

FAITH AND RATIONALISM

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Faith and Rationalism by George P. Fisher

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GEORGE P. FISHER

**FAITH AND
RATIONALISM**

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WITH

SHORT SUPPLEMENTARY ESSAYS ON
RELATED TOPICS



BY
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If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of
God, or whether I speak of myself. JOHN VII. 17.

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Ἐνδεχόμενός ἐστι ἀποφραγεῖν ἐν ἀόχρῳ τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ. ἡμῖς γὰρ αἰτῶμεν, καὶ οὐ δύναται γινώσκειν, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακαλύπτεται.—1 Cor. ii. 14.

"Howbeit, if we will truly consider it, it is more worthy to believe than to know as we now know. For in knowledge man's mind suffers from sense which is the reflection of things material—but in faith the spirit suffers from spirit which is a worthier agent. Otherwise it is in the state of men glorified, for then faith shall cease, and we shall know even as we are known." *****

"The use of human reason in matters of religion is of two sorts; the former in the explanation of the mystery, the latter in the inferences derived from it. With regard to the explanation of the mysteries, we see that God vouchsafes to descend to the weakness of our apprehension, by so expressing His mysteries that they may be most sensible to us; and by grafting His revelations upon the notions and conceptions of our reason; and by applying His inspirations to open our understandings, as the form of the key to the ward of the lock. But here we ought by no means to be wanting to ourselves; for as God uses the help of our reason to illuminate us, so should we likewise turn it every way, that he may be more capable of receiving and understanding His mysteries; provided only that the mind be enlarged, according to its capacity, to the grandeur of the mysteries, and not the mysteries contracted to the narrowness of the mind." *****

"But as the use of the human reason in things divine is of two kinds, so likewise in the use are two kinds of excess; the one when it inquires too curiously into the manner of the mystery; the other when the same authority is attached to inferences as to principles. ***** Wherefore it appears to me that it would be of especial use and benefit if a temperate and careful treatise were instituted, which, as a kind of divine logic, should lay down proper precepts touching the use of human reason in theology. For it would act as an opiate, not only to lull to sleep the vanity of curious speculations, wherewith sometimes the schools labor, but also in some degree to assuage the fury of controversies, wherewith the Church is troubled. Such a treatise I reckon among the things deficient; and call it *Sophros*, or *The Legitimate Use of Human Reason in Divine Subjects*."—BACON, *De Augmentis*, b. ix.

Παλαιός. 1-23-26 Ν. Π. Π.

15537

"Je sais qu' il a voulu qu' elles"—les vérités divines—"entrent du cœur dans l' esprit, et non pas de l' esprit dans le cœur, pour humilier cette superbe puissance du raisonnement qui prétend devoir être juge des choses que la volonté choisit; et pour guérir cette volonté infirme, qui s' est corrompue par ses sales attachements. Et de là vient qu' au lieu qu' en parlant des choses humaines on dit qu' il faut les connaître avant que de les aimer, ce qui a passé en proverbe [ignotū nulla cupido]: les saints au contraire disent en parlant des choses divines qu' il faut les aimer pour les connaître et qu' on n' entre dans la vérité que par la charité, dont ils ont fait une de leurs plus utiles sentences."—PASCAL, *Opuscules* (de l' Art de Persuader).

PREFACE.

Having been invited to deliver an address at the Princeton Theological School, I found the theme which I had chosen so attractive, that I wrote much more than it was possible to read in the time proper for such a discourse. I wrote, also, several supplementary essays,—branches, as it were, of the main stem. It turns out, however, that the branches in the aggregate take up more room than the stem out of which they grew. Such is the origin of the present book. I hardly need add that the hospitality of my brethren at Princeton does not render them in the least answerable for its contents.

G. P. F.

NEW HAVEN, April 14, 1879.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
St. Paul on the Limits of our Knowledge in Religion	12
Characteristics of Faith	13
Connection of Faith with Feeling	15
Connection of Faith with the Will	16
Criticism of Locke's Definition of Faith	16
Extreme Supernaturalism of the early Socinians	19
The Characteristic Temper of Rationalism	20
Rationalism intolerant of Mysteries	22
What is Meant by a Mysterious Truth	23
Mystery not unfavorable to Piety	26
Rationalism in conjunction with Orthodox Tenets	27
Rationalism overlooks the Influence of Sin upon the Intellect	28
Rationalism ignores the Premises of Faith	29
Different Degrees of Vividness in the Perception of Sin	30
Catholic Nature of the Christian Sense of Guilt and of Sin	32
Tendency of Rationalism to take no account of implicit Reasoning	33
Tendency of Rationalism to exaggerate the office of Logic in Religion	34
Tendency of Rationalism to resolve Christianity into a Doctrine	35
Rationalism inclined to seek for Knowledge for its own Sake	37
The True Motive in the Search for Religious Truth	37
Safeguards against Fancy and Enthusiasm	40
The Debatable Ground about a great Religious Truth	42
Limits of Responsibility in meeting Objections to Christian Truth	43
The Sources of our Belief in God	45
Relation of the Will to Faith in God and in Conscience	49