

Misconceptions about faith and reason

- A. Skepticism: faith and reason are contraries
    - 1. First corollary: fideism
    - 2. Second corollary: faith as purely subjective and personal
  - B. Rationalism: reason can fully account for faith
  - C. Medieval debates: Bonaventure, Scotus, Aquinas
- I. Believing as a **human or natural act**
- A. St. Augustine/St. Thomas Aquinas: “to think with assent.”
  - B. Not merely an inner conviction or purely a feeling.
    - 1. Four classical modes of response to a proposition proposed to you:<sup>1</sup>
      - a. Doubting
      - b. Supposing/Opinion
      - c. Knowing
      - d. Believing
  - C. The POW example: believing involves *assent* to what is proposed.
  - D. This is not contrary to reason, and is actually quite reasonable.
- II. **Faith and Reason:** Christian belief as reasonable
- A. God is the source of both faith and reason
  - B. Confidence in reason, in light of faith
  - C. Truths of faith as credible or believable
    - 1. Preambles of faith as a foundation
    - 2. Weakness of our power of knowing: we need God to teach us.
    - 3. Special signs of confirmation (e.g., miracles)
- III. Faith as **properly or essentially supernatural**
- A. Six ways that faith is supernatural

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 2, a. 1.

1. Disposes us to an end that exceeds the capacity of our nature
2. Cannot be acquired by human action; can only be infused

“[I]t is necessary that some principle be divinely superadded to man, through which he is thus ordered to supernatural happiness, just as through the principles of his nature he is ordered to the end connatural to him.”<sup>2</sup>

3. Believer receives a supernatural light strengthening the mind and understanding
4. Object of faith is God himself
5. God moves us to the act of faith – we are taught by the Holy Spirit

Anyone who teaches [divine truths] from the outside, labors in vain unless the Holy Spirit interiorly gives understanding, because unless the Spirit is present to the hearts of the listeners, the speech of a teacher is useless. . . , so that even the Son himself speaking through the instrument of his humanity would be of no avail, unless he works interiorly through the Holy Spirit. . . . But the Spirit makes us know all things by interiorly inspiring us, directing us, and by elevating us to spiritual realities.”<sup>3</sup>

6. The divine persons dwell in us by faith informed by charity
- B. Faith bears fruit in salvation; a relationship with God; erupts into love.

**For Further Reading:** St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, qq. 1-7; Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (Ignatius Press); Romanus Cessario, *The Virtues, or The Examined Life* (Continuum Press).

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *In Ioan.* c. 14, lect. 6 (no. 1958).