

The Act of Believing and Supernatural Faith

1. The act of believing according to human nature.
 - a. Apprehension, judgment, and reasoning.
 - b. Judgments are either true or false in reality but a person always believes the judgment made is true.
 - c. A belief is the result of a judgment. A belief is a truth claim.
 - d. Truth is that which corresponds to reality.
 - i. “Truth is conformity of a thought to a thing, mind to reality, thought’s subject to thought’s object.” – Peter Kreeft
 - ii. A belief is only true when it corresponds to reality.
 - e. The role of the mind: “Even religion, though it goes beyond logic, cannot go against it; if it did, it would literally be unbelievable. Some wit defined ‘faith’ as ‘believing what you know isn’t true.’ But we simply *cannot* believe an idea to be true that we know has been proved to be false by a valid logical proof.” – Peter Kreeft.
 - i. Bad reasoning can interfere with accepting truth and good reasoning can hinder from accepting a lie.
 - f. The role of the will: “for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness...” Rom. 10:10
 - i. The will is what causes the decision to believe and it also queues the mind to reason in its favor.
 - ii. The will is often referenced by the word “heart” in Scripture. It contains your view of what is good. (Heb. 3:8, 10, 12, 15; 4:7, 12; Gen. 6:5; Psalm 14:1; Jer. 17:5-10)
 - g. The mind and will working together: “The mind of the one believing settles upon the one side of a question not in virtue of his reason but in virtue of his will. Therefore assent is understood in the definition of faith as an act of the mind in so far as the mind is brought to its decision by the will.” – Thomas Aquinas
2. Romans 1:18-28; displaying the role of the will and the mind in believing.
 - a. If they knew God (1:21), then why didn’t they move toward what they intuitively knew?
 - b. God gave them over to the lusts of their heart (1:24), a heart that was foolish and darkened through false reasoning (1:21). The false reasoning was in accordance with justifying the desires of the will.
 - c. Why do they need to suppress truth?
 - d. Did they believe the lie? (1:25)
 - e. There was a choice not to examine the obvious in order to bring God into reality (1:28). (καθὼς οὐκ ἔδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει)
 - f. We must be careful not to make the error of putting all who doubt the existence of God into the same category as these unbelievers.
 - i. Reason cannot persuade intentional truth suppressors.
 - ii. Some, who doubt God’s existence, have been persuaded through the faulty reasoning of others. Those who have believed the “authorities” rather than claiming to be the authority.
3. Supernatural faith and bringing reality to accepted propositions.
 - a. Supernatural faith is taking the unseen and making it more real than what is seen. 2 Cor. 5:7
 - b. Consider the act of believing in Jesus.
 - i. God gives the ability for the mind to grasp the reality of Jesus according to the will’s desire to believe in Jesus. God can do this better than all of the reasoning in the world.

- c. God's ways of bringing spiritual truths to reality are vast and perhaps can be categorized by understanding our barriers in believing.
 - i. Fallen nature of the will. (Duet. 8:3-6)
 - ii. Fallen nature of the mind/intellect. (James 1:5)
 - iii. Truths that go beyond the mind's capacity. (1 Cor. 2:6-16)
 - 1. It is actually more reasonable to hold that God must manifest Himself to our intellects to conform to His reality than to think that a finite being has the powers of reason within itself to conform to the mind of the Infinite Being.
 - d. There is great difference between accepting the reason for something to be true and seeing something as true/real in itself. Seeing Pascal's wager to be logically true versus seeing God as true.
4. Faith as a virtue.
- a. Developing virtue requires practice for habituation.
 - i. Faith cannot be practiced if the object of faith is not known, remembered, or enhanced through reasoning and truth seeking. (Jer. 29:13; 2 Thess. 2:10; Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Pet. 1:12-16, 19)
 - ii. Since faith is an act of the mind moved by the will, virtue is developed through the practice of deliberately thinking and holding on to truth.
 - iii. Through the practice of truth seeking and holding on to those truths, faith becomes part of your character. (C.S. Lewis)
5. Humility in faith: Going from virtue faith to the blessing of supernatural faith.
- a. As concurrence has taught, God is not in the business of forcing the will but working according to it.
 - b. As truth seeking contains the promise of God revealing truth, a proper pursuit of faith should be accompanied with an expectation of receiving supernatural faith.
 - i. Why didn't Paul pray that his own teaching would bring them into reality? (Eph. 1:17-19)
 - c. Losing sight of the need for God to reveal, teach, and make truth real when pursuing faith will result in vain pursuits.
 - d. Pride can be very "insidious" in the area of truth seeking, which is really seeking faith. It causes a reversal of the order between reality and conformity. (Prov. 4:23; 28:26)
6. Skepticism and hardness of heart as killers of supernatural faith.
- a. Skepticism is an attitude of disbelief which weights all truth claims toward falsehood before examining the claim. Mark 16:14, John 20:24-29
 - i. Was it more or less reasonable to believe without seeing? (Matt. 16:21)
 - ii. Often it is lack of reasoning that can be attributed to a lack of faith. (Matt. 6:19-34)
 - iii. Diligence/wisdom concerning finding and accepting truth needs to be distinguished from skepticism in order to protect from fideism.
 - 1. The disciples could have searched the evidence to conclude that the eyewitness reports were true. Jesus does not expect fideism.
 - 2. The disciples refused to evaluate the evidence. They had enough evidence to believe in the resurrection without any eyewitness reports (Matt. 16:21).