

(This is a response to a published request wanting irrefutable evidence for belief in God)

Doubt is not the opposite of faith, it is part of faith. Good doubt can be a helpful sign of growth and is a proper process of questioning the grounds of religious faith. Bad doubt is destructive of faith. Many Psalms express some kind of faith-crisis. In every congregation there are Christians to whom faith does not come easily. How gracious of our Lord Jesus Christ to include doubting Thomas in his chosen disciples. Yes, there is room in the company of Jesus for doubters. Agnosticism is not atheism. Questioning our cherished formulations can be constructive so long as we remember that faith in God, although not unreasonable, is beyond reason.

In this life, irrefutable evidence for anything is scarce. I see a chair across a room and although it looks promising, I have no clear proof that it will sustain my weight until, by faith, I trust myself to it. Similarly, science examines evidence and propounds theories and hypotheses which are essentially exercises in faith which can only be proven, or disproven, after appropriate experimentation. The point comes for the God-seeker, who after examining the rational evidence, chooses to put faith in the God of Scripture and then, having exercised faith, finds that faith to have been justified and God to be wholly true.

All around us and within us there are whispers of God which elicit a faith-response that is credible. The universal idea of God in all cultures is a response to these, so that people speak of “the God-shaped vacuum” in the human heart. There is a moral law within us that seems to be innate rather than manufactured, and the existence of language, love and music are indicators that we are spiritual beings. The integrity of the universe points to an intelligent design.

Yet, our belief in God is not to be found in reason alone but in revelation. We would not know God, if God had not chosen to reveal himself generally in creation, conscience and history. More especially God has revealed himself in the Bible, the written word, and in Christ, the Living Word. Methodists affirm that the Bible is the supreme authority on matters of faith and conduct which is backed up by reason, tradition and experience. The Bible has a ring of truth about it, written over a period of 1500 years by many writers but with seemingly one author. It indicates where we came from; what is the meaning of life; where are we going. Surely, the most impactful piece of evidence is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His resurrection from death indicates that he was who he claimed to be, the Son of God on earth. Today, Christian faith transforms individual lives in a personal encounter with the living Lord Jesus Christ. To be born again is not just a nice metaphor, it is a spiritual reality.

The Easter Rising of Jesus Christ gives grounds for belief in life after death. Jesus described “eternal life” as the promised gift of God. His resurrection body is an impressive indication of life hereafter. It is true that details are sketchy so that

Reinhold Niebuhr encouraged belief in the evidence but discouraged arguments over the furniture of heaven or the temperature of hell! The book of Revelation forecasts the sure hope of life in heaven which is endless love, communal joy and active service in the presence of God.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”
(Hebrews 11v1.) May Easter faith be renewed in us.

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