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The Search to Prove the Existence of God

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by *Nathan Schneider*

Though I wouldn't have said so at the time, I began writing my book 11 years ago this summer, the day I first set foot in a monastery. I was 17 years old and neither a Catholic nor a Christian at all, but I was curious. I was also in need; at the tail end of a not-untypically rocky adolescence and getting ready to leave home for the first time, I felt a particular urgency to sort out where I stood with respect to the universe.

The love of the God I found there at Holy Cross Abbey, a Trappist house along the Shenandoah River, seduced me. By then I was at college, and I'd been baptized a Catholic. But only now, after a decade more has passed, have I finally finished that book I'd started. It's called "God in Proof: The Story of a Search from the Ancients to the Internet."

To the disappointment of my teenage impatience, baptism was only the beginning of my own search. As a student, then a scholar in training, then a journalist, I became fascinated with how and why people have sought religious certainty – partly in the hope of fixing my own lack of it. I studied arguments that go back as far as the ancient Greeks, through the medieval Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jews. I met the Islamic world's most famous creationist in Istanbul, interviewed scientists in Oxford, England, and attended philosophy conferences in evangelical megachurches across the U.S. I even got into an argument with the "New Atheist" Richard Dawkins.

The story of proofs for (as well as against) the existence of God is a parade of glimpses into the spiritual and imaginative lives of many great souls, throughout history and all over the world. In medieval France, St. Anselm proved his God with almost the same words that he'd used in an affectionate letter to a fellow monk years earlier. At around the same time in southern Spain, the Muslim philosopher Ibn Tufayl described a proof so powerful it could make one feel as if in the continual presence of God. The 20th-century novelist Iris Murdoch didn't quite accept Anselm's proof for God, but she adapted it into a proof for the "Good" that infuses the universe with morality.

People developed proofs with "faith in search of understanding" – to understand better what they meant by God and what about God they could infer with reason alone. As a result, when you put these proofs back into the flesh from which they came – into the historical context, the personal experience – you get much more than dry axioms and propositions.

To whatever extent my own faith has been steeped since baptism, it has been mostly because of my church communities and the handful of unsung ordinary saints I've come to know who've sacrificed just about everything to bear witness to God's love on the margins of society. But that isn't to say I've wasted my time with proofs. I didn't get the quick fix I might have wanted, but at least I found that some of history's greatest minds didn't either. They got something better, and so can we.

Nathan Schneider is a parishioner at St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral in Prospect Heights. His first book, *God in Proof*, was published in June by University of California Press. Learn more at [GodInProof.com](#).

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 128 Vaux Street
 N.Y. N.Y. 10018
 7:18-2:14:19 • 7PM Mass
 Followed by Healing Service

History
 Frank B. Kelly, noted television host, led on the path of holiness as an Old Catholic, finally found on the shores of the Roman Catholic Church. Raised in a poor neighborhood and devoted to the faith, Kelly used his talents for a television, radio, and radio career. Kelly worked as a hospital nurse on Manhattan St. 1952. He was inspired to start a healing service as a result of a stroke. Believing in the protection of the Guardian Angel and Saint Michael, Kelly led Kelly to the Catholic faith. The only old Catholic, miraculously, but the God manifested a dramatic cure. His illness with debilitating symptoms disappeared. Kelly's story was featured throughout the country, starting in the Chicago magazine *Chicago* featuring Kelly in the article of the book, *Short Circuit to God*, written by David Long, M.D., with a foreword by Kelly's spiritual director, Fr. Ronald E. Smith, S.J., M.D.

Ministry
 Kelly's healing service continues to bring people who are united with people of various groups. Kelly's ministry is in the working with, treatment and care of individuals. Kelly's ministry is also recognized by ministers to give Kelly's message for the improvement of people, especially the last other individuals who are personally diagnosed for the various things people have been healed by the healing minister, Kelly, and his ability for healing and ministrations.

Book Proceeds
 All proceeds from *Short Circuit to God* support missionary work from India and Ghana.

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