To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Robert Leland Palmer entitled "The Faith-Reason Controversy." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Philosophy.

Glenn C. Graber, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

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THE FAITH-REASON CONTROVERSY

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Robert Leland Palmer

August 1979

1397122

DEDICATION

The Faith-Reason Controversy is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Mamie Norris Palmer, and to my wife, Jeannette Mommsen Palmer, and to our daughter, Priscilla Norris Palmer.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Let me express my grateful appreciation to the members of my committee: John W. Davis, Rem B. Edwards and Glenn C. Graber, Chairman, whose encouragement was of inestimable value.

ABSTRACT

The faith-reason controversy came to prominence in the later Middle Ages as a debate between two theological positions, on whether Christianity should utilize philosophy in its handling of beliefs or whether it should turn away from the use of philosophy. This debate has been going on throughout the Christian era, that is, since the first century. It entails also the question whether faith and reason are mutually exclusive channels for truth or whether they are involved in each other.

The Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas shows his thoughts on exemplary items. Frederick Copleston has much to offer here. Nels F. S. Ferré gives us his contemporary ideas on faith and reason.

Thomas tells us that man's understanding of spiritual truths is vitiated by his sin, but reason is redeemed when belief is exercised in response to revealed truth, which is given with divine authority. God prepares the believer's will with grace. Reason may serve in proofs of God's existence and in other matters, but faith is from God.

Some other medieval thinkers deviated from the position taken by Thomas. These were Bernard of Clairvaux, John Duns Scotus (voluntarism), and William of Ockham (nominalism and faith). Ockham opposed the proofs because they were of reason and not faith; so, in effect he snapped the link between

faith and reason. As a tough empiricist, he dissolved the medieval synthesis. Two who had similar effects were Scotus and Eckhart. Albert, Averroës and Ockham saw faith as separate and distinct from reason.

Acquinas followed the teachings of Aristotle, but many in his period of time revered Augustine and Plato more. The nominalism of Ockham and others helped science to get away from church repression. When science broke free, it was carried away in an extreme reaction.

Nels Ferré considers religion to be a whole-response to the important and the real, which should be one and the same. Faith and reason operate together and interchange influences as philosophy and theology.

Both Thomas and Ferré are creative, and they are alike in many ways, though there are some differences.

The faith-reason synthesis has advantages over alternative positions. This synthesis allows for rationality in religion and lends weight to education. Philosophy and theology enhance each other, and they work together as two kinds of insight, and especially as philosophy supports, interprets, systematizes and critiques theology. Humility helps one benefit from both philosophy and theology, both of which appeal to the serious person. The large quantity of published material in the general area embraced by philosophy and theology indicates a genuine interest on the part of mankind. A continuing dialogue promises practical value.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION.	1
	Plan of Approach.	1
	The Merging of Two Traditions	5
	Early Beginnings of a Fissure Between Two Ideologies.	5
	Medieval Synthesis.	7
	Generalizations	7
II.	ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.	13
	The Use of Philosophy in the Service of the Christian Faith	13
	Exemplary Passages from the Writings of St St. Thomas Aquinas.	15
	Thomas' Fellow Medieval Christian Thinkers. . . .	22
	How These Men Figured in the Faith-Reason Controversy	26
	Summary on St. Thomas Aquinas	30
III.	NELS F. S. FERRÉ.	34
	A Contemporary Author	34
	A Holistic Approach	34
	Definitions of Reason and Religion.	36
	Fallacy of an Isolated Intellectualism.	37
	Faith and Reason Acting Together.	41
	The Important and the Real.	42
	Comparison and Contrast of Aquinas and Ferré. . .	44

CHAPTER PAGE

IV. CONCLUSION. 47

Christianity and Education. 47

Christianity and Rationality. 49

Advantages of a Faith-Reason Synthesis. 51

Postive Benefactions in Thomas' and Ferré's Syntheses 51

Value of the Close Relationship Between Religion and Philosophy 54

Benefits for Religion from the Application of Reason to Faith. 58

Alternatives to Faith Plus Reason 60

Reason Working with Faith 62

Timeliness of Interest in Religion and Philosophy. 64

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 67

VITA. 71

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Plan of Approach

The expression "faith and reason," to the student of philosophy, means two things: (1) the view of faith and reason as partners which was held by some leading thinkers in Christendom during the latter part of the Middle Ages, and (2) the suggestive power of the phrase to the student today, as found somewhat copiously in the titles of studies by modern leaders.

The plan of this thesis is to provide a perspective for viewing the faith-reason controversy which took place in the later Middle Ages, to present that conflict and then to disclose some contemporary views as found in one late author, Nels F. S. Ferré. The conclusion will show the relevance of this study to the life to today and draw some inferences from it.

As a paradigm or model for religion, Christianity was selected as one that was familiar to the writer and to the reader. This enhances the interest of any Westerner in his background. Historically there was a controversy between Christians over whether reason should be applied to religion. The investigation should yield benefits to the student, and logically the event should come first and the interpretation afterward.

Christianity began with the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth, whose followers believe that he is the Christ, the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy and the Saviour of all who trust in him.

The number of Christians is estimated at a little less than one billion out of a world population of a little over four billion. It has the largest number of adherents of any major faith in the world.[1]

Involved in the Christian point of view as it is disseminated through the world community there are some rather well-known and broadly-accepted tenets. Some of these are: the existence of God; the creation of the world by divine action; the triune Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the deity of Christ and his virgin birth; the truthfulness of the Scriptures contained in the Bible;[2] Christ's atonement for sin in the plan of salvation; the essential kinship of God and man and eternal life beyond the grave.

In order to do justice to the faith interests of Christians and at the same time to appreciate the philosophical side of the faith-reason controversy, it will be necessary to look at the problem from both sides, from the standpoint of Christian faith and from the rational vantage

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[1]The World Almanac and Book of Facts (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc., 1979), p. 351.

[2]While many Christians believe the Biblical truth to be literal, many others claim only that the Scriptures contain essential truth in some form.

point. In this manner we shall understand the question and approach a solution. A great many Christian scholars look at it from both angles. There are problems of disagreement and lack of harmony.

The "faith-reason controversy" is a debate among theologians concerning the propriety of employing philosophy in connection with theological work. But some who hear these words--faith-reason controversy--seem to think that they refer to a debate between theologians and philosophers. They are misinterpreting the title. Any such contest between philosophers and theologians would be a subject deserving more depth and breadth than our present undertaking allows. We shall likely find that the historical faith-reason controversy does relate to important divergencies of thought which have occurred between religiously involved thinkers and those who have sought understanding apart from religion entirely. The conflict which we endeavor to study is one between those who think that faith needs reason and those who think that faith does better without reason.

The faith-reason controversy in its specific meaning is a divergence of positions in an historical perspective. In its larger frame the faith-reason controversy is, to some degree, lifted out of its historical setting and made into a somewhat systematic overview of the relationship between faith and reason, religion and philosophy. This is the more theoretical usage of the term.

If faith plus reason is the position being considered, an accommodation of faith and reason is implied. Suppose a modern-day Christian took Thomas Aquinas' view that reason is the handmaid of faith, so to speak.[3] Reason and faith would have to become acquainted with each other. Philosophy has been used in apologetics, that is, in defense of the Christian faith. Inevitably this will bring about a discipline for Christian thought. Thomas Aquinas shows the effect of philosophical discipline on the exposition of Christian beliefs. It surely made him a better "apologist" than he could ever have been without it. It also made for truth. Without going into a long discussion on "truth," let it be said that truth is being sought by both religion and philosophy, and, however, we may construct the meaning of truth, we need to find it in religion and in philosophy and in whatever combination we make of the two.

The controversy is not a thing that happened one day at a certain place so much as it is a running battle involving many people over a long period of time. Both of these positions run from early Christian thought to the present. In one stance, faith is accompanied by reason; in the other faith rejects reason.

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[3]Clement of Alexandria called philosophy the handmaid of theology. Ed L. Miller, God and Reason: A Historical Approach to Philosophical Theology (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 120.

The Merging of Two Traditions

Two streams of tradition converged when the philosophical Greek way of thinking began to play upon the Hebrew-Christian thought-life. Of course, it worked the other way also.

It was inevitable that Christian scholars would bring up philosophy and its bearing on Christian faith and life. It came about through Augustine, who received Platonic influences through Plotinus and Porphyry. Stoical thought also influenced the Church so as to be brought into Western life after the Middle Ages. Some Aristotelian influences came through Boethius (ca. 480-524), but the full impact of Aristotle waited until later. Theology was modified by these effects, and philosophy was definitely imprinted with theological content during this period.

Early Beginnings of a Fissure Between Two Ideologies

According to Ed L. Miller,[4] there was a cleavage along these lines between Christians who employed Greek philosophy and those who resisted it as early as the second century. Tertullian of Antioch (ca. 160-230) opposed and Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215) utilized the wisdom of the Greeks. Already Antioch was a center for literalistic interpretation of the Bible and Alexandria was intellectual. There the Hebrew Scriptures had been translated into Greek,

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[4]Ibid., pp. 119-121.

Philo Judaeus had put together the thought of Plato and that of the Hebrews, and there the Bible was being interpreted allegorically.

Clement saw philosophy as providential preparation of the minds of men for Christianity to come. He took the word John used of Christ, logos (word)[5] as meaning reason, and the term gnosis (knowledge) that was applied to a heretical group he employed to describe the Christian's knowledge.

Miller states that "Many if not most Christian thinkers also incline to one or the other of these poles." Fideists (L. fides, faith) thought faith all-sufficient, while intellectualists accepted reason with faith.[6]

Anne Fremantle states it rather fully:

> From apostolic times on, there were two fairly well defined Christian positions: the deliberately, and aggressively anti-intellectual, whose supporters argued that since God had spoken to us it is no longer necessary for us to think, and a more orthodox, but minority, position that whatever is good or true is ours. The leader of the intellectuals was Tertullian (?-?230), followed later by St. Jerome (?340-420) who once, in a vision, had been scolded for being a "Ciceronian rather than a Christian." It had rankled, and he thereafter rejected philosophy as the fruit of human pride, and he even censured Origen (?185-?254), one of the greatest Christian theologians and apologists, for having used secular and even pagan doctrines in the interpretation of Scripture. Yet St. Jerome was one of the few really great Greek scholars of his age, and his translation of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures into Latin (which is called the Vulgate) is still used today. Throughout the

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[5]John 1:1 ff.

[6]Miller, pp. 119-121.

> Middle Ages, these two positions were upheld, and both by many saints--Saints Peter Damian and Bernard of Clairvaux, for example, were on Tertullian's side, Saints Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas on the highbrow side, which in the early ages had been upheld by such Christian writers as Manlius Theodorus, and Claudianus Mamertus, and above all by St. Augustine (354-430). St. Augustine was greatly influenced by two pagan philosophers, who both wrote in Greek. It was through the two Neo-Platonists, Plotinus (205-270) and Porphyry (?232-304), that St. Augustine became the inheritor and transmitter of Greek philosophical thought. Though it is likely that St. Augustine himself was not a Greek scholar, he mentions and comments on these two Greek Neo-Platonist philosophers with approval and bases many of his positions on theirs. . . .[7]

Medieval Synthesis

An alternate designation for the topic is the "medieval synthesis," a term familiar to the student of the history of philosophy. There was a structured relationship between religion and philosophy which came to its fullest expression in Thomas Aquinas. In a borrowed sense this synthesis relates to others during this period. The synthesis is spoken of as a fait accompli with Thomas Aquinas, but the period for its fullest accomplishments and recognition was during the generations following Thomas. Writers refer to the later Middle Ages and to Scholasticism with this term, medieval synthesis.

Generalizations

Christian people who are not philosophers should know about this. They should be told how philosophers feel.

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[7]Anne Fremantle, The Age of Belief (New York: George Braziller, 1957), pp. 18-19.

Philosophers should be told what Christians think about it. Some kind of accommodation should take place; better is the term interaction.

For the purposes of religion, the existence of God is foundational. But also of great consequence is the nature of God.

One purpose of this thesis is that Christians will understand philosophy better and that philosophy students will understand Christianity better. Many scholars and writers have already done this, but it means much for every additional individual who does the same. One ministerial student at a theological seminary received almost a whole new life when his theology professor explained the Christian faith in the light of philosophy.

Religion and philosophy have similarities and differences. They are alike in being broad in their approach, but each can be very specific. They deal with some of the same subject matter; they try to find answers for some of the same ultimate questions. Dr. Rem B. Edwards points out that insight is a characteristic common to philosophy and theology.[8] He makes this a telling argument in developing the philosophy of religion. Insight is not limited to either philosophy or theology. Insight operates in much the same way as revelation does, so that it is not always clear

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[8]Rem B. Edwards, Reason and Religion: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), pp. 115-117.

whether it is the product of reason or faith-revelation. This shows that there is a close correlation between faith and reason, and it may not be really possible to distinguish always between the two elements of human experience.

The Greek idea of cosmos involves the view that man is a part of the world or universe, and that there is something in the universe that is harmonious with man and vice versa. This is philosophical and it involves faith, life affirmation.

One hears it said in church that the heart knows some things that the head does not, and that the head knows some things that the heart does not.

While the theologian starts with God, the philosopher starts with secular concepts or the immediate data of experience, reflects on them, then comes to some knowledge of what transcends man's experience.[9] Aquinas recognized that the theologian depends on sense-experience and learns of God from parents or church.

> It is perhaps worth adding that according to Aquinas one cannot at the same moment believe in the truth of a proposition by faith, accepting it on authority, and know its truth as the conclusion of a philosophic argument.[10]

There are wider ramifications of the faith-reason controversy in Christian apologetics, the reasoned defense

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[9]Frederick Copleston, Thomas Aquinas (London: Search Press, 1976), p. 56.

[10]Ibid., p. 57.

of Christianity, and in Christian philosophy, which is nearly the same thing in actual practice. Students for the Christian ministry need to be strong in the humanities, which include philosophy. Where theology and philosophy have contact, and they often do, the area involving the faith-reason controversy is entered. And there is dialectic between various views in both theology and philosophy.

Three early chapters in Dr. Edwards' Reason and Religion are devoted to the relation of philosophy and theology. These chapters treat moderate positions, extreme positions and some modern alternatives.

The Gifford lectures in Scottish university life have been influential in the area of serious thought. They are mainly about natural theology and have featured some of the most famous thinkers of science and philosophy.

One who is a student of philosophy and of religion ought to be true to the nature and spirit of philosophy, and at the same time he should stay true to the nature and spirit of religion, which for many means Christianity. This dual alignment should bring about personal growth for the one holding to these two loyalties.

It will not be possible to go into the subject of religious language in this essay, but almost everybody knows that there is such a thing as poetic truth. In religion there will be some of this. In preaching there are some things said which are meant to be accepted as poetic or

figurative truth, although this will probably not be true of most that is said. Plato used illustrations with his students and these were parabolic or figurative. His students grasped what he meant, and there was doubtless some faith, as well as some reason, in their grasping.

In choosing this topic for a thesis, the author was persuaded that the subject was a good one and that a logical treatment should support the view that this is a good subject. The subject has an appeal for Roman Catholicism, in view of the pronouncement by Pope Leo XIII in 1879 "that Thomism should be the basic theory of the Roman Catholic Church."[11]

Protestants are definitely committed to thinking for themselves, in that they read the Bible, do considerable discussing, and seek spiritual guidance. Philosophers are interested in religion as well as philosophy, hence philosophy of religion is written and discussed. Historians in general and historians of philosophy in particular are interested also. This theme is vital to Christian and religious education and its implications are significant for public education. It relates to evangelism and journalism. It is important for politics in that it bears on freedom, the separation of church and state as warranted by the First Amendment and justice, where much of our tradition has come

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[11]W. T. Jones, The Medieval Mind: A History of Western Philosophy, second edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969), p. 211.

from English common law, which in turn is based (at least in part) on the Bible. The study of ethics is influenced by a Christian input.

CHAPTER II

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

The Use of Philosophy in the Service of the Christian Faith

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was a Christian professor, famous in history, who was highly educated in religion and philosophy. To an outstanding degree he employed the skills of Aristotelian thought in the service of the faith. He was in a position of strategic importance to lead others in bringing together the discipline of theology and philosophy, and for a century he held preeminence in the dominant Roman Catholic Church.

Aquinas was a central figure, if not the one, in which what is often called "the medieval synthesis" occurred.

Especially in Thomas Aquinas the "faith-reason controversy" is highlighted, with him holding the position that reason serves faith acceptably as an ally, not only acceptably, but necessarily. Opposed to his position is that of any who stress the difference between faith and reason, regarding faith as the all-important thing and ruling out the use of the intellectual component as out of place in the Christian religion.

Thomas Aquinas through his writings was a foremost factor in bringing together the Christian faith and Aristotelian philosophy. The way in which he did this is worth noting, and by it Christianity was explained and systematized.

Also philosophy was shown to be a recognized pursuit in its own right quite apart from theology. For the mind of Thomas, Aristotelianism as a philosophy was worthy of his approval and use. This philosophy, in the form into which he reconstituted it, did not contradict the Christian faith, nor did it compromise it. Theology came first with Thomas, and philosophy was subordinated to it.

Thomas was only one individual out of many who have followed Christian life-styles and also developed their use and appreciation of the intellectual disciplines. Many went before him, but few if any of them did as well as he did. In like manner, many came after him and worked with some of the same problems, looking back to him for inspiration. Today there are still thinkers and students of Christianity who find need for religion and philosophy working together. One is impressed to find a considerable number of titles by serious writers touching "faith and reason."

Both Augustine and Aquinas have contributed to this blend. Miller says:

> It would clearly be a mistake to think of St. Thomas Aquinas, and even more of a mistake St. Augustine, as Clement-types or extreme rationalists in theology. Nevertheless, they do represent a strain of thinkers within the Christian tradition who, though acknowledging the final authority of revelation, theologize with a distinctly intellectualist bent.[1]

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[1]Miller, p. 122.

Exemplary Passages from the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas

In discussing faith, Thomas asks about the interior act of faith "whether it is necessary to believe those things which can be proved by natural reason?" To the objections he replies:

> On the contrary, It is necessary to believe that God is one and incorporeal; which things philosophers prove by natural reason.
>
> I answer that, It is necessary for man to receive by faith not only things which are above reason, but also those which can be known by reason; and this for three motives. First, in order that man may arrive more quickly at the knowledge of divine truth. For the science to whose province it belongs to prove the existence of God and many other such truths is the last of all to offer itself to human inquiry, since it presupposes many other sciences; so that it would be far along in life that man would arrive at the knowledge of God. The second reason is, in order that the knowledge of God may be more widespread. For many are unable to make progress in the study of science, either through dulness of ability, or through having a number of occupations and temporal needs, or even through laziness in learning; and all these persons would be altogether deprived of the knowledge of God, unless divine things were brought to their knowledge by way of faith. The third reason is for the sake of certitude. For human reason is very deficient in things concerning God. A sign of this is that philosophers, in their inquiry into human affairs by natural investigation, have fallen into many errors, and have disagreed among themselves. And consequently, in order that man might have knowledge of God, free of doubt and uncertainty, it was necessary for divine truths to be delivered to them by way of faith, being told to them, as it were, by God Himself Who cannot lie.[2]

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[2] Anton C. Pegis, ed., Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, vol. II (New York: Random House, 1945), p. 1079.

Here we have a statement of the necessity for man to receive by faith-revelation and to believe even those things about God which may be known by human reason, since it takes a long time to reach through study the questions about God that we need most urgently to know. Also Thomas is saying that it is God's intention that these truths be received by faith so that throngs of humanity may share this knowledge and not just a few. A further reason for faith-revelation here is that man may be certain on the basis of divine authority and not confused by the differences which inevitably arise between various natural investigators.

While there are numerous passages, in more than forty articles, in Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas which bear on our investigation, one or two more should be sufficient for our purposes.

Aquinas asks, "whether reasons in support of what we believe lessen the merit of faith?" While this is a question about a small point, it illustrates Thomas' way of thinking about larger matters. In fact, this will be true of many of his disquisitions.

It seems that human reasoning in support of faith reduces the merit of faith, but if one wills to believe on God's authority, it doesn't lessen the merit of his faith, even though he may have reasonable demonstrations of the truth of what he believes.

It is the very nature of faith to apply to the unseen, but if a thing is supported by reasons, the thing believed is less unseen. To this objection, Thomas replies:

> The reasons which are brought forward in support of the authority of faith are not demonstrations which can bring intellectual vision to the human intellect; and so the unseen is not removed. But they remove obstacles to faith, by showing that what faith proposes is not impossible; and hence such reasons do not diminish the merit or the measure of faith.
>
> On the other hand, though demonstrative reasons in support of the preambles of faith, but not of the articles of faith, diminish the measure, since they make the things believed to be seen; yet they do not diminish the measure of charity, which makes the will ready to believe them, even if they were unseen. And so the measure of merit is not diminished.[3]

Another objection voiced by Aquinas is that "an inducement in opposition to faith increases the merit of faith." Turn this around and it means that helps to faith reduce the merit therefor. His reply is to the effect that opposition shows the promptness and firmness of the will in believing. Martyrs have more meritorious faith, and so do the wise who resist heresy. ". . . Things that are favorable to faith do not always diminish the promptness of the will to believe, and therefore they do not always diminish the merit of faith."

Thomas says:

> On the contrary, It is written (1 Pet. iii. 15): Being ready always to satisfy everyone who asketh you a reason of that faith and hope which is in you. Now the Apostle would not give this

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[3]Ibid., p. 1090.

> advice, if it would imply a diminution in the merit of faith. Therefore reason does not diminish the merit of faith.[4]

It is presupposed that the act of faith is subject to the will. Faith is the subject being discussed in the last thirty-seven articles of Summa Theologica II-II, QQ. 1-7 (Basic Writings, vol. II, pp. 1055-1121). Thomas is stressing faith above reason, because religious matters are under discussion. The question here is whether the use of reason detracts from faith. Human reasoning may come either before or after the act of will to believe. If it comes before that act, it diminishes the merit; if after, it does not. If before, it may mean that he has not the will to believe, or the will to believe is not prompt, but waits for human reasons.

He states:

> For just as a man ought to perform acts of moral virtue because of the judgment of his reason, and not because of a passion, so he ought to believe matters of faith, not because of human reasoning, but because of the divine authority. --Secondly, human reasons may be consequent to the will of the believer. For when a man has a will ready to believe, he loves the truth he believes, he thinks out and takes to heart whatever reasons he can find in support thereof; and in this way, human reasoning does not exclude the merit of faith, but is a sign of greater merit.[5]

In relation to the purpose of this investigation, these passages from Summa Theologica are saying that there

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

is room in Christian theology, as there is in Thomism, for human reasoning as an aid to faith. It does help if it does not injure faith or supplant it. This will be a point in favor of the faith-plus-reason position. On the other hand, faith needs to be independent of human reasoning. That is for the sake of doing justice to faith, which corresponds to divine revelation.

One further thing: to say that reasoning is human is all right, but there is conceivably a divine reasoning, which is made available through revelation and through the Holy Spirit. It is important that one be both "born of the Spirit" and "filled with the Spirit."

Another question is asked by Thomas which seems to favor the faith-minus-reason position, and it is "whether faith is infused into man by God?"[6]

As an objection to the affirmative answer, Thomas goes to Augustine's statement that "science" (knowledge) begets faith in us. If so, it is acquired by man rather than infused by God. But this help of knowledge is by external persuasion, while that which actually moves man inwardly to assent is nearer the real cause.

Man hears the teachings of faith and sees miracles, and while these are acquired by man, still one is talking about the outward things of faith that outwardly propose and persuade men to believe.

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[6]Ibid., p. 1115.

Again Augustine indicates that faith depends on the believer's will, a thing that he does. Answering this objection, Thomas says:

> To believe does indeed depend on the will of the believer; but man's will needs to be prepared by God with grace, in order that he may be raised to things which are above his nature.[7]

The things of faith are proposed to men, but there is a second thing required for faith and that is the assent of the believer. He states ". . . faith must needs be from God. For the things which are of faith surpass man's knowledge, unless God reveal them." As to man's assent, there is "a twofold cause, one of external inducement, such as seeing a miracle, or being persuaded by someone to embrace the faith." Contrary to the Pelagians (who stress man's part in the act of faith):

> . . . since by assenting to what belongs to faith, man is raised above his nature, this must needs come to him from some supernatural principle moving him inwardly; and this is God. Therefore faith, as regards the assent which is the chief act of faith, is from God moving man inwardly by grace.[8]

This involves a doctrine of the Christian historical tradition to the effect that man's knowledge of God and things pertaining to God is damaged or vitiated by sin with the effect that man cannot know or understand spiritual truth without special assistance from God and His Spirit. While

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[7]Ibid., p. 1115 f.

[8]Ibid., p. 1116.

the student could gainsay this doctrinal position as being biased, he must depend in the last analysis upon a Christian viewpoint like this one; for, after all, it is a Christian truth that he desires to acquire, and a Christian teacher or witness must help him with understanding this point if he does want a Christian understanding of the question. Otherwise he is welcome to think whatever he wishes to think, but a majority of intelligent Christians share the conviction about the damage done by sin to human spiritual understanding.

If sin ruins man's nature and limits his knowledge, redemption restores his ability to deal with the truth. Thilly describes Thomas' views as follows:

> For St. Thomas, faith is a gift from the Creator, perfecting a finite nature which, without it, would be truncated. Man's finite nature has a supernatural end: a beatitude consisting of the love and direct knowledge of God. To such a supernatural end the finite nature of man ought to conform, but, because the end is supernatural, man's nature can never attain it without assistance. . . . A nature so perfected by faith has its intelligence perfected as well. . . . What can reason do when it is the reason of someone who professes faith? . . . St. Thomas insists throughout on the importance and the penetration of the intellect in its own sphere, when that penetration is helped by faith.[9]

As redemption restores man's ability to know truth, so revelation supplements man's natural knowledge.

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[9]Frank Thilly, A History of Philosophy, third edition; rev. Ledger Wood (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957), pp. 195-196.

For Thomas, revelation has content, and this content is a form of knowledge. He states: "Theology is a science."[10] "Sacred doctrine is a science."[11] Jones explains ". . . there are important truths that remain forever outside the sphere of reason. These must be accepted on faith."[12] And in Thomas' own words:

> But there are other truths, handed down to us in the teaching of Christian religion that they were unable to attain; regarding these truths that transcend human perception, we are instructed according to the Christian faith.[13]

These statements indicate that in Thomas' view there are truths which can be known only through revelation which supplements reasoned faith.

Thomas' Fellow Medieval Christian Thinkers

At first blush one would interpret the words "faith-reason controversy" to refer to warring camps with leading exponents on either side and loyal followers intent on winning over their opponents. There is another way this expression may be understood. It could just as easily refer to a battle within the mind and heart of an individual. This would be a legitimate interpretation of the phrase.

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[10]Pegis, Basic Writings, II, p. 1062.

[11]Pegis, Basic Writings, I, pp. 6-7.

[12]Ibid., p. 213.

[13]Vernon J. Bourke, The Pocket Aquinas: Selections from the Writings of St. Thomas (New York: Washington Square Press, 1969), p. 290.

The thirteenth century, during which Thomas lived, is linked by the processes of thought with the whole span of the medieval period, but especially with the period extending from the ninth century to the fourteenth, when Erigena, Anselm, Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, Meister Eckhart, Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, as well as Thomas, lived, thought and wrote. Except for Erigena, who died 348 years before Thomas' birth, these men lived within a century and a half on either side of Thomas' time. Hence they were all part of the same intellectual generation as Thomas.

John Scotus Erigena (810-877), born in Ireland, was a monk called to Paris to head the palatine school by Charles the Bald. He produced a full-scale philosophical system, dominated by Platonism and resulting in a pantheism.

Anselm (1033-1109) made the first scholastic synthesis (Augustine having made the first synthesis). Anselm was Archbishop of Canterbury and opposed Roscelin's nominalism. He drew upon both Plato and Aristotle, although the full body of Aristoteliam writings was not then available. His ontological proof for the existence of God is well known. He occupied a moderate position between the liberalism of Abelard and the conservatism of Bernard of Clairvaux.

Peter Abelard (1079-1142) "carried the day" in the battle over universals with conceptualism, or moderate realism. The universal is a word and concept representing some reality that supplies the ground for this concept.

Abelard ridiculed extreme realism. His pupil, Peter Lombard, wrote Sentences, along the lines of Augustinian and Platonic thought, and his book was most influential in the time of Thomas Aquinas. "Abelard emphasizes the need of examining our faith in order that it may not be a blind faith."[14] His conceptualism was adopted by Thomas.

Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) was one of the chief representatives of orthodox mysticism.

> The opposition between reason and faith becomes intensified in the twelfth century, when we find on the side of reason Roscelin of Compiègne and Abelard and, on the side of faith, St. Bernard. . . .[15]

Bernard was intensely hostile toward Abelard, thinking him a dangerous influence. Considering him an agent of the devil, he tried to get him condemned. Copleston states:

> Probably the philosopher [Abelard] was no rationalist in the usual sense, so far as intentions were concerned (he did not mean to deny revelation or explain away mystery); but at the same time, in his application of dialectic to theology he does seem to have offended against theological orthodoxy, in fact if not in intention. On the other hand, it was the very application of dialectic to theology which made theological progress possible and facilitated the Scholastic systematization of theology in the thirteenth century.[16]

(Bonaventura was a mystic also, and in many ways he aligned

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[14]Samuel Enoch Stumpf, Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy, second edition (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 1975), p. 172.

[15]Thilly, pp. 210, 214, 195.

[16]Frederick Copleston, History of Philosophy, vol. II (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1962), p. 149; Thilly, p. 251.

himself as Thomas did, but he was more Platonic than Aristotelian.)

Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) was a mystic who reacted against the rational and technical theology of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. He stressed feeling instead of systematic thinking and advocated faith as opposed to precision. Thilly calls him the greatest figure in the fourteenth century movement of mysticism.[17]

John Duns Scotus (1265-1308) was English or Irish, a Franciscan, and took an attitude called voluntarism. He felt that God's will had to be left free from intellectual domination. "His will is his dominant faculty."[18] Things are good because God willed them or commanded them, not vice versa as Thomas held. Morality is grounded in the will, not in the reason. Faith is stressed, and there is no natural theology for him. He "held Augustine and Anselm as highest authorities." As with Ockham, so with Scotus, the existence of God was a concern of faith, not probable demonstration (all that reason could offer). Reason had to do with the empirical world and religious knowledge came from revelation. Platonic and Augustinian terms were favored by him, and philosophy was separated from theology.[19]

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[17]Thilly, p. 251.

[18]Stumpf, p. 205.

[19]Thilly, p. 242; Stumpf, p. 206.

William of Ockham (1280-1349) advocated nominalism. For him, universals were just names for particulars. Only individual things existed. He was with Scotus in emphasis on the will. Thus he rejected the teaching that universals were metaphysical realities in God's mind. Averroës had influenced a number of scholars to distinguish theological truth from philosophical truth. There was some sign of this in Albertus Magnus, but it was also strongly implied in Ockham. This twofold truth line of thought held that a conflicting pair of truths, one in philosophy and one in theology, could both be true.[20] Ockham's strict position on universals served to sever philosophy from metaphysics and make it more like science. Ockham's position implied twofold truth, since he held that theology and religious truth could not be achieved by philosophy or science. In this way a wedge was driven between philosophy and theology. "Ockham's razor" was the statement that "what can be explained on fewer principles is explained needlessly by more."[21] This sounds like reductionism.

How These Men Figured in the Faith-Reason Controversy

What the actual evidence shows to be the meaning of "faith-reason controversy" is that there were several great minds that joined philosophy with Christian faith. Some of

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[20]Stumpf, p. 207; Thilly, pp. 239-240.

[21]Stumpf, p. 207.

them were Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas. This came to full flower in Thomas Aquinas. There were, on the other hand, other great minds before and after Thomas as well as contemporary with him that did not join into the same kind of faith-reason systhesis. The effect of these differences was eventually to dissolve the synthesis.

William of Ockham, whose birth followed Thomas' death by a few years, was a nominalist. Copleston prefers terminist as a classification for Ockham, because Ockham acknowleged that there were universal concepts "in some sense." Ockham is credited with dissolving the synthesis of philosophy and theology, although he, like most leading thinkers of the Middle Ages was both theologian and philosopher. Ockham followed an empiricistic pattern and moved away from the certain knowledge and demonstrative argument of Thomas and the realism of Duns Scotus to probable arguments, which are found in empiricism and induction.

The fourteenth century saw a new movement in the via moderna, as contrasted with the Thomists, the Scotists and groups with similar basic orientation, called the via antiqua. The new movement was identified with William of Ockham and its adherents were called "nominalists."

Accepting the nominalism of Ockham, an English Franciscan teacher, as a position of opposition to the faith-reason synthesis, the problem then shifts to a conflict between Thomism and Ockhamism, or between a faith-plus-reason

stance and an opposing positivistic one. Ockham, though a nominalist, believed in Christianity, but he did not hold the same position as Thomas on faith and reason. His view was lacking the harmony and compatibility between his faith and his reason that Thomas had. Copleston finds that:

> The nominalist movement . . . constituted the wedge which was driven between theology and philosophy, and which broke apart the synthesis achieved in the thirteenth century.[22]

Ockham criticized the metaphysical arguments and proofs of Thomas and Scotus and did this in the name of Aristotelian logic. His nominalism led him to reject the proofs of the existence of God and the demonstrations of God's attributes and the spirituality and immortality of the soul which others had held before him. In the fourteenth century probability came to replace demonstration. Regarding the proofs and demonstrations of God's attributes and the immortality of the soul, Ockham held that you cannot infer the existence of one thing from the existence of another.

Thomas Aquinas had held that metaphysical arguments could establish the truth of God's existence, calling them the preambles of faith. Fourteenth century philosophers, on the other hand, did not think that God's existence could be established in this way. Faith had to take this over from reason. This weakened the structure where philosophy and

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[22]Frederick Copleston, History of Philosophy, vol. III (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1959), p. 12.

theology had worked together. Philosophy became increasingly "lay" in character. We do not see this break in William of Ockham, but we see it in Nicholas of Autrecourt, another teacher. Copleston says of William:

> By assigning to the sphere of faith the truth that there exists an absolutely supreme, infinite, free, omniscient and omnipotent Being, he snapped the link between metaphysics and theology which had been provided by Aquinas's doctrine of the provable praeambula fidei.[23]

Thomas' synthesis was slowly dissolved by the influence of John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and Meister Eckhart. It was as though the three joined to resist Thomas' work. Scotus held the will to be more decisive than reason (voluntarism); Ockham held that universals were mere words (nominalism); and Eckhart advocated the immediate mystical experience of divine reality (mysticism), rejecting the rational intricacies of theology.

The views of Scotus and Ockham eliminated natural theology and the reasoning from effect to cause by means of a rational order, or any rational relationship between God and the world of experience. Reason was limited to this observable world and God's existence was a thing of faith alone. As Stumpf has it:

> In this way, the subject matter and concerns of philosophy were separated from those of theology. Religious knowledge was now seen again more in Platonic and Augustinian terms as a product of

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[23]Ibid., pp. 11-14.

> divine illumination or revelation and not attainable by philosophical discovery. . . . Hence the combined force of Ockham's nominalism and Scotus's voluntarism did much to dismantle the medieval synthesis by separating philosophy and theology, faith and reason.[24]

The fourteenth century rise of science marked the breaking apart of the synthesis of philosophy and theology.

> It [nominalism] constituted the wedge which was driven between theology and philosophy, and which broke apart the synthesis achieved in the thirteenth century.[25]

In a broader perspective, W. T. Jones has this to say about the dissolution of the synthesis:

> Finally, in discussing the development of early modern philosophy I have tried to show the many factors--exploration and discovery, the rise of money power, Humanism, the Reformation, and above all the new scientific method--that combined to overthrow the medieval synthesis and create new problems that philosophy even today is struggling to resolve.[26]

Summary on St. Thomas Aquinas

Thomas was chosen for this study because the philosopher and student of history gravitate to him as a typical user of philosophy in support of Christianity. He stands as a leading exponent of this. He and Augustine are two prominent, outstanding thinkers of the Middle Ages. Although philosophy came into the theological stream during the

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[24]Stumpf, pp. 206, 208.

[25]Copleston, vol. III, p. 11.

[26]Jones, pp. ix-x.

patristic period, it was during the Middle Ages that the Christian religion came into the philosophic stream, at a time when almost every philosopher was a theologian. It is widely recognized that there was a synthesis of philosophy and theology in the high Middle Ages.

> He was neither simply a philosopher nor simply a theologian; and the fact that he was a theologian-philosopher, as one might put it, is reflected in his writings.[27]

We may learn something more of the faith-plus-reason side of this controversy by noting that Thomas Aquinas put together the revealed faith of Christianity and his own version of Aristoteliamism, which is regarded by writers in this field as his own philosophy, or Thomism. In putting theology and philosophy together, Aquinas mediated between them, thus recognizing a tension between them and proceeding to explain the truth as it is known by one so mediating.[28]

Concerning his Summa Theologica, in effect he mediates as if he were Aristotle seeking the golden mean between the interests of faith and those of reason. Not only does he cite Aristotle often, but also he quotes or alludes to a large number of writers extant during his period. He is very thorough and brings up some ideas as though they had been proposed by others that are very radical, but he takes a position close to the center of Christian belief, which he defends

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[27]Copleston, Thomas Aquinas, p. 54.

[28]Étienne Gilson, Elements of Christian Philosophy (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 32-33.

with agile thinking and sharp definition and analysis. The pattern he used had been employed by Abelard and Peter Lombard before him. Although he was in no sense pantheistic, Thomas, through his writings, served to show the sacredness of everything, the presence of God in everything and the comprehensiveness of religion. When Thomas took liberty with Aristotle, he was personalizing it and getting away from literalism just for the good that it would do.

For Thomas, the theologian starts with God and reflects on his creation, but the philosopher goes the other way around. He begins with secular concepts or the data of sensory experience. By reflection on these data he comes to know a being that transcends natural experience.[29]

Copleston comments on the Pope's nineteenth century declaration of the adoption of Thomas Aquinas' philosophy as official and refers to moderns when he says:

> He was not asking them to shut their eyes to all thought since the thirteenth century but rather to penetrate and develop the synthesis of a thinker who combined a profound and living belief in the Christian religion with a real trust in the power of the human mind and in the value of philosophic reflection to see truth wherever it might be found with a fidelity to fundamental rational insights which prevented any surrender to passing fashion just because it was fashionable.[30]

It may help to put this in focus to be reminded that the major part of our Western intellectual heritage derives

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[29]Ibid.

[30]Copleston, Thomas Aquinas, p. 246.

from the Greco-Roman philosophy. The predominant religion of our culture is in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which came to us from a source independent of the above philosophical influences. So intricately are these two strains interlaced together in our thinking, however, that most people are not aware that our background is made up of two disparate sources.

Men today cannot without serious consequences eliminate the heritage brought them by the philosophical component of life and thought. It would be equally difficult to cut away the social, moral and religious deposits in Western culture that have come from Biblical origins. There is much in modern life which represents the combination of these religious and philosophical qualities. That combination produced attainments and satisfactions which make life both challenging and rewarding.

The medieval systhesizers did something rightly. It would be very difficult to imagine life without intellect, or education, or mental life without what modern man has received from the Christian religion.

CHAPTER III

NELS F. S. FERRÉ

Modern and contemporary thought in this connection can be epitomized or represented by someone like Nels F. S. Ferré (1908-1971), an American with a noteworthy career of teaching and writing in the Boston area, in Nashville, Tennessee, and elsewhere. He was a theology professor, who, like Tillich, was philosophical as well as theological.

A Contemporary Author

One indication of Nels Ferré's contemporaneity is his interest in the process theology as found in Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. One notes copious references to contemporary and relevant writers in the index for his book, Faith and Reason: Augustine, Aquinas, Barth, Berdyaev, Brightman, Buber, Einstein, Hocking, Kierkegaard, Tillich and Whitehead, to name a few. In another popular book of his, The Christian Understanding of God,[1] he frequently refers to all of these plus: Brunner, Farmer, Farrer, Hartshorne and Nygren.

A Holistic Approach

In Faith and Reason, Ferré writes of both of these elements as cooperating, not as one chosen above the other.

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[1]Nels F. S. Ferré, The Christian Understanding of God (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951).

> Nor is this relation between faith and reason true only because man's reason is part of faith's inevitable whole-response, but because we live in a dynamic process where the evidence is not all in, and where inevitable tension must, therefore exist between faith's fullest seeing in line with the pointing of process and reason's true seeing of the difference between this ideal and the process as it now actually is.[2]

This is a synthesis of faith and reason, a mediation between the two. Dr. Ferré envisions a working together with a feeling of responsibility for a common task which should precede the separation unto different tasks. He might well have cited Browning to the effect that

> Our times are in His hand
> Who saith, "A whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half; trust God:
> See all nor be afraid!"[3]

Ferré thinks we should all be interested in the larger undertaking and help one another by our own specialties. Our whole civilization calls for cooperation between science, religion and philosophy that we may arrive at a fuller perspective of truth.

> Naturally such constructive thinking must nevertheless not be guilty of belittling the genuine strains and tensions which arise not only from the divergent logical tendencies inherent in difference of method but even more from the human limitations of mind and spirit which corrupt and enlarge these tendencies into defensive attitudes and controversial contents. . . . The whole field

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[2]Nels F. S. Ferré, Faith and Reason, Essay Index Reprint Series (Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971) p. vii f.

[3]M. H. Abrams, general ed., The Norton Anthology of English Literature, vol. 2 rev. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1968) p. 998.

> of human knowledge is occupied territory. Our task is to understand our neighbors' point of view in order to correct and enlarge our own by means of what they see. That is what we mean by subordinating our religious perspective to the full perspective of truth.[4]

Definitions of Reason and Religion

Ferré speaks of religion and right religion, then of reason and right reason. His way of using these terms is important to his approach.

> Religion is our normally necessary whole-response to what is considered to be most important and most real. . . . Right religion is our fully positive whole-response to the complete combination of what is most important and most real. . . .
> . . . . . .
> Reason is the way we recognize, remember, and interpret that world and our relation to it. . . .
> . . . . . .
> Perhaps we had better define right reason as the fullest and most consistent explanation of what is now and here actual based on the most thorough description of it and such reasoning beyond it as may be warranted by the facts found within what is here and now actual.[5]

His further discussion explains that such a definition of reason opens the way for faith to illumine reason by means of a whole-surrender to truth. Also allowed to assist reason are prayer, inspiration and revelation "to light up more fully all that we can truly know of this world of ours."[6]

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[4]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[5]Ibid., pp. 4, 7, 22.

[6]Ibid., p. 23.

Fallacy of an Isolated Intellectualism

This author, through holistic views, offers a wholesome corrective to excessive analysis, which goes without putting back together what has been taken apart so freely. The central problem dealt with in this book is "whether right reason and right whole-reaction actually do or can go together."[7]

Ferré guards against the "false intellectualism that separates reason from man "as if it were independent of him." The mind that knows has prejudices and bents, and it is influenced by emotions and volitions, by stresses and pressures, although some would have it that reason is possible without right emotions and right actions.

"Right reason is always the whole man thinking rightly." It is natural to want to think detached reasoning possible, especially if one wishes to escape responsibility for living truth. In some fields of investigation emotion and risk are hardly called for, but taking such cases to be the model for all truth is a mistake.

> But all truth is living. The closer it comes to the center of life the more alive we find it. It is found in the fullest, purest whole-surrender to what is most important and most real.[8]

Observing that "truth is seeing what is really there," Ferré calls for frank facing of the truth that is really there

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[7]Ibid., p. 10.

[8]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

to be seen. To see what is most important harmoniously related to what is most real may require effort and patience. On the other hand wholeness is necessary to our sincerity.

> When we make too much of reason to the neglect of the emotions or the will we invite a dry, academic attitude which is both artificial and false to the main areas of knowledge. Intellectualism is the absence of living truth.[9]

Just as a well-balanced person is involved emotionally and volitionally as well as intellectually, so the thinker who finds his emotions and his will involved in his response to life is more wholesome over all. Ferré continues in this line of thought.

> When we dodge sympathy and action we must necessarily reason falsely in the most vital areas of truth, in the areas of whole-response. Our very defense of our dodge, that we must be above the battle of life to think clearly, is a rationalization, an unconscious lie to protect us from accountability. All our thinking in the vital areas of knowledge where value and choice are involved is consequently spoiled by this dodge.[10]

The individual who seeks to solve all his problems solely by rational exercise is often disappointed with the result.

Ferré tells us that Julius Seelye Bixler wrote, dealing especially with Max Scheler, "Our emotions are our response to the call of the inner life of the cosmos."[11] I believe that it can be argued that the total psyche is a

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[9]Ibid., p. 13.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ferré, Faith and Reason, p. 13.

sensory organ, and the source of this idea belongs to years long gone.

Pursuing the thought of reason and holism, Ferré states: "Reason must always be within whole-response. Reason must be the whole man thinking."[12] This position is explained in part by two quotations given by the author. One is from A. E. Taylor:

> It is only as we become more and more personally moralized by faithful performance of already known duties that the full demand of duty upon us is progressively realized.[13]

The other quotation is from the words of Jesus: "If any man will to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine. . . ."[14] This is the text used by F. W. Robertson in his famous sermon: "Obedience the Organ of Spiritual Knowledge."

Ferré considers reason to include any and all ways of understanding, more than our capacity for logical reasoning, more than simply that which we can know apart from Christ's coming into the world. It includes "any interpretation at all by any means whatever of that to which we respond. . . ."[15] Every sensation and any revelation are included.

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[12]Ibid., p. 14.

[13]A. E. Taylor, The Faith of a Moralist: Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of St. Andrews 1926-1928 (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1951), series 1, pp. 158-159; Ferré, Faith and Reason, p. 13.

[14]John 7:17.

[15]Ferré, Faith and Reason, pp. 13-14.

In working toward a full description of right reason, Ferré points out that people meet the world in experience made up of three parts or realms. There is that which we can interpret clearly and we react to that; then there is that to which we react vaguely striving to understand; and there is another realm where we have to react without receiving a clear answer from reason. This last realm is the sphere where faith operates.[16] Reason often has limits beyond which it cannot go.[17] He further understands reason as "that which can be stated clearly to ourselves, told meaningfully to others and then tested by them in some manner open to all people."[18]

For Ferré, all reason has an important place in the life of man.

> Reason as capacity for logical inference must be fully honored in its innermost nature. Yet it must work in a world which is far more than a logical network. Reason must tell us, as far as it can, what is true out there and important; more than that, reason can to some extent handle that world, which is at least enough like reason to be partially understood by it, stated by it, and tested by it.[19]

With this granted, man's knowledge is on a secure basis.

In discussing epistemology, Ferré harks back to Thomas Aquinas' simple and optimistic view that "truth is in the

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[16]Ibid., p. 15.

[17]Ibid., p. 26.

[18]Ibid., p. 16.

[19]Ibid., pp. 20-21.

intellect in proportion to its conformity with the object understood. . . . Truth is the equation of thought and thing."[20]

Faith and Reason Acting Together

When he comes to ask what meaning and nature this actual world has, he states:

> Close reasoning may show us that what is now and here actual as a whole points to probabilities beyond itself. We shall find that what is most important and what is most real do not go completely together out there and that therefore religion to be right and full cannot rest with the finding of reason. Reason itself carefully used will show us that it points beyond itself.[21]

Ferré believes that faith and reason interact. In some ways each is part of the other. He has been quoted already to say that "man's reason is part of faith's inevitable whole-response," and in another reference he says that when truth spontaneously arises out of the knowledge situation, "in that sense we could include faith as part of reason," and indeed from the perspective of whole-response we do.[22]

Continuing, he offers that:

> We prefer to define faith as dynamic whole-response, with reason that aspect of the interpretation which can be known in terms of what is here and now actual, rather than to reduce faith to one aspect of

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[20]Pegis, Basic Writings, I, p. 169; Ferré, Faith and Reason, p. 21.

[21]Ferré, Faith and Reason, p. 22.

[22]Ibid., p. 23.

> knowledge. . . . And in the wedding of faith and trust reason is always the best man.[23]

If religion is a whole-response, reason is involved in understanding the factor to which we respond and in directing our response. We see that religion is our response to that which is most important and most real in the opinions of men. Of course we are thinking about religion as it actually is. We react to what we understand to be there. Our awareness and impression of what is there will involve some variation. We react according to our understanding, which depends upon what men have thought in earlier periods and what they think now. Therefore our vision will be unclear and imperfect in some ways.[24]

The Important and the Real

Religion is claiming that what is most important is also most real. This book seeks to know to what extent these are the same and to identify the kinds of knowledge which tell us this. The history of religion and indeed its very nature tell us that they belong together.[25]

When we know what it is that satisfies our deepest needs, we are doing whole-thinking and we know then what is most important. "From the beginning the most real cannot be

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[23]Ibid., p. 27.

[24]Ibid., pp. 29-30

[25]Ibid., pp. 34, 31.

separated from the most important." Both are in our environment for us to receive in our whole-response and thought.[26]

> The real is the power out there to affect us, to determine our destiny, to condition or to control in an inescapable way our actions so that even our choices of what is contrary to the nature of the most real show this finally determining nature of reality.[27]

I believe that here Ferré is touching on the ancient concept of cosmos where he indicates that the reality surrounding us touches our deepest needs. Just what the relationship is we may not understand, but knowing of the correspondence is a step in the right direction. This is faith and this is reason.

Prior to our era both philosophy and religion have regarded the most important and the most real as belonging together. But in modern times stress has been placed on value for religion. This is due to man's allowing reality and value to fall apart, while actually value cannot be without any existence at all.[28]

Ferré points out that the great historic world religions have held together what is most important and what is most real.

> As a matter of fact the great Christian theologians have identified the two aspects of religion [the important and the real] almost as unconsciously or easily as the great classical tradition in philosophy

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[26]Ibid., p. 33.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., p. 35.

> . . . has simply assumed the basic identity of thought and being.[29]

Here he is thinking of the identification of goodness and being, according to Plato, to whom he refers several times, and I think, rightly so.

If we study experience or if we study history, we find being somehow linked with importance or value. It is hopeful for man's wholesomeness that the most important is rooted in the most real. Security and integration call for this hope to come true.[30]

Comparison and Contrast of Aquinas and Ferré

There are several similarities and some differences between the thoughts and ideas of Thomas Aquinas and those of Nels Ferré.

Both were students of philosophy; both were teachers and intellectual leaders. Both were committed Christians first and philosophers second; both were aware of the best literature and tradition. Both took comprehensive views of truth, including science, philosophy and religion. While both were controversial--Thomas a little too liberal with his love for Aristotle to suit Bonaventura--and Ferré too broad for the reactionary conservatives; both were open-ended, ready to receive further light, or for their successors to do so.

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[29]Ibid., pp 36-37.

[30]Ibid., p. 37.

The two men tend to see man's response to the object of religious knowledge as involving faith as well as reason, the will and the emotions as well as the intellect. Aquinas saw the will as operating in faith, and Ferré stressed the emotional aspect of man and its relation to both faith and reason. Both view reason as giving only a part of the whole picture presented by faith. Both would allow theology to influence philosophy, as well as having theology borrow from philosophy. Thomas' revealed truths that supplement reasoned faith (Chapter II) form a parallel with Ferré's distinction between reasoning and "whole-response."

Some of the differences between them are circumstantial, such as the deviations in time and place, but some are intrinsic. Thomas spoke much of divine authority, as Gilson and Copleston indicate, and he was a Roman Catholic during the Middle Ages, when the authority of the Church was great. Ferré, on the other hand, was a Protestant, more inclined to speak of the authority of self-vindicating truth and personal experience. He would stress the Spirit and the Word, as distinguished from the Church. Thomas was dealing with classical and medieval ideas, but Ferré was contemporary, at times echoing existentialism, phenomenology and process theology, and probably influenced by such men as Schleiermacher and Rudolph Otto.

These two creative thinkers have much in common and lend something distinctive to the literature devoted to a

better understanding of religion. They invite further consideration of their contributions to man's treasury of religious thought.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The presumptive result of this investigation is to the effect that faith should cooperate with reason. If it may be called the faith-plus-reason position, there are two other not unfamiliar possibilities, which may be termed the faith-without-reason attitude and the reason-without-faith posture. We shall note each of these, whereas the first is found to be more satisfactory than either of the others. It proceeds in keeping with Christian views and with the concept of philosophy of religion.

The faith-plus-reason position has more in its favor than the faith-minus-reason one. In this the whole person is considered. On all sides, in recent years, people are taking the holistic view. That is what Ferré believes and that is what this writer maintains. Reason and faith are both parts of a healthy functioning of the human capacity; reason and faith go together and should not be divorced from each other. In this way faith and reason may both be retained as normal human experiences.

Christianity and Education

There are specific and valuable advantages in this position. One of these has to do with the education of leaders. Religious believers do read philosophy; especially

is this true of religious leaders and educators. Hepburn brings out in Christianity and Paradox that they do not go deep enough in this reading, but there are some extraordinary exceptions to that. Leaders must be educators in order to influence others and to project their plans. Most clerical leaders in the writer's acquaintance felt a need for education because they considered themselves impelled by spiritual constraint to enter upon Christian pursuits, although this required education, of which they needed a great deal more than they had.

The genius of Christianity is that it goes hand-in-hand with learning. This is true on the lowest level as well as on the highest. Faith-plus-reason yields some very practical help for living in the world, and in all the active pursuits of men, and in all the problem-situations of social life a very ready use is found for reason working with religious faith.

In the Middle Ages, monasticism, a part of the church-dominated life, contributed to the preservation of books by copying, which was the only way of preserving and circulating manuscripts. Also there were monks like Gregor Johann Mendel, the scientist, although he was a modern (1822-1884) Austrian botanist, he discovered Mendel's law concerning the inheritance of animal and plant characteristics. His connection with the Middle Ages through monasticism was [illegible] closer than we would think, not being monastic

ourselves. The monks did teaching and became skilled in their fields.

It was the writer's privilege to hear the late Kenneth Scott Latourette of Yale University speak on the history of church-sponsored colleges in our country. Church-sponsored education was most important in the founding and developing of our early colleges, now some of our greatest institutions.

Reason is irreplaceable in the education of leaders, for rationale is needed for teachers that they may be guided in their methods. Leaders are educated in churches, in schools and through the media. They are prepared to serve as educators, administrators and exporters of the Christian way of thinking to lands around the world. Not least among their services is the secularizing of Christian elements in our culture, which serves a good purpose far beyond the bounds of institutional religion. Although there are some students and some well-educated people who do not desire to be Christians, Christian education serves a moral function and many like things in the learning and training it fosters.

Christianity and Rationality

One consideration in favor of faith-plus-reason is that Christian people do think and reason. Preaching is reasoning. Dr. Oswald Hoffman is heard on the radio almost every Sunday morning on the Lutheran Hour. His preaching is full of reasoning. The Old Testament prophets reasoned. There is wisdom and counsel scattered throughout the Bible,

even in its narrative and history, but especially in the Wisdom Literature, such as Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.

Evidence has been cited for the view that the faith-reason problem has been here ever since the beginning of the Christian era. Thomas and others brought this problem into focus. It was there all the time and it has been there ever since. It was there because Christians thought, and Christians still think and reason. So do non-Christians. This may be a contribution which Christianity makes to all people, that faith and reason both work together. There are many followers of the Christian religion that are intellectual and aware. There are good minds among leaders in the church that are congenial with philosophy. Some have engaged the chief issues, but most have not. But the rank-and-file of church people have a strong tendency to common sense and they are somewhat rationalistic. Tradesmen, businessmen and craftsmen, as well as professional people have down-to-earth views about what is done and said by their fellow church people. Many of these have transferred the terms and concepts of religion into a work ethic, a secularized version of life, reality and experience, and a behavior pattern which results from their way of making application of religious ideals.

There is a real sense in which Christianity has begotten education. The Hebrews taught religious truths. This is not to say that other religions of the world have not done this

too. It certainly is a mark of the great world faiths that they teach. Christianity is not unique in this, but our framework for this thesis is Western civilization; and we are not dealing with world religions here, but only with our own Western history; and it is important that Christianity and learning have coexisted in our civilization. Even the crisis theologians have been learned men and knew existentialism. Many of their readers and followers have been educated as well.

Advantages of a Faith-Reason Synthesis

The synthesis of faith and reason viewed from the rational or philosophical standpoint is very wise, for reason is so important that faith ought to be glad to have assistance. Those who blind their eyes to reason in the eager defense of their faith, the irrationalists, are foolish. Every day all of us rely on reason in everything, and faith is not always in our minds as a conscious factor in our moment-to-moment continuum. The synthesis when viewed from the standpoint of Christian belief holds out certain advantages. The believer finds faith so important that he wishes to persuade people by reasoning that they should experience the faith also.

Positive Benefactions in Thomas' and Ferre's Syntheses

What positive benefactions do the syntheses of Thomas and Ferré make for philosophy and for religion? Thomas'

philosophy yields a positive contribution to the understanding of religion. He was schooled in philosophy. As he met with questions about religion he believed there was an intelligible answer and he carefully phrased his thoughts, dialectically, in answer. The lesson learned here is that we should apply faith to intellectual problems and apply reason to problems of faith. His religious writings yield a positive contribution to the understanding of philosophy. There is not quite as much done here as in the gift of philosophy to religion, but there is some. Belief in the unity of all things and an affirmation of life are religion's gifts to philosophy. Philosophy struggles with a stand-off between "yes" and "no," a sort of apathy sometimes. But religion can give a plus here.

Ferré's philosophical writings yield positive contributions to the understanding of religion and philosophy, as well as their interrelations with science. In Faith and Reason his philosophy contributes to both philosophy and religion and to their relationships with each other.

His chapters on philosophy (III) and religion (IV) are full of the skillful handling of strategic philosophical ideas and those of the philosophy of religion. He quotes Whitehead twenty-six times, more than any other person, Kant twelve, Augustine eight, Aquinas eight, Hocking seven, Plato six, Kierkegaard six, Descartes five, Dewey five, Hume three, Husserl two and Bergson two. One of the quotations of Whitehead is from a personal conversation. Another is from the

lectures of Whitehead. He is definitely well read and also confident in that of which he speaks.

What he contributes is an affirmative recognition of religion as the supreme concern of ours, while at the same time he shows mastery of philosophy and of the implicates of science.

As an indication of Ferré's ability in the philosophy of religion, the following interpretation of his comments is worthy of note. He points out that we must not over-specialize so as to make our own area of interest the only one, but we must see relationships between all fields of human knowledge. Scientists have looked down on philosophy, but an appreciable number have seen that science does not have to be linked with naturalism or positivism. Kant's influence in criticizing philosophy has done great harm in fragmenting the subject into parts. There are historical positivisms, sociological positivisms, humanistic positivisms and logical and linguistic positivisms.[1]

Concerning the attitude of science in looking down on philosophy and religion, he comments:

> Surely a careful reading of this entire tendency of thought, including all its numerous varieties, would make us see that many have been trying to move the tree of knowledge far from its proper place in the midst of the garden of life and have succeeded far too well in clipping close some

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[1]Ibid., pp. 100-103.

> of its branches that when rightly used are for the healing of the nations.[2]

Value of the Close Relationship Between Religion and Philosophy

Ferré agrees that philosophy and religion need each other.

> Since this common tension between Reality and the actual touches both philosophy and theology they need each other. . . . Philosophers who are religious in the fuller sense, who are men of a high and noble faith, are thereby better philosophers. . . . Theologians who are men of faith, on the other hand, will dare to see the actual world for what it is and yet also the existential claims on it of what eternally is and actually ought to be. The more richly religious they are, the more use they will have for philosophy.[3]

The reader of Ferré's book Faith and Reason will be persuaded that its author is consistent and informed. He expressed religious truth in philosophical terms as he stated the following.

> The interpretation of our existential ultimate is unavoidably the responsibility of religion. Within and beyond present process, so brief in its passing and deep in its frustrations, there is, too, the permanence of Purpose, which though it cannot be fully known, being as yet only partially realized, can yet be significantly seen and freeingly believed. Our existential ultimate to be both true and saving must be the fullest synthesis of the most important and the most real, arrived at by faith and knowledge in dynamic interaction, critically and creatively.[4]

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[2]Ibid., p. 103.

[3]Ibid., p. 137.

[4]Ibid., pp. 143-144.

The only quotation from Paul Tillich in this book is on the point of this thesis.

> If rational truth, with its contributions to the different realms of knowledge, is excluded, Christian faith necessarily becomes sectarian and exclusive. If existential truth with its practical bearing on religious and ethical activity is excluded, Christian faith becomes relativistic and sterile. Only by a proper union of the two can the intellectual needs of our present world situation be met.[5]

Philosophy of religion may be diagrammed by two circles that intersect. The area that is mutual to both circles is the one representing philosophy of religion. One circle stands for religion and one for philosophy. The upshot of this thesis is that these two fields of knowledge should work together, mutually aiding each other.

Something more than an Aristotelian kind of classification brings philosophy and theology together. They are closely akin and they enhance each other. The mutual benefit of cooperation between philosophy and theology is not confined to the area of philosophy of religion. Philosophy can be employed in areas of theology beyond this--such as apologetics, systematic theology, Christian ethics and Christian sociology. Theology may shed light on areas of philosophy other than philosophy of religion--such as metaphysics (the nature of man and the world), ethics and epistemology. As an illustration of the service of religion to metaphysics, "it

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[5]Ibid., p. 206.

could very plausibly be argued" that religion gave science the idea of an ordered whole, "and there were laws of nature which could be discovered."[6]

It does make a considerable difference whether it is a case of a religious person approaching philosophy or one of a philosopher approaching religion. The purposes of these two persons are definitely different. Inevitably these disciplines help each other. Similarity in the way of thinking and reading draws these two together. There is an interest in these two areas on the part of many people. If they are serious by nature and disposition they are interested in religion or philosophy or both. Students and writers of philosophy read about and investigate religion, because both philosophy and religion ask many of the same questions and are interested in obtaining truth concerning man's destiny and all related topics. Thus religion and philosophy are closely related, for all practical purposes. What philosophy does for one, religion does for another.

This does not mean that religion and philosophy are interchangeable. The philosopher, whether a beginner or proficient, when he comes to a religious reference will respond to that favorably or unfavorably. If an unfavorable habit is established, he will screen out of his reading

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[6]Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1972 ed., s.v. "Religion and Science," by J. J. C. Smart.

anything truly religious and will become more and more hardened against religion, and his philosophy will be irreligious in its tendencies. If a person is susceptible to the influence of religion, he will respond favorably and seek fuller satisfaction and benefit from religion. He will find in religion answers for many of his questions and problems. Should he have intellectual needs, he will seek help from those who are able to deal with intellectual matters.

Presumably each one, religion and philosophy, could exist without the other. Whether it would then be adequate by itself depends on your definition of adequacy. Let us say that to a large degree each could so exist. Is each indebted to the other? Not necessarily, but inasmuch as they have coexisted and influenced each other for so long, we would have to say that each is now indebted to the other. Then it comes down to how they are going to coexist and how they are going to be handled together. How will each relate to the other? If religion had never heard of philosophy, religion's adequacy would be determined without reference to philosophy. If philosophy had never heard of religion, philosophy's adequacy would be determined without reference to religion. But since they have influenced each other, a standard of adequacy could hardly be decided for one without taking the other discipline into account.

Benefits for Religion from the Application of Reason to Faith

The intellectual treatment of Christianity supports belief. The person is a society where Christianity is established culturally will find strength through the normative or social concepts as well as in other ways. Allowing for the fact that some Christians do not want reason, there are benefits to the Christian following in such well-thought-out presentations of the "case for Christianity" as the intellect can give.

Many in the faith-plus-reason camp desire to have intellectual respectability. An example of this may be seen in the Paris of Aquinas' day. Stumpf discusses the prevalent vogue of Aristotelianism at the University.

> Still, because Aristotle's thought was so formidable and so systematic, particularly concerning matters of nature and science, its forward march was inevitable. If most parts of the University of Paris were to be oriented to Aristotle's thought, the theologians could not avoid coming to terms with this momumental thinker.[7]

One form of apologetic that has great possibilities is seen in the writings of people like C. S. Lewis, Leslie D. Weatherhead and Harry Emerson Fosdick. And there are many others who could be named. The thing that impresses one about these writers is the way they address the problem of doubt and the other specific problem areas, such as psychology and suffering. Some who treat the subject of death do so

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[7]Stumpf, pp. 186-187.

in a very helpful way so as to encourage faith on the part of the reader. This application of the Christian faith to life situations is apologetic in its effect. Philosophy also defends theology when employed to this end. Thomas Aquinas used his keen mind, sharpened on the teachings of Aristotle, in dialectic, with an intellectual answer to a religious problem, but it left the religious situation intact, having thrown off the conflicting thought or suggestion. Thus we have a legitimate use of philosophy for the sake of religious faith. Also both reason and faith include each other in some degree, as Ferré has indicated.

The intellectual treatment of Christianity interprets belief. Beliefs are explained as a method of propagating them. They were hammered out in early church history by intelligent persons who were informed of philosophical thought. Philosophy explains theology. Because both fields of thought, philosophy and religion, deal with the same ultimate questions, they are already similar in subject matter. An examination of the vocabularies of theology and philosophy will illustrate this. Such words as these belong to both disciplines: agnosticism, epistemology, essence, intuition, materialism, ontology, pantheism, rationalism, skepticism, soul, teleology, theism and transcendent. (In both areas we learn that blind alleys give us no answers to our problems.)

The intellectual treatment of Christianity critiques belief. This is a necessary step in philosophy. In modern

times the followers of A. J. Ayer and Ludwig Wittgenstein have raised questions about the facticity or factuality of religious beliefs or claims. If one's belief about a particular aspect of religion cannot be verified by any so-called scientific method, perhaps it can be falsified. Maintaining that most claims made to truth by a religious belief would not be affected by any conceivable circumstance, this view says that nothing would make any difference with regard to the claim made, therefore the claim does not really mean anything.

Philosophy systematizes religion into theology. It helps us to sort things out and classify them. It helps us to summarize and arrive at principles. Then these principles are made to serve as bases of consistency. It may become necessary to modify these principles or find more fundamental ones. Philosophy helps religion make its content consistent. Theology that is systematic helps one understand what he believes. Systematic theology is sensitive to the philosophical climate.

Alternatives to Faith Plus Reason

As it was seen in the introduction, there have been religious views since the first century which might be said to hold the faith-without-reason position. Many holding this opinion have wished to prese-ve the purity of the faith and to perpetuate a spiritual and simple version of it. But this way of thinking resists philosophical tampering with

the creed. It goes about to buttress its own system and make it known as an intelligible one. Before long it has developed reasons to explain its differences from rival views. It has become cognitive itself while resisting cognition. Thus, willy nilly, the advocate of faith-without-reason has become more rational himself. Dogma can degenerate into dogmatism. This can sometimes offend the intelligence.

The position opposed to the joint use of faith and reason in searching for truth is untenable for the simple reason that Christians of the all-faith-and-no-reason persuasion do spell out their beliefs in conceptual or doctrinal statements and thus belie their position of anti-reason.

Very likely there are mystics who do not write their beliefs out in a systematic way, for they do not have a way to communicate their experience to others or to verify the consistency of their interpretations of experience. But a large number of leaders in the field of religion write out and codify their beliefs. While some do not, many do.

Another combination of the words <u>faith</u> and <u>reason</u> gives a point of view which may be called the reason-without-faith belief. Like deism in the eighteenth century, this can result in a somber world-view that gives no solace for sin, sorrow or death. Rationalism goes along with this, and Hegel has given the superlative demonstration of explaining everything that belongs to faith as only an idea.

If, as I believe, the Christian faith has significant truths to offer, then one who explains away the whole of Christianity has left humankind impoverished.

Reason Working with Faith

There are essentials in what a Christian believes that cannot be established totally on the basis of natural reason, and without these elements much of the benefit of faith is lost. To illustrate what these beliefs are like and at the same time to avoid ultraconservative reaction, they are the same as mentioned in the introduction: the existence of God, creation of the universe, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the truthfulness of the Bible, the atonement which Christ made when he was crucified, kinship between God and man and life beyond the grave. Others could be added, but these are enough to delineate the character of historic Christian doctrines. There is a content to Christian belief traditionally held, and while some would settle for less and others would insist on more, the nature and character of the faith of a Christian is important for what it is worth to the believer.

Again in the conclusion, as it was said in other words in the introduction, reference should be made to the very broad wingspan of the subject under discussion. The interface between philosophy on the one hand and religion on the other is of considerable size and importance. For the person embracing both religion and philosophy there are disciplines imposed by both masters. Truth is found in a wide variety of

human activities, and it shows maturity if one can have reverence in the presence of something truly great.

James Burns published a little squib that fits here.

> In the Life of the late professor [T. H.] Huxley, the great scientist, there is a passage of peculiar interest coming from such a source. "Science," says he, "seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great law which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly, wherever, and to whatever abysses Nature leads, or you will learn nothing. I have only begun to learn content and peace of mind since I have resolved at all risks to do this."[8]

T. H. Huxley tells us that truth may come from various sources.

Very helpful in this connection is the section in Reason and Religion where Dr. Edwards finds modern thought leading to "the equating of philosophy and theology as competing historical, rational belief systems." Characteristics of both disciplines which they share in common are: logicality, simplicity, coherence, comprehensiveness, clarity and conformity to experience. Concerning particular belief systems that come to us in the name of philosophy or theology, he states that "each must be accepted or rejected on its own merits or demerits."[9]

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[8]James Burns, Illustrations for Preachers and Teachers Taken from Literature, Poetry and Art (London: James Clarke and Company, Limited, n.d.), p. 147.

[9]Ibid., p. 114 ff.

Timeliness of Interest in Religion and Philosophy

As was said in the introduction, the faith-reason controversy and its elements bear forcefully on life today in the Western world. It bridges the gap between Catholics and Protestants and is involved in some fundamental American principles, such as freedom, justice and liberal education. Serious students of history find the issue still keen and stimulating to fresh discoveries in the world of thought. It has a very practical bearing on several if not all meaningful pursuits in our communal life today.

It would be folly to maintain that nothing is ever done or said in the name of philosophy that is disparaging to the interests of religion. But philosophy can be very helpful in understanding and explaining religion, and religion can hold its own against philosophy so long as its major concerns are respected and left free and intact.

Reading Edwards' Reason and Religion[10] provokes the thought that a review of what has been written in such books as this about such problems as philosophy and religion can be done well and effectively. Not that it has not been done already. That is just the point. There is entirely too much material. The fact that this is so shows that this is a pertinent subject of vital interest, a live issue and one on which many people need to do some thinking. In other

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[10]Edwards, p. 110.

words, all these writers and their interest in and commitment to such writing only underline the importance of the subject. If there were very little written and published on this subject, it might indicate that religion has a weak position, and if Christianity were only treated in a few of them it might indicate that Christianity has a weak position. It does not have a weak position but a strong one, as these evidences indicate. The amount of written work published on the philosophy of religion, bearing upon the areas shared between religion and philosophy is great, significant and impressive.

One thing learned in the work of this thesis is that Christian people need to do more reading and thinking along these lines. Also the intellectual leaders who have lost sympathy for religion could profit by reading a book like Ferré's. Perhaps they have been a bit hasty in their assumptions about how reason operates and how knowledge is obtained.

A seminar in which the writer participated on Nietzsche's ideas as representative of his day and age showed him often to take a median position between two apparently conflicting truths. The medieval synthesis is like a mediating view of religious and philosophical ideas. Dialectic, with its thesis and antithesis, partakes of this mediation. In our world with so many contradictions, this has a practical value for us. Both Thomas Aquinas and Nels Ferré have given

us some of this. Because of the ongoing and never-ending dialogue of philosophy and religion, we need them both.

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VITA

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