

The Knowledge of Faith

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The experience of faith is a perennial source of fascination. Among the questions it has prompted are those concerning faith's origin, its primary resource, and its content. *First*, where does faith come from? Does it originate in an act of the human will, in an exercise of human freedom? Or is it the result of divine activity, such as the influence of the Holy Spirit? This gives rise to the further question as to who is ultimately responsible for faith, God or man. *Second*, how is faith related to the Word of God, the primary resource for the church's public proclamation as well as for the individual Christian's devotional life? *Third*, since Christian faith is synonymous with faith in Jesus Christ, how is the relationship between a human experience in the present and a historical person in the distant past to be understood? The history of Christian thought is replete with answers to these important questions, all of which reflect a concern for the nature of faith: the various interpretations of free will and predestination, the frequent discussions of inspiration and revelation, and the many explanations of how faith and history are related.

Other questions, no less significant than those dealing with faith's origin and content, arise with respect to the epistemological character of faith. It is these with which this article is specifically concerned. Is faith itself a way of knowing anything? If so, what is the nature of its knowledge? In particular, how is it related to knowledge that is based on reason? These questions are usually considered in terms of the relationship obtaining between faith and reason. Does faith come before reason, or reason before faith? Does someone believe because he understands, or does he understand because he believes?

The problem of answering these questions is complicated by the fact that both words, *faith* and *reason*, are used in several ways. If reason is under-

stood as inclusive of all of man's cognitive faculties, then obviously whatever is known with respect to faith is reasonable, or rational, in this broad sense. Within the boundaries of the problem of relating faith and reason, however, it is customary, and helpful, to equate reason with *understanding*. Understanding cannot be simply identified with any function of man's cognitive faculties, for it is possible to know something without understanding it. To know that an automobile runs, for example, is quite different from fully understanding its mechanical operation. What understanding entails is a clear perception of the various causes, or reasons, for something being the case. In a narrower sense, then, reason represents the capacity for giving reasons; to know something on the basis of reason means being able to give reasons for its being the case. What is reasonable is what is capable of rational explanation.

If by faith is meant all that is entertained in the form of religious beliefs, as distinct from the ethical or practical aspects of religious experience (cf. faith vs. works), then anything of a religious nature known on the basis of reason is obviously included within faith. However, faith is frequently distinguished from mere belief, as the difference between the mere entertainment of certain ideas and the commitment to the content of these ideas as determinative of one's entire existence. Faith is often more narrowly conceived as the exhibition of such commitment apart from, or in spite of the lack of, incontestable objective or scientific proof of that to which the commitment is made. What faith, in this case, believes is not completely understood by reason. Thus, there is a certain tension between faith in the narrower sense and reason conceived as understanding. The question at hand concerns the relation of these two factors within religious experience.

I

There have been two classic ways of formulating the relation between faith and reason. The first is that of Augustine. According to his famous formula, *Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis* (If you do not believe, you will not understand), faith is logically prior to understanding, and there is no understanding the content of faith apart from the perspective of faith itself. The Augustinian view regards the knowledge of faith as self-authenticating and as providing the basis for what reason may subsequently explore and expound. But there is no understanding apart from faith. Because of the disastrous effects of sin on man's rational faculties, human reason can know nothing of the divine unless inwardly moved by the Spirit of God. Only under this influence are the objects of faith known.

Thomas Aquinas was less pessimistic regarding the effects of sin on man's rational faculties. In his view, it is possible for human understanding, unaided by divine power, to attain a partial knowledge of God. Such knowledge, to be sure, is less than that of Christian doctrine, but it nevertheless provides a starting point which anticipates what is known in faith. Thus, Thomas saw a continuity between reason and faith. Although it requires the supplementary knowledge of faith, human understanding can take one well along the road to belief — in which case faith, the explicit knowledge of Christian doctrine, appears as the logical complement of, if not the logical conclusion to, what the unaided human reason can know. In the Augustinian view, of course, there is no such continuity. Reason can proceed from, but never by itself precede, faith.

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It is important to notice that both of these formulations regard faith as cognitive in nature. In other words, they assume that faith includes knowing something, that it represents the affirmation of something to be true. An exemplary expression of faith is the statement, "I believe that God exists." Such an affirmation entails knowing that something is the case, in this instance knowing that God exists. An expression of faith is thus an affirmation that something is known. The question of the relation between faith and reason may therefore be formulated as the question, What is the nature of the knowledge of faith, and how is it related to the knowledge of reason?

Generally speaking, there are two types of knowledge, mediate and immediate knowledge. To know something on the basis of mediate knowledge is to base one's knowledge on something else that is known. If A is known because B and C are known, then knowledge of A is knowledge mediated by B and C. In other words, B and C are reasons for A. Since reason means the ability to give reasons for, it is evident that the knowledge of reason (i.e., rational knowledge) can be nothing other than mediate knowledge and, conversely, that mediate knowledge is knowledge capable of rational justification.

If I am asked how I know B, in the case just mentioned, my answer may be that I know B because I know D, E, and F. Perhaps my reasons for knowing D are G, H, and J. This process cannot continue indefinitely, with my giving reasons for knowing one thing on the basis of my knowing other things, because of the fact that my knowledge is finite. Sooner or later I come to the point where I must say, "I know this to be true simply because it is true," or "I believe P because P." In this case, P is accepted as self-evident. It may provide a reason for believing something else, but it is its own reason for being believed; it is self-authenticating. Such knowledge is

immediate, since it is not mediated by anything other than itself. It is not known because. . . . It is simply known — period. The process of regressive justification constitutive of mediate knowledge cannot be infinite. There must be a starting point; something must be accepted as self-evidence — self-authenticating. Therefore, all mediate knowledge includes among its integral elements at least one immediately known, or self-authenticating element, on which it ultimately rests.

When these two types of knowledge, mediate and immediate, are correlated with the Augustinian and Thomistic formulations described above, the knowledge of faith appears in the Thomistic view to be mediate knowledge, since it is based on knowledge provided by reason. By contrast, in the Augustinian view the knowledge of faith is immediate, since it is prior to all rational justification. Now, which of these two interpretations of the knowledge of faith more accurately represents the lived experience of the believer? Is the knowledge of faith more appropriately understood as mediate or as immediate?

Many Christians accept an explanation like that of Thomas as an adequate account of their belief in God. In this view, the movement from unfaith to faith roughly parallels the procedure a scientist follows in conducting his investigations. Beginning with an impartial investigation of all the available evidence bearing on a subject, the scientist selects from various explanations the one which most completely accounts for all the facts and states it as his conclusion. Similarly, the believer begins by observing impartially and objectively all the available evidence for, say, the existence of God. His investigation leads him to conclude that there is no explanation for such phenomena as the order he finds in nature other than the existence of an all-powerful and all-knowing heavenly Father. He therefore bases his faith in God on the conclusion to which the exercise of his reason leads him. Thus, faith is the conclusion to which reason leads by way of a rational examination of the readily available evidence.

This interpretation of the knowledge of faith is supported by a well-known statement of Ellen White's: "God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant."¹ Accordingly, any objective examination of the abundant evidence should lead to the inevitable conclusion that God exists. In this sense, reason prepares the way for faith, which, in turn, is based upon the evidence that reason discovers.

An appealing analogy seems to lend further support to this interpreta-

tion. Coming to have faith, coming to believe in God, is frequently compared to falling in love. Obviously, no one falls in love without some very important reasons for doing so. If a prospective bridegroom could not provide a single reason for loving the girl he intends to marry, we would seriously doubt whether the marriage ought to take place. To the contrary, people in love are known for the lengths they can go to in extolling the beauty, intelligence, and other attributes of their beloved. They regard each endowment as a reason for being in love. Similarly, the believer is capable of producing numerous reasons for his belief in God: God shows his love in a thousand ways; it is written in the stars of the sky and in the way all the creatures of the forest find their needs supplied. In addition, there is the evidence provided in the inspired Word of God, and, above all, there is the evidence of Jesus Christ, the very Son of God.

In the light of this line of argument, the knowledge of faith appears to have the character of mediate knowledge. The believer comes to faith by reaching certain conclusions based on the evidence that his reason discloses. He gives reasons for his faith by appealing to something more basic than faith, on which faith itself rests.

II

This account of the knowledge of faith as logically dependent upon rational knowledge gives rise to several critical questions. In the first place, its acceptance of the scientific method as a general model for interpreting the transition from unbelief to faith seems to rest on a superficial understanding of the nature of evidence. Evidence never lies out there in the external world as cold, hard facts, indifferent to the observing eye. To be seen as evidence, the facts always depend on the assumption of a particular perspective. Evidence of any kind — legal, scientific, or religious — attains its status only by virtue of the assumption of a perspective appropriate to that evidence. To the untrained eye, for example, all the symptoms of a fatal disease may very well go unrecognized. It takes the informed perspective of a physician to see these symptoms as evidence for whatever the malady might be. The present issue is the nature of religious evidence. Whether there is sufficient evidence for the conclusions affirmed by faith, or not, whatever evidence there is will appear as such only to one who assumes an appropriate perspective. Thus, the assumption of the proper perspective is as essential to faith as drawing valid conclusions.

A close examination of the evidence appealed to as a basis for faith reveals that its status is identical to that of the conclusions which reason at-

tempts to draw from it. The presence of a supernatural intelligence at work in the universe, for example, will appear as problematic as the existence of God to the individual who questions the latter. The testimony of the Holy Scriptures will have persuasive power only to the one who regards them as divinely inspired. Again, the sending of his Son to die for the sins of the world will constitute evidence for the love of God only to those who already believe that God loves them. In short, what appears to be an appeal to objective evidence available to any impartial observer turns out to be an appeal to the contents of faith.² If this is true, then it must be the case that the process of finding reasons on which to base one's faith is really the function of faith justifying itself, rather than something else justifying faith. Consequently, every attempt to get behind faith to prior evidence for it will always find faith already present in the perception of that evidence.

The romantic analogy exhibits the same sort of characteristics. None of the reasons appealed to have any force apart from the conviction they are designed to support. If someone assures us that he loves his wife because she has such beautiful eyes, we can easily turn his statement around to the effect that he finds his wife's eyes beautiful because he loves her. The same is true of anything to which he might appeal as evidence on which to base his love. All the "reasons" for his love turn out to be just as much the results of love as causes of it. Indeed, the very act of his giving reasons or providing evidence for his love is an act of love itself, rather than the impartial observation of his wife's appearance and behavior. True love is anything but impartial, particularly in its quest for evidence. The dozens of reasons someone else has for loving his wife will almost certainly fall short of persuading me that I should love her. All the evidence he finds is *evidence for him*, not for me.

Similarly, all the evidence the believer may appeal to as supporting his faith in God is equally capable of being construed as the result of his belief. There is no "objective" evidence available to believer and unbeliever alike. The difference between the two is as much a difference in their ability to see the evidence as a difference in the conclusions they reach. When it comes to the evidence for faith, there is no such thing as an impartial observer, completely open to persuasion one way or the other. The ability to see the evidence as supportive of belief in God is as indicative of faith as is coming to the conclusion, on completing an examination of the evidence, that God exists.

But what about Ellen White's statement quoted above? How can it be understood except as endorsing the view that faith is a conclusion arrived at

by looking at evidence? The first thing to be noticed about these words is the chapter in which they appear — the twelfth of thirteen in *Steps to Christ*. It is apparent from its title that the book intends to account for how an individual comes to have faith, to describe the transition from unbelief to belief. It seems unlikely that the author would reserve until next to the last chapter an explanation of something on which the entire process depends. Moreover, both the title of the chapter, “What To Do with Doubt,” and its opening paragraph obviate the fact that the relation of faith and reason described there occurs within the experience of one who already believes in Christ. Thus, the quest for reasons on which to base faith evidently takes place within the experience of the believer; its character is that of an outgrowth from and an exercise of faith, rather than of an initial foundation for believing. According to its context, then, the basing of faith on evidence Ellen White describes is a means of overcoming doubts that arise within the experience of one who already has faith, not an account of the transition from unfaith to faith to begin with.

Another important thing about this statement that faith is based on sufficient evidence is the fact that it is qualified by these words in the same paragraph: “Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration.”³ This distinction between evidence and demonstration is made elsewhere by Ellen White,⁴ each time to the effect that a demand for the perfect knowledge of complete, or conclusive, evidence as requisite for faith will never be satisfied. Because faith is not “certainty of knowledge,”⁵ one who demands such evidence as a basis for belief will never come to faith. This means that there is always a gap (because of an inevitable limitation of evidence) between that for which reason can provide a basis and that which faith believes. The evidence never fully accounts for what is affirmed by faith. Faith always believes more than what reason can account for; what faith affirms always extends beyond the evidence which reason supplies. In other words, the totality of faith’s contents is never transparent to rational inquiry.

If the evidence on which faith rests is less than coercive, then whatever certainty the believer has in the truth of his affirmations must rest on something more convincing than reason alone. There are therefore two reasons for seeking some factor other than reason to account for the presence of faith: (*a*) the lack of conclusive rational evidence for what is affirmed by faith, and (*b*) the need to account for the assumption of the perspective wherein the evidence for faith is perceived as such.

A suggestion as to what this factor might be appears in the closing sen-

tence of the same paragraph: "Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith."⁶ Although faith, as synonymous with the believer's total religious experience, may be regarded as based on abundant evidence that appeals to reason, the ability to discern this evidence represents something more fundamental than reason — a desire to know the truth. Now, one cannot establish the existence of this desire on a basis of rational evidence, for it is this desire which accounts for there being any such evidence. It will not do to appeal to A as a basis for B, and then attempt to establish B as the basis of A. That on which the discernment of rational evidence for faith depends cannot itself be accounted for by an appeal to such evidence.

There is, therefore, something within the total experience of faith which accounts for there being any faith at all, something upon which all the other elements of faith ultimately rest and to which all its other characteristics may ultimately be traced. In other words, there is within faith an irreducible element, or incompressible core, which accounts for all the other elements in faith and is not itself accounted for by any of them. The question at present concerns the nature of this factor without which there could not in any sense be faith. At what level of experience is it located? and what are its distinguishing characteristics?

III

As inclusive of the total religious experience, faith may be more or less; it may increase or decrease, grow or die. But with respect to its irreducible element, faith is qualitative rather than quantitative; it is either present, or it is not; there is no in-between. To illustrate, there is obviously a vast difference between the faith of the apostle Paul at the height of his ministry and that of the thief on the cross. Paul's faith was greater, more mature, stronger, better informed, etc., than the faith of the latter. But there is something which the two had in common, a fundamental characteristic distinguishing both of them from someone who does not believe. The question is, what is the nature of this fundamental distinguishing characteristic common to all believers, this indispensable *terminus a quo* of the life of faith?⁷

If the nature of that upon which faith ultimately rests is sought on the level of the desire to believe mentioned by Ellen White, it appears as logically prior to the discernment of evidence by the exercise of reason. Accordingly, this absolutely fundamental element within faith may be initially described as prerational. The fact that faith's irreducible element is prera-

tional follows from the principle that what accounts for reason cannot itself be accounted for by reason. Thus, the irreducible element accounting for the existence of faith is never transparent to man's understanding. It forever remains a mystery. There is no rational explanation for the transition from unfaith to faith; it can only be described.⁸

A frequent objection to such an interpretation of the ultimate foundation of faith is that it evacuates faith of meaningful content, that it renders faith a blind leap in the dark, incomprehensible and irrational. Such a leap is obviously at odds with the notion that the knowledge of faith is open to the investigation of reason. But it does not necessarily follow from its being pre-rational that faith's irreducible element is also noncognitive, empty of content. Faith may indeed know something, even though its knowledge is not the result of rational inquiry. Just as sight is never merely seeing, but always seeing *something*, so faith is never merely believing, but always, believing *something*, and what is believed is in some sense known. Hence, faith is never a vacuous entity, empty of all cognitive content; it always involves knowing something. The question is, What is the nature of the knowledge of faith with respect to its irreducible element?

Clearly, the knowledge of faith's irreducible element cannot be mediate knowledge. Mediate knowledge is transparent to reason, which establishes its truth on the basis of other things known to be true. But what is known by faith's irreducible element is not transparent to reason; so it cannot consist of mediate knowledge. The only alternative is that what faith knows on its absolutely fundamental level has the character of immediate knowledge. It is not known because something else is known; it is simply known. In terms of its irreducible element, faith is self-authenticating; it is its own evidence for being believed.

The notion that nothing is known except on the basis of reasons other than itself, in other words, that all knowledge is mediate, is unacceptable. *First*, it is logically impossible, since an indefinite regression of justification is inconceivable, at least with respect to finite knowledge. *Second*, it ignores the evidence provided by the most basic human experiences. When I see red, for example, I know that I see red. My knowledge requires no other proof than the perception of the visual field bearing that color. My knowledge in this case is immediate; there are no "reasons" for it. Again, when I feel pain, I know that I feel pain. I need no further evidence or justification or reason to account for the knowledge beyond the sensation itself. Such knowledge is immediate; it is not known on the basis of something else being known; it is its own reason for being known; it is self-authenticating.

Similarly, that which is known by faith's irreducible element is apprehended immediately. It requires no reason other than itself for being believed and is therefore self-authenticating.⁹

It is characteristic of immediate knowledge not only that it is self-authenticating, but also that it conveys maximal conviction. Consider the same examples. No one is ever in doubt regarding the knowledge of his senses. To be sure, the conclusions drawn from sensory experience may not provide an accurate account of the external environment, but that is not the point. The fact is that one knows the content of his senses — regardless of the accuracy with which the external world corresponds to this content — immediately and with maximal conviction. When I am in pain, there is never the slightest doubt regarding my knowledge that I am in pain; I am completely convinced of it. Of course, I may not accurately locate the source of the pain or intelligently account for its cause (these are the functions of a physician), but there is no doubt in my mind that I am really in pain (I don't need the doctor to tell me it hurts!). Maximal conviction is characteristic of immediate knowledge.

By contrast, mediate knowledge is not characterized by this degree of conviction. Relative certainty is all that it is capable of producing. If I conclude A on the basis of evidence B, C, and D, I can never be absolutely certain that my reasoning process is infallible. Perhaps there is another conclusion, equally well accounted for by the same evidence, which has not occurred to me. Or perhaps A is fully accounted for by B and C, and my inclusion of D as evidence is mistaken. Or perhaps I have overlooked or been totally ignorant of another factor, the addition of which to B, C, and D would invalidate the conclusion A. Such are the perils of discursive reasoning, based as it is on mediate knowledge.¹⁰ Its conclusions admit of relative certainty only; it is incapable of apodicticity. The most that can ever be expected from any rational or scientific investigation is a high degree of probability.

Now, which is fundamentally characteristic of faith, relative or maximal conviction? When a worshiper confesses, "I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth," does he mean, "I believe in the probability that God created heaven and earth"? Or does his confession express more than a relative certainty concerning the truth of his affirmation? Does he regard the creatorship of God as highly plausible, or as so certain that he is willing to stake his very existence on his belief that it is true? If faith is anything other than the maximal conviction that what it affirms is true, it is impossible to account for that paragon of religious devotion, namely, the individual who is willing to die for what he believes. People do not lay down

their lives for mere probabilities or relative certainties. Faith consists of going beyond the expression of relative certainty to the affirmation that the contents of faith are absolutely certain — so that their denial is not only false but inconceivable. The believer does not regard the contents of his faith as representing merely one of several hypotheses he might entertain, albeit the most probable one. No, he regards the contents of his faith as so certain that it is impossible for him to conceive of their not being the case. The very essence of faith, then, is maximal conviction.

Now what is the source of this conviction? It cannot be rational evidence, for such evidence is capable of producing nothing more than relative certainty, and relative certainty is never sufficient to account for faith. As a case in point, consider the consummate formulations of man's rational knowledge of God — viz., the naturalistic proofs for God's existence. They are well known to be ineffective in producing faith. No one ever comes to have faith in God as a result of studying the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments for the existence of God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not the God of the philosophers. Not only logically but practically speaking, faith is never accounted for on the basis of knowledge mediated by reason. If maximal conviction as to the truth of its contents is essential to faith, then reason's disclosure of evidence cannot be constitutive of faith, for the most that such a disclosure can produce is a high degree of probability. So if the certainty of the believer in the truth of his affirmations represents more than the entertaining of hypotheses, however high their probability, then his faith must have some basis other than the evidence that appeals to reason. In short, faith cannot consist of mediate knowledge, for all it can lead to is relative certainty. Since immediate knowledge alone conveys maximal conviction, the knowledge constitutive of faith must of necessity be immediate knowledge. Immediate knowledge is thus required by faith not simply because, like all knowledge, the latter must include at least one immediately known element. Because faith by its very essence consists of maximal conviction, which immediate knowledge alone conveys, such knowledge is not merely requisite to but itself constitutive of faith. In other words, faith is faith by virtue of what it immediately knows to be true.

Since the maximal conviction constitutive of faith is conveyed only by immediate knowledge, and since immediate knowledge is precisely the content of faith's irreducible element, then this irreducible element of faith is not merely requisite to but exclusively constitutive of faith. That is to say, it is the presence of this element — and nothing else — that guarantees the presence of faith. Whatever the other elements that participate in religious life,

none of them has the status of this one irreducible element. It accounts both for there being any faith at all and for faith being what it is. Since this element is not a matter of more or less, its presence alone guarantees the presence of saving faith. The addition of other elements may constitute a working out of salvation, or the carrying out of its implications to their logical conclusion, but a person is not thereby any more saved than he is by virtue of faith's one irreducible element. If salvation on its fundamental level is not a matter of more or less, but a matter of being saved or not being saved at all, then it is this irreducible element of faith — and nothing else — which in the final analysis provides the basis of salvation.

If faith consists of immediate knowledge yielding maximal conviction, and if this is provided by its irreducible element, then the addition of mediate knowledge to the contents of faith by means of rational inquiry, with its accompanying degree of relative certainty, is not constitutive of faith. By virtue of its irreducible element, there would still be faith, whether the process of rational investigation ever took place or not. Therefore, the existence of faith does not depend upon the ability to come to certain conclusions on the basis of a rational investigation of evidence. The quality of one's faith is not directly proportional to his ability to provide rational proofs for its contents. Unless this is so, we must place a low estimate on the quality of faith in the uneducated and the young, those unable and those not yet able to give a rational explanation of their belief — an untenable position, particularly in view of Jesus' description of children as paradigmatic of genuine faith.

IV

In conclusion, it appears that faith is indeed a way of knowing something, and that the knowledge exclusively constitutive of faith is prerational, immediate, and characterized by maximal conviction. On this basis it is possible to suggest an answer to the question as to how faith and reason are related. It is evident from this examination of the knowledge of faith that the Augustinian formulation of the relation between faith and reason is the more accurate representation of the lived character of the human experience of faith. That is to say, the relation of faith to reason is one of irreversible logical priority. This means that faith is what it is independent of reason, and that within the religious life it is always reason which derives from faith, and never vice versa.

It does not follow from the logical priority of faith to reason that faith necessarily exists apart from reason, that is, that faith must at some time be

totally unaccompanied by an ability to give a meaningful account of its content. The effect of the argument has been to establish the *logical* priority of faith to reason, not its temporal priority. Thus, it does not invalidate the notion that faith is always accompanied by some degree of understanding. The point is that this rational element is not constitutive of faith, that it is not what determines either the presence or the nature of faith. Instead, the role of reason is more properly understood as corroborating rather than constituting faith. But this does not at all depreciate the importance of reason in religious life. Certainly, neither the rational explication of the contents of faith nor the corroboration of the affirmations of faith by a rational examination of the evidence is irrelevant to religious experience. Reason may be as integral to the totality of religious experience as is faith, but it is not, logically speaking, its fundamental constituent. Faith alone provides this foundation, which is in the final analysis nothing other than faith itself.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1908), p. 105.
- 2 In *Steps to Christ*, Ellen White emphasizes the role of personal experience in her discussion of the evidence for faith (p. 111). She identifies as the "highest evidence of the divine authorship of the Bible" the effect of its "vivifying power" upon one's own mind and heart (*Education* [Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1926], p. 171). And again, in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume eight (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1928), she says that "the real evidence of a living God" lies in "the conviction that God has written in our hearts, illuminated and explained by His word. It is in the living power in His created works, seen by the eye which the Holy Spirit has enlightened" (p. 325).
It is her view, then, that the most convincing evidence for the validity of the contents of faith is the experience of faith itself. Obviously this evidence is not perceptible from some position neutral to faith and unfaith, but only from within the perspective of faith. Therefore, an appeal to this evidence is an appeal to faith itself, not to something independent of faith, and thus not to anything "objective" in the ordinary sense of the word.
- 3 White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 105; compare *Education*, p. 169.
- 4 White, *Education*, p. 169. See also White, *Selected Messages*, book one (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1958), p. 28; and White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume five, p. 69.
- 5 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume four, p. 28.
- 6 White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 105.
- 7 2 Peter 1:5-7 places faith at the head of a list of attributes which believers should be concerned to acquire.
- 8 In *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1940), the inscrutability of the origin of faith is attested to by Ellen

G. White's comments on John 3:1-17: "So with the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. It can no more be explained than can the movements of the wind" (p. 172). She continues, "It is impossible for finite minds to comprehend the work of redemption. Its mystery exceeds human knowledge" (p. 173).

- 9 The notion that the knowledge of faith exhibits the character of immediacy is corroborated by Ellen White in her description of Mary's inability to understand or explain her anointing of Jesus' feet: "The Holy Spirit had planned for her, and she had obeyed its promptings. Inspiration stoops to give no reason. An unseen presence, it speaks to mind and soul, and moves the heart to action. It is its own justification" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 560); and in her description of the possibility of knowing God's will on the basis of the content of one's own impulses: "And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668).
- 10 The history of science reflects the continual refinement of scientific theories resulting from the progressive accumulation of factual information. Because it can never be assumed that all the information pertaining to a certain natural phenomenon has been discovered, no scientific explanation of a state of affairs can be regarded as apodictic. Though absolute certainty is the goal of scientific investigation, its approach to this goal is always asymptotic.

Comment

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Rice begins his article by defining *reason* as "understanding," and contrasting it with *knowledge*. "It is possible," he says, "to know something without understanding it." One can know an automobile runs without understanding *why* it runs. Understanding is a clear perception of the "causes" of the engine's running, the "reasons" it runs. To understand is to "know" in a particular way. "To know something on the basis of reason means being able to give reasons [causes] for its being the case. What is reasonable is what is capable of rational explanation."

I

It seems to me this definition of reason is much too narrow for theology and philosophy. It is the notion of reason often associated with science and its methods. That is why it fits Rice's example of an automobile so well. By