

# **Belief in God**

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It is mistakenly imagined by some that belief in a Supreme Being as the Creator and Controller of the universe is a mere emotional aspiration, a superstition of ancient times, irrational and illogical, and exploded by modern science. It is believed that scientists (physicists, biologists and others) have erected some theory which both refutes and replaces the traditional belief in God. Such ideas have only a very superficial grounding, and are the result of ignorance or an indifference to both the fundamentals of religious faith and the scope of the physical sciences. It is a significant fact in the history of world thought that very few people have ever made it their business to refute the existence of God. The views of the universe which are considered to be anti-religious are almost all agnostic, not atheistic, that is to say, they attempt to ignore the existence of God instead of denying it. This is true of certain views of modern science as well as of the ancient non-religious theories. The universe in which we live comprises an evident system of causes and effects, of phenomena and their results, and it is possible to discuss them indefinitely and construct theories about them, giving a superficial appearance of completeness. This is done, however, only at the expense of ignoring fundamentals or claiming that they cannot be known. If one were to search for a convincing statement based on firm principles that the existence of a Supreme Being is impossible, one would not be able to find it.

The reason for this state of affairs is that belief in God is at once instinctive, rational, evidential and intuitional, and it is only by deliberately neglecting to consider it that the non-religious attitude is maintained. It is instinctive in that man has an innate feeling of his own inadequacy and helplessness, which accompanies him from the cradle to the grave, a feeling accompanied by the complementary desire to seek refuge and support with a being who controls all those forces before which he feels himself inadequate. We put this feeling forward as instinctive, although it will immediately be perceived that it is also evidential. The weakness of man before all the uncountable influences over which he has no control is a fact so obvious as to require no discussion.

What is less well grasped by some who have claims to intelligence is that belief in God is fully supported by reason and logic, the principles on which all human intelligence stands. For instance, it is a basic requirement of reason that an effect cannot exist without a cause. However hard we press our mental faculties, we cannot conceive rationally of a causeless effect, and if we wish to postulate one we can only do so by temporarily putting our reason on the shelf. Reason leads us to the conclusion that just as the elements which compose the universe are effects of certain causes, the universe itself must be the effect of a cause, a cause which is itself mightier than and outside the universe. Non-religious thinkers have to ignore the origin of the universe and postulate something existing in the beginning without any known cause. This postulate is essentially non-rational and therefore unscientific, but it is a necessity for those thinkers who have unconsciously or deliberately decided not to consider fundamentals. Of these there are even some who openly proclaim their refusal to discuss or admit any metaphysical concept. This kind of attitude, however, can only be upheld by abandoning reason. Reason itself guides us inexorably to the conclusion that there is an ultimate cause, the Cause of causes, beyond this universe of time, space and change; in fact, a Supreme Being.

Another of the basic demands of reason is that diversity cannot exist without a fundamental unity. Whenever the human mind is confronted with diversity, it immediately sets to work to synthesise it into unities, then to synthesise these unities into higher unities and so on until it can go no further. The ultimate result of a rational consideration of diversity is to arrive at a unity of unities, a Supreme Unity, the producer of all diversities, but itself essentially One. Whichever fundamental of reason we select, if we follow its path we are led inevitably to the same goal - belief in God, the Supreme Being.

Besides the conclusion arrived at by purely rational processes, man is led to the belief in God by observation and experience. One of the principal reasons for man's refusal to recognize the existence of God is the intellectual arrogance produced by his appreciation of his own powers of analysis and synthesis, of

harnessing physical forces by his ingenuity, and of constructing complex machines to do his work for him. But pride is caused by concentrating too much attention on one's own virtues and blinding oneself to one's defects. What are the best of man's mechanical inventions but a poor and crude imitation of what already exists in an infinitely finer form in nature? By copying in an elementary fashion some of the functions of the human eye, he has been able to evolve the camera; but what comparison has this machine, made out of lifeless materials, to the living stuff of the eye, and to the refinement, brightness, clarity, flexibility and stability of its vision, its immediate connection with the mind which sifts and appreciates all it sees, all without a complicated system and controls, and directly under the command of the human will? Take any organ of the body and study it - the heart, the brain - and it will immediately be obvious that it is quite outside the scope of man's ability to conceive and fashion such an instrument. The petty imitations of man are attributed to his great cunning, artistry and intelligence. Is it then reasonable, logical or scientific to attribute the infinitely finer and more perfect instruments of nature to such vague and blind energies called by names such as the 'life force', or 'matter in evolution', and leave them undescribed and unexplained? If logic has any validity (and if it has not we had better stop thinking altogether and become animals), the intelligence which conceived and wrought myriads of such delicate and astonishing devices must be infinitely superior to the human intelligence (even the human intelligence is one of its products), and have control of all the materials and workings of the universe. Such an intelligence can only be possessed by a Supreme Being, the Creator, Fashioner and Sustainer of all things.

If we ponder our own place in the world, we find that we (as well as all other beings) are kept in being by a most intimate combination of forces and conditions, which is so delicate that even a small dislocation would cause our total destruction. We live, so to speak, continually on the brink of annihilation, and yet are enabled to carry on our complex existences in comparative immunity. We cannot live, for instance, without daily rest; both the human body and the human mind are constructed to need it. This fact is not in itself surprising, but what is surprising is that the solar system collaborates with us in our human frailty and provides us with a day and a night exactly suited to our needs. Man cannot claim to have compelled or persuaded the solar system to do so; nor can the solar system claim to have modelled human physical and mental energy to conform to its own movements. Both man and the solar system are evidently linked in a total organisation in which man is the beneficiary; the organiser of these inexplicable concordances can only be a Supreme Controller of the universe and mankind. Sweet water is a necessary condition of human existence; it is equally necessary for those plants which produce man's staple foods, which themselves depend on each other. If sea water were to invade our rivers and wells or rain down from the sky, is there any doubt that we should all die of hunger and thirst in a few days and the whole world become an empty desert? Yet sea water is only held back by an invisible barrier over which we have no control, and the sun and the clouds cooperate in order to desalinate our water for us and so give us life. This linkage of interdependence and concurrence could be extended indefinitely by taking examples from the physical world, and to describe it as 'fortuitous' is only begging the question; moreover it is a contradiction in terms. Fortuity is the name for something which does not come within any known system or regulation, an apparently meaningless and haphazard occurrence. To call a system which is a balanced and cohesive organization fortuitous is obviously self-contradictory and fallacious. A 'fortuitous system' is, simply, an absurdity. If we observe carefully we can see that the whole of the universe is interdependent and interlinked and therefore not fortuitous but planned. Belief in God means, precisely, belief in a Planner of the universe.

A basic element in human consciousness - a suprarational element - is a sense of value and purpose in respect to life. Even the worst of men is prevented from becoming completely bestial by this feeling, and in the best of them it dominates their whole existence. The senses of good and evil, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, fitness and unfitness, truth and falsehood are such that however attacked by the missiles of constructive analysis, they remain intact within their intuitional fortress. In all ages and conditions, man has not been able to divest himself of the idea that behind its external effect, every action possesses a quality by which it may be judged and graded in the scale of final values. In addition to the consciousness of the existence of these values, there is the feeling that it is the purpose of man's life to attain those qualities which reflect the highest of them, that not only are they excellent in themselves and worthy of being acquired, but that they must be acquired, and that he has been created to acquire them. The natural sense of qualitative purpose, if allowed to develop freely without the cramps of agnostic prejudice, leads him to the conception of an absolute good and an absolute truth as the ultimate standard of human existence, and from there (for a

quality cannot exist except in a being who is qualified by it) to a being who is the possessor and author of these qualities, the Supreme Purposer.

The decisive vindication of the existence of God is evidential. At various junctures in world history and in widely distant places, certain men have arisen and proclaimed that they have been inspired by God to give His message to mankind. These men were not mad; we have historical records of several of them, including all or part of the message they insisted that they were called to deliver, and it is obvious that they were men who were intellectually and morally highly impressive. They did not come all at once so that we could attribute them to a sort of historical fashion. They came spaced throughout history usually at a time of great moral degeneration. If we examine their message, we find that apart from differences of expression, attributable to the milieu in which they lived, they not only bear remarkable similarities but are basically identical. They have stated that God had conversed with them in some inspirational manner, and had ordered them to proclaim His Existence as the Creator, Maintainer, Controller and eventual Destroyer of the world, to describe His Mercy and Justice, and to warn mankind that it is only by remembering and worshipping Him and following the moral and practical principles that He has laid down for them that they can achieve success and happiness here and hereafter. The last of these prophets was Muhammad of Mecca, who stated that there would be no prophet after him, and it is a demonstrable historical fact that no-one has been able to establish a claim to prophethood since. Now those who discuss or refuse to discuss the existence of God almost invariably rely on rational or anti-rational arguments and rarely, if ever, consider the evidential factor. The two basic elements in human knowledge are, firstly, our own observations and conclusions, and secondly, the evidence of others. Among the branches of knowledge the whole of history, for example, and most of the average man's acquaintance with science, are only known from the evidence of others, unless he himself is a specialist in the subject. When specialists in a certain branch of knowledge continuously assert that a certain thing is a fact, it becomes a necessity for the rest of mankind, who are unable to acquire this knowledge directly, to accept it as such. In the field of direct inspiration from God, and knowledge of His qualities and works, we have the repeated evidence of people in history who have affirmed their apprehension of Him and that they have been charged with conveying His message; not only that, the realities of the divine and spiritual realism as described by these prophets have in various degrees been corroborated and confirmed by the spiritual experiences of an uncounted number of their followers right up to the present day. These corroborators have been the saints and mystics of their various communities. This continuous and widespread evidence of the existence of God, the central and original evidence of prophets, and the derivative and confirmatory evidence of their followers, all based on modes of direct and intuitional perception of His Being, cannot with any reasonability be denied or ignored. To deny or ignore them is patently illogical and unscientific, and against the basic principles of the acquirement and dissemination of human knowledge. In addition to being instinctive, intuitional, and logical, belief in God has irrefutable evidence to prove its verity.

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