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"Proof"

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“Proof”

When I was in high school, a religion teacher showed us several “proofs” for the existence of God. At this time in my life, I tend not to think that humans have the means to prove or disprove the existence of God. Certainly there are no arguments that can force a believer to stop believing, or a non-believer to begin believing. God is not a thing to be measured and examined. But we can have direct experience of God, and interact with God in a loving relationship.

When I look at some of the pictures we have from the Hubble telescope and other modern tools for looking out into space, I think immediately of God, and find myself deeply pleased at the creativity of the Creator. Often I am amused, too. I know that some of the brilliant astronomers, investigators, and interpreters of these images are intensely interested in attempting to understand the Universe. And I, with so little knowledge or even capacity for knowing, smile inwardly (and sometimes outwardly) at the thought of an infinite Creator, lovingly putting forth, out of nothing, things both vast and tiny that we humans cannot fully come to describe, know, or understand even if we add to the sum of our fast-growing body of sciences for another 2,000 years.

It is amusing to me that even with the greatest of telescopes and other means of observing the heavens, every new discovery of events and processes seems to open still more questions. Scientists take much pleasure in reasoning to a theory that explains one particular question, yet each piece of new learning seems to lead on to two more mysteries yet to be understood. It is as though an extraordinary author, knowing the patterns of thought in his or her readers, always imagines and writes new stories that continually delight and surprise those same readers.

God knows us very well, and gave us the desire we have to know all that we possibly can. It is part of our nature to inquire into the making of stars, the interactions of galaxies, the effects of gravity, and the workings of quasars, quarks, and dark matter. And God has more, much more, absolutely unlimited more, available for us to investigate and, more importantly, to appreciate.

Appreciation is for me a spontaneous response to recent explanations of astronomical observations and to still newer discoveries for which there are not yet even the beginnings of reasonable explanations. The beauty of nature is not limited to what we know, but includes

enjoyment of what we observe. With our modern instruments, we have close-up views of individual craters on the moon, and can take delight in seeing what our ancestors could not have imagined. But our grandparents and their forbearers looked at the moon, and enjoyed their view and the knowledge that they had at the time. We are not better than they, nor are we any happier because of the additional knowledge about the moon that has been gathered in recent years. The pleasure we have in coming to know "new things" is the same as the pleasure that all of us experience whenever we personally learn something that we did not know before.

Rather than "proving" that God exists, I find that considering the stars and everything else that is or that might be "out there" invites me (a believer) to take joy in the thought that the discoveries will never be completed – the gifts will be new and exciting, interesting and challenging – for as long as humans exist. I have thought too, that God is not limited to preparing surprises for us in "this life," as if there were a finite number of things for us to learn. This learning process can go on forever – literally, forever. Yes, each of us will die. But God is infinite. If we pass through death to life with God, as we believe is available to us who trust in God, we will never stop learning, never come to know all that God creates.

My mind begins to "boggle," trying to imagine the unimaginable: being on an eternal learning-curve. In the admission that neither I nor any or all humans together can ever "know it all," I find delight. We can experience true joy when we observe the goodness of God's creativity, even if we cannot have "proof" that God is God.