

Two guys walk into a bar to talk about.....

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London Free Press, January 3, 2015

An atheist and a theist walk into a bar. After preliminary comments about the weather and Canadian hockey, the conversation turns to the matter of God's existence. The atheist says that he has thought about God, but he finds it difficult to believe in God because there is no clear evidence to confirm God's existence.

The Christian theist wonders why the atheist requires hard evidence of God's existence. The theist already experiences God in a first-hand relationship. He feels God's love. He communicates with God through prayer. He is comforted by the support God offers. Through his faith in God, his belief is sustained and strengthened. Only hard evidence that there is not a God might change his mind.

The atheist asks, but don't you sometimes have doubts. Many Christians say they wrestle with doubt when God doesn't answer their prayers. Sometimes they feel alone or as though God has abandoned them.

Yes, thoughtful Christians have doubts. But strong faith helps to see us through to renewed strength. There may be times that we can be on the wrong track in our thoughts. Perhaps doubts are God's way of setting us on a correct path.

As an atheist, I think people have differences in their religious views. They don't all see God in the same way and this causes religious disagreements. I will tell you my ideas about God, but I want to hear your ideas as well. A number of years ago I believed in God, but it was a deist's concept. That is, I thought of God as a creator who built numerous organizing principles into His creation and then sat back to observe, but not to intervene. Later I became more knowledgeable about what kinds of organizational principles there are around us keeping the universe functioning as it does. For example, there are natural "laws of motion" as described by Sir Isaac Newton. Included in these ideas are centrifugal and gravitational forces allowing our planets and stars to rotate systematically. There is the marvelous structure of the periodic table in chemistry which assists

chemists to understand how various chemicals combine or interact with each other. We now know more about biology and how living things change and evolve. There are many natural organizational forces, which though invisible to our eyes, can be measured by scientists, and their effects can be predicted, such as in viruses, magnetism, electrical energy, and atomic structure. The more we learn through increased scientific knowledge, the more we realize these are very natural forces and not supernatural forces. As we learn more about natural forces around us our reliance on God and supernatural interventions diminishes.

As a Christian theist, I would like to tell you how I think of God. First, you are right; there are many variations in Christian thoughts about God so I will try to bring my main ideas about God together. Although Christianity is a monotheistic religion we believe God is a trinity as represented by the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. God is all powerful, all knowing, and all good. He created the universe and everything in it except Himself who is uncreated and eternal. God represents love and goodness. Those who accept God's Son, Jesus, as savior will themselves be saved and given eternal life beyond this earthly life. Now the deist God you described does not seem to offer salvation or love or hope for eternal life after one's earthly death.

Yes, that's true. Atheists find little happiness in believing God will intervene in the normal processes of nature. We can learn how nature works and how to cooperate with the forces of nature. We can learn to cooperate with our fellow humans and how to live a full and rich life by being in tune with nature. From these discoveries we receive hope and joy and security. It would not be a comforting thought to hope that God would intervene within natural processes. To do so would make life more chaotic, disorderly, unpredictable and incomprehensible.

At this point the bar tender calls out that the bar will be closing in 10 minutes. The atheist and the theist shake hands wishing each other well as they promise to meet again to continue their discussions on the weather, Canadian hockey and God.