

# THE KALÁM (“kuh-LAHM”) ARGUMENT

## REVIEW

### NATURAL THEOLOGY

In each argument that we present for God’s existence, we said that we would only use logic and science:



“**Natural Theology**” is a branch of theology that seeks to provide justification for belief in God’s existence without the use of scripture. In 1802, William Paley wrote a profound philosophical treatise entitled *Natural Theology*. In our first lesson we said that God is the best explanation for the existence of objective moral values and duties. Now, we want to consider a second argument for God’s existence.

### A BEGINNING OF THE UNIVERSE

1. Did the universe *begin* to exist (a finite past)?  
or
2. Has it *always* existed (i.e., past eternal)?

Until the twentieth century, many scientists just assumed that the universe was:

- **static** (not contracting or expanding),
- **past eternal** (had existed forever into the past), and
- a “**brute fact**,” meaning there was no cause or explanation for its existence.

### THINGS THAT POINT TO A BEGINNING

Instead of assuming a “brute fact” that the universe was static and past eternal, scientists in the twentieth century began to realize that the universe actually had a **beginning** (not past eternal) and was rapidly **expanding** (not static), based on seven scientific discoveries:

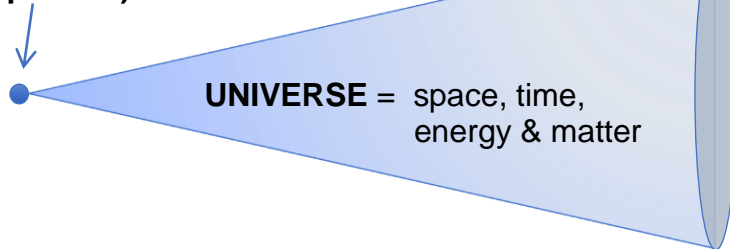
- In 1915, Einstein’s general theory of relativity (GR),
- In 1922 & 1927, Friedmann’s and LeMaître’s FL Cosmology (Standard Model),
- In 1929, Hubble’s discovery of an expanding universe,
- In 1963, Penzias & Wilson’s discovery of background radiation (CMBR) from the original Big Bang explosion in which the universe leapt into exist,

- In 1970, Penrose' & Hawking's proof regarding a Big Bang singularity.
- If the universe was past eternal, **the law of entropy** tells us it would have run out of usable energy by now.
- In 2003, Borde, Guth and Valenkin *proved* that an expanding universe could not possibly be past eternal.

## THE STANDARD MODEL OF THE UNIVERSE

Before that, no space or time.

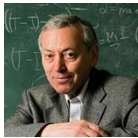
**Big Bang Singularity (an explosion)**



Theists would say “only God” existed, a timeless, spaceless, immaterial and eternal being.

Time (13.8 billion years)

Regarding “a beginning,” **Theoretical Physicist Alexander Vilenkin** tells us:



“With the proof now in place, **cosmologists can no longer hide behind a past-eternal universe.** There is no escape, they have to face the *problem* of a **cosmic beginning.**”

Alexander Vilenkin, *Many Worlds in One: The Search for Other Universes* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 176.

**Philosopher Antony Flew** was, at one time, **the world's most well-known atheist.** Late in his life, Flew eventually became **a theist** based on new evidence:



“When I first met the **big-bang theory** as an atheist, it seemed to me the theory made a big difference because it suggested that **the universe had a beginning** and that the first sentence in Genesis (“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”) was related to **an event** in the universe. If the universe had **a beginning**, it became entirely sensible, almost inevitable, to ask what produced this beginning. **This radically altered the situation.**”

Antony Flew, *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York, HarperCollins, 2007), 88.

The evidence and arguments used in A Beginning of the Universe and The Kalám Argument are the same ones that convinced a man who was at one time the world's most well-known atheist.

# THE KALÁM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

**Premise 1:** Whatever *begins* to exist has a *cause*.

**Premise 2:** The universe began to exist.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, the universe has a cause.

To defeat an argument, you only have to disprove one premise or show that the conclusion does not logically follow from the premises. Critics most often attempt to defeat premise 2.

## PREMISE 1: “Whatever begins to exist has a cause.”

If there's strong scientific evidence for a *beginning* of the universe:

1. Was it *caused* ?  
or
2. Did it just occur spontaneously?

It doesn't happen as often, but it's possible that an atheist might attempt to attack premise 1 and say that the universe just popped into existence spontaneously or uncaused.

## Christians' Response To This Argument Against Premise 1

Mr. Atheist, in everyday life, can we think of any examples where something just sprang into existence uncaused? Is there scientific evidence for such spontaneous events?

To claim that “something can arise uncaused from nothing” is very much like claiming you believe that magic is not an illusion but is very real. That would require a considerable leap of faith. If that's true, why don't we see *everything* around us arising from nothing?

Conclusion: Based on life experience and scientific evidence, it seems likely that the first premise of the Kalam Argument is true:

Whatever begins to exist has a cause.

## **PREMISE 2: “The universe began to exist.”**

Of the two premises, critics most often attempt to defeat premise 2, but that has become more difficult to do as the scientific evidence for a beginning accumulates.

### **Christians’ Response To This Argument Against Premise 2**

Mr. Atheist, today we have scientific evidence that there was **a big bang, an initial explosion and a finite beginning**. The following scientific evidence all points to a “beginning” of the universe:

- In 1915, Einstein’s **general theory of relativity** (GR theory). Einstein fought against the idea of “a beginning” but then finally admitted such a thing.
- In 1922 & 1927, Friedmann’s and LeMaître’s **FL Cosmology** (Standard Model),
- In 1929, Hubble’s discovery of an **expanding universe** (“red shift”),
- In 1963, Penzias & Wilson’s discovery of a **radiation afterglow** (CMBR) from the original Big Bang explosion in which the universe leapt into existence,
- In 1970, Penrose’ & Hawking’s proof regarding a **Big Bang singularity** (the universe all went back to a single atom, before which nothing existed).
- If the universe was “past eternal,” **the law of entropy** tells us it would have run out of usable energy by now.
- In 2003, Borde, Guth and Valenki (BGV Theorem) ***proved* that an expanding universe could not possibly be past eternal** (not even a multiverse).

Today, science uses the Standard Model of the Universe as its starting point for discussion because of all the evidence that accumulated over the past 100 years.

## **CONCLUSION: “Therefore, the universe has a cause.”**

We’ve presented arguments for the two premises:

**Premise 1:** *Whatever begins to exist has a cause.*

**Premise 2:** The universe began to exist.

If both premises are true, the only question left is, “Do the two premises logically lead to the conclusion that the universe has a cause?”

We believe the conclusion very clearly follows from the premises. As a result, we believe the Kalám Cosmological Argument is “more likely to be true than not.” So, our conclusion is true:

“Therefore, the universe has a cause.”

That gets us to a “cause,” but it doesn’t quite establish that God was the cause.

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## WHAT WAS “THE CAUSE” OF THE UNIVERSE?

In public debates, we generally hear three possible theories:

1. **God created** the universe, the earth, and us. That's kind of weird because it doesn't align with the laws of nature we're familiar with.
2. The universe, the earth and we **just popped into existence *without any cause*** or explanation at all. Another weird option.
3. The universe has **just existed into the "eternal past,"** but we have no idea why it exists or where we came from. Again, weird.

Let's consider these in reverse order.

### Option 3: The Universe Just Existed Into the Eternal Past

Despite the scientific evidence, there are some atheists who still say the universe has just been there forever, and we don't know why.

#### Christians' Response to Option 3:

Mr. Atheist, option 3 is just an assumption without evidence. Questions such as

- “Why does the universe exist?” and
- “Where did the universe come from?”

are addressed on the website “areasonstobelieve.org.” See the information on the philosopher G.W. Leibniz on that site for more information. However, no one, not even Einstein, has ever been able to prove a past eternal universe.

In addition, in 2003 the BGV Theorem proved that any universe that has been expanding for all of its existence cannot be past eternal.

Theoretical physicist Alexander Vilenkin even said:

“With the proof now in place, **cosmologists can no longer hide behind a past-eternal universe.** There is no escape, they have to face the *problem* of a **cosmic beginning.**”

**Conclusion:** Of the three options to explain the cause of the universe, option 3 seems the *least* likely to be true.

## **Option 2: The Universe, the Earth and We Suddenly Just Popped Into Existence**

### **Christians’ Response to Option 2:**

Mr. Atheist, saying that everything just “popped into existence” causes us to wonder, “How did the ‘pop’ occur?”

Mr. Atheist, option 2 offers no explanation for that, but the Kalam Argument just proved that there had to be “a cause.” Option 2 doesn’t even attempt to explain the cause. It simply asks us to believe something without a rational justification.

“**Explanatory power**” is one criterion that we use to weigh one theory against another. How much does a particular theory help to explain the phenomena that we observe around us? Option 2 has very little “explanatory power” in that it doesn’t provide “a cause” for our popping into existence.

**Conclusion:** This lack of any explanation for “how the pop occurred” causes us to conclude that option 2 does not seem as likely to be true.

## **Option 1: God Created the Universe, the Earth and Us.**

### **Christians’ Evidence in Support of Option 3:**

Mr. Atheist, **simple explanations are the most likely to be true.** For a further explanation of this see “areasonstobelieve.org.” Of the three options before us, saying that God caused the universe to exist is the **simplest** explanation.

Secondly, option 1 is **the only one to provide a “cause”** to explain the existence of the universe, something that options 2 and 3 fail to do.

**Conclusion:** Because option 1 is the simplest explanation and because it’s the only one to suggest a cause for the universe, option 1 seems to be the best

explanation. So, we think it is more likely that “God created the universe, the earth and us.”

Because this “cause” had to exist prior to the universe when there was no time or space, **God must be a transcendent being who is:**

- necessary
- uncaused (Aristotle & Aquinas said he was “the uncaused first cause”)
- timeless
- spaceless
- immaterial
- incredibly powerful.

Whatever begins to exist has a cause, and that cause was God.

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## WHAT IS “MULTIVERSE THEORY”?

In order to save their idea of a universe created by chance, some scientists have proposed what is called “**M-theory**” or a “cosmic landscape” or a “world ensemble.” This says that our universe could simply be a bubble in a sea of bubbles, with each bubble expanding.

To get rid of a finite beginning, and without any scientific evidence for such a thing, multiverse theorists have recently suggested:

- “Each bubble or universe had a beginning, but the overall sea of bubbles (i.e., the multiverse) does *not* have a beginning.”
- “The law of entropy applies to our universe, but it does *not* apply to the larger multiverse.”

**Multiverse theory requires that there be at least 10 to the 500<sup>th</sup> power universes** for it to be true. There’s no evidence that points to a “multiverse.” It’s a theory that was created out of whole cloth.



Using the made-up theory of “multiverses” and the idea of an already-existing law of gravity, theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking and philosopher Daniel Dennett suggest that, given enough time and enough universes, eventually our universe simply “created itself.”

## Christians' Response to "M-Theory":

Mr. Atheist, in response to "multiverse theory," theoretical physicist Roger Penrose tells us, "**M-theory enjoys no observational support whatsoever.**"

Mr. Atheist, since the idea of a multiverse is just a hypothetical idea without evidence, it's difficult to say if it would be exempt from entropy.

Since 2003, we know that **the Borde-Guth-Vilenkin Theorem very clearly applies to a multiverse** (i.e., multiple expanding universes). These three men won a Nobel prize for proving that even a multiverse that has been expanding throughout its existence **CANNOT** be eternal into the infinite past, but definitely had a finite beginning!

Looking at Hawking and Dennett's theory from a logical standpoint, there are a few **difficulties** with their idea:

- For one thing, the universe would've had to already exist before it could create itself.
- Secondly, Hawking and Dennett's idea requires that matter, energy and gravitational force were precursors that existed before this universe, contrary to everything we've learned about the Standard Model of the Universe.
- Thirdly, according to their "M-theory" where did all the multiverses come from that were required for this particular universe to create itself? They don't explain that.

We said earlier that all logicians adhere to the "**simplicity**" criterion. It is the most important criterion for evaluating the viability of different explanations. Oxford philosopher Richard Swinburne states:

"To postulate a trillion-trillion other universes, rather than one God, in order to explain the orderliness of our universe, seems the height of irrationality."

John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford, England: Lion Books, 2009), 75.

To drive home this point about "multiverse theory," John Lennox quotes physicist John Polkinghorne:

"Theoretical physicist John Polkinghorne . . . rejects the many-universe interpretation: 'Let us recognize these speculations for what they are. They are not physics, but in the strictest sense, metaphysics . . . **There is no purely scientific reason to believe in an ensemble of universes.** By construction these other worlds are unknowable by us. A possible explanation of equal intellectual respectability – and to my mind of greater economy and elegance – would be that this one world is the way it is, because **it is the creation of the will of a Creator who purposes that it should be so.**'"

John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford, England: Lion Books, 2009),



# WHAT CONSTITUTES “KNOWLEDGE”?

Within the field of philosophy, there is a sub-discipline known as “epistemology.” This sub-discipline attempts to understand, “What constitutes knowledge and justified or warranted belief?” Is it possible to “know” something even if I’ve never received enough evidence to give me 100% certainty? As a Christian witness, when someone challenges me to “prove” something, what am I obligated to do?

In **Christianity**, we speak of “faith” or “knowledge” gained through direct experience:

- Our concept of “**faith**” is described in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the *assurance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen.” We don’t see the wind, but we believe there’s ample evidence that it exists.
- Our concept of “**knowledge**” is that particular people are blessed by God to know that he exists and to know that Jesus Christ is the redeemer of the world. Normally, this knowledge is obtained through direct experience rather than an intellectual argument (e.g., Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus).

In the field of **epistemology**, philosophers speak of “knowledge” and “certainty” obtained through reason or arguments:

- To philosophers, “**certainty**” occurs if there is a deductive argument that provides a **100% guarantee of truth** (i.e., sure beyond any doubt).
- To philosophers, “**knowledge**” occurs if there is at least an inductive rationale to logically infer a **probability greater than 50%**.

So, philosophers say it’s entirely possible to “**know**” something without **100% certainty**. This is extremely important. Logic is their area of expertise, and philosophers say that **you have attained a “knowledge” of something simply if its probability is greater than 50%!**

In our initial conversations with atheist friends, **it would be better to use the last two terms (i.e., certainty and knowledge) as they are defined by philosophers.**

## ***Atheists’ Mischaracterization of Christian “Faith”***

Most atheists attack Christians’ concept of “faith” and characterize it as believing something *without any evidence*. This mischaracterization, which is repeated over and over, is false. Even the most renowned atheists in the world like Richard Dawkins commit this error.

## ***Properly Basic Belief***

Is it possible to “**know**” something through direct experience *without ever examining any arguments?*

Philosophers say it is! Based on merely experience and reason, it's entirely rational for a person to conclude, for example, that memories about his past experience or perceptions about the external world he sees around him are not a product of his imagination, but are actually very real.

Philosophers call these conclusions based on direct experience "**properly basic beliefs.**" For example, Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus resulted in Paul's properly basic belief that Christ was the Redeemer. It was based on direct experience. In like manner, knowledge of God's Holy Spirit that is grounded in direct experience and reason is a very real phenomenon.

**So, it's entirely possible for me *not* to know *any* of these arguments we're talking about and yet have sound reasons based on direct experience to conclude that God exists!** To philosophers who study epistemology, that is an entirely appropriate way to obtain a "knowledge" of something (i.e., greater than 50% probability).

### ***Knowing vs. Showing***

It's entirely possible to "know" something without being able to "show," or demonstrate to others, that it's true.

For example, I could be put on trial for a murder I never committed, yet every piece of evidence that is presented to a jury indicates I committed the crime. I personally know for a fact that I'm innocent, yet I'm unable to establish that fact for the jury. In this case, my innocence is a "properly basic belief" based on experience. It's entirely reasonable to insist that I'm innocent even though I can't prove it.

It's entirely possible to **know** that God exists based on direct experience but not be able to **show**, or demonstrate to others, that there are sound reasons to believe in God. What we're attempting to do in this class is become more adept at "showing."

### ***Cumulative Impact***

As we consider various arguments for God's existence, we need to keep in mind that **each argument does not stand alone.** Instead, the rules of logic *require* that we consider the cumulative impact of *all* arguments.

It's a common but illogical approach for atheists to attack each argument in isolation and say, "Your Morality Argument failed to make the case, and your Kalam Argument failed to make the case. Therefore, I still don't believe that God exists." The rules of logic demand that when two arguments are making the same point (i.e., God's existence) we can't simply consider them in isolation but **must consider their cumulative impact.**

Let's say the Morality Argument moved a person from zero belief in God to thinking there's a 30% chance that God exists. It's possible that the Kalam Argument will then alter his thinking furtherhhhh and he changes his opinion from 30% to a 55% chance that God exists.

If you have more than one argument for a proposition (e.g., God exists), never let anyone isolate each argument and say each one failed to convince them. By the rules of logic, we must consider the **cumulative impact** of all arguments.

### ***Burden of Proof***

As a witness for God's existence, there will come a point where skeptics challenge me to "prove it."

If an audience is convinced that the chances of God's existence are "greater than 50%," I've met the "burden of proof" that is required of anyone who debates this issue. In other words, when my proposition appears to be "more likely than not," I've accomplished my objective. That's also true in debating *any* issue.

Don't ever let anyone cause you to feel that, in making your argument for God, you're obligated to provide them with 100% certainty. That's not the standard for proof in *any* debate. The only standard that you must meet is "more likely than not."