

Module 4

FAITH

Thesis Statement:

Integral Christian faith involves believing (Doctrine), doing (Morals) and trusting (Worship). The global character of faith can be captured to a certain extent by the use of paradox.



Section 1: Faith

Section 1A - What is Faith? [An Old Testament Understanding]

Faith in the Old Testament can be summarized into one Hebrew word, *ʾmn* (*aman*). This word is the origin of the modern day “AMEN” that we use today. It stresses the idea of solidity, stability, firmness, certitude. There are two forms of *aman*:

- a) **ne’ eman**: When used of men, it means that they are worthy to be trusted or believed. When used of God, it means that His promises do not deceive, that His word is really fulfilled, that men can rely on Him with absolute security.
 - Biblical Narrative: **Abraham**, the greatest prototype of faith in the Old Testament is Abraham, who heard and beautifully executed all God’s biddings. When God called him out of his homeland in Ur of the Chaldees and sent him forth as a nomad in the desert, he unhesitatingly obeyed.¹ His story, beginning from his call and God’s promise, up to the test of Abraham’s faith in the sacrifice of his son, has all been a true faith in God, that God will not deceive and that his promises will be fulfilled. This highlights characteristics of the believer’s **obedience and fidelity**.
- b) **he’ emin**: The principal verb used to express the act of believing in the OT. One can translate this word as “he believed, he trusted, he relied on...” with an object, the object of which can be another human being, or God.² When used as an expression for man’s relation to God, it means “to declare God *ne’ eman*”, “to say Amen to God.”
 - Biblical Narrative: **David**’s story of faith particularly highlights the utter gratuitousness of his relationship with Yahweh. The theme of “**chosenness and reward**” and God’s delighting in David resounds throughout his story, despite sin and occasional unfaithfulness. Highlight the personal relation between man and God, and man’s “Amen to God.”

But particularly important, faith in the OT acquires greater meaning, not in particular individual experiences, but in the experience of a people, the people of God. The Jews had a distinct awareness of being laid hold of by a personal Supreme Being. “This King, this God, laid hold of Israel in the *covenant* at Sinai, which can be expressed simply: “You shall be My people, and I will be your God.” And Israel believed, they said *aman*. This highlights all aspects, obedience, fidelity, chosenness, and eventually, reward. The important thing to note is that faith does not lie on the level of *personal* faith alone, but it is *ecclesial* faith, a faith of a people.

“In the Old Testament faith is depicted as the appropriate response to God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises. Although the element of belief is present by implication, the emphasis falls on trust or confidence in God as Lord. Faith is tested by obedience and fidelity.”³

Section 1B - What is Faith? [A New Testament Understanding]

Faith in the NT can be summarized into one Greek word *pistis* (πιστις) and its derivatives. *Pistis* continues the Jewish tradition of faith, because it also means belief, obedience, trust, hope and faithfulness. In its verb form, *pisteuein* (πιστεύειν) meaning “to believe,” it means an acceptance of the kerygma. Faith is not just a noun, but more importantly a verb.

¹ Avery Dulles, *Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.

² Avery Dulles, *Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 7.

³ Avery Dulles, *Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17.

To highlight this, in the Gospel of John and the Johannine epistles, the verb *pisteuein* (πιστεύειν) occurs 107 times. But the substantive *pistis* (πίστις) is never used in the gospels, and only appears once in his epistles (1 Jn 5:4). As its usage indicates, John is interested in faith as a dynamic process rather than a state.⁴

In John's Gospel, simple verbs like 'know,' 'have,' and 'see' dot the pages. Very often we can grasp a deeper meaning by substituting these simple verbs with our contemporary verb 'experience.' Examples:

- * Some individuals were invited near the beginning of the Gospel: "Come and [experience me] for yourselves" (Jn 1:39)
- * The people of Sychar tell the Samaritan woman who has brought them news about Jesus: "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and [experienced] that this indeed is the Saviour of the world." (Jn 4:42)
- * The Gospel of John is written such that the reader "may believe that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may [experience life] in his name." (Jn 20:31)

The verbal language is unmistakable and suggests the evangelist's conviction: no one should or can ever say, "Now I know Jesus and *have* faith in him."⁵ Faith is not a mere possession. It is experienced and lived in action. Remember our lesson in practical theology. What we know affects what we do, and what we do affects what we know. It is best to think of faith, not as a noun, but as a verb - *faithing*.

Jesus in his teachings constantly calls people to believe in him, which in Greek is the *pistis* derivative *pisteuein eis*. "...*pisteuein eis* (πιστεύειν εἰς) may be defined in terms of an active commitment to a person and, in particular, to Jesus. It involves much more than trust in Jesus or confidence in him; it is an acceptance of Jesus and of what he claims to be and a dedication of one life to him."⁶ This too takes on a verbal form. The dynamism can be beautifully described as "faith action in Christ" and "faith action towards Christ."

To better understand this concept, let us take a look at the paradigmatic story of Mark 5:25-34, The Woman with Hemorrhage.

- a) "*There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages (ῥύσις αἵματος) for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped and only grew worse.*" (Mk 5:25-26)
 - * We are introduced to the central character of the scene. She is a woman with "rhusis aimatos" or literally a "flow of blood." This is not just some hemorrhage, but a gynecological ailment. Therefore, in the eyes of Jewish observers, this woman is unclean. ritually impure, and cannot participate actively in the community of Israel.
 - * The description of the length of the illness and of the failure of previous attempts at healing illustrate the difficulty of the cure and thus the magnitude of the miracle.
- b) "*She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured.'*" (Mk 5:27-28)
 - * "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured" is a soliloquy that makes the audience aware of the woman's great confidence and faith in Jesus' power to heal. The woman does not seem to think that Jesus' conscious desire to heal is a prerequisite for her healing.
 - * Jesus is the awakener or catalyst of faith. But change does not happen with the catalyst alone. The one whose faith is awakened must take part, and "do."
 - * Faith represents "an activity of the believer, an energetic, importunate grasping after the help of God" (C.E.B. Cranfield), or as the poet Francis Thompson puts it: "clinging Heaven by the hems."

⁴ Avery Dulles, *Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 14.

⁵ Gerald O'Collins, SJ, *Jesus: A Portrait* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 222-223.

⁶ Raymond Brown, *John*, vol. 1, 513.

c) “Immediately her hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.”

* The word *euthus* or εὐθύς (meaning “immediately”) indicates the instantaneous, and thus miraculous quality of the cure.

* Faith, therefore, is above and beyond what is natural. Thus a supernatural quality.

d) v.34 *And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith, has made you well; in in peace, and be healed of your disease.”*

* Jesus’ words confirm the miracle, and grants her peace. The greek is *sesōken se* (σέσωκέν σε), which translates easily to the Hebrew peace greeting of “shalom.” We have learned in class that shalom means not just a greeting of peace, but also the characteristic of *wholeness*. Thus, we can interpret this as Jesus’ restoration of the wholeness of the woman. She was once marginalized, and unable to “do” anything within the community. And she is given “ability” again.

* This is the heart of the Kingdom of God, where Jesus is able to give capacity to those who do not have it. The marginalized, poor and sick, are given ability. But this is only possible through action. In the Kingdom of God, there is no room for passivity.

e) Other things we can learn from miracle stories:

* Faith is connected to, and even becomes interchangeable with, desire (Mk 10:51-52). This confirms that “faith” in the Synoptic miracle stories denotes not merely “trust” but also *a movement of the will which presses in its desire toward Jesus*.

* Jesus is impressed by uncommon faith (Mt 8:10) and by persistent faith (Mk 7:29)

* Demand for signs (Mt 12:38) and demonstration miracles are strictly rejected.

* Jesus expected the witnesses to believe as a result of a miracle (Mt 11:20-24).

However, the most important definition of faith in the New Testament is found in the Letter of Hebrews:

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Section 2: Dimensions of Faith

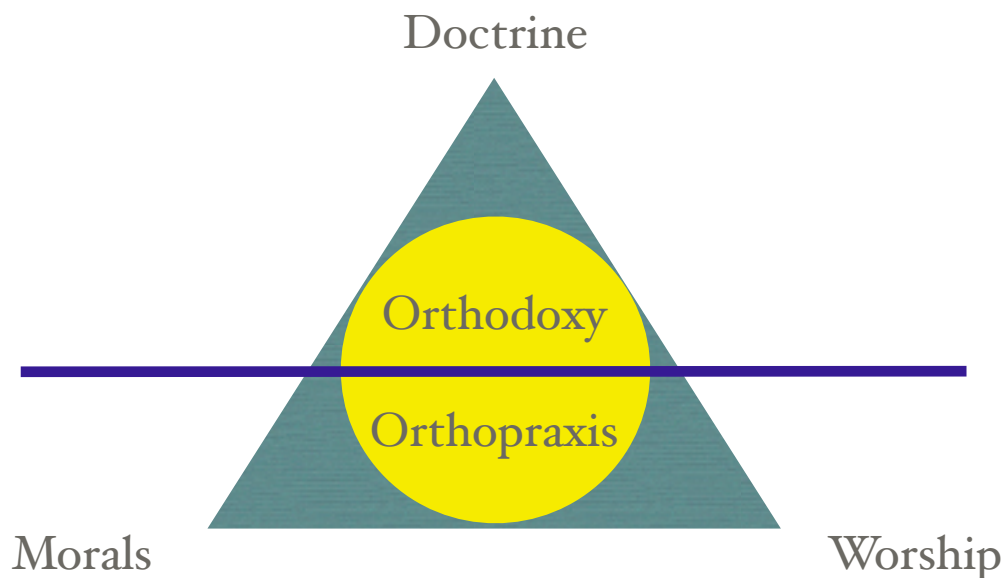
Remember, our approach in the study of the faith is practical theology. This highlights the importance of the relationship between theory and practice. What we know affects what we do. Similarly, what we do shapes what we know as well. There is no “one way” street from theory to practice, but rather a network of highways that run between what is theoretical and what is practical.

Lived experience and faith are deeply intertwined. Human experience becomes the place where the gospel is grounded, embodied, interpreted and lived out. Human experience is an important locus for the work of the Spirit. As such, it holds much relevance for the development of the practice of the faith.⁷

Therefore, in the study of faith, we must also remember the importance of the intimate relationship of knowledge and experience; of theory and practice.

A person’s faith is not just about his or her beliefs, and the web of dogma that comprise such belief. It is not just the head knowledge, but it is also the practice of the faith. Faith is not just believing, it is also doing. Remember the statement of C.E.B. Cranfield. He says that faith represents “an activity of the believer, an energetic, importunate grasping after the help of God.” Faith is not passive acceptance, but it is constant longing of God through action. We do not just believe. We do.

⁷ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 5-6.



The figure above represents the structure of faith. Faith is structured as both orthodoxy (the proper understanding of the faith) and orthopraxis (the proper practice of the faith). Under orthodoxy, there is one dimension of faith, which is Doctrine. Under orthopraxis, there are two dimensions of faith, which are Morals and Worship. Let us take a look at all three dimensions of faith in the following sections. Why is it important to have all three dimensions of faith? Here, the story “Revelation” by Flannery O’Connor is a good read. Take a look at it before venturing further into the handout.

Section 2A - Doctrine

The dimension of Doctrine deals with the **believing** and knowing aspect of one’s faith. But this is more than mere “head knowledge.” It involves basic convictions, but it also involves a deep knowing, the knowing that can be compared to how we “know” our family, our friends and the people we love.

Christian **faith**, then, is personal knowledge of Jesus as Christ as “my Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28). Christ solemnly assures each of us: Here I stand knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house, and have supper with him, and he with me.” (Rv 3:20).⁸

“Revelation is.... a complex of truths which are offered to us through the grouping of concepts which are bound together by Christ, the prophets, and the apostles.... It goes without saying, however, that faith is not terminated with the simple conceptual or verbal statement, but rather with the reality, the mystery itself. Doctrine, as conceptual signs, is the means for the believer to give assent to doctrine understood as the realities signified by the signs. What is revealed.... is God himself, His eternal decreed [and] mysteries.”⁹

⁸ Cf. *CFC* 129.

⁹ René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Alba House, 1966), 307-8.

Section 2B - Morals

Besides believing, faith is **doing**. “What good is it to profess faith without practicing it?” Faith then is a commitment to follow God’s will for us. PCP II brings out this “doing” dimension of faith as “witnessing” through “loving service” of our needy neighbors.¹⁰ At its very core, the goal of the Morals dimension of faith is to enact Christ’s Kingdom of God ideals into the world. This will be discussed further in the Christology portion of the course.

Central to morals is the Christian virtue of **love**. This love, perfected in Jesus Christ’s Greatest Commandment, is what is necessary to live a life aligned with God’s will. We love others, even people we might not even know (Cf. The Good Samaritan). To enact the Kingdom of God into this world, and to enfold our faith, we need to perform action. Just as revelation is not just word, and not just deed, but both, so is faith. Faith has an particularly active aspect as well.

Section 2C - Worship

Faith is also **trusting** God, specifically entrusting oneself into God’s hand. Abraham’s example in the Old Testament is good to look back to, where upon God’s command, he left everything to set out to a foreign land. Against all human odds, we see Moses trusting Yahweh to free the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. In the New Testament, Jesus worked signs and cures only to those who trusted in him. “Everything is possible to a man who trusts.” (Mark 9:23)¹¹

Central to worship is the Christian virtue of **hope**. In the Old Testament, faith was associated at times with the words *chakah*, *gawah* and *yachal* – all stems of the words of hope or to hope for. They bring out an essential element of the OT faith, which is looking to the future. In Isaiah (40:31), the “waiting for the Lord” becomes the classical formulation for OT hope. One can also look at Psalms 42:5 or 43:5. Connecting the OT with the NT, Paul, in Romans 4:18, refers to “Abraham believed, hoping against hope.” This is also the prominent sense in Hebrews 11 in the “Hall of Faith.” The faith of the Patriarchs is hopeful trust in the promised future.

Section 3: The Paradoxes of Faith

Theology, despite its claim as a science, complete with sources, method and logic, is still a kind of art, insofar that its subject matter is faith, and faith cannot be truly compartmentalized into neat, definitive boxes. The best way to approach faith, then, is to designate it as “paradox.” This paradoxical nature is what keeps faith from being studied in the same way as the pure sciences.

What is a paradox? A paradox can be defined as two juxtaposed statements or ideas, one in polar contrast to the other, yet somehow complementing one another, and the net effect is a peculiar and surprising expression of truth; “the convergence of opposites.”

Why paradox? We have to take a look at the nature of mystery, the nature of human perception and knowledge, and the nature of the Gospel: “The very word paradox is paradoxical. Let the paradox be. Remember after all, that the Gospel is full of paradoxes [eg. polar reversals like “The first will be the last”], that man is himself a living paradox, and that according to the Fathers of the Church, the Incarnation is the supreme Paradox.”¹²

¹⁰ Cf. CFC 130

¹¹ Cf. CFC 132

¹² Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 8.

Section 3A - Certain yet Obscure

Faith is certain.

From a purely philosophical point of view, the certitude of faith might seem contestable. The evidence for Christian revelation is not stringent and, according to competent authorities, does not suffice to exclude all risk of error.¹³

Faith is grounded in God, and the certainty in God is the basis for the certainty of faith.

“Faith is certain because it rests on God who reveals Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, present to us in the Holy Spirit. We are certain of our Faith because it is our personally committed loving knowledge based on the convincing signs of God revealing Himself in Jesus Christ, and present to us in His Church through word, service, fellowship, and sacrament.”¹⁴ You may also recall the Signs of Revelation for more certainty. And besides, “the authority comes from God himself, who can neither be deceived nor deceive.”¹⁵

In the case of our examination of the certainty of faith, it would be best to phenomenologically ground ourselves on the familiar experience of love, especially the example of romantic love. “I do not ‘see’ completely. Yet why am I sure? Because I am united to Someone who sees.”

Analogy: Refer to *Treatise on John* by Augustine, *Da mihi amantem, et sentit quod dico*. “Show me one who loves, and he or she feels what I am saying. Show me one who desires or is hungry, or one who is thirsting in the desert, sighing for the fountain of the eternal homeland; show me one such, and that one will understand what I am trying to say.”

When you are asked whether you love or not, it is quite easy to answer “yes” or “no.” When you are asked for reasons why you love, there is some degree of ease as well. You love a person because they are smart, kind, good-looking, understanding, etc. However, if one is asked to give an exhaustive list of every reason for loving, one will be in a pickle. The difficulty to definitively and exhaustively give reason to love is not proof of its inadequacy or falsity. There are just some things that cannot be articulated within the confines of the language we have. I have my reasons to love, but I cannot put all these reasons to words. Sometimes, the only way to capture this difficulty is in two words. Why do I love? *Tout simplement*.¹⁶ Just because.

“Faith is, first of all, the belief that there is absolute love. Beyond that the believer need posit nothing else.”¹⁷

¹³ Avery Dulles, *Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 229.

¹⁴ CFC 144.

¹⁵ ND 118.

¹⁶ *Tout simplement* is my personal neologism, which I created to explain the experience of wanting to give reason for something, but that this reason one claims is beyond the capacity of articulation within human language. It is a French phrase, literally translated as “simply” or “just because.” As a point of reference, one can confer to a similarity with Karl Barth’s usage of “*tout simplement*” in Karl Barth, “Préface a la deuxième édition” in *L’Épître aux Romains*, (Labor et Fides, 1972), 13. Here, Barth is arguing against the aphorism: “Simplicity is the mark of divinity.” I agree, insofar as what constitutes the study of the divine is the eternal grappling with what is not simple, and thus simplicity seems not the mark of divinity. When I speak of “*tout simplement*,” it is not a case of, in the words of Barth “pseudo-simplification (*de pseudo-simplicités*).” Rather, it is the presentation that, in all respects, in every direction, human life is difficult and complicated (*‘Pénible et compliquée est, de nos jours, la vie des hommes, à tous égards’*). Thus, by claiming something is “*tout simplement*,” it is not a passive resignation of the lack of reasons, nor is it a means of escape when a question asked regarding faith and life seems too difficult or perplexing. Rather, it is the assent to the inherent bigness of reason that cannot be oversimplified into human constructs and language.

¹⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Only Love is Believable,” in *Toward a Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons:1968) 128.

Faith is obscure.

At its very core, the conception of God and his eternal decrees is that of mystery (Vatican II actually makes this even obvious by shifting its language to the mysteries of God's will). Therefore, these are absolutely impossible to contain within human categories, too much for our minds to handle.

Since the principal material object of faith is God himself, our knowledge is always partial. This is "the profoundly mysterious identity of the God who revealed himself in that way to Israel alone, yet revealed himself as supremely hidden: *Deus revelatus tamquam absconditus*."¹⁸ In the OT, it is affirmed: Yahweh is pleased to dwell in darkness (1 Kgs 8:12). In the NT, it is likewise said, "God dwells in inaccessible light." (1 Tim 6:16)

Theological mysteries are truth and therefore light for the mind, but the truth is so vast, the light of such intensity, that the mind is dazzled and amazed. When a man meets a mystery of the faith, he finds not a deficiency but an excess of intelligibility: there is just too much to understand. Reverence to supernaturally revealed mystery is therefore not reason's abdication, but reason's recognition, through faith, of a grandeur transcending its powers. 'If it searches diligently, piously, and soberly,' say the Fathers of the First Vatican Council, 'reason, enlightened by faith, attains, by God's gift, a certain most fruitful understanding of the mysteries... but it never becomes adequate to investigating them in the way it does the truths that constitute its proper object.' Like the ocean, the revealed mysteries of God have a visible surface, beneath which lie hidden and unfathomable depths."¹⁹

In his reflections on faith and doubt, Paul Tillich asserts that every act of faith calls for daring and courage, and includes, in principle, the possibility of failure. "The risk to faith in one's ultimate concern is indeed the greatest risk man can run."²⁰ Again he writes: "There is no faith without an intrinsic 'in spite of' and the courageous affirmation of oneself in the state of ultimate concern." This consciousness of risk, Tillich holds, is not the same thing as skeptical doubt, which would prevent the full commitment of faith, or methodological doubt, which would put commitment in brackets. But it can be called doubt, Tillich holds, in a certain sense, which he calls "existential doubt." By this he means an acceptance of the insecurity inseparable from faith.²¹

Section 3B - Free yet Morally Obliging

Faith is free.

There are two levels of freedom:

- a) **Categorical freedom** - freedom of choice, "I have my freedom", the act of choice itself. However, although free choice is constitutive of true freedom, there is a deeper level of freedom, indubitably connected with being fully human.
- b) **Transcendental freedom** - freedom as the self formed by the choices, "I am my freedom"; the basic stance that we as persons take and become through our free acts. Karl Rahner speaks about this: "Freedom is not indefinite choice but *definitive commitment*. It is not the capacity for indefinite revision, always doing something different, but *the capacity to create something final, irrevocable, and eternal*. It is to become a particular kind of person."

¹⁸ Louis Bouyer, *Le Père invisible: Approches du Mystère de la Divinité* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 177.

¹⁹ John Saward, *Cradle of Redeeming Love: The Theology of the Christmas Mystery* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 48.

²⁰ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 17.

²¹ Avery Dulles, *Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 232.

When one claims that faith is free, they must assume both characteristics of freedom apply to faith. Firstly, faith, in the categorical level, is a free act, an initial act of submission of one's self graced by God. But more importantly, faith, in the transcendental level, is your comprehensive choice, encompassing your whole life. It is the fundamental commitment, the fundamental direction of one's human existence. It is a choice, not simply one among many, but one so comprehensive that it defines our whole vision of life, our horizon of meaning, our standards of judgement. Later on, in future parts of the course, we will discuss the reason why such is important.

Reflect on this: "I think 'freedom' - at least what we usually think of it - is an illusion. As far as I can tell, absolute freedom doesn't exist. I think we all have some measure of freedom, but in the end we have to choose who or what will be our master. For some people it's their Lexus or their big house or their love of gourmet food or their music. For some people it's their career. For some people it's their family. It's a question of what you want to give your life to, or for."²² Freedom is in the choosing.

On a final note, faith...

...cannot be ranged side by side with other choices, however momentous these may be.... Of its nature, it is architectonic and claims to engage, to shape, to evaluate the whole life.

Furthermore... faith is a facing of eternal destiny; not the selection of one among many possibilities, but the option for my only ultimate destiny. All other choices are made between God's creatures; faith is a choice of God.²³

Faith is moral obligation.

Moral obligation is not opposed to authentic freedom: In fact, moral obligation makes us more free, *if we understand freedom as becoming more fully human*. Again, the analogy to love will be particularly useful: "The will is drawn by love.... You have only to show a leafy branch to a sheep, and it is drawn to it. If you show nuts to a boy, he is drawn to them. He runs to them because he is drawn, drawn by love, drawn without any physical compulsion, drawn by a chain attached to his heart."²⁴

Remember: "Freedom does not mean the right to do whatever you please, but the right to do whatever you ought."²⁵

Section 3C - Supernatural yet Reasonable

Faith is supernatural.

Remember that there is a strong connection between faith and revelation. Because there is a supernaturality to revelation beyond natural reason, the response to it (faith) must also have an aspect of the supernatural. Remember Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*:

Hence, man's knowledge of divine things is three fold. [1] The first is when man, by the natural light of reason, rises through creatures to the knowledge of God. [2] The second is when the divine truth which surpasses human intelligence comes down to us by revelation, yet not as clearly shown that we may see it, but as expressed in words that we may believe it. [3] The third is when the human mind is raised to the perfect intuition of things revealed.²⁶

²² Michael P. Enright, *Diary of a Barrio Priest* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books).

²³ John Coventry, *The Theology of Faith* (Blackrock, Cork: The Mercier Press Ltd, 1968), 70.

²⁴ Augustine, *Treatise on John*.

²⁵ Fulton Sheen, *Children and Parents*, (New York, NY: IVE Press, 2009), 52.

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, IV.1

There are just some truths that are beyond the sphere of natural reason. These truths include the Trinity as well as the Incarnation. These things cannot be known without revelation. It is not to say that the human mind is incapable of thought or reason, but that there exists in these world realities that are just innately greater than ourselves.

As John Green says in his famous book, *The Fault in Our Stars*: “Some infinities are bigger than other infinities.”



Faith is supernatural because its object is transcendent, and the human being in the act of faith is drawn to this transcendence. When we speak of transcendence, it is not merely a characteristic of God, but a goal of humans as well. The great paradox is that it feels so natural, so human, to be drawn to the supernatural. “To transcend means to move beyond: to move beyond present limits. It comes from the Latin *scandere* meaning ‘to climb,’ and the Latin *trans*, meaning ‘across,’ ‘beyond.’ The human experience of transcendence is a natural phenomenon. *Self-transcendence* takes place as we move through the different levels of human experience. We constantly yearn, reach for something *more* in personal living, and it is the inner dynamism of this transcendent movement that draws us toward what lies beyond our world of immediate experience. Although we must remain firmly anchored in this world, an awareness of reaching beyond ourselves can become an experience of openness, which when be elevated by grace can contain an awareness of the *Transcendent Other/the Sacred*.”²⁷

Faith is reasonable.

Faith and reason are complementary; this has always been the consistent and official teaching of the Church (recall the Enlightenment problem before Vatican I between fideism and rationalism). It is also reasonable, we can point to particular credibility and signs within the Christian message. The existence of doctrine as a “complex of truths” prove the point that there is structure in our belief.

However, we must take note: “Faith is reasonable, not reasoned.”²⁸ (Look back at statements of John Saward concerning the obscure character of faith.)

“Faith is surrender. The believer does not have to encumber himself with theories. Should he make use of them, nothing better. If he wants to reflect on his faith, theories are indispensable to him. He wants them sound and true. But he should keep himself from remaining attached to them as to the own good of his intellect.”²⁹

²⁷ Catherine McCann, *New Paths Toward the Sacred: Awakening the Awe Experience in Everyday Living* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), 205.

²⁸ John Coventry, *The Theology of Faith* (Blackrock, Cork: The Mercier Press Ltd, 1968), 48.

²⁹ Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 8.

Section 3D - An Act yet a Process

Faith is an act.

Faith is a particular act of the will. Recall the notion of freedom involving categorical and transcendental levels. Faith can come in the form of the initial act of saying yes to God. It can be in baptism or in a conversion experience (eg. St. Ignatius and his cannonball experience or Paul's conversion). Further, in the life of a Christian, an intensification of faith (a "second conversion" or "renewal experience", eg. a non-practicing Christian suddenly gets involved with a Church organizations or groups and feels that he has found a place again in the Church.) These are singular moments, singular choices, and these characterize faith experiences.

Faith is a process.

However, more importantly, faith is a process. It is not enough to profess faith once; that decision must be repeated endlessly. It is entirely correct to speak of a "daily conversion," a constant turning towards God.

Quote from CFC:

"A fourth paradox highlights Faith as both a particular *act*, yet perseverance in a lifelong *process* that is the beginning of eternal life (CCC, 162-163). John's Gospel declares: 'Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn 17:3). But this faith in Christ is much more than a single, personal decision for Christ. It is an enduring way of life within the Christian community, the Church."³⁰

Section 3E - A Gift yet our Doing

Probably the most important passage from Vatican I:

Since man is totally dependent upon God, as upon his Creator and Lord, and since created reason is absolutely subject to uncreated truth, we are bound to yield by faith the full homage of intellect and will to God who reveals Himself. 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 cannot err nor deceive. For faith, as the apostle testifies, is 'the assurance of things hoped for, the convictions of things not seen' (Heb 11:1)³¹

Faith is a divine gift.

Faith is a human response only possible by means of grace. Faith is therefore 100% divine, a fully divine gift. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is a gift of God...." (Eph 2:8) This aspect of faith, a trusting in the 100% divine gift of faith by God, is known as *fiducial* faith, a classic formulation by Luther and Protestantism. We must affirm that this is correct, but we cannot say that it ends there. As much as faith is a gift of grace, there is also a distinctly human aspect to faith.

³⁰ CFC 148.

³¹ ND 118.

Faith is a human task.

Faith has a 100% human aspect as well. It is *our* faith. As much as God provides grace, as long as there is no one to respond to God, faith will not exist.

We must add too that faith is a task because we are called to share it with others. When we share our faith with others, our faith grows in strength. We become more convinced. Faith that is not “given away” becomes desiccated; analogy of the Sea of Galilee vs the Dead Sea.

We must also move against the privatization of faith that is quite common in modern society, which is criticized by Johann Baptist Metz. Metz speaks of a faith that is lived in action, and lived in action towards others. “The faith of Christians is a praxis in history and society that is to be understood as hope in solidarity in the God of Jesus as a God of the living and the dead who calls all men to be subjects in his presence. Christians justify themselves in this praxis of imitation in their historical struggle for their fellow men.”³²

Section 3F - Personal yet Ecclesial and Social**Faith is personal.**

Faith is an encounter, it is a personal act. But not only that, but it is a **personalizing** act. The human person responds to a personal God. “The grace given by God is at once personal and personalizing; personal because it is directed to an individual soul in its own determined situation, personalizing, because it is destined to make the individual soul realize its own unique vocation.”³³ (Recall faith as transcendental freedom and architectonic. “You become whom you love.”)

*This should be further explained in Theology 151.

Faith is ecclesial.

Faith is ecclesial because it is done as a community, the Church. The Church witnesses to faith. (When we say Church, it does not refer solely to the hierarchy. We look at the examples of the lives of many catechists who go to far flung areas, missionaries, social workers of the Church.)

*This should be further explained in Theology 131.

Faith is social.

Faith is social because it calls us to respond to society, through justice. In today’s world, faith as social justice is necessary. Why? Because it takes seriously the existence of the oppressed majority as an inescapable and ugly blot in God’s created order (The sin of the world).

*This should be further explained in Theology 141.

³² Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (New York: Seabury/ Crossroad, 1980), 73.

³³ Jean Moroux, *I Believe: The Personal Structure of Faith* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1959), 22.

Section 4: Some Concluding Remarks

As a means of concluding the faith portion of this lesson, I'd like us to focus on the concept of unbelief, a healthy dose of which is a necessary ingredient in true faith. A college student once wrote a letter to Flannery O'Connor regarding the unbelief that plagues many of the youth today. However, one need not see unbelief as purely negative, as O'Connor highlights in his response:

"I think that this experience you are having of losing your faith, or as you think, of having lost it, is an experience that in the long-run belongs to faith; or at least it can belong to faith if faith is still valuable to you, and it must be or you would not have written me about it.

I don't know how the kind of faith required of a Christian living in the twentieth century can be at all if it is not grounded on this experience that you are having right now of unbelief. This may be the case always and not just in the twentieth century. Peter said, 'Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.' It is the most natural and most human and most agonizing prayer in the gospels, and I think it is the foundation prayer of faith...

If you want your faith, you have to work for it. It is a gift, but for a very few is it a gift without any demand for equal time devoted to its cultivation... To find out about faith, you have to go to the people who have it and you have to go to the most intelligent ones to stand up intellectually to agnostics and the general run of pagans that you are going to find in the majority of the people around you...

Even in the life of a Christian, faith rises and falls like the tides of an invisible sea. It's there even when he can't see or feel it, if he wants it to be there. You realize, I think, that it is more valuable, more mysterious, altogether more immense than anything you can learn or decide upon in college. Learn what you can, but cultivate Christian skepticism. It will keep you free - not free to do anything you please, but free to be formed by something larger than your own intellect or the intellects of those around you."

* * *

Faith is about what is beyond the horizon of the humanly possible. Faith is exploring into what people could never achieve by themselves. Faith is the mysterious need in us to get to where we could surely never go. Faith, in fact, is about what we call God. Faith is the inkling that we are meant to be divine, that our journey will go beyond any horizon at all into the limitlessness of the Godhead... Faith is not something we possess. It is something by which we are possessed.

-Herbert McCabe