



The Logic of Faith: Prolegomena to a Theological Theory of Knowledge

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I.

In the contemporary philosophy of religion, the question concerning the logic of faith attracts much if not most of the scholarly attention. My purpose in this paper is to indirectly address this question by overturning it, that is, to argue that the sensible question to ask is not whether faith is reasonable but whether it is possible to be reasonable without faith, even specifically Christian faith. The paper is divided into three main parts. In the first, I briefly indicate what I take to be the source of the question whether faith is reasonable; I very generally describe some of the main ways that question has been addressed; and I state some of the reasons why I believe that very question is questionable.

In the second part, I substantiate the claim—as much as I can within the confines of this paper—that faith is a vital component of human reasoning. In the third, I explain why I believe the Christian faith best accounts for the element of faith that enters into reasoning. Here, I argue that identifying Christian belief as the paradigmatic instance of the faith that enters into reason is the way the logic of faith is perhaps most effectively, if implicitly, elucidated. Through all this, I outline the contours of a theological theory of knowledge in which faith and reason do not preclude but presuppose one another. Although pre-modern thinkers like Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas—as I understand them—advocated a theological concept of knowledge, that concept has mostly become foreign to modern minds.¹ The goal of this paper is to set sights towards rendering that concept intelligible and thus towards resolving the epistemological problems that have arisen because it became unintelligible—above all, the problem of elucidating the logic of faith.

¹ Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

II.

Before beginning to work towards this goal, I want to locate the origins of the very question concerning the logic of faith, albeit generally, if only to imply that there was once a time when this question that has occupied philosophers for so long was not such a central concern. The reason it became one, I submit, is that an epistemological outlook which I will describe as ‘non-theological’ began to take hold in the wake of the late Medieval decline of the theory of knowledge and divine illumination, although that outlook admittedly took on many forms which cannot all be mentioned here.

In a non-theological perspective on knowledge, reason and faith do not mutually entail but exclude one another. According to this outlook, human reasoning that is worthy of being pronounced objective results in knowledge claims that are either self-evident or backed by incontrovertible empirical evidence. By this account, the mind is competent of its own accord to determine that its thoughts are adequately supported by evidence: that they fully correspond to their attendant realities. So construed, human reason is not subject to uncertainty, deficiency, development, dependency—in sum, to any element akin to faith.

Since claims to know an immaterial God cannot be validated by such a rationalist standard, faith in Him is conceived as belief in the absence of sound reasons. Inasmuch as faith and reason become irreconcilable by definition, the question as to whether and how they are reconcilable appears.² In the modern period, Christian philosophers of religion have taken two main approaches to responding to this question. Some have attempted to show that there is a means of establishing reliable evidence for belief in God, often by arguing in support of various theistic proofs for the existence of God, especially cosmological and teleological ones. The method these have employed—that of the natural theologian—has involved demonstrating that it is possible to provide arguments for the rationality of religious belief that make no appeal to faith and so conform to rationalist standards.³

² Prominent objectors to the rationality of belief in God include David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and more recently, W. K. Clifford, J. L. Mackie, Bertrand Russell, and Michael Scriven.

³ The Neo-Thomist Catholic thinkers of the twentieth century are some of the most famous proponents of the natural theological project against which Protestants like Karl Barth and even some Catholics reacted. Another more recent proponent of the argument that the existence of God can be demonstrated from the cosmos is William Lane Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (London: Macmillan, 1979). The slightly more moderate conclusion of the renowned natural theologian Richard Swinburne is that theistic proofs provide probable as opposed to incontrovertible evidence for God’s existence. See *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

Other proponents of Christian faith have simply embraced the fact that faith is irrational by rationalist standards and adhere to it all the same.⁴ Insofar as these approaches tend towards the extremes of rationalism or fideism that render belief in God a more or less rational matter than it would actually appear to be, many have failed to find them fully satisfactory. To be fair, I should note that the situation in the scholarship has taken a turn for the better in recent years. Many philosophers of religion have recognized the inadequacy of purely rationalist or fideist answers to the question of religious belief. In newly founded traditions such as Reformed Epistemology, scholars have refused to address that question concerning the logic of faith on the basis of prevailing epistemological assumptions. Instead, they have inquired whether it is even valid to apply rationalist standards to faith, endeavouring to show that faith can be proved reasonable on its own terms, and that it is what makes the mind reasonable.⁵ Because they refuse to comply with rationalist standards, Reformed Epistemologists, to take one example, have sometimes been accused of fideism.⁶

There is some weight to that critique. For while Reformed Epistemologists have re-constructed faith so that it naturally relates to reason, they have not given the full-scale re-definition of reason as entailing faith. They have only completed one half of the project that would fully substantiate their case. Even if Reformed Epistemologists and others working in a similar vein were to redefine reason as well as faith however, it would remain for these proponents of theism to demonstrate that the God whose existence in question is the Triune God of Christian faith as opposed to the object of any other monotheist belief system or simply the 'God of the philosophers'.

In light of the difficulties associated with addressing the question concerning the logic of faith, at least on the basis of the non-theological assumptions that generate the question in the first place, I would like to present an alternative approach to the question. This approach does not involve imagining new ways to reconcile reason and faith as they have been defined in recent history; nor does it entail a half-hearted effort to challenge those definitions—a challenge in which faith but not reason is recast.

The first step in this approach does not involve a re-evaluation of the nature of faith but of reason; the project here is to construe

⁴ Blaise Pascal, Soren Kierkegaard, and Ludwig Wittgenstein are usually cited in discussions of fideism, although it is possible to argue that those who have labeled these thinkers fideists have seriously misunderstood them.

⁵ Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

⁶ See Richard Swinburne, Review of *Warranted Christian Belief* by Alvin Plantinga, *Religious Studies* 37 (2001), pp. 203–14.

the nature of reason in a way that reveals that it is impossible to be rational without faith. The second step in the effort is to show that faith is hereby rendered intrinsically rational. Where this way forward is taken, questions concerning the knowledge of God cease to be treated separately from questions concerning knowledge more generally, as they often are in contemporary philosophy. Instead, the two questions are answered together—with the question of ‘ordinary’ knowledge being treated first—which is the way the matter seemingly must be dealt with if the sense in which faith is rational is to be decisively demonstrated.

An added benefit of addressing religious epistemological and general epistemological questions together is that it becomes possible to resolve some of the problems pertaining to ordinary knowledge together with those that pertain to religious knowledge. As it concerns ordinary knowledge, the main problem today is that of proving the very possibility of knowledge. Although the project of proving the rationality of faith is one that has been the table at least since the Enlightenment, this question has only occurred in recent years as many so-called post-modern philosophers have pointed out that, contrary to the common modern contention, human knowledge is in fact subject to the elements of uncertainty, development, and so on, which supposedly undermine the validity of knowledge claims.⁷ Upon discovering that the rationalist standard of knowledge is unattainable and thus untenable, many post-moderns have concluded that it is impossible to reason objectively at all.

The argument I am making here is that this conclusion need not necessarily follow if an account of reason can be given in which the elements that have been declared detrimental to rationality—those elements that resemble faith—are shown to be vital components of rationality. At this stage, I would be remiss if I failed to mention that something along these lines has been done by representatives of philosophical traditions such as phenomenology and pragmatism, and by figures like Michael Polanyi, who combined what he took to be the key aspects of both those traditions.⁸ Though Polanyi occasionally refers explicitly to faith, not all do. In spite of this, an examination of the theories of knowledge in question would confirm that the theories do take features of knowledge that could be described in terms of faith into full consideration.

While this is admittedly the case, it remains for religious and even specifically Christian religious faith in a Triune, Incarnate God to be

⁷ This includes Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida in the Continental tradition and Edmund Gettier in the analytic.

⁸ Phenomenologists I have in mind include Edmund Husserl and Maurice-Merleau Ponty; pragmatists include C.S. Peirce and William James. Michael Polanyi’s magnum opus is titled, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

identified with the element of faith that enters into human reasoning. In other words, it remains for those who have redefined reason in terms of faith to relate the element of faith they acknowledged to religious faith, just as it remains for those who have redefined faith in terms of reason to fully found their arguments by redefining reason in terms of faith. To perform those tasks in that order would be to enact faith-based theories of knowledge even while implicitly establishing the rationality of religious faith. It would be to resolve the questions concerning the possibility of knowledge in general and the logic of faith together, as they apparently must be if they are to be conclusively resolved. The formulation of such a theological account of knowledge, however, is a task that seemingly remains to be completed.

As I have already suggested, the first step involved in undertaking it is to define knowledge such that it entails faith. In this regard it both possible and advisable to incorporate the findings of contemporary philosophers who have articulated faith-based accounts of knowledge, as Augustine did with Neo-Platonism and Aquinas with Aristotelianism, since such scholars often do the job Christians need done better than Christians thinkers have managed. Although an effort to appropriate so-called the 'secular' contemporary philosophies most conducive to the Christian purpose of articulating a faith-based theory of knowledge that is intelligible and relevant in the contemporary context is not one that can be undertaken now, my intention is to make a full-blown effort to do this in future. For the time being, I simply offer a general explanation of a faith-based concept of knowledge, as I understand it.

III.

The hallmark of a faith-based theory of knowledge I would submit is its recognition of the fact that any effort to know cannot begin with the full attainment of understanding but only with the goal of attaining it. By setting an intellectual goal, the mind effectively puts its faith in the attainability of the goal. This, incidentally, is the sense in which one can say with Plato in his *Meno* dialogue that the mind may simultaneously know and lack knowledge of whatever it is thinking about. For the mind can know its object potentially, by anticipating knowing it, even when it has yet to encounter that object in reality.

The faith the mind places in the knowability of some reality is what compels it to do whatever is relevant to reaching the goal of knowing that reality. In attempting to do this, the mind must draw on the knowledge it already has so as to make speculations about the nature of the object of knowledge it does not have but wants to have and believes it can have. While existing knowledge makes it possible

to eventually meet the goal, it is noteworthy that it also plays a part in determining the goal in the first place, inasmuch as that which the mind knows already indicates what it desires and is able to know.

By placing faith in such pre-existing knowledge and the desires and abilities it entails, the mind becomes capable of working to obtain new knowledge. For that knowledge enables the intellect to form a provisional picture of the object that is still unknown; it thus informs the faith in that object and attunes the mind to recognize the object of faith when it is finally encountered, sustaining its efforts until a flash of insight engenders the realization that this encounter has occurred. In this effort to meet an intellectual objective—to find a suitable solution to a question or substantiate an intuition—it is often necessary to go out in search of new information, to form hypothetical solutions on the basis of that information and subsequently test those solutions and revise or even reject them. To get things right, in other words, it is often necessary to get things wrong, or at least less right. Unknowing, or faith, in sum, is a key component in the process of coming to know.

While this inevitable feature of human inquiry might be regarded as a hindrance to objectivity by some quintessentially modern accounts, according to which objectivity entails the totalized knowledge of any object under consideration, knowledge as I have been describing it can be considered objective if objectivity is said to exist wherever a human subject has set a cognitive objective towards which it is actively working. To the degree that the mind is oriented towards that objective—putting its faith in the attainability of the objective—which gives it a sense of direction and a rationale behind its actions, one can say that the mind is objective and that the knowledge claims the subject makes are justified, even if they have yet to be fully substantiated.

On this definition, objectivity, like knowledge itself, is not an all or nothing affair but a matter of degrees, insofar as all objects of knowledge must be objects of faith first. That is to say, they must be unfulfilled cognitive goals before they can become cognitive achievements. The paradoxical point that comes into relief here is that the only way for a human subject to be objective is to set and work towards an objective that is compatible with their subjective interests and abilities. Whenever the mind meets an objective it has set for itself, the understanding that results becomes a permanent extension of its cognitive equipment. The mind relies upon or has faith in that understanding in future efforts to make sense of the world. Furthermore, that understanding inspires a growth in faith inasmuch as it instils confidence that other goals can be met and then enables the mind to meet them in cognitive acts that result in further understanding.

The more habitually the mind brings understanding it already has to bear in its efforts to acquire new knowledge, the more one might say

that it lives by faith in that understanding and grows certain as to its truth. Certitude, it turns out, is acquired by degrees, just like objectivity in knowledge. It exists to the extent the mind uses its understanding in further acts of knowing. By putting it to use, the mind does not regard that understanding as an end but as a means—not as an object of understanding but as something on which it relies subconsciously or in faith. To dwell on the understanding itself would be to cease to employ it in the effort to understand something else. Even after faith makes it possible to acquire understanding, consequently, the understanding that has been acquired becomes again a matter of faith, albeit a more informed faith. This ongoing interplay of faith with understanding is what allows for growth in understanding. Apart from the faith through which intellectual objectives are set and met, there would seem to be no way to span the distance between not knowing and knowing, and as a result, there would be no knowledge at all.

To this point, I have been listing the positive ways in which faith makes it possible to progress towards cognitive objectives. In what follows, I want to mention a few of the ways in which faith helps the mind overcome hindrances to intellectual progress. As I have already intimated, the very possibility of progress is contingent upon the willingness of the knowing agent to relinquish ideas whenever new evidence renders them outdated—to acknowledge its ideas as provisional as opposed to absolute. In this instance, what is needed is an attitude of open-mindedness or faith, which checks the mind's natural tendency to cling to the belief that it has already captured the truth and has nothing more to learn. Such a prideful outlook ironically inhibits the mind's ability to overcome the less than totally true notions it inevitably entertains and therefore grow in understanding. To sum up, pride undermines the human ability to work towards an objective and thus to reason objectively.

As it causes those that fall prey to it to regard their own ideas and causes as the be all and end all of human existence, narrowing their perspective on what is right and good in a way that excludes the ideas of others, pride tends to foster animosity between those that entertain and cling to their different opinions; it renders people willing to undermine the good of others in the effort to promote their own. As such, it is the source of the many destructive and therefore irrational behaviours that wrath engenders.

By contrast to this, faith promotes peace so far as it predisposes those that live by it to accept the fact that they are finite and that they can profit from attending to the ideas of others, which may help them expand and clarify their own. Although faith instils intellectual purpose, it simultaneously keeps the mind from holding so tightly to that purpose as to defeat it by sacrificing the well-being of others for the sake of fulfilling it and thus from abandoning the integrity that is the source of the stability of the individual as well as the collective mind.

In addition to restraining pride and wrath, faith saves those that adhere to it from the apathy that often arises as a result of realizing the immensity of a cognitive objective or the risks and unknowns involved in straining towards it. Such fears in the face of obstacles can lead the mind to give up on its objective altogether and in this way abandon its rationality. In this case, faith has the power to make the mind reasonable because it keeps those that have it steadily fixed on a goal so that when challenges arise, they can overcome as opposed to be deterred by them.

The upshot of the discussion thus far is that faith is reasonable not because its objects are fully comprehensible but because it gives human beings cognitive objectives and makes it possible to meet those objectives as well as to overcome obstacles to doing so and thus to being rational. Much more could be said about how faith accomplishes all this. Moreover, more could be done to put a faith-based description of human knowing into contemporary philosophical terms, addressing contemporary epistemological problems and positions in the process. Like many other topics of discussion, however, all of that lies outside the compass of this article and waits to be treated in a book-length work on the topic.

IV.

A lingering question that falls within the scope of the present inquiry concerns the reasons for identifying the faith component that seems so essential to human reasoning with faith in a transcendent or divine being. The first observation I would make in response to this question is that belief in the divine seems to entail faith in the most 'objective' objective imaginable. Although an objective is the necessary condition for human rationality, it is not at once the sufficient condition, insofar as it is entirely possible to set irrational objectives.

A variety of examples of such objectives could be enumerated here. One irrational objective would be that of obtaining something one cannot possibly have or should not have. Others would involve organizing all of life around the attainment of temporal things like power, fame, fortune, physical satisfaction, or an excess of any of these things. Insofar as those that exhibit envy, greed, lust, or gluttony stake all their hopes for happiness on things that are fleeting or hard to find in the human situation, they make themselves slaves to desires, the constant satisfaction of which cannot be guaranteed. They put their sanity at the mercy of transient circumstances.

Faith in a transcendent being, by contrast, instructs that nothing in this world can offer lasting fulfilment, whether it be material attainments, physical pleasures, even ideals and causes. This is true so far as there is nothing in the world that is not without certain

limitations; nothing that is the all-inclusive, unending good that the divine is said to be. By adopting the objective of knowing God or at least transcending the self, the mind sets the most 'objective' objective it possibly could because this objective does not come from within the self but from beyond human beings and the transient world in which they live.⁹

When the intellect sets a transcendent objective, it acquires the resources it requires to pursue its immediate goals in view of the overarching goal of grasping something that surpasses all immediate things and that cannot be reduced to any one of them. By these means, it is kept from the seven sins—if I may be so bold as to use that word—of pride, anger, apathy, envy, greed, lust, and gluttony that cause the mind in different ways to work from the assumption that its happiness depends on temporal things, skewing its priorities and perspective on those things in ways that ultimately prove fatal to its ability to think and act rationally in the circumstances it considers.¹⁰

Although it is true that operating on the assumption that happiness consists in immediate attainments can serve to secure happiness in certain situations, this approach makes it impossible to find the good in or make the best of all the circumstances that are likely to present themselves at some point to those that live in the human situation. For this reason, the seven ways in which many work to secure immediate personal happiness turn out to be ways in which they ensure that their default state will be one of discontentment. By checking the notion that happiness consists in specific temporal attainments, faith allows those that have it to maintain a positive outlook no matter how things may change. By preserving the mind's stability in this manner, faith has a rationalizing effect, which is evidenced by the spirit of contentment that is the hallmark of the sound mind.

While the points made previously serve to confirm that faith in a transcendent being is indispensable to human rationality, they do not disclose why Christian faith might be seen as exceptionally well suited to rendering reason sound. What has been said thus far, in other words, fails to expound the reasons for believing in the Triune, Incarnate God as opposed to the object of any other monotheist religious or philosophical system.

Ostensibly, all such systems entail belief in one God as well as an overarching goal of knowing Him; furthermore, all offer some account of how to meet that goal. For this reason, there is much members of one religious tradition can learn from those working within another about how to work towards the goal of knowing God. Although all monotheistic systems of faith share that goal in

⁹ See Fergus Kerr, *Immortal Longings: Versions of Transcending Humanity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Prov. 6:16–19.

common, Christianity is unique in that it offers a concrete account of what makes it possible for that goal to actually be attained: an account of how God entered into the realm of human beings so that they might approach Him in His.

By way of the doctrine of Incarnation, the Christian system grounds the affirmation of the possibility of spanning the gap between the immanent and the transcendent that all monotheists make. At His Incarnation, the Son of God revealed what human beings had forgotten at the fall, namely, that there is a God who made the world and that the chief end of humankind is to know Him and to make Him known. In His life on earth, Christ revealed God as He carried on doing what He does eternally, which is to express the Spirit of God that glorifies God the Father.¹¹

In thus reflecting the nature of God, Christ made it known that God's nature is Triune. He disclosed the one God who knows Himself and makes Himself known does so because there are three elements in His singular act of knowing, namely, the knower, the known, and their act of knowing. In affirming the Triune nature of God and His Incarnation, it would appear that the Christian faith enacts the possibility of providing the account of one God and His knowability by human beings that all monotheists seek to give. In light of this, one might say that Christian belief is supremely rational, not because members of other traditions are less capable of being rational, but because Christianity seems to offer the best rationale for the ability to be rational that all faithful people have—an ability that people with faith of a non-Christian kind can and in many cases do put to better use than the Christians who can give a reason for it.

The Christian teaching is that this ability was restored by Christ. For as Christ imaged the Triune nature of God in the form of a human person by expressing His Spirit or mind in view of the Father's glory, He simultaneously established that all human persons were made in God's image to do as He did. That is to say, He revealed that they were designed to express the unique spirit or mind the Son gives them at their creation for the glory of none but God the Father; that this, in fact, is their way of reaching the objective of knowing the Father.¹²

Although those that place faith in Christ commit to working towards this end, it is important to note that they do not fully recover the capacity to reason with faith in God's ultimate goodness in the same instance. Instead, it waits for them to make their faith completely effective by cultivating the habit of reasoning under the influence of faith until they memorize how to do so.¹³ Every time a mind

¹¹ Jn. 3:19–20. 5:20, “I seek not to please myself but Him who sent me.”

¹² Jn. 14:6.

¹³ Jn. 15:1–8: abide in me; 15:9–17: remain in my love.

that functions in faith allows the overarching objective of knowing God to inform its efforts to meet its immediate goals, it cultivates this habit. It allows the belief that God is ultimate to govern its evaluation of its objects. As a result, it is kept from considering the circumstances that come under its purview as the be all and end all of human existence that only God is—a perspective that produces the attitudes like pride and envy that prove so detrimental to rationality.

While it keeps the mind from considering the things that come to its attention as ultimate ends, faith also makes it possible to perceive temporal experiences as a means to the end of knowing God. It renders perceptible the good that God is able to bring from those experiences. Inasmuch as faith in God is what allows reason to identify the goodness of the circumstances, the knowledge of those circumstances mediates or doubles as the knowledge of God that is attainable in this life, which is knowledge of Him through things that are other than Him.

By way of knowing those things in faith, the mind begins to develop a sense of what it would be like to know the unknowable God. The more it works in faith, the stronger its sense of what is involved in knowing God—and the faith that compels it to know God—is bound to become. If the mind can form a habit of reasoning in faith—a habit of evaluating reality in the spirit or mind of the Son who regards all things with a view to the Father's goodness—which is a habit of praying without ceasing—then it becomes predisposed to recognize the God of faith who is addressed in prayer at the point when He is revealed.¹⁴

By performing acts of knowing as the Father performs His, namely, through the Son and in His Spirit, the mind's acts become the means through which it begins to participate already in God's eternal life, which simply consists in knowing God.¹⁵ When it is construed along these lines, the process of coming to know God comes into relief as a process analogous to the one that is involved in coming to know any object whatsoever, that is, a process of 'faith seeking understanding'. In such a process, the mind allows its faith in the attainability of an as yet unmet objective to guide all its rational endeavours. Those endeavours convey the hope the mind has to attain its object—a hope that increases the more automatically faith is brought to bear. To the extent faith works in hope, it fosters a perspective that cannot help but work itself out in human actions which are the expression of the love the mind has for its object.¹⁶

The difference between the process of faith seeking understanding that is involved in knowing natural objects and knowing God comes

¹⁴ 1 Thess. 5:17.

¹⁵ Jn. 17:3.

¹⁶ 1 Cor. 13:13: faith working in love.

down to this: He cannot be reduced to any ordinary object that is encountered in this life and for that reason can never be grasped in this life. The fact that He is currently inaccessible, however, is precisely the reason why the objective of knowing Him is the ultimate cognitive objective; why faith in Him is the paradigmatic instance of the faith that enters into all acts of reasoning; why those acts can and must be regarded as the venue in which God is indirectly known and made known in the present life. The transcendence of the God whose existence is accounted for by His Triune nature and whose knowability is explained by His Incarnation, in summary, is the reason why the most sensible course of action for human beings is to allow belief in Him to impact efforts to know the things that are not God until doing so is second nature.

While the Christian calling to cultivate a habit of reasoning in faith may seem laborious, one ought to bear in mind that Christ promised His followers an easy yoke.¹⁷ To live by faith, after all, is simply to take advantage of the grace God gives in abundance. The only ‘work’ human beings have to do is to realize in increasing measure what Christ has already accomplished on their behalf. This is something they can do by opening their hands in faith to receive the grace that is the knowledge of the goodness of God.¹⁸

Although this ‘work’ may prove difficult initially inasmuch as it requires the mind to let go of all the things it has come to regard as essential to happiness, the sacrifice of the self and its desires is ultimately bound to bring a life of unparalleled freedom and joy.¹⁹ For as followers of Christ allow themselves to be reformed by the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love, their pride is counteracted with humility, wrath with peace, sloth with diligence, envy with kindness, greed with generosity, lust with integrity, and gluttony with self-control.²⁰ To sum up, the sins that ensured that the default state of the mind would be one of discontentment are substituted for the virtues that make it possible to thrive in all things.

Since those that lose their lives for Christ’s sake only forfeit the mind-narrowing attitudes that prevented them from identifying the good or God in all the events of their lives and thus from finding happiness in those events, one might say that they do not truly lose their lives, their interests, and their abilities. What they lose is what prevented them from being themselves and from freely living in keeping with their interest and abilities: from working towards the

¹⁷ Mt. 11:30.

¹⁸ Jn. 6:29, “Jesus answered, the work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.”

¹⁹ Jn. 8:34–6, “I tell you the truth: everyone who sins is a slave to sin...if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

²⁰ Gal. 5:22–23.

objectives they were uniquely designed to fulfil and thus from being objective or rational.²¹

Although the message modern philosophers like Descartes and Kant was that human knowledge and happiness are best served when the subject turns to itself to find the norms by which to judge reality, I have been suggesting that just the opposite is true. For to the extent that the mind serves itself instead of God, deeming the self rather than Him as an end in itself, it is bound to stake its hopes for happiness on the fulfilment of personal desires for things that must fade, rather than on Him. In doing this, as I have argued, the mind undermines its ability to secure ongoing happiness. Such behaviour can hardly be called rational. Yet the irrationality of it, as G.K. Chesterton has written, is not proved by any error in philosophical argument but by the manifest mistake of human lives and societies that are rent apart by the effects of sin.²²

On making this point, Chesterton goes on to affirm that the most effective way for philosophers to promote human rationality is not through the characteristically modern doctrine of human perfectibility, but through the old doctrine of original sin. Giving credence to this doctrine, Chesterton contends, entails a realistic and therefore rational recognition of what it takes to be a sane human being, namely, an acknowledgement of the fallen conditions of human existence and the need for gradual redemption through faith in Christ. The alternative to recognizing that faith is required to be reasonable is the discontentment and discord that can be witnessed everywhere today; the choice as Dorothy Sayers describes it, is between 'creed or chaos', 'dogma or disaster'.²³

In affirming all of this, I have been trying to gesture towards the sense in which faith, even specifically Christian faith in a Triune, Incarnate God is rational. Although the divine object of faith may not be fully comprehensible, it would seem that belief in Him is nonetheless rational, inasmuch as it bears the burden of rendering reason functional and sound.²⁴ To demonstrate that this is truly the case, I have argued that the philosopher or theologian ought not begin to work by addressing the question concerning the rationality of faith,

²¹ Jn. 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life;" 12:25: "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." As St. Augustine wrote in his sermon on 1 John 4:4–12, "love God and do what you will."

²² G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 148.

²³ Dorothy Sayers, *Creed or Chaos: Why Christians Must Choose Either Dogma or Disaster* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1999).

²⁴ G.K. Chesterton *Orthodoxy* 23: "mysticism keeps men sane... the whole secret of mysticism is this: that man can understand everything by the help of what he does not understand;" 29: "it is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. Reason itself is a matter of faith;" 104: "some faith in life is required even to improve it... some dissatisfaction with things as they are is necessary even in order to be satisfied."

but by re-defining reason so that it presupposes faith. To do this is to overturn the very question concerning the logic of faith and shift the onus of proof off of those who believe and onto those who doubt.

From that point, it becomes possible to identify faith in the Triune, Incarnate God as the paradigmatic instance of the faith-component that is involved in all reasoning. On those grounds, moreover, one can finally conclude that Christian belief is rational, inasmuch as it enables those that adhere to it to be rational and to fully explain why they are able to be rational. To articulate an account of reason that entails elements akin to faith and invoke Christian faith to account for those elements would be to articulate a theological theory of knowledge in which questions concerning reason and faith are addressed together, such that the problems that result from addressing those questions apart are implicitly resolved.

In establishing the logic of faith on the basis of the claim that it is impossible to think soundly without faith, such a theological theory would simultaneously reconfigure the nature of the work required of those who make it their work to prove the rationality of faith in the face of objectors who demand a 'sign' to validate belief. Even in the day of Christ, there were many who did this, and the response of Christ always served to indicate that the objectors had entirely missed the point, which only a person of faith could catch.²⁵ The point is that a demonstration of faith's feasibility is not something that reason is capable of producing—the sign consists in the right use of reason itself.

In light of this, one can conclude that the project of proving the logic of faith is not a matter of producing proofs; rather it involves the decidedly spiritual labour of surrendering the self to the transforming power of a faith that fosters soundness of mind and fellowship with others, while remaining ready on demand to explain why the Triune, Incarnate God is the reason for the joy this sacrifice readily, if paradoxically, affords. In this instance, the sought-for proof shines through those who do not need to see in order to believe, whose lives bear the mark of their confidence that their walking in the darkness of faith is journeying towards the light of the knowledge of God.

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²⁵ 1 Pet. 3:15.