

"There is a God for I experience a relationship with him and I know he lives in my heart" - evaluation

Belief in God cannot arise just because people are theorising. The emphasis on a relationship with God shows that the catalyst for God is people thinking they have touched and being touched by him. Ultimately all faith in God stems from a sense that you have experienced God. God by definition is not a theory or concept but a being who relates to you person to person. Anything else is just a thing not a proper God. So you have the experience or somebody has and then they use reason and evidence to support what they think the experience tells them. To refute religious experience as indicating God is the only refutation of God you really need.

E. P. Sanders wrote that "The burden of proof lies with whoever is making a claim." If you claim that God exists you are automatically telling people they were made for him and not just by him. Because of that implication, there is a bigger burden of proof. Indeed the God issue needs the biggest proof and evidence of all. The believer in God because the proof or evidence of a personal God is personal to him cannot expect anybody else to listen to his claims. The argument that there is a God for you have experienced him is for you and nobody else for it simply cannot mean anything to anybody else. You end up claiming that you know something others don't and that is hardly a recipe for humility. It never is.

All proofs and evidences are founded on the experience of some not all. The experience grounds and interprets the proofs and evidence so in essence ONLY the experience counts.

God is spirit - spirit is boring for it is an entity that has no components. There are no real experiences of God for we cannot experience spirit. We can have feelings yes but feelings are not spirit so they cannot discern spirit. We do not know if spirit even makes sense.

Experience is evidence. Evidence is that which shows you something is true. If evidence misleads it is faked or you have understood it wrongly. If people find all kinds of different Gods through their religious experience and they all contradict each other then the experience is not evidence for God but evidence that people make too much of what they think they experience spiritually or religiously. Having life changing religious experience shows things can happen that change you but it has nothing to do with showing your beliefs are true.

Many people think they are in a close relationship with God and that they learn from him. When that learning leads to error and disaster and conflict with others who think God wants something different you soon see that it is all in their heads. You may say that some being carried away by imagination does not mean that all are!

It seems reasonable to assume that evidence is a gift from God if God is love so you can find God in the evidence of science, ethics, human needs, history and experience. You can then build a theology. But none of these can do it unless you assume what kind of God you expect evidence for. How do you decide what kind of God then? You will claim that you know him as in how you know somebody in a relationship so you try to let religious experience show you God and what he is like. Do you experience God? Does that experience come before the others? If we can have this great mystical experience then why assume that the other evidence is in any way relevant to it? The experience demands that you make it the judge of science and everything else. But science insists that it must speak for itself which is why it is all about testing and checking and challenging assumptions. Notice also that if evidence is a gift from God then evidence has to have the final say on whether an experience of God is worth taking seriously. Too much concern for the experience is actually about trying to feel there is a God there that fits what you want him to be. It is not about God but about how you want to feel about God.

Religious experience in practice is virtually the only way somebody develops belief in God. Some believe in God because of the experiences of others even if they have never had those experiences themselves.

You must be as smart as God when you are in a position to accurately assess that it is not your imagination or your wishful thinking! You are arrogant.

You know the heart can deceive - you must be claiming then that God has given you the miracle gift of infallibility.

Religious terrorists show by their actions they expect to live after death and enjoy a rewarding relationship with God. Acts speak louder than creeds. They are proof that religious experience can be dangerous.

Is belief in God a wonderful and peaceful thing and distorted by religious bloodletters? But the reality is that no belief can guarantee inner peace in this turbulent world. The evil and violence in the world require a response and some understandably feel that the appropriate, fastest and best response is violence. Religious terrorists have startling moral views. They feel God inspires them to have them and rewards them and thrive on the promise that God will reward their

struggles given long enough. They experience God as giving them spiritual and emotional support through it all. So the bad morals become evidence that their bloodletting version of God exists. The "morals" capture what they understand by God. Even peaceful views of God argue that violence and evil are needed in some way otherwise they would not be happening! Intending the belief to be peaceful does not change the fact that it cannot truly be. Pretending otherwise is incompatible with respect for the victims of religious violence.

If you really believe, why do you not try to use your gift except when it makes you feel good? Why do you trigger the connection with God when you feel afraid but not use it to diagnose your illness instead of going to the doctor? Actions speak loudest! The notion that God wants you to go to the doctor so he will not diagnose for you is too convenient. It is a cop-out. A real believer does not play it safe in matters of faith.

So faith as in thinking God is speaking to you through the thoughts that come into your head or through your feelings is harmful potentially and in actuality.

But does that give you the right to say that the old lady lighting candles at church has a dangerous perception that her feelings and imagination are giving her signs from God? She will not kill but that is through luck. The principle is bad in itself for it carries a risk. She may not kill but in so far as she is an example for others - and we all are even if we try not to be she is doing harm and making religious harm possible.

You say your experience had a profound and lasting effect on your life and made it better. But some people have a predisposition to changing for the better rather fast and unexpectedly. It is that you must thank. No experience can change you unless you are predisposed to let it.

There are people who have an awe-struck experience of God who think afterwards it was a delusion and who are not really changed by it. The change has nothing to do with proving the experience to be really from God.

If good results of an experience prove it is from God then surely the bad results prove it is not from God?

Religious experience for the huge majority of the pious is not spectacular or very deep

And you can suffer terribly and experience abandonment by God just like Jesus supposedly did.

Why are we to dismiss the experiences of unbelievers that there is no God?

Unbelievers are accused of not having experienced God. As God is believed to be with everybody, that means if anybody does not feel or sense him then it is their own fault not his. A religion that opens the door to the accusation or which takes the next step and accuses is not a good religion. It is insulting and accusing people in the name of faith. It needs independent proof and standards before it can do that and it cannot. It just assumes. It opens the door and accuses on the basis of faith alone.

God is chiefly love according to the Christian faith. This love has moral implications. For the Catholic, it is about seeing how contraception is a hugely grave sin among many things. But what about Christians who experience God as approving of their use of contraception and even early abortion? The religious experience is supposed to convey what God is like - his moral character and his living nature.

To say God has chosen you for the experience of his presence, is a boast. It boasts that God has chosen you while more deserving people don't get the experience. It accuses others of shutting God out which is why they don't experience anything. It boasts that you know that it is God. What is even more insulting is that instead of finding God by doing heroically good deeds say among the lepers you are finding him a lazier way. I am not saying believers are totally narcissistic but I am saying they it is a more narcissistic way. Religious experience gets undeserved esteem. It should not.

Religious mystics and those with the religious experience cannot communicate well it for it is personal to them and involves something ineffable and sometimes it is bewildering for them. Yet they still claim to have the right to say something and will tell you about God. That in fact makes them to be very suspect people. If you really have an unmentionable experience you will not be talking about it or trying to convey it. Are you trying to make out you know something others do not know.