

FAITH AND EVIDENCE

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It is essential that two questions be clearly distinguished. How may I be certain that faith is directed toward the ultimate, as the religious man claims it to be? How may it be known that the propositions which are made in connection with that apprehension of faith are true? Unless the discussion takes into account clearly from the outset that two kinds of questions are here being asked, nothing but confusion can result. We must distinguish between the problem of what constitutes evidence for the reality of the religious awareness of God, and what for a theological statement describing or expounding this religious awareness. For both a knowledge-claim is made. The first claim is that knowledge of God is valid knowledge. The second claim is that propositions which express and interpret that knowledge are also valid. Only confusion will result if the distinction between these two questions is unclear. We must differentiate between a certain belief held within the circle of religious faith and that faith itself. What are the criteria by which we judge the certainty of these? The problem resolves itself into two aspects therefore, which may be expressed in the following two questions: How may I know that my religious apprehension, my apprehension of what I call God, is valid? How may I know that statements about the apprehension and its implications are true statements?

Why do such questions arise? As to the first, it may well be asked why if one is certain that his knowledge of God is valid, he should be concerned with showing that it is. There might be two reasons given for this, first, that one has doubt caused in the mind as to a preceding so-called "unshakeable" con-

viction, whose certainty then needs buttressing; or secondly, that one wishes to show that that claim to know God is not an irrational one, but on the contrary a most reasonable thing. The presence of doubt, the need to commend his assurance in face of that doubt, these are the pressures that lead to the quest for the establishment of the certainty.

Where is the ultimate certainty to be found? Where doubt is present we appeal from that which is less certain to that which is more certain, so hoping to ground that about which doubt has been aroused upon that about which there can be less doubt, or it is to be preferred, no doubt at all. If we are sure beyond doubt that *b* is true, and that being true, it has a direct relation (of some sort or other, which must indeed be made clear for the desired result) to *a*, which we have come to doubt, then we may be reassured in our knowledge of the truth of *a*. For our question concerning the validity of knowledge of God, the first of the two questions we differentiated at the outset, we may fill in the content of *a* and *b* more specifically. Let *a* be religious awareness, whose validity we have been led to doubt. Let *b* be the consistent explanations made on the basis of a valid religious awareness, explanations which have fruitful connections with scientific, moral, aesthetic experience. We may seek the reassurance of the religious awareness on the basis of the explanations made possible by taking that faith as a probable hypothesis, that is to say, as in doubt. So to seek reassurance of *b* we appeal from the less sure to the more sure. To establish the certainty of awareness of God, one can appeal to experience itself or one can appeal away from it to some other grounds, which are considered to be more certain than the knowledge given in experience itself. These alternatives exhaust the possibilities. Apart from them there remains skepticism. To that to which an appeal is made for the reassurance of the validity of religious awareness, our *b* above, we shall give the name "evidence." We appeal to evidence from that which is lesser known than the evidence, to the evidence which we consider better known than that from which we make the appeal.

Thus evidence is for the unconvinced or for the skeptical. Of what relevance is evidence if one is convinced already? If one does not know that watch-makers make watches one cannot argue to the existence of a watchmaker when one finds a watch upon the sands. If one does not know, the argument is not convincing (*pace* Paley). If one is convinced already, how can evidence be used? Evidence is employed to assist one to move from lesser to greater certainty; but what if one is already as certain as it is possible to be. Does an *a priori* certainty need a *posteriori* evidence? Is not the question contradictory?

It may be suggested at this stage that evidence is not for the reassurance of the believer who has come to doubt, but for the skeptic that he might come to faith, that he might be convinced by appeal to that which he has never known by talk about what someone else claims to know. But it may well be asked how one can convince another of the truth of experience by appealing to words about that experience, for words about experience can by no means be identified with that experience. The words of another about a conviction are not the same as being convinced myself. Words about God are by no means to be identified with knowing God. A transposition has taken place. What then of the evidential nature of such words, such transpositions of the "immediate utterances of experience"?

Let us attempt to set forth the various possibilities of approaching the problem of the truth-certainty of the knowledge of God. The alternatives are as follows: First, to demonstrate the existence and (at least some of) the attributes of God. Secondly, not to demonstrate but to give "evidence" or "evidences" for the existence and attributes of God, and the certainty of one's knowledge of God. We should not try to demonstrate the finality of the Christian awareness of God but rather (at the least) to show that it is not unreasonable or (at the most) show that it is highly probable. Thirdly, to affirm that the final reference point is not open to proof or

evidence of a kind analogous to empirical¹ evidence given in other instances of confirmation of knowledge (*e.g.*, in physical science), but that it carries its own authentication wrapped up within it. The knowledge of God is self-authenticating and does not require, indeed is not patent of, more than that it forbids us to make any attempt at authentication outside of the awareness. What authentication there is is *a priori* and not *a posteriori*. There may be a divergence as to the nature of the *a priori* certainty. It might be viewed as beyond doubt. It may be viewed as not having final and absolute certainty. The important point for our classification is that there can be no moving from lesser to greater certainty. Whether the certainty is final or not there is no more final certainty to be found concerning religious awareness than from within the context of that awareness. For those who would not claim absolute and final certainty would affirm that there can be no other, but insist that there is always the element of risk. One bets one's life there is a God and stays by the wager. Fourthly, then there is the skeptic. There is no demonstration, no evidence, no self-authentication. There is risk, and one had better make the best of it. But it is a risky dive into further meaninglessness. One cannot know, or claim to know that knowledge of God is either certain or probable.

One might add that to these various distinctions correspond different approaches to the task of theology, and definitions of the relationship between faith and reason. To the first corresponds the conception of the task of theology as to give proofs for the existence of God. Here theology and philosophy are one. To the second theology has the job of supplying "evidence" for its contentions. This evidence may be either compulsive, as it was intended by "Apologetics" or "Evidences," or corroborative of that which it points to, but which is known apart from the rational constructions of empirical evidence. Those who deny that it is possible to prove the reality of God or the certainty of faith, and who thus repudiate

¹ See n. 2 (on page 196).

the high rationalism which sought to demonstrate the existence and attributes of God, may indeed be attracted to seeking for "evidences" which may be set forth to commend the reality of that faith. The "prover" says: I can demonstrate the reality of that which was not demonstrated to me by reason. The "evidencer" says: I can commend on grounds other than those by which I was convinced the reality of that of which I am certain. Then there are those whose appeal is to the self-authentication of awareness of God. While the certainty of reason and logic are contrasted *toto caelo* with the certainty of knowledge of God, reason may be given a status both in preparing for religious awareness and in commending it, or it may be simply denied any appropriate place in the declaration of faith. To the fourth corresponds the reasoning of the radicals which is not really to be classified as theology at all.

To get at the heart of the matter we shall distinguish between experience and expression. When what is experienced is expressed in the logical forms of the linguistic medium a transposition takes place. A loss is sustained. Only confusion results from considering the expression as if it were the reality which it is expressing. It is possible that one may focus only upon the expression, and, finding all manner of logical pitfalls with it, be led to repudiate the reality which is being expressed thereby. If one overlooks the possibility that the experience might be the only and final court of appeal, the expression will have to be considered only on the basis of the canons of logic and rationality, that is to say in reference to what is other than that which it claims to describe. That is why the *a priori* restricting to empirical realities of statements purporting to refer to non-empirical realities is bound to misunderstand those non-empirical statements. A "protocol-statement" is a translation which may very well render the original unavailable.

Can we say anything meaningful about God to those for whom the meaningfulness of God is not already evident (to

use a pun)? To speak about the manner in which language is used is not necessarily identical with speaking about the reality apprehended in religious awareness. If such reality is unknown to the one who approaches the words, purportedly about it, they will either be strictly meaningless, or they will be made to point in another direction, that is to say the expression which is of experience *a* will be read in the light of experience *b*. Much that is of use to the theologian may come to light if this is done, but he will in the last analysis have to object to it as needlessly restrictive and refuse its limits upon his endeavors. He will have to say, "If that is all you think that I mean by what you interpret me to say, you will have misconstrued what I take the referent, the experienced reality, to be, or what I know the experience to mean."

The theologian does not use a language different from that which his fellows speak. He has no special language of his own. His usage may be different, but the language is not itself different. He employs the same kinds of constructions, indeed even the same words. So parallels may (and should) be drawn between the language. Parallels, some closer and some more remote, may be found to the usage of language by the religious. *But*, and this is the nub of the matter, parallels only indicate what is like, not what is unlike. To point to the analogies between ordinary language usage and the language usage of the religious man still leaves open the problem of the referent of the theologian's language, and its validity. Suppose we speak of discernment-commitment situations of which certain language is specially significant, shall we indeed have done anything more than to have indicated that "knowledge about" the situation is communicable in "I-It" terms? These I-It terms may be translated and made to refer to existential situations which cannot be identified with the one most important situation they originally purported to describe. Why should talk, for example, about "cosmic disclosure" be readily identified with talk about God? The "evidence" which is here presented is a particular kind of talk about particular

kinds of situations. These situation-responses are then made analogous to responses to what is the unique situation of the disclosure of God. In the name of empirical reference meaningfulness has been found which does not lead to further knowledge of the referent of such language usage. This referent still remains hidden. As symbolic language pointing to the ultimate, at least for him who is certain of the "encounter" with what stands ultimately over against him—God—, will not such language be bound to be misconstrued as pointing to something more proximate, and its usage as a consequence be only partially understood, analogically understood? When a symbol (*e.g.*, spirit), is claimed to be drawn from an immediate, self-authenticating awareness of God, and is explained in terms of some reality or discernment-situation other than the one from which it rose (and by definition all else is other), will not its intended significance, when made to point to what is other than God, be quite effectually devaluated in the process of commending itself? The appeal to the evidential value of the symbol is in terms of a particular kind of human experience, "empirical" if you will, which particular kind of human experience is made analogous, for the purpose of getting the benefit of analogous predication, with the experience of the ultimate. The appeal is as follows: you know that a discernment-situation is spoken of meaningfully in rather plain terms in the usage of language; experience of God is a discernment-situation, the language which is used to describe it is meaningfully used. Thus it cannot be said that religious language is meaningless since it has such clear parallels in language which describes experiences which no one denies. The suggestion is tacitly made that meaningful religious language may indeed point to truth.

A symbol has meaning in terms of experience, the limits of which set bounds to the meaningfulness of symbolism. So in a "desacralized cosmos" many once-potent symbols have lost their power to point. The limits of experience set limits to meaningful usage of language. That is why in the discussion

of the meaning of the term "God" nothing can be assumed at the outset. If we start with the proposition "let God be x ," we then wait to see how, in the particular discussion, the unknown gets filled with meaning. For x could be given meanings p , q , or r , as the experience of the individual was interpreted in a particular way, and its significance presented in the light of that experience. (In Kant, for example, the symbol x , a postulate, stands in the first critique and the second for two realities. Starting with a particular interpretation of *e.g.*, rational experience, that is scientific reason, the term "God" is given different connotation from that which it is given when the experience is that of moral awareness.) We have seriously to reckon with the fact that the term "God" is nothing more than a *flatus vocis* for many of our contemporaries. The symbols by which the theist points may have different kinds of meaning for the non-believer. The latter may make something of them but that may not be what was intended. The believer may communicate with fellow-believer through the use of symbols. The process is one of "indirect communication" since both of them know the reality to which the symbols employed point. Thus a meeting-point is provided by the use of symbols pointing to the same reality, and thus making possible a community between two persons who both know that reality. The difference between the believer and the non-believer is that the former has at least one more connotation of the term "God" than the latter. Thus the symbol "God," if it is at all meaningful, will indicate a reality which is known. The believer has many uses of the term "God" in his vocabulary, many of which may overlap with those of the non-believer. He has one however which does not overlap at all. The meaning of that symbol "God" can only be known as the reality to which it points is disclosed. Otherwise it remains empty.

Since the theist claims that the reality "God" whom he says he knows is a living reality (the analogy of life being another difficult one to add to the arsenal), he is aware that in the usage of his pointers, his symbols, he cannot achieve a direct

communication. Moreover the theist says that his symbols serve to indicate a reality that may make itself present through them. In this sense words become "Word." Within the context of "Word," such employment of symbols will then make a community of fellowship possible, not on the level of intellectual understanding of the language involved (for that may well be very paradoxical employment), but rather in pointing back to the reference which both parties know from the *a priori* awareness of which we have spoken. Genuine symbols are thus bonds of union between those who together participate in the meaningfulness to which they point.

To appeal to "evidence" for the meaningfulness of one's expressions one hopes that such an appeal will make more plausible the claim that God who is known is the reality He is known to be. Our language is meaningful; we give evidence to show that it is; the evidence turns out to be based upon analogies, which evidential appeal evidently assumes the validity of analogical predication. We have shown, we believe, that the claim that our language is meaningful is not the same as the claim that we know God. Moreover, the claim that religious language is meaningful is based upon canons of meaning which may be appropriate in certain realms of discourse but not in others.

It is to be clearly understood that the basis for the employment of analogy is in the fact that something has been experienced. The procedure of analogical predication cannot be employed to establish that basis. It is assumed. Thus the desire for an empirical reference point for the *grounding* of religious awareness is a misplaced one. The ground is given, the reference point for theological discussion is given. Talk about, reasoning about, the significance of religious awareness is incomprehensible apart from the givenness of that awareness. Awareness is *a priori*. Language, "evidence" is *a posteriori*. It is obviously impossible to ground the validity of religious awareness in what is *a posteriori* to it.

We have intimations that our certainties of ordinary life

are not misplaced on the basis of "evidence" and we then attempt to speak univocally of evidence as relevant to our awareness of God and transcendent realities (*i.e.*, realities which transcend ordinary experience). We may say, for example, that the love of a friend which is in doubt may be checked by his faithfulness in communicating to us, even when it is difficult for him to do so, that such communication will be in accord with our particular circumstances and needs. He will not communicate pity when there has been a manifestation of what we thought was courage. He will not be silent when there is genuine need. This is the way in which "evidence" is brought to bear on the problem of the friend's faithfulness. The analogy then runs: If God loves you, there will be similar things to which you can appeal as evidence. The crux of the problem is whether we seek for evidence of that of which there is uncertainty, or whether we point to the certainty which we know by the examples which we set forth. If the former, then we must be prepared to defend the employment of the analogical usage of the idea of evidence in connection with religious awareness. To make a one-to-one co-ordination between awareness of that to which evidence is applicable in empirical experience, and awareness of what we may call God is, to say the least, a procedure which calls for justification by the one who makes it. It rests upon the failure to recognize that such empirical appeal—to "evidence"—is analogical, not univocal. It may indeed be equivocal. The problem to be faced is whether the term "evidence," "appeal to empirical reference," when used within the religious frame of reference, is in any sense analogical. This is the least that must be done by those who employ this kind of approach to the problem of religious certainty.

A point of contact between those who appeal to evidence in the manner of the scientific method to establish religious certainty and those who say religious certainty is *a priori* may be said to be found in the fact that in both cases, whether *a priori* or *a posteriori*, the certainty is experienced. For indeed

in the appeal to scientific evidence one has to "see" that the evidence *is* evidence and therefore able to produce certainty: that is to say, there is at some point an appeal to an intuitive grasp of the situation. This indeed may be admitted but it does not touch our basic contention that in the case of the theist this "grasp," his intuitive certainty, precedes any such attempt to commend it; it is *a priori*, whereas the intuitive grasp in scientific procedure is a means to bring the inquirer (who is in doubt as to the outcome) to a certainty not presupposed and otherwise unobtainable.

The appeal to immediacy is used in quite a different context in the two cases and thus no real analogy exists between them. Moreover the theist in appealing to experience from initial certainty (prior experience) is not seeking for confirmation or disconfirmation but rather for a way of expressing, perhaps commending, that which he knows as certain from the outset.

Is not the fact that one appeals to evidence already an admission that the reality for which evidence is sought is less certainly known than that evidence which is called in to help out that lack of certainty? Evidence is required for that of which we are in doubt. To speak of presenting evidence as the resting place for our faith, or as the means by which another may come to faith, is to point away from that which is the object of faith.

It may be said that there is an ambiguity in the usage of the term "evidence," that the expression is employed of commendation where there is no doubt on the part of the one who makes it. That this is a possible usage of the term we would not wish to dispute. All we are concerned to point out is that evidence is directed against somebody's doubt, and is only to be understood against a background of antecedent or concomitant doubt. Thus if the subject is in doubt concerning the validity of an hypothesis or of an experience, he will seek to confirm himself in assurance of its truth by seeking for evidence. He may not be in doubt, but have to confront the doubt of

another. This he may seek to do by appealing to "evidence." We have been contending that the procedure is misdirected, that it is at best an appeal from religious awareness to what is transposed from it. If it is the other who is in doubt, there may be a similar appealing to evidence in the attempt to share the truth-certainty of the awareness which the subject has known. But appeal to evidence is in either case a substitute for the reality, and can never produce the desired certainty.

It is a well-known, and well-worn problem of logic and of law, to determine what constitutes evidence for a particular claim. How may the decision be made as to what constitutes evidence in any particular instance? In the nature of the case it has to be seen that the evidence is relevant to, very relevant to, indeed of utmost relevance to, that for which it purports to be evidence. At some point there must be an appeal away from the co-ordination of what is said to be evidence and that-for-which-evidence-is-evidence to the insight, the intuition, that this is so, that it is actually "evidence." One sees this or one does not. Appeal is made to an intuition which may not be further questioned. One cannot after all keep on continuously appealing to the reliability of evidence without the process going on *ad infinitum*, and thus opening up an infinite regress. There must be a stopping point for which no evidence can be given that evidence is relevant. To contend that *b* and *c* constitute evidence for *a* is to affirm *a priori* that a relationship exists between them, a relationship of a particular kind, a relationship moreover which is set into sharper relief by the "evidence" now forthcoming. How does one know that? Not by a process of appealing to further evidence but by appealing away from further evidence, that is on the basis of an insight that it is so.

We have contended that the desire for an empirical reference point to provide us with religious certainty is misplaced. The best that evidence can establish is the high probability of a certain fact. The piling up of evidence, relevant to the particu-

lar matter to be proved, can at best bring one to a high degree of probability but this never quite reaches certainty. Even if the certainty is virtual it is never real. The Christian has never been content with a probable God, even if the probability be extremely high. At least one must recognize that the implication of appealing to evidence is that the *a priori* certainty is insufficient, and the appeal is thus a parley with skepticism.

If one construes the truths of religion as parallel to the truths of science it is not only natural but inevitable that empirical reference be essayed. Since, by a process of appeal to evidence provided by test situations which he arranges as best he knows, or by active observation, the scientist appears to validate his assumptions about the structure of things, there should be some parallel kind of validation for the claims which the theologian makes about reality. So runs the argument, but there is a most important distinction between the approaches of the scientist and the theologian. The former starts with initial uncertainty about certain aspects of reality, even if he shelves his uncertainty with a brash hypothesis that it must be of a certain kind and viewed in a certain way. Within the context of a reality assumed to be of a particular kind, *e.g.*, as described by Newton or by Einstein, he then proposes hypotheses which, within the kind of reality assumed, can be checked, and so validated or invalidated by appeal to empirical evidence. The question for which the scientist assumes the answer is that the cosmos is structured in a certain way. Within the limits of this assumption he then sets forth his hypotheses to be proved or disproved according to what he reckons as evidence for them.

Now the question upon which the theologian focuses is that of the reality of God. He does not assume this, but knows it. He does not set it forth as an hypothesis to be confirmed by the finding of evidence. Rather he explicates what he knows to be certain. In this his view of reason is opposed to that of the scientist. He does not set forth with the conjecture that it is the ultimate reality that he has known, and then seek a

confirmation of this. Rather he knows and then moves to make whatever explanations he does about the rest of reality on the basis of his certainty. Now it is important to distinguish between the two levels of which we have previously spoken. When he speaks *about* his religious awareness, the transposition which has taken place from immediate awareness to speech involves that his certainty be expressed in two ways: direct witness, "the immediate utterances of faith," and argumentative exposition. It is in the latter that the immediate certainty of faith becomes transposed into the suggestiveness and probabilities of reasoning. The theologian's aim is to transfer, to the best of his ability, to the rational level the certainty which he has known on the experiential level. If he is asked for "evidence" it is in reference to that which he knows, not with a high degree of probability, but of which he is certain. It is obvious that he will be asked for evidence of what he knows by one who doubts the validity of his knowledge. The "evidence" which the theologian may be called to give, and which certain of his brood are willing to supply, is for the purpose of commending the certainty which he knows in face of questions which are raised. That is why there was a department of theology once called "Evidences." "Evidences" served in the minds of those who employed it to corroborate what was known, and then to commend that knowledge and its object in face of criticism and doubt.

What then is to be the theologian's response when he is called to validate the context within which his claims are being made? The evidence of the scientist is gathered for the discovery and establishment of facts within a particular context which he has assumed. The validity of assuming that context is left unquestioned by the scientist *qua* scientist. Philosophy of science, in part, concerns itself with the examination of the scientist's assumptions. But philosophy is not science. When revolutions take place within the realm of science a new conceiving of the context may become necessary. Thus Copernicus replaces Ptolemy, and Einstein replaces

Newton. For the sake of his researches, the working scientist assumes that the universe is structured in such a way that his methods of discovery are appropriate. This he does not further question. The application of his method assumes its applicability within this context. This assumption of its applicability involves an acceptance of the structure without its being further examined. Where such an examination is conducted in the interest of science, it is made by the philosopher of science, who is driven from data discovered within a theory of the structure assumed as valid to a re-assessment of the adequacy of that theory. The scientist *qua* scientist is not primarily concerned about structure. The theologian is. Now the scientist, in the voice of certain scientific philosophers, asks the theologian to provide evidence analogous to, or univocal with his own, when the objects of concern are quite different. It is obvious that "evidence," even when it is allowed by certain theologians, must have quite a different meaning in the theological vocabulary from that usage given it by the empirical analyst of language or the scientist. What we have called into question is the procedure on the part of the theologian of appealing to such evidence in the attempt to make more certain that than which nothing can be more certain. Anselm's critics tried to supplement his approach by appealing to such evidence. Thomas, while assuming the ontological argument, began with the "evidence" of the senses and moved from this to a "proof" of the reality of a certain kind of God. That the procedure of appealing to empirical foundations or evidence for faith is for the theologian a barren one when evidence is construed in terms of sense perception has become obvious from the discussions with the logical positivists. Their restrictive criterion for the usage of reason made it obvious that the theologian had to assert that the approach was quite inadequate to permit him to say what he had to say about God.

When asked for evidence to verify in empirical terms the claim that "God loves us as a Father loves his children," the

theist is driven to qualify the meaning of the terms as they are used in ordinary parlance. Then they continue to be qualified so that their usage becomes so different from its ordinary employment that the assertion is reduced from its original brashness to meaninglessness *in terms of empirical canons*.² If an assertion is either false or true, it should be possible to cite empirical evidence for or against it: if not for it then at least against it. But a statement which cannot be verified by empirical means cannot be so falsified either. So ran the argument. The logical positivists showed us the uniqueness of theological statements, as well as their own needlessly restrictive definition of reason. Their queries point up the assertion made previously that the call for evidence is a skeptical one. It demands that we establish with greater certainty that which is at present of lesser certainty or quite in doubt. While this may be necessary for the scientist who does not know at the outset whether his conjectured hypotheses are even plausible until he tests them in an empirical situation, it is quite unnecessary for the theologian whose

² The term "empirical" is a most misleading one. Basically it means "having reference to experience." So in defining it, one introduces another term, which because of the variety of reference it may have, needs itself defining with greater specificity to be at all useful. In a sense all our knowledge is empirical since it is we who have it, and it is thus within the limits of our experience. This gets us only to the place where we must deny an exaggerated objectivism, which is in fact self-contradictory in any case. In the particular instance of this text it means "having reference to sense-experience," which reference can act as confirmation, its possible absence as disconfirmation. The term "empirical" is used theologically of those writers whose methodological procedure requires an appeal to "experience" as opposed for example to reason, or authority (viewed in some objectivistic manner), as the means for theistic discussion. The attempt is made to isolate, analyze, describe that particular religious dimension of experience, and then to draw out its implications for discussion of God. Appeal to reason, or to authority are not uniquely religious, even if they are "experiences." Theological empiricism is the appeal to the known and unique reality of faith. Since "evidence" relates to "experience" the definition of "experience," that is of the "empirical," will determine what kind of "evidence" is admitted as valid, whether the appeal will be made to it, or from it.

certainty at the outset in his relationship with God is unquestioned. To read one discipline in the light of the other and to dictate the procedures of theological endeavor on the basis of scientific methodology is unwarranted and misleading.

It should be clear that our case is directed against a particular construing of the meaning of "evidence." If we seek an analogy for the appeal of the theist we may find it in that type of "evidence" which the witness is called to give in a law-court. This "evidence" concerns that which has been immediately experienced by him. Anything other than this is ruled out as out of order. He may only speak that which he has known by having immediately experienced it. What he has known must of necessity have antecedence and priority to that which he speaks.

This does not mean that we deny reason a place in the theological enterprise. It is not a matter of "either proof or silence." One may point rather than prove. To the mysteries of Christian faith it is very often a most complicated procedure to point. But the pointing, while it may be very direct and compulsive, does not provide the same compulsiveness as that of proof, or the appeal to "evidence." The pointing can be said to be compulsive only after the reality to which it points has become known. The term "compulsiveness" points to the experience of the empiricist who, even if he does not incline at the outset to the conjecture proposed, may indeed have to bow to the "facts" which come to light in the process of investigation. The initial uncertainty is overcome. The theist's certainty is *a priori*. The scientist's certainty is *a posteriori*. So the theist's talk about religious awareness can only indicate the direction in which to look, and the places where not to look. The theist's talk is explication, not experimentation. It is report about what is known, not report about what is coming to be known.

The term "evidence" is rejected in the sense used hitherto. There is, nevertheless, a way in which it has obviously impor-

tant currency in English and in which it may be fruitfully employed of religious knowledge. If we say that religious knowledge is "self-evident," we indicate an appeal to evidence, but in this case the evidence is internal to the apprehending self, as that self is in relation to the ground which is apart from and stands over against it. It is the self-evidence of knowing that one is in relationship to the not-self. The analogy has shifted from that of establishing of probable conclusions about a conjecture on the basis of the empirically verifiable evidence, rather to that of the speaking of the response of person to person. This kind of "knowing" is what is presented in the Scriptural account of certainty of God. The shift is a vital one, the knowledge less easy to manipulate, the theological task to be quite differently construed in consequence. The claim is made that to construe worthy knowledge only in terms of the empirical method is needlessly to restrict it. Religious knowledge is more like the knowledge that trust in another person makes available than the knowledge that comes from an empirical process. What has here been said about the *a priori* nature of the religious awareness, is differently expounded in the various theological traditions. But our formula "from initial certainty, through a process of transposition, to rational explication"³ could serve as a definition of theology which might be applied to different schools of theology, *e.g.*, the mystical tradition, the Thomist way, liberals, Barth. In each of these cases there is an initial immediacy of awareness (defined differently indeed), and

³ Since the form in which we have been expounding theistic certainty in this paper has been philosophical, the question may well be raised as to what can guarantee the certainty of the knowledge here treated against subjectivity. This article has had the limited purpose of setting forth the religious certainty of the theist as a given in relation to its subsequent elaborations. Thus we have not examined the means by which this certainty comes to be. In discussing this latter we would have to raise and address ourselves to the problem of the relation between rational, historical, and experiential certainty. We would then find ourselves in the midst of a discussion of the relationship between faith and history.

following this the explication in rational terms of that awareness. ⁴

⁴ In this description of the process by which theological statements come to be made ("from initial certainty, through a process of transposition, to rational explication" p. 198), as in the article as a whole, it has not been our concern to discuss the important issue of the historical source of the revelation which, for the Christian theist, constitutes the point of departure. It may suffice to point out that when a reality is manifested through history, that is through happening, we must give attention to all the relevant questions that may be raised relative to historical knowledge and historical evidence, after having shown that such considerations are relevant to the kind of knowledge which we have here expounded. The methods of the historian can take us only so far—to the having-happenedness of certain things. The question that must further be raised is "What is disclosed through such having-happenedness?" The Christian answer to this question has been a trinitarian one. What was disclosed then and there in the first century of our era, is continuous, indeed in unity with, what is disclosed here and now in the experience of the believer. To stress this continuity between past and present, history that took place and history that takes place, is what is intended by a doctrine of the Spirit. One can only see the inner side of the event established by historical methods (*e.g.*, the death on the Cross) as the reality disclosed there ("God was in Christ") is now manifest and whose manifestation produces the certainty of which we have been speaking. This certainty is thus tied to historical event. While knowledge of the Crucifixion of Jesus is not identical with faith in the Christ who was crucified—indeed pagan historians chronicled the crucifixion—there must be no dichotomy between the two kinds of knowledge. That certain things happened was in fact confessed from the outset of the church's history as integral to faith and to the witness to faith. The decision of faith did not take place in a vacuum but within the context of an historical frame of reference. It still does.