



## What is faith? Does belief require Warrant?

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This workshop will consider the relationship between faith and reason, what might count as evidence for religious claims, and the relationships between evidence, inference and particular claims. It will consider what is involved in being justified in claiming a certain belief such as the belief that God exists or that Jesus was raised from the dead. The apologetic relevance of this will also be discussed in light of the nature of Christianity's truth claims and the current intellectual movement away from Postmodernism.

### Workshop One: Does Belief Require Warrant?

Everybody has beliefs; however, the concept itself seems to be more recognized than understood. We have beliefs about our world, ourselves, others, and many other matters pertaining to life and death. **What we know is that we have beliefs and that we think our beliefs are a proper representation or expression of what is real and true.** Some of our beliefs seem more important to us than others. Some of our beliefs seem fairly well established while others are not so well supported. It seems that importance or risk has something to do with what we demand in terms of justification. For example, when we get on an airplane to cross the Atlantic, there are certain things for which we want assurance, such as does the amount of fuel stored exceed the amount of fuel needed and that in fact the plane will be able to fly. Beliefs on order seem fairly well established for us (those who are not the first ones to do this) both by experience and what is known about the physical laws of the universe. Other beliefs seem to be on a lower order, such as a belief that it will rain

tomorrow. One important factor in what we demand in terms of grounds for a belief relates to what we understand to be the risk involved. That is, what do I risk if I am wrong in my belief and what do I gain if I am right in my belief. Under normal conditions (that is, where belief and not instinct determines our actions) the greater the risk in terms of loss and gain, the stronger evidence demanded.

Furthermore, while there seem to be different order of beliefs concerning this world, there is a perceived difference between beliefs about this world and religious beliefs. There are many religious beliefs in the world, but what I have in mind for our discussion are the beliefs that are attached to Christianity. So, when the term 'religious belief' is used here, we will all know that I am talking about those beliefs affirmed by Christianity. Of course, what is true of Christianity in terms of beliefs will also pretty much hold for all religions, but our concern here are beliefs associated with Christianity. When speaking about religious beliefs, many think that religious beliefs are more difficult to justify and wonder if it is even possible. Others think that religious beliefs are of a different belief order and they simply do not require justification. For these people, religious beliefs are a matter of faith and are beyond the normal justification process. Then, there are others who think that not only is it possible to provide justification for religious beliefs, but that it is necessary to do so. Furthermore, that to offer justification is not contrary to faith, but necessary for faith. It is agreed that one may use different evidence to provide that justification, but that is different than claiming no justification is necessary.

Every religious belief claim moves in at least two directions. The first direction is personal. That is, if I make a belief claim (I claim this or that to be true) it is necessary that I consider that the belief has **good and sufficient** warrant for me to claim it as true. In this case, the truth level of the belief must be of such a magnitude that in my mind it requires some action on my part. That is, what the belief says about reality is true and if I do not act in accordance with that truth, then I am at tremendous risk. Furthermore, if I am persuaded of the truth and, therefore, moved to some action consistent with the belief, then there is some benefit or gain for me.

The second movement is in relation to others. As a Christian, if I am persuaded of the truth of my Christian beliefs, then to the degree that I share those beliefs with others, I do so with the intent that they too might be persuaded of the truthfulness of those beliefs. Whereas the risk factor is very high (determines where one spends eternity), they will undoubtedly require some good and sufficient evidence (reason) that might persuade them to belief. This is where apologetics enters. The Apostle Peter says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense (APOLOGIA) to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). In other words, we are to give reasons for our belief regarding our hope which means we must have reasons for such. This seems to be the pattern in the book of Acts. For example, Luke tells the story of the evangelistic work of the early church and he does so using such words as: 'dispute' in Acts 6:9,10; 19:8,9; 'reasoned' in Acts 18:4, 19; 24:25; 'persuade' in Acts 18:4; 19:26. The use of such words indicates activity that is best characterized as giving good and sufficient evidence within the format of proper argument building. This is because the early church, like the church today, spoke to a world that did not share its epistemological framework. Therefore, the new belief presentation required some evidence that it was true, thus persuading the hearer to reject one belief in order to accept another belief. We must remember that, often in presenting Christian beliefs, if a person is persuaded of the belief that God exists, for example, then that may also entail rejecting certain other beliefs. And we do know that religious beliefs of all kinds tend to be very tenacious.

The world to which we speak is not that much different from the world to which the Apostle Paul spoke. There is, however, one important difference---the twenty-first century has heard and rejected the claims of Christianity whereas in the first century the message was being heard for the first time. Our world presents us with two obstacles. The first is that the world generally has accepted the naturalistic explanation of reality. That means its range of knowledge denies anything beyond the natural. The second is that, even where religious beliefs are

acknowledged, they are not granted any reality status. So, when speaking to the present world, Christians must realize that often they must demonstrate that the claim that God exists is not first about religion, but reality. That is, the world is one way if God is the cause and quite another way if He is not. So, it is not just persuading people of one belief, it is persuading them against a contrary belief. They think their belief that God does not exist is true and the Christian thinks that his belief that God exists is true. Later we will see other conditions under which we try to persuade others of the truthfulness of the Christian beliefs.

As Christians we claim a certain truth value for our beliefs. For example, we think that our belief concerning the existence of God is right. But why it is right? So many times it is difficult for Christians to remember what it was like to think as an unbeliever. That is, because once we believe the Spirit indwells us and witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God (Ro. 8:16-17). This indwelling presence supplies an existential certainty to our beliefs. However, prior to believing, all we had was a cognitive certainty. When I say certainty, I do not mean absolute or (Cartesian type certainty), but rather good and sufficient reasons to belief something. Whatever ministry the Spirit of God has in the life of the unbeliever, and He does have a convicting ministry (Jn. 16: 7-11), it is not apart from a coherent message (Ro. 10: 14-18). Evidence (of some legitimate type and quantity) that is relevant to the claim seems necessary for the claim to have power to persuade of its truthfulness. The Apostle John, in writing his Gospel tells the reader, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and than believing you may have life in His name" (20-30-31). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives a summary statement concerning the early confirmation of the truthfulness of the message of salvation: "First to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will" (Heb. 2:3-4). The testimony of Scripture seems rather united on this notion that Christian beliefs are ground in good and sufficient evidence/reason. Therefore, we will talk about beliefs in general and then focus on Christian

beliefs and the role of evidence, justification and warrant in relation to those beliefs.

## Some Preliminary Definitions

It is always important to establish definitions for key concepts/terms before discussing the subject in which the concepts/terms are used. I will try to keep away from minute detail and cumbersome language. Some terms will receive more space than others, but that is either because they are more involved or they are more often misunderstood.

### Belief: (noun)

There are two different ways in which the word belief is used legitimately. One way is to use 'belief' as a noun to express something I think is true about reality. For example, I might say that I hold to the 'belief' **that** God exists. By saying this, I am saying only something about my view of reality, namely that it includes the existence of God. Of course there are other beliefs associated with that belief, such as what kind of God this is, what He can and cannot do and so forth. This use of the word 'belief' says nothing about any religious commitment. A second way 'belief' is used is to speak of a personal commitment. For example, I might say that I have belief **in** God. The latter expresses a personal commitment that is obviously predicated upon a confession of the first type. In our discussion, we are using the term 'belief' to point to the first usage.

### Believe: (verb)

The word 'believe' is, of course, closely associated with the term belief. In fact, the latter use of the term 'belief' is often expressed using the word 'believe'. For example, I might say that I 'believe' in God. I am telling you something about my belief commitments. In this case, not only do I think that God exists, but I have been persuaded to commit my life to Him. So, we use the term believe to speak of some personal commitment to a person or idea.

Second, we use the word 'believe' to indicate the possibility of error. For example, I might say, "I 'believe' I am telling you the truth." In this sense I am using the word 'believe' to indicate that I realize I could unintentionally be wrong. So, I am reflecting the fact that I recognize my knowledge

limitations and want you to know that I am fallible.

A third way that the word 'believe' is used is to indicate a degree of reasonableness. I might say, "I 'believe' a man walked on the moon. This is something I have not seen for myself, but there is no good reason to doubt the report. Furthermore, my mental disposition regarding this has no direct bearing on my daily life. This may also be called an opinion.

A fourth way the word 'believe' is used is to indicate 'believability'. Someone has shown me good and sufficient evidence/reason to justify the claim which I now believe. Here the word 'believe' is used to express the shape of some piece of reality. It may not call for any action on my part at that time. For example, may be I say that I believe that Jesus was a real historic person. That only says that I think that there is good reason to claim that Jesus really lived in first century Palestine. It seems that before there is any legitimate use of the word 'believe' in the first sense, there must be a condition reflected in the fourth usage of the word. That is, before I believe **in** God, there must be some 'believability' **that** God exists.

### The difference between believe and know

It is understood that you can believe anything, but you can only know what is true. So you can believe that the moon is made of cheese, but you cannot know that it is made of cheese. Therefore, when we are speaking about believing something in the Christian sense, we are also claiming knowledge. That is, we are claiming that our belief is true. That is to say, we think we are justified in holding to a certain belief because we think we have sufficient grounds for claiming it to be true. Furthermore, we think that this knowledge is important because it deals with the real state of affairs in areas of great importance. Therefore, Christians (and others) saying that their 'belief' is true, suggests there must be some grounds for such a claim. When Christians say they believe that God exists, they are saying more than just what they hope might be true. They are, in fact, saying that reality includes the existence of God. So while technically there is a difference between believe and know, the Christian is claiming truth in his statement of belief. So, we will agree at this point that when a Christian claims a certain belief

he is saying that it is a justified belief which means it has a strong truth value.

## Faith

Faith is a word that is often heard when Christians try to explain what they know or believe. However, it seems that there is considerable ambiguity in just how the word is used. Truly faith is a biblical word and important to the Christian way of living. We know the Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Furthermore, we are told that the "justified one shall live by faith" (Ro. 1:17). So there is no question that the Christian life is a life of faith. But, that does not tell us precisely what faith is.

The epistle to the Hebrews provides a description of faith as it says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Here it is affirmed that faith gives substance (assurance) of things hoped for. In the Christian sense, the concept of hope deals with something that has been told to be so, but as of yet has not been realized (Ro. 8:24-25). The rest of the verse in Hebrews says that faith is the evidence (proof) of things not seen. The verse is clear that faith is about what is not seen, and not about what is unknown. It could be said that faith is not an epistemological word, which is to say that we do not acquire new knowledge through faith. Instead, faith is a response to what is revealed. God reveals that there is a hope awaiting Christians---His coming kingdom. The hope itself has not yet been realized in its fullness, but because God has spoken on this subject, it is possible to acknowledge its reality before actually seeing it. It is faith in the word that has been given that assures the heart of the Christian that Christ will come. It is not that one knows it by faith, but that one believes he is justified in believing what God has said.

Faith requires an object. That is, faith itself has no power in and of itself. To illustrate this, consider the fact that many people have faith that good works will save them. In fact, they might have a lot of faith that this is the case, which is reflected in the fact they are busying doing good works. However, regardless of how much faith they might have, it avails nothing for them because the object of their faith (good works) is powerless to save. The legitimacy of faith is in the object of the

faith, not the amount of the faith. So, when a person is asked, "How do you know that Jesus is coming again?" He might say, "Well by faith." But that is only partly true. There are two ways in which 'know' could be used. First it is that I can know (be aware of the fact) because it has been revealed. If Jesus would never have said that He was coming again, there is no way that we could know that He is coming again. If we never knew He had promised He was coming again, there is no way we could have faith in His coming again. So, I could say, "I 'know' Jesus is coming again because it has been revealed that He is coming again." That would be using the word 'know' for simple awareness. But, there is more to it than this, because I am probably being asked about my 'belief' that He is coming again. In this case, 'know' refers to what I claim to be a true belief, not just awareness of some fact. I can believe He is coming again because He has claimed that He is coming again. So, I look at the facts of Jesus and the claim of His coming again and conclude there is good and sufficient reason to have faith in Jesus and His coming again. So, faith is not about 'knowing' in the sense of gaining new information. It is about my mental disposition towards the truthfulness of any claim made and my commitment to that person or idea which is the subject of the claim.

Any claim that is appealed to solely on the grounds of faith leaves the claim without any justification other than your own appeal to faith. Since, when used in this way, faith is totally an internal operation without criteria by which the claim can be verified, therefore, any claim that is justified solely by faith has no more merit than another claim made on the same grounds. It is true that no one can prove such a claim false, it is also true that it cannot be demonstrated to be true.

## **Faith has two elements**

I am using the word element in the sense of  $H_2O$  being what constitutes water. It takes both Hydrogen and Oxygen in proper portions and right circumstances to have water. You do not have water if only one of the elements is present. The combination of the two is different from the individual parts. So I believe it is with faith. The elements of biblical faith are: *Knowledge* and *Active Commitment* or we could call it *Assent to the Truth and Trust in the*

*Truth.* Knowledge: that is, faith always needs an object and it is the object that gives sufficiency to faith. First there is information and second there is commitment. Commitment without knowledge is blind and knowledge without commitment is empty. Reason enables us to understand the facts concerning the object of our faith. The words of revelation are intelligible. That is, we understand the content of the Scripture through our reason. It is through reason that we make sense of the claims by which we can determine if there is sufficient and good reasons for believing the claim is justifiably true. Then, if we believe the claim, we are now in a position to make a belief claim for which we can give warrant.

## **Where does it begin?**

It seems that belief is something that happens to us (I will say more about this in the other workshop). No one has to tell us when we hear something to make a judgment about it. It just comes natural to us. At some point in our lives we become aware of the fact that we have certain beliefs. At first, as children we do not think about our beliefs. For the most part they are handed to us from our parents or significant others around us. We might call these beliefs adopted beliefs. The beliefs that we have as children usually develop from thinking in very concrete forms. Often we find that, as we get older, those early beliefs do not square with reality, but we are not hurt by this because early on our beliefs do not play a large role in our survival. It is not until about the age of nine or so that many children begin to develop the ability to think in the abstract. As a result, their belief forming apparatus is more developed and on the whole, works rather well. We will talk about this later.

Once we begin the process of thinking about our beliefs and why we should believe such and such, we soon learn that beliefs are expressions of the way we think the world is. This includes matters of personal life as well as the cosmic structure of things. Furthermore, we learn that it is important not to believe everything we hear (we may have to learn this the hard way). So, we begin to realize that it is necessary to have some evidence or grounds to justify believing this or that. In fact, this is the mark of a discerning person. Otherwise he might be called gullible, which is not a compliment.

## **Why evidence and warrant are necessary**

Two people can look at the same evidence/facts and draw different inferences from it. In that case the two people may make different claims about or for the same facts. We must remember that fact/evidence is not self-interpreting. For example, how many different claims were made by those who saw Jesus on the Cross or how many different claims were made concerning the empty tomb? In each case different observers saw the same thing but drew different inferences leading to differing claims.

As already stated, a person can believe anything and all of us believe something. Some of our beliefs are held rather loosely because they have little or no direct bearing upon our lives, while other beliefs are more important to us and we hold them rather strongly. Some beliefs we hold onto strongly, not because of the evidence, but because of the importance of the belief itself to us existentially. Someone says that they believe that a lost child is still alive. There may be no evidence in favor of that belief; in fact, there may be considerable evidence against the belief. Nonetheless, the person still holds onto that belief and as a consequence will not get on with his/her life. In this case, the belief is not based on evidence, but rather on existential concerns. Eventually, the belief will collide with reality and either there will be an unhappy realization or a denial of the truth in order to hold on to the misbelief. We can think of many religious beliefs people hold onto without sufficient and good reason. So, in life it is important to make sure the beliefs for which we claim a high truth level are sufficiently justified.

When we speak of evidence there is a necessary connect with reason. Regardless of the type of evidence, it is reason by which the evidence is organized and applied in a relevant manner in order to yield justification. Evidence is what gives rise to the idea that something is a part of reality, making it justified for us to claim it as a belief. It is unwise to claim something to be true without sufficient grounds for making that claim. We can see the reason for this in many ways. Reasons for a belief being justified involve several things.

## **The process**

At some point we receive new information (this can be from any number of sources, that is, any source from which we understand that we receive information) we must ask ourselves if this is a belief that belongs to another person, or if this is just facts/evidence and we are to form our own belief. Assuming it is the first, then it is a matter of asking what justification that person has for his belief. We then ask him for his justification. If, on the other hand, we are simply the recipients of certain facts or evidence that another is using to convince us of some belief claim, we must first consider the evidence. It does not really make any difference which one we look at as the process is still the same, it is only whether we are building to a claim or asking another to tell us how he justified his claim.

We begin with evidence. Let us say that the claim is that God exists. You would then look at the evidence on which the claim was based. The evidence is that there is something rather than nothing. Supporting that, is the evidence from cause and effect. Someone might agree, but would want to know how one gets from the evidence that there is something rather than nothing to the claim that God exists. At that point, it is realized that certain inferences have been drawn from the evidence. So, now it is necessary to supply warrant for making the inferences that were drawn which ended in the conclusion that God exists. Someone might object and say that just because something exists does not necessarily mean it had to have a cause. My response is that whereas an actual infinite is impossible and, whereas, if the universe were eternal it would have reached the state of maximum equilibrium, I conclude that it must have had a beginning. Now my warrant for inferring a cause for the universe has been established, but what is the warrant for calling that cause God. Certainly other inferences by others have also been drawn from the same evidence and even have led to contrary claims. So, now I must give warrant for my inference that God is the cause.

Maybe the following warrant would be offered. You will notice several warrants working together. First, you can never end up with more than you started. Since we are now sure that we have both personal/rational beings as well as immaterial things, it is necessary to begin at least with something that is personal and

rational. Furthermore, whereas what I see exists, is contingent, I know that a contingent thing cannot be the cause of its own existence. Therefore, I conclude that the personal, rational being is a necessary being. By necessary, I mean that He must have all knowledge and so forth. If my warrants are at least sound, then it is reasonable to conclude that the claim that God exists is justified. Both the evidence and the inferences drawn from the evidence are justified.

The belief that God exists, of course, is very important and belief in God is even more important. Furthermore, before one can be persuaded to believe in God, he must be persuaded that it is believable that God exists. On matters of such grave importance, one must make sure that his belief is justified on some legitimate grounds. The risk is extremely great. Moreover, in speaking to others of this message we often are calling them to give up some of their beliefs in order to accept a new belief. We must not underestimate the emotional and intellectual struggle this involves. If we expect others to move to belief that God exists and eventual to belief in that God, then we must be willing and ready to give them reasons that would be persuasive to the end that such a radical and important change might take place.

### **What counts as grounds for justification.?**

There are now two questions before us. The first concerns the matter of what counts as grounds for justification. The second deals with the issue of whether all people require the same amount of reasons/evidence as others. We will begin with the first one: What counts as grounds for justification?

*Experience:* broadly speaking, this involves taste, sight, touch and hearing. We have several of these in the first chapter of I John. In speaking of the disciples' experience with Jesus, John writes, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life" (1:1). Here John uses three of the sense modes: hearing, seeing, and touching as verification that what he is about to say is verifiable. In other words, experience is valid grounds for justification of a claim. You ask me how I know---I saw it, I heard it, I touch it, I smelled it. I understand that it

is possible that we can make a false judgment on the basis of our sense experience. For example, if I drink orange juice immediately after brushing my teeth it appears that there is something wrong with the orange juice. However, we know that this is not the case. I think that most of us recognize that sense experience is generally trustworthy and when it is not we seem to know that something is up. In fact, we are able to use our reason to adjust for most misjudgments. Of course, sense experience does not stand by itself, as we need reason to organize, classify and make connections with other data. We need our memory as well. So, while sense experience never stands alone, it is certainly a legitimate source of justification as part of the entire process of our mental complex.

Reason: Here we would say that a person might say he is justified in believing something because he has reasoned to this position. Here we are speaking about the process whereby a person reasons to a certain conclusion by drawing inferences from certain data/evidence. Of course, it is a little difficult to keep reasons and experience separate, but they are. Reasoning here is used in the sense of what we have as a result of logic. As long as the reasoning process falls within the canons of logic we could say that a person is justified in believing something on such grounds.

Authority: We often use authority as a justification for believing something. But here we must be careful, as there are two types of authority. One is what can be called **authority of expertise**. In this case authority is understood in the sense that the person is well-studied and counts as an expert in some area. This is a shortcut, so to speak, for in this case we depend upon the experience of another. An example of this would be accepting the word of an astrophysicist concerning black holes. Authority, however, can also be used in another way and this one can be problematic. This is **authority of position**. Here, a person is the authority because he is at the top, so to speak. He is top in rank. One can see rather quickly that, although this is often used, it is not very reliable grounds in and of itself. That is, a person may be in charge, that is the head of some organization, but that does not mean he is an authority. A person, for example, might be the head of an educational institution, but that does

not mean he is an expert in matters of education. More likely he is well versed in organization and fund raising. Often celebrities are used to speak on various social or political issues in order to convince the viewing audience of some position. However, just because a sports celebrity, for instance, knows a lot about baseball, that does not mean he is an authority in other areas.

So, authority is a legitimate source of verification as long as it observes certain criteria. In fact, Christians think that the disciples are legitimate authorities on the life and words of Jesus. Furthermore, they think that the Bible is a legitimate authority on matters of God and life. But something is not an authority just because we say it is an authority. We must have reason to believe that the source is in a position to speak with accuracy on the subject in question. Authority of this type would also include eyewitness accounts.

Intuition: This is another controversial concept. It is used in at least two different ways. One way is something like what is called the 6th sense. It is undefined and ambiguous and somewhat mystical. I personally think this is rather suspect and does not provide adequate grounds for justification of any belief or knowledge claim. It has no means of verification, is highly subjective, and one's intuition serves no better than another person's intuition. And when there are contrary claims, there are not means of adjudication.

However, there is another way that we use intuitive. This way is for sort of seeing relationships between the particulars within the big picture because of our familiarity with the subject. I have used the word gestalt for this type of intuition. It is when you have such knowledge and familiarity with a particular subject that you see certain things that it takes others some time to figure out. Let's say that we have a person who works on automobiles and he is training a young man in the trade. You take your car in and to have it fixed. The older man asks the younger man to find the problem. After some time the young man seems frustrated so the older man steps in and directs the young man to the problem. The young man is amazed that he simply knew it intuitively. That type of intuition seems to me to be acceptable and could be grounds for a belief claim. Nonetheless, it seems rather limited in use, but should be included here.

## **Are reasons a one-size-fits-all proposition?**

For purposes of the present discussion, we will use the notion of evidence and reason interchangeably. That is, we could ask what reasons a person has for a belief claim or what evidence he has for a belief claim. What is interesting is that not everybody has the same need for the same reasons (evidence) or the same amount of reasons (evidence). This will facilitate our discussions here as we consider why it is that reasons/evidence impact different people differently.

First, not all people we confront with the truth claims of the Gospel are of the same personal make up. That is, they may have a different personality make-up, different beliefs, a totally different world view, or different experiences just to mention a few. So, what may be persuasive to one may not be persuasive to another. Second, individual belief predicaments vary from person to person. For example, when it comes to sharing the truth claims of Christianity with others, different people may be resistant for different reasons.

### Different mental make-up requires different reasons

To speak of a particular set of reasons or kinds of evidence that should be persuasive in all cases seems wrong-headed to me and out of touch with humanity. What counts as persuasive for one, might not be persuasive to another, and in some cases no amount of reasons or evidence will be sufficient to persuade of the basic Christian belief claims. In the latter case the problem will not be with the reasons or evidence, but with the a priori commitment of the hearer. For one reason or another, maybe because the thought of giving up one belief for another seems so risky or it might result in some personal cost, these people will simply reject any reasons or evidences given. This happened on Mars Hill in Acts 17. But we will only recognize that this is a reality, we will not spend any time discussing this. Instead, we will look at the fact that not all reasons or evidence work the same way with all people. For example, the Philippian jailor apparently did not require a lot of reasons to believe, however, many on Mars Hill were not moved to faith in Christ by a number of reasons.

(Everybody has a little different cerebral make-up). While it appears that on the average we all have the same cognitive/mental complex which includes the mind, the will, the emotion, the memory, the conscience and so forth. However, due to experiences and other cultural influences we do not necessarily all think in the same categories. For example, someone coming from the west may think in terms of thesis-antithesis where the law of non-contradiction is the basis for his cognitive process. However, some one from the east may think more in terms of synthesis and is not bothered by present contradictions. Furthermore, our individual experiences have an affect on how we think and what we think is important. All of this and more shapes how information is processed and beliefs are formed or rejected.

(Everybody is different, by virtue of environment, genes, and education). While this is similar to what has just been said, it expands the notion. We see how Jesus gave different reasons under different circumstances. Jesus gave the woman at the well (Jn. 4) some very strong evidence that He was the One who was the promised Messiah. However, that was already acknowledged by Nicodemus, so Jesus gave him different reasons (Jn. 3). Jesus appealed to the authority of the Old Testament in dealing with Nicodemus and that seems appropriate for one who acknowledged both the authority and content of the Old Testament.

(Some people tend to be more visual). In this case, physical evidence or demonstration will be more influential in their thinking process. An example of this would be Thomas, the Apostle, who would not believe the resurrection had taken place “unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (Jn. 20:25). It is instructive to note that Jesus gave him what he required and did not criticize him for his request.

(Some people are more oriented to rational argument). For these people, it is the logic of the argument that persuades them. It seems that those at Corinth were of this disposition, as the Bible says that Paul “reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and

Greeks" (Acts 18: 4). Now, it should be pointed out, that in any case, it is never exclusively empirical evidence or rational argument. All that is being said here is that different people process differently and require different types of evidence/reasons.

Individual belief predicaments vary from person to person. In this case, what determines the type of evidence or reasons is dictated by the spiritual predicament of the person to whom you are speaking. By this I mean that not everybody is struggling with precisely the same thing. Consider the following:

(People often may have incorrect prior knowledge [Acts 19:1-4]). In this situation, it may be that the person has heard of Christianity, but what he has heard is not true Christianity. In this case one must give the evidence or reasons for the individual to consider a corrected understanding of Christianity.

(People have concluded that Christianity is not true). In this case the task of persuasion requires evidence or reasons that must not only show why Christianity is true, but also why contrary beliefs are false.

(People may have the correct information, but lack proper understanding [Acts 8: 28-38]. In this case, the evidence or reason needed is to give a proper understanding. This will require a particular kind of evidence or reason.

(People may have correct prior knowledge, but assign no value to it [1 Kings 18 & 19]). If this is the case, then one can see that different warrant may be needed as the individual has drawn some improper inferences from the evidence. Maybe they have witnessed how some believers have conducted themselves and, although they have the correct information, they have concluded that it has no value.

## Conclusion

All beliefs rest on some warrant. The justification of the belief as knowledge depends on the preponderance of the evidence. So, a claim that God exists must rest on some evidence that is considered legitimate. That does not mean that a person may claim to hold a belief that does not

rest on good primary evidence. In that case, the belief may arise out of some personal need. For example, a mother may say that she believes her daughter is alive when all the evidence points to the contrary. This is a belief of a different order. It is what we might call a psychological belief as opposed to an epistemic belief.

Although all epistemic beliefs rest on evidence, it is not the same for every person. Some people require more and some fewer reasons (evidence) to believe a claim. But if one thinks about it seriously, it will become obvious that all beliefs have some evidential basis. The evidence may be strong or weak, but it is there.