

A Scientist Believes in God

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I am a Ph.D. biochemist. I was raised as a 3rd generation Jewish atheist by my father who was raised as an atheist by his father. I was taught that:

1. Religion was “the opium of the masses,
2. When you died you simply went out like a light,
3. Moses wrote the 10 Commandments,
4. There was right and wrong but no sin,
5. God was a figment of the imagination of weak people who needed a crutch.
6. Science has disproved the existence of God.

The heroes, I was raised on were the great scientists of my Father’s day: Albert Einstein; J. Robert Oppenheimer; Enrico Fermi; Arthur L. Schawlow; Harold C. Urey. I was raised to be a scientist and that’s what I became.

Because of my upbringing, I had been exposed to many arguments against a belief in God. Yet all during the time I was growing up, I felt that something was missing. I felt a void that the radical politics and the promiscuity of the 60’s just made larger. When I was in graduate school, studying for a Ph.D. in biochemistry at Kansas State University, I decided to find out about Transcendental Meditation, the latest fad at the time. I took a walk in the flint hills on the outskirts of Manhattan, Kansas and ended up in a hillside cemetery. It was a beautiful spring day, quiet and peaceful. I sat down on a stone bench and did my breathing exercises. It seemed to me that nothing happened. Then I bent down and picked up a piece of prairie grass, and looked closely at it. It was almost a flower but completely green, intricately wound in a spiral of fibers, culminating in a wispy seed cluster.

Since I was studying DNA, proteins, lipids, and complex carbohydrates, I realized that the laws of nature, the principles of biochemistry, evolution, heredity, DNA, RNA, proteins, cells, culminated in this extraordinary work of art, the secret beauty of a little plant. If this was an “accident of nature” then it was even more of a miracle than if it was a spontaneous creation. And if this little plant was a miracle, how much more miraculous were we. I didn’t realize then how successful that meditation was.

Years later, after I finished my graduate studies and began my research career in earnest, I was walking through the stacks of the library at the University of Houston and I passed by a big black book. It was a large print copy of The Holy Scriptures, translated from the Hebrew Masoretic Text. A Jewish Bible for the visually impaired. How appropriate! I picked it up and in 2 ½ months I read it from cover to cover.

When I came to Isaiah’s Suffering Servant:

1. It was our infirmities that he bore
2. He was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins,
3. Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,

4. Who would have thought any more of him, when he was cut off from the land of the living and assigned a grave among the wicked?

I thought “Isn’t that the story of Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection? What’s that doing in the Jewish bible?”

After I finished the Old Testament, I picked up an English translation of the Latin Vulgate New Testament. Then I encountered Jesus in his Beatitudes:

1. “You have heard, ‘You shall not Kill,’ but I say, don’t even be angry”
2. “Reconcile with anyone who is angry with you before you come to the Temple with your offering”
3. “You have heard, ‘Love your Neighbor,’ I say love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you and tell lies about you.”
4. “If someone strikes you in the face, turn the other cheek.”
5. “If someone takes your coat, give them your tunic as well.”

I was stunned. In the Old Testament, God was so frustrated because people just didn’t get it. Even the Prophets only got little pieces of it. And Jesus got it all. How could anyone know the heart of God except God Himself?

That was the moment I decided to be a Christian. I eagerly read on, everything leading me closer to Jesus. What a comfort it was to have Jesus fill that godless void in my life after all those years of searching and longing.

And then I came to the feeding of the multitude...Jesus said “the bread I will give you is my flesh and if you eat this flesh...,” and the multitude scattered, “Who is this who wants to give us his flesh to eat. This man speaks harshly. We shall no longer follow him.” So Jesus said to his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” “Well some say you are John the Baptist come back from the dead, others say Elijah or one of the Prophets.” “Who do you say that I am?” And Peter said “You are the Messiah, the son of the living God!” “Simon bar Jonah, Henceforth I call you Peter (which means Rock) and upon this “Rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. I give you the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whose sins you loose on earth, I will loose in heaven and whose sins you hold bound on earth I will hold bound in heaven.”

Well, I knew that the Popes were the decedents of Peter, and now I knew that the Catholic Church was established by Jesus Himself. So in 1976, at the age of 30, I became a Roman Catholic Christian believer.