WHAT IS FAITH?

The Origin of the World

by Ernest O'Neill Program 09

What is faith? That's what we're talking about on this station each morning. What is faith? We're saying of course that faith is the basis of all the activity that we have in our lives. We have faith in the alarm clock that it will waken us at a certain time in spite of the fact that it doesn't always do that. We have faith in the fact that the faucets will produce hot and cold water at the right time in spite of the fact that they don't always do that. We have faith that the telephone is going to get us through to the necessary contact we have in the business world, though it doesn't always do that.

So, all of our life is based on faith. We act in faith when we buy a certain automobile. We act in the faith that our judgement is correct and that we have made the right observations on the reasonable evidence that was presented to us that this was a reliable car. We put our faith in that and often thousands of dollars of our good money into it. We have faith that certain timing mechanisms that we use to put the lights on in our homes are going to operate. We base all kinds of activity on the faith that we have in Wall Street, in the Stock Exchange, and in the banking system. So, actually faith is that factor in our lives without which life could itself not exist.

So what we have been doing is, applying this term faith to the ultimate realities of life itself -- the most important things that our whole life are based on and of course the most important of all is the world itself. We've been talking about the kinds of faith that we have about the way the world was created.

I was saying, you remember, that when you look at this world and you realize that all the size of it and you realize that all that

we men and women have made over hundreds of years of our existence here on earth amounts at the most to about one hundred or maybe three hundred cubic miles. That is if you put together all the buildings and all the ships and all the cars and all the things that we've ever made in all the countries in the world, they come to about three hundred cubic miles. But that compares very unfavorably with the size of the earth itself, because the volume of the earth is not three hundred cubic miles, its not five hundred cubic miles, its not a thousand cubic miles, its not five thousand cubic miles, its not ten thousand cubic miles. It is two hundred and sixty thousand million cubic miles.

So, I'm suggesting to you that you ought to put your faith in the fact that this earth -- this two hundred and sixty thousand millions of cubic miles of earth -- was created by a "big bang". Now isn't that reasonable? It was created by an explosion. "Of course, you know your reaction is, "Forget that! The effort that we put into the building of the Empire State Building in New York or the effort that we put into the Sears Tower or

the care and precision that we have put into the mines that we have burrowed into the earth, or the effort that we have put into the mighty building that we see in our cities certainly is clear evidence to us that that kind of complex mechanism does not come from a big bang or from an explosion." If I say to you, "Oh well the big bang took place years ago." You would say, "Okay, the rubble would just be older. It wouldn't be more ordered, it would just be older. but it would still be rubble and destruction and rubbish. That's all that explosions ever produce."

Of course you would then say to me, "Now listen, look at the complexity of our world, and look at even water itself--water forms more that half the body weight of most animals and plants. Its not readily decomposed. It dissolves many substances. It makes dry substances cohesive and become flexible. With salts in solution it conducts electricity. This is a very important property in the animal body. Then alone or almost alone amongst fluids known to us it reaches its greatest density when cooled not at freezing point but at 4 degrees Centigrade. This has some important consequences. One is that lakes and ponds freeze at the top and not from the bottom upwards. Fish life thus has a chance of surviving a very hard winter. Mother consequence is that by its expansion on freezing, water disrupts the rocks and thus breaks them down to form soil, carves out cliffs and valleys, and makes vegetation possible. Water has the highest heat of evaporation of any known substance. This reduces the rise in temperature when a water surface is heated by the sun's rays. Now, do you mean that all this complexity of just one of the substance that make up our earth came about as the result of a big bang, or the result of an explosion? No, I can't have faith in that--that this was all created either by time plus chance, or by a mighty explosion."

Of course that is why a man like Darwin completed you remember, the famous study of evolution called Origin of Species, with this paragraph. He said, "There is a grandeur in this view of life with its several powers having been originally

breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one." So, Darwin was absolutely certain that this earth is so complex, that originally, way back of whatever evolution has taken place in the meantime, way back of all that, there was originally as he says, a Creator. That's why a man like Einstein says, "My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior Spirit who reveals Himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God."
So the greatest intellects of our day have no doubt at all that it is reasonable to have faith in the whole truth that all this complicated universe and world that we see around us, resulted not from just a big bang or an explosion, not just from time plus chance, not just from some decomposing substance, but it has resulted from the same kind of order and the same kind of analytical thinking and planning, that we have put into the things that we in mankind have made on this earth. In other words there's something unreasonable about exercising sensible faith which is based on belief plus action on the basis of reasonable

evidence; there's something unreasonable about exercising that kind of faith in ordinary everyday life -- about looking at an automobile as it stands on a lot, and observing it closely and watching the way other people have used it and have had experience with it, and then believing that that is a reliable automobile for you and then acting on that belief on the basis of that reasonable evidence and buying it -- there's something utterly unreasonable in exercising that kind of faith in everyday life and then suddenly in relation to your belief and your faith about the world and the universe itself, jumping into an absolute fantasy land, an Alice in Wonderland superstition that the whole thing came about not by that same kind of careful intellectual analysis, or the same kind of careful manipulation of mechanisms, as we have used to make our automobiles and our buildings, but believing that the whole thing came about by time plus chance, or by some great explosion that took place billions of years away when none of us were alive. There's something sad and sick about calling that faith. That is not faith, that is not even worthy of the name of faith. That is a drunken man's dream. it is the fantasy of some insane crazy intellect -- if one can even call it the function of an intellect at all.

Surely faith is believing that this world and this universe originated from the exercise of the same kind of intellect as we have used in manufacturing our creations here on earth.