

I Believe in God

Ten reasons that strengthen my Christian faith

When Thomas met the other disciples he said, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it" (John 20:25). Does your faith also need reasons or evidence? I notice that for some people faith comes easy. For others, however, before they can bring themselves to believe it must in some way 'make sense', 'feel right' or 'fit somehow into their worldview'. Normally I believe strongly in the existence of a good personal creator God. But sometimes I encounter situations that cause me to doubt, for example, when God does something or allows something to happen that I disagree with. When I doubt and also when I don't doubt I find that reasons and arguments strengthen my faith.

What can be proven about God? What are we looking for? What can we expect to find? I see in this natural, physical world, the fingerprints of a powerful, intelligent outsider.

1. About reason: Everything in the known universe has a cause. The universe itself also needs a cause. Even the 'big bang', if it actually occurred, must have had a cause. We can choose to call this initial cause 'God.'

2. About complexity: Our body is very complex machine! It is amazing how complex our world is. There are just so many necessary details. The amazing complexities that I see in nature fill me with wonder and encourage me believe in the existence of an intelligent designer. We can choose to call it designer 'God.'

3. About good and evil: What is good? What is bad, wrong or evil? Can ethics

simply be the product of our changing public opinion? The fact that most -if not all- people are conscious of good and evil suggests that ethics and morality go beyond socially learned behaviour. The fact that some kind of moral code appears to be burnt onto every human 'hard-drive' suggests the existence of a moral lawgiver. We can choose to call this moral lawgiver 'God'.

It therefore seems reasonable to me to believe in the existence of a powerful initial cause, an intelligent designer, a universal legislator. You can call this 'great entity' God or give it any other name. What else can we discover about this 'great entity'? Is it likely to be a *thing*, like energy, or a *person*, something like you and me?

4. Over logic: I see a *person* as something more, higher or greater than matter and energy. I also notice that it is the greater that creates the smaller. For example, a person creates a computer; a bird builds a nest – but never the other way round. Who or what could create people like you and me? Our creator must also have a 'personhood' equal or in some way greater than that of ours.

5. About beauty: Why do we see and enjoy so many different colours? Why can a sunset be so beautiful? Why does our planet have such a diversity of flowers? Why do we have so many attractive flavours and aromas? Why does music exist? Not everything in our universe *needs* to exist. Since beauty is part of this creation, it must also be appreciated in one way or another by its designer. The appreciation of beauty is a trait of 'personhood'. The fact that beauty exists, suggests to me that God is a *person*, who can also appreciate and enjoy it.

6. About virtues: The process that we call evolution is a value-free process. A mechanical universe has no room for virtue; it has no need for morality. But something in us knows that virtues such as love, humility, empathy, self-sacrifice, generosity and forgiveness are real. The existence of such virtues tells us

something about the Creator. Ethics and virtues are things that are valued by persons. The fact that virtues exist suggests that God is a *person* who also values them.

An important characteristic of 'persons' is that they have a strong desire to communicate with others. If God is a person it should not be considered as odd that this God should want to communicate with us. In fact, we should actually expect it. Christians believe that God has communicated a number of times with humans and that his supreme revelation came in the person of Jesus Christ. How Jesus help us to believe in God?

7. About Jesus: Did a person called Jesus really exist? Was he a myth? Most historians believe in a historical Jesus just as much as in Aristotle or Constantine. Has the Church made Jesus 'divine'? Jesus himself was clearly not confused about his own identity. He came to this earth with a mission. The disciples of Jesus became slowly convinced that Jesus was God in human form: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:1-14). That is why the enemies of Jesus accused him of blasphemy and wanted to kill him. The life and words of Jesus help me believe in God.

8. About the resurrection of Jesus: Friends and enemies of Jesus agreed that his tomb was empty. How did it become empty? The evangelists say that Jesus rose from the dead. Alternative explanations are quite weak. Moreover, after the resurrection, many people saw Jesus alive: "He [Jesus] appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep [have now died]. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:6-8). The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the explanation that best fits the facts and it helps me to believe that Jesus was a genuine revelation of God.

9. About good changes: In Jerusalem, the city where Jesus was crucified, just a few weeks after the resurrection, 3.000 people believed the Christian message. This explosion of Christianity and the testimony of millions of changed lives also today cannot be accounted for without the real, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. In addition, sometimes I see extremely unlikely and otherwise unexplainable answers to prayer. The God of the Bible is still active today.

In order to believe, Thomas wanted some evidence. The resurrected Jesus appeared to him and said, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe". Was this evidence *proof* that Jesus was God? No, but it helped. Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:27, 28). Certainty about His resurrection helped Thomas believe that Jesus was God. Like Thomas, we have no evidence to *prove* that God exists, but the evidence and reasoning do help. Faith is a choice, for God or against God. "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:1).

10. About the meaning of life: Christian faith is a rational faith. It is not a blind step in the dark. It makes sense. It is worthy of our faith and trust. Furthermore, genuine Christianity works and is existentially satisfying: it gives me hope when facing the brokenness in this world, it gives meaning and direction to my life, and I am sure it makes me a better man. When Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10), he was speaking the truth.

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