CHAPTER SUMMARY AND EVALUATION OF REASON FOR THE HOPE WITHIN

SUBMITTED TO DR. JAMES GRIER
FOR INTRODUCTION TO APOLOGETICS

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A Summary and Evaluation of Chapter Six of *Reason for the Hope Within*

While reading *Reason for the Hope Within*, chapter six stood out to me because it dealt with the topic of faith and reason. The book’s aim was to introduce a number of articles dealing with apologetics and Christian philosophy, and while I am sure that it is all well written, it lacks a number of younger audiences in contribution to Christian philosophy. Throughout this book there are often times that the chapter or topic leaves the reader wanting more information/further reading on it. Unfortunately, *Reason for the Hope Within* seems to be more of an overview of the subjects it deals with, and does not direct the reader to other titles that may contain greater detail for those wanting to advance in reading about Christian philosophy and apologetics.

Chapter six was written by Caleb Miller and is a section that focuses on *Faith and Reason*. Here Miller goes over the view of Christian Faith and Human Reason and gives attention to the issue of whether they are opposing to one another or if they work together. Miller gives Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Wesley’s view on how faith and reason work together. His purpose in doing this is so that the Christian can see the importance of defending the Christian faith and also understand that reason does have something to do with Christianity. Oftentimes, fundamentalists tend to forget about apologetics and when needed to defend the faith simply say, “The Bible is true.” However, this is not as it should be. Christians who do not defend Christianity both Scripturally and logically are nothing but stubborn.

Miller then addresses whether or not faith is opposed to reason. Here he approaches
the problem of when reason makes the individual trust their own faculties. From there he
deals with the objection that faith does not measure up to the standards of reason, and
also deals with what Søren Kierkegaard says about this topic in his famous book,
*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Miller then follows Alvin Plantiga in claiming that
belief in God can be rational even though it is not the conclusion of one’s reasoning.
This idea insists that the Christian argument gives good reason to think that belief in God
can be grounded in types of experiences. Examples of this are: God’s Sovereignty played
out in an individual’s life, God’s passing of judgment, or God’s providence where he
leads them in life. Miller suggests that there are advantages to an individual basing their
faith upon their experiences instead of reasoning. However, in my opinion, this seems to
be very scary, especially in a time and culture where people tend to change their
decisions based on any circumstance and not on truth.

Lastly, expanding on the topic of the objection of faith and reason, Miller deals
with the apologetics of evidentialism. Here he gives a brief explanation of what an
evidentialist is and how they try to prove theism by ways of rational arguments based
upon evidence that they believe to be true. He explains that oftentimes the evidentialist’s
proof unfortunately is merely an argument and needs to be examined deeper. Miller
briefly goes over the Scriptural passages that evidentialist’s use for their argument:
Romans 1:18-20. However, he tends to disagree with the evidentialist view concerning
this passage, saying, “This passage does not seem to say that God’s existence and nature
would, but for sin, be obvious to everyone.”¹ Miller then presents some of the problems
with evidentialism - one being that every argument demands that it follows the same

¹ Ed. by Michael J Murray, *Reason for the Hope Within* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1999),
p.148.
premises that both sides agree upon. For example: if there is an argument about Creation, both parties must agree upon the reasoning of a Creator. In view of Romans 1:18-20 he says, “They may hold such beliefs but nothing in this passage assures us they do.”

Continuing on into section two, Miller expresses the importance of an individual’s understanding of faith and reason. Here he gives three clear meanings on the subject of faith. These are:

(1.) **Christian Faith** is a sect of beliefs that Christians typically hold to and that are central to Christianity.

(2.) **Faith** has a proper human response to God - this response ends up being in two parts: first, one believing that there is an important sect of claims that are true doctrine. And secondly an element of true thought that has to deal with a personal relationship with the Triune God.

(3.) **Faith** is a source of belief; this view sees faith as something that can be revealed either by Scriptures or the Holy Spirit by supernatural means.

Next he gives means of knowing reason:

(1.) **Reason** as our proper use of our cognitive faculties: This is the Christian asking himself if faith is either reasonable or rational in their thought process.

(2.) **Reason** as the proper use as a natural human faculty: This is only seeing the natural use of the human’s cognitive facilities in relationship in the natural world.

(3.) **The faculty of reason** is that which makes beliefs and reasoning logical.

In part three Miller details the topic of Christian epistemology and goes over the

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2 Murray, p. 149.
three major parts of it: creation, sin and redemption. With creation, Miller shows how
God created humanity with a set of purposes so that mankind would give back (glory) to
God. Here Miller alleges that Christians today do not have a good enough reason to
believe that prior to the fall Adam knew truth infallibly. From there he then focuses on
the human life in fallenness. Here he shows how the affects of sin have corrupted man’s
mind in the process of reasoning, which he perceives is what gives humans the tendency
to suffer from the inability to determine truth. Lastly, Miller shows that in epistemology
the view of redemption is that it has helped cleanse man’s heart in order to improve the
process of thinking and reasoning. In this section (which is quite long) he indicates that
man best receives truth when indwelt with the Holy Spirit. My only fear in this all is that
Miller may be allowing human experience to be the determining factor on things, rather
than true propositions.

Lastly, Miller concludes his chapter by dealing with the central issue in his
discussion of Christian theology. He does this by answering two questions:

1. Is Christian faith rational for those who accept it?

2. Is there a basis of persuading others rationally to accept Christian faith?

After explaining both of these issues he addresses the conflict between them, and also
points out that mankind may make mistakes when living this out. He shows the
importance of how a Christian is to identify what God has revealed, but recognizes that it
is hard to do this in the fallen state. Miller’s mindset is clearly seen in the last two
paragraphs when he reveals his thoughts on the process of the Christian seeking truth, as
he ends saying,
“According to Christianity, I argued, we have reason to think that we have been cognately designed by God so that when we honestly seek the truth, our cognitive faculties are reliable and that God has graciously intervened in human life to compensate for the noetic effects of sin.”  

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3 Murray, p. 164