

Credo

I believe God exists, that He is real, not a figment of my imagination, and that – however improbable it may seem – He cares about me.

(Right away I see a problem. Does that mean I believe that God is male? No, God is beyond gender. He is neither male nor female, but in English we have no pronoun for such a Being. I use the conventional male pronouns for God, not because I am trying to make a statement but simply because that is the traditional usage.)

I believe God is a person. Not a human person, of course, but a Being with the attributes of personality, not an impersonal Force or Power. That means, among other things, that God has a will and makes decisions. It also means that He can relate to other beings, such as humans.

Where did God come from? I have no idea. I believe He has always existed, and always will exist. While that sounds unlikely, it became a lot easier for me to believe when I realized that time itself is not permanent. It had a beginning and will have an end, but God is beyond time. God just is.

I believe that God is inherently good, and that the highest expression of his goodness is his love, which is life-giving and wholly beneficial. God has all wisdom, all power; He has no limitations, no weaknesses; He is absolutely perfect.

I also believe in sin, sickness, suffering, and death. The empirical evi-

dence for those realities is indisputable. Despite human progress in many areas, especially technology, overall the world does not seem to be getting better and better, but rather worse and worse, heading for destruction.

So why doesn't God do something about it. If He is all-loving and all-powerful, why doesn't He just override human tendencies toward evil and make life good for everybody?

Here's the problem, the way I see it. God chose to create free human beings, not robots; therefore He cannot step in to stop the mischief that humans devise without taking away our freedom. In other words, He could make us all march forward on the straight and narrow, looking neither right nor left, but the result would be more like an parade of robots than the vibrant but messy sprawl of free human beings. So, even all-powerful God cannot "make life good for everybody" without destroying the essence of his own supreme creation, magnificent Homo sapiens.

Furthermore, wrongdoing demands punishment. That may not be self-evident, but I believe it is built into the human condition, a part of the reality we live in. Unchecked evil is inevitably destructive; that is, it necessarily leads to people getting hurt or sick and ultimately dying, as well as to other bad things, like environmental degradation. That's why God cannot help us by taking a completely "hands off" attitude and leaving us to our own devices. In short order we would destroy civilization and perhaps even all life.

So where do we find joy and peace and love that lasts? How can we have

a happy ending, with good triumphing over evil? I believe God has provided the answers to those questions. He Himself has done for us humans what we could not do for ourselves.

What He did was to send his Son to live among us; that is, God himself came to earth in human form, to teach us, to show us how to live, but above all else, to suffer the punishment of death on a cross for our sins. Since He took upon Himself the penalty for human wrongdoing, we can be forgiven and live guilt-free lives in the midst of a dying world.

This is the Christian Gospel, the Good News that Jesus came to proclaim.

Finally, I believe there is an everlasting future in heaven for those who believe the Good News and trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Heaven is where sin, sickness and death no longer rule our lives; where all the righteous yearnings that were stifled will be revived, all the hopes that were dashed will be renewed, all the unanswered cries for help will be answered. Everything will be made good and pure and whole again.

This is what I truly believe.

– Roland F. Chase