

Gerrish is much too uncritical in accepting the claim that even an explicit faith, which in no way resigns to the church one's responsibility to think and believe for oneself, is "still a conviction that cannot be proved" (39). That "faith," as he says, "does not rest on proof" is indeed true in the sense that all forms of faith, secular as well as saving, as *forms* of faith, are historical as well as existential and therefore cannot possibly be deduced from anything accessible to human experience and reason simply as such. Moreover, no forms of faith as forms *of faith*, and so existential as well as historical, could even conceivably be proved by the only kinds of proof that Gerrish, like most others, generally seems to have in mind (as, e.g., on 122 n. 33, where he speaks of justifying a person's religious beliefs by deriving them from "propositions that are either self-evidently true, or evident to the senses, or direct reports of [one's] states of consciousness." He also refers at one point (44) to "moral awareness," and so he might possibly allow for some kind of a theistic argument based on it.)

But even if one takes seriously these sound reasons for denying that the conviction of faith can be proved, one need not join Gerrish in simply accepting the claim in question. Aside from the fact that there is a kind of religious or existential "proof" of, or argument for, faith, there are also moral as well as metaphysical reasons that can be given for the necessary implications of faith, and so, indirectly, for the truth of faith itself. Of course, no particular religion as such can ever be deduced simply from a true metaphysics and a true ethics, taken either singly or together. Although the truth of a religion's understanding of existence, insofar as it is true, must indeed be implied by a true metaphysics and a true ethics, it itself as a particular way of conceiving and symbolizing its understanding is irreducibly historical. As such, it is simply given—a datum for metaphysics and ethics, rather than a deduction from them. And this means that validating its claim to truth also always involves certain properly historical and hermeneutical procedures. Even so, a religion's understanding of existence is in no way beyond the sphere of metaphysical and moral argument, and good reasons of both kinds can be given for its truth, insofar as it is really true.

1 June 2000