

Faith & Reason

What is Faith?

Meanings from the *Oxford English Dictionary*

(1) a set of propositions that one believes

“The Jewish faith”

(2) a relationship to a belief

“I believe that God exists on faith alone”

(3) a relationship to an individual

“I have faith in Ed” (that he will keep his word, etc.)

(4) an attitude towards life

To be willing to act in the face of uncertainty, hopeful that things will work out.

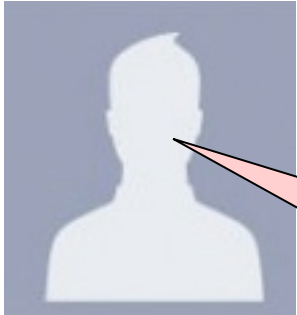
What is Reason?

Meanings from the *Oxford English Dictionary*

- (1) A verbal account that explains or justifies something
 - “He had his reasons for swallowing that toad, but they weren’t good reasons.”
 - “Her reasons persuaded him to stay home and avoid being lynched by the aroused mob.”

- (2) A power or faculty of mind ...
 - (a) To think and form valid judgements by a process of logic.
 - (b) To adapt thought or action to some end (means-end reasoning).
 - (c) In contrast with the *will*, *imagination*, or *passion*, reason is more rule-like or governed.

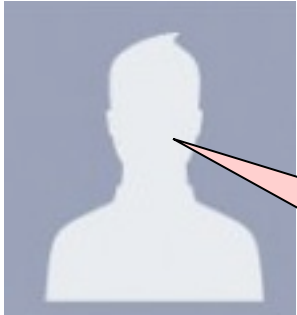
What is Faith?



Author of Hebrews
(1st c. CE)

Faith is being sure of
what we hope for and
certain of what we do
not see. (Hebrews 11:1)

What is Faith?

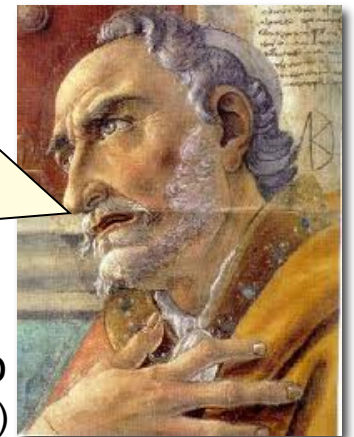


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(1st c. CE)

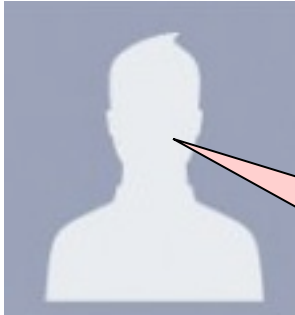
Faith is being sure of
what we hope for and
cer

Understanding is the reward of
faith. Therefore, seek not to
understand that you may believe,
but believe that you may
understand.

Augustine of Hippo
(354-430)



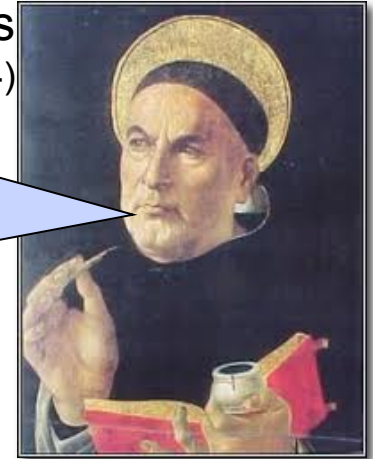
What is Faith?



Author of Hebrews
(1st c. CE)

Believing something on faith means believing it to be true because God says it is true.

Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

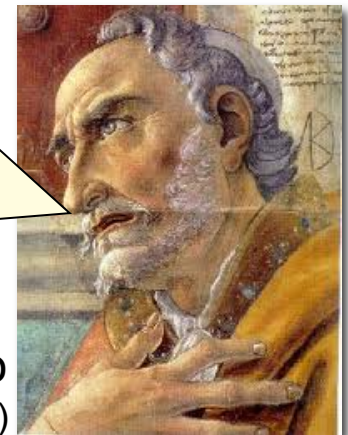


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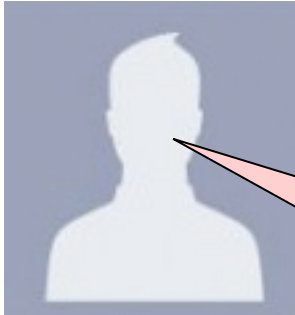
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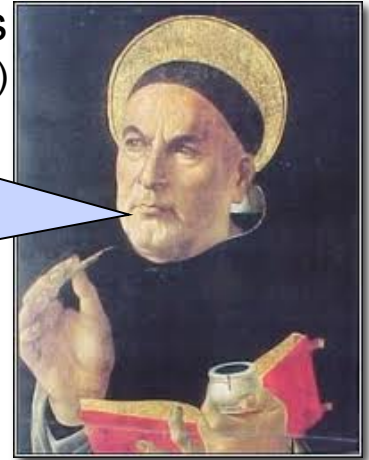


What is Faith?



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Faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off.

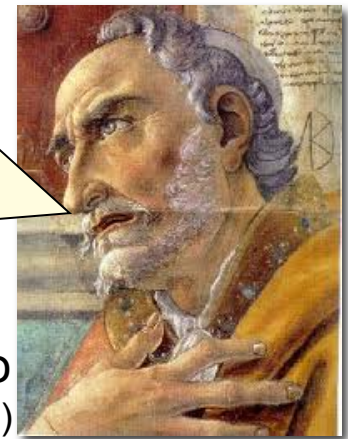
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ward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.



Soren Kierkegaard
(1813-1855)

Augustine of Hippo
(354-430)



Faith vs Reason?



St. Paul
(1st c. CE)

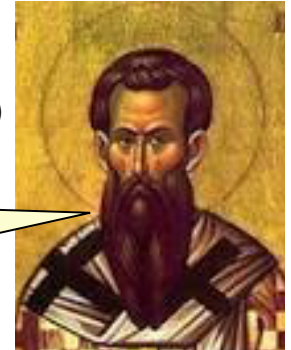
See that no one makes a
prey of you by philo-
sophy and empty deceit.

(Colossians 2:8)

Faith vs Reason?



St. Paul
(1st c. CE)



Tertullian
(160-220 CE)

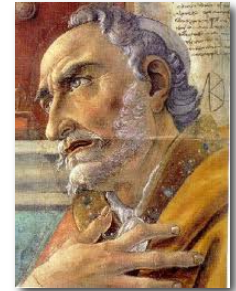
What has Athens to
do with Jerusalem?

See that no one makes a
prey of you by philo-
sophy and empty deceit.

(Colossians 2:8)

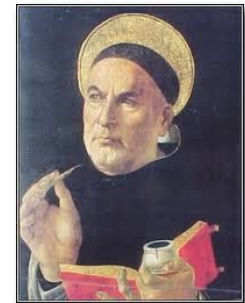
How are Faith and Reason Related?

(1) Does faith *correct* reason? (Augustine)



or

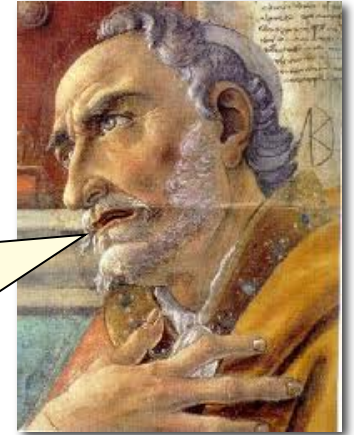
(2) Does faith *supplement* reason? (Aquinas)



How are Faith and Reason Related?



Reason helps us discover credible authority but, once found, reason must submit to this authority.



Augustine of Hippo
(354-430)



How are Faith and Reason Related?

There is a two-fold truth to religious claims. Faith *supplements* human reason.



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

Knowable only by faith; reason can elucidate, but not prove.

Articles of Faith

Ex.: that the universe was created in time; that God is triune.

Knowable through reason.

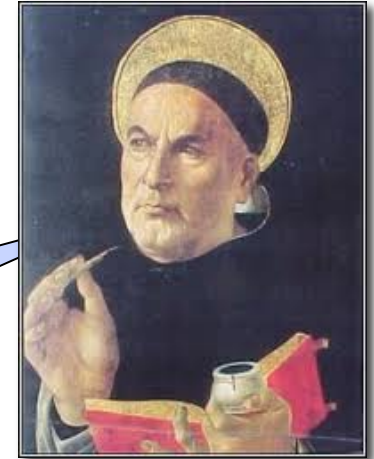
Preambles to the Articles of Faith

Ex.: that God exists; that God is the cause of the universe.

Believing on Faith



Believe Me,
O Mortals!



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

Believing something on faith
means believing it to be true
because God says it is true.

2+3=5! F=ma! I exist! Murder is wrong!
Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo!
The Cubs are a superior baseball team!

Believing on Faith

Believing something on faith means believing it to be true because God says it is true.

Given this definition of faith, which of the following statements may one “believe on faith”?

- (1) Jesus is the Son of God.
- (2) The world was created in time.
- (3) The *Bible* is the word of God.
- (4) God exists.



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

Aquinas: Faith and Reason

Bk. 1, Ch. 3: On the Way in which Divine Truth is to be Made Known

(§2) “There is a twofold mode of truth in what we profess about God”:

- (1) **Truths obtainable by natural reason** (e.g., God exists, God is one): these truths were available to Aristotle.
- (2) **Truths obtainable by faith alone** (e.g., God is triune): to these, Aristotle had no access and so could not have known.

Aquinas offers **four arguments** for accepting this second kind of truth that is beyond human reason, viz., supernatural truths:

- (1) FROM THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE (§3): all our knowledge comes from our senses, but God is nonsensible.
- (2) FROM THE GRADATION OF THE INTELLECTS (§4): just as it is folly for the simple-minded to reject the claims of the scientist, it is folly for the human to reject the claims of God.
- (3) FROM OUR KNOWLEDGE OF SENSIBLES (§5). Our knowledge is limited even with sensible things; thus it will be even more limited with the nonsensible.
- (4) FROM AUTHORITY (§§6-7). Both Aristotle and Scripture attest to knowledge that is beyond human reasoning.

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (written 1251-64)]

Aquinas: Faith and Reason

Bk. 1, Ch. 4: Why God has revealed some natural truths to us

(1) PROBLEM OF EXCLUSIVENESS (§3)

Without such revelation, there would be few people who would ever attain to those truths, either because they lacked ability, or lacked the time, or lacked the initiative (i.e., were too lazy).

(2) PROBLEM OF TIME (§4)

Even those who could attain to those truths wouldn't get them until late in life, due to the profundity and presuppositions of the truths, and the youthful passions of the person.

(3) PROBLEM OF FALSITY (§5)

These truths, due to their complexity, would probably be mixed with error.

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (written 1251-64)]

Aquinas: Faith and Reason

Bk. 1, Ch. 5: Why there are supernatural truths, and why God should reveal them to us

(1) HIGHER GOOD (§2)

Human beings are ordained to a higher good (e.g., heaven); but if humans have no knowledge of this higher good, they can hardly be expected to desire it. Thus, they need these higher truths.

(2) KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S NATURE (§3)

By revealing these truths, we gain a better understanding of the nature of God, particularly the fact that he is so beyond us in intellect and wisdom.

(3) HUMILITY (§4)

Being revealed these truths curb human presumption, showing to us the limits of our intellects.

(4) JOY (§5)

There's a great deal of joy to be gained in contemplating these truths.

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (written 1251-64)]

Aquinas: Faith and Reason

Bk. 1, Ch. 6: The truths of revelation are justified by miracles

Aquinas has two kinds of miracles in mind:

(1) The Standard Kind

Turning water into wine, raising the dead, curing the incurable, etc.

(2) The Conversion of Europe to Christianity, despite its ...

(a) **supernatural truths**, which are repugnant to reason, and

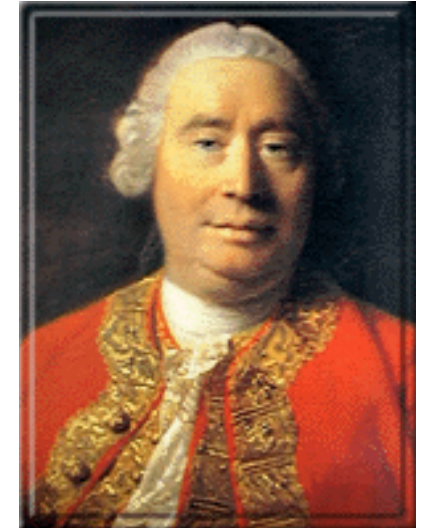
(b) **ascetic requirements**, which are repugnant to our passions.

- These two aspects of Christianity are not readily accepted by people and so the fact that they *were* accepted, and by so many, is explainable only through recourse to divine intervention.
- This latter miracle is central for Aquinas: if we deny (1), then (2) is an even greater miracle.

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (written 1251-64)]

Hume on the Christian Faith

“We may conclude that the Christian Religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity.” (Section 10, pt. 2)



David Hume
(1711-1776)

[David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748)]

Three Positions

Strong Rationalism

In order for a religious belief system to be properly and rationally accepted, it must be possible to prove that the belief system is true.

Fideism

Religious belief systems are not subject to rational evaluation.

Critical Rationalism

Religious belief systems can and must be rationally criticized and evaluated although conclusive proof of such a system is impossible.

Three Positions

Critical Rationalism

Religious belief systems can and must be rationally criticized and evaluated although conclusive proof of such a system is impossible.

Assessing a world view for...

- (a) internal (logical) consistency.
- (b) external consistency (with the known facts).
- (c) *theoretical* explanatory power (making sense of the world).
- (d) *practical* explanatory power (making sense of the human condition).
- (e) remaining open to new truth.

Three Positions

Fideism

Religious belief systems are not subject to rational evaluation.

Problems with Fideism:

- (1) Religious diversity: over which abyss do I leap?
- (2) Fundamental belief: is it really axiomatic?
- (3) Modifying belief: we often do this, in the light of reason.
- (4) Self-contradiction: we use reason to avoid this.
- (5) Self-serving: Fideists use reason until they start to lose.

Revelation!

Two Kinds of Revelation

General: available to all.



Special: available to some.



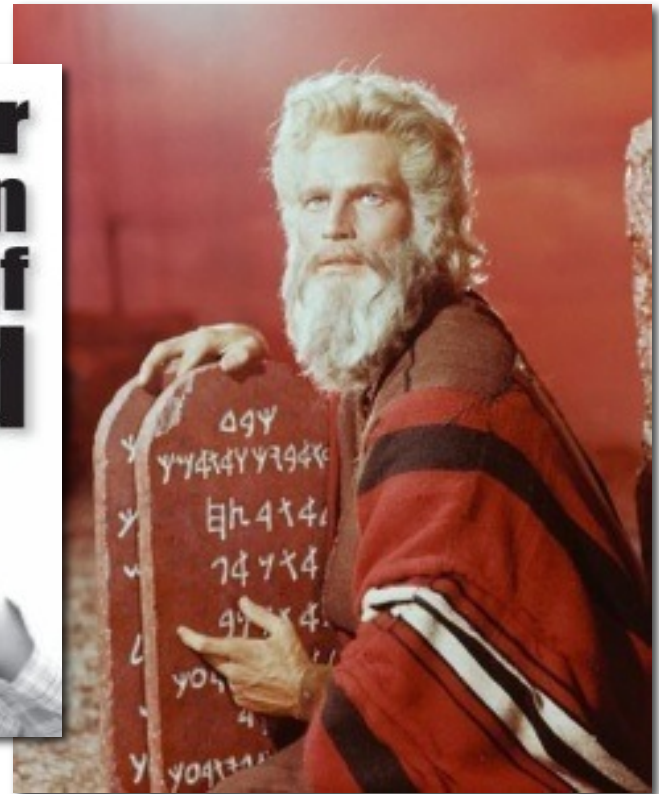
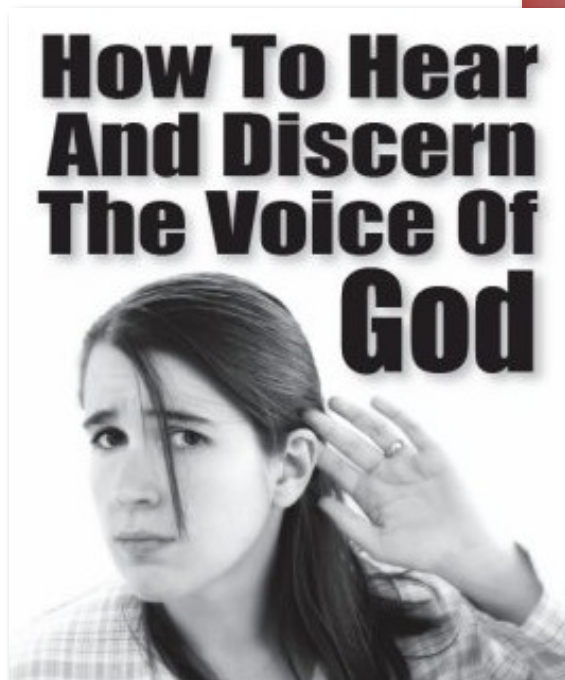
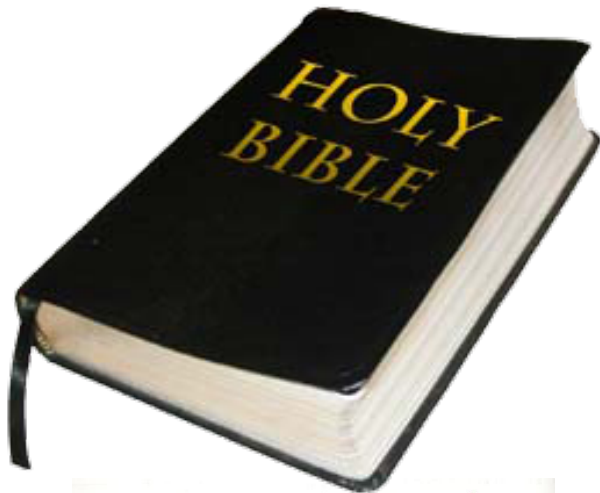
General Revelation

General Revelation: given directly to *all* people, typically through nature and with the help of reason.



Special Revelation

Special Revelation: given directly to one person or group, as found in scripture, prophecy, divine inspiration.



What do you think?

What reason would we have to believe that a revelation comes from God?

How would we recognize God's voice?

Special Revelation in Texas

Mother Who Killed Sons with Rock Found Not Guilty

Sun Apr 4, 8:45 AM ET (2004)

TYLER, Texas (Reuters) - A Texas woman who beat two of her sons to death with a rock and badly injured another because she believed God told her to do it was found not guilty by reason of insanity on Saturday.

A jury of eight men and four women deliberated for nearly seven hours before reaching their verdict.

Deanna Laney, 39, broke down in tears and shook when state judge Cynthia Kent read the jury's decision in the hushed courtroom in the eastern Texas city of Tyler.

She could have faced life in prison if convicted, but instead will go to a state mental institution until the judge decides she is well enough to be released. [...]

Religion, Revelation, and Morality

If God should really speak to man, man could still never know that it was God speaking.



Sacrifice of Isaac (1603)
Caravaggio (1571-1610)



Immanuel Kant
(1724-1804)

Religion, Revelation, and Morality

It is quite impossible for man to apprehend the infinite with his senses, distinguish it from sensible beings, and recognize it as such.

... speak to
... ll never
... God

... ing.



Sacrifice of Isaac (1603)
Caravaggio (1571-1610)



Immanuel Kant
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Religion, Revelation, and Morality

But in some cases man can be sure that the voice he hears is not God's. If the voice commands him to do something contrary to the moral law, then no matter how majestic the apparition may be, and no matter how it may seem to surpass the whole of nature, he must consider it an **illusion**.



Sacrifice of Isaac (1603)
Caravaggio (1571-1610)



Immanuel Kant
(1724-1804)

Natural and Revealed Religion

Natural religion is the set of religious beliefs that can be known **through reason alone** as it reflects on the phenomena of nature.

Revealed religion is the set of religious beliefs that can be known **only through God's special revelation**, either scripture or mystical insight.

Natural and Revealed Religion

Deism: the believe that natural religion is adequate for one's salvation; special revelation is unnecessary or even deceptive and harmful.

Some Famous Deists:

(in America) Ben Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine

(in France) Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau

(in Germany) Leibniz, Lessing, Kant

Three Words that Sound almost the Same

Fideism

is the belief that reason and evidence can play, at best, a minor role in religion. Our belief is based on faith.

Deism

is the belief that natural religion is adequate for salvation; rejects special revelation.

Theism

is the belief that God exists.

Latin: *fides* (faith), *deus* (God). Greek: *theos* (God)