

Creator's work an invitation to seek evidence of his existence

“**B**EYOND reasonable doubt” is a sound principle for juries to use in deciding guilt or innocence. In other areas of life, however, we often have to decide things before we can be sure. For example, we often give people “the benefit of the doubt” in building a friendship. A degree of trust is needed first and confidence in the friend comes only later.

In other cases, many people want 100% proof in advance. The kind of question would seem to dictate how it is reasonable to proceed. Take the “God Question”. The philosopher Bertrand Russell once said that if he ever met God he would justify his atheism on the grounds there was “not enough evidence”. Most people are not sure enough to opt for atheism but they still wonder why God, if he exists, does not provide the evidence that would remove any doubt. In the

absence of compelling evidence, is the only reasonable option to remain agnostic?

The problem with evidence is that it needs to be interpreted. Physics, for example,

provides evidence suggesting that the universe has a mind behind it. Many things seem to be exquisitely finely tuned for life and mankind to exist. After the “Big Bang” that started the universe off, galaxies and stars would never have formed if gravity had been a tiny bit weaker.

On the other hand, if it had been a tiny bit stronger, all the stars would have collapsed under their own weight so quickly there would have been no time for life to evolve. If the nuclear forces inside atoms had also been a fraction stronger or weaker, then the elements carbon and oxygen necessary for life would not have formed. The remarkable coincidences in nuclear physics led the atheist astronomer Fred Hoyle to comment that “it looks like someone had been ‘monkeying’ with the physics”.

There is a long list of “coincidences” that appears to point to a cosmic designer. The evidence does not add up to proof, but this circumstantial evidence points to a Creator. An alternative idea is that

There has been much talk about “reasonable doubt” of late. Nuclear physicist **Paul Ewart** discusses the notion in relation to the “God Question”.

universes and we just happen to be in the one where all these lucky cards or coincidences came up. The idea is logical, but that doesn’t make it plausible. Many physicists dislike this idea since it can’t ever be proved and it may not even be “science”. In any case, a “multiverse” doesn’t rule out a Creator, it just makes him/her even greater! It looks as if the evidence won’t give us definite proof either way. Things seem to be fine tuned to leave the question of God open — could there be a reason for this?

No matter how suggestive the evidence may be, it is always possible, if we have the mindset, to put it down to coincidence. Albert Einstein once

resurrection. There is the Bible’s diagnosis of human sin as the cause of evil in the world and the proven efficacy of God’s remedy of forgiveness and power to change people from the inside out. The “eye-witness” testimony of millions of men, women and children who have experienced God in their lives is genuine evidence that can be separated from the evils and corruptions of organised religion. The evidence may be all around us — we just need to look.

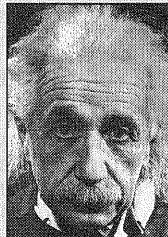
The agnostic position, sitting on the fence, is reasonable for many questions. The meaning and purpose of our lives, however, is not one of

them. One day the fence will disappear. We may find we decided that God wasn’t important enough to us to take the first step towards knowing him.



“It looks like someone had been ‘monkeying’ with the physics”

— Fred Hoyle



“Coincidence is God’s way of remaining anonymous”

— Albert Einstein

said that “Coincidence is God’s way of remaining anonymous”. Jesus was tempted to perform miracles that would compel belief in him as God’s Messiah. He resisted this temptation and was sparing with his show of divine power. He understood human nature well enough to say that even if someone were to come back from the dead, some people would still not believe.

It seems the God Jesus reveals to us won’t overpower our doubts because he is interested in another type of question. That question is more about having a relationship with him than deciding if he exists. An overwhelming show of “evidence” would change for ever the nature of our response to him. So he leaves us room for doubt, room to make a free choice.

Evidence exists. Beyond the remarkable “coincidences” in the universe, there is, for example, the almost universal human sense of a spiritual and moral dimension to our existence. There is the historical

According to the chemist-turned-social philosopher, Michael Polanyi, knowledge requires a degree of personal commitment if it is to become effective. Reason itself will tell us when we need to make a move to find out if something is true.

Talking to the philosophers and debaters of Athens about their “unknown god”, St Paul gave a clue to why there is no certain proof of God’s existence, “God did this... so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” Acts 17:26,27.

It’s the nature of any relationship that confidence, and even a kind of certainty, comes only after commitment not before. Getting beyond “reasonable doubt” needs a step of faith — but it’s a reasonable thing to do.

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