

FAITH AND REASON: CONFLICTING OR COMPLIMENTARY?



IMPORTANT?

- ✘ Apologetics
- ✘ Science
- ✘ Intrinsic theological/spiritual relevance

“Tell a devout christian that his wife is cheating on him or that frozen yogurt can make a man invisible and he is likely to require as much evidence as anyone else....[However] tell him that the book he keeps by his bed was written by an invisibly deity who will punish him for eternity if he fails to accept its every incredible claim about the universe, and he seems to require no evidence whatsoever.”

- Sam Harris

RATIONALISM (*CHRIST OF CULTURE*)

✘ Religion of reason

- + No true religion would be inaccessible to reason alone
- + Anything not accessible to reason alone is therefore untrue
- + “All that which can be known of God may be made manifest by means which are not derived from anywhere but from ourselves, and from the simple consideration of the nature of our minds.” (René Descartes)

✘ Autonomous reason

- + We can reach the truth simply by using reason
- + Reason functions without the input of faith, intuition, etc.
- + Reason is self-sufficient

RATIONALISM (*CHRIST OF CULTURE*)

- ✘ Problem: reason can only get you so far
 - + Deism, generic transcendent god without Christ
 - + Christianity is communicated in a book, with a particular story, given to a particular group of people – not a set of abstract metaphysical propositions.

“...useless to know God without Christ.”

- Blaise Pascal

FIDEISM (*CHRIST AGAINST CULTURE*)

- ✘ Fide = “faith” ; Fideism = “faith-ism”
- ✘ No true religion would be fully comprehensible to unaided reason
- ✘ To insist on using reason to evaluate religious beliefs is pride, a refusal to take God at His word

FIDEISM (*CHRIST AGAINST CULTURE*)

- ✘ Kierkegaard: genius vs. apostle
 - + Genius = rationalist with human wisdom
 - ✘ Listen because of his rational insight
 - + Apostle = bringer of divine wisdom
 - ✘ Listen because of his divine authority
- ✘ Reason is fit to judge geniuses who speak of human wisdom, but when confronted with an apostle, all it can do is submit.

FIDEISM (CHRIST AGAINST CULTURE)

- ✘ Problem: which apostle to follow?
 - + *“But how can an apostle prove that he has authority? If he could prove it physically, then he would not be an apostle. He has no other proof than his own statement.”*
 - + Similar declarations of divine authority from the biblical authors, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, talk radio hosts, etc.
- ✘ Arbitrary choice

× Rationalism

- + Reason against faith
- + True religion is known by reason alone
- + Reason operates independently of faith

× Fideism

- + Faith against reason
- + True religion known by faith alone
- + Faith operates independently of reason

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

- ✘ Faith and reason working together
 - + *“I believe so that I may understand, and I must understand in order that I may properly believe.”* (St. Augustine)
 - + While reason cannot function apart from faith, faith must in turn be nurtured and refined by rational reflection.
- ✘ Faith and reason aren't opposites, but complimentary
 - + To be properly rational requires faith, and to be properly faithful requires reason.

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

- ✘ Reason depends on faith
 - + Reason is not autonomous or self-sufficient
- ✘ Problem of first principles

Conclusion

Premise / Conclusion

Premise / Conclusion

Premise / Conclusion

Premise / Conclusion

You get the idea

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

- ✘ Reason depends on faith
 - + Reason is not autonomous or self-sufficient
- ✘ Problem of first principles
 - + First principle must not depend on a prior belief
 - + If reason is belief on the basis of prior beliefs, how do you get a first principle?
- ✘ Potential first principle?
 - + The knowledge that reason gives us is valid/trustworthy
 - + Can't be proven rationally
 - + Necessary for reason to get off the ground

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

- ✘ Faith provides this very first principle
 - + The Christian story provides an account of our minds that allows us to trust them
 - + Created in the image of God
 - + Fallen, not beyond redemption
 - + God is not a deceiver
- ✘ Faith provides what reason requires but cannot itself provide: a reason to take reason seriously

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

- ✘ Reflects dual biblical emphasis on faith as well as reason
 - + 1 Cor. 1:18-25
 - + 1 Peter 3:15

“Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

“Always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is within you.”
- ✘ Explains why smart people remain unconvinced
 - + *“The will is one of the chief organs of belief, not because it creates belief, but because things are true or false according to the aspect by which we judge them. When the will likes one aspect more than another, it deflects the mind from considering the qualities of the one it does not care to see. Thus the mind, keeping in step with the will, remains looking at the aspect preferred by the will and so judges by what it sees there.”* (Blaise Pascal)

FURTHER READING

- ✘ Blaise Pascal, Pensées
- ✘ James R. Peters, The Logic of the Heart: Augustine, Pascal, and the Rationality of Faith
- ✘ Soren Kierkegaard, Of the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle
- ✘ C.S. Lewis, The Abolition of Man
- ✘ Peter Leithard, Solomon Among the Postmoderns
- ✘ G.K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy