

Is Reason Really an Enemy of Faith?



Are We Irrational?

Have you ever had someone in the culture tell you that ‘people of faith’ are simple minded folks who blindly believe that God exists in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary? Secularists often portray Christians as both ‘unreasonable’ and ‘unreasoning’. They simply believe that we have no idea what the evidence demonstrates related to the existence of God. They think we have blind faith, and they think we are comfortable with our blind obedience to the traditions of religion. Well I, for one, have never seen my faith in this way. I was an atheist for thirty five years because I believed that there was sufficient evidence to support naturalism. I will confess to you that I also thought that naturalism was the more reasonable worldview and that naturalists in general were more thoughtful and evidential. I thought that secularists and philosophical naturalists (I was both) were more committed to a rational examination of the evidence.

I found plenty of skepticism amongst naturalists and other historic thinkers who have questioned the reasoning ability of believers. Many well respected writers have challenged the rationality of ‘blind faith’ and (along with it) Christian Theism:

Thomas Jefferson

“Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blind-folded fear”

Anais Nin

“When we blindly adopt a religion, a political system, a literary dogma, we become automatons. We cease to grow.”

Francis Bacon

“Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all of which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, even if religion vanished; but religious superstition dismounts all these and erects an absolute monarchy in the minds of men.”

Sir Julian Huxley

“Today the god hypothesis has ceased to be scientifically tenable ... and its abandonment often brings a deep sense of relief. Many people assert that this abandonment of the god hypothesis means the abandonment of all religion and all moral sanctions. This is simply not true. But it does mean, once our relief at jettisoning an outdated piece of ideological furniture is over, that we must construct some thing to take its place”

But is this criticism valid? Are these observations true? Are those who believe in the existence of God truly holding on to an “outdated piece of ideological furniture”? Is it possible to be ‘reasonable’ and a theist at the same time? Is faith truly ‘blind’ or is it the result of a rational examination of the evidence? One thing is for sure, the concept of ‘blind faith’ is completely foreign to the Christian Worldview.



A Rational God

The God of the Bible does not call his children to obey blindly. The Bible itself serves as a piece of evidence, the testimony of eyewitnesses who are providing us with reasons to believe. That's why the scriptures repeatedly call us to have a reasoned belief in Christ, and not to resort to the behavior of unreasoning animals:



Jude 4, 10

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ...But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.

The Bible uses this word for 'unreasoning' in a pejorative manner; to be unreasoning is to act like an animal. God clearly wants us to use our heads! In fact, God wants us to examine all the evidence that is at our disposal and to study the things of God with great intensity. When we do this, we truly begin to worship Him with our mind:



Matthew 22:37-38

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment."

Believe it or not, our god is in the business of providing us with evidence. He wants us to be convinced after we examine the proof. Look at how Jesus dealt with the disciples following His resurrection:



Acts 1:2-3

...until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Peter apparently took this high view of evidence very seriously. Just listen to this portion of the first sermon he ever preached on the day of Pentecost:



Acts 17:30-31

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

The earliest of Christians understood the connection between reason, logic and faith, and they did not see these concepts as mutually exclusive. In fact, Paul often used reason to make his case for Christianity and he valued those who would also use reason to investigate the evidence that he offered:



Acts 17:2-3

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead



Acts 17:10-11

And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

As Christians, we are encouraged to examine the evidence and test what we observe and what we have been told:



1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good...



1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

In the end, God wants us to be convinced of the truth in such a way as to allow this truth to change our lives. God wants us to be convinced:



Romans 14:5

Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.



2 Timothy 1:8-12

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.



2 Timothy 3:14

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them...

When believers use their minds, investigate the evidence and become convinced, something wonderful happens; they have the courage to defend what they believe using the same logic and reasoning power that assisted them to faith in the first place:



1 Peter 3:15

...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence...

Over the centuries, Christians in all disciplines of inquiry and discovery have used their reasoning powers to investigate the evidence. Christians are not irrational by nature and many Christians have been world leaders in their use of reason and rationality.



Great Christian Thinkers

While there may be 150 years worth of great atheist thinkers that can be paraded in front of us to justify the possible truth of naturalism and humanism, there are thousands of year's worth of great Christian scientists and writers and thinkers who have reasoned to just the opposite conclusion. These were rational and reasonable CHRISTIANS who saw no conflict between the rational process of thoughtful examination and their belief in the existence of God. They saw no conflict between the pursuit of science and the pursuit of theology. In fact, they saw the two endeavors as inextricably connected. Let's take a look at just a few great Christian thinkers throughout history:

John Philoponus (c.490 to c.570)

He theorized about the nature of light and stars and criticized Aristotelian physics

Bede, the Venerable (c.672 to 735)

He wrote two volumes on "Time and its Reckoning" that revealed a new understanding of the "progress wave-like" nature of tides

Pope Silvester II (c.950 to 1003)

He influenced and shaped the teaching of math and astronomy in Christian schools

Hermannus Contractus (1013 to 1054)

He wrote on geometry, mathematics, and the astrolabe (a historical astronomical instrument used by classical astronomers and navigators)

Robert Grosseteste (c.1175 to 1253)

He is considered the founder of scientific thought in Oxford. He wrote books on the mathematical sciences of optics, astronomy and geometry. He believed that experiments should be used in order to verify a theory

Pope John XXI (1215 to 1277)

He wrote the "Thesaurus Pauperum" (a widely used medical text)

Albertus Magnus (c.1193 to 1280)

He was a scientist who may have been the first to isolate arsenic. He wrote "Natural science does not consist in ratifying what others have said, but in seeking the causes of phenomena"

Roger Bacon (c.1214 to 1294)

He contributed in areas of optics, mechanics and geography; he promoted empiricism and was one of the earliest advocates of the modern scientific method. He was also responsible for promoting the concept of the "laws of nature"

Theodoric of Freiberg (c.1250 to c.1310)

He gave the first correct explanation for the rainbow in "De Iride et Radialibus Impressionibus" (or "On the Rainbow")

Thomas Bradwardine (c.1290 to 1349)

He was called "the Profound Doctor" and his studies lead to important developments in mechanics

Jean Buridan (1300 to 1358)

He developed a theory known as 'impetus'; an important step toward the modern concept of 'inertia'

Nicole Oresme (c.1323 to 1382)

He was one of the early founders and promoters of 'modern sciences'. He made many scientific discoveries, including the discovery of curvature of light through atmospheric refraction

Nicholas of Cusa (1401 to 1464)

He made contributions to the field of mathematics and developed the concepts of the 'infinitesimal' and of 'relative motion'

Otto Brunfels (1488 to 1534)

He was a botanist and his "Herbarum Vivae Icones" was a formative work in the field of botany

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473 to 1543)

He introduced the 'heliocentric' world view, discovering that earth and the solar system planets revolved around the sun

William Turner (c.1508 to 1568)

He is the "father of English botany" and was also an ornithologist

Ignazio Danti (1536 to 1586)

He was a mathematician who wrote about Euclid (an astronomer, and a designer of mechanical devices)

Giordano Bruno (1548 to 1600)

He was an Italian cosmologist who argued that the Earth revolved around the Sun and that other worlds also revolved around other suns

Bartholomaeus Pitiscus (1561 to 1613)

He was a mathematician who may have coined the word trigonometry in the English and French Languages

John Napier (1550 to 1617)

He was a Scottish mathematician renowned for inventing logarithms and his promotion of the use of decimals

Johannes Kepler (1571 to 1630)

He invented “Kepler's Laws of Planetary Motion” based on data he got from Tycho Brahe's astronomical observations

Laurentius Gothus (1565 to 1646)

He was a professor of astronomy who wrote many books on the topic

Galileo Galilei (1564 to 1642)

He was a renowned scientist defended ‘heliocentrism’ (to his own peril)

Marin Mersenne (1588 to 1648)

He was a mathematician who communicated with other mathematicians related to concepts concerning what are now known as “Mersenne primes”

René Descartes (1596 to 1650)

He was one of the key thinkers of the “Scientific Revolution” and the Cartesian coordinate system (used in plane geometry and algebra) was named after him. He did formative work on invariants and geometry.

Blaise Pascal (1623 to 1662)

He was a great thinker, known now for “Pascal's Law” (physics), “Pascal's Theorem” (math), and “Pascal's Wager” (theology).

Nicolas Steno (1638 to 1686)

He was considered a pioneer in both anatomy and geology

Seth Ward (1617 to 1689)

He was the Savilian Chair of Astronomy and wrote the foundational volumes, “Ismaelis Bullialdi Astro-Nomiaie Philolaicae Fundamenta Inquisitio Brevis” and “Astronomia Geometrica”

Robert Boyle (1627 to 1691)

He was a scientist and theologian who proposed that the study of science was not in conflict with the study of God but could actually glorify God

John Wallis (1616 to 1703)

He was a mathematician who wrote “Arithmetica Infinitorumis” and introduced the term “Continued Fraction” He also worked in areas of cryptography and helped develop calculus

Gottfried Leibniz (1646 to 1716)

He was a “polymath” who did work on determinants and the development of a calculating machine

Isaac Newton (1643 to 1727)

He is still considered to be one of the greatest scientists and mathematicians in history. He founded the principles and theories of "Newtonian Physics"

Carolus Linnaeus (1707 to 1778)

He is known as the "Father of Modern Taxonomy", but he also made contributions to ecology

Leonhard Euler (1707 to 1783)

He was an important and substantial mathematician and physicist

Maria Gaetana Agnesi (1718 to 1799)

She was a mathematician who was eventually appointed to a position within the Vatican by Pope Benedict XIV

Isaac Milner (1750 to 1820)

He was a "Lucasian Professor of Mathematics" and he developed a process to fabricate Nitrous Acid

Olinthus Gregory (1774 to 1841)

He wrote "Lessons Astronomical and Philosophical" and as a mathematician he became the mathematical master at the Royal Military Academy

William Buckland (1784 to 1856)

He was a geologist who wrote "Vindiciae Geologiae" (The Connexion of Geology with Religion Explained)

Lars Levi Læstadius (1800 to 1861)

He was a botanist who wrote proficiently and discovered four species

Edward Hitchcock (1793 to 1864)

He was a geologist and paleontologist who wrote on the topics of "Natural Theology" and fossilized tracks

William Whewell (1794 to 1866)

He was a professor of mineralogy who wrote "An Elementary Treatise on Mechanics" and "Astronomy and General Physics Considered with Reference to Natural Theology"

Charles Babbage (1791 to 1871)

He was a mathematician, philosopher and mechanical engineer who wrote "The Difference Engine" and the "Ninth Bridgewater Treatise"

Adam Sedgwick (1785 to 1873)

He was a geologist who won both Copley Medal and the Wollaston Medal.

John Bachman (1790 to 1874)

He was an American naturalist who wrote many scientific articles and named several species of animals

Robert Main (1808 to 1878)

He was an astronomer who won the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society

James Clerk Maxwell (1831 to 1879)

He was a mathematician and theoretical physicist who developed the classical electromagnetic theory (he was able to synthesize all prior unrelated observations, experiments and equations of electricity, magnetism and optics into a consistent theory)

Gregor Mendel (1822 to 1884)

He is considered the "Father of Modern Genetics" for his studies related to the inheritance of traits in pea plants

Philip Henry Gosse (1810 to 1888)

He was a marine biologist who wrote "Aquarium" and "A Manual of Marine Zoology"

Asa Gray (1810 to 1888)

He was a botanist and wrote what is now known as "Gray's Manual" (which is still an important botanical book). He also wrote "Darwiniana" in which he wrote about the relationship between Evolution and Theology

Francesco Faà di Bruno (1825 to 1888)

He was an Italian mathematician who is famous for "Faà di Bruno's Formula"

Julian Tenison Woods (1832 to 1889)

He was a geologist who wrote "Geological Observations in South Australia" and "History of the Discovery and Exploration of Australia"

Armand David (1826 to 1900)

He was a botanist and a zoologist who described several species new to the West

George Stokes (1819 to 1903)

He was a mathematician and physicist who was a President of the Royal Society and made contributions to "Fluid Dynamics", optics and mathematical physics

George Salmon (1819 to 1904)

He was a mathematician who won the Copley Medal for his work in mathematics

Henry Baker Tristram (1822 to 1906)

He was an ornithologist and a founding member of the British Ornithologists' Union. He wrote "The Fauna and Flora of Palestine"

Lord Kelvin (1824 to 1907)

He was a mathematical physicist and engineer who won the Copley Medal, the Royal Medal, and made important contributions in the field of Thermodynamics.

Pierre Duhem (1861 to 1916)

He was a physicist, a mathematician and a philosopher of science who contributed to the field of "Thermodynamic Potentials"

Dmitri Egorov (1869 to 1931)

He was a Russian mathematician who made important contributions in the area of “differential geometry”

Max Planck (1858 to 1947)

He was a physicist who is considered to be the founder of Quantum Mechanics. He won the 1918 Nobel Prize in Physics

Robert Millikan (1868 to 1953)

He was a physicist who won the 1923 Nobel Prize in Physics. He wrote about the important relationship between faith and reason in “Evolution in Science and Religion”

E. T. Whittaker (1873 to 1956)

He was a mathematician who contributed to the fields of applied mathematics, mathematical physics and the theory of “Special Functions” He was a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and he wrote “Theories of the Universe and the Arguments for the Existence of God”. He also received the Copley Medal

Arthur Compton (1892 to 1962)

He was a physicist who won a Nobel Prize in Physics

Georges Lemaître (1894 to 1966)

He was a professor of physics and an astronomer who first proposed the Big Bang theory

David Lack (1910 to 1973)

He was an ornithologist and the Director of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology. He wrote “Evolutionary Theory and Christian Belief” and was known for his study of the genus Euplectes

Charles Coulson (1910 to 1974)

He was a prominent researcher in the field of theoretical chemistry who won the Davy Medal.

Theodosius Dobzhansky (1900 to 1975)

He was a geneticist who was critical of young Earth creationism. He argued that science and faith did not conflict

Michael Polanyi (1891 to 1976)

He was a ‘polymath’ who was active in physical chemistry, economics, and philosophy. He wrote “Science, Faith, and Society”

Aldert van der Ziel (1910 to 1991)

He was a physicist who researched “Flicker Noise”. He wrote more than 15 books and 500 scientific papers. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers named an award after him

Carlos Chagas Filho (1910 to 2000)

He was a neuroscientist who led the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and wrote "The Origin of the Universe", "The Origin of Life", and "The Origin of Man"

Sir Robert Boyd (1922 to 2004)

He was a pioneer in British space science and was Vice President of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Arthur Peacocke (1924 to 2006)

He was a biochemist who worked in areas related to the theory of Evolution. He won the Templeton Prize.

C. F. von Weizsäcker (1912 to 2007)

He was a nuclear physicist who co-discovered the "Bethe-Weizsäcker Formula" He wrote "The Relevance of Science: Creation and Cosmogony" and led the Max Planck Society

Charles Hard Townes

He is a physicist who won the Nobel Prize in Physics and wrote "The Convergence of Science and Religion"

Ian Barbour

He is a physicist who wrote "Christianity and the Scientists" and "When Science Meets Religion"

Stanley Jaki

He is a professor of physics at Seton Hall University who won a Templeton Prize and promotes the idea that modern science could only have arisen in a Christian society

Allan Sandage

He is an astronomer who made several discoveries concerning the "Cigar Galaxy" and wrote the article "A Scientist Reflects on Religious Belief"

John Polkinghorne

He is a particle physicist who wrote "Science and the Trinity" and won the Templeton Prize.

Owen Gingerich

He is an astronomer who teaches the History of Science at Harvard and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the International Academy of the History of Science

R. J. Berry

He is geneticist and a former president of the Linnean Society of London who wrote "God and the Biologist: Personal Exploration of Science and Faith"

Michał Heller

He is a mathematical physicist who writes on "Relativistic Physics" and "Non-Commutative Geometry". He also wrote "Creative Tension: Essays on Science and Religion" and won the Templeton Prize

Ghillean Prance

He is a botanist involved in the "Eden Project" and current President of "Christians in Science"

Donald Knuth

He is a renowned computer scientist and is known as the "Father of the Analysis of Algorithms". He wrote "The Art of Computer Programming"

Eric Priest

He is a mathematician and an authority on Solar Magnetohydrodynamics who won the George Ellery Hale Prize

Robert T. Bakker

He is a paleontologist who was an important player in the "Dinosaur Renaissance" and an advocate for the theory that some dinosaurs were warm-blooded

Joan Roughgarden

She is a biologist and Stanford professor who wrote "Evolution and Christian Faith: Reflections of an Evolutionary Biologist"

Kenneth R. Miller

He is a biology professor at Brown University who wrote "Finding Darwin's God"

Francis Collins

He is the director of the US National Human Genome Research Institute who wrote "The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief"

Simon C. Morris

He is a British paleontologist who studied the Burgess Shale fossils and was the co-winner of a Charles Doolittle Walcott Medal and also won a Lyell Medal

John T. Houghton

He is a professor of atmospheric physics and is co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He won a gold medal from the Royal Astronomical Society

Christopher Isham

He is a theoretical physicist who developed "HPO Formalism" and wrote "Physics, Philosophy and Theology"

Stephen C. Meyer

He is a geologist with a PhD in history and philosophy of science from Cambridge who cofounded the Discovery Center and co-wrote "Science and Evidence of Design in the Universe" and "Darwinism, Design, and Public Education"

Michael J. Behe

He is a biochemist and a professor at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania who coined the term "irreducible complexity" in his study of cellular structures. He wrote (or co-wrote) "Darwin's Black Box", "Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe" and the "The Edge of Evolution"

William Albert Dembski

He is a mathematician and statistician who taught at Baylor University and wrote "The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities" and "No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot Be Purchased without Intelligence"

Charles B. Thaxton

He is a physical chemist who holds a doctorate degree in the history of science from Harvard University. He wrote "The Mystery of Life's Origin" and "The Soul of Science".

Guillermo Gonzalez

He is an astrophysicist who studies the late stages of stellar evolution using spectroscopy, and he is also doing research on extrasolar planets. He wrote "The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos Is Designed for Discovery"

Paul Kwan Chien

He is a biologist known for his research on the physiology and ecology of intertidal organisms. He is a professor at the University of San Francisco where his research is centered on the transport of amino acids and metal ions across cell membranes as well as the detoxification mechanisms of metal ions. He wrote "The Cambrian Explosion: Biology's Big Bang" in "Darwinism, Design and Public Education"

Cornelius G. Hunter

He is a professor of biophysics at Biola University whose research is centered on nonlinear systems and molecular biophysics. He wrote "Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil", "Darwin's Proof: The Triumph of Religion Over Science", and "Science's Blindspot: The Unseen Religion of Scientific Naturalism"

Scott Minnich

He is a microbiologist who is studying the temperature regulation of Yestis enterocolitca gene expression and coordinate reciprocal expression of flagellar and virulence genes. He co-wrote and presented a paper to the Second International Conference on Design & Nature, entitled "Genetic Analysis of Coordinate Flagellar and Type III Regulatory Circuits"

Henry F. Schaefer, III

He is a computational and theoretical chemist who studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford University. He is a member of the International Academy of Quantum Molecular Science and is the Professor of Chemistry, Emeritus, at UC Berkeley

Geoffrey Simmons

He is a medical doctor and wrote "What Darwin Didn't Know: A Doctor Dissects the Theory of Evolution" and "Billions of Missing Links: A Rational Look at the Mysteries Evolution Can't Explain"

Wolfgang Smith

He is a mathematician, physicist, and a philosopher of science who has written extensively in the field of "Differential Geometry". He has either written or contributed to "Cosmos and Transcendence: Breaking Through the Barrier of Scientistic Belief" and "The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology: Contemporary Science in Light of Tradition"

Marcus R. Ross

He is a vertebrate paleontologist who contributed "The Cambrian Explosion: Biology's Big Bang" in "Darwinism, Design and Public Education"

That's quite a list of great thinkers, and it is only a very small representation of theists who have managed to retain a belief in God while deeply exploring the truths they have learned through reason and scientific observation. But these great thinkers have done more than simply hold on to their faith; it was their faith in the existence of an orderly and all-powerful God that established the foundation from which they knew that science could be done in the first place!

Theists hold that our universe is the product of an orderly and rational God and as such, must certainly follow the laws of this orderly and rational law giver. For this reason, we should expect the universe to submit to certain universal constants that can be observed and tested. Perhaps this is why so many great scientific thinkers have been Christians. And these Christians certainly understand the connection between faith and reason.



Jesus Understood the Connection

And the greatest of theistic thinkers was, of course, Jesus Himself. We don't tend to think of him as the smartest man who ever lived, but (as God Himself) that is exactly what he was (and is). Jesus understood the relationship between reason and faith. Over and over again he offered EVIDENCE that he was God and asked those who were watching to use their reason to connect the evidence to the truth.



John 10:37-38

"If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

Jesus gave us more than enough REASON to believe that He was who he said he was, and He never asked us to believe blindly. It's important for us to understand that when Jesus asks us to have faith in Him, he is asking us to accept what he says on the basis of the evidence that He has given us. The Christian Faith is a reasonable faith:

Unreasonable Faith

Believing in something IN SPITE of the evidence. We hold an unreasonable faith when we refuse to accept or acknowledge evidence that exists, is easily accessible and clearly refutes what we believe

Blind Faith

Believing in something WITHOUT any evidence. We hold a blind faith when we accept something even though there is no evidence to support our beliefs. We don't search for ANY evidence that either supports or refutes what we are so determined to believe

Reasonable Faith

Believing in something BECAUSE of the evidence. We hold a reasonable faith when we believe in something because it is the most reasonable conclusion from the evidence that exists

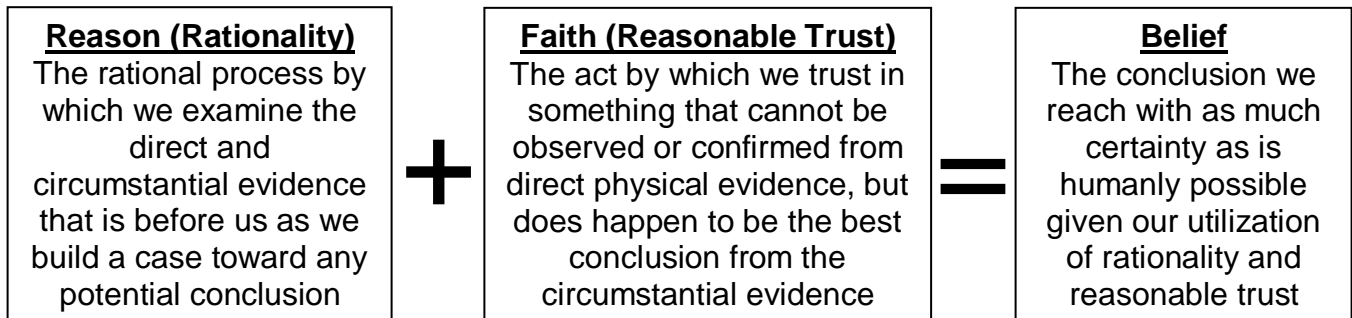
The Bible repeatedly makes evidential claims. It offers eyewitness accounts of historical events that can be verified archeologically, prophetically and even scientifically. We, as Christians are called to hold a REASONABLE FAITH that is grounded in this evidence.



How Reason and Faith Co-Exist

Now it's important to realize that theists are not the only people who employ 'faith' as they sort through and accept truth claims. All of us are comfortable accepting many propositions without clear or tangible definitive evidence. Trusting when you don't have perfect evidence; this is the substance of 'faith', this is what it means to move and rely on 'faith'. And all of us trust in something we cannot observe, or cannot confirm from direct physical evidence. As an example, both the theist and the atheist must trust in something they cannot see or confirm in order to explain the origin of life in the universe. Both sides may have good theories, both sides may build their case from the best circumstantial evidence available to them, but at the end of the day, both the theist and the atheist are going to have to place their confidence in something that cannot be observed or confirmed with direct physical evidence. Neither group was present at the point at which life began to observe the moment evidentially as eyewitnesses.

If we think of 'faith' in this way (as trusting in something that we cannot observe, confirm or demonstrate evidentially, even though other circumstantial evidence may make trusting 'reasonable'), then all of us exert some form of faith to accept and live within our worldviews. With this notion of 'faith' in mind, it is clear that we exercise both reason AND faith in order to come to a belief in ANYTHING:



Reason and faith are not enemies, they are essential partners as we do our best to observe, make sense of, and live in the world around us.



But, Can Fallen Humans Really Trust Their Own Rationality?

Many Christians take a very different view of reason and 'faith' than I have offered here. After all, doesn't the Bible teach that humans, in our fallen natural condition, will always deny the truth of the evidence they see related to the existence of God? Doesn't the Bible clearly teach that the 'natural man' is wicked and cannot apprehend the things of God? Look at some sample verses that are often used to make this case:



Romans 8:5-8

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the

mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.



Romans 1:18-24

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.



1 Corinthians 2:12-14

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.



John 6:44

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day"

Isn't the natural mind too depraved to understand the things of God? Aren't humans incapable of understanding the truth of God's existence unless God first acts to remove the intellectual barriers so they can see the truth? And if this is the case, isn't it futile for us to be sharing evidence with people who, in their 'natural' condition, are going to reject the truth anyway?

Well let's think about that for a second. While it is clear that no one comes to the Son unless the Father first draws them, and it is clear that our minds must first be renewed by God so that they can understand spiritual truths, it is also clear that these truths were delivered EVIDENTIALLY to eyewitnesses who then testified about them in the special revelation of the scriptures, and these truths are also available to us EVIDENTIALLY through the natural world that we live in. We observe and listen to the eyewitness accounts of scripture and to natural revelation using our empirical senses, and we appraise the evidence using our rational minds. Yes, God does 'flip the switch' and remove barriers that we construct to deny the truth, but He expects us to reason through the evidence once the switch has been flipped.



Live Above the Lies

When non-believers try to paint Christians as unthinking and irrational, they are simply trying to demonize those with whom they disagree. The truth is that while we may not agree on the conclusions reached by atheists, we theists HAVE used our reasoning powers in a rational way to look at the evidence. Not all atheists are rational, and not all Christians have been rational in their examination of the evidence either. But for

rational, evidential theists who are committed to studying the truth of their worldview, reason and rationality have been essential to our faith.