

**Boston University**

**OpenBU**

**<http://open.bu.edu>**

---

STH Archives

New England Conference Autographed Letters Collection

---

2007-04-30T16:34:58Z

# Letter to Ruth Merritt 11/10/1818

---

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/1146>

*"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."*

Boston Nov. 10. 1818.

Dear Sister,

Your kind letter of Oct. 8th was rec'd in due time from the date; but the nature of its contents induced me to delay, till consideration should enable me to return an answer that should be satisfactory to myself if not to you.

Your letter has imposed upon me a difficult task, that of pointing out to a bewildered mind the path of safety. It will not suffice for me to say you must be faithful & cleave to the Lord; to help you out of your difficulties I must be more particular.

You say "The vicissitudes of the last eighteen months have nearly effaced the previous part of your existence from remembrance." I know not what to say to this; I believe, however, it will not always be thus with you. You have a "composure & ease, to which you used to be a stranger," & which you seem to think is not a "peace founded upon a well grounded hope in the Redeemer;" but is "an insensibility which nothing exists." Here also I am at a loss to answer. I hope it is not so. "Can be solemn or cheerful, converse upon religion, life & death, the world & worldly things—can attend religious duties or neglect them, & all in the same frame." There is evidently something wrong. "Outward things do not affect you." It is well they do not. Again. "I have many times, while deeply meditating on my existence & the vast concerns connected with it, experienced pain," &c. No wonder that you should. "Yet this has ceased." I pray God it may return.

"I have professed religion, & <sup>enjoyed</sup> some enjoyment therein, but I doubt the reality." I do not doubt it. That you have professed religion is certain; & I believe it is equally certain that you have had some "enjoyment therein," & why should you doubt the reality? Was it not real?—You say, "how do you know that any thing like this exists, except in the imagination?" You know it if reason do not deceive us—"Or man was made a lie." There is such a thing as imagination, & how do we know that what we call religion, & the enjoyment consequent therein, is not all imagination? We know it by the most infallible of all testimony, the word of God. Here we have a rule to distinguish between imagination & reality. You are to employ your reason

in ascertaining the wisdom of revelation; the Bible has unspeakably better vouchers than any other book. There is seen the true province of reason. Reason never deceives us, false reasoning does. Reason is guided by facts in settling the evidence of revelation; & when that is done it is safe believing all that is taught in revelation. Revelation tells you that Jesus Ch. is the Saviour of sinners; when you believe this fact, Jesus Ch. becomes precious to you, lives in you, establishes his kingdom in your heart, which is "righteousness, peace, & joy in the Holy Ghost." Is the love of God, which is shed abroad in your heart, an imagination, or a reality? Is not this love as real, & more powerful, than the working of natural affection? And so of all the other affections of piety. Can you doubt them any more than you can doubt your senses?

You say, "many have thought, & you also, that we might have an assurance of invisible things amounting to certainty. — What is known is no longer an object of faith." But what is faith? "You faith is the substance, ~~of things~~ (the substance) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction) of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1. Faith, in this sense, is obtained by assenting to the truth of God, & acting with the mind upon it. In this way we come to know that we have not followed a cunningly devised fable — we know the doctrine — we know the things that are freely given to us of God. Thus we walk by faith, & this faith is knowledge. There are different kinds of knowledge; as the knowledge of our senses, & moral certainty. It is of the latter we now speak; & we are said to walk by faith to distinguish this knowledge from that of our senses. Oh my Sister, guard against your sceptical turn of mind. Of what, except the immediate objects of sense, can you be so certain as of the reality of religion.

~~You say that "many have thought, & you also, that we might have an assurance of invisible things amounting to certainty. — What is known is no longer an object of faith." But what is faith? "You faith is the substance, (the substance) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction) of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1. Faith, in this sense, is obtained by assenting to the truth of God, & acting with the mind upon it. In this way we come to know that we have not followed a cunningly devised fable — we know the doctrine — we know the things that are freely given to us of God. Thus we walk by faith, & this faith is knowledge. There are different kinds of knowledge; as the knowledge of our senses, & moral certainty. It is of the latter we now speak; & we are said to walk by faith to distinguish this knowledge from that of our senses. Oh my Sister, guard against your sceptical turn of mind. Of what, except the immediate objects of sense, can you be so certain as of the reality of religion.~~

Please to receive a few words of advice. I Beg to be

of sinners; when you believe this fact, Jesus Ch. becomes pre-  
cious to you, lives in you, establishes his kingdom in your  
heart, which is "righteousness, peace, & joy in the Holy Ghost."  
Is the love of God, which is shed abroad in your heart, an ima-  
gination, or a reality? Is not this love as real, & more power-  
ful, than the working of natural affection? And so of all the  
other affections of piety. Can you doubt them any more than you  
can doubt your senses?

You say, "many have thought, & you also, that we might have  
an assurance of invisible things amounting to certainty. — What  
is known is no longer an object of faith." But what is faith? "Now  
faith is the substance, ~~of things~~ (the substance) of things hoped for,  
the evidence (conviction) of things not seen." Heb. xii. 1. Faith, in this  
sense, is obtained by assenting to the truth of God, & acting with the  
mind upon it. In this way we come to know that we have not  
followed a cunningly devised fable — we know the ~~for~~ doctrine — we  
know the things that are freely given to us of God. Thus we  
walk by faith, & this faith is knowledge. There are different  
kinds of knowledge; as the knowledge of our senses, & moral certaint-  
ty. It is of the latter we now speak; & we are said to walk by faith,  
to distinguish this knowledge from that of our senses. Oh my  
Sister, guard against your sceptical turn of mind. Of what, ex-  
cept the immediate objects of sense, can you be so certain as  
of the reality of religion.

~~You say that "many have thought, & you also, that we might have  
an assurance of invisible things amounting to certainty. — What  
is known is no longer an object of faith." But what is faith? "Now  
faith is the substance, of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction) of things  
not seen." Heb. xii. 1. Faith, in this sense, is obtained by assenting to the  
truth of God, & acting with the mind upon it. In this way we come to know  
that we have not followed a cunningly devised fable — we know the doctrine — we  
know the things that are freely given to us of God. Thus we walk by faith, &  
this faith is knowledge. There are different kinds of knowledge; as the knowl-  
edge of our senses, & moral certainty. It is of the latter we now speak; & we  
are said to walk by faith, to distinguish this knowledge from that of our senses.  
Oh my Sister, guard against your sceptical turn of mind. Of what, except the  
immediate objects of sense, can you be so certain as of the reality of religion.~~

Please to receive a few words of advice. 1. Be not too inquisitive  
to pry into things beyond your reach; but rest satisfied  
with obvious truth. 2. Look not to professors, but to the bible  
for the standard of pure religion. 3. Pray more than you have  
heretofore done. 4. Accustom yourself to see God at all times. Set  
him before your face, & on your right hand. 5. Read your bible  
devotionally. — 6. Write to me again, & let me know your mind.

I am pleased with the thought of receiving a visit from you  
this winter. Don't disappoint me. I want you to stay several months.  
I have just rec'd a letter from Calvin Brewer, in which he

informs me that you talk of going to New-Orleans, with  
his sister. If I thought you could be sincere in that strange  
project, I would use some dissuasives. Adieu.

My love to all our family, & connections.

Your affectionate brother

Timo: Merritt.

2

Mrs Ruth Merrill

Barkhamsted Conn.

To the care of one of the mechanics on Granville St.

