

III. FAITH AND REASON

THESIS:

(a) *La fede, come libera, certa e ragionevole risposta alla rivelazione di Dio in Cristo (DV 5), suppone una conoscenza previa della credibilità del cristianesimo. (b) La ragione, illuminata dalla fede, può conseguire una qualche intelligenza dei dogmi della fede, *sia dall'analogia di quelle cose che conosce naturalmente, *sia dall'connessione degli stessi misteri tra di loro e con il fine ultimo dell'uomo (DS 3016). (c) Perciò la teologia, come fides quaerens intellectum implica una riflessione filosofica.*

I. Analysis of Faith-Reason Debate in 20th Century Theology:

A. Terms of Argument: Is supernatural revelation impossible? The revealed is either **knowable** or **not knowable** to human reason.

1. If in principle it is knowable, then supernatural revelation is superfluous. At the most, a prophet or teacher can help man to learn that which they can learn by themselves but which external difficulties impede them in doing.

2. If in principle it is unknowable, then one cannot perceive a divine revelation. Without a knowledge of God, it is impossible and even immoral to recognize it.

B. Analysis: In Western philosophy:

1. **The basic conundrum concerns the ability of man's finite mind to know the Infinite.** Since our act of knowledge is limited, we can't know God as infinite, can't have divine infinite revelation and knowledge of God, and can't recognize it in a prophet either.

a. Kant: presumed that we can judge what is true, no norm exists outside human reason; its own principles are absolutized. Yet, reason cannot know the noumenon: God (who is infinite) or prime matter (also infinite).

b. Modern thought has followed and says that individuality cannot be totally known by any concepts. The legacy of today is that reason lacks value (i.e., **relativism**).

C. Analysis: In Catholic Thought:

1. Distinction: Supernatural = grace and faith

Natural = nature and reason

2. Truth demands correspondence between reason and reality. We presume that reason can know nature and reality and therefore we also presume that we can know something about faith.

3. Scholasticism: the division between grace-faith/nature-reason was founded upon the **Beatific Vision - intuition of God.** Of this world, in natural knowledge, we know all in concepts. Of God, intuition of Him is beyond concepts. Therefore:

a. intuition of God assures me that I know God as an infinite/omnipotent Trinity.

b. it also assures me participation in the divine life.

Since you cannot get to the Beatific Vision with only reason, all else belongs to grace.

4. Reason For Distinction Between Nature And Grace:

a. To maintain the distinction between creation and revelation. Revelation is an historical novelty that was not present at the start of creation and its natural structure. [Ladaria speaks of the distinction between the creaturely and supra-creaturely. The creaturely includes liberty of man, even before grace. If so, there is a problem for theology here!].

b. To save divine justice and divine liberty: God is not obligated towards man because man sinned. God remains absolutely free. Thus there are **two divine gratuities**:

1. creation is gratuitous
2. revelation and salvation is gratuitous.

c. To save intelligibility of the world and liberty: To have a revelation of God, I must have some knowledge of God in order to receive it. Creation must have some sense or else man does not have a real choice/liberty.

5. Proper Understanding of Catholic Theology: [nature/grace/faith]

Key: Human cooperation with grace:

- a. Man is free
- b. He must recognize Gospel as possible revelation. He must be capable of recognizing God before hearing revelation.
- c. Certainty is demanded in faith to be consonant with reason and to give my life to it.
- d. FAITH: presupposes an awareness/knowledge of God that is rational.

NB: Choice demands rationality!

D. Analysis in Protestant Thought:

Key: the sovereign transcendence of revelation to the exclusion of reason. [Our response: faith is a qualitative leap - but its not an irresponsible (or even irrational) leap.]

1. Classical Protestant Theology: Man cannot cooperate with grace;

Protestants reject the distinction between nature/grace because man is totally corrupt; grace is totally unmerited. Man remains **corrupt** even after grace. Grace remains exterior to him. Justification is given only insofar as God looks to Jesus and sees Him and applies what is His to us. Grace creates an act of faith for man but does not change man interiorly. Thus, man is predestined: to heaven or hell. (NB: See notes from Greshake).

2. Modern Protestant Theology:

Ontological principle to man's inability to cooperate with grace. Man gives of self but cannot know God. He only knows what is finite and that remains relative. All that is relative cannot satisfy man's heart and man alone cannot reach God. The result is that man has no

reason for free choice = opinions reign. Man is a slave of sin; choice is regulated by passions; he is condemned to death.

BUT: revelation and grace come to us because we cannot stop Him from intervening in us. Initiative is all God's -- freely given.

GRACE: pushes man to believe. Man, in his reason, is only able to recognize the lack of sense in the world. Thus, grace is "*amazing grace*" because man is justified without merit and is still a sinner. He is both a sinner and justified.

3. Three Resulting Tendencies for Protestant Theology: All are based on Scripture. [Man does not have a free choice; and no sense of faith].

a. Bultmann: I believe in God but not in a "Creed." Every effort to establish a "Creed" attempts to control God. I believe in the preached Gospel, not in dogmatic propositions, since I cannot measure God by the measures of this world. Thus, all is myth.

b. Fundamentalists: I believe in the Word of God; reason cannot arrive at truth.

c. Barth: to know who God is and man is, one must look to Jesus Christ who is revelation. To attribute to reason any function in the act of faith is to submit the word of God to the control of reason. Do not look at your own experience in order to understand the world, but look at Jesus, to understand man and God.

Catholic response: In faith, reason controls only the free and responsible option of the believer, inasmuch as it is an option authentically human. However, it does not control in any way the Word of God which remains sovereign as the one foundation of faith. And so we speak of the **Transcendence of faith**, as founded upon God's self-revelation in Christ, and the **Immanence of faith** as conditioned by reason.

Question: How do you choose between these without reason? You Can't!!!

E. Three Catholic 20th century faith models:

Is being (reality) known principally in a concept or non-conceptually, i. e., in an intuition or judgment? Is the intellect passive or active?

First Model: Conceptualist Model: (Cajetan Thomism)

1. Summary:

"The Conceptualist position, following Cajetan's interpretation of Thomas and represented in this century by Gardeil and Maritain, emphasized the concept of being, the possibility that all of reality can be conceptualized and the passivity of the intellect in issuing of the concept. A clear distinction obtained between the natural and supernatural orders, and the Deposit of faith contained supernatural truths proposed in conceptual propositions. Once it was established what the faith was, its contents were explicated in dogmatic or positive theology, and then conclusions could be deduced, from revealed truths in speculative theology.

The fundamental problem with this position was its failure to allow adequately for historical pluralism and development.”

2. Schema:

a. Three presuppositions:

- a. natural knowledge of God’s existence
- b. natural knowledge of immortality of soul (“anima”)
- c. natural knowledge of the moral law. [I must follow the moral law, and God in justice will either punish or save.]

b. Passive Nature of Intellect:

Proper Object of Human Intellect: **BEING** (understood in the concept; I arrive at reality by way of concepts).

Proper and Proportional Object of Human Intellect: **SENSE of material thing**. How? abstract from sense knowledge

- a. Form: is drawn by act of abstraction and imposed onto passive intellect. The form is the same as the object from which it comes.

c. Distinction between Reason and Will:

Formal Object of reason is **truth** while man’s will is oriented to its formal object which is the **good**. There is a distinction between the intellect and the will.

1. Truth comes in concepts and in judgment of propositions. Its object is not a person but propositions.

2. When I receive supernatural truth, it must be propositional while remaining supernatural (from God and surpassing reason).

3. How can I accept a propositional truth that is beyond reason’s grasp?
In the WILL, because I desire salvation and only God can save me.

4. Where? In the Gospel, which promises me happiness: motive to believe the Gospel.

5. Is it immoral to believe what reason cannot fully comprehend? How can I justify faith? Answer rests with the affirmation of various types of truth:

a. abstract truth

b. historical truth: we can know historical truth only by means of testimony. Jesus lives and truth comes from the testimony of the apostles. Why Jesus? He preached supernatural truths in His Gospel. His miracles are testimony to God’s power. Prophecies from the Old Testament are fulfilled.

d. Nature of Faith:

Faith assents to the revealed truth by reason of the authority of the revealing God. Since the proper object of man’s understanding is ens, known in a concept, what is offered to man as truth comes in propositional forms, accepted in act of will by virtue of authority of testimony.

e. Consequences:

- a. I have an exterior reason to justify my act of faith. Greatest miracle was the resurrection.
- b. The apostles had authority and infallibility and successors also have it to bring acceptance of faith.
- c. Importance of church as ordinary means of salvation because the reason of faith exists only in church, resting on authority given to Peter and his successors.
- d. Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation in that I can know with certitude what God revealed- natural judgment. The Beatific Vision, promised by revelation, pertains strictly to the order of grace and surpasses all conceptual knowledge.
- e. Judgment of credibility: From grace and is an act of faith.
- f. Clear moral law
- g. Theology employs “regressive method”(show how magisterial teachings agree with historical documents)

f. Key Strength: clarity of propositions.

g. Central Weakness:**1. Why is my faith not natural?**

I believe according to natural arguments, so why need grace? The distinction above is an attempt to answer this problem. If reason is valid, then how can I have a certitude greater than reason.

L. Billot: says that the moment of homage to God is when one faces the truth of revelation. That such truth is not according to an act of reason but because God is God.

2. Lack of theological pluralism**3. Lack of any sense of historical development****Second Model: Transcendental Thomism:****1. Summary:**

“Transcendental Thomism located man’s access to reality in an intuition or judgment, of which the concept is only a part. The role of the intellect is an active one, and objectivity is recognized only over the knowing subject. The natural-supernatural distinction is relativized and grace is offered to all men as constitutive of their being. The explicit formulations of the faith surrender their primacy to an unthematic acceptance of grace that is simultaneously God’s self-revelation.”

The problem with this position is that it relativizes the unique historical manifestation of salvation in Christ, the necessity of the historical church and reduces all dogma to relativistic formulations.

2. Schema:

a. Active Nature of Intellect: “conversio ad phantasma”

1. Proper Object of human intellect: Being affirmed in the act of judgment. Intellect is an active movement that goes beyond the Form.

2. Intellect is **dynamic** because it goes to the True with the question: “Why?” Concepts are but secondary productions of the intellect which transcends them in seeking the **final ground** of its own activity and knowledge. For, insofar as a judgment, referring to a finite reality, can be questioned and all conceptual expressions are not ultimate, nothing short of the infinite God can satisfy man’s innate, unrestricted, unconditional desire to know.

b. No distinction between Intellect and Will’s Formal objects:

The intellect goes to the “true” as the “good”. How do you distinguish the will and intellect? What is objectivity? On some level, objectivity, because it sees the act of judgment in this way, also includes subjectivity. The result: **objectivity rests in subjectivity** and concepts are relativized.

c. Natural Desire for Beatific Vision:

The desire goes towards God Himself as a TRINITY. There is a natural desire for the Beatific Vision. The danger is that nature has no sense of itself; reduction to an individual way to truth. (Why do you need the Church?).

1. Rahner affirms a nature desire for the Beatific Vision. Nature is the “**residual concept**” [what is left when moments of supernatural grace are removed] that is not necessarily affirmed in content but must be retained to avoid heresy. The reason for this is because man is already graced. He is also must come up with this notion of grace as a “quasi-formal causality.”

d. Act of Faith as certain and free: (Rousselot)

1. Intellect is dynamic (synthetic judgment between subject-object) as a desire to reach God.

a. World serves as a sign; Faith sees the natural signs and with grace we can make correct synthesis intellectually.

b. Mutual causality: perceptive act and that which is perceived. Both: a sign demands totality of a horizon & total signification is revealed only through individual signs.

2. Act of Faith: It is certain and free.

a. Certainty is assigned to intellect and not the will. Intellect as love and desire that wishes to possess itself and God simultaneously. Mutual influence between the intellect and the will. “Expansion of soul: Grace elevates man’s soul and my judgment to believe arrives at a decision under the influence of grace. PT: The more I love, the more I know him.

b Exterior Sign is Christ. As a result, man can give freely homage to God.

c. Summary: “The internal assent is attributed to human freedom since man may reject the grace calling for free homage. Simultaneously, the act of faith is most reasonable because the perceived clue applies the witness of the natural order to the recognized truth.”

e. Problems:

1. No need for a definite, historical mediator of salvation since any finite object as mediator of the act of faith. Therefore, how is Jesus unique?

2. No distinction between credibility and credentia:

3. No need for a church or magisterium: Is personal being the object? If so, why have a church? In accordance to reason, I have a foundation to faith, then why have a church? The church is best seen as a servant of grace and servant to the world.

4. The implicit, intuitive knowledge of faith enjoys a priority over conceptual dogmatic formulations. Theology is seen as a dialogue seeking common theological presuppositions, Pluralism quickly leads to relativism.

5. For moral theology, there is no objective judgment possible about acts in themselves apart from the subject's intention.

NB: The above is from McDermott, but see the following from Lambiasi:

B. Pierre Rousselot (1878-1915)

Gli Occhi della Fede (Jaca Book, Milano 1977) -- A compilation of two articles from 1910 in *Recherches de Science Religieuse*.

The problem: How is faith born? The *analysis fidei* is the question that concerns him. How do we go from knowing to believing? What room is there for grace in the act of faith? And in knowledge? Before believing I should have reasons for belief. Are they part of *pure reason* or are they also motivated by grace? And how does grace work here?

There are two interlocutors in the discussion with Rousselot -- 1) immanentism or modernism, which made faith and knowledge meld into one in religious sentiment (sentimentalism) and 2) the extrincism of classic apologetics that separated belief and knowledge into separate spheres. When Rousselot published his works, the hypothesis of *scientific faith* was still popular, which suggested that there exists a natural faith, not yet informed by grace. There's an anthropological problem here -- who is the believing man? Also the problem of pure nature. Scientific faith -- natural faith -- The theory holds that reason can (without grace) know the elements of the faith, based on their credibility. An example is Gardeil, *La crédibilité e l'apologetique* (Paris, 1908). Even an atheist can arrive at the motives for the credibility of the faith, even if he does not come to belief.

The idea behind the theory of scientific faith was to safeguard the reasonableness of the faith. Billot (the only cardinal to be "de-cardinalized" -- his red hat was removed by Pius XI) believed that one can demonstrate that God has revealed Himself (a historical fact) and that it is legitimate to believe.

Rousselot, p. 39 -- sums up this doctrine -- reason can arrive at the materiality of the object of belief. The object is the same as that of supernatural faith. The atheist historian who arrives at the fact of the death of Jesus on the cross meets the same object, with the same psychological component as the believer -- the difference is the absence of faith. There is a doublet here of

natural faith and supernatural faith. The problem is that the faith of the simple cannot be explained in such a theory. There is certainly a rational element. But how many people say, “I see that I should believe, and therefore I believe”? How can I find this *scientific faith* in the simple? What difference would there be between Christian and Muslim faith? (Ed. note -- I didn't get the point of the last question.)

How are reasonableness and supernaturalness of the faith combined? For Rousselot, knowledge is not identified with rationalistic knowledge. Knowledge is to open oneself to the other. In apologetics, the apologist ended up using the rationalistic presuppositions of the rationalist. In knowledge the other is accepted. Knowledge is love. In French, *connaître* = *con-naître* = “to be born with.”

For the theory of scientific faith, there is a rational knowledge of the credibility of the faith, while supernatural faith believes. Reason -- credibility; faith -- *credendum* (the thing believed). On the one hand, apologetics takes us to the threshold of faith, then we enter into the household of faith, where dogmatics takes over. The guide of reason is no longer needed.

When I see that the truth is credible, then I believe. The problem for Rousselot is that “then.” He held that when one does not yet believe, the motives for belief are worthless. He wants to make the knowledge of the motives of credibility coincide with the act of belief (act of faith). I believe because it is credible; because it is credible, I believe. Rationality is not previous to, but included in, the act of faith.

When the act of faith is made, it can be said that “faith has discovered its eyes.” In the Augustinian-Thomistic line of thought, faith is at the same time knowledge of the credibility of the faith and the act of faith itself. Grace affects the entire process. Here Rousselot's anthropology begins to overcome (prophetically) the theory of pure nature.

Example -- a scientist -- A pear falls on Newton's head and he discovers gravity. It is a simultaneous process. Pears had fallen on many heads before. There is an act of genius in Newton that makes the incident special for him.

-- Or a detective discovers a body and says, “This person killed himself.” Another detective comes in, sees a piece of evidence, and says, “The butler killed him.” They both see the same things, but the second one discovers the discoverable.

In John, at the empty tomb, the Beloved Disciple “saw and believed.” Also, St. Thomas saw and said, “My Lord and my God.” What would Pilate or Caiphas have said?

St. Thomas (Aquinas) -- Eyes are needed for the faith. The solution of the intertwining of reason and supernatural is *Reciprocal Priority* -- between the proof and the thing proved. It's not a matter of the proof coming first, and then the belief. There's a temporal simultaneity and a reciprocal priority. The example of a flash bulb -- at the same moment the light flashes and the object is illuminated.

“Knowledge of credibility and knowledge of the truth are one act only.” The light of faith makes us see (with St. Thomas the Apostle). Is this not a vicious circle. No, using later terminology, we could say it is a “virtuous circle.” Rousselot says that it isn't because we don't have a deductive process short-circuited by presupposing one of the elements to be proved, but an inductive process. There is a difference between the order of reason and that of the supernatural. The indication is cause of the assent and precedes it (in the order of reason), but it follows it in the order of the supernatural. For example the holiness of the Church is the

necessary precondition for the holiness of an individual, but the holiness of an individual saint also points to the holiness of the Church.

Moral dispositions -- the problem remains that not all who look see. Without clean eyes I cannot see. Knowledge is the desire to know; love is the desire to love. A return here to the subject. There needs to be a capacity to understand. An example from experimental psychology: a monkey is placed in a room with boxes. The first day a chocolate is in the first box, the second day in the second, and so on. The monkey will find the chocolate each day and eat it, but only after having gone to the other boxes first. A child will check both boxes on the second day, but from then on will go to the newly added box. The argument about the contemporaries -- they saw the same thing and some believed, while others did not. There needs to be a sympathy for the object of the faith before it can be accepted -- this is the moral disposition. Song of Songs 4:3 -- If one loves he recognizes the spouse from only a single pearl of her necklace.

The advantage of Rousselot: the simplicity of the explanation. The believer doesn't have to complicate things in order to explain the reasonableness of the faith, because the faith is reasonable. This explains the faith of the simple who do not have to become educated to become believers. "Theology is not the belief of the wise, but the wisdom of believers." (citing an Italian author?) Reflection on love doesn't make love more true, but this doesn't mean that we don't need those who study love (i.e., academic theology). A scientist doesn't provide better milk for her child than a farmwoman, but there needs to be someone who studies the chemistry of mother's milk.

Now we turn to the second area of discussion of Rousselot - the relationship between certainty and freedom. How are they related? The act of faith is necessarily certain. If it were not, it could not be faith. At the same time, faith remains always free. How do we explain this paradox?

We need to avoid two extremes: Or you see with certainty and are not free, or you see freely and are not certain -- only one or the other can be saved.

Solution, is like the first. The reciprocal priority. P. 69: "Only because man so wills, does he see the truth; only because he sees the truth does he so will." There is a reciprocal priority between the knowledge of truth and the will to believe. I am certain, but also free, because I do not feel myself bound.

Vision/knowledge is through love. What is being considered is an idea more appropriate to knowledge and love. Love is the maximum expression of knowledge. Love gives birth to knowledge and knowledge legitimates love. Von Balthasar uses this in his theological aesthetics.

Isn't there irrationalism here? No -- there's a metaphysics of love. Love sees because it is reasonable; love loves because it sees. Faith is the *lumen fidei* that makes the object of faith shine for me. (von Balthasar overcomes the subject-object categories in this area, allowing for the inter-personal dimension.) There is a *perichoresis* of love, Newman's *illative sense*.

Rousselot: Does all of this have a scriptural basis? Yes, this faith is described in the fonts of tradition, especially in the Gospels. The person who does not believe does not believe because he cannot see. But his lack of faith is culpable, for if he willed to see he could -- here is the

importance of the miracles of vision. The guilt of the Jews -- they have not wanted to see that He is the Son of God.

Synthesis:

1. In the faith there's room for both belief and knowledge. Knowledge is included in the act of faith.
2. There is no opposition between belief and love, nor between knowing and loving.
3. Christ, the sense of the faith, is not a mystery to be known logically, but is a soteriological mystery. Herein lies the error of classic apologetics. Jesus must be known as a lived mystery. In John, belief is knowledge. P. 107: I hope not to be criticized for saying that the faith has no proofs. What's lacking is intelligence. There needs to be an intelligent intellect." (cf. St. Augustine). The knowledge of love is global.

Evaluation:

Positive:

1. There is a great novelty -- Rousselot does not present the process of faith in a unilateral form, deductive. It is logical, but it cannot be killed by the attempt to determine the elements.

The believer is a believer not despite being rational, but precisely because he is rational. Rationality here is understood not in the rationalistic sense of the word. Reason supersedes itself in the act of faith (cf. Pascal). Rationalism, not faith, is the suicide of reason. According to rationalistic illuminism, faith is the death of reason. In truth, according to Rousselot, the human being is made capable of faith by grace.

Evaluation, cont.:

2. Von Balthasar -- Rousselot has taken the right road. Faith is a *light*. It does not add arguments, but illuminates those arguments. Grace gives this tendency which allows the person to arrive at this vision. It's a matter of *attraction*. The Father attracts, draws to Him. Faith has a meaning, makes *sense*; at the moment in which I recognize the sense/meaning, I give my *assent*; there's a continuity in this faith, a *consent*.

Criticism:

1. Von Balthasar -- With regard to the *object* (Lambiasi doesn't really like this term, but we have to use it), Rousselot speaks too much still of signs and too little of the figure. He risks atomizing the signs even if he overcomes the apologetics of proofs. He speaks of the cross (sign), but not so much of Christ (the figure). (Ed. note: I think that last example grasps the general idea.)
2. With regard to the *subject* of the act of faith, there is the risk of Kantism (von Balthasar's bogeyman!). There is too much accentuation on the subject.

Overall, however, we should agree with von Balthasar that Rousselot found the right path

Now, a return to McDermott:

Third Model: Synthesis

a. Summary:

Balance between reason and faith can only be found in sacramental theology and a theology of freedom that takes history seriously.

“Thomas and the great Catholic thinkers recognized that the basic sacramental structure of Christianity demands that finite reality not be absolutized, since it is not God, nor totally relativized and deprived of formal intelligibility lest it be rendered incapable of pointing beyond itself. The structure and intelligibility of finite reality must be preserved so that it may serve as the sacramental sign of God’s presence.”

b. Schema:

1. Man tries to understand two infinities: God and Matter (individual).
 - a. When I say “this is “, I unite finite and infinite; identity with being but also individuality. The reference is always to the finite material thing.
2. Man also has love; and this includes an absolute. Love is supra-rational and free.
 - a. How can a finite man affirm an absolute? It (absolute) seems to be doomed to relativity.
3. Key: Same structure found in love is always and also reflective of the structure of man’s intellect.
4. Result: love’s structure is primary and reflects intellect’s structure.

Therefore, how do I know the proof of love? In Jesus and so my certitude rests in more than intellectual propositions!!!

II. Faith: trans-rational yet presupposes credibility.

The Faith, grounded in God’s self-revelation in Christ, cannot be the result of a merely rational discourse; however, it presupposes a previous knowledge in the credibility of Christianity. Theology (the theological task) necessarily implies a philosophical reflection while not being tied to any one determined philosophical system.

I. Vatican I (Dei Filius):

Reaction to **Fideism**, with its total reliance on revelation and its distrust of human reason, and **Rationalism** in its various forms which considers natural reason as the only source of human knowledge.

Presupposition: There is both a congruity and distinction between Faith and Reason

Two Basic Thrusts:

A. There is a congruity between faith and reason.

1. In the natural order, it is possible to arrive at a certain knowledge of God through created things by the light of reason.

2. One can also use reason to interpret supernatural revelation because there is no contradiction between reason and faith.

“However, though faith is above reason, there can never be a 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, and God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth.” (DS 3017)

3. Furthermore, the act of faith is not blind because reason can discover in secure signs (miracles, prophecy, Catholic church) the reasonableness of faith.

“However, in order that the obedience of our faith be nevertheless in harmony with reason, God willed that exterior proofs of His revelation, viz., divine facts, especially miracles and prophecies, should be joined to the interior helps of the holy Spirit; as they manifestly display the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, they are the most certain signs of the divine revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all men.” (DS 3009)

4. There is a congruity between external things that serves as an argument for faith that come to be heard **and the interior illumination** of the intellect by grace.

B. There is also a distinctive and clear distinction between faith and reason.

1. One can distinguish between their **principles**: (natural reason and divine faith) and their **objects** (known natural things and the mysteries of the hidden God). The truths of faith transcend the powers of the intellect and cannot be deduced by reason.

“There are proposed for our belief mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God.” (DS 3015)

2. They are accepted by the authority of God and not because of the natural light of reason.

“The catholic Church professes that this faith, which is the ‘beginning of man’s salvation’ is a supernatural virtue whereby, inspired and assisted by the grace of God, we believe that what he has revealed is true, not because the intrinsic truth of things is recognized by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself who reveals them, who can neither err nor deceive.” (DS 3008)

3. Thus, faith is a supernatural gift from God in that it gives **interior** help to help recognize the **exterior** signs that witness to divine revelation.

4. To the extent that faith transcends reason it is a gift of grace that demands the **submission of man’s intellect and will**. The act of faith is a free act of obedience responding to grace.

II. Faith transcends reason (DV 5)

1. Nature of faith:

a. By faith, we mean something more than merely a natural knowledge of God; Catholic theology and teaching has insisted that had God not communicated himself to us in any other way other than creation, we could have a natural knowledge of God by light of pure reason. (cf. Dei Filius: The same Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from the things that were created through the natural light of human reason. . . but that it pleased His wisdom and bounty to reveal Himself and His eternal decrees in another and supernatural way.” [DS 3004])

b. Faith is the personal response to the self-disclosure of God in the order of grace. The Father, who has disclosed to us the fullness of human possibility through the Incarnation of the Son invites us to participate in that Filial relationship through the power of the Spirit.

1. Faith, therefore, is not the result of a demonstration but a Self-disclosure. And yet, it’s goal is union and communion. The union and communion of love presupposes a choice that is fully human (that is rational and free). **Faith cannot be an irrational choice.**

2. Faith must also be a free choice (and its freedom is compromised if we were to say that faith is the logical result of a mere rational discourse), not the result of a constringent demonstration. To say that faith transcends reason is not to say that faith and reason are opposed to each other (to say that the act of faith is irrational was the position of the rationalists: to say that an act of reason cannot put us in contact with God is fideism. Both extremes are false.) What does it mean to say that faith transcends reason? **It means that rationality is not the only measure of truth** (you cannot reduce revelation to the rational); on the other hand, God respects human freedom and offers to freedom the self-disclosure in revelation.

2. The transcendence of faith in relation to reason:

a. From the Divine side (The Gift as Offer - trinitarian aspect)

1. The formal foundation of faith:

The foundation of faith is the personal self-communication of God, particularly the fullness of that **self-disclosure in Jesus Christ**. While Rahner speaks of man as an openness to the possibility of God’s self-disclosure, the fact of that self-disclosure, that fundamentally gratuitous act of the Father, transcends the being of man and the natural possibilities of his intelligence and freedom. [McDermott’s point: the Rahnerian dynamism is always a frustrated dynamism; the natural abilities of human reason and free will would never bring me to the union and communion with the Father in the Son through the Spirit which is possible only through faith]

2. The grace of faith itself:

Man cannot believe without the **interior illumination** of the Holy Spirit. Obviously, we do not achieve salvation purely by our own efforts. If faith is considered “saving knowledge” it is a knowledge that transcends human abilities.

3. The content of faith:

The **mystery of Christ** who is center of both revelation and of faith. Only in Christ are the “mysteries” of faith revealed (Trinity, Church, sacraments, eschatology etc.)

b. From the human side: Free response to the offer:

There is a certainty that is proper to faith, a certainty that is not based on logical demonstration. If the assent were the conclusion of an evident and constringent demonstration, the assent would not be free and human. the process is one of conversion. The function of reason, then, is one of justifying the option to believe (similar, in a sense to what William James accomplishes in *The Will to Believe*) and not that of demonstrating.

II. Faith presupposing reason as a reflective, intellectual step.

Here, we are not talking about the second order reflection of theology, but the very act of believing itself. What are the grounds of possibility for making an act of faith?

A. Thomas: God Himself as “*veritas prima*”. God Himself is the foundation of His credibility as the ultimate truth. However, he is only seen as ultimate truth through the interior illumination of grace.

- a. “Fides praesupponit rationem, sicut gratia naturam.” (ST I, q.2, a.2, ad. 1)
- b. “Fides non potest universaliter praecedere intellectum; non enim posset homo assentire credendo aliquibus propositis nisi ea aequaliter intelligeret.” (ST II-ii, q.8, a.8, ad.2)
Faith cannot be blind!

B. The credibility of Christianity: Faith is conditioned by reason inasmuch as it supposes a prior knowledge of the credibility of Christianity.

1. Reasonableness of Free Choice:

If the option of faith is an option of absolute surrender to God, or total adherence to Christ as the ultimate meaning of one’s existence, the severity of such a choice would demand a reflection upon the reasons for that option. **This exigency is an ontological part of human freedom.** Human freedom is constituted in such a way that it demands to be guided by a reflexive knowledge of its motives or its decision. Man cannot renounce this fundamental exigency of his being without abdicating himself as a responsible (and self-determining) being. Therefore, the act of faith, inasmuch as it is a free response, cannot be considered apart from the human capacity to reflect, that is, reason.

2. External Signs/ Internal Illumination:

The knowledge of sufficient motives to justify the option of Christian faith ought in some way to show the credibility of Christianity. As we have seen in *Dei Filius*, God provides signs of his presence in revelation history; credibility is achieved as the mind moves from sign to reality signified through discursive reflection. Such a reflection is a condition prior to faith.

3. Epistemologically, reason precedes faith but not existentially. It is important to make this distinction. We are saying that within the act of faith, as in any act which involves human self-determination, reason plays an indispensable role. In the existential order, however, we do not mean to say that God manifests himself through concrete signs; reason then contemplates those signs and on the basis of that evidence understands the credibility of belief and then makes the leap of faith (if it was that clear, it wouldn't be faith!) Rather, existentially speaking, man is never simply situated with only the light of reason before the signs of Christian revelation. **Rather**, already in the rational enterprise of reflecting upon the credibility of Christianity, the illuminating function of grace is taking place (The condition of the possibility of seeing the sign as sign is the illumination of grace itself.) In other words, the judgment of credibility has a logical priority but not necessarily an existential priority. In fact, one only reflects upon the rational elements of faith in a relatively later moment of conversion. Then, one discovers the logical priority of the judgment of credibility.

D. Integrating the faith-reason antinomy in the greater, more comprehensive grace-nature rapport:

1. Brouillard: Reason, transcendental condition of possibility of faith.

2. Alfaro: Man, as intelligent and free, radically capable (*potentia obedientialis*) of receiving the absolute grace of God's self-revelation, self-donation. We are constituted as rational and free beings, as possible recipients in faith of that self-revelation.

3. The faith surrender to the Mystery who is God is a rational act; the rational affirmation of the Mystery who is God is a faith act. (Actually, the affirmation of rationality is a faith act. The affirmation of faith is a rational act).

III. Theology - philosophical task without canonizing one philosophical system.

A. Task of theology: applying reason to the process of revelation-faith.

1. The use of philosophy in the theological enterprise of "understanding" faith.

a. It is legitimate to use philosophy because of the distinction between a natural and a revealed knowledge of God.

b. Question: What are the conditions, the right measure, by which philosophy is employed?

2. Theology as thought thinking:

Theology (like any science) is a philosophical task when it reflects upon itself.

a. Critical thinking:

The theologian seeks to take account of his **presuppositions** or the presuppositions of those who are engaged in the task of understanding the faith. Of course, his own presuppositions are faith; *fides quaerens intellectum* may also be understood as *crede ut intellegas*. Reflection proceeds from faith; it is a matter of doing theology “from the center” and not as a disinterested observer.

b. Methodical thinking:

There is a **certain method** by which the theologian proceeds; as Lonergan has shown, the method itself is somewhat determined by the processes of human knowing (experience, understanding, judgment, decision); however, while these processes are universally valid, the theologian’s task is, methodologically speaking, **unique** in that it is guided by certain norms imposed by its object [faith] and by the goal of the enterprise. In effect, the doing of theology, when guided by its object faith becomes a further experience of faith. In seeking to understand the incomprehensible (in seeking to grasp the ungraspable), theology sees its own limitations as it confronts the ultimate questions and impossible antinomies (God-man, freedom and necessity, unity and diversity, nature-grace, etc.).

c. Systematic thinking:

The parts are never examined nor understood apart from the whole; the theologian makes himself aware of the hermeneutical circle by which the whole interprets the parts and the parts contribute to an understanding of the whole.

3. Theology as thought thought:

The content of theology implies philosophical questions. Faith provokes man to express the ultimate questions given with his existence: From where do we come? What is our goal? Does God exist? Is there freedom and responsibility? Seeking to understand Christian revelation and salvation as addressed to man, reflection on the faith cannot be done without asking at least what it is in man that makes it possible for him to be the recipient of a divine self-communication. Anthropologically, what is the constitutive structure of the human person?

4. Conclusion: Theology and philosophy are connected. Philosophical reflection constitutes a permanent infrastructure of theological thought, an inseparable moment in doing theology. If we were to renounce this truth, if we were to try to divorce philosophy from theology, we would still be driven by some unconscious philosophical presuppositions.

B. Theology is not tied to any determined system of philosophy; no philosophy can be imposed upon the reflection of faith.**1. Revelation-faith makes a claim to universality -**

All have been called by God to participate in his life. The theological reflection upon this call-response, therefore, has a universal dimension. It cannot be tied to any particular philosophical system.

2. Faith, on a pre-reflexive level (that is, faith by itself) is not competent to judge the logic and method of a specific philosophical system.

However, faith conscious of itself must challenge the contradiction between its content and determined philosophical doctrines (cf. Vatican I *Dei Filius*: Further the Church, along with its apostolic office of teaching, received the charge of guarding the deposit of faith has also from God the right and duty to proscribe what is falsely called knowledge [cf. I Tim 6:20] lest anyone be deceived by philosophy and

vain fallacy [cf. Col :8].” - DS 3018). The goal is not to prove (scientifically) the falsity of these doctrines. Theology can point out a lack in certain philosophical systems which make that system unsuitable or unadaptable to the theological task. For example, theology is a reflection upon the personal faith encounter with God as he has revealed himself in history and most fully in the Incarnate Son. Theology, then, in seeking to understand this divine human encounter, finds affirmed in faith the freedom of God, the freedom of man, the destiny of man and the world, and all of the other conditions that make possible this encounter. Are all philosophical systems best equipped to help us to understand this encounter? *Optatum Totius* calls for seminarians to “base themselves on a philosophic heritage which is perennially valid.” Yet, it calls for students “to be conversant with contemporary philosophical investigations.” (OT, 15)