



## "Is Seeing Believing?"

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The discussion hadn't got us very far, so I tried another tack, 'Have you ever been to Australia?' I asked above the din of the Union bar.

'No.' the student replied.

'Then how can you be certain it exists?'

The student looked at me, not quite sure how to respond...

What would *you* say in reply to my question? I was trying to help this student realise that *seeing* is not the *only* determining factor in believing, that our experience cannot be the final court of justice as to whether God exists.

So how do we believe, how can we know whether Australia is there or whether there is an *intelligent cause*? If seeing cannot lead to believing, how about we switch off completely and take a guess in the dark? This type of approach is very common in today's culture and is often called 'blind faith.'

Artist Mark Wallinger has created a character called '*Blind Faith*' as the subject of some of his artwork. Art critic Ian Hunt says that Wallinger's video piece *Angel* (1997), which contains the character Blind Faith, expresses something that is 'true but we find impossible to believe, prisoners of our eyes' (Hunt, 2000, p.26). **The idea being discussed is that the only way to believe is to close our eyes and trust that the impossible is actually true with no certain rational basis.**

But this kind of blind faith is not Christian faith. Christians trust in a concrete object outside of themselves - the living God himself. He has acted in the past, made promises about the future and speaks to each one of us in the Bible. In contrast

Wallinger says that he uses quotes from the Bible because of their 'powerful evocation of desire' (ibid., p.23) disconnected from their function as records of the action of the Living God. Therefore, in his work the object of faith is only the emotion of desire brought up within himself rather than any divine presence.

So how is it possible to trust in 'God' who seems to be 'out there' and far away but whom we have never seen? Well, let us go back to our Australia example. How did you reply to my question? How about if someone had come from there to tell you about it? What is they were able to give you accurate detail about the climate, culture and history? This might help us realise that Australia really exists.

In regard to the divine, this is exactly what Christians know has happened in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, who is also known as the 'Son of God'. This is how one of his followers put it:

'No-one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is the same as God and is at the Father's side, he has made him known' (John 1:18)

And you are free to investigate and examine this account for yourself. We must not think that our visual limitations mean there is no God, nor that the answer lies in blindly trusting nothingness. Rather Jesus has made God known in real space-time history and by looking through him, as a lens, we may see the Living God clearly and believe he is there.