

## What is 'Faith?'=

= assent ( belief?)

= trust

= commitment – devotion

## What is 'Reason' / 'Rationality'?

= Consistent and coherent thinking

= Assent-in-proportion-to-evidence thinking

## Faith – Reason Relations:

### 1. Affirm Reason – Reject faith (example: Evidentialism)

**W.K. Clifford:** "It is always wrong, everywhere, for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."

**Bertrand Russell:** "I would tell God [on 'Judgment Day'] I did not believe because there was not enough evidence."

### 2. Affirm Faith – Reject Reason (Fideism)

**Tertullian:** "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?" (Nothing!) – "I believe because it is absurd."

**Soren Kierkegaard:** "subjective truth" – "infinite passion vs. reason" – "leap of faith"

**Mark Twain:** "Faith is believing what you know ain't so."

### 3. Reason-ing as the basis of Faith-ing

**Thomas Aquinas:** God as creator is known by reason , then God as triune is known by faith. (?)

**Christian apologists** who seek to prove that Jesus rose from the dead / "was God" based upon historical arguments

### 4. Faith-ing as the basis of Reason-ing

**Anselm:** "I believe in order that I may understand."

**Alvin Plantinga:** belief in God as a 'properly basic belief'

### 5. Faith / Reason in Conflict

- Resulting in "cognitive dissonance"
- Faith / Reason tension and 'dialectic' where each continues to challenge the other?

## **Belief Orientations (Strategies)**

(based upon a distinction by William James in “the Will to Believe”)

	<b><u>Gain Truth</u></b>	<b><u>Avoid Error</u></b>
<b>Highest Value:</b>	believe P, if P is true	not believe P, if P is false
<b>Fear:</b>	not to believe P, though P is true	believe P, though P is false
<b>Acceptable Risk:</b>	believe P, though P is false	not believe P, though P is true
<b>Burden of proof</b>	less strict	more strict
<b>Give ‘benefit of doubt’?</b>	yes	no
<b>Welcome Result</b>	more true beliefs	fewer false beliefs
<b>Unwelcome Result</b>	more false beliefs	fewer true beliefs

It should be obvious that it will be easier for one who embraces the ‘gain truth’ orientation to believe in God and more difficult for one who embraces the ‘avoid error’ orientation to believe in God. The former is more “credulous” and the latter is more “skeptical.” The former requires less evidence (less strict burden of proof) and the latter requires more evidence (more strict burden of proof). The former will give the benefit of the doubt to God’s existence if there is insufficient evidence and the latter will not give the benefit of the doubt to an insufficiently evidence-supported claim.

**Question:** Is it “More important to believe in God, given the possibility that God does exist?”

OR

Is it “More important not to believe in God, given the possibility that God does not exist?”