

Why I Believe in God By Uri Brito

Welcome to our first episode of Through New Eyes. My name is Uri Brito, pastor of Providence Church in Pensacola, Fl.

On this first episode, I would like to make a case for why I believe in God. This is mainly addressed to atheists, but it will also set a foundation for the guiding principles of my thinking.

Let me begin by making a few observations:

First, I know full well that atheists listening to this are not prone to changing their convictions and embracing the God of Scriptures.

Second, the Bible tells us that God is the one who draws men unto himself (John 6:44).

Third, what I present as a case for believing in God is my own testimony to the grace of God.

Finally, I have not heard all arguments against the existence of God, and even if I had (an impossibility) I would still not be persuaded to believe otherwise.

The genesis of the episode came after my reading of Van Til's classic article: *Why I Believe in God*. It is in that tradition of reasoning and apologetic that I find myself situated. I will also quote from him and follow his model of presentation, which began in childhood and concluded in his adulthood.

Infant Faith¹

I had the distinct joy of being born into a Christian family. God was gracious to place me in such a home (Acts 17:26). It was there where my father, who happened to be a minister, trained me in righteousness. He was imperfect, as all fathers are, but the gospel was proclaimed daily in my life. "I was conditioned to believe in God," as Van Til would say. God was a part of my day to day and part of my Lord's Day. I worshiped as a child and continued to worship as a young boy. Yes, Christian religious training was poured down my throat, whether my parents understood what they were doing or not. The nurture they provided (Ephesians 6) was sufficient to establish a foundation for later years.

Early Schooling

I was born in Brazil. I was born in a part of the country that was struck by poverty. Poverty was all around me. It is possible that an atheist may raise the question: Where is your God now amidst all this poverty? My answer is that He was right in the midst of it. You see, God does not reserve His presence only for the rich and prosperous. Where the poor sinner is, God is there also.

My early schooling was in the public educational system of northeastern Brazil. It was devoid of distinctly biblical education, though there was a lot more liberty to speak of religious things, in light of Brazil's large Roman Catholic population.² However, religious observations were scattered in a sea of mysticism and nominal Christianity. Yet, my joy was full. When I played soccer after school, I knew God existed. I never doubted for a moment. When school was over and I came home on Wednesday nights, I knew that it was time for prayer meeting. What did we do? We prayed. We prayed fervently. We prayed without much order, but we prayed. It reminds me of Paul's words in Romans 8: "26 Likewise the Spirit

¹ As a reference, read Paedofaith by Rich Lusk <http://www.athanasiuspress.org/inventory.html?catid=10>

² See <http://countrystudies.us/brazil/42.htm>

helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”³

It was in those days when my father baptized me. Baptism is very important in Christian teaching. We often say that when you begin to walk away from the words of Christ, we should be dragged back by the hairs of our baptisms; and this happened over and over in my own life.

My education both at home and at school, though contradictory at times, was sufficient to mature my faith. Did I grow as a Christian as quickly as I would have liked? No, but I grew nevertheless. An atheist may find this statement non-sensical, but as Christians we like to talk about maturity in the faith; a little growth is still growth.

If you are an atheist who grew up in the Western World, I am sure that Christianity is not a foreign concept. If you are European, the names John Calvin and Martin Luther are ingrained in your history, though these days Europe is proud of its rejection of God. If you grew up in this country, you have heard of certain American forefathers, who though imperfect, believed in the God of the Bible. The reality is we were both born under the influence of “Christian Civilization.” So let me make this point clear, when I speak of faith in God, I am not referring to some abstract philosophical higher Being or the god of Islam or the god of Judaism. I am speaking of the Triune God of the Bible. As Van Til observes: “...surely there is no sense in talking about the existence of God, without knowing what kind of God it is who may or may not exist.”⁴

I must confess that I was tempted in those early days. I was tempted to do that, which the Bible considers to be sinful. What is a sin? A sin is any lack of conformity or transgression of the law of God.⁵ Yes, I confess I failed many times. But in biblical Christianity there is forgiveness. As Brit Hume⁶ has stated, “this is something Buddhism does not offer;” or any other anti-biblical religion or cult, I might add.

But yet, through continual repentance, Christ forgave my sins then, and continues to do so now.⁷ This is what atheists need to understand: Christians have never claimed to be perfect, without sin. What we have claimed is that when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ.⁸

Later Schooling

In my later years my Christian faith was maturing. I was strong, and not even Screwtape’s tactics could bring me down. I was tempted, yes, but I was preserved by God’s grace.

My college days in the late 90’s were filled with enthusiasm. I had no doubt about the existence of the biblical God. My doubts had to do with the details of certain theological assumptions I held for years, but now were being shattered. You see, Christianity is a big tent within a short creed.⁹ We disagree quite

³ Romans 8, English Standard Version

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Westminster Shorter Catechism, #6

⁶ See video here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szVYIDSb7nM>

⁷ I John 1:9

⁸ I John 2:1

⁹ The Apostle’s Creed is a great summary of catholic Christianity.

a bit with one another, but we all affirm the same essentials. One of our early fathers taught us that in essentials, unity, in non-essentials, charity. I try to keep this in mind.

Objections Raised

I have no doubt by now that you have all sorts of questions. You are probably asking: "Where are the arguments for the existence of God?" Well, one of my seminary professors taught me that those arguments have their place, but they are secondary to the main purpose of apologetic discourse. I am not opposed to having these discussions, but "obviously I cannot enter into a discussion of all the facts and all the reasons urged against belief in God. There are those who have made the Old Testament, as there are those who have made the New Testament, their life-long study. It is their works you must read for a detailed refutation of points of Biblical criticism. Others have specialized in physics and biology. To them I must refer you for a discussion of the many points connected with such matters as evolution."¹⁰

My position, however, is that even if you heard certain proof that some force did exist, you would still not call it the God of the Bible. Think of Anthony Flew. Christians are thrilled that he has abandoned his staunch atheism and now believes in a higher power. Do not misunderstand me; I am thrilled that he is no longer an atheist in the proper sense of the term. But what good is it to take the first step, if there are an infinite amount of steps to God? That gap can only be filled in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity. He comes to earth, so He may raise you to the heavens.

It is true that some Christians will say that they will assume for the moment that God does not exist. They say this, in order to reach common ground with you, the atheist. But I have no intention to compromise my belief in God or to assume, even for a second that He does not exist. We do not share the same epistemology. I begin with God and you do not! My position is made clear in the words of Cornelius Van Til:

We really think you have colored glasses on your nose when you talk about chickens and cows, as well as when you talk about the life hereafter. Without such a God, without the God of the Bible, the God of authority, the God who is self-contained and therefore incomprehensible to men, there would be no reason in anything. No human being can explain in the sense of seeing through all things, but only he who believes in God has the right to hold that there is an explanation at all.¹¹

Why do I believe in God?-- because He is the Revealer of true life. And He has revealed Himself to me in my infancy. His Word is true and it cannot be broken. In one sense, "I could not *help believing* in God -- in the God of Christianity -- in the God of the whole Bible!"¹²

As I mentioned in the beginning, I am certain that this will not satisfy you, but at least now you know that for me it is reasonable to believe in God. You may consider all my statements "circular meanderings of a hopeless authoritarian. Well, my meanderings have, to be sure, been circular; they have made everything turn on God. So now I shall leave you with Him, and with His mercy."¹³

¹⁰ Van Til, *Why I believe in God*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*