

TWO OPINIONS

AIM To advocate for polarizing theology

REASON I'm tired of limping

SR Heb. 11:1-3, 6 Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. [v. 2] For by it the men of old gained approval. [v. 3] By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. [v. 6] And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

1John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.

SUMMARY **If Yahweh is the God, follow Him!**

PRAYER

INTRO **1 Kings 18:17**—“And it came about, when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said to him, “Is this you, you troubler of Israel?” Ahab is into attack mode. Elijah is the troublemaker. If it hadn't been for Elijah the countryside would be green and every Israelite would be seated under, and plucking grapes from his own vine, and shaking down figs from her own fig tree. If it hadn't been for Elijah the rivers and the brooks would be singing and all the Esaus of the land would be bagging big game. But instead of that the earth and its carcasses rot, and Obadiah is out hunting for water, before the last horses collapse and Ahab has to walk to work. Elijah is the troublemaker. Yahweh is my God is his name and that's the trouble.

The trouble is people walking around with God's name written on their forehead. The trouble is people unafraid to call sin by its right name. The trouble is people ready to stand for the right though the heavens fall. To stand for the right before the king and his court, and his consort and her pagan priest father, and all the Canaanite imports into the land that God had commissioned His people to clean up and occupy. 'Drive out the Canaanites,' He said. Canaanites, Amorites, Perizzites, parasites and all. If they would diligently obey Him He would overflow their barns and their storerooms (Deut. 28:1-8). If not, "those whom you let remain of them *will become* as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land in which you live" (Num. 33:55).

But Ahab had found a better way. Be nice to them, win their confidence enough to get them to marry you, then bid them follow you to your church—your country, I mean, to set up standards they are comfortable with, and the faith they live by, faith in a god who gave them their rain—he was the weather god; who gave them their grain—he was the son of Dagan [*dagan* means grain]; and a god who had received authority from the head of the pantheon to rule—Jezebel's Baal was son of the ancient El. If Baal wasn't three in one at least he could multitask—three things at once. And besides, he had a divine father.

How did they get rain and grain from him? There was a process. And his devotees were actively involved in the process. You worshiped at the high places. Worship was a very practical, and a highly symbolic matter. Male and female engaged as best they could, on a human plain, in what they understood Baal to do when he sent the rain. Rain was Baal inseminating the earth so it could produce. So you did the same thing in the high places. That was church. What was there about that to be mad about?

But Elijah was mad. Elijah, you see, didn't believe in Baal, he believed in Yahweh. Okay, fine, Elijah, you keep your Yahweh and leave us our Baal. To each her own. What is the trouble with that? The trouble with that is that both your Baal and my Yahweh make the same claim. You and Baal claim that every bird and bee, and flower and tree, and mountain and sea, and coffee [i.e. postum] and tea, and you and me come from evolution—Baal, that is. Yahweh and I claim that in six days He made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the Sabbath day, blessed, sanctified, and gave it to us in perpetuity as the testimony to His creative authority. Both of those cannot be right. And I'm tired of limping: **1 Kings 18:21**— And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people did not answer him a word. Can you

think of any reason why the people wouldn't answer? What would they say? Elijah had asked them a pretty difficult question. What was Elijah's question? How long? What did he expect the people to answer? 'Well, we intend to be here for the next two days. We're leaving on Sunday to go back to Wildwood and Kibidula.' Did he think it was an OCI retreat they were attending? What kind of question is that? 'Well, we'll be here for the next two weeks, but we come here every year—Colorado is a beautiful place to spend a vacation.'

What were the people supposed to say? He put them on the spot. And putting them on the spot was the last thing they were prepared to handle. Why? Because their very status quo, their very sense of equilibrium, depended on not standing up for anything specific. Notice Elijah's wording: How long are you going to be hesitating like this? The word for hesitate is a rather astonishing word. The noun form of this root makes its appearance on the lips of God in a message to Moses for all God's people (Ex. 12:11). God is talking about getting out of Egypt. He is going to get you out of Egypt and this is going to be the climactic moment, and everybody is to prepare for it by eating. They are beginning a new life. This is the beginning of their calendar. This is going to be their first month. And on the 10th day of this month everybody, according to their family size, is to settle on a lamb. Small

families can share their lamb because nobody is to be left out; but we don't want extravagance and waste either. Because what you don't eat you'll have to burn. You aren't to put it in the refrigerator to make sandwiches in the morning. So. They're choosing a flawless, young male sheep or goat, and they're keeping it for four days. Then on the 14th they'll kill it at twilight, sprinkle some of the blood on the entranceway to their house, roast the flesh, and eat it with bitter herbs that same night. They're to eat as if they're going somewhere. Get dressed and put on your hat, grab your walker and hold it with one hand; eat the lamb and the bitter herbs with the other hand, and eat quickly. What is this all about, Moses is wondering. So the Lord tells him:

Ex. 12:11, and this is where the noun appears for the first time. In other words, the name of this thing is a God name. And what is its name? "It is the Lord's Passover."

Passover is about going somewhere with the Lord, and behaving as though you're going somewhere. Passover is about going somewhere because the Lord has made the way; you haven't seen it yet, but it's there. And when it opens up you'll be ready to move. Passover is about doing what God says to do, no ifs, ands, or buts. Passover is for everybody, and everybody is to make sure everybody else is included. Nobody is to be left out because they are poor; and nobody is to gorge because they can afford.

Class and status distinction have no place here. Share with your neighbor if she needs and you have enough. And make sure the blood is all over the entranceway—at the top, and on both sides; and stay inside the door. Bloody up the door and stay inside. Why? Why, why, why? Why the participation, the sharing, the dressing up, the hurrying up, the bloodying up, the staying inside? Why? Because sometime soon (v. 12), God is coming through: “For I will go through the land of Egypt, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD.”

I want to register something here, and I want to do it sensitively—which is absolutely not my gift. So pray for me right now, even as I say it. Passover is not of human invention. Passover is not a thing emerging out of the mists of the hoary past, and surviving civilization to become established and venerated by a certain group of people as part of their tradition. Passover came to be called Passover because the Lord named it so. And the proper identification according to that original attribution is “the Lord’s Passover.”

Did I get that right? God grant. It is not an American thing, or a communist thing. It is the Lord’s thing. And it is a faith thing—you are acting on something you have not seen and something that has seemed impossible for 430 years. But you behave as though it is going to happen

now! And it is a life or death thing. You step outside that door daddy, or firstborn, no matter how much blood you may have put on it, and you're in trouble. Daddy and firstborn symbolize seed and generations. Everybody. God was always trying to make clear that it is only through Him that anything is possible—including conception. That's what circumcision is about—life and the means of live are holy; existence is to be wholly lived for God. And that's what swearing was about too—"put your hand under my thigh" (Gen. 24:2—Abraham; 47:29—Jacob). Whatever you say now is a matter of life and God, or death and evil. In fact you didn't even have to swear for it to be a matter of eternity. When Esau brought his venison to Isaac to receive the birthright it was gone already. Isaac could have said, *well, Jacob fooled me so what I said doesn't count any more*. That's not how you saw it back then. My word is permanent once I speak it. I don't get vindicated because the grand jury couldn't find anything to charge me with. My word is my integrity.

Back to Passover. The noun appears. God speaks it. Then He uses the verb to say what He will do. And the verb of God passing through is the verb Elijah uses in 1 Kings 18:21 to curse the vacillation and pusillanimity of the nation of Israel. I told you it's an astonishing word. So if God can do it why is Israel blighted for doing it? Why does Israel need to get out of what God

is into? Why? Well, for one thing, God is going somewhere. Israel isn't going anywhere. For another, God is going to destroy. Is that what Israel wants? For another, God knows what He is doing; Israel has no clue. A form of this same root gives us the word 'lame', and in a context that shows how God feels about what Israel is engaged in right now: Tell Aaron that none of his descendants who is lame is to officiate at my altar. They have a defect (Lev 21:16-21). That is discrimination. Yes, I know. And God knows too. But He's got to find some way to say that Jesus is perfection. All the symbols He uses will be limited if they are human. But we may either read the Bible to complain about patriarchy, slavery, and ethnic cleansing, or we can get the point that we are a lame and limping mess and Jesus is the only answer to our weakness and our mess. Truth is, that the range of meaning of the word we're looking at stretches from leaping to limping. And whether Israel is jumping or dragging they aren't going anywhere. They are here, then they are there. Then they are here again. Between two opinions: between going and coming; between leaving and staying; between Egypt and Canaan; between life and death. And they cannot say how long they'll be like this.

Postmodernism has given wonderful philosophical validity to limping between opinions. No more grand, dictating, controlling narratives.

Everybody can have her own story, or variety of stories for their varieties of situations; and find a way to believe in everyone. No more need for labeling. Even the philosophy itself doesn't have a name. You thought Postmodernism was the name of something? What does "postmodernism" identify you as? The word only means 'we are the people who come after the people before us.' Before them there was something called modernism. It was scientific. Everything was going to be measured, evaluated, cut, probed, heated, melted, numbered, disemboweled, and summarized in 7 words. Then it turned out we couldn't do that. So we found a place for God. The Christian theologians did. Science tells us what is actually going on. And God tells us the rest. Science shows us how things happen. And religion tells us God does them.

I always say I have no quarrel with the real atheist. Richard Lewontin helps me explain why. Lewontin is higher up the food chain than people like Stephen Jay Gould in the field of evolutionary biology [Gould is just better known for his writing]. So Lewontin should know. Here's what he says:

Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons," in *The New York Review of Books*, reviewing Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, Jan 9, 1997:

Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific

community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism.

It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.

Evolution is a theory that life is meaningless—without any original purpose, and without any mind to have given it purpose and direction. So evolution uses careful intelligence and rigorous logic to prove that nothing makes sense. And they want you to credit their intelligence for proving that life is an accident. And the Christian? “Yes, yes,” says the Christian, “your observations about how life proceeds are accurate. But no, no! It is not an accident. God does it. Yes, yes, there is evidence of chaos from the start. But no, no, it’s not really chaos. That is the work of our God of love. If there is anybody who expresses the height and depth of postmodernism’s all-embracingly wonderful absurdity it is theistic evolution—halting, vacillating, limping between two opinions. We need to believe in God because we are, well, believers. But we need to make sure people know that we are on the side of science or else people will laugh at us. Well, the scholars are laughing you to scorn:

Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2009), 85:

Those who have yielded, not without a struggle, to the overwhelming evidence of evolution are now trying to award themselves a medal for their own acceptance of defeat. The very magnificence and variety of the process, they now wish to say, argues for a directing and originating mind. In this way they choose to make a fumbling fool of their pretended god. And make him out to be a tinkerer, an approximator, and a blunderer, who took eons of time to fashion a few serviceable figures and heaped up a junkyard of scrap and failure meanwhile. Have they no more respect for the deity than that?

1 Kings 18:21— And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people did not answer him a word. I’m tired of limping, sisters and brothers. It’s time to stand up straight and tall, whether you’ve got legs or not. You can take a stand for God with Elijah, and repudiate atheistic infiltration into the ranks of God’s creation celebrating, new earth anticipating remnant people: “If Yahweh is the God, follow Him!” (1 Kings 18:21). Notice how pointed Elijah’s theology is—positive, pointed, powerful, and polarizing. Elijah thinks and speaks of deity with the definite article. I looked up 20 versions and found 4 [*NET Bible, Dios Habla Hoy, Nueva Version Internacional, La Bible du Semeur*] that acknowledge Elijah’s definite article. Because what Elijah says is intolerably discriminating and exclusionary: If Yahweh is the God, follow Him! If Yahweh is the God the rest of them are something else that is not god. Israel must know, whatever else they wish to give their allegiance to, that it is not worth worshipping. They must know that the time has come to stop the

charade, time to stop the farce, time to quit the vacillation and multiple opinions, time to stop limping.

OCI and friends, there are people all around you living with systematized explanations about how the universe began, about how you got here, about how to survive and progress and advance and succeed. And their explanations are based on generations of genius, continuously repeated observation, and vast resource investment. And their theories run the world. Society's intelligentsia subscribe to them. Just like with Elijah. Israel's established authorities, its royal upper crust, and the masses by the numbers, accepted and bowed to the prevailing theory. People lived and prospered, or starved to death, according to Baalist theories on why drought happened, where rain came from, and the mechanism for causing it [sexual orgies in hillside groves]. The difference between Israel's Baalists and today's godless scientists is perhaps little more than that in Elijah's time they didn't argue that it was a religion.

But today on the mountain, Elijah will confound the Baalists with a test that is outside the scope of their laboratories, because he knows that there is nothing outside the scope of Yahweh's capacity and responsibility. How about you? Do you know of a test that is outside the scope of science's laboratories? I know you believe that God is omnipotent. I know that you

believes, unlike Martha, that Jesus does care. But do you know of a test that is outside the scope of science's laboratories? Is it available to you? Are you ready to use it?

In *Heavenly Places*, p. 51: Faith in Christ is not the work of nature, but the work of God on human minds, wrought in the very soul by the Holy Spirit, who reveals Christ, as Christ revealed the Father. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. With its justifying, sanctifying power, it is above what men call science. It is the science of eternal realities. Human science is often deceptive and misleading, but this heavenly science never misleads. It is so simple that a child may understand it, and yet the most learned men cannot explain it. It is inexplicable and immeasurable, beyond all human expression.

Some friend of OCI, somebody affiliated with OCI, some administrator, some financier, is thinking about Elijah and figuring, God is going to do that for us: "Let them call on the name of Baal, and [we] will call on Yahweh. The god who answers by fire, He is the God" (see 1 Kings 18:24). We know that Baal is nothing. He cannot convert; he cannot forgive; he cannot redeem. He is nothing but a theory based on people's efforts to explain what they see. He is nothing. Yahweh can send fire—fire to consume sacrifices, and spiritual fire to purge people's souls. Yahweh can forgive and convert and redeem. He's done it for me! Send the fire Lord! And nothing happens. Call again, Send the fire, Lord. And nothing happens. People get sick. People leave. Fewer people register for the LE and LC programs. Your enterprise starts drowning in red ink. Send the fire, Lord!

Heb. 11:1-3, 6 Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. [v. 2] For by it the men of old gained approval. [v. 3] By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. [v. 6] And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

1John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.

Are you testing by human methods, working with human calculations, depending on human science, or are you working with God? Are you willing to continue because you know, regardless of current material evidence, that the same God who in 6 days made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, the same God who brought Israel out of Egypt, the same God who sent the fire for Elijah, and the same God whose miracle in your heart converted you from the error of your ways, that same God who is coming soon, He commissioned you? And you will be faithful to Him come what may. Is Yahweh your God indeed? If Yahweh is the God, follow Him! The fire He sends doesn't have to be visible. It's the fire of passion in your bones, and the fire of the Spirit; and the world cannot see it; so the world won't understand. Maybe your wife or husband can't get it; but you can, and you have, and you know that Yahweh is the God: Eat the Passover; behave as though it's going to happen, because Yahweh said it would: If Yahweh is the God follow Him!