

# A Faith of Reason

---

M.W. Bassford  
8-27-06

## Introduction.

- A. Every day, a massive campaign continues its assault against us. Governments around the world support it; millions devote their lives to it. It holds as its stated goal the destruction of the things that are most dear to us, and its followers will not rest until they have accomplished their end.
- B. However, this campaign is not the work of al-Qaida or other Muslim extremists. It is a war waged against us by people of our own nation and our own culture. Its battleground is not in the hills of Afghanistan or the streets of Baghdad, for it is a conflict fought in our hearts. It is not about the fate of the United States as a nation. The stakes are far higher than that, for this is a war for the souls of mankind--the war against faith.
- C. My description may seem overly dramatic, but I am not exaggerating. The resources that Osama bin Laden and his cronies are nothing compared to those that are bent to destroy our faith. Consider this: there are tens of thousands of public schools in our country, and most of them try to teach our children that the Bible is a lie.
- D. Oh, they don't come right out and SAY it, but that's their point. They present the theory of evolution as established scientific fact, the peak of human wisdom. They imply that if we want to be intelligent, reasonable people, we must accept the theory they offer. And that means that we must reject the word of God.
- E. After all, they claim, the Bible is nothing more than the product of human supersition.
  - 1. I had an anthropology professor in college named Bob Benfer. He was a little guy, bald, with a graying ponytail, like a refugee from the 1960's. I still remember the way he started the class's evolution unit. He mentioned that there were people in the class who chose to believe in God rather than evolution, and that was OK with him. After all, he had a daughter who believed in astrology, even though the stars have shifted so much over 3000 years that they don't give the same readings anymore if you just look at them. He implied that believing in God was just the same as believing that those stars predicted the future.
  - 2. His point was this: sure, it's a free country, and you can believe in anything you like, just don't act like you're being rational about it. As atheist Richard Robinson wrote, "Christian faith is not merely believing that there is a god. It is believing that there is a god no matter what the evidence may be. . ."
- F. Naturally, atheists say that Christianity is irrational, but sadly, some believers do too. They describe faith in God as a blind belief that cannot be changed by anything external. They give up on reason.
- G. If that were all there really was to faith, I would not be a Christian. I would be an atheist, and you should be too. However, I do believe. I believe that God is real and that the Bible is His inspired word, and I believe that with my mind as well as with my heart. My faith is founded on the evidence for God.
- H. Thus, let's consider the nature of our faith. As the Bible describes it and we practice it, it is not a faith in delusion and superstition. It is a faith of reason. Let's explore this, beginning with our standard of evidence.

## I. The Standard of Evidence.

- A. Very often, those who don't accept the existence of God question the sufficiency of the evidence that exists.
  - 1. Atheists are people who refuse to believe in God. They demand that God reveal Himself to them on their terms and provide them with the proof they demand. They will believe only if they see Him themselves.
  - 2. Agnostics are people who claim to be undecided about whether God exists or not. They say that there is not enough evidence for them to take a position on.
- B. However, both are applying an illogical standard. They demand more proof for the existence of God than they require for the vast majority of things that they don't question. The evidence for the existence of God is the same kind of evidence as we have for anything else. There are two types: firsthand and secondhand.
  - 1. Firsthand evidence is evidence that we see ourselves. If I see John murder Joe because Joe took the last piece of pie at a potluck, I have firsthand evidence that John is the murderer.
  - 2. Secondhand evidence, though, is evidence about an event that we get from some other source than observation of the event. For instance, my testimony at John's murder trial is secondhand evidence. Other possibilities might be powder burns on John's hand and Joe's blood on his cuff--CSI stuff.
  - 3. Both of these are Biblically attested. In John 20:29, Jesus cites both kinds of evidence as valid.
- C. None of us have firsthand evidence for God. None of us have seen God directly because God does not reveal Himself in such a way today. However, we are normally willing to accept secondhand evidence as sufficient to form other beliefs. For example, ask yourself this: do YOU believe in Abraham Lincoln? No one alive today has ever seen Abraham Lincoln in the flesh. However, there are no Lincoln atheists or agnostics. They accept the evidence for Lincoln that they reject for God. The atheist's argument, though, is even more unreasonable than that. In rejecting God, he embraces something that's irrational. Let's consider the faith of the atheist.

## II. The Faith of the Atheist.

- A. The enemies of God like to act as though they are relying completely on the evidence, as though only ignorant religionists need faith. Don't be fooled. Underneath the scientific trappings, atheists make more use of faith than we do, even if they don't admit it. You see, we believe in something that can be supported with evidence. Atheists, on the other hand, believe in something for which evidence CANNOT exist.
- B. To see how this works, let's consider something that the atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair wrote. She said, "Atheism is based upon a materialist philosophy, which holds that nothing exists but naturalist phenomena." Here's her point in plain language: "Materialist" is just another word for atheist. When she says that nothing exists but naturalist phenomena, she means that everything in the world has a natural explanation.
- C. Certainly, Christians accept that there are natural explanations for many things. When we see a feather drifting on the breeze, we say it's because of natural, not supernatural, forces. Materialists, though, say that there can ONLY be natural explanations. They rule God out without considering the evidence.
- D. Do you see the logical problem? That statement is completely a statement of faith. It assumes that people are now capable of observing everything that exists. Therefore, if we can't observe and understand God and His actions, He must not exist. Here's the problem: things might exist that don't have scientific, natural explanations. Worse yet, there is no way to test whether the naturalist explanation is even true.
- E. It's like this: say an archaeologist wakes up one morning and decides that he can find every artifact at his archaeological site with a metal detector. He sweeps the site with his metal detector and, using the metal detector, finds only metal artifacts. From this, he concludes that only metal artifacts were there. Is he right? Maybe. It could be that only metal artifacts were there, but it could also be that non-metal artifacts were there, and the metal detector just didn't pick them up. Here's what he's done: the archaeologist has started out looking for metal objects, found only metal objects, overlooked all non-metal objects, and proven nothing.
- F. In the same way, many materialists start out with the idea that everything can be naturally observed and explained. Just like the archaeologist only looked for metal artifacts, the materialist looks only for materialistic explanations. Of course, he only finds the materialistic explanations he was looking for, and he inevitably overlooks God and His power. As with the archaeologist, this proves nothing.
- G. Indeed, it rejects out of hand the possibility that there may be a better explanation than the naturalistic one. When offered the choice between saying "God created the world," or "There was a Big Bang," every time, materialists have to accept the Big Bang explanation, regardless of the evidence on either side. Their starting point does not let them admit the possibility of a supernatural God. Materialists don't see God in creation because they reject Him even before they start looking. However, if we rationally consider the evidence, we are led to a very different faith--the faith of the Christian.

### **III. The Faith of the Christian**

- A. In Hebrews 11:1, the Bible tells us that "faith is the evidence of things not seen."
- B. This does not mean that faith operates without evidence. Instead, evidence is the basis of our faith.
  - 1. Scripture teaches that God's creation is evidence for God. Consider Romans 1:20, which says that people who disregard this evidence are without excuse. In other words, if we are being completely logical, when we look at the world around us, we are convinced that God exists. No one will be able to stand before God on the day of judgment and say, "There wasn't enough evidence" because the evidence is THERE.
  - 2. In the writings of the apostle John, we plainly see that faith is on the basis of evidence.
    - a. In John 20:3-8, John describes the evidence that caused him to believe. John was not present when the Lord was raised. However, he came to the tomb, saw the evidence of the resurrection, and on the basis of that evidence, believed. Thomas did the same in John 20:24-29. He started out unbelieving. Then, when he touched the hands and side of Jesus, he was convinced by the evidence.
    - b. The Bible calls us to believe on the basis of this recorded eyewitness testimony. Jesus implies it in John 20:29, when He says that those who have not seen and yet believe are blessed. Thus, it is possible to believe without seeing for ourselves. Indeed, that's precisely the claim that John makes in John 20:30-31. John's record of the signs is evidence, and he argues that the evidence is sufficient to produce belief. Nor is there anything unusual about this--we make similar decisions all the time.
- C. According to 1 John 1:3, this Scriptural record of evidence is what leads us to have fellowship with God. We cannot be Christians without having weighed the evidence first.

### **Conclusion.**

- A. It becomes apparent, then, that the stereotype of "blind faith" is not correct. Christian faith relies on reason. In the same way, the stereotype of the scientific atheist is also untrue. They must have faith that a natural explanation exists for everything. They try to force-fit those explanations even where the evidence is for God.
- B. When we deal with those who deny the existence of God, let's all remember this. We don't have to be defensive or afraid. We have the rational position; they don't.
- C. Indeed, this evidence demands action from all of us. If you believe the evidence for God, come to Him now.