

FAITH IS NOT A VIRTUE

The Catholic Church alleges that the gift of faith is the most important gift that Heaven can give. It says that faith is not natural but a supernatural gift from God.

It is called a virtue for a number of reasons.

Because it is responding to God working within you to help you to believe.

Because it makes it possible for you to do good for the love of God.

Because without it you will only have man-made faith and man-made religion.

Because it is obeying God's command to believe what he says in the Bible and through the Church.

Faith for the Catholic means faith in God and in the Church. Since the command of Jesus to love God and trust him even when you feel he is wrong no matter what happens or what the consequences will be is part of faith the extremism is backed by Jesus. It follows then that if Roman Catholicism is not true then the priests and theologians are the most evil men in the world. They say they would be if they were wrong so take them at their word. Without the priesthood there would be no Catholic Church so they are to blame for any damage done by their cult. They teach a bit of faith is better than none so if you have a warped faith that leads you to persecute Muslims they prefer that to you being a good natured Atheist so they are as good as to blame for people doing such hateful things.

Also to say that faith is a gift from God is to fall prey to arrogance. It is saying your faith is right because God does not lie to you. But you would need to be as wise as God to know for sure if God really is the cause of your faith. You are also claiming that anybody who has a different faith has not received that faith from God and that is pure sectarianism. Faith in God then tries to give you the right to look down your nose at other people. And if believers should believe such things how can they complain if somebody believes that God wants them to slaughter prostitutes? It is futile to say that they don't believe in going that far to respect faith for they say that the whole point of faith is that God is trusted to tell the truth which means he should be believed even when he is thought to be commanding something illegal.

The Catholic doctrine that sin is the worst evil of all for it offends such a good God so it is better to die at God's hands than to sin even slightly implies that not having the faith to tell you this and what is a sin to believe and not to believe is the worst evil. It is the worst thing you could do to a person. Teachings like that encourage murder for if you think you have done the worst thing possible murder should come easier to you. A God who hates sin above all evil and who does not hate cancer as much is not worth worshipping for evil is evil and he should hate it all. The Church has no real compassion for people when it worships that!

If you see faith as just faith, that will not stop you from changing to another faith or fixing errors in what you have faith in.

If you see faith as a supernatural gift from God you are trapped until you start to doubt that it really is supernatural. The notion that faith is a gift is about putting pressure on you to accept a particular form of faith and to keep accepting it. It is implied that you are evil and calling God a liar if you abandon the faith or change it or scrap it.

The person of faith sees being called a person of faith as a compliment. It is far from a compliment. The person is shown as arrogantly knowing that his faith is from God while the next person's different faith is not or that only some of it is a gift. And if you think your faith is a gift you will be biased and you cannot expect others to trust you when you talk religion and faith. You are putting up a wall that excludes people of a different faith or none.

The notion that faith is a gift is very often behind the concept of faith being a virtue. So not only are you bad if you refuse the faith. Not only are you bad if you accept the faith and then reject it. Not only these. But you are good and virtuous merely for accepting it. And not only that. But each religion says you are good and virtuous for accepting ITS version of what faith involves believing.

Religious faith creates barriers against truth and reality. It can mean that you can see how convincing atheism is and not be convinced. You are immunised.

Religious faith when seen as a gift is bad in itself. It has no justified existence. That is why even if you are not an extremist who would blow the planet to pieces for what you believe, you are still putting the main ingredient of extremism out there.

That ingredient is faith. You are in agreement with the extremists. When you use steps such as prayers, Church membership, sacraments and Sunday worship to reinforce the faith of the community you are even more responsible. When a person is armed with a knife and does no harm with it we can thank luck for it. It is the same with faith.

Faith as in supernatural or unnatural gift cannot agree with science which sees it as useless. It cannot be put on a par with science or above it. It cannot be granted any importance. It is nothing compared to science which believes in continual investigation and correction of errors. It is an intrinsic insult to science.

Christianity is one of the few religions that says that it fits with science. It says it tries to but it is lying. The religions may not all teach that faith is a gift and a virtue but they certainly do act as if it is. Actions speak loudest. It is wise and safe to say that religion in general is not a friend of science. The Christian who imagines that God commands us to love science is only interested in science because God says so. But that is not being scientific. It is being religious. To accept science means you accept it for it is self-correcting and about checking everything out. To accept science because of God is not accepting it for those reasons. It is only about acting scientific but not being scientific at all. Science has to be accepted on principle - the principle of being scientific.

Roman Catholicism officially teaches that faith matters more than reason. If you have to get rid of one or the other it has to be reason. If science refutes religion then you have to believe religion. Adam and Eve existed even though their existence is proven false by DNA evidence.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/pls1c3a1.htm

Faith and science: "Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth." "Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are."

This says that if reason contradicts faith you assume there is a solution though you may think that getting it is impossible. In this way faith is put above reason. It risks not seeing that there is a contradiction. It is arrogant to assume that there can be no contradiction.

The less evidence you have that your faith makes sense and is true the worse the faith is. The more outlandish the content of faith is the worse it is. The evidence and the reasons for believing the big things such as God or Hell or that Jesus is God deserve really intense and methodical scrutiny. And even more so if it is true that you need to have the right views about them to get into Heaven forever and keep out of eternal punishment.

If a view can be put out there without having sufficient evidence, it can be dismissed without sufficient evidence.

If a view has no evidence at all, then nobody not even God has the right to protest or complain if you assert a contrary view and have no evidence for it.

Faith should be embracing the truth as your friend. Faith should be a fluid process. Religion has people adopting faith for they fear what it is like to think for yourself and feel alone. If you adopt faith for that reason then your faith is not about truth but about what suits you. It is not about truth but about practicality. Faith that serves as a crutch or a shield to avoid fear only leads to irrationality and self-deception and bigotry.

Every religion has its own understanding of what people are supposed to put faith. Catholics believe that God has revealed himself through the Catholic Church and its doctrines and morals and practices.

Many religions treat faith as an epistemology. That is, they argue that faith is some sort of supernatural revelation to you about what is true. Thus faith is seen as knowledge. This implies that you are not only to see your religion's teaching as certain but also to FEEL that it is totally certain. Thinking something is certain when it is not is lying to yourself so that you can fool others better. It is hard to lie unless you lie to yourself first. And once you start treating opinions and beliefs as having the same force as facts do that is dangerous. It is the one thing you have to do so that a fanatic can brainwash and influence you. Those who feel certain of what is not certain know it deep down and tend to become bullies towards those who know the real truth and those who can rip off the mask.

The Catholic Church sees religious faith as a virtue. St Paul implied as much when he said that faith, hope and love go together indicating that you cannot have love without faith.

This leads to the persecution and slander of unbelievers.

The Lord offers the grace of faith to all. If good he must. It is often taught that we are free to accept or reject this offer. But how can we unless we believe in the first place for you cannot sincerely accept or refuse what you do not understand? All must first believe in it to reject it. God has forced all to believe. All our thoughts are forced on us anyway so it makes no difference. We can't help what we believe or know so it doesn't matter if it is forced on us. In the present moment, I am unable to change the things in the past that make me believe.

McGrath declared in his *Believing in God* that we cannot decide what we are going to believe (page 131). So how could faith be a virtue?

The two major objections to faith or belief being a moral issue or an issue of virtue are that belief is involuntary and that it is the individual's own business.

The terrible things that people like Torquemada do are not to be praised even if they sincerely believed they were doing right therefore you can be condemned for your harmful beliefs (page 408, *Reason and Belief*). What I like about that point is that it forbids evil beliefs like that God is right to torment people in Hell forever or that to use birth control deserves eternal punishment or that the brother you can see and touch comes second to the God you can't see or touch. The Christian who supports those tenets cannot use the excuse that it is good of God to do those things and demand that he come first. Torquemada would have said the same about his belief that heretics should be cruelly destroyed for the glory of the Catholic Church. Even those who do evil are doing good as they see it. If they don't mean to do evil, that is very true. And it is still true if they consciously do evil for they see the evil as attractive and therefore good. This shows that faith and trust and belief have nothing to do with moral intent which is the only thing that counts in morality. This shows that the legal system should be centred on opposing dangerous beliefs with truth and even the rigours of the penal system for when error is a threat to morality or belief in right and wrong there is no alternative.

Religion should drop harmful fanatical doctrines and has nobody but itself to blame if it gets on the wrong side of the law. It shows that religion's fanaticism should have no hearing when it comes to governments deciding what the law should do. If religion wants unbelief to be a sin then it gives others the right to condemn itself and despise it for its beliefs. Even if unbelief is not a sin, religion still consents to this treatment for when it demands it for others it must expect such treatment in return. No wonder it gets defensive and no wonder sectarianism is a poison that goes hand in hand with religion. It gives sectarianism the status quo in legitimacy.

Jesus regarded lack of faith and belief as a sin which shows he hadn't the slightest clue what he was talking about. He was anything but a Son of God for he could not manage even to be a prophet never mind decent. If anybody raised him from the dead it was Satan. So Jesus as good as confessed through his bigotry about faith that it was evil to teach doctrines like eternal punishing and still taught them. This shows that the doctrines of Jesus is nothing contain a good deal of spiteful wishful thinking. There is no hate worse than cold hate like that.

Jesus wanted those who displeased him to rot in Hell forever. Nobody could in justice hold such a belief as eternal punishing lightly. If you want to believe in it and call yourself holy you would have to go and do heroic good works. That might lessen the cloud over you for believing such a doctrine but the cloud can never go away. You are still admitting you want to believe that sinners deserve such a harsh fate.

It has been observed that Christians do not say one has faith that there is no God. If we believe in Mars though we have never seen it that is not considered to be faith. But those things are faith. Funny that is not considered a virtue! How fair!

Religion says that it is reasonable to trust God. This is true if he exists and you can prove it. Believing that God exists though there is no evidence or proof is made a part of this trust for God does not lead you (discreetly or otherwise) to see that he exists and then reveal himself to you. So trust in God forbids you to see any contrary evidence. Faith, in the religious view, must mean tricking yourself into ignoring the evidence and telling yourself that you believe until you really believe.

Newman wrote that we will never do anything if we keep looking for proof in life so we have to assume that a person or God is trustworthy and to assume that is to have faith in what he has revealed. That is advocating discrimination for God allows a lot of suffering and makes killer viruses and sends sinners to Hell forever and a tyrant does less evil and is vilified for it. You see how a tyrant could use religious approbation for the evil of God to persuade people to afford him the same privilege. He could tell people that he is authorised by God to do what he does and God has it all in control. The tyrant

could tell people that it is not fair of them to judge a being they don't really know as good while they know tyrant exists and call him an evil autocrat. It is very easy to believe that if your trials come from God and God is using them to better you that you should feel a disinclination to stand up for yourself. Tyrants would love you to be like that.

We should always look for some evidence and try to avoid guessing and depending on what we feel about things. Assuming is bad news unless it is something unimportant or an emergency. If we are unable to get evidence that does not mean we should close our minds to what the evidence against an assumption says and religion commands us to shut them firmly.

In the chapter called, Why Does God Tolerate Suffering? we find the following in relation to atheists or those who think that if there is a God, then God is to be condemned for letting so much suffering happen, "The condemnation of God by man is not based on the truth, but on arrogance, on an underhanded conspiracy" (page 65, Crossing the Threshold of Hope, John Paul II, Jonathan Cape, London, 1994). It is interference to judge atheists as arrogant for blaming God if he exists. It is fuelling antagonism against the atheists. And it is an insult to the person who sees such horrendous suffering that they refuse to accept a God who would tolerate it. They do that out of a wish to face the utter horror and intolerability of the suffering. They do it out of courage and compassion.

The Christian faith says everybody is a sinner and sin is essentially the prideful wish to be free from God. If we are sinners and the essence of sin is pride, then the most attractive sins will be the ones that make us look good though we are not. Religion calls faith a virtue. So the virtue of faith is intrinsically suspect. Some virtue then! Even if faith should be a virtue it does not follow that it ever is practiced as one.

Sins against faith would be the most common sins. For example, when a Christian commends somebody's revenge that is heresy. The Church does little to bolster people's faith because it knows it hasn't a leg to stand on. Such sins attack the heart of the faith and would be the most serious of sins – for example, to reject one doctrine is to reject the reliability of the rest and to espouse anarchy in some form - and the Church's apathy proves that the Church is insincere and only out for money and power and many of the priests are just priests for they are some way dysfunctional. The Church has so many sins that most people have never even heard of and if they did they would desert the Church in droves. It is clear from Jesus' ban on sexy thoughts that it is a sin not to be well covered up for the sake of modesty for example. And the Church has many doctrines that are so silly and impractical and these are kept from the people for the Church knows that the people would desert the Church in droves if they knew of them. And the Church also has many doctrines and rules in opposition to the gospel of Jesus, for example, his rule that the Church must shun unrepentant sinners is ignored. There are many in the Church who only imagine they believe – we have all met people who under questioning show that they feel the faith is true but can't be said to have any real belief. Therefore the Church is taking money off the people on false pretences. This is theft.

The doctrine that God guides you is dangerous. God is supposed to guide Catholics to believe in the Catholic Church. That is why the Church says that faith is a gift from God. Many have sworn that God guided them to give money to charlatans like Benny Hinn. Hinn says that he only wants the money to do the Lord's work and because he deserves it because of the great work he does for the Lord. He says he does ask for money but leaves it up to the people to decide if God wants them to give. This proves all the more that God is a bad idea because when God has mysterious ways he could want you to give money to some greedy evangelist.

We need light from God to believe in the gospel because it is so easy to err and believe other things and all of us will die with many errors in our belief system. Some intelligent people believe that nothing can be known except that nothing can be known for sure. We all have different levels of intellectual ability and also we all have different biases. The Church says that faith in the doctrines of the Church is a gift from God and that we need supernatural light from God to have this faith. It follows then that anybody who does not believe in God's one true gospel doesn't want to and is an evil person.

Faith is greed. It poses as the ultimate answer to everything and even gives you hope of eternal life as if living and doing good in this world is not enough. It helps people feel that nature cares about them when it cannot and would not if it could. You end up feeling you as good as have it all like some billionaire when in fact you do not. That feeling that God and the universe and existence is about you is a cruel lie and it influences others around us no matter how much we try to keep it for ourselves.

To call faith a virtue and then to bring others to that faith is a serious crime. It invites Muslim fanatics and all to follow suit with the result that the hold their dangerous faith has on them gets too strong so that they become willing to do terrible things for it. Even if this faith does not include murder and the abuse of women, it is still out to give people who disagree with them a lot of trouble and a hard time. So much then for faith being a virtue!

Faith is not belief but it is related to belief and you cannot have faith without belief. Belief cannot be chosen and it just happens. You cannot make yourself agree that something is true. Thus faith is not a gift. Calling it a gift from God is just sheer manipulation and an attempt to sweetly pressure people to believe or think they believe. It blames the person who

does not believe for not choosing the gift.

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