FAITH AND THE LIFE OF REASON

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D. REIDEL PUBLISHING COMPANY/DORDRECHT-HOLLAND

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 72-83376

ISBN-13: 978-94-010-2912-4

e-ISBN-13: 978-94-010-2910-0

DOI: 10.1007/978-94-010-2910-0

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1972

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For Sylvia, Nick and Ann

For Ruby, Robin and Erik

*and for all who pursue the riddles of religion
in a spirit of open-ness, brotherhood,
affection and desire for truth*

PREFACE

This book brings together ideas and materials which we have discussed together over the years as friends and colleagues. We draw on four papers published by us both as co-authors and on several more papers published by King-Farlow alone. We wish to thank the editors and publishers of the following journals for permission to make use of matter or points which have appeared in their pages in the years indicated: *The Philosophical Quarterly* (1957, 1962, 1971); *The Thomist* (1958, 1971, 1972); *The International Philosophical Quarterly* (1962); *Theoria* (1963); *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* (1963); *Sophia* (1965, 1967, 1969, 1971); *Philosophical Studies of Eire* (1968, 1970, 1971); *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1968); *Analysis* (1970); *Religious Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1971; we acknowledge a debt to H. D. Lewis, Editor, on page 20).

This book is not, however, a collection of reprinted articles. It is a continuous work which deals with a vital cluster of problems in the philosophy of religion. In this work we attempt to utilize both our earlier thoughts, often considerably revised, and our very recent ones in order to argue for the good sense and rationality of making certain strong forms of commitment to some basic elements of primary wisdom in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

While pursuing the investigations which have led to the writing of this book we have found ourselves becoming indebted to many individuals and institutions. We are indebted to many Catholics, Protestants and fellow-Anglicans for their tolerant stimulation, as well as to a number of strong religious sceptics for their even more tolerant willingness to argue with us as friends. We are deeply indebted to Sylvia Kostyk King-Farlow and Robina Ogilvy Christensen for their splendid personal, intellectual and religious encouragement. King-Farlow is much obliged to the benefactors of Christ Church, Oxford and of Duke and Stanford Universities who made possible his initial studies in philosophy – and to such inspiring teachers as Michael Foster, J. O. Urmson, Charles Baylis, Romane Clarke, N. L. Wilson, John Goheen and Patrick Suppes. He is no less

thankful for post-doctoral research awards from the A. W. Mellon Foundation and the University of Pittsburgh (1960-61); from the Faculty Summer Research Awards Committee of the University of California; and from the Leverhulme Foundation and the University of Liverpool (1966-68). Christensen is indebted to Derwin Owen and Eugene Fairweather of Trinity College, the University of Toronto for their encouragement and insights, and to Donald Kuspit of the University of Windsor. Having served under him together, we are both indebted to the astute administration and fine Cartesian scholarship of Professor P. A. Schouls, Head in Philosophy at the University of Alberta, and also to another friend in philosophy Señor Juan Espinaco-Virseda.

As philosophers, we are in the business of providing arguments and criticism. It is part of the British and the historically associated Canadian Parliamentary tradition wherein arguments and criticisms are desired to be made vigorous and hard-hitting for the sake of the lively exercise and protection of freedom, that one may speak out quite roughly in debate against one's fellows without being taken not to esteem them and without being taken to believe that one has a monopoly of wisdom on one's own side. To debate politically or philosophically in that parliamentary spirit, provided one first makes clear what one is about, seems to us compatible with principles of Christian charity and democratic tolerance. We ask then that we be read as criticizing others in that parliamentary spirit, occasionally with a touch of tongue in cheek.

Faith and the Life of Reason begins with an account of 'hypothetical' theism and of the crucial role of religious beliefs as offering Justifying Explanations of human history. We believe that this account should serve to banish the spectre of incompatibility between the best aims of Science and Religion, of Empiricism and Faith. A family of criteria for Rationality is similarly considered to show just how insubstantial that spectre really is. Chapter II distinguishes two basic kinds of descriptions accorded to God, kinds whose intellectual distinction and actual association seem crucial for understanding God's role as the Justifying Explanation of history in a coherent Judaeo-Christian conceptual scheme. We also attempt to vindicate the wisdom of Aquinas against Anselm on the question of whether we can manipulate these descriptions to give an *a priori* proof of the existence of God. In Chapter III we are centrally concerned to expound a coherent concept of miracles that can serve our

later concerns with the objectivity of value judgments, the consequent possibility of tolerant but intellectually sound reasoning for the existence of God, and the relations between probability, utility, rationality, commitment and religious faith. Chapters IV and V are concerned with the nature of such reasonable inference of God's existence and with the related residual wisdom of both Aquinas and Anselm in believing that "God exists" is in some sense a *necessary truth*. Current shibboleths about rigid dichotomies between facts and values, between asserting existence and describing existents, etc., are weighed and found wanting: the shibboleths show the naïveté of philosophers, but show nothing inconsistent or incoherent about the Judaeo-Christian scheme. In Chapters VI and VII we examine the notions of *objective probability* and *maximizing expected utility* so as to argue that Aquinas' intellectualist tradition may properly be linked with William James' reasonable concern for man's passional nature in "The Will to Believe". Fresh light, we hope, is thereby shed on our contention that in certain ordinary settings clear, objectively reasonable arguments for God's existence and for commitment to a religious form of life can be given. In Chapter VIII we turn from the previous areas of relevance which the Judaeo-Christian tradition can have for reasonable people today, to show the great relevance of Thomist contributions to that tradition for modern concerns about war, punishment and human survival.

In the context of modern intellectuals' present avowals of admiration for fideism, relativism and scepticism it is not entirely paradoxical to say: We reach the *novel* conclusion that *traditional* intellectualist approaches to the reconciliation of Faith with the Life of Reason were basically very wise. The novel truth is that many much mocked forms of old-fashioned thought about religion and natural theology are far sounder than most of their modernist successors.

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