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AN ANALYSIS OF FAITH AND REASON AS METHODS OF KNOWING IN CHRISTIANITY

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of faith and reason as methods for knowing in Christianity is an analytical study, which investigates the relationship between faith and reason in Christianity. The study tried to establish whether the two methods of knowing could be used in Christianity, if and how they can be useful to the religion, the church and Christians. Library research method was adopted.

In analyzing the problem, the researcher established three relationships that exists between faith and reason. These relationships include: contradictory; supplementary; and, complementary. After due analysis of the three relationships, that faith and reason are complementary to each other formed the conclusion of the work.

This implies that the idea of discountenancing reason at the expense of faith in the Christians desire to know should not arise anymore

B Conclusion

Faith and reason are all method of knowing in Christianity. They are complementary to each other. The application of the intellect

In the matter of the Christian faith aids the Christian in a productive Christian living. People must be given the reason why they must believe. Man by nature is an inquirer. Shying away from giving good reasons for our hope will only embolden gainsayers and further swell the rank of those who do not believe.

Evidence strengthens belief. What is proved cannot be doubted by any reasonable mind. Jesus said, "without sign they cannot believe." He knew the importance of evidence, the low estate of man and his dependence on what is seen, hence his promise that sign will accompany the preaching of the gospel.

The theory of course and effect when argued extensively affirms, the interconnectivity of faith and reason. Whatever is seen happening, is caused by something.

The separation of faith and reason in Europe resulted to the comatose state of the church over there (Polanyi 237). It may creep into the church in Nigeria. The Christian must not shy away from defending the faith. It is not just enough to say that the fate of the church in Europe cannot be replicated here.

Proofs can help us to grow as Christians. Knowing the reason for our faith will actually strengthen our faith (Close 18). Ockham ended scholasticism by declaring that faith and reason were incompatible and should be kept strictly separate (238). However, the physicists, economist, biologist, are guided by external aid to get at

their conclusion, so is the overwhelming evidence provided to the search for God.

The 21st century theologian may not function efficiently without knowing and appreciating the interwoveness of the two. He must be predisposed to the fact because, it permeates the whole body of the Christian truth. The world is getting more sophisticated, knowledge is increasing. He must meet up with the great challenge. He is a bearer of the light and truth. Those who lead must know. And the theologian being on the grandstand must not renounce the task entrusted to him as one who sets out the truth of the Christian faith. He must be able to give reason for the faith in him (Peter 3: 15)

Reason is not a monster as it is being painted. Reason helps the Christian to attain a deeper understanding of the Christian faith. The securitization of propositions or axioms on the Christian faith has never at anytime affected negatively on the church. Rather, it has always resulted in the strengthening of faith, and having a more cogent weapon against those who do not believe (John Paul II 4). Man, who knows by experience what it means to trust Christ, will be more productive in his work with God. What he believes about, when daily proven, not only deepens his faith but gives him the boldness to share his faith.

From various discoveries by man over the centuries, have almost succeeded in elbowing God out from human consciousness. Many can go about life as if there is no God only to come running to him when solution defies every available human solution. The danger

to Christianity today is not Islam or any other religion but a subtle "man" called intellectual inquiry. Knowledge of the fact that God who created man also gave him the mind to think can reduce this pride on what the intellect can attain. Many who cannot understand this see themselves as liberated from the shackles of Christian dogmas.

Archaeology supports the claim of Christianity. This in the time past, have helped skeptics to believe. The discovery of the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1), which was doubted just few decades ago, and the accuracy of Jacob's Well (John 4), all have lent credence to the authenticity of the biblical claims, and have confronted those who have problem with believing the Christian claims. These are the proofs, which those who do not believe are asking for. Christian apologetics have in the time past presented the Christian faith in an intelligent fashion. Most of the New Testament books were intelligent, reasonable replies to many wrong insinuations against the Christian faith God often uses apologetics, or evidence to help clear away obstacles to faith that many people erect and also to show that faith in Christ is reasonable.

> It does not in the least follow that faith that God gives is an irrational faith, that is, faith without right reasons. We believe in Christ because it is rational to believe in him. An intelligent Christian ought to be able to point up the flaws in a non-Christian position and to present facts and arguments which tells in favour of the gospels (McDowell 32).

The head and the heart are created to walk together in harmony "I know whom I have believed" says Paul (2 Timothy 1:21). Ones faith involves the intellectual faculty. The abandonment of reasons in the Christians quest to know results to emotionalism, without providing backing for the stupendous claims of Christianity. All true faith involves knowledge and issue in knowledge (Machen 40). Christians are turning out to become intellectual dullards, fed with every concoction men dish out to them in the name of "what the Lord says." Most of these, pitiable ones, gullible, are fastly becoming pagans in their practices when they have unknowingly abandoned the part of heroic devotion to the gospel..

The Christian faith is the faith that has provided enough evidence. The idea of hiding under faith when something cannot be proven should not arise in Christianity. Great men in the history of the church have been men that questioned the reason for their belief. A belief, which is intellectually indefensible, is not likely to appeal to best minds of a paramagnetic and questioning age like ours (MacDonald 118).

Many were the superstitions which were hitherto believed and which resulted to false practices. At Present, so many of these superstitions have given way to a better knowledge. Faith without critical analysis is dogma. The result of dogma is fanaticism. So many evil occurrences in the past were attributed to be curses from God. However, man by the reason of thought has arrived at the reasons for, and the solution to this phenomenon which where once attributed to

be curses from God. The backwardness of many Christians could be attributed to their inability to make use of their minds. Everything is presented to God to sort out, including that which should be the responsibility of man. Many Christians do not consult the doctors when they are ill. Rather, they will wait on God to come and heal them. They refuse to reason. However, despite the necessity of reason, reason is not the answer. The problem of man is not a head problem but a heart problem. No matter how man tries to think away God, the moral problem persists and can only be addressed when the truth is believed. "It (reason) cannot lift a single defeated soul out of the abyss of self- loathing and despair" (MacDonald 20).

The Christian should not in any way be afraid of reasoning his faith, for such reasoning will only result to a better understanding and deeper convictions. If what is believed is true, what is the fear in proving it? Any faith that is afraid of reasoning is a faith that is standing on an "insecure foundations" (Macgregor 162). Scientific certainty is always considered an objective certainty. Likewise, the certainty of a Christian man's faith is an objective certainty, -a certainty that is not based on some psychological experience of the person. Christianity did not originate as someone's idea. It has received the greatest attack so far because it does not shy away from making the greatest bold claim despite that it is one of the youngest religions in history. Its claims are not presumptions, assumptions, postulations, or ideas by hallucinated minds, but a declaration of what is, because of an event, which everyone is free to verify. Many

people choose Christianity rather than Islam, Judaism, etc because the claims of Christianity have been proven true. Reason and faith work together. The mind will continue to search until the truth is discovered. The heart cannot rejoice when the mind is struggling.

C Recommendations

1. The shedding off of the toga of religious dogmatism, accepting the part which reason can play as methods of knowing in the Christian faith is a discovery which need to be encouraged. The appreciation of the fact that there are vast tracts of truths amendable to reason gives one something to cheer.

2. In order to avoid the adoption of some extreme positions like the one by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century. or the other extreme by Tertullian, a course curriculum on faith and reason, or the role of science in relation to Christians faith should be taught to pastors in theological schools. Christians should be encouraged to read, and by other means other than the Bible, seek a good knowledge of the things of faith.

3 Finally, given that knowledge in this area is still hazy, more research work centering more on the complementarities of faith and reason or science is hereby recommended.