

HOW FAITH AS A GIFT FROM GOD IS A CLEVER SMOKESCREEN FOR MAN-MADE RELIGION

Religion says that faith is a gift, a sort of personal revelation from God that is a good way of getting you to accept a system of beliefs created by man. It stops you seeing the true origin and the contradictions. The errors are explained away as being examples of how God's ways seem bizarre to us but this is only because we don't have all the store of knowledge he has.

When religion has a lot of mysteries – apparent contradictions – it is taught that you need grace to believe them for you cannot understand them with your own intellect (page 66, What is Faith? by Anthony Kenny). So, a religion that teaches that faith is caused by grace must have a faith full of mysteries and a religion of mystery must have a doctrine of faith being behind grace! Otherwise there is no need to be helped to believe by God.

Christianity says that faith in the Christian religion and in the doctrines and truths God has revealed is not natural and is a gift from God. This recognises that the religion of God has to come from God and not man for man errs and can be sneaky so the religions he creates could turn nasty or mislead people.

A man-made religion is an oxymoron. It can have no binding force. Would you really think you should say abracadabra every day five times just because some man says so? Whatever does not bind or obligate in reality is not a religion though it may be a semblance of one. Religion is in reality the experience of your faith as a gift from a supernatural power that tells you the truth and only the truth and demands obedience and religion is the community formed by people who are based on this experience. Anything else is fake religion for it is deliberately man-made. It would be terrible if we thought we shouldn't challenge it or criticise it constructively. It could be that all religion is fake religion even by its own standard.

Anything human is dangerous if it is made sacred or sacrosanct. It is man's word getting treated as infallible revelation from God and when errors are exposed the believers either water them down or say they are not errors in the sight of God for God knows better than us. If man made the religion, fault it where it should be faulted. And realise the fact that it is man-made is itself a fault no matter how good the results seem to be. Christianity surprisingly agrees that man-made religion is a problem which is why it says it has to bring people to the Christian faith - the one faith revealed by God.

Man cannot claim to be almighty and infallible God for he will be found out. It is much easier and more effective to claim that you have a message from a God whose ways and teachings are above our heads and any grasping of them we do is down to his assistance. If man invents doctrines and says that whoever hugs a tree receives healing energy that he can send to others nobody can falsify this. Nobody can prove that a man who says God ordered him to sacrifice his son for it fits in with God's hugely complex plan - aspects of the plan will be nasty for life is nasty - is lying or deluded. So man is on safe ground.

If man cannot claim to be God to get looked up to and obeyed and to get attention (its not always about money or comforts) he can do the next best thing and lie that God spoke to him. The best way to get converts and reinforce his power is to teach, "God told me things we could never guess at or figure out for ourselves. I have given you the message. God can enable you and help you with his grace to believe the message." So the man tells the message and the audience has to seek inner inspiration from God telling them the message is true and helping them to believe it.

What happens is -

Pressure is applied if you do not believe. The subliminal or blatant message is, "If you don't believe you are against God and it is your own fault for not letting his grace work and what about people who are encouraged by your example not to believe?" You are accused of being anti-God and anti-truth and of sinning.

It is arrogance for man to claim that a transcendent God who is so different from us is speaking to him and there are countless alternative explanations. Man needs to be as wise as God to judge. By claiming that God is inspiring you to believe the word of arrogant man, you are just as bad as him. You are claiming to know that God has revealed to him and you are saying yes to his being the kind of person who risks passing on his own ideas as the word of God. You are sharing in and all together you reinforce each others' arrogance.

You cannot accept any revelation as the word unless you judge it. So it is really all about you. While believers talk about grace and the great gift it is they think their own judgment that they can judge that God has spoken is better. There is no real humility here. To keep their pride they swallow the grace and inspiration stuff. Though grace makes you vulnerable to

being exploited part of it is self-exploitation too.

The religious person who says God commanded him to set up a children's charity is doing exactly the same thing as the man who says God demands that he kill his child. The results are different but the results are not the point. The point is that both are claiming revelations from a source that has to deal with a nasty universe and a plan that has to make the best out of a bad situation that is too complex for man to comprehend. The person getting nice revelations is still nodding to this dangerous principle. The way is opened up for nasty revelations. It is nasty in itself to open the door. Keep it shut.

By the way, strictly speaking it is not true that belief and opinion are about you making up your own mind. Your mind makes itself up. It happens to you. You may push buttons to manipulate the process but your mind always makes itself up. The notion that belief and faith in God happen when you let God's grace form them in you is nonsense.

The notion that faith is reasonable and you use reason to get to faith and its mysteries leads only to absurdity. Reason cannot show you that any of the mysteries are true. It means that you have to use reason to get to faith and then you eschew the reasons you believe as if they were wrong or irrelevant. But that is dropping faith and replacing it with so-called faith or a pretence. And the reasons must be far from sufficient and satisfactory when grace is required. The reasons can't cause faith.

You cannot believe in nonsense or in what you perceive to be unintelligible and religious mystery is a prime example of incoherence. If you need grace to believe, you are trying to believe what is unintelligible to you but how could you get the grace when you adhere to the sin of trying to insult your intelligence? God can't give grace to a person who does not really want it when he won't do God's will if God's will is not to denigrate your intelligence. To refuse to love God in anything is to refuse to love him at all. One sin defiles all you do. To hold on to sin and then do good is really saying, "I do this good but I want my sin too." So it is only looking good. It is not real good as far as God and purity of heart are concerned.

If grace makes the Catholic believe, then what makes the Hindu monist accept doctrines like pantheism which are just as ludicrous as Catholicism? Catholics want to say that God enables you to believe the Catholic Church and deny that God enables Hindus to believe what they believe. And they say that even though they say we can't believe mysteries without God. There is a lot of self-deception involved. To say, "my faith is supernatural and yours is not even if you think it is" is essential sectarianism and judgmental bigotry.

We conclude that the mystery teaching is a way of getting around the errors and contradictions that man will preach in the name of God. The idea that faith in divine mysteries is a gift is to pressure you and get you to override your own reason.

