

Belief and Proof: Mutually Exclusive?

In the early 1950s my wife, Betty, and I were living in Marseille, France. We once entertained a student from the University of Paris. Before long, our conversation turned to spiritual things. It soon became clear that our young guest recognized neither God nor the hereafter.

“How do we know there is life after death? Has anyone ever returned from there to tell us about it?” he argued.

“Let’s say there would be a knock on our door,” I said. “The man standing there would tell us there *is* life after death, because he had been there and was sent to make us aware of the fact. Would you believe him?”

Without a moment’s hesitation, the young philosophy student replied, “Yes, I would!”

“I wouldn’t,” was my response.

Somewhat chagrined, our friend added, “I guess I wouldn’t, either.”

Abraham, the Old Testament patriarch, told a formerly rich and influential man that if people on earth do not believe what God says in the Bible about life after death, “...*they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead*” (Luke 16:31).

Needlessly and regrettably, many of us are tempted to doubt the goodness (if not the existence) of God, just because so much is wrong either with our personal lives or with the world. But, let’s not make the mistake of doubting his integrity or his existence only because we don’t approve of his personality, plans, policies and practices. When we accuse God of wrongdoing, be it for his actions or for his inaction, we are more than mistaken; *we actually offend him*. (See Job 1:22.)

You might be saying you doubt God’s existence because there is no *proof*. It is doubtful I can provide you with proof that God lives; that is, proof you would readily, if not eagerly, accept. But, equally, it cannot be proved that he *isn’t* real. It seems to me that you and I have only one option: we can *believe* – believe whatever we want, because *all* of us are believers. We can believe he does or doesn’t exist. (I also believe we should at least tolerate – if not respect – each other’s beliefs, even though we may disagree.)

I think belief and proof are not mutually exclusive. Speaking for myself, I can say my belief is not a substitute for proof. Adam and Eve had proof of God’s existence, but proof was not enough. They needed to believe God enough to trust and obey him. To have faith in God is to trust him; to trust God is to live for him unconditionally.

I am a believer because I’m convinced faith is an inseparable, indispensable, irreplaceable part of approaching and interacting with God – proof or no proof. We may think that if we had proof, faith would be superfluous. I don’t think so. Proof of God’s existence comes equipped with faith. There is no such thing as faithless proof of the existence of God. ◇◇