

The one thing that classical, traditional philosophy cannot abide is uncertainty: it hates doubt; classical philosophy, from its beginnings in the ancient world right through the Middle Ages and beyond, it has always sought to *prove* things – especially the existence of God. It was a black-and-white world, an either-or universe, where everything was true or it was false. There was no multiplicity of perspective, no other way of looking at things. *Quod erat demonstrandum* was the order of the day: it means ‘that which had to be proved is proved’ and it came at the end of all equations and arguments in that branch of philosophy known as logic.

Despite the fact that the medieval philosophers believed you could prove the existence of God by logical reasoning, from a perspective *other* than black-and-white, either-or, true-or-false, logic has very little bearing on faith.

The appearances of Jesus after his Resurrection cannot be the subject of philosophy or logic:

- i) All people who die cease to exist
- ii) Jesus died
- iii) Therefore Jesus ceased to exist

That is philosophically, logically watertight – but it not *true*.

Logic aims to give our knowledge *certainty* about the world and ourselves... but this has nothing to do with faith. Faith and knowledge cannot co-exist: if I *know* something, I don't need to believe – I have certain knowledge; if I believe something, I don't

have certain knowledge, I have faith. Doubt makes faith possible. Doubt is a pre-requisite for faith.

Thomas the Apostle wanted sure and certain knowledge – proof – that Jesus had risen. Once he had this proof, there was no need for faith, no need for him to believe. We don't need to be too concerned about the doubts we have in our hearts – and we all have them. Sometimes we catch ourselves thinking about someone and saying: 'I wish I had their faith.' But how do we know what their faith is? They too have doubts – otherwise they wouldn't have faith, they would have knowledge. Pope Francis has often made this point: he said that the space where one finds and meets God must include an area of uncertainty. To say that we have met God with total certainty or that we have all the answers to the big questions of life is a sign that we haven't met God at all. A devout faith must be an uncertain faith. He says: "The risk in seeking and finding God in all things, then, is the willingness to explain too much, to say with human certainty and arrogance: 'God is here.' We will find only a god that fits our measure." Or as the 18<sup>th</sup> century French writer Voltaire once said: 'God made man in his own image, and man promptly returned the compliment.'

Faith needs doubt because what is faith anyway? It is not finding but searching. To find is knowledge – to search is faith. The whole of life, in this sense, in every sense, is a journey of searching. Blaise Pascal, another French writer, contradicted all

philosophical logic when he famously said: 'You are only seeking God because you have already found him.'