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**Faith and Sight.** A fundamental contrast posed by Scripture is between faith and sight: “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). Humans are part physical and part immaterial soul and spirit. And thus we live in two kinds of realms, a physical world of twenty-four-hour days, and an invisible, almost timeless world inhabited by angelic and demonic spirits and a supernatural divine Being. During our growing-up years, we learn to improve our eyesight so we can observe physical reality—noticing details, large and small. Similarly, believers growing in faith learn to “see” and tap into this spiritual reality that is just as real, except it is invisible. God’s Word introduces the principles for successful living—principles not normally practiced by neighbors and fellow employees. But abundant living is accessible to those willing to keep trusting in God and to learn how to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). Christian faith is primarily a relational concept, involving a relationship with God and the implications that ensue. “Belief is commitment to God himself, and consequently to ‘content’—to what God guarantees as his truth” (O’Brien, 1979, 1309).

**Cognition and Affect in Faith.** A traditional threefold analysis suggests that “Faith involves knowledge (*notitia*), persuasion (*assensus*), and commitment (*fiducia*). These three elements of faith are operative, not only when one first believes the gospel and trusts the Savior, but also in a growing faith throughout the Christian life” (Lewis and Demarest, 1987, 169). These elements may be illustrated by this mundane example: A general claim is made that chairs can safely hold the weight of people—knowledge of what is to be believed. Based on my critical observation at the library, I am persuaded and accept the claim as true, seeing the evidence of many people safely

**Faith.** Reliability, trustworthiness, confidence (from Latin, “with faith”) in or toward an object, exemplified in the common legal expression, “acting in good faith.” Although “faith” receives bad press in popular parlance—akin to burying one’s head in the sand like an ostrich and ignoring the obvious—the concept of faith is central for Christianity. “Without faith it is impossible to please [God]” (Heb. 11:6). In the New Testament, Christians are often called “believers” (Acts 10:45; 1 Thess. 1:7), and littleness of faith is Jesus’ frequent criticism of the disciples (Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20). Scripture speaks of “the faith” (i.e., what is believed, 1 Tim. 4:6; Jude 3), initiatory saving “faith” (Acts 15:9; Eph. 2:8), as well as “faith” as a manner of Christian living (Rom. 1:17; 2 Cor. 5:7). This latter type of faith is primarily treated in the article.

seated in chairs—intellectual acceptance or assent of its truth. Then I act on this truth and sit in a chair, letting my full weight rest on the chair—personal commitment or trust in that truth.

Thus, faith involves both cognitive (knowledge and assent) and affective (trust) aspects—a matter of both the head and the heart. In the following discussion, these two main components are elaborated, describing faith's relationship to reason, to will, to affect, to action, and to Christian spirituality.

**Faith and Reason.** What are the basic tenets of the faith? Various syntheses of Christian doctrine have arisen in the form of creeds (from Latin, *credo*, "I believe") and confessions (e.g., Apostles' Creed [390], Westminster Confession [1646]). Near the beginning of this century, "The Fundamentals" (1910–15), a twelve-volume series, was published to define orthodox Christianity against liberal trends in the church—from which the term *fundamentalism* derived. Today, evangelical Christianity continues to affirm the following basic truths highlighted during the Reformation: unique authority of Scripture, salvation through faith alone, pursuit of holy and practical living, and evangelism to all nations.

How do reason and faith relate? To believe with certainty, is any evidence or validation needed? Or do we simply assent to and rely on the words of Scripture, regardless of our own questions or doubts? Packer (1984) suggests that "Beliefs, as such, are convictions held on grounds, not of self-evidence, but of testimony. Whether particular beliefs should be treated as known certainties or doubtful opinions will depend on the worth of the testimony on which they are based. The Bible views faith's convictions as certainties and equates them with knowledge . . . because they rest on the testimony of a God who 'cannot lie' (Titus 1:2) and is therefore utterly trustworthy."

It may be helpful to distinguish between the certainty of "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3 NASB) and our own human faith experience, of trusting more and more, and with greater certainty, in "the faith." It is here a paradox emerges: Some measure of certainty is needed to have faith, and yet faith also requires uncertainty—evidence may not be available and faith must move into realms even reason cannot go. And doubts can surface. Habermas (1990) identifies three kinds of doubts (factual, emotional, and volitional) and suggests ways for handling these.

Basinger (1997) offers a fourfold typology to explain the differing options for how necessary reason and rational evidence are to validate one's beliefs—particularly in relation to non-Christians. At one end of the continuum, reason is totally unnecessary ("hard fideism or anti-evidentialism," as represented by Barth, Kierkegaard)—faith alone, beliefs are immune from any critique by non-

Christians. On the other end, reason is absolutely necessary ("hard rationalism or evidentialism")—beliefs must be capable of being conclusively proven to any rational person (e.g., Swinburne, Aquinas). The two middle-of-the-road positions take a softer view on these extremes. The main difference is that in "soft fideism or anti-evidentialism" (e.g., Plantinga), "reason can and must be used to defeat objections to religious belief; reason must at least show that one's beliefs are rationally possible" (Basinger, 1997, 71) and not internally inconsistent. Thus a defensive case is needed. For "soft evidentialists or rationalists" (e.g., Mitchell), some sort of positive argument must be offered, given the pluralism and diversity of worldviews in the marketplace.

**Faith and Will.** We cannot change our beliefs at will—we do not have direct control over our beliefs—we cannot believe in anything we want to. We acquire our beliefs passively over time, formed by the evidence we confront in life. "We believe our beliefs to be true because we know that we do not choose them, but we believe that they are forced upon us by evidence from the outside world" (Swinburne, 1986, 127). "Truly to believe in—as really to love—a person, or ideal or Faith is to be overtaken by it" (Astley, 1994, 211). Although beliefs cannot be changed directly at will (i.e., we lack "inner" freedom), we can indirectly influence our beliefs by freely placing ourselves in situations that permit attending to new or additional evidence (i.e., we have "outer" freedom) (Astley, 1994, 218).

Many of the beliefs that we arrive at are finally the results of our policy decisions. Although believing itself is not an act, our acts determine the sorts of beliefs we end up with. It is primarily because we judge that our beliefs are to some significant degree the indirect results of our actions that we speak of being responsible for them. . . . If we had chosen differently, if we had been better moral agents, paid attention to the evidence, and so forth, we would have different beliefs than in fact we do have (Pojman, 1974, 180).

Thus, not only are students responsible for giving themselves to acquiring new beliefs, but teachers also carry great responsibility since they decide which beliefs to expose their students to.

**Faith and Affect.** Faith also has an experiential side, an important component of faith often neglected in the discussion. Maybe the "objective" and cognitive aspect is easier to evaluate. Yet this subjective aspect of faith is essential for Christian living. These synonyms encompass this nonrational aspect: desires, convictions, readinesses, tendencies to act, given favorable opportunity. Like beliefs, we develop these passively, but can cultivate such affections over time, since we must learn to "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6). In response to the revivals of the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards identified

standards to guide believers in discerning genuine religious affections. McDermott (1995) offers a contemporary version and presents twelve unreliable signs (e.g., frequent and passionate praise for God, time-consuming devotion to religious activities) and twelve reliable signs (e.g., seeing the beauty of holiness, humility). Unbelief is depicted in Scripture as a hardness of heart, stiff-necked, uncircumcised (Acts 7:51)—graphic images of pride and arrogance. Yet “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6 NASB). Cultivating a tenderness and humility before God implies a posture of trust in God that he loves us, cares for us, and will guide our paths.

**Faith and Action.** Genuine faith is a way of living and issues in noticeable actions and behavior, for “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26), as illustrated by the plagues in Egypt. For the seventh plague of hail, Moses warned them to save their livestock from the hail that would kill anything in the open field. “The one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD made his servant and his livestock flee into the houses; but he who paid no regard to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field” (Exod. 9:20–21 NASB). Some Egyptians evidenced faith in God’s word.

Faith is known by its deeds. Later, Israel was given an opportunity to display its faith: “The LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not” (Deut. 8:2 NASB). When God tests our faith, the resulting actions display the convictions of our heart. After Abraham climbed the mountain and was about to sacrifice Isaac, God remarks, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me” (Gen. 22:12 NASB). Through testing, God intends to purify our faith and nurture our growth in maturity (James 1:2–4; 1 Peter 4:12–19).

**Faith and Christian Spirituality.** Faith involves both thoughtful and experiential commitments. “To articulate the faith and to engage in the quest [to attain union with God] were twin aspects of a single enterprise. Only with the Enlightenment did it become at all commonly thinkable to reflect on God in a spirit of detachment, skepticism and even disbelief—and . . . in the context of a life in which prayer and worship played only a formal part or, eventually, no part at all. . . . Even committed Christian theologians, however, often came to share something of this separating off of Christian thought from the intensity of the quest for God” (Houlden, 1995, 512). Too often this important experiential side was devalued, even denounced, defaulting to a

primarily cerebral faith as the norm. Yet throughout church history, periodic movements surfaced to reclaim a warm, heartfelt Christianity. During the 1700s and 1800s, pietism represented an attempt to emphasize practical, even mystical, Christian living, in lieu of a formal orthodoxy. In our own day, the term *Christian spirituality* carries the notion of wedding orthodox belief with a vibrant spiritual experience. Seeking God is a continuing quest of faith, both of mind and heart.

KLAUS ISSLER

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*Edited by*

**Michael J. Anthony**

**Associate Editors: Warren S. Benson,  
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