

**Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**

**FAITH, REASON, AND CHOICE:
LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR MIND**

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“Lord, help me never to use
my reason against the truth.”

--A Jewish Prayer

One day, a scholar asked Jesus Christ to define the most important commandment in God’s law (Mark 12:28-31).^{*} In His reply, Jesus told him that the greatest commandment has two parts. The first is to love God “with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.” How do we understand this famous mandate? We love him with all our heart when we trust in Him and devote to Him our greatest affections, living a life according to His will. We love God with all our soul when we cultivate a deep friendship with Him through regular communication in prayer, Bible study, worship, and meditation. And we love Him with all our strength when we keep our body healthy and serve others with our abilities. But, how do we love God with all our mind?

Through the centuries, thoughtful Christians have been intensely interested in the proper relationship between faith and reason in the believer's life. Christians involved in advanced studies, research, or professions that challenge the foundations of faith continually face the dilemma of how to love God with all their mind, integrating faith and reason in their daily activities. The tension is heightened by the fact that many of our contemporaries assume that intelligent people are not religious or, if they are, prefer that they keep such beliefs to themselves.

In this essay I will present a brief survey of the options available in considering issues of faith and reason, review key biblical passages on the subject, suggest how believers can deal with questions and doubts, and propose ways in which thoughtful Christians can cultivate a reasoned faith. I will conclude by outlining the role of personal choice in granting priority to either faith or reason in our intellectual pursuits.

During the first fourteen hundred years of our era the relationship between faith and reason was not controversial in the Western world, because religious beliefs and institutions held a privileged position in society. Acceptance of the Christian Church, its dogmas, and traditions was assumed in the general culture.

The first major challenge to this hegemony occurred during the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s. Martin Luther and others sought to restore the Bible to a position of authority in Christian belief and practice while highlighting the direct, personal relationship that must exist between the believer and God, rather than through the established Church and its representatives. Although Luther was a well-read reformer, he had misgivings about the role that autonomous reason could play in the Christian experience. "Reason--he is reported to have said in his mature years--is the greatest enemy that faith has. It never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but, more frequently than not, struggles against the Divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God." [1]

One century later Descartes stated that he would consider true and reliable only what his reason accepted. And with him, the faith-reason equation in Europe started to shift toward the latter factor. During the 1700s the Enlightenment critically examined the role of traditional institutions and accepted beliefs, challenging Christian dogmas and Church authority. Thinkers such as Diderot, Hume, Montesquieu, and Voltaire paved the way for an emerging secularism. Human rationality apart from faith in God started to gain the upper hand in intellectual circles. Today, most educated people take for granted the supreme value of reason and question the validity of religious faith, labeling it ignorance, credulity, or even superstition.

Premises and definitions

According to the Scriptures, God created Adam and Eve at the beginning of human history and endowed them with rationality and free will, with "the power to think and to do." [2] Exercising those abilities, our first parents disobeyed God and, as a result, lost their perfect status and home. Although we share the weaknesses of their fallen condition, God has preserved our capacity to think for ourselves, exercise trust, and make choices. In fact, one of the goals of Adventist education is "to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought." [3]

Before proceeding, clarity requires that we define a few key terms:

Faith, from a Christian perspective, is an act of the will that chooses to place one's trust in God in response to His self-disclosure and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our conscience. [4] Religious faith is stronger than belief; it includes the willingness to live and even die for one's convictions.

Reason is the exercise of the mental capacity for rational thought, understanding, discernment, and acceptance of a concept or idea. Reason looks for

clarity, consistency, coherence, and proper evidence.

Belief is the mental act of accepting as true, factual, or real a statement, an event, or a person. Of course, it is also possible to hold a belief in something that is not true.

Will is the ability and power to elect a particular belief or course of action in preference to others. **Choice** is the free exercise of such ability.

Reason and faith are asymmetrically related. It is possible to believe that God exists (reason) without believing in God or trusting in Him (faith).[5] But it is impossible to believe and trust in God (faith) without believing that He exists (reason).

I accept the priority of faith in the Christian intellectual life, as expressed in two classical formulations: *Fides quaerens intellectum* ("Faith seeks understanding") and *Credo ut intelligam* ("I believe in order that I may understand"). Reason is important to faith, but it cannot replace faith. To a Christian, acquiring knowledge is not the ultimate object of life; life's highest goal is to know God and to establish a personal, loving relationship with Him.[6] Such trust and friendship leads to obedience to God and to loving service to fellow human beings.

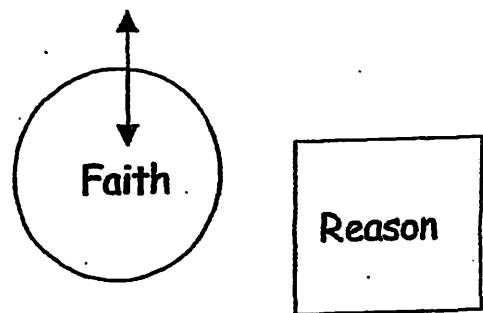
Relationship between faith and reason

How have believers related to issues of faith and reason in the past? How should we relate to them? During the Christian era, individuals assumed various approaches that can be outlined as follows:[7]

1. **Fideism:** *Faith ignores or minimizes the role of reason in arriving at truth.*

According to this position, faith in God is the ultimate criterion of truth and all that a Christian needs for certitude and salvation. Fideists affirm that God reveals Himself to human consciousness through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, and mystical experience, which are sufficient to know all important truths. A popular contemporary saying summarizes this stance: "God says it. I believe it. That settles it."

Radical fideism was first articulated by Tertullian (160?-230?), an early Christian apologist known for his critical attitude toward the surrounding pagan



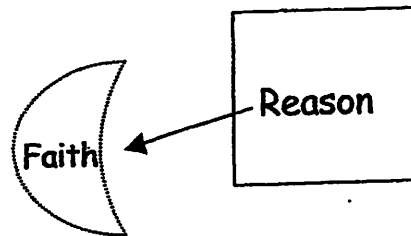
culture. It was the argumentative Tertullian who remarked, *Credo quia absurdum* ("I believe because it is absurd"). In the succeeding centuries other Christian authors have extolled the supreme value of blind faith in direct opposition to human reason. Carried to an extreme, fideism rejects rational thought, opposes advanced education and scientific research, and may lead to a private, mystical religion.

Moderate fideists accept that at least some truths (such as God's existence and moral principles) may be known by human reason illumined by the Holy Spirit (John 1:9; 16:13). Reason, then, can partially comprehend religious truths after they have been revealed. In addition, there is a rational basis for accepting the truths of faith that the human mind cannot, on its own, discover or fully comprehend. Such a position was articulated by the French writer Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). Faith predominates, but reason is not ignored.

Critics of radical fideism observe that faith in God and in Jesus Christ presupposes that there is a God who revealed Himself to humanity in Christ. Furthermore, Christians who receive the Bible as a trustworthy revelation of God must, of necessity, exercise their rational powers to comprehend and accept the propositions, exhortations, and prophecies contained in the Scriptures. If the Bible is truly a propositional expression of God's will as well as the basis of faith and practice for the Christian, human reason cannot be disregarded.

2. Rationalism: *Human reason challenges, undermines, and eventually destroys religious faith.*

Rationalists maintain that human reason constitutes the foundational source of knowledge and truth, and therefore provides the basis for belief. Modern rationalism rejects religious authority and spiritual revelation as sources of reliable information.



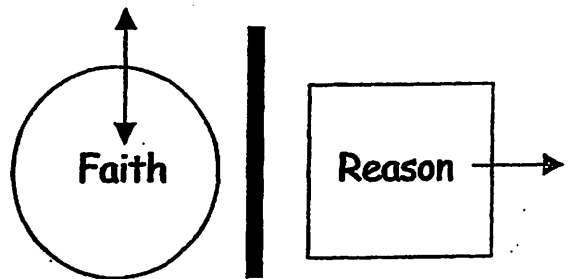
Beginning with the humanistic revival of the European Renaissance (14th - 16th centuries), which extolled human creativity and potential, rationalism flourished during the Enlightenment (18th century), with its systematic critique of accepted doctrines and institutions. With time, rationalism branched out into different varieties, such as empiricism ("Rely on your senses"), materialism ("Only physical matter and laws can be trusted"), pragmatism ("Believe in what works"), and existentialism ("Trust in your personal experience"). It eventually evolved into modern skepticism which questions, doubts or disagrees with generally accepted

conclusions and beliefs and then further into atheism, a denial of God's existence. Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud are representatives of this position.

In its opposition to faith, rationalism argues that religions tend to support traditional and sometimes irrational beliefs and to frustrate the self-realization of human beings, both individually and collectively. Rationalists also argue that there is no logical need for a First Cause in the universe, and that the reality of evil in the world is incompatible with the existence of a powerful, loving, and wise God as traditionally conceived by Christians.

Most institutions of higher learning offer an education based on a secular worldview that rejects a priori transcendent reality and relies exclusively on human observations and interpretations in their search for specialized knowledge.

3. Dualism: *Faith and reason are autonomous and operate in separate spheres, neither confirming nor contradicting each other.*



This position has been advocated by both agnostic and Christian thinkers. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) said that he was destroying the pretensions of human knowledge in order to make room for faith. He claimed to have shown that all attempts to establish the existence of God on the basis of rationalistic arguments were doomed to failure. Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) also rejected rational or moral arguments that attempt to support theism or Christianity because, in his view, those arguments presupposed their truth. For him, God is magnificently revealed in Jesus Christ; human beings can only submit to this revelation in faith, or reject it in sin. Belief cannot argue with unbelief, as though there were relevant premises accepted by both; it can only preach to it.

Many contemporary scientists, some of them Christian, assume a more radical stance. They maintain that science deals with objective "facts," while religion addresses moral issues from a personal, subjective perspective. Therefore, the spheres of activity of reason and faith, knowledge and values, are unrelated to each other.[8]

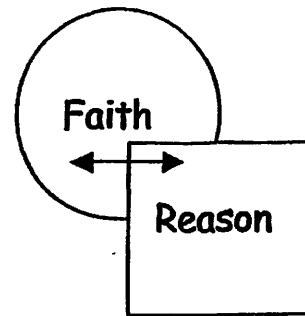
Bible-believing Christians are not willing to accept this dualistic position. They argue, for example, that Jesus Christ as portrayed in the Gospels is not only the center of their faith as God incarnate, but also a real Person who lived on this earth at a particular time and place in human history. They contend that the events

narrated and the characters presented in the Scriptures were also real and part of the historical continuum, as evidenced by a growing volume of documentary and archaeological evidences.

Any attempt to separate the spheres of reason and faith relegates the Christian religion to the realm of personal feelings, individual subjectivity, and ultimately to the level of fanciful and irrelevant myth. Both Christians and non-Christians hold to varying and frequently contradictory beliefs. If these cannot be distinguished as to their truthfulness or falsehood by the use of reasonable evidence and argument, then no belief whether religious or philosophical can claim reliability and allegiance.

4. Synergy: *Anchored in God's revelation, human reason can strengthen the human quest for and commitment to truth.*

Proponents of this position maintain that Biblical Christianity constitutes an integrated and internally consistent system of belief and practice that deserves both faith commitment and rational assent.



The realms of faith and reason overlap. Truths of faith alone are those revealed by God but not discoverable by human reason (for example, the Trinity or salvation by grace through faith). Truths to which we arrive through both faith and reason are revealed by God but also discoverable and understandable by human reason guided by the Holy Spirit (for example, the existence of God or the objective moral law). Truths ascertained by reason and not by faith are those not directly revealed by God but discovered by human reason (for example, physical laws or mathematical formulas).[9]

C. S. Lewis, the renowned Christian apologist, argued that in order to be truly moral, human beings must believe that basic moral principles are not dependent on human conventions. Those concepts possess a transcendent reality that makes them knowable by all humans. [10] Lewis further maintained that the existence of such principles presupposes the existence of a Being both entitled to promulgate them and likely to do so.

If the real world can be comprehended by human reason on the basis of investigation and experience, it is then an intelligible world. The amenability of this world to scientific inquiry both at the cellular and galactic levels allows human beings to discover the laws that provide evidence for intelligent design of the most intricate kind. This extremely elaborate design of all facets of the universe, which

makes possible intelligent life on this planet, speaks of a Designer.

Therefore, religious experience and moral conscience can be seen as signs of the existence of the same Being that scientific research envisions as the intelligent Designer of the cosmos and the Sustainer of life.

Reason, then, can help us move from understanding to acceptance and, ideally, to belief. But faith is a choice of the will, a decision to rely on God's revelation as foundational. Careful thinking, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, may remove obstacles on the way to faith; and once faith is already present, reason may strengthen religious commitment.[11]

Faith and reason in biblical perspective

The Hebrew worldview, as reflected in the Old Testament, conceived of human life as an integrated unit that included belief and behavior, trust and thought. During most of their existence, the people of Israel accepted as fact the reality of God, whose revelations were documented in their Scriptures and whose supernatural interventions were evident in their history. For them, the enemy of belief in the true God was not unbelief but the worship of pagan deities, mere products of misguided human reason. Their goal was not theoretical knowledge but wisdom--the gift of right thinking that leads to right choosing and right living. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

The New Testament reflects the transition toward a different cultural context, in which Hebrew monotheism had already become fragmented into various Jewish sects, and had also been influenced by Greco-Roman polytheism, emperor worship, and agnosticism. As the early Christian Church interacted with this religio-philosophical environment, it began to articulate the distinction between faith and reason, granting to faith the position of privilege in the life of the believer.

Bible teaching with respect to faith and reason may be summarized in the following propositions:

- **The Holy Spirit both awakens faith and illumines reason**

If it were not for the persistent influence of the Holy Spirit on human consciousness, no one would ever become a Christian. In our natural condition we do not seek God (Romans 3:10, 11), acknowledge our desperate need of His grace (John 16:7-11), or understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). Only through the agency of the Holy Spirit we are drawn to accept, believe, and trust in God

(John 16:14). Once this miraculous transformation has occurred (Romans 12:1, 2), the Holy Spirit teaches us (John 14:26), guides us "into all truth" (John 16:13), and allows us to discern error from falsehood (1 John 4:1-3).

- **Faith must be exercised and developed all through life**

Each human being has been given "a measure of faith" (Romans 12:4)—that is, the capacity to trust in God—and each Christian is encouraged to grow "more and more" in faith (2 Thessalonians 1:3). In fact, "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Hence the plea of an anguished father to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24) and the insistent request of the disciples, "Increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5). We grow in faith when, in response to God's mercy toward us, we increasingly trust in Him and obey his commandments.

- **God values and appeals to human reason**

Although God's thoughts are infinitely higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8, 9), He has chosen to communicate intelligibly with humankind, revealing Himself through the Scriptures (2 Peter 1: 20, 21), through Jesus Christ who called Himself "the truth" (John 14:6; Hebrews 11:1, 2), and through nature (Psalm 19:1). Jesus frequently engaged His listeners in dialogue and reflection, asking for a thoughtful response (see, for example, His conversation with Nicodemus, in John 3, and with the Samaritan woman, in John 4). At the request of the Ethiopian official, Philip explained a Messianic prophecy found in Scripture so that he might understand and believe (Acts 8:30-35). The believers in Berea were praised because they "examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). The ultimate goal of life is to know God and to accept Christ as Savior; such personal knowledge leads to eternal life (John 17:3).

- **God provides sufficient evidence to believe and trust in Him**

The unbiased observer can perceive in the natural universe a display of God's creative and sustaining power (Isaiah 40:26). God's "invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen" and understood by "what he has made." Those who, in spite of the evidence, stubbornly deny His existence and creative power "are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). Significantly, however, when Thomas expressed doubts about the reality of Christ's resurrection, Christ provided the physical evidence and challenged him to "stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27-29). When we are confronted with questions regarding the origin of

the universe, our point of departure should be that of faith: "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews 11:3). [13]

- **God offers clear guidance for life, but accepts the choices we make**

In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve the option to obey or disobey Him, and warned them of the terrible consequences of choosing the latter (Genesis 2:16, 17). Speaking through Moses, God reiterated the options: "I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. . . . Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19). His appeals to human conscience are exquisitely courteous: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Above all, God seeks from His creatures love, obedience, and worship that are freely considered and chosen (John 4:23, 24; 14:15; Romans 12:1 [*logikén* = reasonable and spiritual]).

- **Faith and reason can work together in the believer's life and witness**

When Jesus was asked to provide a summary of God's law, He stated that the first commandment included, "Love the Lord your God. . . with all your mind" (Mark 12:30; compare with Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). Paul stated that the acceptance of Christ as Savior depended on a thoughtful understanding of the gospel: "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Christians are expected to be "always prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15 [answer = *apologían* in Greek, defense, justification; reason = *lógon* in Greek, a word, an explanation]). Peter also encourages Christians to "make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge" (2 Peter 1:5, 6).

Dealing with questions and doubts

Thus far, we have approached the subject of faith, reason, and choice from philosophical and biblical perspectives. The range of options examined can be diagrammed as follows:

Unbelief	Faith
Doubt	Belief
Questions & Choice	

Let us now look at the practical implications of what we have examined. How should Bible-believing Christians deal with the tension that inevitably arises between their faith and their reason when they face conflicting issues in their study, research, or life experience? The following suggestions can help:[14]

1. Remember that God and truth are synonymous. God created us as inquisitive creatures. He is honored when we exercise our mental abilities to explore, discover, learn, and invent as we interact with the world that He created and sustains. When we use our rationality and creativity in an attitude of humility and gratitude, we are loving God with our mind. Believers should not be afraid of study, research, and discoveries. If there are discrepancies between "God's truth" and "human truth," it is because we misunderstand one or both. Since in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3), all truth is God's truth.

2. Accept that the Bible does not tell us everything there is to know. God's knowledge is infinitely broader and deeper than ours: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). For that reason, He had to condescend in order to establish communication with us, within our ability to comprehend. As Jesus told the disciples, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear" (John 16:12). In addition, our human fallenness clouds and limits our understanding. "Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). The Bible can be approached as a book of history or literature or laws or biography. But its main purpose is to help us know God and to teach us how to become friends with Him and live godly lives now in preparation for eternity. In the New Earth we will have the time and the opportunity to explore and learn from the vast complexity of the cosmos and its inhabitants.

3. Distinguish between God's Word and human interpretations. Human traditions and preconceived ideas frequently make us read things into the Bible that are not there. The case of Copernicus (1473-1543) offers a sobering example. On the basis of his study and observations, this astronomer proposed that the planets, including the Earth, revolved around the Sun. Since most astronomers still accepted Ptolemy's geocentric theory, many religious leaders of that time considered Copernicus' ideas heretical. They believed that because of the

importance of human beings and the centrality of this Earth in God's plans, the Sun and planets must revolve around the Earth. When Galileo and Kepler provided evidence in favor of Copernicus's views, the discovery did not destroy God or Christianity.

Three centuries later, Charles Darwin argued against many theologians of his time who believed in the absolute fixity of the species, which is not required by the Bible narrative. Not many years ago, some Christians stated that God would not allow humans to travel in space or land on the Moon. Again, those statements were proven wrong, showing they were based on personal interpretations and extrapolations.

4. Realize that the scientific enterprise is an ongoing exploration.

Experimental science deals only with phenomena that can be observed, measured, manipulated, repeated, and falsified. Contrary to the impression that one gains from many science textbooks and the popular media, experimental science frequently leads to adjustments and even reversals. True, many of the basic laws are now universally accepted. But as scientists continue their research, theories and explanations that were accepted for years are replaced by other theories and interpretations that seem more accurate and reliable.[15] As a matter of method, scientists work in their disciplines within a naturalistic framework, which excludes the supernatural. Many of them are agnostics or atheists; however, their beliefs are not based on scientific evidence but on personal choice. Only when we approach the natural world from the perspective of God's revelation in Scripture, we begin to understand it correctly. Scientists and researchers who are open to the possibility that God exists, find abundant evidence in the natural world to indicate that there is an Intelligent Designer who planned and sustains the universe and life.

5. Create a mental file for unresolved issues. Some questions will inevitably arise in our studies, in our life experience, and even in the Bible for which we don't have satisfactory answers. In some cases, we find an explanation later. In other cases, questions remain unresolved. A classic example is the tension between our belief in an all-powerful, loving God and the suffering of the innocent. Although there are abundant evidences of God's power and care, we cannot fully understand why human tragedies and natural disasters occur in a universe in which He is sovereign. The biblical concept of a cosmic conflict between God and Satan that involves this planet and its inhabitants provides a useful framework for understanding this and other deep mysteries. In the meantime, the best approach is to suspend judgment, keep studying them prayerfully, and seek the counsel of

mature believers. Some day we will gain a new insight or God will make these contradictions clear to us. Faith in God and recognition of our own finitude demand that we learn to live with some uncertainties and mysteries.

Conclusion

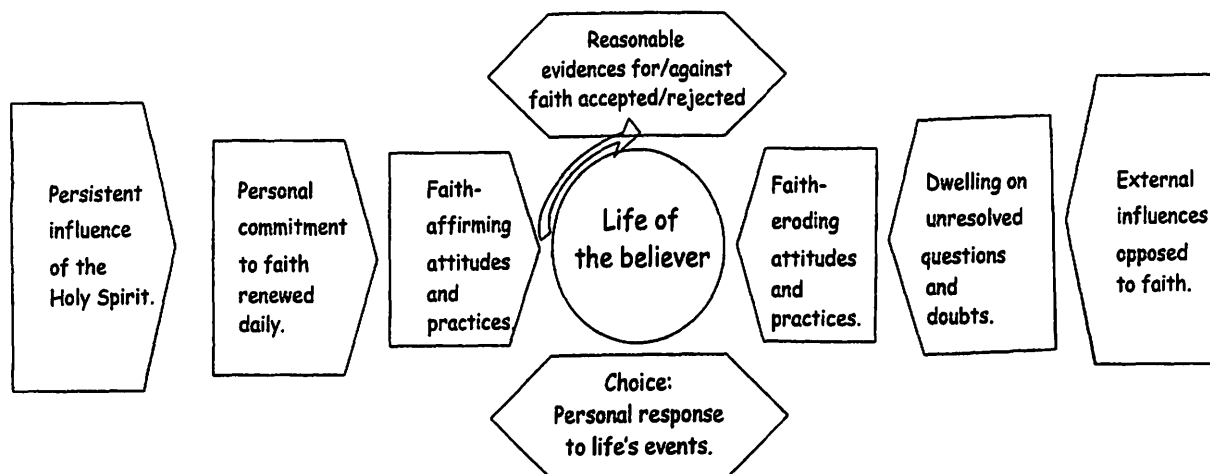
As a way of illustrating the main thrust of this essay, we can depict our mind as a court of law that operates every day of our lives.[16] At court our individual will sits as the judge, while Reason and Faith are the lawyers that bring evidence to consider and witnesses to present their views. The evidence and the testimony they provide comes from a wide variety of sources, which include: the influence of people we love and respect, the feeling of loving and being loved by God and others, our social interaction and dialogue with others, the messages of the Bible, observations of the natural world, spiritual experiences in prayer and service, study and research, the joys and sorrows of life, individual and collective worship, our response to beauty in the arts, the effect of our habits and lifestyle, and the search for inner consistency and authenticity.

Our will daily sifts through this multiplicity of emotional, spiritual, rational, and aesthetic perceptions and data, comparing them with the Code—our worldview.[17]

At times the arguments advanced are accepted and strengthen our faith convictions. At other times, the evidence presented trigger an adjustment in our worldview and a modification of our beliefs. These changes, in turn, have an impact on our conduct. Other times, the will prefers not to decide.

Sitting respectfully in the background, the Holy Spirit is always ready to speak a word of caution, correction, or affirmation. Other voices, perhaps those of uninvited and hostile observers, are also heard in the courtroom, raising objections, presenting contrary evidence, and insinuating doubts. The court of our will continues to deliberate until the very last day of our conscious life.

This permanent interaction between faith, reason, and choice in the life of the believer may be outlined as follows:



As thoughtful Christians, we are called to love God with both our mind and our will, integrating in our life the demands of faith and intellect. For the educated believer there is "no incompatibility between vital faith and deep, disciplined, wide-ranging learning, between piety and hard thinking, between the life of faith and the life of the mind." [18] In order to strengthen these three facets of our God-given mental abilities—faith, intellect, and will—we must deepen daily our friendship with Jesus, our study of the Scriptures, and our commitment to truth as revealed by God. [19] He trusts that, in view of the evidence available to us, we will be intelligent decision-makers.

How, then, do we love God with all our mind? By being

- **Thankful** to Him for our mental abilities, opportunities, and blessings
- **Humble** and teachable on how to use our reason, imagination, and influence
- **Responsible** in applying our discoveries, in treating others, and in relating to the natural world that God has entrusted to us
- **Available** to communicate the Good News, help others, and honor Him in everything we think, say, and do.

Postlude with two parables

Is there a gardener?

Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing growing side by side there were many flowers and also many weeds. One of the explorers exclaimed, "There must be a gardener tending this plot!" So they pitched their tents and set a watch.

But though they waited several days no gardener was seen.

"Perhaps he is an invisible gardener!" they thought. So they set up a barbed-wire fence and connected it to electricity. They even patrolled the garden with bloodhounds, for they remembered that H. G. Wells's "Invisible Man" could be both smelled and touched though he could not be seen. But no sounds ever suggested that someone had received an electric shock. No movements of the wire ever betrayed an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never alerted them to the presence of any other in the garden than themselves. Yet, still the believer between them was convinced that there was indeed a gardener.

"There must be a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden that he loves."

At last the skeptical explorer despaired, "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?"[20]

The invisible gardener

Once upon a time, two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. A man was there, pulling weeds, applying fertilizer, and trimming branches. The man turned to the explorers and introduced himself as the royal gardener. One explorer shook his hand and exchanged pleasantries. The other ignored the gardener and turned away.

"There can be no gardener in this part of the jungle," he said. "This must be some trick. Someone is trying to discredit our secret findings."

They pitched camp. And every day the gardener arrived to tend the garden. Soon it was bursting with perfectly arranged blooms. But the skeptical explorer insisted, "He's only doing it because we are here—to fool us into thinking that this is a royal garden."

One day the gardener took them to the royal palace and introduced the explorers to a score of officials who verified the gardener's status. Then the skeptic tried a last resort, "Our senses are deceiving us. There is no gardener, no blooms, no palace, and no officials. It's all a hoax!"

Finally the believing explorer despaired, "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does this mirage differ from a real gardener?"[21]

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Notes and references

*Unless otherwise noted, all Bible passages in this essay are quoted from the New International Version.

1. Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, chapter 353 (1566). Luther had earlier distinguished between the *ministerial* and the *magisterial* uses of reason. In its ministerial role, reason submits and serves the gospel, helping Christians to better understand and explain their faith. In its magisterial role, reason stands over and above the gospel and pretends to judge it on the basis of argument and evidence.

2. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1952), p. 17.

3. *Ibid.*

4. In the same book *Education*, Ellen G. White defines this virtue crisply: "Faith is trusting God, believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good" (p. 253).

5. "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder" (James 2:19).

6. "This is what the Lord says:... 'Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:25). "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

7. See Hugo A. Meynell, "Faith and Reason" in *The Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, edited by Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 214-219.

8. Stephen Jay Gould who, until his recent death, taught the history of science at Harvard University, stated that "the supposed conflict between science and religion... exists only in people's minds and social postures, not in the logic or proper utility of these entirely different, and equally vital subjects." In his view, "science tries to document the factual character of the natural world, and to develop theories that coordinate and explain these facts. Religion, on the other hand, operates in the equally important, but utterly different, realm of human purposes, meanings, and values" (*Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* [Westminster, Maryland: Ballentine, 1999], pp. 3, 4).

9. Centuries ago, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) proposed a rational foundation for the Christian faith and its teachings in a monumental philosophical and theological treatise, the *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas claimed, for example, that the existence of God and the immortality of the soul could be shown on the basis of general rational principles alone, while such doctrines as the Trinity and the Incarnation had to be accepted on divine revelation and authority. With his reliance on the authority of early Christian authors and on Aristotle and his commentators, Aquinas represents the culmination of medieval scholasticism. Christians in the Protestant tradition object to Aquinas's excessive trust in philosophical argumentation and human rationality, and propose instead the primacy of the Scriptures (*Sola Scriptura*) as the single source of Christian belief and practice.

10. The Apostle Paul argues thus: "Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the

law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them” (Romans 2:14, 15).

11. See Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), pp. 29-44. See also Richard Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside, California: La Sierra University Press, 1991).

12. Stephen Dunn, *New & Selected Poems, 1974-1994* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), pp. 183, 184.

13. "God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith" (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* [Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, n.d.], p. 105).

14. Adapted from Jay Kesler, "A Survival Kit," *College and University Dialogue* 6:2 (1994), pp. 24, 25.

15. Thomas Kuhn, in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (University of Chicago Press, 1970) showed how scientists work within a mutually accepted conceptual paradigm that changes with time. Ian Barbour stated: "Science does not lead to certainty. Its conclusions are always incomplete, tentative and subject to revision" (*Religion in an Age of Science* [1990], vol. 1, p. 35). Christian apologist C. S. Lewis caution should be heeded: "Science is in continual change, and we must try to keep abreast of it. For the same reason, we must be very cautious of snatching at any scientific theory which, for the moment, seems to be in our favour. We may mention such things, but we must mention them lightly and without claiming that they are more than interesting. Sentences beginning 'Science has now proved' should be avoided. If we try and base our apologetic on some recent development in science, we shall usually find that just as we have put the finishing touches to our argument, science has changed its mind and quietly withdrawn the theory we have been using as our foundation stone" ("Christian Apologetics," 1945).

16. I am indebted to Michael Pearson for the basic structure of this illustration, which I have elaborated here. See his essay, "Faith, Reason, and Vulnerability," *College and University Dialogue* 1:1 (1989), pp. 11-13, 27.

17. A worldview is a global outlook on life and the world that each mature individual possesses. Worldviews answer four basic questions: Who am I? Where am I? What is wrong? What is the solution? See Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1984).

18. Arthur F. Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), p. 5.

19. Too many Christians ignore the important role of reason in developing a mature faith. "Our churches are filled with Christians who are idling in intellectual neutral. As Christians, their minds are going to waste. One result of this is an immature, superficial faith. People who simply ride the roller coaster of emotional experience are cheating themselves out of a deeper and richer Christian faith by neglecting the intellectual side of that faith. They know little of the riches of deep understanding of Christian truth, of the confidence inspired by the discovery that one's life is logical and fits the facts of experience, of the stability brought to one's life by the conviction that one's faith is objectively true" (William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, revised edition [Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994], p. xiv.

20. Anthony Flew and John Wisdom, "Theology and Falsification," in John Hick, ed., *The Existence of God* (New York: Collier Books, 1964), p. 225.

21. John Frame, "God and Biblical Language: Transcendence and Immanence," in John W. Montgomery, ed., *God's Inerrant Word* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship), p. 171.
