

Why Believe in God

I am convinced that there is a God. It is popular in our culture to mock faith today. Believe in God is portrayed as something without any basis. Atheists will call God an imaginary friend or an invisible sky fairy among other things. The assumption that many hold is that there is no evidence for God. Even believers in God struggle to defend why they believe.

I am convinced, by evidence, logic, and reason, that is a God. I do not choose to believe in God arbitrarily or blindly. Instead, I have found that there is tremendous evidence for God. The evidence is overwhelming and comes from numerous areas. As I look at all the evidence, I struggle to understand how a person could fail to believe in God, but many do. In this, I will share some of my reasons for believing in God and some of the evidence I have encountered.

If God exists, then there is nothing more important in our lives than recognizing this. Our lives on earth are short. Actually, they are infinitesimally short when compared to eternity. A million years, a billion years or a trillion years is still miniscule compared to eternity. If there is a God and our actions in this life have repercussions in eternity, then accepting and acting on this information is by far the most important thing we can do.

Since the Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries, it has been popular to be skeptical of anything that science can't measure, control and explain. For many, it is a requirement that we will only believe in God if we can touch him, measure and quantify him, and prove through scientific methods that he exists. This expectation is illogical. God is outside of creation. It is similar to looking at a building and saying that we will only accept the truth that an architect exists if we can find the architect in the materials of building and scientifically analyze him in the structure. Or, alternatively, can study computer code and find the programmer in the code? Or, if you saw a beautiful painting, would you assume there was no artist that created it if the artist could not be found in the paint? These make no sense. We are never going to find an architect in the steel, concrete, wood and glass of the building, a programmer in the 1s and 0s of computer code, or an artist in the paint of his work. We will see the mind of the architect, programmer or artist in their work. Likewise, we will not find a substance in the matter and energy of the universe that we can identify as God, but we will find evidence for his intellect in his creation.

St. Thomas Aquinas said, "To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible." St. Thomas is not suggesting that there isn't evidence supporting our faith or that finding evidence isn't important. Instead, he is explaining how we need to make a choice to believe the evidence that we have. Ultimately it is our choice to accept or reject that evidence. If you have decided that there isn't a God and that God cannot exist, then you will reject the evidence to the contrary. If that has been your position, I invite you to consider the evidence without a determined bias against the possibility that God exists. If you are willing, ask God to help you believe. What is the

downside to honestly and genuinely asking such a question? If there is no God, such a prayer will go unheard, but if there is God, inviting Him into your life could be the most important thing you ever do.

In this document, we have compiled different pieces of evidence for the existence of God. Some evidence is based on witness testimony, other evidence is based on logical reasoning, and some evidence includes supernatural events that cannot be explained in any other way than the actions of something supernatural. Individually, the arguments are persuasive, and taken together, they present a compelling case. The evidence compiled here is just a small sampling of the evidence for God. There is a lot more, but this provides a good starting for considering whether there is a God. Before we get to the evidence, we need to look at what God is if God exists.

We will look at:

- The Nature of God
- Philosophical Proof
- Scientific Evidence
- Historical Evidence
- Prophecies Fulfilled
- Physical Signs
- Miracles
- Near Death Experiences
- St. Galgano

The Nature of God

If God exists, what is the nature of God? There is a tremendous misunderstanding of what God is. Most people who deny that God exists do not disagree with believers. We don't think that what they deny exists either. What we believe is very different.

God is not a creature in creation. This means that God is not just the biggest, smartest, strongest creature in the universe. God is not a being, but instead is being itself. God is infinite and there is nothing lacking in God. There is an important implication of this. We cannot add anything to God. God doesn't need us (but we need him).

So, why would God create us? The only logical answer is out of love. Love is not attraction or desire. We confuse those with love. Love is a self-gift for the good of the other. In our culture, there is a tremendous amount of use. People use each other for pleasure, power, wealth and honor. We have all been used, and we know how empty being used can be. That's not love. Instead, love is giving of yourself, the complete opposite of use. If God has no need for us and we cannot make God any better or happier, then the only reason He would create us is for our benefit.

God imagined what we could be, loved us and decided to create us. This is very important. Our lives are hard. The Hail Holy Queen prayer, written by Blessed Herman the Cripple who suffered from cerebral palsy and spina bifida in the 11th century, states:

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O merciful, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.

This is a prayer that reflects the hardships of this life. We are in a vale of tears, exiled from heaven. It is also a prayer of hope, because we are not made for earth but for heaven. God wants us to join him and promises to take all our pain away. There is a catch. We need to unite with God. This is incredibly easy and impossibly hard. We need to give up our desires for ourselves and love God and others totally. The more we seek to make ourselves happy, the less satisfied we will be. Instead, the less we seek our own happiness and instead turn toward God and life for Him, the more joy we will have.

We cannot do this on our own. All we can do is surrender to God and let him work through us. We need to trust and love God. That's it. He will do the rest.

There are many people in history that inspire me. One is St. Lawrence. He as a deacon in the early Church, arrested and sentenced to death by being roasted over a gridiron. The Roman slowly cooked him. Lawrence loved God so much and was filled with such joy from that love that he was joyful while having his flesh slowly burned. He preached about Christ as he lay on the iron grill. He laughed, sang and told jokes. At one point, he told his executioners that he was done on one side and it was time to flip him. The pain of being roasted like that had to have been agonizing, but the joy and love for God that Lawrence had was much greater than his pain. The pain couldn't inhibit his joy at all. That is a joy I want, and it is a joy I want for you.

Many in this world suffer from anxiety and depression. I've suffered both for significant periods of my life. What I have found is that both the anxiety and depression lessen when I'm close to God. They don't necessarily go away, but there is a peace and joy that is greater than the anxiety and depression. Now, I can't imagine living apart from God.

The evidence below gives reasons to trust in God. The reward is beyond all the riches of this world, and all we have to do is recognize and live the truth that there is a God who loves us.

Philosophical Proofs

Philosophical proofs use pure reason to prove the existence of God. By using logic alone, we can determine that God must exist. There are more than a dozen philosophical proofs. I have provided just one, the one that resonates strongest with me.

Uncaused cause

This proof offered by St. Thomas Aquinas relies on the law of physics that an object at rest will remain at rest until an outside force acts upon it. Nothing starts moving on its own without a cause. We see this all around us. If we sit a rock in a particular place, it will remain in that place until something moves it. The entire universe is the same. All around us, things are in motion, and prior to their moving, other things

were in motion, collided with them and moved them. It's like a giant complicated set of dominos. We see can see a small section of the line of dominos, with one object acting on the next and that one acting on the next. We see this in everything around us. Every action has a cause.

This sequence of events must have a start. There cannot be an infinite sequence of events backwards in time. To understand why, we need to consider what infinity means. Infinity is something boundless that never ends. It something impossible to achieve. If there was infinite time or an infinite series of events that had happened before now, it would have been impossible to get to now. Why? Anything that happened in the past is a discrete, finite event that happened. Since they are discrete, finite events, we could assign a date to them and write those dates down. For our list, instead of listing every event or even every day, let's list every billion years that has passed. If time was infinite, we could start the list with the last billion years, then the billion years before that, then the billion years before that, and so on. No matter how many periods of a billion years we add to the list, we would have a finite list of time. Before the start of that list, there would still be an infinite list. We could never get to the start because there would be no start. Now, look at it from the other end. There would be a time or an event that was infinitely in the past. With an infinite gap between now and then, it would be impossible to get from there to now.

The implication of this is that the number of past events must be finite. There could be a tremendous number of past events, but they must in total be finite. If there is finite list, then there must be a starting point - a first mover. That first mover must be eternal, meaning it is not bound by time. Why do we know this? If the first mover was bound by time, it would have to be finite and have a start. There must be something did not have a start and has always been to get time and all events started. This first mover is God.

This proof was provided centuries ago when science believed that the universe was static. Today, we know that the universe is in motion, it is expanding, and it had a start. The big bang points to the exact time the first mover moved the universe. Modern science supports the philosophical idea that there was a start to everything. That start to everything is God.

Scientific Evidence

Scientific evidence for God helps us see God's work in the universe around us. There are details of the universe that point to a creator. Today, there is a false belief that science and religion are in opposition to each other. This is a lie. When we look objectively at science, God's fingerprints are all over creation.

Big bang/start of time

The easiest way to see God in creation is from the big bang theory. We know that the universe has a beginning. Science tells us that approximately 13.8 billion years ago, the universe came into being. At that time, the universe was a singularity with all the energy and matter that we see today existed at a single point. In a singularity with everything in a single point, we would have infinite density and time would not pass. Consider that for a minute. There was no time passing. Then the universe exploded, and time started. What started time? This is a perplexing philosophical question. With no time passing, why

would time start? It isn't simply an issue of waiting long enough. There is no waiting. Without time, the same instant would remain. No time means no change, so how did anything start?

Then, in an instant, space, time, energy and matter came into being. Science can't possibly explain this, but this is exactly what we would expect to happen if an eternal God outside of time and space had created the universe from nothing.

Genetic code / genetic entropy

Our genetic code is the most complex program in the universe. Our most sophisticated computer programs cannot begin to rival the complexity of our genetic code. If someone gave you a book, you would know there must be an author that wrote the book by the organization, the plot, sentence structure, spelling, characterization and the other information contained in it. If someone gave you a computer program, you would know there must be a designer that created it. If someone gave you a beautiful painting, you would know that materials could not have randomly composed such a beautiful complex composition. If someone gave you a machine, you would know there must be an engineer that designed it.

Our genetic code is many times more complex than any book, computer program, artwork or machine we could ever create. The information stored in our genetic code is far greater than what random chance could ever give rise to.

Our genetic code is also degrading constantly. This is called genetic entropy. Over time, like everything in the universe, our genetic code is becoming more chaotic. We see this all around us. Each of us, as we get older, experiences our genetic code developing more errors and we exhibit this in all the details of aging. This also happens in species. Genetic entropy is the pattern of genetic codes getting more chaotic and random over time. This chaotic effect should have prevented complex life from developing, and if miraculously a step of increasing complexity had occurred, it should have degraded back into something simpler. Instead, life grew more and more complex. This violates the third law of thermodynamics and the scientific evidence for genetic entropy. Without something directing the origin and development of life, we cannot explain how the complexity of life arose. The thing that caused this to happen is God.

Fine tuning of the universe

The universe is ordered around physical laws. These laws depend on a number of constants that govern how the laws work. Constants govern the strength of gravity, the speed of light, and the mass of an electron. There are around 20 of these constants and the way our universe operates is determined by them.

These constants are not dependent on other things. They just are. This raises the question, could they have other values? Since they are constants and independent, they could have other values. This is where our universe surprises us. If any of the constants was different, by even a small amount, the universe could never have developed so that life could have existed. For example, if gravity was slightly stronger, the universe would have collapsed back on itself long ago. If gravity was slightly weaker, matter would have spread apart without gathering into galaxies, stars and planets.

Let's take an example. The max deviation of the cosmological constant is $1:10^{120}$ to allow a life supporting universe to develop. That is a number so large it is almost impossible to consider, but let's try. There are approximately 10^{50} atoms on earth. Now, that's a huge number, but we're not close to 10^{120} . Let's say that each of those atoms is actually a planet with 10^{50} atoms. That would get to 10^{100} , but we are still 100,000,000,000,000,000,000 times short of 10^{120} . Hopefully, this gives an idea of the fine tuning of the universe for life, but picturing the number of atoms on earth is little tough. Let's consider winning the lottery. Winning the jackpot of the Powerball are 292,201,338 to 1. That is 2.92×10^8 , a miniscule number compared to 10^{120} . Actually, to get a number compared to 10^{120} , we would have to pick all the correct numbers in 14 consecutive Powerball drawings. This is just one of 20 constants. That we exist is practically impossible.¹

This apparent impossibility is easily explained if there is a designer fine tune everything.

The fine tuning of the cosmological constant is impressive, but it is just one of the fine tuned constants. Far more mindboggling is the initial entropy of the universe. Entropy is a measure of the disorder. When the universe started, the initial entropy was extremely low. Had it been higher, life would not have been possible. The odds that the initial entropy was as low as it is have been calculated by Roger Penrose to be 1 in $10^{10^{123}}$. This is a number so large, we can't begin to comprehend it. It's so big, it is impossible to write it out. Written, it would be a 1 followed by more zeros than the number of atoms in the universe. In other words, we can't even write the number. If we made each zero an atom, we would run out of atoms long before we finished writing the number. Actually, the number of atoms in the universe is tiny compared to that number. Scientists estimate that there are 10^{79} atoms in the universe. We would have to multiply that by 10^{44} to write it.^{2 3}

The odds of low entropy are so low as to be practically impossible if there wasn't a super intelligence that designed the universe.

The fine-tuned universe theory posits that we need a designer to explain the highly precise and ordered design of the universe. The main argument against this is the idea of a multiverse. This argument states that if there were enough universes all with random constants, then eventually there would be a universe that matches ours. There are two problems with this argument. First, there is no evidence that there are other universes in existence. In fact, we do not even have the ability to test for other universes. All our scientific observations necessarily occur inside our universe, so it is impossible to ever test for the existence of a universe outside of the one we are in. The idea of a multiverse is entirely unsubstantiated conjecture of the people that thought it up. Second, even if there were other universes, the number required would be beyond comprehension. To explain the entropy level, we have odds of $10^{10^{123}}$ against. The other constants are extremely unlikely as well. That means we need far more

¹Amazing level of fine tuning in the Universe puts God in the picture, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j23EEu0P3m4>

² Teleological Argument and Entropy, <https://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/teleological-argument-and-entropy-faq.htm>

³ From Nothing to Cosmos: God and Science A Comprehensive Look at the Evidence for God, by Fr. Robert Spitzer, https://www.magiscenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FNTC_Study_Guide.pdf

universes than atoms that exist in our universe to have any reasonable chance of a life permitting universe existing. Even if there are other universes, the sheer number required seems highly unlikely.

Historical Evidence

If there is a God, then we should expect to see the influence of that God in history. Looking for God's impact on the world should be easy, but it is important to remember God's ways are not our ways. There are a lot of religions that all claim to be true, but they can't all be true. We are going to look at the truth of just one – Christianity.

In Christianity, it is believed that God is a Trinity of three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three are one God, but also distinct. It is also believed that the second person, the Son, in an effort to reconcile us to Him, became man. That man was Jesus. If God did become man and live among us, we should see evidence for his existence and for his divinity.

The existence of Jesus is easy to confirm. Jesus was known by first century Christian, Jewish and Roman historians. We have their writings and there is universal agreement that Jesus lived, was crucified and died. That part is easy to show with historical evidence. Proving that a man who claimed to be God lived and died two thousand years ago is a good starting point, but it does not prove he was God.

The central claim for Jesus' divinity is that he rose from the dead. That is the key claim of Christianity. If it is true, then Jesus is the Son of God. If untrue, then Christianity is false. The resurrection is essential.

What is our evidence that Jesus rose? We have two groups witness statements. First, the Apostles, Jesus' closest followers, claimed to have witnessed the resurrected Jesus. Second, we also have the Jews of that time claiming the Apostles stole the body. Which should we believe?

It is much easier to believe the Jews, because people don't come back to life after being executed by crucifixion. Should we trust the 1st century Jews, or is it better to trust the Apostles? We have to consider which is more reliable.

The Jews were confronted by Jesus and faced a loss of power if the Apostles became the leaders of the faith. They certainly had a worldly motivation to lie, but that doesn't mean they did.

If we could find a motivation for the Apostles to lie, then it would be reasonable to assume the Apostles were lying and the Jewish leaders were telling the truth. It is easier to believe that the resurrection is a lie than the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. The problem is that the Apostles had no incentive to lie. Let's look at their lives after the resurrection.

The Jews rejected and persecuted the early Christians. This started by casting them out of the synagogue. This meant that choosing to be a Christian would separate the early Christians from their family, friends, business associates and all the other people in their community. The synagogue was central to Jewish culture and to be banned from it would have been terrible. There was a huge social penalty to becoming Christian. From there, they would have been arrested, beaten, and ostracized. It was a huge burden to become Christian.

The Apostles taught and lived the Gospel message that Jesus taught. It calls a person to strict adherence to the 10 commandments, but at a much higher level. This included embracing the beatitudes and the call to be poor in spirit, meek, humble, peaceful, merciful and pure of heart. It included the new commands that those who are angry have committed murder in their hearts and those who are lustful have committed adultery in their hearts. It also included the expectation that they would be persecuted.

Taken together, becoming a Christian meant that you would:

- Be ostracized by friends and family
- Give away any wealth to the poor and embrace poverty
- Avoid all lustful thoughts and avoid all fornication, adultery and other sexual sins
- Accept joyfully any abuse and persecution
- Forgive and show mercy to those who abuse, exploit and harm you
- Give up all power and respect within the society

There was no upside to being Christian if it was false. Every worldly desire, wealth, power, pleasure and honor, was given up when a person converted. They were at the lowest level of society, subject to oppression, torture and death.

The Apostles, who knew Jesus and claimed to have seen Him resurrected, lived these commands. Peter was crucified upside down. Andrew was crucified on an X shaped cross. James the Greater was beheaded. Simon was crucified. Jude clubbed to death. James the Lesser was cast down from the top of the Temple and then clubbed to death. Phillip was crucified upside down. Bartholomew was skinned alive. Matthew was killed while celebrating Mass. Thomas was stabbed to death.⁴

John was the only Apostle to not be killed, but that was not because people didn't try. He was given poison at one time and thrown in boiling oil another. Both times, he survived. He was sent to a penal colony and died there.

If the Apostles had lied about seeing the resurrected Jesus, why did they lie? There was no monetary gain. They were regularly persecuted for their beliefs and knew that they would likely be martyred in horrible ways. Paul writes that if they are wrong about the resurrection then they are most to be pitied. There was no benefit to any of the Apostles to hold on to the claim of the resurrection if they knew it was a lie. Instead, becoming a Christian was a choice for a very hard, painful life of self-denial and sacrifice. If it was a lie, we would expect at least some of the Apostles to admit the lie while being tortured, but none of them did.

It isn't just the witness of the Apostles that we have. Jesus appeared after the resurrection to many people. Paul wrote that there was even a time Jesus appeared to 500 people at once, implying to the people he was writing to that they could go and verify that with the eyewitnesses. It wasn't just the Apostles that were persecuted. The other witnesses died horrible deaths for the belief in the resurrection. Nero liked to use Christians as torches at night, by covering them with pitch and lighting

⁴ <https://catholicism.org/how-did-the-apostles-die.html>

them on fire while still alive. The bronze bull was an execution method where people were slowly roasted to death inside a bronze bull placed over a fire. Entire families were executed in this manner. The tortures of the Romans were severe, but the early witnesses to the resurrection held to their faith.

Now, consider that you were an early Christian and claimed to have seen Jesus resurrected. You have a choice. You and your spouse and children are going to be locked in a bronze statue of a bull. A fire will be lit below the belly of the statue and you will be slowly burned and roasted to death. It would be excruciating. You have a choice, admit that the resurrection is a lie and your family will live or remain steadfast in your belief. This is exactly what happened to St. Eustace, his wife and his sons. Many other Christians suffered similarly. Some saw the resurrection and witnessed to it. Others relied on those examples and then witnessed to their belief by suffering and dying. They choose horrible deaths instead of denying Christ. Over and over, the early Christians were steadfast in their faith no matter how horrendous the torture.

The early Christians who claimed to have seen Jesus rise from the dead are exceptional witnesses. They had no incentive to lie and every incentive to change their testimony, but they didn't.

Prophecies Fulfilled

In addition to historical evidence for Jesus, we should expect to find evidence for God directing historical events in some way. The easiest way to see God's direction would be a prophecy of God that was fulfilled. We have many of those. The prophecies of Jesus are incredible.

We have writings that pre-date Jesus that predict His life, death and resurrection. These are Jewish writings that support Christianity's claims.

Can we trust the prophecies or were they made up after the fact? The most compelling evidence for fulfilled prophecies are from the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in caves in Qumram on the shore above the Dead Sea in the 1940's and 1950's. 981 manuscripts were found and dated between 408 BC and 255 AD. Jesus lived in the early first century (0-33AD), so many of the manuscripts pre-date Jesus. They were not fabricated later.

The writings were held by the Essenes, a Jewish monastic community awaiting the Messiah. The Messiah was predicted to be a leader that would liberate and deliver the Jews. Three prophecies stand out from the scrolls found at Qumram. These come from the prophets Isaiah, Psalms and Daniel.

Multiple copies of the Isaiah scroll were found dating to 351-295 BC, 351-296 BC and 200 BC – 1 AD. Based on these, we can reliably trust that the prophecies of Isaiah about the Messiah existed prior to Jesus.

Isaiah 53 has some of the clearest prophecies for the Messiah. It says that the Messiah will be spurned and avoided, suffering and accustomed to infirmity, stricken and afflicted. It says he will be pierced and receive stripes. The text says he will be oppressed and killed.

This is a very strange prophecy. The great hero and hope for the Jewish people is described as being rejected by the people, scourged (stripes), crucified (pierced) and killed. This is not the type of prophesy that a people looking for hope would be expected to develop, but the dead sea scrolls make it clear that this prophesy existed before Jesus. Jesus fulfilled this prophesy.

The second text that predicts Jesus is from Psalm 22. This manuscript dates around 30-50 AD, but has a style that predates Jesus by several hundred years. Scholars have concluded that the manuscript is a copy of one from a much earlier time. The Psalm is believed to have been written around 1000 BC, but based on the manuscript from Qumran, the earliest scholars can be certain the original text was written is several hundred before Jesus.

Psalm 22, like Isaiah 53, predicts the crucifixion:

Psalm 22:13-16: They open their mouths wide against me, lions tearing prey and roaring. I am poured out like water. All my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me. A company of evildoers have enclosed me. They have pierced my hands and feet.

This prophecy points to the crucifixion of the Messiah with his hands and feet pierced. The earliest known use of crucifixion was in the 6th century BC by the Persians. This means that Psalm 22 predicts the Messiah will be crucified, with his hands and feet pierced, four hundred years before the first crucifixion and a thousand years before the Messiah, Jesus, was crucified.

Finally, the Dead Sea Scrolls include a copy of Daniel dating from 150 BC to 50 AD. This scroll, like the psalm 22 scroll, has a style that indicates it is a copy that predates that date range. The original book of Daniel is believed to have been written in 500-600 BC.

Daniel 9 has a prophesy that states that 490 years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem the Messiah would deliver the people from their sins. The rebuilding of Jerusalem is dated to around 458 BC. That would place the time of the Messiah at 32 AD, almost exactly when Jesus was crucified. The Jews knew this prophesy and were awaiting the Messiah at the time of Jesus.

We have two different writings from before Jesus that predict that the Messiah and Savior of the Jews would be crucified and a third writing that gives the time period when this would happen. The prophecies of the Messiah are not what one would expect. For an oppressed people looking for their salvation, it would be reasonable to expect prophecies of a strong, powerful hero who would conquer all. At the least, we would expect a hero that would be widely accepted and honored. Instead, the prophecies point to someone who will be rejected, tortured, oppressed, crucified and killed by the people that the Messiah was sent to help.

Marian Signs

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the mother of Jesus. She played a unique role in our salvation, since she was the one that said yes to the angel when asked if she would give birth to the Messiah. She was

responsible for raising Jesus, and at the cross, Jesus gave Mary to us to be our mother as well. Since then, Mary has worked to help her children. Over the centuries, she has appeared to numerous people. We will look at a few of these signs.

Fatima

The apparitions of Fatima are one of the greatest modern miracles that points to the truth of Christianity. In 1917, during World War I, Mary appeared to 3 children in Fatima, Portugal. Each month on the 13th day from May to October, Mary appeared and gave a message to the children.

The apparitions of Fatima included several miraculous predictions that were fulfilled. These have no explanation except for divine action.

One of the messages of Fatima was that Russia needed to be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. If the Church did not do that, then Russia would spread her errors through the world. Unfortunately, the Church did not take any action to consecrate Russia. At the time of this prediction, Russia was Holy Mother Russia, a devote Catholic country and ruled by the Czars. The prediction was made to peasant children in Portugal in summer of 1917. It is a bizarre prediction for peasant children to be concerned with Russia, and more bizarre that they were predicting that a devote Catholic country would spread errors that would impact the world. Later that year, the Russian Revolution would transform the country into a communistic, atheist nation. Russia has spread her errors throughout the world and the consequences have been severe.

Interestingly, it was Pope St. John Paul II who finally consecrated Russia to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. He completed that on March 25, 1984 at the height of the arms race. The transformation in Russia immediately following the consecration was tremendous. In 1984, hardliners in the Soviet Union were secretly planning an attack on Western Europe. On May 13th of 1985, the anniversary of the first Fatima Apparition, an explosion at the Severomorsk Naval Base destroyed two thirds of the missiles stockpiled for the Northern Fleet. This crippled the Soviet military and made an attack on Western Europe impossible. Later that year, the mastermind for the attack plans died. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party and began a policy of Glasnost. By 1989, the Soviet Union was in chaos and the Berlin Wall fell. In 1991, the Soviet Union was dissolved.⁵ All this happened very quickly after the Pope consecrated Russia as requested by Our Lady.

The Fatima apparitions occurred during WWI. Mary predicted that if we did not heed her warnings, a worse war would come. This prediction said that there would be a warning light and the war would begin during the pontificate of Pius XI. On January 28, 1938, a geomagnetic storm caused an aurora, the Northern Lights, to be seen across the Northern Hemisphere on a widespread basis.⁶ The aurora appeared much farther south than is normal and was reported widely as an extraordinary event.

The predication of the worse war was made in the middle of WWI in 1917. The children had predicted the pope that would be in place for the start of that war. That pope, Pius XI, didn't become pope until

⁵ <https://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/fatimaconsecration.htm>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_1938_geomagnetic_storm

February 6, 1922, more than 4 years after the apparitions and the prophecy. The children had no way of knowing the name of the future pope, but got this prediction right. Pius XI remained pope until he died on February 10, 1939 after the start of WWII. Japan and Italy were engaged in war by 1935 and Germany invaded Austria in 1938. The prediction from Fatima for WWII seems rock solid.

These predictions are interesting and persuasive but can't compare to the miracle of the sun. Mary promised that her last apparition to the children on October 13, 1917 would be accompanied by a miracle that many would see. On that date, 70,000 people came out to see what would happen. Reporters from numerous newspapers were there, along with a number of atheists that went with the intention of testifying that no miracle happened.

On that day, there was rain all morning. Then, at noon, everything dried instantly – the ground and all the people that had been soaked became completely dry. The children saw Mary with Joseph and Jesus, but the people assembled did not. At the conclusion of the apparition, the sun began to change. People described the sun spinning, changing color, moving across the sky and plunging to earth. It was a terrifying experience that Catholics and atheists alike witnessed and testified to what they saw. Reporters wrote what they saw.

The explanation of non-believers is that the miracle was either a lie or a mass hallucination. Neither of these is credible. There were many people there with the intention to refute any claims of a miraculous event, and those skeptics testified to seeing the phenomena. The idea that 70,000 people, including skeptics, all lied is not credible. The idea that this was a mass hallucination is also not a realistic explanation. Mass groups of people do not spontaneously hallucinate the same thing. Drugs can induce a group of people to have visions at the same time, but they don't see the same vision. Each is unique. Plus, the sheer number of people, seventy-thousand, makes a hallucination an impossible explanation. If that isn't enough, there were people who didn't go to the site that day but still saw the miracle from miles away.

Egypt

Mary appeared to approximately one million Egyptians between 1968 and 1971. The apparitions occurred on the roof of St. Mary's Church in Zeitoun outside Cairo.

The apparitions typically lasted a few minutes, but some lasted hours. There was great interest in these apparitions and people would flock to the site when Mary would appear. Newspapers sent reporters and photographers to the site and those images are available.

Perhaps the most famous witness was Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein, the President of Egypt and a Sunni Muslim. Nasser had heard about the apparitions and wanted to view it. When an apparition occurred, he went to the site, saw it and believed it to be authentic.⁷ The Egyptian Muslims, including Nasser, have no incentive to lie in their testimony that Mary appeared at Coptic Catholic Church.

⁷ <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2017/04/26/our-lady-of-zeitoun-and-christianity-in-egypt/>

Physical Signs

The Marian apparitions are impressive, but even more impressive are the physical signs left after some apparitions. We will look at two of these physical signs that any person can go visit.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Guadalupe refers to visions that Juan Diego, a poor peasant, had of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1531. In Mexico in the 1531, Spanish missionaries were having trouble converting people and Juan Diego was one of the very few converts.

Mary appeared to Juan Diego and asked that Church be built on a hill. Juan Diego took this request to the local bishop, and the bishop said he would consider the request but would not proceed at that time with a new Church.

Juan Diego explained this to Mary in another vision and Mary took his tilma (a cactus fiber cloak) and wrapped it around a bundle of roses that she picked and gave to Juan Diego. It was winter and nothing was in bloom except for one small rose bush on the hill. The roses were a type native to Spain and were not found in Mexico at that time.

When Juan Diego went to see the bishop with the roses, he opened his tilma and the roses spilled out. On the tilma was an image of Mary.⁸

The image changed the evangelization in Mexico. Over the next ten years, virtually the entire country was converted. After having almost no success for more than a decade, they converted on average 3,000 people a day for the next ten years. That alone was miraculous.

The tilma is housed in the Church that was built on the site of the apparition. Cactus fiber cloaks are common but typically last only a few years. People have tried to reproduce the tilma and the reproductions disintegrate within 10-20 years. Juan Diego's tilma has lasted nearly 500 years in the hot humid climate near Mexico City.

Scientific analyses with infrared photography have shown that the paint exists in one continuous surface and no brush strokes can be found. This means the paint, with all the different colors, was applied in one continuous layer. No one has been able to explain how this could have been done nearly 500 years ago, and no artist today can duplicate it.

Even more amazing is what the tilma has endured. In 1785, a worker accidentally spilled acid on the tilma while cleaning the case. An area of the tilma was eaten away. Over the next 30 days, the tilma healed itself. No explanation exists for how this occurred, but the damage is almost entirely gone.

In 1921, anti-Catholics detonated a bomb, with 29 sticks of dynamite, inside the church directly in front of the tilma. A large cast iron crucifix was horribly bent and mangled by the explosion, the stone floor was severely damaged and cracked, a marble altar rail destroyed, and windows were shattered 150 feet

⁸ <https://www.catholic.org/about/guadalupe.php>

away. The tilma, immediately in front of the explosion, was unharmed and the glass case was completely undamaged.⁹

The image on the tilma has a reflected image in the eyes of Mary. This image in the eyes can only be seen with 2,500x magnification and was only discovered in modern times. The image, in both eyes, shows what appears to be man resembling the Bishop standing before Juan Diego with the tilma. The image corresponds to the curvature of the eye. This image is identical in both eyes and is far too small to have been painted.¹⁰

If God did not send Mary to provide this image, there is no explanation for how this could have come to be.

Our Lady of Las Lajas

The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a mother, Maria, and her daughter, Rosa, in Columbia in 1754. Maria kept the apparition a secret initially, but when Rosa died, she took the body to the site of the apparition. Mary answered Maria's prayers and raised Rosa from the dead. After taking Rosa home, the townspeople who had seen Rosa die wanted to know how the girl came to be alive. Maria took them to the site of the apparitions and resurrection.

They found on the wall of the cave a beautiful image of Mary with St. Francis and St. Dominic. The image is beautiful and very detailed.

The people of the area venerated the image, and some wanted a piece of the rock to take home. Over time, people chipped away at the stone image to take small pieces with them. Miraculously, no matter how many times this happened, the image was always left intact. Every fleck of stone removed revealed the same image. The image throughout the stone.

In the 20th century, German geologists studied the stone wall. They found no paint or dye. The composition of the stone is such that all the colors of the image are the natural colors of the stone. This astounded the scientists, so they used a core drill to see how deep the image goes. They found the image extends unchanged several feet into the rock.¹¹

How did a large stone form naturally, with a mineral distribution that created a large highly detailed, intricate image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Francis and St. Dominic? Even more amazing, the image is consistent for several feet into the rock without variation. The odds that a random distribution of minerals could form a large complex image defy comprehension, and the fact that this image is consistent at least three feet into the rock is mindboggling. If this isn't a miraculous creation of God, then it is a complete impossibility. There is no scientific explanation for how this could have come to be. Despite that, the rock exists and can be seen at the church built around it in Columbia.

⁹ <https://cruxnow.com/faith/2014/12/12/four-awesome-facts-about-our-lady-of-guadalupe/>

¹⁰ <https://www.magiscenter.com/the-science-or-lack-thereof-behind-juan-diegos-tilma/>

¹¹ <https://www.myconsecration.org/about-the-miraculous-image-of-our-lady-of-las-lajas/>

This image is a beautiful, complex piece of art. Where is the artist that created this image? The artwork is comprised of minerals deposited in a specific pattern. Naturally, this couldn't occur. It has to be supernatural.

Miracles

Scripture records that Jesus and the Apostles performed many miracles. The works provided a reason for the early Christians to believe. Although these are recorded in Scripture, and we have the history of the Church growing through terrible persecution as evidence, we cannot objectively verify the miracles today. All the people who were healed then have long since died. If those miracles are true, we should see miracles today. We do. There are miracles where the evidence and testimony can be examined today and points to supernatural action.

Wall of Miracles

There are a number of Catholic shrines around the world known for miracles. At these locations, people experience spiritual healing and physical healing. One testimony of the miracles is the abundance of crutches and other medical devices left behind because the healing rendered these aids unnecessary.

One location where we can see a wall of miracles today is in Montreal. St. Andre Bassette is estimated to have performed 10,000 miracles during his. Each of these was a person who was cured by God when St. Andre prayed for them. There is a wall of hundreds of crutches left by people who no longer needed them after being cured.¹²

The Blue Nun

In the 17th century, Sister Maria, a Franciscan religious sister in Spain, had a larger number of mystical experiences including bilocating to the American Southwest. This involved entering a trance and traveling spiritually to Indian villages in New Mexico. She took rosaries with her and gave them out, healed the sick and taught the people about Christ. She was very effective and converted large numbers of people before the Spanish traveled to these villages.

Sister Maria told her superiors about her visits. Word spread of her experiences and eventually the story got to the Pope and the Spanish Inquisition. They wanted to investigate the nun's claim of bilocation to another continent. They sent word to the Bishop of Mexico City to investigate. In 1628, the bishop sent missionaries to New Mexico to area the sister in Spain had claimed to have visited. When they reached the tribes that Sr. Maria had described, the people told of blue nun matching the description of Sr. Maria with her blue habit. They explained that she had taught them about the faith, and they wished to be baptized. When one of the missionaries returned to Spain, he confirmed the claims of Sr. Maria. Sr. Maria met the priest and told him in detail and with complete accuracy about his visit with the Indians.¹³

¹² <https://aleteia.org/2019/01/07/according-to-estimates-st-andre-bessette-cured-over-10000-people-in-his-lifetime/>

¹³ <https://www.desertusa.com/desert-people/lady-in-blue.html>

No natural explanation can show how the sister knew of the tribes in New Mexico, how the tribes knew of St. Maria and learned the faith, or how Sr. Maria knew exact details of people and events when the missionaries were at the villages. Sr. Maria's cause for canonization is in process.

St. Vincent Ferrer

St. Vincent Ferrer was a great preacher and miracle worker. When his cause for canonization was started, the Vatican investigated 800 reported miracles and stopped looking at that point. The miracles were spectacular with over 40 people raised from the dead and many healings from incurable conditions.

One of the more unusual miracles was how Vincent saved the life of a man who was falling to his death. Shortly after being ordained a priest, Vincent was giving a homily. The area of Spain was experiencing a famine. In the middle of his homily, Vincent stopped abruptly, waited for a moment and then told the people not to fear. He said two ships were going to arrive that night filled with grain. It was at a time of year when ships didn't sail in the Atlantic due to storms, so having grain ships arrive was extremely unlikely. Vincent's superior was extremely angry with him because he expected that the prophecy would fail, and the church would look bad. Instead, Vincent was right, and the ships arrived exactly as he had said. The superior was now worried that Vincent would be filled with pride and would try to work more miracles. He forbade Vincent from doing any miracles or prophecies that would draw attention to himself. A few weeks later, Vincent was walking past a construction site. A worker fell from several stories up and cried out "Brother Vincent help me". Vincent didn't want to work a miracle without permission, so he commanded the man to stop and went to get permission from his superior to save him. The man hung in mid-air while Vincent went to see his superior. When Vincent explained what happened to the superior, the superior gave permission to save him and said a crowd had likely gathered so he better hurry. The superior went with him and found the man hanging in the air where Vincent had left him with a large crowd gathered. Vincent told him to come down and he slowly descended unharmed.

Vincent performed miracles on a daily basis for several decades. There were days when he healed hundreds of people of the worst infirmities until he was completely exhausted. Then, he would travel to another town and do it all again. Vincent's gift of healing allowed him to convert hundreds of thousands of people. At a time when the Church was in decline, people were leaving and the society was in rapid moral decline, Vincent's work reversed the trend throughout Europe. He preached across Europe in his own language, but everyone who heard him, could hear him in his own native language.

Lourdes – Alexis Carrel

Alexis Carrel was an atheist physician that developed techniques for suturing blood vessels. His work earned him a Nobel Prize.

In 1902, he decided to visit Lourdes to disprove scientifically the reports of healing miracles. On the train, he saw a woman with severe tuberculous peritonitis. Carrel knew that it was a fatal condition and tried to ease her suffering with morphine. He warned that she would not survive the trip and told her care givers not to move her because she could not survive it. They refused and took her to the water of

the spring of Lourdes after arriving and poured it over her. Carrel watched as she initially experienced terrible pain, but then her condition immediately improved. He saw her swelled belly recede to normal before his eyes. By evening, she was well and eating dinner.

Carrel was rocked by this event. He knew that what he witnessed was impossible, but he documented everything he saw in detail. Carrel had been convinced that atheism was true and relied on science to explain everything. It took 25 years of wrestling with an undeniable miracle for Alexis to accept the existence of God, but he did exactly that in 1939.¹⁴

Gemma Di Giorgi

Padre Pio was a Capuchin priest in Italy in the twentieth century, and he was a miracle worker. He healed numerous people and performed other miracles. One of the most amazing involved a girl (Gemma) born blind. The girl's eyes did not have pupils and it was impossible for her to see. It was also impossible for any surgery or other medical treatment to heal her.

Padre Pio appeared in a dream to a nun that was praying for young Gemma. He promised to pray for her. The family decided to take Gemma to visit Padre Pio. Gemma was 7 and Padre Pio immediately recognized her despite having never met her or her family. Padre Pio blessed Gemma's eyes. Gemma was healed and gained her sight. The most amazing thing about this is that Gemma still did not have pupils. She can see but science cannot explain how. Her eyes should not function without pupils¹⁵.

Near Death Experiences

Near Death Experiences (NDE's) provide evidence that we have a soul, that there is life after death and that there is a God. These experiences are difficult to assess, but there is objective scientific research on them. One of the most persuasive arguments from NDE's for the soul and for God are the documented cases where a person receives information during an NDE that would be impossible for them to possess naturally.

One example of this was of a woman who described a shoe in exact detail on the third-floor ledge of the hospital she was in. The woman had been a patient in hospital but in another part away from the shoe. It was impossible for her to have physically seen the shoe. To verify the description, a psychologist in the hospital had to crawl along the ledge to the location of the shoe. The description came from a patient perfectly matched what was found, including the color, style, orientation, wear on parts of the shoe and even the way the laces were oriented.¹⁶

Personal Experience

Up to now, all the proofs, evidence and reasons for believing in God come from sources external to the author. Now, I would like to share a few experiences where I encountered God. Personal evidence is

¹⁴ <https://churchpop.com/2015/12/25/agnostic-scientist-converted-miracle-lourdes/>

¹⁵ <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2vgs4w>

¹⁶ <https://www.magiscenter.com/credible-near-death-experience-stories/>

important because our God is a personal God who seeks to be in relationship with us. We need to recognize God in our lives. God is not distant and obscure, but close and intimate.

Intimacy with God is our greatest desire, but we often confuse this desire with poor imitations. For example, we desire the beauty of God, but we often settle for the beauty of art, nature or other people. These are good, but they point to God who is beauty. We desire truth, and find joy in learning. This has at the core a desire to know God show is Truth, but we confuse it with learning about truth about any subject. We are made to be joyful, but confuse that with finite temporarily pleasures. All of these point to God, but need to keep going passed them to God.

In my life, I drifted away from the Church. I always considered myself Catholic but was “Catholic in name only” for many years. During that time, I sought to direct my life and make myself happy by my own pursuits. There were temporary times when I was happy. God’s creation is wonderful and amazing. It can provide many sources of happiness and pleasure, but none of the will satisfy this. I found this to be true.

I had a business that began to failure during the recession in 2008. Laying off my employees was the hardest thing I’ve ever done. All I could see was failure in my life and it was wrecking my marriage and family. I was in total despair. Finally, on June 17th, 2009, after more than a year of anxiety, depression, despair and constant feelings of suicide, I broke down and gave up. I got on my knees and cried out to God to help me. I explained to God I had always had a plan for my life , but my plan had failed dismally. I would try God’s plan. I promised to follow God. I thought that no matter what His plan was, it couldn’t be worse than might. That’s far from great faith, but it was where I was.

After that prayer I got up from knees and sat at my desk. Nothing felt different, and I had no idea what to do. In that moment, my anxiety was great. I truly didn’t know what to do. I got the idea that I needed a role model to follow so I googled Saint of the Day. The saint that popped up was St. Emily. I read her bio and nothing in it fit me. St. Emily lived in 18th century France, she was religious sister, she founded a religious order, and her order opened school for peasant children. Nothing in that fit my background. As a married man with a daughter, the plan of becoming a nun who starts school for peasant children in rural France was a good game plane. I began to get angry. I was desperate for something from, and St. Emily appeared to be a dead end. I reread the bio, with my anger growing (I had no right to be angry with God – I had turned away from 15 years before, so I had no right to expect His help, but I did anyway). Then I saw it. I quickly googled my elementary school and realized St. Emily had founded order that started my school. In an instant, I knew God was telling me that He wasn’t just going to help me know, but had been putting people in my life for centuries to help me. I decided to trust God. I’ve never been the same.

A few years later, I was with my family at my in-laws. My mother-in-law was dying. This was her forth bout with cancer. For days, my mother-in-law could barely move. She couldn’t lift her head and needed assistance to roll over. She hadn’t been able to swallow food or water for more than a day and had fallen into a comma. We were told she had less than a day to live. I had some holy water from Lourdes, where Alex Carroll witnessed and documented a miraculous healing. My daughter got it and brought to

me asking what we could do. Despite my trust in God, I didn't expect a miracle, but wanted to offer as many prayers as we could. I instructed my daughter to say, "God, please bless grandma in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit" and she traced the sign of the cross on her forehead with the holy water. Instantly, my mother-in-law opened her eyes, sat up and called my wife's name. My wife ran over, knelt by her bed and hold her mom's hand. He mother looked at her and said, "I love you". She then laid back down, closed her eyes and never opened them again. A few hours later, she died. It was a miraculous moment that gave my wife one final opportunity to hear her mother tell her she loved her.

In 2016, I was at a Steubenville conference, and during the Saturday Mass, the entrance hymn was Hail Holy Queen, a favorite of mine. At the end of the first line, I felt God's love overwhelm me. I had never felt God's presence or His love before. The feeling was overwhelming, and I started to cry for the first time in more than 30 years. The feeling of love was so strong, it scared me and pushed it away. God, respectfully, withdrew. I felt such a loss and invited God back, and He returned. Fear then took over again and I pushed back. This went back and forth, with God sharing His love and my desperately wanting it, but also feeling fear because it was so more intense than anything I have every felt. When the song ended, so did the experience.

Another time, I had interviewed for a job with our diocese. The job appeared perfect to me and I was very excited. The interviews seemed to go well and I left extremely excited. Two days later, I went to Eucharistic Adoration and prayed for God's will to be done in this. As I prayed, God gave me a sense that the job would very good and God showed me some of the good things that would come from. It then became clear that I wasn't going to get the job. Instead, God showed me another path that was even better, and then God gave me the sense that He wasn't going to do that. Then another path, even better than the last, and the feeling that I wasn't going get that. There were probably three or four more future paths that God showed me that were outstanding, but I would get those either. At the end, God simply left me with the idea that He has something even better than all of those, but I needed to trust Him.

A few years ago, I went to my Cursillo weekend. I was seeking to encounter God more personally. On the first night, I was walking back to my cabin contemplating the evening. I then heard God speak. This is the only time in my life I've ever heard God auditorily, but the voice was loud and clear: "Why are you looking for me here?" I was shocked, thinking, "of course I'm looking for you, that what I'm supposed to do isn't it?" Then, as I tried to understand the words spoken to me, I heard, "I am already with you always." In that moment, I imagined my home with my family. This gave me such peace for the rest of the weekend retreat. I knew God was already with me. I didn't need to find Him.

I have learned to trust in God. In 2008 and 2009, I was an alcoholic, but with the collapse of my business, we were broke. I decided to stop drinking, cold turkey, one day. I prayed to God to help and trusted he would. That was it. I didn't have another drink again from months, and when I drank again, I was able to moderate my drinking, something had been impossible before. This was not by my strength. For my part, it was easy. I simply stopped. That is only possible through God's grace. God also helped lessen my depression and anxiety.

These are just a few times when I have personally encountered God. I have come to expect God to be at work at every moment of my life. This doesn't mean I expect every moment to be fun or peaceful. There are hardships and trials. As difficult as they are, there is good that comes from them, and I trust that God will always give me the grace I need to persevere in following Him.

St. Galgano

Galgano was a knight and a nobleman in the 12th century. He was very obnoxious, abusive and took advantage of people. Since he was nobleman and a knight, he could do what he wanted without consequences, and he took advantage of his situation. He was addicted to many things - alcohol, womanizing and superiority over everyone. He was on a path to hell.

St. Michael appeared to him in a dream and told him to reform. He woke up scared of hell, but didn't change anything in his life. A week or two later, St. Michael appeared to him again, but this time while Galgano was awake and riding his horse down a road. The Archangel told Galgano he had to reform, or he would go to hell. Galgano doubted he could change and pulled out his sword. He said it would be easier for him to drive his sword into a stone than it would be to give up his life of comfort and pleasure. To make the point, he drove his sword at a large rock. Galgano expected the sword point to bounce off the stone. Instead, the sword slid into the rock like butter and embedded itself deeply in the rock. Galgano realized it wasn't up to his strength to change, but his reliance on God could do anything. That moment, he completely changed and led a life of holiness from then on. He died months later. Despite the bulk of his life being a horrible sinful mess, we trust that God accepted his repentance and led him into heaven. The sword is still in the stone today and you can visit it in Italy¹⁷. Have confidence in God and let his strength carry us. We are not strong enough, but with his grace, nothing is impossible.

These are just a few of the reasons to believe in God. Individually, each is persuasive, and taken together, they make a compelling case. There are many more reasons. With all the evidence for God, it is reasonable and logical to believe in God.

Once we recognize that God exists and is active in our lives, we have a choice: Follow God or Reject God. God made us for eternal joy. Rejecting that means we will suffer eternal misery. The choice should be clear and easy, but we often choose poorly. How many times do we choose something we know isn't good for us? When it comes to God, there is no choice worse than rejecting the author of life and the One who promises eternal joy.

If you are just considering that God may exist, or if you are struggling in your faith, the words of a father to Jesus in the Gospel are a great prayer, "I believe, help my unbelief." That or another prayer asking for faith. God will help with the rest.

¹⁷ https://www.traditioninaction.org/religious/h141_Galgano.htm

Other Information

This document was first published in a pdf in 2019 and shared privately, and based on the response, was added to the website EucharisticVirtue.com in 2020. This site is dedicated to the Eucharist and to developing Virtue.

Copyright 2020 - This document may be reproduced (electronically or in print) for individual and parish use provided it is distributed free of charge and this notice is not removed. Printing, electronic distribution or other distribution for fee is prohibited without the expressed written permission of the author. Use the contact form on EucharisticVirtue.com to contact the author.