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FAITH AND REASON.

By J. E. BEST, PH.D., B.Sc.

INTRODUCTION.

IN this paper I wish to bring together certain facts and ideas, and in doing so I have the object of presenting through them as a medium a fair picture of my subject, "Faith and Reason." The picture is not altogether an ordinary one, for it sets out two aspects. In one of them the view is mainly from an historical and psychological standpoint. In the other it is more from a philosophical standpoint. Corresponding to these aspects the paper falls naturally into two parts. The first is concerned largely with clashes of personality and with clashes that may occur within the personality of one individual. The second part treats the matter more after the manner of analytical philosophy and regards faith and reason as two independent means of access to truth, different in their nature and in what they can achieve, but having a proper function of mutual co-operation.

I. *The Historical and Psychological Aspect.*

That "Faith is that faculty we possess by which we believe what we know to be untrue" is a "chestnut" I would not reproduce if it did not epitomize so neatly one particular and important point I wish to make. Of course taken literally the definition is absurd. That is why it is able to appeal to our humour. Yet it builds on an unfortunate fact, that rational thought on the one hand and belief on the other have all too often stood in mutual opposition. Their antagonism is regarded as traditional. Before, however, I deal with any details of this antagonism I think it of value to make certain issues more clear. By "rational thought" for instance I do not mean that kind of thinking often termed "rationalist." This thinking is thinking

with an axe to grind. It wants simply to abolish religion. At heart it is not rational at all. Its drive primarily is emotional. I am, however, intending to refer to a kind of thinking that is not inspired by an emotional bias but is careful, that is distinctively consequential, that has the one aim of arriving at the truth and is not daunted by the possibility of mistakes by the way. This is not to be taken as any definition of the "pure reason" with which I shall be concerned in the second part of this paper. It is meant to convey, as well as I am able in a few words, what I have in mind when I speak here of rational thought. Then there is "belief." It is possible to mean many things by this term. There is the belief, or faith, which is the common everyday reliance on persons and things, something *far* more frequent than rational thought. And then there is something on a higher level, which is more rare, but which when it exists, can have greater effect still in everyday living. This is belief that is less superficial, that grasps the more ultimate. It includes religious belief. Among other things it includes political belief. As compared with the belief which is everyday trust it is by far the more variously graded. With a certain few individuals it is characterized by the clarity of vision. With a greater number it is held largely on the authority of those who "see" more distinctly. And with certain others it seems to be held for little more reason than that they have never troubled to think whether anything else could possibly be true. Disregarding, therefore, the lower level of belief which makes up so much of common experience, it will be more apparent what I am meaning by belief when I refer it to the age-old struggle between faith and reason.

As a very early instance of this struggle it is of true interest to outline the circumstances attending the death of Socrates. Socrates was more than a great philosopher, at least as we understand the term to-day. He held himself to be entrusted with a highly special mission to mankind. This mission was to direct men into the pathway of goodness. He believed it to be laid on him as a duty by God, and he insisted upon it at his trial. He was, he said, an envoy from God. Rather than be false to this duty he chose death. As a philosopher, of course, there is equally no doubt of his greatness. It was his philosophy that Christian doctrine was to find so natural to its expression in the centuries to come. He was certainly the most righteous and the wisest man of his day. However he subjected to the

criticism of reason the ethics and the traditional religious beliefs of his time, and this criticism proved intolerable to his fellows. He was charged with "corruption of the young" and moreover with "neglect of the gods when the city worships, and the practice of religious novelties," and by a majority he was condemned to death. This was the penalty for assailing with rational thought the beliefs of a great civilization.

The story marks out what may be regarded as the beginning of the as yet untermiated battle between religion and philosophy. But if it is unhappy, at least it is inspiring. It is not so easy to perceive this redeeming feature in later aspects of the struggle. Listen to the battle in early Christian times. Tertullian is hurling his defiance at this never-too-greatly-to-be-detested reason. He is deriding its essence. "Because it is impossible," he declares, "therefore I believe." He rejoices in regarding his faith as irrational, and if, that being so, philosophy cannot accept it, well then! so much the worse for philosophy! But if at one time he feels so much its victor that he can deride this philosophy to its face, at others he feels the need for more serious denunciation. "It is this philosophy," he bitterly complains, "which is the subject matter of this world's wisdom, that rash interpreter of the divine nature and order. In fact, heresies are themselves prompted by philosophy. . . . Wretched Aristotle! . . . What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem?" Since Tertullian there have been other champions, Calvin, for instance, and Barth. It was Calvin who held that reason by itself could provide man with no certain knowledge at all. Moreover, not merely that, but that man's thoughts of God aided solely by reason are not just imperfect, they are altogether false. And to-day Barth employs reason in the service of dogma, but dogma is an aristocrat and reason is only a poor serf who has to toil and moil on the aristocratic fields, whose lot it is to be ridden down—without a prick of conscience—should he stand in the way of the aristocratic coach.

Now it is expressing it a little tamely to say that it seems in this struggle that rational thought has been treated unjustly. The attitude of man taking a stand upon the ground of faith in opposition to reason has sometimes been wickedly wrong. Socrates is not an isolated figure in a dim past. A Christian abbot has had only to expound a rational denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation to be pulled limb from limb by his brother

Christians. And if at times the treatment has been wicked at others it has been simply ridiculous. Instinctively one seeks for some explanation. Why should things be thus? When one reads Karl Barth, for instance, one cannot fail to see a man with a wide grasp and firm hold of Christian truth. But then, when he is faced with a logical contradiction between two dogmas, one finds he is able to brush the difficulty on one side with the lightest of unconcern. To him the truth of neither dogma is affected. If there is any fault to be found, it is logic that must take the blame. The impression naturally created upon intelligent non-Christians is deplorable. At least the position is most unsatisfactory. How does it come about? I think there is a clue that will suggest an answer. It is common to find in Barthian writing a very liberal use of exaggeration. This makes his meaning often hard to ascertain, because it follows that his ideas become conveyed with a corresponding lack of precision. Exposition in this manner, I need hardly say, is repugnant to any man of developed logical sensibilities. But Barth will use even blatant contradictions in the attempt to express his thoughts. Can one by any stretch of imagination hear Kant elucidating himself as a matter of course in terms of "impossible possibilities"? Thus I find it hard to escape the conclusion that for Barth and others like him the significance of reason has scarcely dawned. Like Calvin he towers as a giant in spiritual insight, but equally like Calvin he is a babe in matters of analysis.

This brings us to an issue of the greatest significance. Rational undevelopment is not something of comparatively minor account. It is a great handicap in arriving at truth. Faith, it is readily conceded, may alone be able to perceive some objects. But does it always see without aberration? Can it even detect if there is any aberration in its vision? The answers to both those questions are certainly, No. But reason is often able to detect an error, by the use of its principle that truth must agree within itself. To put the matter differently, and in a way that Kant has expressed it, reason has the function of saying what is open to belief. The proposition *The whale swallowed Jonah whole*, for example, is. But the proposition *Jonah swallowed the whale whole*, is not. Because there is no contradiction in the former. But the latter, unless it speaks in riddles like an ancient oracle, clearly declares that the lesser of two things is also the greater, which, of course, is absurd. It is on this principle that rational

thought works. Everything is open to belief unless it contains a contradiction. So faith errs when it strays beyond the bounds of rational possibility.

On the other hand if faith will co-operate with reason it can save itself many an error. Here, however, arises a difficulty. The determination of rational possibility is not always simple. It may require abstruse thinking and tedious and patient study. But the temperament from which faith springs most readily is one that is naturally impatient and impulsive. The apostle Peter stands for a classic example. Thus I should not expect a faith-temperament, particularly such a temperament of an extreme kind unbalanced by any appreciable rational development, to regard the probings of a slow reason with a sympathetic eye, especially of a criticising reason. In this I see the root of the matter, that is to say when faith does battle with a truly reasonable reason. In general I think there is really no more to be said.

Before, however, leaving this side of the conflict I want to draw special attention to the instance of Tertullian. It is of considerable note from the standpoint of psychology. As I have indicated I regard both Calvin and Barth as unable to perform a synthesis between their own worlds of faith and the world of reason external to them in other men. Thus with them the clash is something, so to speak, outside themselves. They are not at strife within. This, however, I want to suggest is just what Tertullian was. If this be correct, it accounts for the outstanding vehemence of his denunciations. It is at least an inference from his considerable acquaintance with philosophy, unusual amongst those otherwise like him. When he was a young man philosophic enquiry greatly attracted him. But suddenly he turned upon it and from that point never ceased to rage at it. The only sufficient explanation for this behaviour, it seems, is to be found in the strong urge to sacrifice that is associated with all religion. Something has to be given, whether it be an offering, perhaps human, to appease the gods, or the forfeit of an animal's life to obtain God's forgiveness. It may be merely the salve to conscience, or the denial of some delight in the hope that God will be pleased, or it may be the dedication of a man's life to God. Tertullian offered the sacrifice of his intellect. In the language of modern psychology he effected an act of repression. For the rest of his life he was unconsciously

devoted to the stifling of his reason. Men like Calvin and Barth never had to experience the same acute struggle as did Tertullian. Reason could not press such ever present claims with them or nearly so cogently. There is little wonder that he should find himself compelled to shout so loud.

But there is another view to be taken of the struggle. Up to this point I have laid the blame upon faith, that is to say, I have discovered the cause of the trouble in the natural intolerance of what one might term in some instances a highly specialized faith-temperament, but in general merely an unbalanced faith-temperament. Moreover, thus far I have discovered the cause exclusively in this way. That, however, is because I have been particular in the selection of my instances. Other instances point to the fault in a different direction. If a temperament can be intolerant because little else is developed in it but faith, in the same way it may be intolerant because little else is developed in it but reason. This is the basis of the other side of the conflict between faith and reason. The instances that constitute this side are mostly, though not entirely, of recent date. They make up essentially the war between religion and science. To a consideration of the follies that have attended the unbalanced reason-temperament I want, therefore, now to turn, with science singled out as the chief perpetrator of these follies. Not, however, that I propose to discuss matters of biology and geology. There is another issue where science has been far more truly at fault.

Against philosophy, as we have seen, religion has laid the charge that it makes men heretics. With far weightier justice religion can today claim that science makes them atheists. This is the issue I mean. If men of Christian persuasion have, on the whole, but little to say upon it, and seem comparatively unconcerned by it, it is, I feel sure, because the very great majority of them have so little true acquaintance with the subject matter of science or with men of scientific attainment who are not avowedly Christian. Among the various views held today upon the nature of the Universe that of the normal man of science is peculiarly his own. He thinks that the Universe bears the character of a machine, and that this characteristic exhausts its nature. This view goes by the name of *materialism*, and the normal scientist really believes it true. Sometimes one hears it said that the danger it threatens to Christian belief is now largely past. This

is so to some extent. A few of the greater intellects of science in recent years have appeared to indicate a certain dissatisfaction with materialism. And the Christian Church today includes more than a few capable minds equipped to appreciate both what materialism has to say and also its shortcomings. Nevertheless, speaking as a scientist, it is my view that the generality of scientific men, because of their specialist training, think materialistically, and not only so but that they infect to a most regrettable degree the mind of the general public. I am not suggesting that the average man of science is militant in his beliefs. He merely carries with him a high prestige, endowed by his seemingly miraculous powers. There is little doubt of the fact that in the public eye the minister of religion, despite his normally more careful thinking, ranks a very poor second by comparison. The danger, in fact, persists acutely.

Now if this danger is to be dispelled it must be dispelled by reason. For it has arisen through reason. It is, of course, true that materialism, the doctrine of mechanism, is no new thing, that it was philosophy before Socrates and that it was held again in Greece after the bright light of Plato and Aristotle had paled and waned. In the sense, however, in which it is endemic to science it traces back no farther than to the Renaissance. During the Middle Ages such science as there was lay within and formed part of a broad scheme of thought which, for all its ignorance, had at least one virtue. It did justice to all the many aspects of the Universe that exist. Broadly speaking it was a scheme deriving from Plato and Aristotle. Its key words were *classify*, *reason*. These were the implements of research. With the Renaissance there came, however, a far reaching change. The old implements for gaining knowledge were not abandoned, but the emphasis was laid on new ones. It became the vogue to *experiment*, to *measure*. As it happened the new method of research met with striking success. Astronomy was understood. And then one field after another in physical science in brilliant succession. And all in consequence of that frame of mind that induced Galileo to drop the heavy and the light balls from the tower of Pisa. The Universe revealed itself as understandable through the science of mechanics. If you were good at the logic of mathematics or mechanical devices—but not otherwise—the Universe could hide no secrets from you. That seemed to be the position that emerged from the Renaissance. And roughly

speaking most scientists today seem still to hold to it. The Universe is in fact, in their view, a happy hunting ground for which all the rights are reserved for reason and none for faith.

For a genuine philosophy of the Universe this position is simply ridiculous. Its absurdity is plain merely by tracing it to its source. The scientists have investigated the Universe with implements that are capable only of discovering *matter*, and then, because they have not discovered anything else but matter, they say they have found that the Universe contains nothing else except matter. It is as though a man wears spectacles to give him clear vision, but because he so happens to choose blue-coloured glasses, he comes to the remarkable conclusion that, if you only provide yourself with the proper means to perceive it, everything is coloured blue. Science although it makes a great show of reason has much to learn and appreciate concerning reason. When it becomes more truly reasonable it will not find it so hard to make its peace with faith.

Saying this it seems fitting, as a conclusion to the historical study of the subject, to quote from two men who achieved in no small degree the happy synthesis between faith and reason that is so plainly proper. Firstly Justin : " Christ," he declares, " is the first born of God . . . the reason (Word) of whom the whole human race partake, and those who live according to reason are Christians even though they are accounted atheists. Such were Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks, and those like them . . ." Further, he declares, " Whatever has been uttered aright by any man in any place belongs to us Christians ; for, next to God, we worship and love the reason (Word) which is from the unbegotten and ineffable God ; since on our account He has been made man, that being made partaker of our sufferings, He may also bring us healing. For all the authors were able to see the truth darkly, through the implanted seed of reason (the Word) dwelling in them." And secondly Clement of Alexandria : " Thus philosophy," he lays down, " was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness, until the coming of the Lord. And now to assist towards true religion as a kind of preparatory training for those who arrive at faith by way of demonstration. For ' Thy foot shall not stumble ' if thou attribute to providence all good, whether it belongs to the Greeks or to us. For God is the source of all good things ; of some primarily, as of the old and new Testaments ; of others by consequence, as of philosophy.

But it may be, indeed, that philosophy was given to the Greeks immediately and primarily, until the Lord should call the Greeks. For philosophy was a 'schoolmaster' to bring the Greek mind to Christ, as the Law brought the Hebrews. Thus philosophy was a preparation, paving the way towards perfection in Christ."

Against these affirmations one might set the inspired introduction of the *Gospel according to St. John*. Its bold synthesis of Peter's declaration of faith with the Logos doctrine of Greek philosophy is standing testimony to the true bond that exists between belief and rational thought.

II. *The Analytical Aspect.*

I wish now to consider the topics of reason and of faith in a more formal and abstract way. I wish to refer each to the question of knowledge, so that against this setting the intrinsic nature of both is seen more clearly and the mutual relations between them. Thus I wish to think of each as a particular mode of access to knowledge. There are other modes, of course. This paper on which I am now writing is *white*. I do not know that by any process of reasoning, nor by any act of faith. I know it by that mode which is given me in my sense of sight. On the other hand my power of vision cannot inform me whether what I write is *sense* or *nonsense*. That is a matter for my reason. If I write *A thing can create itself* and *A thing cannot create itself*, then in fact I have written two statements one of which is sense and the other of which is nonsense. But if I merely content myself with *looking* at them then I shall never know which is which. My reason, however, can tell me. Let me take the first statement. Whatever this statement may mean I certainly have to understand by it action of some kind. But action is a thing of which I cannot conceive without prior to that conceiving of something that can act. Thus I have to think of something that already exists. But according to the statement the action of which I have to think is self-creation, so that the thing that acts thus does not already exist. The statement, therefore, says that at the same time and in the same sense something both exists and does not exist. It therefore conveys nothing whatever to the mind, that is to say it is nonsense. But it will be evident that there is no contradiction in the other statement that a thing cannot create itself. It is

therefore sense. It is also true. For it is either true or not true, and we have seen that to state that it is not true is simply to state nonsense.

These analytical examples show the nature of pure reason. It discovers implications. It must be fed with material, and it then shows what is contained in that material. The material may be facts. It then deduces what is involved by the facts. On the other hand the material may be an hypothesis or hypotheses. It may then show that the hypothesis contains in itself its own denial, so that it cannot possibly be true, or, it may show that one hypothesis contradicts the other, so that one at least must be false. This is the kind of knowledge that reason can give. By it, on the basis of what we have already argued, we can know, for example, that if the ideas of "spontaneous generation" or "emergent evolution" mean in any sense that something forms itself out of nothing then they are patent absurdities, and false. But, as we have seen, it has to be supplied with something on which to work. It then has the ability to display this something from all angles. Using another analogy, it is as though the something were a portmanteau which reason opens, and the contents of the portmanteau, which reason brings to light, the logical deductions that reason makes. Reason, however, does not provide the "portmanteau" in the first place. Other powers are required to do that, such as sense, judgment, intuition. These supply us with knowledge directly, reason always indirectly. Sense, judgement, intuition "give" directly. Reason "proves" indirectly. What the latter proves is as certain but not more certain than the *data* given by the former. This seemingly trivial and obvious point is nevertheless exceedingly important. There are persons who become obsessed with "proof." If they can prove a thing, they are happy that it must be so. But if it is one of those things which by its nature cannot be proved, because it falls into the category of data, they become worried and fall into doubt and may even deny the thing altogether. This position is absurd. Certainly I cannot prove that the paper on which I am writing is white. But that is no ground for denying that it is so. My power of sense tells me so and there the matter ends. Likewise I cannot prove that what I am writing is not scandal or sedition. To know that, I must rely on my powers of judgement. If they are weak I may not know, or I may have but a hazy notion. Yet

these things will not be because what I judge of does not exist or has only, so to speak, the haziest of outlines. They will be due to a lack of development of a particular one of my powers. It is conceivable that I might deny this. If I did, however, the most likely explanation of my denial would be in that natural inclination not to find the fault in myself, but somewhere outside of me. It scarcely needs saying that in this same inclination is to be found the basis for many a denial of those things which are known by that particular mode of apprehension which is faith.

In so far as most of the denials of what is held in the Christian Faith have come from men of science, it seems a thing worthy of note, if not altogether striking, that the tenets of science are held in a way that is not fundamentally different from that by which we as Christians hold the basic truths of our Faith. The tenets of science are its laws. Each law of science is a detailed confession of belief, in its own special way, that order, regularity, is a characteristic of the Universe. No law of science can be proved. It is a direct perception, more or less accurate, of something that is quite beyond reason to attain. In science, for instance, we observe a certain specific set of conditions to be attended on every occasion by certain happenings. We suppose that the happenings are bound in some way to the conditions, so that it was not chance coincidence that we observed them on the finite number of occasions that we did, but on the contrary we ought always to be able to observe them whenever we observe the conditions. That is to say we suppose something universal to be true, a definite relation that holds between every particular set of conditions and what we now term its consequences. The universal relation is a law of science. There is no bridge by reason from the particular events that suggest it to the law itself. It is not held by rational conviction. Yet it is held by conviction. How strong this conviction may be is not, perhaps, easily clear. A simple analogy that bears both on the convictions of science and of religion may, however, aid.

X, I will suppose is a friend of mine. That being so I shall know that he is. Now how do I know? Every act of his directed to me, perhaps, is friendly. But that is not a sufficient basis for my reason to build on if it is to conclude that *X is my friend*. Each single act might bear behind it some ulterior motive foreign to friendship. There is always that possibility,

that reason cannot rule out. And his acts to me taken altogether might only be those of a very subtle enemy. But I know that if, through thinking in this way, I should come to doubt his friendship I might very well lose it. The fact, if I did lose it, that I should know that I had lost it would in itself show that I knew before that I possessed it. How then did I know? Simply by an act of direct perception, of intuition, of apprehension based on the fact of his acts. My conviction that he is a friend is a matter of faith. It is by attaining conviction in this way that scientific knowledge is built up. Likewise in religion "the eyes of the blind are opened" and the blind *see*.

Reason and faith are not mutual antagonists. They have different specific functions, but they are partners. And this most surely St. Augustine realized when he said, with his peculiar and subtle skill in words: "Not all who believe think. But he who thinks believes. For he believes in thinking and thinks in believing."

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Mr. F. F. BRUCE wrote: Dr. Best's timely treatment of this important subject deserves our warm gratitude. It is refreshing, too, to find a scientist quoting Justin, Clement and Augustine so appreciatively and aptly as he does! Many contemporary theologians need to be reminded that all truth is God's truth, and as such is self-consistent.

The position assigned to Calvin on the anti-rational side between Tertullian and Barth gives one pause. Calvin, to be sure, accepted his theological *principium*, the Biblical revelation, by faith and not by reason; but, his premisses once granted, the system based thereon was almost (not quite) flawlessly logical. He had his full share of Gallic logic, and it is arguable that the less digestible elements, for example, in his doctrine of predestination are due to his drawing what seemed to him to be the logical consequences of the Pauline doctrine, and as a result carrying it to an extreme not contemplated by Paul. But Calvin was not insensible to the advantages of philosophical training and liberal culture; it is no accident that his first literary venture, published when he was twenty-three, was a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*. Unlike

Barth, Calvin gave a due place to the natural revelation of God and emphasized the manifestations of His "common grace" in the world and in mankind, despite the corruption resulting from the Fall. So, for instance, speaking of the truth to be found in profane authors, he says: "If we consider the Spirit of God to be the only source of truth, we shall neither repudiate nor despise the truth itself, wherever it may appear, unless we wish to insult the Spirit of God; for the gifts of the Spirit are not lightly esteemed without despising and reviling the Spirit Himself" (*Institutes* II, ii, 15).

The Logos-doctrine of the Johannine Prologue is fundamentally Hebraic, firmly rooted in the Old Testament. The term Logos, however, formed a bridge between Biblical revelation and Greek philosophy, as Justin, Clement and others saw; but some of the elements in the Hebraic concept never succeeded in crossing the bridge, and some essential differences between the Johannine and Greek Logos-doctrines survive to this day. Canon Phythian-Adam's paper, "The Logos-Doctrine of the Fourth Gospel," in the *Church Quarterly Review* for October-December, 1944, is specially worthy of study in this connection.

These are but passing observations occurring in the perusal of a paper which is a welcome and valuable contribution to the prime object of the VICTORIA INSTITUTE.

Major R. B. WITHERS wrote: This is an admirable and most timely paper, but to comment adequately on it would mean writing another equally long.

Dr. Best's comments explain why it is so difficult to read Barth if the aim is objective truth. A statement can be precise yet not true; but if it comes short of precision, it must correspondingly come short of truth. A man's spiritual insight is worthless to anyone but himself if he is unable to express it with precision. Here Dr. Best understates his case. Rational undevelopment is worse than a great handicap in arriving at truth; it positively inhibits it. This is because even if a truth be apprehended, we cannot apart from reason distinguish it from an untruth. Moreover we either perceive the distinction, or we do not; there are no

degrees of perception in his sphere. Nor should Dr. Best have conceded that faith may alone be able to perceive some objects. The function of faith is not to perceive, but to believe and to trust what is perceived by the mind. We expect the sun to rise to-morrow, and we act accordingly. That is faith as defined in Heb. xi, 1, correctly translated.

From this it follows that only if our perception be true ; that is, in accord with reality ; will our corresponding faith be true also. Hence, for genuine faith we require two things, reliable data in the first instance, and reason in order to ensure that we do not so misuse the data as to involve a contradiction or even a meaningless form of words.

The scientist usually conforms to the first, but when he goes beyond precise measurement and experiment into philosophical speculation he is apt to fail in the second.

The theologian is more prone to fail in the first, to be misled by faulty data, inaccurate translations or through permitting his mind to be prejudiced by preconceived theories. The enormous power of such prejudice is shown by the opposition evoked by any attempt at scientific translation of the Scriptures or the application of scientific method to their study. That we should still have to argue about the second sentence in the Bible speaks for itself ; and this is but one problem out of thousands.

Another form of irrationalism is in Brunner's statement, quoted in the *Journal*, Vol. 76, pp. 102 and 105, "We can neither experience nor understand divine revelation, but only believe it." It was remarked that it was difficult wholly to agree. I find it impossible to agree with it at all. Nobody can really believe what he cannot understand. We may believe *that* a statement is true, on the ground of faith in the one who utters it ; but we cannot believe the statement *itself* unless it conveys some clear-cut concept to our mind ; that is, unless we understand it.

Divine revelation, once ascertained, can be understood by anyone of ordinary intelligence ; but only the grace of God can enable anyone to believe it.

MR. W. F. SPANNER wrote : I think we are all under a debt to the author for presenting us with this paper on a subject of uhhh

vital and fundamental importance, indeed never more important than at the present day. I, for one, would like to thank him for his effort.

I now pass on to make a few comments on some of the points raised by the author. In the first place I see that he has made a number of statements concerning Calvin and Barth without giving any references to the works of these theologians to support his assertions. I think it would increase the value of this paper if this omission could be remedied. To take up one point in particular, the author states that Calvin taught that man's thoughts of God aided solely by reason are altogether false. This is, I think, unjust to Calvin who clearly teaches that all men by nature enjoy a certain knowledge of God; this knowledge may be corrupted by the fall but is nevertheless sufficient to leave men without excuse for their sin and rebellion against God, although it is insufficient to bring them to a saving knowledge of God. Calvin's teaching is made clear by a study of Chapters II to V, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I. I agree with the author that Barth (in so far as I can understand Barth) seems to teach that faith is irrational. This, however, is certainly not Calvin's teaching. Calvin defines faith as "a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence towards us, which being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds and confirmed to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit." Also "Faith consists, not in ignorance, but in knowledge" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, Chapter II). Faith far from being a "leap in the dark" consists in knowledge derived chiefly from the Word of God. This is reasonable faith. The author does not seem to fully appreciate the gulf which here separates Calvin from the irrational view of faith so widely held to-day. This latter so-called Modernist view, which seems to be accepted by Kierkegaard and Barth, looks upon faith as a "leap in the dark," an "adventure into the unknown," an "abandonment of oneself"; it is in sharp antagonism to the classic view of faith embodied in the creeds of the Christian Church such as the 39 Articles, and the Westminster Standards both of which substantially embody—I think it may be said with fairness—Calvin's view.

As I understand it faith is reasonable, and yet at the same time goes beyond reason. In his learned work, "Creeds or No Creeds" (1922), Canon Harris rightly points out that the whole structure of classical science and philosophy is based in the ultimate analysis upon faith. Faith that among other things includes :—

(a) Faith that we live in a rational universe.

(b) Faith that the processes of human thought known as reason are reliable as far as they go.

(c) Faith that the evidence of the human senses is reliable provided it is treated with discrimination.

Faith must precede reason in the logical order of events. We must, for instance, believe in the existence of truth before we can seriously engage in the quest for truth. It may be of course that due to a person's faith being misplaced his faith is unreasonable but faith in itself is not necessarily unreasonable, and it is certainly an essential to any kind of achievement. Christian faith, in particular (by which I mean faith in Christ, the Son of the living God) is in the very highest degree conformable with right reason, and it is the grand task of the theological science of apologetics to demonstrate this in order that the world may be saved.

Bergson, whose theory of emergent evolution is accepted by Bernard Shaw,* is dominated by the anti-intellectual and irrational bias of a large section of modern philosophers when he declares : "The intellect is characterized by a marked inability to comprehend life."† If this statement was true we might, of course, just as well give up thinking, which is just what the majority of Germans did prior to the advent of Hitler. The logical result is a purely emotional approach to life which leads to totalitarianism in the realm of politics and finally (unless people wake up in time) to national suicide.

I have made some further remarks on this subject in a brief article in the January issue of *Peace and Truth*, entitled "Pragmatism and Christian Faith" and to which the author of the present paper may like to be referred.

* *The Rationalist Annual*, 1945, p. 7.

Quoted by Canon Harris, "Creeds or no Creeds," 1922, p. 94.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I should like to thank those who have contributed comments for their kindly expressed appreciations. I feel in considerable debt to them for so valuably adding point and clarity to the paper by their remarks.

In so far as their criticisms indicate disagreement it seems clear that the divergence of view does not relate to prime issues or matters of main practical importance. On the other hand it is most heartening to find such full support on two implicit propositions of a principal order: that the expression of faith must be fully rational; and that in Barthianism there is the gravest danger.

On the first of these it is scarcely necessary to say anything further. In so far as a statement of faith is not rational it is mutilated, since it contains contradictory parts neither of which can be believed, because what one gives the other with equal force denies. If nothing remains that is not contradicted then the statement amounts to nothing at all: it is nonsense.

On the second proposition one may say of Barthian writings that it seems possible to take either of two views: that words are used apart from their ordinary meanings; or that they are used in mutual contradiction. In either event the reader is left in the greatest uncertainty as to what in the view of the writer is what—although the strongest impression may well be forced upon him that the writer is infallible and that everyone else is totally wrong. With stuff of this character paraded as Christianity who will condemn the ordinary man if he passes Christianity by as not for him, and the more intelligent man as not worthy of his consideration? Moreover the minds of earnest and honest young Christians are disturbed and filled with anxiety by this kind of writing. That they are standing on false ground they are left in little doubt; but when they look for rescue from the quicksands no visible hand, no tangible aid is held out to assist them. Major Withers' quotation of Brunner could not be more apt in illustration. What is this special faith we are supposed to have in which we are illumined in no conceivable way? If statements

like Brunner's were made in a court of justice the judge would either ignore them or direct the jury to ignore them as meaningless. Jabberwocky may be great fun in the adventures of Alice, but it cannot be tolerated in the serious business of living.

Concerning Calvin, Mr. Bruce gives good evidence to show that rather like Tertullian he had it in him to join the opposite camp to that in which I have placed him. This is a most interesting point. Moreover, I entirely agree that Calvin is to be distinguished from Barth. However, there seems not to be any doubt that Calvin had it both ways: and reviewing the whole matter as carefully as I am able I find it difficult to assure myself that Calvin lies truly in the category of full rational development. Many a scientist to-day who makes considerable use of the logical machine in the court of his work I would not place in this category.

I think that where Major Withers differs from me on the nature of faith it is more a matter of definition of words than substance. I regard the dawning of faith like the awakening of vision, and the blind eye made to receive sight, in which trust and confidence follow naturally as the darkness is pierced and objects are seen in the light. Faith is not as the Barthians assure us a leap into the dark—although this is true enough to their obscurantist doctrines—but like a step into the light; and entry into the attitude of confidence is spontaneous with the increase of vision.

I am glad that Mr. Spanner should emphasize the disastrous consequences of anti-rationalism by reference to Germany of recent times. When Church or State abandons reason it places itself at the mercy of every storm of emotion within it.

The references I would give to the works of Calvin and Barth are: *Institutes* I, iv, 1; v, 11, 12, 13 and *Credo* (as translated by J. Strathearn McNab), p. 36.