

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

The late Roy Weece was once a campus minister at M.U. in Columbia. He regretted that many young students had their faith “smiled away” by unbelieving professors. There was no evidence presented. There were no rational arguments. Just a condescending smile. Some even went so far as to laughingly say that believing in God was like believing in the Tooth Fairy. Such bullying is intellectually vapid. Have you ever heard of a scientist studying evidence for years and concluding that the Tooth Fairy was real? Yet there are many scientists who conclude that God is real based on their diligent study of evidence.

Today’s letter will deal just such a man. This famous intellectual was once an atheist but became a Christian based upon evidence. His name is Allister McGrath. He writes: *“When I was growing up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during the 1960s, I came to the view that God was an infantile illusion, suitable for the elderly, the intellectually feeble, and the fraudulently religious. I admit this was a rather arrogant view, and one that I now find somewhat embarrassing. My rather pathetic excuse for this intellectual haughtiness is that a lot of other people felt the same way back then. It was the received wisdom of the day that religion was on its way out, and that a glorious, godless dawn was just around the corner.”*

He continued: *“Part of the reasoning that led to my conclusion was based on the natural sciences. I had specialized in mathematics and science during high school, as preparation for going to Oxford University to study chemistry. While my primary motivations for studying the sciences were the insights they allowed into the wonderful world of nature, I also found them a convenient ally in my critique of religion. Atheism and the natural sciences seemed to be coupled together by the most rigorous intellectual bonds. And there things rested, until I arrived at Oxford in October 1971. Chemistry proved to be intellectually exhilarating. As more and more of the complexities of the natural world seemed to fall into place, I found myself overwhelmed by an incandescent enthusiasm. I chose to specialize in quantum theory, and found it to be mentally demanding, almost to the point of pain-yet rewarding. Although the quantum universe fascinated me, I was increasingly drawn to the biological world, intrigued by the complex chemical patterns of natural organisms. In the end, I decided to research advanced physical methods of investigating biological systems, under the supervision of Sir George Radda, who later became chief executive of the Medical Research Council. In the midst of this growing delight in the natural sciences, which exceeded anything I could have hoped for, I found myself rethinking my atheism. It is not easy for anyone to subject his core beliefs to criticism; my reason for doing so was the growing realization that things were not quite as straightforward as I had once thought. A number of factors had converged to bring about what I suppose I can reasonably describe as a crisis of faith-or lack thereof. Atheism, I began to realize, rested on a less-than-satisfactory evidential basis. The arguments that had once seemed bold, decisive, and conclusive increasingly turned out to be circular, tentative, and uncertain.”*

This brilliant young scientist examined again the views of unbelievers like Bertrand Russell, Karl Marx, Richard Dawkins, and others. Under careful scrutiny he found them wanting. The more he learned the more his faith in Christ continued to grow. He ultimately earned his doctorate in molecular biophysics and achieved first class honors in both chemistry and Christian theology. He also became a Doctor of Divinity in theology, and a Doctor of Letters in intellectual history.

He now states: *“Spiritually, God is the oxygen of my existence; I would find it very difficult to thrive without a belief in God. Of course, the word “God” needs some clarification. It means different things to different people, even though there are often clear areas of overlap. To clarify: I believe in the God who is made known and made available through Jesus—that is, a personal God who I believe knows me as an individual, cares for me, and enables and inspires me to live my life with a firm sense of purpose and a deep satisfaction in the service of others. That situates me within the generous parameters of Christianity”*

McGrath relates to C.S. Lewis who was also an unbeliever who came to faith at Oxford. Lewis said: *“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen—not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else.”*

In addition to teaching at Oxford and Cambridge, McGrath is also a Teaching Fellow at Regent College. He is noted for his work in historical theology, systematic theology, and the relationship between science and religion. He is also well known for his writings on apologetics. He advocates theological critical realism and is opposed to the “new atheism”. He is a best selling author. Some of his better known books are: *The Twilight of Atheism, The Dawkins Delusion? Dawkins’ God: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life, and A Scientific Theology.*

Your college professors may try to convince you that “faith” is a religious word that means “believing something without any evidence”. Quite to the contrary, faith requires evidence. A great many scientists like Allister McGrath have come to faith because of evidence! Scientist John Lennox pointed out that as of 2019 only around 11% of Nobel Prize winners were atheists or agnostics. 35% of this small group won their prizes in literature rather than scientific disciplines. (7% in chemistry, 9% in medicine, and 5% in physics). It is ridiculous to “believe” that there is no evidence for God. The Bible was written to provide evidence for our faith. Note: **“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples that are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:30,31).** Follow the evidence and you will come to faith as did Allister McGrath!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce