

The Unreasonable Reason  
John 1:1-18  
October 11, 2009  
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I got this movie at Target: "Religulous" by the comedian Bill Maher. Let's watch:

[*Religulous* movie clip]

Bill Maher: *I certainly, honestly believe religion is detrimental to the progress of humanity. You know it's just selling an invisible product. It's too easy. These questions about what happens when you die; they so freak people out that they will just make up stories and cling to them. People who are otherwise so rational about everything else and then, come Sunday, they believe they're drinking the blood of Jesus...I preach I don't know. (Addressing various people of faith) You are smart people. How can people believe in a talking snake, and the virgin birth? [A few people briefly share about their faith while "Jesus is just alright with me" plays in the background.]*

*Religion must die for mankind to live. The hour is getting very late to be able to indulge in having key decisions made by religious people.... Faith means making a virtue out of not thinking. It's nothing to brag about. And those who preach faith, and enable and elevate it are intellectual slaveholders, keeping mankind in a bondage to fantasy and nonsense that has spawned and justified so much lunacy and destruction. Religion is dangerous because it allows human beings who don't have all the answers to think that they do. Most people would think it's wonderful when someone says, "I'm willing, Lord! I'll do whatever you want me to do!" Except that since there are no gods actually talking to us, that void is filled in by people...with their own corruptions and limitations and agendas. This is why rational people must end their timidity and come out of the closet and assert themselves. That's it. Grow up or die!*

Wow that's intense!

I think he's arguing that we need to stop being religious and we need to become rational – reasonable—that it's time we abandon faith and replace it with reason.

Reason.

And maybe Bill Maher is on to something when he talks about the importance of "reason."

In 500 BC, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus taught that "reason" is the "source and the fundamental order of the universe," that "reason" is like the fabric of reality.

In 350 BC, Aristotle taught that reason is the basis of all rational discourse. Reason is logic, which governs dialogue. The Greek philosophers identified rules of logic that we all know intrinsically (*a priori* knowledge). For instance:

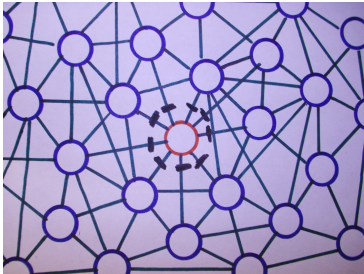
If  $A \rightarrow B$  and  $B \rightarrow C$ , then  $A$  implies  $C$ .  
If this flower is a rose, and all roses wither in autumn, then this flower will wither in autumn.

That's logical. Logic governs language giving words their meaning and thus allowing for communication. Dialogue is "reasoning together."

Around 300 BC, another group of Greek philosophers, the Stoics, argued that not only does reason pervade the entire universe there is a "seed of reason" a "*Logos Spermatikes*" in every human being. And that presence of reason is our ability to reason, which connects us to our reality.

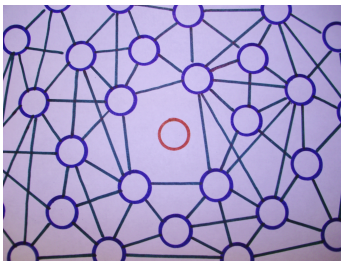
Well, I think they're really on to something. All reality is connected by reason, and all society is connected by reason.

Like this:



If each of us is a circle, then each line is reason, which manifests as language -- meaningful words.

If a person becomes unreasonable they're utterly cut off and alone.



If that happened by accident we say they went insane. If it happens on purpose we call them a liar. Lying to self or lying to others. But see it's still insanity just chosen insanity. It's choosing to be lost because "reason is the way."

One night about 15 years ago I was putting my son Jonathan to bed. We said our prayers, I gave him a kiss and then he said,

"Daddy?"

"Yes."

"Daddy, I know what the most important thing is in all the world."

And I said "Wow! You do?"

"Yes" he said, "it's the alphabet."

I don't know where he got that, but I've thought about it for years. I mean, the alphabet is the substance of words like logic is the substance of communication. So without logic and reason you are utterly cut off and alone. I think it's safe to say that reason is the most important thing in the world. Reason is the way, the truth, and the life, the light of all men, and apart from reason you can do nothing.

Now at this point some of you are getting nervous because people like Bill Maher have told you that Jesus is unreasonable. And other people like pastors and Bible study leaders have told you that you must have faith in Jesus and implied faith is unreasonable. But hang in there. "Come now and let's reason together," says the Lord (Isaiah 1:18).

When I was a senior in high school, I really began to take my faith seriously, and yet that's what I also began to doubt seriously. I remember asking the spiritual kids at youth group—you know the ones that said "just" and "really" and cried when they prayed—to explain contradictions and give reasons. And when they would get stuck in some logical corner, invariably they would say, "you just need faith." As if faith was the ability to reject reason.

Tony Campolo asked his son if he knew what faith was. Right away he responded, "Faith is believing what I know isn't true." In other words "faith is believing a lie."

And so it was out of my deep love for truth and reason that one night in my senior year in high school I locked myself in the upstairs bathroom, knelt down by the side of the tub, and sobbing and shaking I prayed, "Jesus I don't think I can believe in you anymore."

And I felt the void -- cut off, alone, nothingness, and despair.

But I felt it either way: putting faith in what felt like a lie or not putting faith in Jesus.

Ironically, I think that night was the night of my conversion. Ever since that night I haven't prayed that prayer and today I have to say, "Jesus I can't help BUT believe in you."

But you see I do think Bill Maher is on to something. Let's ask his question: "what's reasonable?"

Bill Maher says that believing you drink two thousand year-old blood is unreasonable and believing that a snake talked is unreasonable. Now that is unusual, but that's different than unreasonable. I think he's confusing what's reasonable with what is scientifically verifiable.

Science is the study of what I can predict through observation in a controlled environment. So if an apple repeatedly falls at  $32 \text{ ft/s}^2$ , science says we predict that it will fall at  $32 \text{ ft/s}^2$  in the future. We call this the law of gravity, but we don't know it's a law. We just know that's what apples and our experience normally do. So if one day you see an apple floating in the air, or a man walking on water, is not necessarily unreasonable; it's unusual so you might want to pay attention. For perhaps there's a reason he's walking on water. The reason is one that you haven't encountered before that's reasonable.

GK Chesterton wrote: "all the terms used in this science books, 'law, necessity, order'... are really unintellectual because they assume in inner synthesis which we do not possess."

You see science tells me *what* happened but not *why* -- not the reason.

Chesterton goes on: "the only words that ever satisfied me as describing nature are the terms used in fairy books: 'charm, spell, enchantment.' They express the arbitrariness of the fact and it's mystery. A tree bears fruit because it's a magic tree. Water runs downhill because it is bewitched."

That is, gravity is not a law, gravity is like someone's decision. It exists because someone said it should, and if the water runs uphill perhaps that someone is saying something new.

My point is that just because something is unusual that doesn't make it unreasonable, or if it is unreasonable it's no more unreasonable than fruit on a tree or water running downhill.

However, it is entirely unreasonable for Bill Maher to imply, "the only things that are reasonable are things that are usual for me." That is unreasonable and a bit insane for the moment you say that is the moment you are stuck in that. You're stuck in the universe of you with nothing new and nothing bigger than you.

You see, science is the study of things we think we can predict and control, and it's not reasonable to think that those things are all there is. It's not reasonable, and it's not scientific. The scientific method can't be proved with the scientific method. So if the only things that are reasonable are things that can be proved by the scientific method then the scientific method is entirely unreasonable.



So miracles are unusual, but that's different than unreasonable. They don't violate reason, and they are not without reason. Miracles are unusual, but that's not unreasonable.

However there are some things that are usual that seem pretty darn unreasonable. They may not violate reason or contradict reason, so they may not be unreasonable in that sense, but they can't be explained by reason.

So if Bill Maher thinks a 900-year-old man is unreasonable, he should think these things are really unreasonable. This is my list of unreasonable things:

### 1. Beauty

If someone said, "Hey that sunset is beautiful." And you said, "Why?" They couldn't give you a valid reason. "Beauty," "goodness" -- what the Bible calls "glory,"—no one can explain it; it's unreasonable. You can't reason your way to beauty.

### 2. Love

Albert Einstein said, "gravitation is not responsible for people falling in love... no, this trick won't work... how on earth are you ever going to explain in terms of chemistry and physics so important a biological phenomenon as... love." And real love -- sacrificial love -- isn't a "biological phenomenon." I see no conceivable reason for love. You can't reason your way to love.

### 3. Life

Darwin didn't explain life; he explained death. What's the reason for one entity serving another entity and forming a life? Why does Bill Maher want to live or think it's rational that others live? Why does he think life is more rational than death? That's unreasonable.

### 4. Light

Now it's not just that there's no reason for light, light seems to be fundamentally unreasonable. Scientists say it's a particle and a wave—a contradiction. And get this: all space and time is relative to light. And all space and time is the universe -- existence.

### 5. Existence

Not things *in* existence (like talking snakes and 900-year-old men), but existence—the foundation of existence, the cause of all things that have been caused. If you think of everything that's been caused, what caused that? There must be an uncaused caused. If you think of everything for which there is a reason, what's the reason for that? An unreasonable reason?

Philosophically the foundation of reality has always been unreasonable. And now even scientifically it's unreasonable. If Bill Maher thinks a talking snake is unreasonable, it's absolutely nothing compared to the unreasonableness of the Big Bang. That space and time themselves sprang into existence 15 billion years ago. Spring into existence from what? Well, there was no what. No time. So the beginning can't be a "what" only "who" outside of space and beyond time. And get this: all "whats" are continually dependent on a "who."

Quantum physicists now tell us that all physical reality is comprised of quantum particles that are fundamentally uncertain and unreasonable. In fact they don't really even exist until observed. Cornell physicist David Mermin put it this way: "we now know that the moon is demonstrably not there when nobody looks."

See? The scientists are saying all "what's" are dependent on a "who" that reasons. Dependent on "who" but get this we don't even know what "who" is. We don't know what consciousness is--what a person is.

## 6. A Person

Every person is like an unreasonable reason. In other words, in every person there is like a seed or a piece or the image of the uncaused cause. And you see, that's just a scientific manifestation of an ancient philosophical problem: the problem of me. Or I should say "I"-- the "I" that observes "me," that thing that is conscious of the self.

Do you know what I mean? Think about yourself. Now what's the thing that's thinking of yourself? Logically that thing can't be yourself. What's the "I" that observes "me?" As soon as I observe "I," it's no longer I but me. I can't observe I. I think about me in the past and I postulate me in the future. But I exist forever now in the eternal moment. See I am not an object in this world. I am not in space and time. I am like a spirit -- like breath of the uncaused cause, and I reason. But what is reason? What's the reason for reason? And that's my last unreasonable thing.

## 7. Reason

There is no reason for reason. How could there be? And how could you know that reason is unreasonable? How could you know that truth is true? There is no rational argument for rationality. Einstein said, "the eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility."

You can't reason your way to reason; you can only get there by faith. You can only be reasonable by faith. Faith in reason. People want reasons for faith, but you must have faith in order to reason. So the statement, "Faith is unreasonable" is profoundly unreasonable; for to reason that faith is unreasonable you must have faith in reason.

You see faith is reason is a religion. Atheism is a religion, for the atheist has faith that there is no God. Even agnosticism is a religion. Bill Maher says, "I preach: I don't know." But how does he know that he doesn't know if in fact he really doesn't know -- you know?

You see Bill Maher is very religious. He has faith in his own reason.

In May of 1793 during the French Revolution, all churches in Paris were closed and many were transformed into temples of reason. They worshiped reason even erecting the goddess of reason in Notre Dame. That period of French history is also known as the Reign of Terror. Between 16,000 and 40,000 people were executed on the guillotines.

That is also the official religion and Communist China and was the religion in the former Soviet Union where something like 60 million were starved or executed.

All had faith in reason but didn't know reason. A child puts faith in reason but not their own reason. A child puts faith in their father's reason and that's reasonable: faith in the reason or someone you know.

Well you can't reason your way to reason. You have to have faith in reason. That's what I mean when I say there's no reason for reason. Reason is the unreasonable reason for it is the reason. Not that it contradicts reason but that it can't be explained by reason for it is reason.

Now look at this list of unreasonable things. Maybe they are unreasonable things for they are the reason. Goodness, love, life, light, the uncaused cause -- the creator, persons -- in his image, and reason...

Reason: the fabric of reality according to Heraclitus, Aristotle and the Stoics.

Reason: the basis of all the dialogue, communication, the word.

Reason: the seed in us that connects us to our reality.

Reason: the Way, the Truth, and the Life -- according to the Greeks.

Of course the Greeks didn't use the word reason, they used the Greek word *Logos* translated "ratio" in Latin "raison" in French, which becomes "reason" in English. *Logos* from which we get words like:

logic

dialogue

*anthropologos*--anthropology

sociology

biology

zoology

geology

psychology--*psych reasons*

theology--*God reasons--God word*

*Logos* is translated "the reason" or "the word."

And now we can read our text.

John 1:1 "in the beginning was the *Logos* (Reason, Rationality, Logic, Word) and the *Logos* (Reason, Word) was with God, and the *Logos* (Reason, Word) was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...(comprehended it)

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God.

In the *Logos* (Reason, Word) became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father... and from his fullness we have received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only son, who is in the bosom of the father, he has made him known."

"In the beginning was the reason and the reason was with God and the reason was God. He was in the beginning with God in all things were made through him" -- the reason.

We're not the author of reason, reason is the author of us.

We're not the judge of reason, reason is the judge of us.

We can't comprehend reason, but we can be comprehended by reason.

We can't reason our way to reason, however reason can reveal himself to us.

That is, we can't know reason by reasoning, but only by revelation. Then we can recognize reason, and that's called faith.

We can recognize reason because reason is the "light that enlightens all men." When any person thinks a thought or has a dialogue they are reasoning by grace through faith and theologians call that general revelation.

John 1:14 "and the reason became flesh and walked among us." They wrapped him in swaddling clothes and placed him in a manger, and theologians call that special revelation.

But you see it's all Jesus. So the inside of that manger is bigger than the entire outside. Jesus is categorically bigger than any of us could think or ever thought and yet he became small enough that we all could believe -- have faith, so we could know him -- not a what --a who.

That night by the bathtub I lost the Jesus that I could comprehend. However, I had already been comprehended by the Jesus did I knew. It wasn't until years later that I realized that night by the tub I had been talking to Jesus in which I said I couldn't believe. Now, after that night I found lots of helpful reasons, however I already had faith in reason: his name is Jesus.

So let's review:

"<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word

[PETER PICKS UP POSTER OF "7. REASON"]

And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[PETER PLACES THE POSTER OF "REASON" OVER THE POSTER OF "EXISTENCE"]

<sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God; <sup>3</sup>all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life,

[PETER PLACES THE POSTERS OF "REASON" AND "EXISTENCE" OVER THE POSTER OF "LIFE"]

And the life was the light of men.

[PETER PLACES THE POSTERS OF "REASON," "EXISTENCE," AND "LIFE" OVER THE POSTER OF "LIGHT" AND THEN OVER THE POSTER OF "A PERSON"]

<sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it... (it shines its glorious...)

[PETER TAKES THE STACK OF POSTER AND PLACES THEM ON TOP OF THE POSTER OF "1. BEAUTY"]

<sup>9</sup>The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. (Because he loves the world...)

[PETER TAKES STACK OF POSTERS AND PLACES THEM OVER THE POSTER OF "2. LOVE"]

<sup>9</sup>He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. (The world put faith in reason, but the world did not know who reason was.)

<sup>11</sup>He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.

[PETER NAILS ALL THE POSTERS TO THE CROSS]

<sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God;”

When we crucified Jesus, we crucified reason.

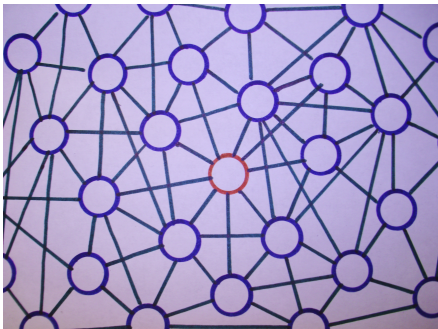
We crucified reason because we wanted to control the reason rather than love the reason.

We wanted to take wisdom rather than love wisdom.

We wanted to take the knowledge of good and evil like a law rather than know the good and love that is grace.

We crucified reason and yet that's the revelation of reason. For the reason is sacrificial love. It's mercy, grace, God: "Jesus from the bosom of the father, he has made him known." Jesus Christ and him crucified is the revelation of reason and judgment by reason.

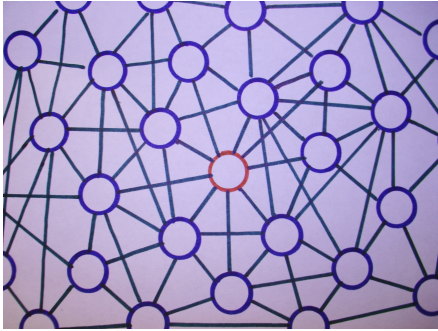
If you receive Jesus:



You are connected to beauty, love, life, light, God, and persons. You are connected by the word -- the dialogue of heaven -- Jesus is the reason.

But if you reject Jesus, you are cut off in death and darkness and alone [image 378]. You are insane for you have rejected its sanity -- and the reason. In the words of John, "you are condemned already" because you have not believed. You're imprisoned in death surrounded by life.

Jesus Christ and him crucified is the revelation of reason, judgment by reason, and salvation through reason. From the cross Jesus descended to the spirits in prison even your spirit in prison and he helps you believe. He paid your debt he gives you faith in God. He gives you reason he gives of himself.



The reason was crucified for you so you would come and "reason with him," so that you could fall in love with God. He is the reason. So he is certainly not unreasonable if that means "contrary to reason" for he himself is the reason. And yet he certainly is unreasonable if that means "without some other reason" for he is the reason for all reasons.

He's that big and he's that good.

And now why would Bill Maher not know such a thing? Well perhaps partly because of ridiculous religion: religious people who don't believe Jesus is that big and that good, people who don't want him to be that big and that good.

Three years ago, I took this picture in Paris.



It's the church of St. Louies des Invalides -- the Kings Church. Just like Notre Dame during the French Revolution, it was transformed into a temple of reason. So they have faith in reason but they didn't know who reason was.

How could they not know who reason was? It had been a church.

See those banners on the ceiling?



This sign explains that by the time of the French Revolution the Cathedral of Notre Dame was adorned with 3000 of these banners and likewise this church the church of St. Louies. They were and are all banners that were taken from foreign armies conquered in war.

Do you get the picture? The church was preaching the wrong reason, even anti-reason all in the name of Jesus. They preached that reason was the conquest of power rather than the sacrifice of love, that it was taking rather than giving. Now of course they preached giving grace and love for themselves but not others. They didn't want Jesus to be that big and that good and so they cut Jesus, they cut the reason down to size. Just like a crowded Jerusalem did long ago, just like we religious types do today.

So you see, the religious people had already crucified reason when the revolutionaries begin worshiping reason. They worshiped reason but didn't know who he was and who he is.

Maybe you've worshiped reason.

Well, now I'm telling you who he is.

Maybe you said he was simply your own reason.  
Maybe we thought he was simply our own reasons.

But Jesus is the reason made flesh, crucified, and risen from the grave. Even if you've never called him your Lord you need to know "he is not far from you" in fact "in him you live and move and have your being." And so "the word is near you, and in your heart on your lips" for "he is the light enlightens all" people.

Now he asks you to receive him, to love him as he loves you.

Do you recognize him?  
Do you want him?



Would you receive?

He is the reason in all things,  
The reason of all things,  
And the reason for all things... including you.

So on the night he was betrayed he took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same manner after supper and having given thanks, he took the cup saying, "This is the new covenant in my blood."

This isn't merely the blood of the two thousand year-old dead man. This is the blood of the eternal living man. I don't know how to explain that to you. Remembrance, spiritual presence, trance substantiated essence. I can't explain this but this explains you. He explains you. There is no reason for him for he is the reason for all things.

Now there are all sorts of reasons that can help you believe that this really happened two thousand years ago. And yet I don't think that there is or even could be a watertight proof that he is the reason for all reasons. He set it up that way. He doesn't want you to prove him. He wants you to recognize him -- surrender to him -- and fall in love with him. That's faith.

He wants you to want him the way he wants you.

Isaiah 1:18 "come now and let us reason together says the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow."

See? This is a lot of logic of God, and He longs for it to be your logic, too.

Romans 12:1 "therefore... by the mercies of God present your bodies as a living sacrifice..." which is your *logikos*—logical, reasonable, spiritual worship.

Tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup. Ingest the logic of heaven, become the logic of heaven. The world already has a lot of faith in reason, but they don't know who reason is.

Let's worship.

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Communion

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Benediction

You know, I think John that wrote the gospel of John is the same John that also wrote the Revelation, is the same John that laid his head on the chest of Jesus at the last supper.

When you read the revelation, it starts in this incredible way: John, who is the last of the disciples, is exiled on the island of Patmos, and he's is worshipping and suddenly Jesus manifests to him in all His glory. His eyes are like fire, and He radiates life and love. And do you remember what John does? This is the John that spent all this time with him in this world. He drops to the ground as if dead.

I think it was because at that moment, John suddenly realized that every fiber in his being, every cell in his body, every thought that he even could think was continually upheld by the Word of God that had just appeared before Him and he was entirely vulnerable to him.

Do you see why it's so important that you come to trust him, put your faith in him in this world. Cause if you don't, when He appears, you'll run in terror and hide yourself in hell.

But if you know Him, if you worship Him, if you keep surrendering to Him, you'll run to him, into the marvelous light from which you are made and in whose image you are being made.

You see, that's what He's doing in this world: He's romancing us into faith. And so keep worshipping--keep believing.

But understand this: God loves you with everything that He is, and everything that He's got.

So in Jesus name, believe the gospel.

Amen.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*