
Setting An Editor Right on Faith. II.

It is quite true that science rests on proofs and that faith does not; but that does not mean that proofs have no part to play in faith. A scientific hypothesis may rest on a "mass of probabilities," but faith cannot.

The mind accepts a truth of science because it believes the evidence of the senses; it accepts a truth of faith because it believes that it was revealed by God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

However, in the quest of a truth of faith, the mind has a function no less exalted than it has in science; it must, in fact, go into every field of science and far afield from the natural sciences in its quest. It is the primary function of the mind in search of revealed truth to examine the "motives of credibility," that is, the reasons for believing that this or that truth was actually revealed by God. It must establish by reason that there is a God and that He can speak to man and that He has actually done so. It must use every aid of the critical sciences to establish the historical value, the authority, of the books which purport to contain such divine communications; it must weigh the miracles and prophecies adduced to prove such claims.

Secondly, the mind must examine very carefully this "revealed truth" to see that there is nothing in it contrary to reason, nothing in conflict with other truths - whether these be known by revelation or by science. The mind must necessarily reject what is not in conformity with known truth; hence, "faith which is often highly illogical" is not faith but self-delusion, a child of unrestrained, unreasonable emotion.

In the third place, reason must operate upon revealed truth to push it to its logical conclusion, and these conclusions are both speculative, or theoretical, and practical. If it is revealed, for instance, that matrimony is a sacrament, then questions regarding its nature should be settled by a spiritual, and not a temporal authority; and the authority to settle such questions should be the one established by God.

Reason has, then, it appears, a large field of action in the matter of faith. **BUT**, faith does not rest upon reason. As said above, the mind accepts a truth of faith only on the authority of God Who reveals it.

And there is nothing unreasonable in this; on the contrary, nothing is more reasonable. If we are willing to take the word of our fellow-man for something we have not investigated for ourselves, is it unreasonable to accept God's word for something which is beyond our powers of investigation, if our mind has seen that God has revealed it?

There are mysteries in the subject-matter of faith, of course; but a mystery, while beyond reason, is not contrary to it. A religion without mysteries, without truths which surpass human understanding, cannot satisfy the man who believes that God knows more than he does; and we have already seen that the acceptance of such truths on faith is perfectly reasonable if one is sure that God has revealed them.

It is easy to see why non-Catholics fail to investigate the claims of the Catholic Church when they hold such views of faith as that expressed by the editor whose statements we have quoted. But the Church has never wavered in her definition of faith: from St. Paul to the Vatican Council, her teaching is clear-cut. Faith is an act of the intellect, at the command of the will, under the influence of divine grace, by which the mind assents to revealed truth, not because of its internal credibility, but on the testimony of God Who reveals it. (To be concluded tomorrow.)

PRAYERS: Gus DeHooghe's mother is ill. H. G. McKee, of Brownson Hall, is ill in St. Joseph's Hospital. Ray Cusick's brother is ill. A deceased friend; a deceased relative of Ed Mahon. Five special intentions.