

Proving the Existence of God

I'm sorry, but my title is a baited fish hook. To those who believe, it could imply that this article will show that their faith is academically and intellectually respectable. To those who do not believe, it could be taken as an invitation to a contest in which atheist arguments will defeat the irrationality of faith. Sadly, both of these views of God make the same mistake: they see God as some theory that can be written about by a theologian in a book, or analysed by an atheist in a debate. Both of these wrongly assume that God can be found by standing apart from him and being objective.

An atheist was dying of cancer. He was asked whether fear of death tempted him to pray to God. 'No', said the atheist, 'Read Frazer's Golden Bough and you'll find that gods are ten a penny. What's really happening to me, is that Nature is carrying out an evolutionary experiment'. Brave man; but no atheist: 'Nature' was his god.

And so with all of us. When it comes to what really affects us, like love, death, pain, or joy: the answer is not in the writings of an academic theologian; in a TV debate; or on a programme about the history of Palestine. Instead, when we are overwhelmed by love, death, pain, or joy; we call on those glimpses, however brief, of something more important than anything else we ever knew. Whatever name we give it; it is our first clue to finding God.

As in a Jewish story: God was exhausted by the millions of requests sent up to him. He asked the angels: 'Where can I hide away where no one will find me and I can get some rest?'. An angel replied: 'Hide in the human heart; no one will think of looking for you there'.

Looking for God, we may not recognise him at first. He may be tucked away in our hearts, hidden under a misleading label, or found inside everyday life. But when our eyes are opened, dry ethics or abstract theory will have little to do with finding him. For us, as with his disciples on the first Easter, when they met the Risen Christ (Luke 24:30-32): 'Did not our hearts burn within us?'

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