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### The Power of Faith

Daniel Walther

*Andrews University*

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**W**HAT do you believe? In what? In whom? In an effort to arrive at an answer, let me ask first, What is faith? Faith is not mere opinion. It "is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God." —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 62.

Furthermore, faith is not simply intellectual assent to the truths of the gospel. Nor is it merely subscribing to a creed or confession. A person does not need keen intellectual training to have powerful faith, yet faith should be rooted in sound thinking. It must be morally honest.

Faith is not an emotional, mystical experience. To be sure, it contains an element of mystery, for we "see through a glass, darkly." But it is not darkness that conditions my faith; it is how I use faith when it is dark. Faith, to me, is not gullibility. It does not in any way demand the abdication of intelligence. There are times, however, when faith reaches beyond human reason in a domain where surrender to an "it is written" is the only way. I accept as authority what the prophets received by inspiration, and as long as it is the Word of God, I accept it, even if my intellect cannot grasp it.

After mentioning what faith is not, I ask, What is faith? To me, faith is primarily a subjective experience; but it also has an objective element. It is subjective because it is personal. "I have to do my own believing," Luther said, "as I must someday do my own dying." No man can believe, love, or think in my stead. My faith is personal and not negotiable, just as character is not transferable. "No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit's working."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 412.

Look at the Bible characters. They worked out their own salvation. They prayed and studied and sought their way through until they met God. They closed the door to the outside world and entered into the closet where they found God, who sees in secret. There, in silence, they listened to His voice, and obtained a faith capable of moving mountains.

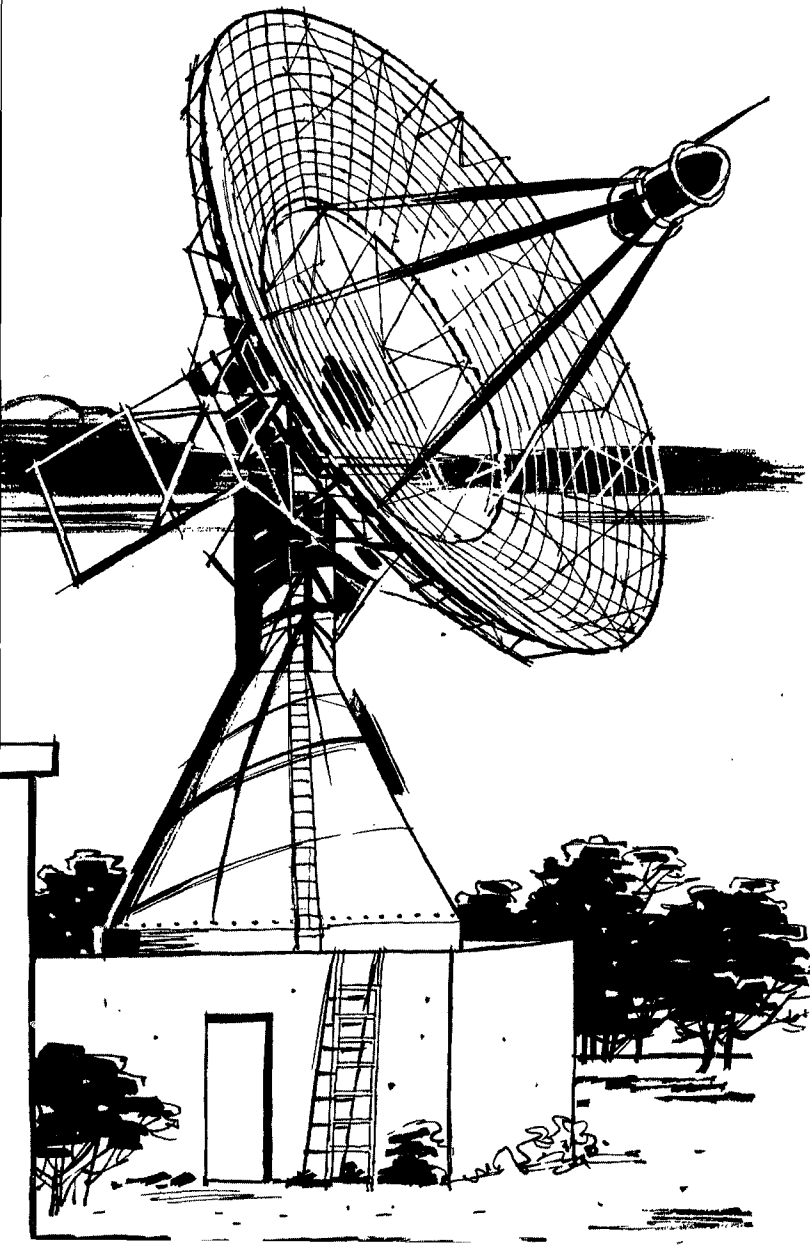
On the other hand, faith is objective because it is an encounter with God. This encounter makes God the object of my faith. What matters then is not how I relate myself to faith but how I relate myself to the One in whom I believe. God comes to meet me. I am not alone. I know by experience that He is the life as well as the way.

I met God in His Word. The important thing, then, is not primarily *what* I believe but in *whom*; not in what formulas I put my trust but in what Person. I can believe in things and words, but the supreme achievement of my

# THE POWER OF FAITH

Must "scientific proofs" support one's beliefs  
before one can depend on them?

By DANIEL WALTHER





In an age of astronauts and radar, does faith have as much relevance as in primitive times?

faith is fellowship with Christ; as the apostle Paul said, "I know *whom* I have believed" [not *what*] (2 Tim. 1:12).

Furthermore, faith is absolute trust based on the Word of an all-powerful God who is ever beyond all human attainments—a God who in essence is love and to whom I can unashamedly say, "Lord, I know not what to ask; Thou only knowest what I need."

As absolute trust gives quality to friendship, so unmitigated trust in God conveys peace to the soul. In my youth I remember an incident that we heard in school about Alexander the Great. He had a trusted friend, a physician. When Alexander was ill the physician prescribed a medicine which the king was to drink. Some jealous people informed Alexander that the physician, whom he considered a friend, was in reality an evil person and that the medicine was poison. Alexander ignored their talk and promptly drank the medicine. Absolute trust prompted his action.

As you sit in church you see a child in the pew ahead of you. Her father is not there. He had to slip out on an errand, and she looks bewildered and heartbroken. Then her father returns, and at once everything changes. With her head against her daddy's shoulder, she looks into his eyes. No need to speak. She is happy. All is well with the world. She is secure. The image, of course, is as old as mankind, but no less true today than when our divine Lord pointed to a little child to indicate the best way to the kingdom.

### The Great Enemy, Doubt

Faith's greatest enemy, obviously, is doubt, which assails us both in times of crisis and in prosperity. Doubt filled the hearts and minds of Christ's disciples after His crucifixion. Think of the two who walked to Emmaus: "We had hoped . . ." And then the Lord Himself, unrecognized by them, revived their faith. His simple words and the warmth of His fellowship reassured them.

Think, too, of the bitter disappointment of those who had staked everything on the belief that the Lord would return on October 22, 1844. Somehow I am reminded of the disciples who walked to Emmaus when I read the moving and familiar account of Hiram Edson when he said after the Disappointment:

"Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn. I mused in my own heart, saying, My advent experience has been the richest and brightest of all my Christian experience. If this had proved a failure, what was the rest of my Christian experience worth? Has the Bible proved a failure? Is there no God, no heaven, no golden home city, no paradise? Is all this but a cunningly devised fable? Is there no reality to our fondest hope and expectation of these things? And thus we had something to grieve and weep over, if all our fond hopes were lost. And as I said, we wept till the day dawn."—F. D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, pp. 247, 248.

As in the case of those who walked to Emmaus, the Lord had an answer that came without delay—a faith-giving and heart-warming assurance that not only healed the wounded hearts but gave them an enlarged vision and a deep, renewed trust in the Advent faith.

But the enemy is never idle. He is always on the trail of those who would serve God. Artfully he uses every mechanism of distrust. Cunningly he injects doubts in what we most cherish—God's Word. As he did to Adam, so he suggests to us: Did God really say . . . ? (Gen. 3:1). Is His Word really true and dependable? If I harbor a strong faith, and experience the power of the gospel I will know that it is not a fleeting opinion. I must counter every insidious suggestion by the victorious "It is written." I must learn to trust in the Redeemer, to have the certainty that my salvation does not depend on formulas, but on a trusting faith in my God.

I often ask myself the question, "Must I understand in order to believe?" Or is it perhaps the other way round? This question has caused many a crisis. In the early church some taught that it was possible to dissociate knowledge (*gnōsis*) from faith (*pistis*). Faith conveys knowledge; it *is* knowledge. To believe means to know. Or in Anselm's words, "I believe that I may understand."

When we read that "the Word was made flesh," that does not mean simply the Word per se but also understanding. Thus I learn that God makes Himself known also through His Son, Jesus Christ. But that type of knowledge in Jesus Christ is foreign to the world and considered absurd by it, just as the wisdom of the world is foreign to the kingdom of God.

### Age-old Conflict

How does Christ fit into our atomic-power age—when an astronaut can see the sun rise every 90 minutes or so; when science since 1950 has made more progress than from the beginning of the world until 1950? The age-old conflict between science and faith was particularly bitter in the nineteenth century, when science seemed to triumph. Man put his faith in science. Indeed, the human mind, through God's mercy, has been able to uncover many laws of nature, and very little seems impossible to the scientist. But we also know that true science and true faith are not at odds—they are allies.

The progress of the physical sciences is indeed impressive, and the achievements go far beyond all expectations, but the message of God is as urgent and relevant as ever. No matter how erudite and skillful man is, his heart is what it always was—desperately evil, restless, starving, and in need of a simple faith. The Christian lives in an age of

rapidly changing concepts, but though true Christianity does not change, it has continual appeal. There is an imperishable, youthful vitality about God's message. And in spite of all his brilliant achievements, the immense hunger in the heart of man has increased.

Modern man may say, "Show me, and I will believe. I must see how it works." Louis Pasteur "saw" before he demonstrated. Early astronomers with primitive instruments "saw" what later on was proved. And our divine Lord asked, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29, R.S.V.). Proof belongs to human reasoning,

but faith is a gift of God—the kind of faith that God puts in our heart.

"Faith is different from proof; the one is human, the other is a gift of God. . . . It is this faith that God Himself puts into the heart, of which the proof is often the instrument . . . , but this faith is in the heart, and makes us not say *scio* ["I know"] but *credo* ["I believe"]."—PASCAL.

"Seeing is believing" is good, but "believing is seeing" is better. Paul appreciated in Timothy an "unfeigned" faith. By this I understand a faith not concealed by make-up, varnish, or artificial techniques. Faith is genuine, workable, reassuring, necessary. It is not a fancy current of opinion philosophically doctored up.

To me, faith, while personal and intimate, leads to a rewarding fellowship, because it keeps me from forsaking the assembly, and it is an integral part of divine love. One of the last statements of Paul was, "I have kept the faith," a faith that is workable. Faith has been proved in a practical way. In times of trouble it may be the only thing we possess. I have found that through faith my religion becomes powerful. As Jonathan Edwards once said, "He that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only without affection never is engaged in the business of religion. . . . True religion is a powerful thing . . . a ferment of vigorous engagedness of the heart."



## The Art of Living.....when



## you're young

by Miriam Hood

### It's Yours to Spend

WHEN I read recently in an authoritative periodical that young people in the United States spend \$16 billion a year, I was startled. That much money hasn't any reality for me (even a million dollars is pretty incomprehensible), but since it is being spent, certainly we should discuss wise spending. Money is for spending—that's one aspect of its use. Other aspects are saving and giving.

I think it's logical to assume that "things" must be purchased. After all, a human being must have food, shelter, clothing, education, and transportation, just to mention a few of the more prominent areas for spending. Probably we can omit the food and shelter segment in our discussion, going on the assumption that those are provided by parents, or are a part of the "package deal" in dormitory life. That brings us to clothing, which accounts for the major share of the \$16 billion, according to the economist whose statistics I'm using.

Everyone likes to be well dressed, within his social framework, and clothes-buying ought to be a pleasure. But let's hope it isn't a mania, an acute disease, with young Christians. It seems to me that the aim of merchandising is to create in consumers an overwhelming desire for many absolutely unneeded items, and to make everything hanging in your closet completely passé at least once a year. If you yield to the blandishments of advertising you'll find yourself buying, buying—hopelessly and frenetically—because you feel just as unsatisfied as ever once you've gotten your purchase home. You need one *more* skirt, blouse,

"separate," madras jacket, turtleneck sweater—or whatever.

Logically, then, in wise spending, the young person (or any other thinking person) will have a structure plan for his wardrobe. At the beginning of every season it's a good idea to go through your closet and dresser drawers, making a list of what you have that's usable. From there, you can make another list of what's needed to keep you suitably dressed. When you go shopping, then, you'll go for a definite purpose and for a definite aim, from which you'd better not let yourself be deflected, or you'll be in trouble. A bargain's not a bargain just because it's "marked down." It's a bargain only if you *need* it, if it's right for you, and if it fits into your master plan.

A real budget-saver is the philosophy of staying away from stores unless you plan to make a definite purchase. It's absolutely lethal, I think, to stroll through stores as a recreation. Few of us have the kind of resistance we need as a safeguard against "impulse buying." (I'm not one of that disciplined few, sad to relate!) Stores count on this facet of human nature, you know. I've no wish to deprive our friends in merchandising of their living, but the precarious balance of my budget has to come first!

An intelligent, informed young person needs to study the concept known as "quality" because there are so many tricky aspects to it. For instance, is "brand-name" merchandise always "quality" merchandise? Is the cheapest item the most expensive in the over-all picture, due to poor durability? Or is the cheaper item sometimes

just as satisfactory, due to factors such as limited wearing? (A "one-occasion" dress would fall into this category, I think.)

Other important considerations for a young Christian's clothes philosophy might be the thought that conservative clothes, while they don't attract great attention, don't go out of style so quickly. A good basic style can be dressed up or down with accessories and kept in active service until you've really gotten your money's worth. Boys will find that trousers which neither fit like flypaper nor bag like balloons can be worn until their condition signifies that they'll have to be retired. Again, you'll have gotten your money's worth.

Even with a carefully-thought-out clothes philosophy, you'll make occasional mistakes. Everyone does. But if it was your fault, if you had some little uneasy qualms when you just couldn't resist the shiny blouse with the frills (and the too-narrow seams, which popped out the first time you wore it), it's rather immature to rail at fate in general and the store in particular. No one *forced* you to buy it!

We haven't yet discussed saving and giving. We'll continue with those aspects next week. In the meantime, I'd advise that you keep a weather eye on your budget, your closet, and your sales resistance.