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A Christian Worldview Understanding of Doubt

By Freddy Davis

There are a lot of people who are not Christians who have doubts about the Christian faith – and for a lot of different reasons. Some doubt because they hear other non-Christians give convincing arguments and just believe them. Some doubt because they simply don't want to believe in the first place. They have beliefs or a lifestyle that contradicts Christian values and don't want to give them up. Some doubt because they say they don't see any evidence that God exists.

But even many Christians have doubts about the truth of the Christian faith. Many of them hang onto their faith, but have a nagging sense that maybe God doesn't exist in the first place.

In fact, I even did an internet search on professional Christian apologists to see what they had to say about the subject and found some interesting results. Did you know there are some who, while they solidly believe in Christ, will not express their confidence at 100%? Some will simply affirm that the evidence for the truth of the faith is overwhelmingly strong, but can't say absolutely. Others even give a probability in terms of percentage. This doesn't mean they are about to give up their faith, but it does indicate a certain level of doubt. These answers also give at least a little bit of a nod that supports naturalistic worldview beliefs. But what about the average person?

Sadly, there are a lot of people who, when they were younger, were very gung-ho about their faith in Christ. But at some point something happened to shake their confidence and they walked away from Him. Of course, I'm not in a position to judge their soul. Only God can do that. But the phenomenon does exist.

Of course, the Bible does talk about falling away from the faith. 1 Timothy 4:1 says, *"But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons."* Then there is Hebrews 3:12 that admonishes believers to, *"Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God."*

Different Christians interpret these verses in various ways. Some account for the problem by suggesting that those who "fall away" never actually knew Christ in the first place. There are others who say falling away is something that is done by virtue of a free will decision to choose another belief. Or maybe there is some other justification. Whatever the case, doubt is at play.

Dan Barker is the co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). It is an Atheist organization dedicated to promoting the principle of separation of church and state. They are all the time suing various government entities and other organizations for things such as posting the 10 Commandments, praying in public meetings, and the like.

Barker grew up in a Christian environment and became a musician and evangelical minister. He even served as pastor in a Pentecostal church for several years – both preaching and performing church music professionally.

However, at some point he began to question some of his core beliefs. Over time he became convinced that the Bible was not divinely inspired, and that what it taught could not be justified logically. He finally came to the point where he felt he could no longer in good conscience preach the gospel, so he resigned from the ministry. Following that, he embraced Atheism and later joined FFRF. He eventually became its co-president.

My personal experience was different from his. I also grew up in a Christian environment and accepted Christ when I was in high school. When taking a biology class, we inevitably came to the unit on evolution. The teacher didn't try to convince the class that it was true, but she did teach it "as if" it were true. And I will tell you, I struggled with that. I intuitively knew that if evolution was true, the Bible could not be. But I came out in a different place from Mr. Barker. After some very deep digging, I came to see the genuine flaws in evolutionary theory and my faith ultimately came out even stronger.

But there is something going on these days. There is a phenomenon happening called deconversion or the ex-Christian movement, and there are a lot of people who identify with this point of view. These folks even have their own websites and social media groups. They are people who, for whatever reason, used to be connected to Christianity, but have fallen away.

So how does that happen? It happens when false beliefs somehow become believable to an individual and the Christian faith loses its believability. But what causes that?

A person's understanding of what is real and what is fantasy is called their worldview. Formally it is defined as the assumptions people make about the nature of reality. This definition tells us two things.

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First, a person's worldview beliefs are just that – beliefs (assumptions). There is no way to empirically prove any faith system. (This is particularly a problem for the atheistic Naturalism that dominates modern society as that belief is built on the assumption that science can ultimately lead to an understanding of everything that exists.) Every worldview is defined by how it understands three things – the structure of ultimate reality, the nature of a human being, and the ultimate a person can get out of this life. Interestingly, none of these questions can even be addressed by science. They are all derived by faith – for every belief system in existence.

Second, this definition tells us that people determine for themselves what is real and what is fantasy based on how they answer those three questions. One implication of that is that if something is believed to be fantasy, it is not even considered a possible true belief. A second implication is that what they do consider real is essentially an unconscious belief. There is no sense that it even needs to be justified.

So, doubt comes about when a person's understanding of reality gets challenged in a way that a different set of beliefs comes to seem possible. And that can happen when people are not able to consciously justify their own beliefs. And the truth is, most people are not able to do that – including Christians.

In modern society, naturalistic worldview beliefs are so dominant that virtually every societal institution is dominated by it – education, news media, arts and entertainment, government, business, family, and even many churches. This belief dominates our societal environment and is so pervasive that it is hardly even noticed by most people. They just unquestioningly accept it as true. And since, as a worldview belief, it is unconscious, it bumps up against our Christian beliefs and makes people uncomfortable without them realizing what is even going on.

As a result, when people who hold non-Christian beliefs are able to give what seems like a reasonable explanation for their beliefs, it can make people who don't solidly know their own beliefs have doubts.

Often, for instance, Atheists will claim that "science proves their beliefs are true, and that Christians can't back up their beliefs with any kind of scientific proof." If Christians don't consciously recognize that:

- a) science can't prove Atheism either (and that it is not based on science)
- b) their Christian beliefs do have proof (even though it is not scientific proof)

... they are subject to allowing doubt into their thinking.

o what is necessary to address this problem? What is necessary is for Christians to understand the nature of faith in general, and the objective reality of their Christian faith.

God is an objectively real person who can be known in an objectively real personal relationship – even though He cannot be detected by empirical science. He has revealed Himself to mankind in numerous ways. First, He reveals Himself personally when we enter a personal relationship with Him by faith in Jesus Christ. Sometimes that is accompanied by feelings, but not always. Since we are made in God's image as spiritual beings (even though housed in a physical body), we can interact with Him personally. And, by our spirit we know it when we do because He exists as an objectively real person. God has also re-

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vealed Himself in the Bible. That is how we can know His will and His ways.

No other faith system has that. Every other one in existence has logical flaws and can't be backed up by their own requirements. When we truly know God, we can have total confidence because our beliefs do correspond to our experience of God, and there is no contradiction.

There are two things to do to quash doubt. One is to make sure that your personal relationship with God is genuine and active. When you spend time with Him in prayer and in the Word, the personal affirmation of His reality becomes increasingly strong. The second thing is to truly get up to speed regarding the basic foundation of your Christian faith. If Christians can get these two things right, doubt will increasingly become less of a problem.