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## Teleological Argument

By Larry D. Mathis

From whence came our marvelous and complex universe? Our alternatives to this question are few. (1) Is the whole thing merely an illusion? (2) Did the universe somehow arise spontaneously out of nothing? (3) Is the universe eternal; has it always been, having had no origin or beginning? Or, (4) Was it created by an Intelligent Being? It is our deep conviction that our universe, and everything in it, man included, was created by Divine Intelligence, and that this is the only adequate and correct response to this question.

The material universe in unquestionably one of system and order, not chaos; of laws, not chance and haphazards. Can any informed and reasoning intellect possibly believe that insensible and mindless matter just changed to originate itself and all this system, then changed to impose the system upon itself? It is incontrovertible that where there is a plan there is intelligence! Marvelous design is built into our universe. It is utterly impossible for a plan of such intricacy and sophistication to have developed by mere chance.

How could anyone suggest that the "order of nature" (which is a tremendous exhibition of design, law and order), which is seen everywhere, merely arose from chaos and chance? Did such magnificent order come from disorder? Did intelligence come from non-intelligence? Did mind come from matter? Did feeling come from that which has no feeling? Surely not! This is where the teleological argument enters.

Teleology is "the study of evidences of design in nature." This argument from "design" is one of the oldest and most powerful of the theistic arguments for the existence of God.

The teleological argument is very simple. The intricate design found throughout the universe could not possibly have come without some kind of supreme architect and designer behind it.

Where there is order there must be an orderer. Where there is plan there must be a planner. Design requires a designer. The "Great Designer" of all things is God. (Hebrews 3:4).

The teleological argument affirms that God daily presents himself to public view in such a manner that men cannot open their eyes without being constrained to behold him. The force of this argument is from design; intelligence is seen everywhere in the things that exist.

Men of all centuries have been struck with awe when considering the law, order and design of the universe. Law, order, design, and intelligence go hand in hand. The earth, the sun and stars, and the universe itself; and the charming variety of the seasons, demonstrates the existence of a Divinity. The existence of a Being endowed with intelligence and wisdom is a necessary inference from a study of celestial mechanics. (Psalm 19:1 ff.) Theists should press the point that it all fits together, from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy. Precision, design, order, exactness, etc., are all adjective which modify the universe.

### Teleological Argument Illustrated

1. The forms of four human faces appear on a granite cliff at Mount Rushmore. Even if we knew absolutely nothing about the origin of the faces, would we not come immediately to believe it was an intelligent production and not the result of natural processes of erosion? Would we not rightly conclude there must have existed at some time, and at some place or other, sufficient intelligence to form them? It is a stubborn and observable fact that the natural powers of wind and rain erosion have never produced human faces like these in granite! Is it not reasonable then to conclude that it took intelligence to produce a real face, a living organism? How was the human face formed? Compare Psalm 139:14.

2. Consider the books in a public

library. How were they produced? Does it not require intelligent guidance to transfer thoughts — and thoughts into words? Has anyone ever observed an encyclopedia of information result from an electric fan blowing on alphabet cereal? Does making random mistakes in copying "Mary Had A Little Lamb" over long periods of time ever result in a production like "Paradise Lost"? Does experience indicate that information in a library is transferred from one volume to another volume by mere contact on the shelves? Does such occur during the shipping process? Do words occasionally leap inexplicably from one book to another?

So certain are we that only minds convey specified complexity in information that when ancient inscriptions in unknown languages are discovered we do not hesitate to conclude some intelligent being inscribed them! And, were astronomers to receive a decodeable message from outer space there would be no reason to conclude that it emanated from anything but an intelligent source.

To further illustrate we submit the following. Troops of monkeys pounding and thundering away, at random, on typewriters could never produce the works of Shakespeare, for the practical reason that the whole observable universe is not large enough to contain the necessary monkey hordes, the necessary typewriters, and certainly the waste paper baskets required for the disposition of wrong attempts!

Let it be observed that man is different. His "thinking" involves proper logic, argumentation, reasoning, judgment, concepts, etc. The very fact that I can "think" causes me to believe in God! Let those who deny God explain intelligence, volition, emotions and moral judgment.

God has plainly revealed himself to man through the things that exist — the created universe. As a result man is without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20.) The Apostle Paul further states that "God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is . . . LEFT NOT HIMSELF WITHOUT WITNESS."

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**TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT**

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(Acts 14:15-17.) Even the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork. (Psalm 19:1.) The moon and the stars were ordained of God; they are the works of his fingers. (Psalm 8:1, 3.)

To those who are prone to deny the existence of our God, the Creator of all things, we submit the following for their consideration: "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; And the birds of the heavens, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these, That the hand of Jehovah hath wrought this." (Job 12:7-9.)

Design requires a Designer. "For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God." (Hebrews 3:4.)

**"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES"**

John 5:39

**(An Acrostic)**

- S - Systematically. (Luke 24:27; 2 Tim. 2:14.)  
C - Carefully. (Psalm 1:1, 2.)  
R - Reverently. (Psalm 19:7-11.)  
I - Intently. (Proverbs 2:2; Heb. 5:12.)  
P - Prayerfully. (James 1:5-7; Psalm 119:18.)  
T - Trustingly. (John 22:31; Acts 24:14.)  
U - Understandingly. (Acts 3:18; Heb. 4:12.)  
R - Retentively. (Jer. 20:9; Psa. 119:11.)  
E - Every day. (Acts 17:2; 1 Peter 2:2.)  
S - Savingly. (Acts 20:32.)

Unknown

**WANTED:  
Busy People**

By A. T. Pate

If you want a job done well, get a busy person to do it. Indolent, idle people never have time. Just as this principle is true in the business world, it is also true in the work of the Lord. God has always called busy people into his service. Peter and Andrew were casting a net into the sea when Jesus invited them to "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19). Likewise James and John were busy fishermen, mending their nets when the Lord called them. Matthew, a tax collector, was at his post of duty when summoned to follow the Lord and Saul was intensely busy persecuting the church.

When we go to the Old Testament, we find the same thing is true. Moses was called from tending Jethro's flocks to become leader of the Israelites. Elisha was busy plowing when summoned to the office of prophet. David was brought from the fields and flocks to be anointed king over God's people. Amos was working as a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit when divinely appointed to prophesy unto Israel.

When God wished to announce the birth of his Son, he chose to release the news to the shepherds busily engaged watching over their flocks by night. The Scriptures abound with illustrations of the same fact. God uses busy people to accomplish his purpose.

In this 20th century age in which we have more and more leisure time, let us be busy serving God and man, capturing every opportunity to do good. As the inspired apostle exhorted, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (I Corinthians 15:58).

**"That Which Is  
Perfect Is Come"**

By Lloyd Topliss

The phrase "that which is perfect is come" (1 Corinthians 13:10) has been the occasion of much discussion. It is important that we have a knowledge of this verse, especially knowing what it does not teach.

A study of the word "perfect" reveals that it is a process or development when referring to man. It is also translated "full-grown" or "mature". About the word "perfect" Vine says, "it signifies having reached its end; finished, complete, or perfect." Thayer says, "wanting nothing necessary to completeness." Bullinger defines it as "what has reached its end, term, or limit."

In Ephesians 4:13 we read, "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." "Full-grown" (Greek TELEIOS) is used here to describe a Christian's progress in maturity.

In Philippians 3, Paul is exhorting these Christians to know the heavenly and not the temporal things of life. Paul states that he has not "obtained" or "has been made perfect" in verse 12. But in verse 15 he says, "let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded . . ." There is a state of perfection (maturity) one can obtain in this life.

The Corinthians lacked maturity. Paul addressed the problem of spiritual maturity in 1 Corinthians 12-14. In the twelfth chapter Paul admonishes the Corinthians about the use of spiritual gifts. He shows that the possession of these temporary gifts did not make one a mature Christian. It seems, from the tone of Paul's address, that the main problem was that those who had the gift of speaking in tongues were "lording it over" those who lacked this gift. With "and I show you a still more excellent way," (1 Corinthians 12:31) Paul begins to give the solution to the gift problem.

With these thoughts in mind, let us examine four commonly-held views as to what "that which is perfect is come" refers.

1. **Christ.** Since the word "perfect" denotes a process or development this is an incorrect viewpoint. This viewpoint also ignores the rest of the verse concerning "the partial." If Christ is the "perfect" then what is "the partial"?

2. **The second coming of Christ.** Most Pentecostals hold this view. If "perfect" refers to the second coming of Christ, then miraculous gifts would still be in effect. But the second coming is not a process or development. The second coming is not in the context of these chapters. Paul is dealing with a present problem and the solution to that problem.

3. **The completed written revelation.** This view is the most accepted especially among brethren. Some reasons this writer

rejects this view:

a. All truth was revealed before it was written down. In Jude 3 we read, "I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." Could Jude have been the last inspired writing written? Among commentators this does not seem to be the case.

b. Paul has already stated, 1 Corinthians 13:2, that a completed revelation "all knowledge" would not be the answer to the Corinthians problems.

c. The Corinthians had all knowledge necessary to obey the gospel. The revealing of more knowledge would deal only with quantity and not quality. Paul's discussion in this chapter does not concern how much knowledge has been revealed, but how much of it has been grasped.

4. **Mature knowledge produced by love.** This viewpoint fits the context and the Corinthian problem. Miraculous gifts gave only a partial knowledge, but love would produce mature knowledge of God. Spiritual gifts were for the beginning era of the church. They would be discarded when maturity (perfection) came. Since the Corinthians lacked love they abused the gifts which were given for the benefit of all. This showed that they did not understand the nature of gifts.

Those who claim the possession of miraculous gifts today fail to notice that Paul considers these gifts as evidence of immaturity. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7, 8). Therefore, our goal, as should have been the Corinthian Christians', must be to produce love in our lives. This will lead to mature knowledge of God.

- Hugoton, KS 67951

## God Shut The Door!

By Garry Stanton

*"And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in."*  
Genesis 7:16

After Noah, his wife, his sons and their wives, and all the animals had entered the ark, GOD SHUT THE DOOR. Why was this fact recorded, what significance does it carry? I believe that it had to do with the truth that, when God shuts the door, NO MAN can open it! Can you imagine the panic of those outside the ark when they realized that death was imminent because of the rising waters?

Do you not also figure that there was a lot of pushing and shoving to get to that door? Had Noah, a mere man, shut the door of the ark, the mob could have, and probably would have, forced open the door and entered the ark of safety directly against the will of God. But, God Almighty had shut the door and no man was going to open it! This does not make God cruel for he had granted time for the people of Noah's day to change their ways. Peter tells us that "the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing" (1 Peter 3:20), and that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). God gave that wicked generation 120 years to hear Noah's preaching and repent before he brought the flood (Genesis 6:3). They refused to repent. So, they had to suffer the horrible consequences of refusing to obey God. God had given them every opportunity, but finally God's justice demanded a purging, and so the rains came.

Peter likens the salvation of Noah and his family to our salvation in Christ which is appropriated by faithful obedience to our Lord in baptism (1 Peter 3:20, 21). There are many lessons to be learned by the account of Noah and the ark, but there is at least one lesson that we sometimes overlook, and that is, the great truths that we can learn from the fact that GOD SHUT THE DOOR. First, we learn that man must not loose that which God has bound, or as in this case, man is not to open (actually, CAN NOT OPEN) the door to safety that God has closed. God placed salvation from the flood in the ark and he established the conditions which were to be met in order to enter the ark and find salvation. The condition for entering the ark was—righteousness, right doing, a walking with God (Genesis 6:9; 7:1, 5). No one, not even Noah, had the right to alter these conditions in any way.

Today the church is troubled with a frantic effort to open the door to salvation to those to whom God has closed it. The modern "catch phrase" that is being echoed from a seemingly growing number of places is, "There are sincere, honest Christians in all denominations." There are many problems with this philosophy beside the fact it does not originate from scripture. One of the most dangerous problems with it is the sense of false security that it gives to those not in the ark of safety. They think that they are safe when in fact they are lost and because they think they are safe they do not seek true safety.

Another problem arises when a modern Noah, who is overtaken by this present day philosophy, can be heard to say, as he looks out at the masses from the lone

window of the ark, "They are sincere and honest, let them in!" But, GOD SHUT THE DOOR, and no present day Noah, nor anyone else has the right, nor the power, to open it against the will of God.

God has established the conditions upon which man can enter the ark of safety and no one has the right to change them. God's word is sufficient to enable man to enter the realm of salvation (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:3). He has given us the conditions of salvation and no alteration is needed. Any changing of these conditions by man is specifically forbidden by God (Revelation 22:18, 19).

Also, we see from the account of Noah and the ark that there are some conditions which must be met in order to remain in the realm of safety. Ham entered the ark and was spared from the destruction of the flood, but afterwards sinned and was cursed (Genesis 9:20-27). Likewise, some today enter the ark of safety but later they do not do as God wants and are again in danger of destruction. To remain in salvation, we must worship God as God has authorized us (John 4:23, 24); we must walk in the light of God's word (1 John 1:7); and we must be faithful until death (Revelation 2:10). These requirements are not the vain philosophies of man, but the words of God. Those who do not meet these requirements will find the door of eternal salvation SHUT BY GOD. Man has not the prerogative nor the power to overlook, set aside, nor change these God given requirements.

Remember, when God shuts the door no man can open it!

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## BIBLE TRIVIA?

By Dub McClish

With the surge of interest that has developed over the "Trivial Pursuit" game many other "trivia" games have been generated. Among these is one called "Bible Trivia," which must have been put together by someone who knew little about the Bible. The times I have tried to play it, I found that some of the subjects were not even mentioned in the Bible and others of them were based on misunderstandings and/or misapplications of Bible teaching. Even if the originator of "Bible Trivia" had accurate knowledge of the Bible, I question his respect for what it says. One does not respect it very much who labels any of it "trivia."

Have you checked a dictionary on "trivia" and "trivial"? Webster says

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**BIBLE TRIVIA?**

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"trivia" is "unimportant matters" and that which is "trivial" is "commonplace, ordinary, of little worth or importance, insignificant." The consignment of material in the Word of God to the status of insignificance is not done only by the "Bible Trivia" game developers, however. Several years ago as I was preaching a series of sermons on the book of Matthew, one of the elders (no doubt responding to some complaining church member) suggested that I should move on to something else since much of the material in Matthew was rather dull and insignificant. More recently, while in the midst of devoting one sermon each week to a different book of the Bible, one member complained that I was "just filling time" with such material. In other words, it was "trivia". Many church bulletins have a "Bible Trivia" section each week.

I deny that there is anything insignificant or unimportant in the Bible. It may be fair to say that some material in the Bible is **more** significant than other, but I would be extremely cautious about calling any of it "trivia". There is Scriptural precedent for such caution. The Lord attributed importance to the "jots" and "tittles" (small portions of a single letter of the Hebrew alphabet) of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:18). Further, Christ made a powerful argument concerning his own claim of Deity from a **seemingly** insignificant phrase in Psalms 82:6. Likewise, Paul used the singular form of an Old Testament word as the basis of his argument that Christ was the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham that in his **seed** (not seeds) would all nations be blessed (Gal. 3:16).

The fact that I (or anyone) may not **perceive** the significance of a portion of the Bible, does not mean it is trivial. Let us love and revere **all** of the Bible as the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Denton, Texas

\* \* \* \*

*You cannot divorce sorrow from sin.*

\* \* \* \*

*Despise not opposition: Without it you cannot grow.*

\* \* \* \*

*Majority vote cannot change truth into a lie, or a lie into a truth.*

\* \* \* \*

*Do not seek lighter burdens, but a stronger heart.*

\* \* \* \*

**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

**GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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