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Rightly wielding "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17)

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Category: ESSAY

Some Measures of Faith

April 17, 2019 | By Arjay B. Araña

So this is it. After a whole year of making preparations and laying down the foundations, I'm finally starting my "real work" for this blog — the first of my collections of essays, *Faith Foundations*. Will I measure up to the promises I've made?

But first I want to thank you, dear readers, for sticking by me through this difficult first year of blogging. There are not many of you yet, but I value the trust you are giving me.

For this first post I will explain my philosophies behind this essay collection in particular, and my biblical and theological studies in general. This is entitled *Some Measures of Faith* because there are some things that we need to take on faith — you as the reader, and me as the writer — as we progress in this series, at least in the beginning.

Faith Foundations is about the doctrines of the Christian faith, and this is a result of my studies in theology: I explain, illustrate, and reflect on these doctrines.

I have two purposes for this essay collection. The first is to guide those of you who are wanting to know more about God and the Christian faith, and that is by teaching you the proper foundations. The second is to strengthen those of you who are already believers in Christ — by helping you understand more the things we believe in.

Why this Collection?

One purpose of this blog is to help you know God more, through the Bible and my own life. And because this is a Christian blog, you know that I'm talking about the God of Christianity. But even with me saying that, this God is still shrouded not only in mysteries but also in false teachings and controversies.

Knowing God is much more than just knowing things *about* him. God, the Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, is inviting us to know him personally in a loving relationship through his Son Jesus Christ. However, before we can begin such a relationship with him, we need first to learn the **true things** about him — at least the fundamentals, the basics.

For those of you who are already believers, knowing solid spiritual truth is necessary for real spiritual growth. For example, if you know very little about the Holy Spirit, then you probably wouldn't know that this third person of the Triune God is the key to living a victorious Christian life.

This essay collection is a survey of (and my personal reflections on) the fundamental

doctrines, and not only the doctrines about God himself, but of Christianity in general. This is part-theology, and part-introspective pondering.

And I'm doing it this way because my personal goal in studying and writing about theology (as taught by my teachers) is **to be transformed** — to become a better follower of Christ — and not just to be informed. If you're a Christian, I'm hoping that you'll share this goal with me. And if you're not, I'm hoping that I'll still be able to touch your heart, and not just your head.

As we begin our study, there are some things that we need to take on faith, as I've said. Below are four of them. Someday I might write about these, but for now we need to accept them as true.

- To know the truths about God, we depend on God himself, the Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes to the truth. This means that only those who have the Spirit in them, that is, genuine believers, can truly comprehend these truths. Still, I write these essays with all of you in my mind; if you're not a believer, then know that there are some things that you just won't understand.
- God is infinite, that is, he is without limitations. We humans, as finite beings, cannot fully comprehend him. Still, God is knowable (to some extents), and he has revealed himself to us; first, in his creation, and then in other means, especially his written Word, the Bible.
- The Bible is the inspired Word of God. The people who were involved in writing it were moved by the Holy Spirit, so that they spoke God's words, and not just their own. The Bible is also inerrant — it is true in all things it affirms. Because God speaks truthfully, his Word, the Scripture, is also truthful.
- Jesus Christ is at the center of the Scripture, and we do our study of both the Old and New Testaments, and of theology, in the light of this.

To Believe Is to See

It's been often said that in the world, especially in science, the philosophy is “to see is to believe.” Evidence begets belief in reality. In matters of faith, however, the opposite is true: “to believe is to see.” That is, belief begets understanding of reality. In other words, you cannot reason out your faith.

At least, that's what the majority of us experiences. I believe that there are those who came to faith in Christ because of a careful investigation and analysis of the evidences. Lee Strobel, author of *The Case for Christ*, comes to mind.

I am not one of these people, because I was already an ardent believer when I started to study more about God and his Word.

Something that you might have noticed about this blog is the underlying belief or assumption that the things I'm saying about God are true. “To help you know God more” is one of this blog's purposes, I said, and not “To convince you that there is a God.”

This essay collection, *Faith Foundations*, which is part of this blog, is no exception to the rule. And that is because I'm following a classic method in my study of theology: **faith seeking understanding**.

Anselm of Canterbury, in the eleventh century, articulated this principle very well: “For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe — that unless I believed, I should not understand.”

This is another measure of faith that we need to accept in our studies together, my friends. And what this means for you is that, if you’re not a believer, you should at least keep an open mind.

And for that open mind, I am being honest in return: I’m telling you my personal bias. I study theology and write this essay collection already believing that God is real, and also that the things the Bible speak of are real. Like the creation, angels and demons, Adam and Eve, the fall, the flood, salvation, judgment, heaven and hell. I study because I want to know more about God and the Christian faith, and to confirm or to correct the doctrines I believe in.

Also, in addition to my bias, I’m telling you my personal attitude: I’m largely disinterested in debates or arguments. Yes, you won’t find me defending this or that position in certain doctrinal issues; however, I do care very much about sound doctrine, and if necessary, I do fight against false teachings.

My primary concern in my biblical and theological studies is to learn as much as I can of the lay of the land — particularly of orthodox Christianity, the tradition I identify with — so that I can properly teach, preach, and of course, blog.

The fact is, I respect the rich heritage of the faith, and I respect the works of great teachers, present and past. I’m not here studying so that I could start my own religion, but to glorify God.

Faith, and not reason, rules my studies. For even though the critical part of my mind is always at work, gratitude, humility, and trust are the real marks of my pursuit of the knowledge of God.

This is the underlying truth I never forget: God is infinite, and I am only a finite created being. I am simply thankful that I have this privilege to know wondrous things about him.

* * *

A word about my references: Because this is only a survey of fundamental doctrines, I’m limiting my use of book references to the three-volume *Exploring Christian Theology* by Nathan Holsteen and Michael Svigel (Bethany House Publishers, 2014-2015).

To quote the Preface of Volume 1:

“*Exploring Christian Theology* will offer introductions, overviews, and reviews of key orthodox, protestant, evangelical tenets without belaboring details or broiling up debates. The three *ECT* volumes, compact but substantial, provide accessible and convenient summaries of major themes....”

“*Exploring Christian Theology* differs from other mini-theologies in that it strives to present a broad consensus, not a condensed systematic model of one evangelical teacher or protestant tradition.... Like the evangelical movement itself, we seek to be orthodox and interdenominational within a classic consensus.”

* * *

Reference:

- *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God* by Nathan Holsteen and Michael Szigel (Bethany House Publishers, 2014).

Tags: religion, Christianity, Christian, God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Bible, faith, doctrine, maturity, theology, reason, humility, gratitude

Note: This post is part of the collection Faith Foundations.
swordsoftheword.wordpress.com/archives/sets/faith-foundations/

About



Do you hunger for God? To know him more and his Word, but are overwhelmed by the huge amount of study materials out there?

Are you longing for the Bible to become more personal to you? To find in your study the balance between the theoretical and practical, between the scholarly and personal? The balance between truth and grace?

Swordsman of the Word is a blog about God and the Bible, but it is much more than that. This is also my own journey towards knowing God more through his Word, and towards understanding and changing my own life — and the world around me — in the light of that Word.

This is an invitation for you to join me in my journey.

My name is **Arjay B. Araña**. I'm a Filipino, single, and a born-again Christian.

I'm a member of a conservative evangelical church here in the Philippines. I am called by God to be a teacher and a missionary, and I'm presently attending a Bible school.

This blog is part of my works for the ministry, both in Christian education and the missions. It is solely dedicated to my personal essays and reflections — and its purposes are (1) to help you know God more, through his Word and through my own life, and (2) to share with you my passion and burden as a missionary of the gospel.

More Information: My posts in the following category tell more of the philosophy and the story behind my work here: swordsmanoftheword.wordpress.com/category/about/. Also, I've talked about my personal life and my own walk with God in my testimony: swordsmanoftheword.wordpress.com/archives/sets/my-testimony/.

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Note: Though I have several social media channels, I'm centralizing all communications to my FB Community Page. But if you don't want to use Facebook, your other option is to email me at [swordsmanoftheword@yahoo.com].

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Do you want a much closer look into my walk with God?

Support me now at **Patreon** [www.patreon.com/arjayarana]. For only \$3 a month, you'll be granted read and download access to all my devotional reflections, which are based on the classics *Streams in the Desert* and *Morning and Evening*. You'll also get to read posts from my journal.

Or if you want, you can simply send me love-gifts to support my ministry.

If you'd like to donate, please contact me by email [swordsmanoftheword@yahoo.com] so that I can send you my PayPal.Me link. Thanks!

*This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God,
and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ. — John 17:3 WEB*

How has this ministry helped you, my friend? Have you started to know God more?

The truth is, all these things I've talked about won't have any real meaning to you unless you first have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

If you want to know how to start such a relationship (and to know the story, the privileges, and the responsibilities that accompany this relationship), please read this: **God's Plan of Salvation.**

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