

Christianity is True: The Right Relationship Between Faith and Reason

Understanding the connection between faith and reason is foundational to apologetics. In our engagement with unbelievers, we confront a range of options in how 'faith' and 'reason' relate to each other. There are a number of fallacies that need to be exposed (many of which are also held by believers). In this session, we explore five models, expose 'untruths' and lay down the proper connection between the two reflecting the reality that Christianity is a REASONABLE FAITH.

Andrew Fellows is leader of the European Leadership Forum Foundational Apologetics Seminar. He is the Director of L'Abri Fellowship in the United Kingdom. L'Abri is a community dedicated to both demonstrating and explaining the truthfulness of Christianity. It does so by opening its doors to hundreds of seekers who experience the hospitality of this community. Andrew has travelled extensively throughout Europe lecturing to students, artists and politicians on a wide array of subjects.

FIVE MODELS

I. 1st Model - Reason Against Faith

A. This model rests on assumption that faith (religion) has no place in the pursuit of truth.

a. John Locke - 'belief is a persuasion that falls short of knowledge.'

b. Most people we engage today hold to some version of this model.

B. The fallacy- *The myth of pure objectivity.*

a. You can never divorce reason from the knower (the subject).

b. All human knowing involves both the human subject and the thing that is object of subjects enquiry.

c. Acquisition of knowledge by means of reason involves an act of faith. *We take on trust what we cannot prove for ourselves.*

C. Thesis was developed by the 20th century scientist and philosopher, Michael Polanyi.

A. 2nd Model - Faith Against Reason

B. This reflects itself in different ways:

- a. *Philosophies of religious experience* - Reason weakens religious experience!
- b. *Religious epistemologies* - Reason stands in the way of arriving at the knowledge of GOD (Kierkegaard/Barth/post liberals).
- c. There is a discontinuity between reason and God that only 'faith' can bridge.

C. The fallacy

- a. We never move beyond rationality (our thinking facilities are always operational).
- b. We never cease to be thinking beings. This means the pure 'leap of faith' is not humanly possible (we cannot escape reason).
- c. When we look at the great mysteries of the Christian faith (Trinity), we do not enter a place that goes beyond reason.

II. 3rd Model - Faith Over Reason

A. Both faith and reason have a function, but dualized.

- a. Faith is consigned to upper story of reality (religious matters)
- b. Reason deals with everything in the lower story (the material world)

B. The fallacy

- a. No real separation between the religious and the non-religious (a place for faith above and a place for reason below)
- b. All of life is spiritual (except for sin). You cannot divide reality into religious and non-religious spaces
- c. Whatever belongs to reality calls for a response of reason and a response of faith

III. 4th Model - Reason Leading To Faith

A. Smooth connection between faith and reason.

- a. This communicates that we have a REASONABLE FAITH.
- b. This is possible because Christianity really is true. That is why we can give reasons for it (this is what apologetics is about).

B. While affirming the REASON LEADING TO FAITH model, we also need to *qualify* it:

- a. *When we connect with another human person we never deal with a disengaged reason.*
- b. *Reason leads to faith only via other human functions.*

C. Although we start with a reasonable argument, we must appreciate that this creates *an opening to* other human functions (will, imagination, and finally 'the heart)

- a. *Reason alone* cannot bring living faith.

IV.5th Model - Faith Leading To Understanding (a reason that is based on faith)

- A. Along with MODEL 4., we need this model in order to reflect the proper relationship between faith and reason.
 - a. *Fides quarens intellectum* - (faith seeking understanding)
 - b. *Credo ut intellectum* - (I believe in order that I might know/understand)
- B. How does this work?
 - a. *All knowledge involves a faith commitment.*
 - b. *Faith is constantly functioning in every person because every person is religious.*
 - c. Martin Luther - *'whatever our heart clings and entrusts itself to as unconditionally trustworthy is really our God'*
 - d. AN EXAMPLE; If we think reason is ultimately trustworthy (as most moderns do), we will embrace this with a religious commitment born of FAITH (which is why Richard Dawkins and Derran Brown are religious fanatics).
 - e. Religious 'faith' has a deeply qualifying impact on what everyone believes - why you cannot separate faith and reason.

