

Rotheiser: Reasons to believe in God

Today belief in God is often seen as a naiveté. For many, believing in God is like believing in Santa and the Easter Bunny, nice, something for the kids, a warm nostalgia or a bitter memory, but not something that's real, that stands up to hard scrutiny and indeed stands up to the dark doubts that sometimes linger below the surface of our faith. Where's there evidence that God exists?

A true apologetics, I believe, needs at a point to be personal. So here are my own reasons why I continue to believe in God in the face of the agnosticism of our overly-adult world and despite the dark nights that sometimes beset me.

First, I believe in God because I sense, at the deepest level of my being, that there's an inalienable moral structure to things. Life, love, and meaning are morally-contoured. There's an inalienable "law of karma" that's experienced everywhere and in everything: good behavior is its own happiness, just as bad behavior is its own sorrow.

Different religions word it differently but the concept is at the heart of all religion and is in essence the very definition of morality: *The measure you measure out will be the measure that's measured back to you.* That's Jesus' version of it, and can be translated this way: *The air you breathe out is the air you will re-inhale.* Simply put: If we cut down too many trees we will soon be breathing in carbon monoxide. If we breathe out love, we will meet love. If we breathe out hate and anger we will soon enough find ourselves surrounded by hated and anger.

Reality is so structured that goodness brings goodness and sin brings sin.

I believe in God because blind chaos could not have designed things this way, to be innately moral. Only an intelligent Goodness could have built reality this way.

My next reason for believing in God is the existence of soul, intelligence, love, altruism, and art. These could not have emerged simply from blind chaos, from billions and billions of cosmic bingo chips coming out of nothing, with no intelligent loving force behind them, endlessly churning through billions of years. Random chaos, empty of all intelligence and love from its origins, could not have eventually produced soul and all that's highest inside it: intelligence, love, altruism, spirituality, and art. Can our own hearts and all that's noble and precious within them really be just the result of billions of fluke chances colliding within a brute, mindless process?

I believe in God because if our hearts are real then so is God.

Next, I believe in God because the Gospel works – if we work it. What Jesus incarnated and taught ultimately resonates with what's most precious, most noble, and most meaningful inside of life and inside each of us. Moreover, this checks out in life. Whenever I have the faith and courage to actually live out the Gospel, to roll the dice on its truth, it always proves to be true, the loaves multiply and feed the thousands and David defeats Goliath. But it doesn't work unless I risk it. The Gospel works, if we work it.

The objection could be raised here, of course, that many sincere, faith-filled people risk their lives and truth on the Gospel and, from all appearances in this world, it doesn't work for them. They end up poor, as victims, on the losing side of things. But again, that's a judgment we make from the standards of this world, from the Gospel of Prosperity where whoever has the most worldly success wins. The Gospel of Jesus undercuts this. Anyone who lives it out as faithfully as he or she is able, will be blessed with something beyond worldly success, namely, the deeper joy of a life well-lived, a joy which Jesus assures us is deeper, less ephemeral, and more lasting than any other joy.

I believe in God because the Gospel works! As does prayer!

Finally, though certainly not least, I believe in God because of the community of faith that stretches back to the beginning of time, that stretches back to the life and resurrection of Jesus, and that baptized me into the faith. Throughout all of history virtually all human communities have been also communities of faith, of belief in God, of worship, and of sacred ritual and sacrament.

I believe in God because of the existence of families of faith and the existence of church and sacrament.

I wrote my doctoral thesis on the classical proofs for the existence of God, arguments for God's existence taken from some of the great intellectuals in history: Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Leibnitz, Spinoza, and Alfred North Whitehead. I rambled through nearly 500 hundred pages of articulating and evaluating these proofs and then ended with this conclusion.

We don't come to believe in God because of the compelling power of some mathematical equation or logical syllogism. God's existence becomes real to us when we live an honest, sincere life.