

The question, “Is there rational justification for belief in God?” is a complex and compelling one. There are many ways in which the question can be answered, many of which draw from human experience and through the search of knowing thyself. Logical arguments based on religious experience by way of Christian justification and transformation will sufficiently rationalize and justify belief in an existent God. I believe that these philosophical arguments provide sufficient framework to expand the question and deliver wisdom to the reader.

What is “a rational justification for belief?” Let’s peel this onion together while venturing into the realm of epistemology. We must first start by understanding the word “knowledge” and how it applies to belief. One must through observation or introspection come to know something. For example, “I can know that Jim is in the next room, I certainly believe it; but I may believe Jim is in the next room and not know it” (Tilly, 1995). The other element that we must explore for belief is whether or not it is true. If the belief that you hold is not true, it cannot count as knowledge (Tilly, 1995). You can believe an assumption or a guess, but it cannot be counted as true knowledge. So, for a belief to take place, it must be true. The final element to sum it up is “justification,” which is the accuracy of a true belief. The more accurate your true belief, the more solidified the justification (Chaffee, 2016). Herin, knowledge = justified, true, belief.

It is essential for the belief to be rational, and this is obtained through personal investigation that is satisfactory to the self (Tilly, 1995). Without rationalizing through the investigation process, the accuracy of the belief is notwithstanding. Through a clear conceptualization of understanding who God is and his character, rational justification cannot be obtained due to a lack of accurate and true knowledge. How can one say they believe in something that they’ve never investigated? It is impossible to know something without obtaining understanding. This is why I choose to speak on behalf of the God of Abraham, who is also the

God of Jesus Christ, who was justified as the Son of God through His works, and equal with Him. The Christian's God is the One who sent His Son to be the propitiation for sin and restore communion with mankind and Himself through Jesus Christ. Through thorough study and investigation of this God, a rational belief in God is justifiable through common religious experience and knowledge.

Beyond having a justified true belief, is receiving the experience of justification from God, which can only be experienced through Christianity. No other religion believes that God came in the flesh to die for the propitiation for the sins of all people who come to believe in Him and repent of their sins. This experience of justification is unique to Christianity and is expressed in many testimonies of Christians, such as John Wesley in his book *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. This justification from God can be obtained through seeking knowledge and coming to an understanding of the story of humanity's fall and reconciliation to God, and allowing the self to become part of the story. Obtaining an understanding of this truth and realizing the Ultimate Sacrifice of God can/will justify the believer and free him/her from the penalty of sin and death by way of belief, ultimately justifies and transforms the believer, thus giving religious experience. It can only come to the believer who has a truly broken and contrite heart for the sins committed against God and His creation. This obtained mercy and grace then sets the sinner free in body, mind, and spirit, and gives a new righteous freedom leading to transformation of the heart. These are the testimonies of religious experience, which does not prove God exists, but presents a base understanding for the Christian's belief in God.

Religious experiences are deeply personal and likely to be contended. The argument for religious experiences (ARE) is said to be self-authenticating, and that no knowledge can be inferred from emotional states or convictions, no matter the intensity (Kwan, 2021). The

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argument of cognitive science of religion (CSR) argues that “supernatural beliefs are typically produced by belief-forming and belief-sustaining processes that are epistemically unreliable.” (Launonen, 2023). It is also said that religious experience is unreliable because “most believers in a god have fairly specific beliefs about that god and those specific beliefs are supported by various arguments that believers typically find plausible... and reliance on testimony from those who are familiar with these arguments.” (Launonen, 2023).

Within these arguments to debunk religious experience, they commonly reject the Principle of Credulity which states, it is rational to treat experiences as innocent until proven guilty (Kwan, 2021). But in recent time, “science” has set out to disprove any sense experience as from God, as Launonen states that, “Cognitive science can undercut belief in God by showing that the intuitive appeal of some reason – such as a theistic argument or a religious experience – is not appropriately independent but relies on epistemically unreliable cognitive processes.” (Launonen, 2023). Launonen argues that hypersensitive agency detection capacities (HADC) are important in explaining religious experiences that undergird personal religious beliefs. “Hypersensitive agency detection (HAD) is the tendency to attribute agency and intentionality where it does not exist or is unlikely to exist.” (Douglas, 2017). Essentially what Launonen is arguing is that sensations created in the mind are giving people false senses of religious experience. He further argues that because of social religious upbringings and creating a relational experience with God, that the sense experiences of God’s presence is a deception of the mind and is generating false belief.

The use of “science” to disprove the convergence of God with people, is an unreliable claim and is not valid due to the overreaching yet subtle bias beliefs towards Christians in the faith. The arguments Launonen uses to justify his claims are evidentially based on the whole of

Christian society rather than using specifically transformed and triumphantly changed individuals to stake his claim. The research and questionnaire used to form his argument use weak polling methods and are not accurate to truly justified Christians. A truly justified Christian has an entirely different religious experience than the society of Christendom as a whole, and this is evidenced in the transformation of the psyche of the self. A true religious experience apart from charismatics is the obtained justification of the self in the eyes of God. One of the best records of this experience is John Wesley in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*.

The Bible itself speaks out against some religious experiences with certain people, "The prophets are prophesying lies in My name," replied the LORD. "I did not send them or appoint them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a false vision, a worthless divination, the futility and delusion of their own minds." (Jerimiah 14:14). This points out that many religious experiences claimed could have a fault, that it may not be from the Holy One. It does not disprove religious experiences altogether either. There are many accounts of religious experiences throughout the Bible that did in fact come from God, even dreams and wonders. But the common point of contention is the heart, or the psyche of the one having the experience. It is easy to find religious experiences that occurred to people who had received the Holy Spirit in the Bible, because it states it. In the present world, the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is given to believers in Jesus Christ. But we cannot tell who has received and who has not, so to distinguish we use fruits, which are the transformational qualities of the said believer.

Forensic justification thus should be used to expel any falsehoods of Christian religious experience. If we are examining Christians, then they must have experienced justification and have a transformed psyche. When we observe a broken and despicable person, it is often said that there is no hope for them. But in some cases, these hopeless people become faithful,

devoting their newfound life to piety, and become servants of Jesus. This is the transformation that is possible by the power of God and is a display of God's grace and mercy to all people, both sinner and saint.

It is rational to form a justified belief in God through examining religious experience through Christian justification and transformation. It is by the lives of those who have been transformed that give us a reason to challenge belief in God for ourselves. The atheist will say that the "psychological foundation of faith is based on human emotions, such as the need to be protected from the world's worries and to have a father figure to protect them from this terrifying world and to give their life meaning and purpose." (Haq, 2022). But this argument is assuming that Christians want protection from the world, when it is not protection that the sinner seeks, but forgiveness and saving from the swallowing up of sin and its torments. This is why we look to the justified Christians to give us the hope for rational justified belief. It is by their testimonies that the evidence is formed, the knowledge is sufficiently examined, and the power of healing and transformation is manifested.

The most powerful witness of the existing God is the testimony of the transformed. It will be debated that it is how the brain is wired, or that psychologically there was always a longing to be their best self, but the logical fact is that by believing in a saving God, and because of the faithfulness of God, people are transformed and come to understand a redeemed life that breathes peace. It can be argued that the justified Christian and their experiences are hallucinations, that they are misguided sense experiences. But at the end of the day, I'd rather believe in a God who saves, a God who loves all people, and a God who is able to take a sinner and make them a saint.

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