



How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God

By Michael Shermer



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A new edition covering the latest scientific research on how the brain makes us believers or skeptics

Recent polls report that 96 percent of Americans believe in God, and 73 percent believe that angels regularly visit Earth. Why is this? Why, despite the rise of science, technology, and secular education, are people turning to religion in greater numbers than ever before? Why do people believe in God at all?

These provocative questions lie at the heart of *How We Believe*, an illuminating study of God, faith, and religion. Bestselling author Michael Shermer offers fresh and often startling insights into age-old questions, including how and why humans put their faith in a higher power, even in the face of scientific skepticism. Shermer has updated the book to explore the latest research and theories of psychiatrists, neuroscientists, epidemiologists, and philosophers, as well as the role of faith in our increasingly diverse modern world.

Whether believers or nonbelievers, we are all driven by the need to understand the universe and our place in it. *How We Believe* is a brilliant scientific tour of this ancient and mysterious desire.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

One hundred years ago social scientists predicted that belief in God would decrease by the year 2000. "In fact ... the opposite is has occurred," Shermer writes in his introduction. "Never in history have so many, and such a high percentage of the population, believed in God. Not only is God not dead as Nietzsche proclaimed, but he has never been more alive."

Why do so many believe in the existence of something so inexplicable? That's exactly what Shermer answers in this comprehensive, intelligent, and highly readable discussion about the nature of faith. "People believe in God because the evidence of their senses tell them so," claims Shermer, who is the publisher of *Skeptics* magazine. Having been a believer and a student of the history of science, Shermer (now an agnostic) is more interested in knowing why and how people believe in God rather than trying to prove who's right or wrong. As a result, this book is not only even-handed and thorough, it is also destined to become a timeless contribution to spirituality as well as science. --*Gail Hudson*

From Publishers Weekly

Shermer, who teaches critical thinking at Occidental College and is perhaps best known as the director of the Skeptics Society and publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, approaches religion not primarily as a delusion to be debunked but as a phenomenon to be explained. Shermer wonders why religious belief, traditional theistic belief in particular, remains widespread in contemporary America, confounding expectations that progress in science and technology should bring a corresponding decline in faith. One way to discover why people believe is to ask them, and Shermer has compiled original survey data to support his analysis. One noteworthy finding is that, although theists tend to explain their own faith in rational terms (e.g., observing design in nature or a pattern of God's activity in daily life), they explain the theistic beliefs of "most other people" primarily in emotional or pragmatic terms (e.g., faith brings comfort and hope). Shermer maintains that while believers' first-person awareness is misleading, their third-person perspective gets it right: religion can be explained quite adequately in functional terms. He reviews a range of theories from anthropology, evolutionary psychology and cognitive science that analyze religion as a means to social harmony or psychological stability. Although Shermer's arguments will probably not be decisive for debates between nonbelievers and believers (who generally agree that religion has strong pragmatic benefits), both will be able to appreciate this readable and generally fair-minded treatment of a subject that often provokes contentious dispute. (Oct.)

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From Scientific American

Shermer marches bravely into the arena where theists, atheists and agnostics argue their views, usually without convincing anyone not on their side. As editor of *Skeptic* and director of the Skeptics Society and a man (trained in psychology) who has been successively a theist, an atheist and an agnostic, he might seem to the religious to have a bias against their convictions. But he says his "primary focus in addressing readers is not whether they believe or disbelieve, but how and why they have made their particular belief choice." He has asked the question of many people, and he summarizes their reasoning. His discussion ranges eloquently and learnedly over broad areas of philosophy, theology and science. In the end, whatever the reader's own thinking, she will probably discover that she has learned a lot about the opinions other people have on "the God Question" and why they hold those opinions.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Stewart:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? E-book is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each publication has different aim or even goal; it means that book has different type. Some people truly feel enjoy to spend their time to read a book. These are reading whatever they get because their hobby is reading a book. How about the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, particular person feel need book after they found difficult problem or exercise. Well, probably you will need this How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God.

Lisa Haight:

In this 21st millennium, people become competitive in every single way. By being competitive currently, people have do something to make all of them survives, being in the middle of the crowded place and notice by simply surrounding. One thing that often many people have underestimated that for a while is reading. Yep, by reading a reserve your ability to survive enhance then having chance to remain than other is high. For you personally who want to start reading some sort of book, we give you this particular How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God book as beginner and daily reading guide. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

Michael Major:

Playing with family within a park, coming to see the coastal world or hanging out with good friends is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, and then why you don't try point that really opposite from that. Just one activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition info. Even you love How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God, you could enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout people. What? Still don't buy it, oh come on its named reading friends.

David Auman:

In this era which is the greater man or who has ability in doing something more are more important than other. Do you want to become among it? It is just simple approach to have that. What you must do is just spending your time not much but quite enough to experience a look at some books. One of several books in the top record in your reading list is usually How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God. This book that is qualified as The Hungry Hills can get you closer in turning into precious person. By looking up and review this book you can get many advantages.

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