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MASTER OF THEOLOGY

Models of Faith and Reason

by
Peter Holmes

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Theology

University of Notre Dame, Fremantle

May 2010

“I testify that this dissertation is my own work. It does not contain material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university or institution. To the best of my knowledge, this dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the dissertation.”

.....
Peter Holmes
Date: 28 May 2010

Abstract

In his excellent work *The Assurance of things Hoped For*¹ surveying the development of the understanding of “faith” in the context of the Christian religion, Avery Dulles provides a concise sketch of the historical development and current manifestation of seven ‘models’ of faith which still have some contemporary influence. This thesis takes each of the models of faith Dulles presents and gives a brief description of the model; offers some preliminary observations about the relationship between faith and reason in the respective models; and, by examining the Church’s teaching on faith and reason in *Fides et Ratio*, discusses the relationship between faith and reason according to each model.

¹ Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York, Oxford, 1994).

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Models of Faith and Reason

Peter Holmes

Introduction

In his excellent work *The Assurance of things Hoped For*¹ surveying the development of the understanding of “faith” in the context of the Christian religion, Avery Dulles provides a concise sketch of the most important understandings or models of faith which are still influential today. Dulles traces the historical development and current manifestation of seven ‘models’ of faith which still have some contemporary influence. This thesis will take each of the models Dulles presents and give a brief description of the model, including some examples taken from proponents of the respective models; offer some preliminary observations about the relationship between faith and reason in the respective models; and, finally, by examining the Church’s teaching on faith and reason in *Fides et Ratio*, discuss the relationship between faith and reason according to each model. My specific questions here are:

Whether “faith” is compatible with reason

Whether “faith” requires reason.

I intend to argue that not only is faith compatible with reason, but that all models of faith described by Dulles require reason.

This study is not attempting an historical and/or theological survey of the vast array of theologians and philosophers who have contributed to the development of various concepts of faith over the past two millennia. The theologians and works cited and

¹ Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York, Oxford, 1994).

discussed in this thesis are presented primarily as examples of each model for the purposes of our study. While various authors and commentators on the topic of ‘Faith and Reason’ and on *Fides et Ratio* specifically have been consulted in other sections, the sections offering commentary on each model based on *Fides et Ratio* have been treated, wherever possible, without external commentary in order to represent the Church’s teaching as dispassionately and clearly as possible.

Fides et Ratio

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. *Ex* 33:18; *Ps* 27:8-9; 63:2-3; *Jn* 14:8; *1 Jn* 3:2).²

The Propositional Model

The propositional ‘model’ of faith described by Dulles is based on the assertion that it is impossible to believe anything which is not rationally conceivable. I cannot believe, for example, that “blue Wednesdays fly twelve”. Even if I memorised the words and believed the source of this bizarre assertion to be trustworthy, I could not grasp that which was being proposed to believe. In order to believe anything we must understand what is to be believed. The only access we have to such objects of belief is propositions. In this model, faith is assent to revealed truth on the authority of God who reveals, but “what is revealed and believed must be a sentence.”³ Swinburne makes this point forcefully in refuting the assertion, mistakenly attributed to Tertullian, that Jesus’ life,

² John Paul II, “*Fides et Ratio*”, (hereafter *F&R*) in *Fides et Ratio: Faith and Reason* (Strathfield, St Pauls Publications, 1998), Opening paragraph.

³ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, p172 (attributed to William Marshner)

death and resurrection is worthy of belief because it is absurd. After showing a few ways in which such an assertion could have been made intelligibly,⁴ Swinburne insists that he would refute such a statement on the grounds that “there are logical limits to the possibilities for human irrationality, and even Tertullian cannot step outside them.”⁵

The propositional model seems to find some support in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament the people of Israel are invited to receive the laws of the covenant, to “write them on your doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”⁶ The covenant of God with his chosen people seems to take the form of specific propositions. The law is emphatically pronounced from the stone tablets Moses brings from the mountain, placing great emphasis on the fact they are written, literally carved in stone, for all to see, seek to understand and to do.⁷ In the New Testament Christ himself affirms that all of God’s Word is eternal.⁸ He insists that man shall live “by *every word* that comes from the mouth of God.”⁹

⁴ Richard Swinburne, *Faith and Reason - Second Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 23-24. “There are ways in which we can interpret Tertullian as making an intelligible claim. ... ‘Absurd’ could be taken to mean ‘apparently absurd’, and ‘impossible’ to mean ‘impossible by normal standards’. Tertullian might be saying that one would not expect a true claim about a matter of very deep significance to look plausible or likely at a first glance by the average person... he might be saying that because the most significant and fundamental events must be very different from normal ones, they will be impossible if one supposes that only normal events occur - so a claim about such a happening would be more likely to be true if it concerned the apparently impossible.”

⁵ Swinburne, *Faith and Reason - Second Edition*, 24. “If Tertullian believes that all the evidence is against a proposition, he must believe that that proposition is improbable, and in that case he cannot believe that it is true. He may die rather than deny the proposition in public; he may, in some sense, plan his life on the assumption that the proposition is true, but he does not *believe* it. There are logical limits to the possibilities for human irrationality, and even Tertullian cannot step outside them.”

⁶ Dt 6:9, 11:20.

⁷ Ex 24:7, Dt 6:6-7, Ps 19:7-11, Ps 119.

⁸ Mt 5:18. “Not one letter, not the least stroke of a pen will disappear from the law.” cf Mt 24:35, Mk 13:31, Lk 16:17, 21:33, Isa 40:8, Ps 119:89-91.

⁹ Mt 4:4 (citing Dt 8:3) Emphasis mine.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the covenant cannot be reduced to mere propositions. It describes a relationship between God and his people. The covenant contains a great deal more physical action or ceremony than specific propositions. The establishment of the covenant itself includes a few verses of commandments, followed by approximately forty chapters consisting largely of liturgical instructions.¹⁰ The purpose of various parts of the text of the covenant notwithstanding, the text is still written propositions. Even the liturgical instructions making up a significant proportion of the covenant are still expressed in words, sentences and coherent propositions. Even the poetic, at times mystical, exploration of faith in the Psalms and wisdom literature is completely focussed on “the Law of the Lord” as the central focus of faith.¹¹ We see this theme expanded in the New Testament, particularly in the Pastoral Epistles. Bishops are exhorted to firmly hold and teach the “deposit of faith”¹² and to transmit it using the “sound pattern of words”¹³ which has been handed down to them.¹⁴ In the late second century and early third, Irenaeus and Tertullian reflect the biblical themes emphasising doctrines proclaimed by the apostles, as proposed, interpreted and guarded by the Church.¹⁵

¹⁰ Laws and advice on moral matters are often interwoven with liturgical instructions but the point remains that these instructions are primarily liturgical, and other matters are placed into a liturgical context with liturgical implications. cf John W. Kleinig, *Leviticus* (St Louis: Concordia, 2003), 22.

¹¹ For example Ps 19, 119.

¹² 1 Tm 6:20, 2 Tm 1:14.

¹³ 1 Tm 1:13.

¹⁴ cf 1 Cor 11:2, 15:3, Gal 1:12, Eph 4:20.

¹⁵ *Adv. haer.*, I.10.1-2 in Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, Eds. *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 330-331. “The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith ... she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. ... Nor will any one of the rulers in the Churches, however highly gifted he may be in point of eloquence, teach doctrines different from these.” cf. Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 21. “Irenaeus is particularly concerned to defend faith in the objective sense as the heritage received the apostles whose writings are “the ground and pillar” of our faith.” (citing 1 Tm 3:15).

St Thomas seems to support this model of faith in defining faith as “to think with assent” to proposed truth.¹⁶ Although the believer cannot truly assent to propositions he has not yet heard or understood, he is “bound to believe such things explicitly, when it is clear to him that they are contained in the doctrine of faith.”¹⁷ Following St Thomas, John Duns Scotus (1265-1308) insisted that truth must be expressed in rational propositions in order for reason to grasp it, even if supernatural faith infallibly guarantees it.¹⁸ Centuries later, the sixth canon of the Council of Trent incorporated the Scotist theme that faith is assent to revealed truth.¹⁹

Standing astride the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as both the climax of rationalism and yet “curiously modern,”²⁰ Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) believed faith could be described in rational terms,²¹ treating ‘faith’ as assent to certain propositions

¹⁶ T.C. O’Brien, *St Thomas Aquinas – Summa Theologiae* Vol.31 (New York, Cambridge Press, 2006) ST II.II, 2.2, Art.1.

¹⁷ O’Brien, *St Thomas Aquinas – Summa Theologiae* ST II.II, 2.2, Art.5. “Therefore, as regards the primary points or articles of faith, man is bound to believe them, just as he is bound to have faith; but as to other points of faith, man is not bound to believe them explicitly, but only implicitly, or to be ready to believe them, in so far as he is prepared to believe whatever is contained in the Divine Scriptures. Then alone is he bound to believe such things explicitly, when it is clear to him that they are contained in the doctrine of faith.”

¹⁸ Richard Cross, *Great Medieval Thinkers – Duns Scotus* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), 13. “The correct way of trying to understand revealed truth, for Scotus, necessarily involves a defense of what we would call the philosophical coherence of such truth. Theology, for Scotus, is a deeply rational exercise.”

¹⁹ The Council of Trent *Decree concerning Justification* Ch.VI “they are disposed to that justice when, aroused and aided by divine grace, receiving faith by hearing, they are moved freely toward God, believing to be true what has been divinely revealed and promised.”
<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct06.html> (accessed 13, April 2010).

²⁰ Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, Intervarsity, 1968), 91.

²¹ “In [*Religion within Limits of Reason* (1793)], conscientiousness and true respect for the Christian religion but also the principle of proper freedom of thought have led me to conceal nothing. On the contrary, I have presented everything openly, as I believe I see the possible union of the latter with the purest possible reason.” Letter dated 4 May 1793 (*Gesammelte Schriften*, XI, p. 429, No.574) cited in Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, 92.

based on various kinds of evidence.²² Kant believed that assent to some truth is a “moral necessity.” He proposed that it would be absurd to believe there are absolute moral principles without ever being able to hope for them to become a total reality. He insisted that a rational world is a completely moral world.²³ Given that morality fails to be lived perfectly in this existence he proposed that it is necessary to believe in a future existence where morality is perfected and justice enacted, or the universe would not be rational. In short, he argues for the existence of God and an afterlife on the basis of *what ought to be*.²⁴ Treating faith as purely rational, Kant displays great optimism in the power of reason, indeed, he places his religious hope in it.²⁵

The First Vatican Council insisted that faith is assent to truth, which the authority of God guarantees.²⁶ The Council assumes that grace is at work in all levels of faith but insists that “all things are to be believed which are contained in the Word of God as

²²Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 70-71. “Kant describes 3 levels of faith, 1) an educated guess, such as a doctor’s diagnosis based on an educated assessment of a patient’s symptoms, but by no means the only possible reasonable conclusion 2) a persuasive argument, whereby we are convinced by overwhelming, though still not infallibly certain, evidence and 3) a moral necessity.”

²³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 808: cited in Paul Guyer, *Kant*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2008), 231. “I call the world as it would be if it were in conformity with all the moral laws (as it can be in accordance with the freedom of rational beings and should be in accordance with the necessary laws of morality) a moral world... an intelligible world.”

²⁴ Sebastian Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, (London, Routledge, 1999), 315. “We would be entitled to base belief in God’s existence on what *ought to be* – on the existence of obligation – rather than on what *is*.”

²⁵Marilyn McCord Adams believes that Pope John Paul II exceeds Kant’s optimism about *internal* certainty in claiming that certainty about some *external* questions is a condition of a successful search for meaning of life. cf. McCord Adams, Marilyn, “Sceptical Realism: Faith and Reason in Collaboration” in Anthony Fisher & Hayden Ramsay, *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?* (Adelaide, ATF Press, 2004), 11.

²⁶ Berard Marthaler, *The Creed – The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology* (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007), 32-33. “The Constitution *Dei Filius* ... presents revelation primarily as the communication of supernatural truth inaccessible to natural reason, and faith as the acceptance of revealed truth.”

found in Scripture and Tradition, and which are proposed by the Church.”²⁷ For the First Vatican Council the object of faith is the revealed truth of God in the Scriptures and in Tradition (mediated with certainty by the Church). Faith is a form of knowledge based on divine authority (although the First Vatican Council did not deny faith has other aspects). While Vatican I emphasises the reasonableness of faith, it rejected blind ‘decisionism’ by an appeal to the public character of revelation and faith.

In a *motu proprio* (Sept 1, 1910), Pius X issued his ‘oath against modernism’.

According to the *motu proprio*, God can be known by natural reason and evidence. The Church was founded by the real, revealed and historical Christ; dogmas do not ‘evolve’ into something other than what the Church initially held. Faith, according to the *motu proprio* is intellectual assent to truth which is external to us. This truth is accepted as true on the basis of God’s authority.²⁸

More recently, thinkers such as Germain Grisez, one of the most significant contributors to modern moral thought,²⁹ seem to promote a propositional model of faith. In

²⁷ First Vatican Council “*Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*”, Session 3, Canon 8. Also relevant is Session 3, Canon 3. “With the grace of God inspiring us and assisting us we believe to be true what he has revealed.

²⁸ Pius X, *Motu proprio (Sept 1, 1910) “Oath against Modernism.”* “Faith is not a blind sentiment of religion welling up from the depths of the subconscious under the impulse of the heart and pressure of the informed will, but is a genuinely intellectual assent to truth received from outside by hearing, whereby we accept as true, on the authority of God who is supremely truthful, that which has been said, attested and revealed by the personal God, our Creator and Lord.”

²⁹ Janet E. Smith, *Humanae Vitae - A Generation Later* (USA, Catholic University of America, 1991), 340.

“The work in ethics of Germain Grisez and his associates, Joseph Boyle, John Finnis and William May, especially their critique of consequentialism and proportionalism, has made an enormous contribution to contemporary Catholic moral thought.”

opposition to writers such as Rahner, O'Collins, McBrien and Schillebeeckx, Grisez insists on adherence to the Church's propositions in matters of moral life.³⁰

It is worth noting that some recent evangelical Protestant theologians seem to support a propositional model of faith. Gordon H Clark defines faith as assent to propositions³¹ and his colleague Carl Henry warns that, without assent to propositions faith is no longer "identifiably Christian."³²

Preliminary thoughts on the Propositional Model

The basic concepts of human communication, understanding propositions, and comprehending and assessing the reliability of their source, all require the basic skills which belong to the realm of reason. I cannot begin to believe, for example, the proposition that "blue Wednesdays fly twelve". No matter what my assessment of the reliability of the source of such an utterance, the sentence is impossible to believe until the words are defined in such a way that I could comprehend what was proposed by it. The sentence must be logical. It must propose something that is comprehensible in order for anyone to believe it. The exercise of hearing and analysing the sentence is a rational process.

³⁰ Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus, Vol I* Ch.1.Q.C, 4. "All faithful Christians are forbidden to defend as legitimate conclusions of science such opinions that are known to be opposed to the doctrine of faith, ... The phrase "doctrine of faith" used here must not be limited to truths solemnly defined. It also includes at least those truths of faith and morals proposed by the ordinary and universal magisterium of the Church as truths to be held definitively."

³¹ Gordon, H. Clark, *Atheism* "The Trinity Review", July/August, 1983, 5. "There is a definite reason why not everything can be deduced. If one tried to prove the axioms of geometry, one must refer back to prior propositions. If these too must be deduced, there must be previous propositions, and so on back ad infinitum. From which it follows: If everything must be demonstrated, nothing can be demonstrated, for there would be no starting point. If you cannot start, then you surely cannot finish" cf. Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 171. "Faith, by definition, is assent to understood propositions."

³² Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 171. "Faith divorced from assent to propositions ... [is] neither identifiably Christian nor akin to authentic belief."

Assent to the propositions engages the mind in an act of will and intellect. Even further, offering a defence (apologetic) of the proposition engages the powers of reason built on the foundation of revelation.

Dulles raises the problem that this model seems to restrict belief to that which has been proposed. That is, if we insist that a concept cannot be believed if it cannot be formulated in a sentence, then we eliminate the possibility of belief in parts of the ‘mystery’ which have not yet been clearly expressed in propositions.³³ Dulles cites the adage “we know more than we can say” to illustrate his point that this model seems to overlook “the mystical dimensions of human knowledge.”³⁴ It is hard, however, to imagine we could believe X, even if X were ‘revealed’ in a mystical manner, if X were not in some way proposed rationally. The “mystical” source of such a proposition would not alter the need to comprehend the proposition in order to assent to it. Even if the mystical source alluded to knowledge unable to be proposed, this would not indicate that it is possible to believe X without X being proposed for belief. If the mystical source somehow inspired belief in something without specifically proposing anything, then it seems that the proposition proposed for belief is that there is something worth believing which has not (yet) been explicitly proposed, which is in itself a proposition.

It would seem that sentences or propositions describe reality, and that this reality is the object of belief rather than the sentences themselves. Specifically, the real object of

³³ Also relevant is Henri DeLubac, *Paradoxes of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 228. “Faith, if it be really faith, is always one, always entire. It envelops the totality of its object – even in those parts of it which have not yet been made plain, or in those aspects which have not yet been explored.”

³⁴ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 172.

belief is a person, the first and ultimate Truth, and not a proposition. To believe is to assent that X is the case, which presupposes that X must first be expressed in the form of a rational proposition. But the believer assents to the *reality* of X and not merely the proposition that X is the case.

Although propositions describe reality, they necessarily do so within the limits of language. The use of language carries with it all the limitations of language. Language assumes the cultural understanding and philosophical assumptions of that language. It is one thing to insist a dogmatic formula composed with the language of the sixteenth century, using language filled with the cultural and philosophical assumptions of the sixteenth century and which sought to respond to specific issues arising in that same century has been protected from formal error by the charism of infallibility. It is quite another thing to insist that this formula has expressed the truth perfectly and completely for all people, for all time.³⁵ There is a danger in a system that demands such precision of belief of what Ralph McInerney calls “philosophical pride.”³⁶ While absolutising one’s own ideas may produce legitimate systems of thought, McInerney suggests that a proper approach to philosophy takes into account the inherent weaknesses in all systems.³⁷ This recognition allows for a legitimate plurality of thought systems. Not in suggesting that

³⁵ cf. *F&R*, 84 and 94.

³⁶ Ralph McInerney, “The Scandal of Philosophy: Reconciling Different Philosophical Systems According to *Fides et Ratio*” in Fisher & Ramsay, *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?*, 28.

³⁷ Ralph McInerney, “The Scandal of Philosophy: Reconciling Different Philosophical Systems According to *Fides et Ratio*” in Fisher & Ramsay, *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?*, 28. “Pluralism is legitimate so long as it recognises the partial and imperfect nature of each of the systems with respect to the truth.” (McInerney still insists (*ibid*, 30) that faith provides a “negative criterion” for philosophy.)

mutually contradictory systems should be considered ‘true’ at the same time, but by acknowledging that both systems are partial and imperfect representations of reality.³⁸

Finally, it is worth noting Swinburne’s point that our reasons for holding a proposition may change over time, while we still hold to the same proposition. We may, says Swinburn, hold a proposition to be true on the basis of our research, and later hold the same proposition to be true on the basis of having faith in the conclusions of this research long after forgetting almost all of the relevant details.³⁹ To push Swinburne’s example further, we could hold a proposition to be true simply because it presents the only logical answer to a question, but later, when we are exposed to evidence supporting the proposition our reasons may change even if the proposition we believe in does not.⁴⁰

The Propositional Model in *Fides et Ratio*

Positive

Even in the opening paragraphs of *Fides et Ratio* we can discern a particular concern for and emphasis on specific truth located in formal revelation as the proper object of faith.

³⁸ McNerny notes (*ibid*, 29) that John Paul II’s insistence that philosophy begins with sense perception and experience necessarily excludes the philosophy of Descartes at the very least, adding a touch of the ironic to the irenic approach of the encyclical.

³⁹ Swinburne, *Faith and Reason - Second Edition*, 21-22. “A person may continue to believe a proposition while his evidence for it changes. I may a few years ago have assembled a lot of historical evidence which, I believed, made it probable that Jesus was raised physically from the dead. I therefore believed the latter proposition. I may now have forgotten the historical evidence, and yet continue to believe that Jesus was raised. My evidence now may be only that I once did, honestly and conscientiously, examine historical evidence and reach the conclusion that Jesus was raised. This evidence about my past investigation may be my present grounds for belief.”

⁴⁰ St Thomas Aquinas insists that believing something to be true on the basis we have evidence for it is not properly faith. (2a.2ae,1.4) O’Brien, *St Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae* Vol.31, 21-23.

The Church ... received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life. ... It is her duty to serve humanity in different ways, but one way in particular imposes a responsibility of a quite special kind: the *diakonia of the truth*.⁴¹

It describes the bishops of the Church as the ones “who share the mission of “proclaiming the truth openly” (2 Cor 4:2)”. It points to the bishops as “witnesses of the divine and Catholic truth” especially for the benefit of the young who, without such guidance, have “no valid points of reference.”⁴²

The Church can declare herself as bearer of the message⁴³ which God himself has revealed because God not only desires to make himself known, but provides sufficient revelation to enable us to understand and believe in Him. The God who cannot deceive us, nor desires to⁴⁴, has entrusted revealed truths to his entire people but charged the Magisterium with the task of providing authoritative boundaries within which the faithful can go about interpreting this revelation. John Paul II seems to support the idea that God has revealed himself in the form of propositions when he reiterates the canons of the First Vatican Council, “there are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known.”⁴⁵

The conviction that faith is grounded in propositions has its origin in the very sentences of Scripture which propose things for us to believe. Indicating that the authors “intended

⁴¹ *F&R*, 2.

⁴² *F&R*, 6. Also relevant is *F&R*, 22 “If something is true, then it must be true for all people and at all times.”

⁴³ *F&R*, 7.

⁴⁴ *F&R*, 8.

⁴⁵ *F&R*, 9 citing *Dei Filius*, IV DS 3015.

to formulate true statements, capable ... of expressing objective reality”⁴⁶ *Fides et Ratio* can confidently assert that “faith clearly presupposes that human language is capable of expressing divine and transcendent reality in a universal way... otherwise there would be no Revelation of God.”⁴⁷

This is not to suggest that any human language is capable of expressing the entirety of divine truth. The document compares the condescension of the second Person of the Trinity becoming incarnate with the condescension of God expressing at least a portion of his infinite truth within the mundane boundaries of human language.⁴⁸ Within the boundaries of this human language a theologian seeks to understand the meaning of what is proposed for his belief.⁴⁹

Although acknowledging that human language and even our reason are retarded by sin, imperfections and prejudices, *Fides et Ratio* still confidently asserts that human language is capable of expressing “unchanging and ultimate truth”⁵⁰ even surpassing the usual limits of language.⁵¹ *Fides et Ratio* warns against “abandonment of the traditional terminology”⁵² on the basis that the dogmatic propositions of the Church are not merely

⁴⁶ *F&R*, 82.

⁴⁷ *F&R*, 84.

⁴⁸ *F&R*, 94. “Human language thus embodies the language of God, who communicates his own truth with that wonderful “condescension” which mirrors the logic of the Incarnation.”

⁴⁹ *F&R*, 94. “In interpreting the sources of Revelation, then, the theologian needs to ask what is the deep and authentic truth which the texts wish to communicate, even within the limits of language.”

⁵⁰ *F&R*, 95.

⁵¹ *F&R*, 95. “Human language may be conditioned by history and constricted in other ways, but the human being can still express truths which surpass the phenomenon of language.”

⁵² *F&R*, 55. (In Raimond Gaita, “Moral Inquiry in a Catholic University” in Anthony Fisher & Hayden Ramsay, *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?* (Adelaide, ATF Press, 2004), 98. Gaita opines that “the longstanding traditions of Catholic moral philosophy, do not ... constitute a discipline” in themselves, but he acknowledge certain characteristics of a Catholic philosopher which separates them from a non-Catholic philosopher.)

human attempts to express the divine reality, but genuine expressions of the divine truth in human forms. The attempt to express religious truth necessarily draws on philosophy, even transforming philosophy as it makes use of it⁵³ to propose the revealed truth with ever increasing clarity “in order to express *the true doctrine* about God.”⁵⁴

Against the relativists of various kinds, *Fides et Ratio* asserts that the truth communicated in divine revelation is not confined to a particular culture, place or time so that all men and women find in it the ultimate truth and meaning of their lives.⁵⁵

Going further, the author insists that man cannot discern grave matters such as what is “good and evil” alone but is “constrained to appeal to a higher source.”⁵⁶ Although conceding a limited value in various imperfect means of searching for truth the document insists that “since Christian truth has a salvific value, any one of these paths may be taken, as long as it leads to the final goal, that is to the Revelation of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷

In addition to the use of philosophy to comprehend and utilise “the various forms and functions of language” in order to facilitate the clear communication of the truth⁵⁸, reason comes strongly into play in comprehending, interpreting and communicating the divinely revealed propositions, not only in grasping the logical and conceptual structure of the propositions in which the Church's teaching is framed, but also, indeed primarily,

⁵³ *F&R*, 39.

⁵⁴ *F&R*, 39.

⁵⁵ *F&R*, 12.

⁵⁶ *F&R*, 22.

⁵⁷ *F&R*, 38.

⁵⁸ *F&R*, 65. “Philosophy [prepares] for a correct *auditus fidei* with its study of the structure of knowledge and personal communication, especially the various forms and functions of language.”

in bringing to light the salvific meaning of these propositions for the individual and for humanity.⁵⁹

Far from rendering propositions useless, the doubt that sin creates is the reason for reliance on rigorous use of philosophical method in careful interpretation of the propositions of revelation. Faith liberates reason from its limitations⁶⁰ and it is from our understanding of “the sum of these propositions” that we come to know the truth.⁶¹

The task of the theologian, according to this model of faith, is to utilise philosophical insight and method to comprehend, develop and communicate “this certain and unchangeable doctrine” to each age, in response to the various challenges and needs of the people of God.⁶²

Negative

It would seem that *Fides et Ratio* does not so much suggest that the propositional model of faith is incorrect so much as it is limited. While it is true that God reveals himself through definitive statements and specific dogmatic formulations, these sentences present the object of faith to us in human phrases, but the object of faith is properly God. *Fides et Ratio* insists that “only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.”⁶³ The object of our faith is not sentences but a person. Even

⁵⁹ *F&R*, 66.

⁶⁰ *F&R*, 43. “Illumined by faith, reason is set free from the fragility and limitations deriving from the disobedience of sin and finds the strength necessary to rise to the knowledge of the Triune God.”

⁶¹ *F&R*, 66.

⁶² *F&R*, 92.

⁶³ *F&R*, 12. (citing *Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

sentences of divine revelation itself are the “Word made flesh”⁶⁴ who reveals himself and, in doing so, the entire Godhead. Placing faith in mere propositions could carry even more danger than merely falling short of understanding and knowing God. To be sure, believing in a person involves believing what that person reveals about themselves. This model points beyond the propositions themselves to the truth which they express, and always looks to that ever reliable truth to confirm and increase our understanding of what has been revealed. Lacking the guidance, respect and proper love of the person who is the object of faith could lead to a distorted understanding of God, as the failings of human reason can obscure even revealed truth.⁶⁵ This is not to suggest that proponents of the propositional model reject the work of the Holy Spirit or the person of Christ. Nevertheless it is worth noting that, in their emphasis on the propositions themselves, there is a danger of placing insufficient emphasis on God as the object of true faith and on the person of Jesus Christ as the living Word of God, the Word made flesh. The proper object of faith is God himself, not primarily the propositions which lead us to and proclaim this object.

Another issue raised by *Fides et Ratio* which presents a problem for the propositional model is that of our flawed nature. By virtue of our fallen nature, our reason is not perfect⁶⁶, our motives not always reliable and the philosophy we utilise in our struggle to express the truth can itself be seriously flawed.⁶⁷ Further still, the very formulations

⁶⁴ *F&R*, 7 (citing *Dei Verbum*, 2).

⁶⁵ *F&R*, 28. “The natural limitation of reason and the inconsistency of the heart often obscure and distort a person’s search.”

⁶⁶ *F&R*, 75. “[Philosophy is] seriously handicapped by the inherent weakness of human reason.”

⁶⁷ *F&R*, 49. “History shows that philosophy ... has taken wrong turns and fallen into error.”

are affected by our human limitations.⁶⁸ On top of all this, we may even flee from the revealed truth because we are “afraid of its demands.”⁶⁹

It is here that every attempt to reduce the Father's saving plan to purely human logic is doomed to failure. “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the learned? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 Cor 1:20)⁷⁰

Conclusion to the Propositional Model

We have seen that the propositional model, properly understood, does not suggest we believe *in* propositions but, rather, that propositions are the believers’ efforts to coherently describe the mysteries of God. The proponents of the propositional model, supported by *Fides et Ratio*, argue that, despite the various difficulties faced by reason, it is still possible for reason to discover, discern and describe truth. We have seen that it is impossible to believe something if we do not understand what is to be believed. Even if God has revealed some truth directly to us, we must use reason to decipher its meaning in order to assent to it. To ‘think with assent’, the Christian person needs reason to deduce how particular propositions coherently interrelate with other propositions of faith. In fact, it is only through the logical structures of human language that the believer is able to express truths about God and seek to ‘believe’ in any meaningful sense. Uncertainty, difficulty and doubt do not deter proponents of this model from their optimism regarding reason. They are, rather, spurred on to more diligent and rigorous application of reason in their search for truth.

⁶⁸ *F&R*, 51. “it is necessary to keep in mind the unity of truth, even if its formulations are shaped by history and produced by human reason wounded and weakened by sin.”

⁶⁹ *F&R*, 28.

⁷⁰ *F&R*, 23.

The Transcendental Model

The second model of faith described by Avery Dulles is based on the emphasis on supernatural faith as necessary for supernatural understanding. Faith is not so much adherence to dogmatic propositions but a gift of transformation, given and freely accepted, which enlightens and moves the human spirit towards God. This gift is a totally new perspective, allowing man to reach and understand things far above his natural reason. Although Dulles attributes this view almost exclusively to Rahner and his 20th century contemporaries,⁷¹ it could be argued that some of its foundational ideas can be traced back to the Scriptures, even if these were only developed to the present extent relatively recently.

A strong theme in Biblical wisdom literature, specifically, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”⁷² and related sentiments,⁷³ directly links human wisdom with a proper attitude of awe and respect for God’s majesty. In the New Testament, St Paul urges his readers to be transformed by a renewal of their mind⁷⁴ which he describes as uniting with the mind of Christ.⁷⁵ It could be argued that the Scriptures support the idea that a general disposition inclined toward the divine naturally inclines us to greater understanding.⁷⁶ A particular attitude or state of mind is necessary for obtaining wisdom.

⁷¹ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 173.

⁷² e.g. Ps 111:10, Pr 1:7, 9:10.

⁷³ e.g. Pr 15:33 “The fear of the Lord teaches a man”, 16:6 “through fear of the Lord a man avoids evil.”

⁷⁴ Rom 12:2.

⁷⁵ Php 2:5.

⁷⁶ cf. The call of wisdom in Pr 1:20-33, 3:13-20, 8:1-36 & 9:1-12.

As early as the first century of Christian history, Pope Clement I, in his lectures to catechumens, teaches that faith opens the eyes of our hearts to the truth of God.⁷⁷ St Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386) held that our reason is ‘enlightened’ by faith conferred in baptism⁷⁸ and St Augustine (354-430) famously proposed that “unless you believe you will not understand.”⁷⁹ Augustine believes that some truths of the faith are impossible to understand without the gift of faith.⁸⁰

Perhaps the most significant contributor to the development of the relationship between faith and reason, St Thomas Aquinas, referred to a *lumen fides*, that is, a “light of faith” which enlightens our natural reason and orders the believer towards the things of God.⁸¹ Far from claiming that this is an achievement of our natural reason alone, Thomas insists that the light is Christ himself, who enlightens us and inclines us towards the good.⁸² Centuries later saw something of a revival of St Thomas’s view in Pierre Rousselot (1878-1915) who described faith as an active power of discernment given to the mind. Rousselot developed the Thomistic theme of faith as a living connaturality with the things of God⁸³ by describing the intellect in terms of its final goal, God.⁸⁴ Karl

⁷⁷ Clement I *First letter to the Corinthians*, 36. “By [Christ] the eyes of hearts are opened. By Him our foolish and darkened understanding blossoms up anew towards his marvellous light.” in Cyril Richardson, *Library of Christian Classics, Vol I – Early Christian Fathers*, (London, SCM, 1953).

⁷⁸ Phillip Schaff, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol 11 - Lectures on the Article “and on one Holy Ghost, the comforter, which speak by the prophets”* Lecture XVI, 16 and lecture XVII, 36.

⁷⁹ *Ep 70:1:3-4 “Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis”* seems to be a Latin translation of Is 7:9 (from LXX) according to Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 27.

⁸⁰ Augustine also refers to Is 7:9 “unless you believe you shall not understand” (from LXX) in his commentary *In Psalm.*, 118; *Serm.*, 18:3 in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 27.

⁸¹ 2a.2ae.1.4. Ad3 “The light of faith does make one see the things believed in.” O’Brien, *St Thomas Aquinas – Summa Theologiae* Vol.31 (Also relevant is 2a.2ae.1.5. Ad1; and 2a.2ae.2.3 Ad2).

⁸² Thomas Aquinas, *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas: Electronic edition*. (InteLex Corporation, 1993), p71. Commenting on John 1:9 “He [the Word] was the true light, which enlightens every man coming into this world.”)

⁸³ Avery Dulles, introducing Pierre Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith: With Rousselot's Answer to Two Attacks* (New York, Fordham, 1990), 17. “By defining the intellect in terms of its final object, God, Rousselot

Adam (1876-1966) continued to build on Aquinas' idea, describing faith as a light which illuminates the intellect and opens it to what is divine and holy. The assent of faith is affected by the will when it recognises in Christ the *summum bonum* which is the fulfilment of the entire person. Adam proposes that the inquirer must abandon the objective, impersonal, scientific approach and be reverently attentive to a message that involves the entire person since Christ is not a mere set of proposals but a living person who communicates himself through the life of the Church. This seems to represent a departure from St Thomas in that Thomas insisted that the light of faith orders one towards the articles of faith, and is not indifferent to them.⁸⁵ St Edith Stein (1891-1942AD) provides a healthy clarification to this theme, insisting that the light of faith makes us less vulnerable to error, but not completely preserved from making mistakes.⁸⁶

In his *Introduction to Theology* Abelard (1079-1142AD) taught that reason can achieve a kind of 'primordial faith'⁸⁷ which, while not able to gain us salvation, predisposes us towards the divine gift of supernatural faith which saves. John Duns Scotus further developed the idea that human reason needs healing after the fall but that, when healed by faith, human reason resumes its search for understanding which is proper to its

recalled St Thomas' paradoxical doctrine about the "natural desire for the beatific vision." For no concept, only God known in Himself, can satisfy the soul's innate longing for the truth" (cf. Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 111. "For Rousselot the light of faith is something by which we see, not something seen.")

⁸⁴ Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith: With Rousselot's Answer to Two Attacks*, 17. "Rousselot conceived knowledge as a tendency towards its goal and effectively rendered man connatural with that goal, specifically the First Truth, God Himself, and with all that led to this goal."

⁸⁵ II.II.2.3 Reply Ob.2 "anyone, through the light of faith divinely infused, gives assent to what is of faith and not the opposite." O'Brien, *St Thomas Aquinas – Summa Theologiae* Vol.31, 75.

⁸⁶ Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Assent to the Meaning of Being* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 2002), 21 in Prudence Allen, *Mary and the Vocation of Philosophers*, 52.

⁸⁷ *Introductio ad theologiam*, Bk. II sec. 3; PL 178:1051 "primordia fidei" in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 29.

created nature.⁸⁸ According to Scotus, our search for God and faith in Him is not something artificially imposed on us via an external faith but a natural end of our created being.

Jacobus Payva d' Andrada, a Portuguese Jesuit, proposed a kind of 'salvation of the Greeks', the idea that Aristotle is in heaven by virtue of his 'natural faith' and implicit desire for union with the one God. Responding to suggestions that anyone who never knew Christ would be consigned to hell, he wrote "There can be no more shocking harshness and cruelty than to deliver up human beings to everlasting torments on account of lack of faith which they could in no way obtain."⁸⁹ Juan De Lugo (1583-1660) and others argued more carefully, suggesting that a pagan might come to receive supernatural grace which allows them to assent to certain parts of the truth (available to them in their pagan religion or in nature) but that they would still need to make an 'act of faith' in a saving God.⁹⁰

Although Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and his intellectual followers tend to fall more into Dulles's affective/experiential model than the transcendental model, his insistence that dependence on the transcendent is more significant than revealed propositions could be seen as a key building block for those who later developed the transcendental model of faith as Dulles describes it. Schleiermacher described faith as

⁸⁸ Cross, *Great Medieval Thinkers: Duns Scotus*, 11. "Scotus' answer to the first question [Do we need revealed doctrine in order to be saved?] is a resounding "No." He reasons that it would be possible for God to save someone without the gift of faith, and *a fortiori* without any theological knowledge." cf. Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 36-37.

⁸⁹ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 59 citing d' Andrada's *Orthodoxarum explicationum ... libri decem* from Martin Chemnitz's *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Sixth Topic, sec. 1, no. 7; 1:393.

⁹⁰ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 60.

“the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God.”⁹¹ For Schleiermacher, faith consists of the experience itself, and this experience becomes a testimony when shared.⁹²

Drawing on many of the themes above, Karl Rahner (1904-1984) interpreted the ‘light of faith’ not so much as revelation of dogmatic truth,⁹³ but as God’s gracious gift of himself,⁹⁴ which invites and enables human beings to say “yes” to the transcendent which is called ‘God’.⁹⁵ Human faith is, in turn, a complete self giving over to the transcendent mystery which we call ‘God’, following the example of Christ himself who gave himself over to God completely. Faith, in this model, does not mean Jesus, or anyone else, believes in statements of fact, but that the entire self is given over to the transcendent.⁹⁶ This intimacy with the divine person does not, according to Rahner, lessen the mystery of God. In fact human language struggles to express the mystery of

⁹¹ H. R. Mackintosh & J. S. Stewart Eds. *Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith* (London, T&T Clark, 1948), 16. “The self-identical essence of piety, is this : the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God.”

⁹² Mackintosh & Stewart *Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith*, 11. “Piety in its diverse expressions remains essentially a state of feeling.” And p12 “The self-identical essence of piety, is this : the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God.”

⁹³ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 116. “We want to avoid both misunderstandings that a mere word *about* God, although perhaps spoken by God, as well as that of self-communication of God which is refined and understood entirely after the manner of a thing.”

⁹⁴ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 118. “God’s self-communication means, therefore, that what is communicated is really God in his own being, and in this way it is a communication for the sake of knowing and possessing God in immediate vision and love.”

⁹⁵ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 101. Rahner believes we are also free to say no to God, but that this “no” must be to God himself, “not merely to some distorted or childish notion of God” nor to God’s law, nor “merely the moral sum which we calculate from good or evil deeds.” For Rahner’s discussion of the freedom of this choice see Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 97-106.

⁹⁶ John J O’Donnell SJ., *Karl Rahner - Life in the Spirit* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2004), 53. “In Rahner’s mind Christ’s surrender to God in freedom reveals him as a man of faith and hope. For Rahner, Christ is not dispensed from faith, rather he is the perfect exemplification of it. But faith here is understood not so much as believing that something is the case, but rather as surrender to God. And Christ, like us, does so in darkness, indeed even the bitter darkness of the abandonment of the cross.” [expounding *Theological Investigations XIII* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), 165].

God.⁹⁷ This transcendent God is the ultimate goal towards whom the human spirit is oriented, the only goal that can satisfy us and complete us.⁹⁸ God commits himself to grant the necessary grace to enable us to rise to the goal.⁹⁹ God's offer of this grace is, at least implicitly, in the created world, and created beings.¹⁰⁰

This transcendental faith is possible, according to Rahner, without explicitly assenting to dogmatic formulas regarding Christ.¹⁰¹ A basic acceptance of the holy mystery is enough for faith, even without any understanding or formulation of doctrine or even, in some cases, in the absence of what might be considered vital doctrines.¹⁰² This form of 'faith' produces the possibility of an 'anonymous Christian'.¹⁰³ For Rahner, "faith is an

⁹⁷ Stephen Duffy, "Experience of grace" in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* ed. Declan Marmion & Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 44. "Divine closeness notwithstanding, God remains the incomprehensible mystery that brings language to breaking point."

⁹⁸ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 83. "The most radical and absolutely immediate self-communication of God in his very own being is given to us, ... the finite subject does not disappear in this most immediate manifestation of God and it is not suppressed, but rather it reaches its fulfilment and hence its fullest autonomy as subject. This autonomy is at once both the presupposition and the consequence of this absolute immediacy to God and from God."

⁹⁹ Stephen Duffy, "Experience of grace" in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* ed. Declan Marmion & Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 44. "Grace is God's transforming presence enabling divinization of humans and their participation in the divine life."

¹⁰⁰ Stephen Duffy, "Experience of grace" in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* ed. Declan Marmion & Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45. "For Rahner, grace and nature, the divine self-gift and humans and their world, are related as the contingently-is and the hypothetically-necessary. Nature must be if divine self-giving is to have an addressee. Creation is grounded in God's gracing love. Nature exists for grace, never apart from grace. The incarnation is the goal of creation's movement, the conditions of its possibility."

¹⁰¹ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 227. "We can say then: anyone who accepts Jesus as the ultimate truth of his life and professes that God has spoken the ultimate word to him in Jesus and in his death, not all the penultimate words which we still have to find ourselves in our own history, but the ultimate word for which he lives and dies, he thereby accepts Jesus as the Son of God as the church professes him to be. This is true whatever the theoretically inadequate or even false conceptualisation might sound like in his own formulation of the faith in which he is living out his existence."

¹⁰² Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 228. "Anyone who, though still far from any revelation explicitly formulated in words, accepts his existence in patient silence (or, better, in faith, hope and love), accepts it as the mystery which lies hidden in the mystery of eternal love and which bears life in the womb of death, is saying "yes" to Christ even though he does not know it."

¹⁰³ cf. Donovan, Daniel, "Revelation and faith" in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* ed. Declan Marmion & Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 93-94.

acceptance of the nearness of God as absolute mystery.”¹⁰⁴ Faith can even exist in atheists who “accept themselves unconditionally.”¹⁰⁵ This faith does incline one to assent to revelation when it is credibly proclaimed, but can exist in persons even if they have never previously encountered any specific revelation.

Preliminary thoughts on the Transcendental Model

This model seems once again to possess an optimism about reason, albeit reason assisted and mediated by divine grace. It also focuses the search for truth and meaning firmly on the transcendent divine. While naming the transcendent truth as its object, however, the model seems to allow the possibility of an imprecise and unguided search for truth, even if it does not adopt it completely. Perhaps the model finds support in the dichotomy, such as presented by Marilyn McCord Adams, between a realism concerning reality but not concerning epistemology.¹⁰⁶ The transcendental model seems to be promoting a search for truth which is optimistic about finding truth and yet pessimistic about being certain when one has found the truth. A proponent of this model sets out with all the joy of a child on an Easter egg hunt but with no idea how to tell the eggs from rocks, or

¹⁰⁴ Karl Rahner, “Thoughts on the Possibility of Belief Today,” *Theological Investigations*, vol5 (New York: Crossroad, 1974), 7 in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 173.

¹⁰⁵ Donovan, “Revelation and faith” in Marmion & Hines, Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, 94. “On a number of occasions Rahner argued that a genuine acceptance of oneself is the beginning of faith, and it is already an act of saving faith. What is at stake here is not the relatively superficial self-acceptance of pop-psychology, but rather something that involves the whole person, including one’s openness to the infinite and the absolute.” cf. Karl Rahner, “Faith Between Rationality and Emotion,” *Theological Investigations*, vol.16 (New York: Seabury/Crossroad, 1979),67. “[Faith] can be found in people who consciously believe they are and must be atheists, as long as they are completely obedient to the absolute demands of conscience, that is, ... they accept themselves unconditionally, without self rejection, fulfilling that primordial capacity of freedom which involves the subject as a whole.” Cited in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 173; on self acceptance as faith see “Anonymous Christians,” *Theological Investigations* vi, 390-398 and “Anonymous and Explicit Faith,” *Theological Investigations* xvi, 52-59.

¹⁰⁶ Hilary Martin OP, “Comments on ‘Sceptical Realism: Faith and Reason in Collaboration’” in Fisher & Ramsay, *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?*, 21. “While Adams is a realist about reality, she is not a realist about human knowledge of that reality.”

even, ultimately, if eggs are what he is looking for! Epistemological pessimism notwithstanding, the absence of an emphasis on dogmatic guidelines leaves the proponent of this model with reason alone to identify, discern, and critically assess the raw data of experience in order to determine what, if anything, has transcendent significance. In other words the proponent of the transcendental model is left with only their reason to guide their life and belief.

Although this model seems to downplay specific revealed truth, it does not dispense with reason. Where specific revelation is absent, or not yet presented ‘credibly,’ the individual has only reason to guide them in discerning a ‘transcendent’ reality from random happenstance. Reason has a place in organising these ideas into a coherent system which expresses their underlying desire to draw near to the mysterious God and serves as a guide their daily actions. Hence Gregory Moses can propose that we cannot insist others believe what we do, since what we believe is only our explanation of what we believe at present, but we can expect their proposals to be reasonable. Their conscience almost completely guided by reason, (guided by the ‘light of faith’), becomes the norm for their belief and ‘faithfulness’ of life.¹⁰⁷

The scope of reason within this model might include the exercise of discerning who “I” am in order to engage in the fundamental self acceptance, the act of will which engages my whole person in a fundamental ‘yes’ to the transcendent, and the practical operation of the conscience which is the arbiter of all moral action. In this light it would seem that

¹⁰⁷ Gregory Moses, “Faith and Reason – Naturalised and Naturalised” in Fisher & Ramsay, *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?*, 49-52.

the transcendental model presents an optimistic approach to reason, trusting it completely. Nevertheless it seems to sacrifice hope in universally accessible objective truth via revelation in favour of a disproportionate trust in unguided reason, as opposed to reason assisted by faith and revealed truth. At the very least it moves the focus from revelation (as it appears in the propositional model) and focuses on the subjective *fides qua* aspect of faith.

Even so, the claim that human beings find fulfilment in belief is an audacious claim, made in the face of modern scepticism and even surprises some self professed realists. Marilyn McCord Adams believes, for example, that Pope John Paul II goes beyond St Thomas, even beyond Kant's "moral" imperative to claim that God and belief in our immortality are necessary for a successful search for the meaning of life.¹⁰⁸

The Transcendental Model in *Fides et Ratio*

Positive

Fides et Ratio espouses the foundational principle of the transcendental model of faith by asserting that faith and reason not only work in cooperation towards the same ultimate truth¹⁰⁹ but that this search begins in the very nature of humankind, knowing ourselves in all the mystery that entails, and asking the "fundamental questions which pervade human life: *Who am I, where have I come from and where am I going? Why is*

¹⁰⁸ Marilyn McCord Adams, "Sceptical Realism: Faith and Reason in Collaboration" in, Fisher & Ramsay, *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?*, 11.

¹⁰⁹ *F&R*, introductory paragraph.

there evil? What is there after this life?”¹¹⁰ These things stem from our common experience of being human, and the quest for meaning that this entails.

Fides et Ratio uses the ‘wise man’ of Scripture as the exemplar of man in pursuit of his own self realisation. Citing the dramatic poetic description of a wise man pursuing wisdom as a hunter pursues his prey,¹¹¹ the encyclical lauds the search for truth as something which defines our very humanity, and sets us apart as creatures destined for transcendence. Self realisation is the ultimate goal of all human beings in this model.¹¹² Indeed, the very search for truth implies an inbuilt conviction that truth is obtainable.¹¹³ This is not to say that we can achieve complete knowledge and salvific self realisation by purely natural powers. The Holy Spirit provides an utterly transformed way of looking at the universe and oneself which allows the intellect to rise to the contemplation of truth¹¹⁴. It is the Holy Spirit at work in all of history, from beginning to end, that man’s illuminated reason discovers, discerns and assents to in faith.¹¹⁵ The truth is available to all in history and ultimately leads anyone with a “sincere heart” to the “definitive vision of God.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ *F&R*, 1, and 26. “Truth comes initially ... as a question: *Does life have meaning?*”

¹¹¹ *F&R*, 16. “Happy the man who meditates on wisdom and reasons intelligently, who reflects in his heart on her ways and ponders her secrets. He pursues her like a hunter and lies in wait on her paths. He peers through her windows and listens at her doors.” (Sir 14:20ff).”

¹¹² *F&R*, 4. “Driven by the desire to discover the ultimate truth of existence, human beings seek to acquire those universal elements of knowledge which enable them to understand themselves better and to advance in their own self-realization.”

¹¹³ *F&R*, 29. “Human beings would not even begin to search for something of which they knew nothing or for something which they thought was wholly beyond them.”

¹¹⁴ *F&R*, 16. “Faith sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of Providence.” Also relevant are *F&R*, 41 “purified and rightly tuned, therefore, reason could rise to the higher planes of thought” and *F&R*, 43. “Illuminated by faith, reason is set free... to rise to the knowledge of the Triune God.”

¹¹⁵ *F&R*, 11. Citing *Dei Verbum*, 8.

¹¹⁶ *F&R*, 15.

The Thomistic theme of connaturality referred to in *Fides et Ratio*¹¹⁷ also seems to support the transcendental model. The light of faith which opens our senses and minds to the truth of God in history, creation and in our very selves goes further to instil in us a kind of natural inclination to the truth of God, by virtue of his gracious work of faith within us. This connaturality seems to be manifest in the encyclical's example of the martyrs. The martyrs' witness does not need logical arguments or carefully worded propositions in order to convince us of the truth their actions bear testimony to since, "from the moment they speak to us of what we perceive deep down as the truth we have sought for so long."¹¹⁸

The focus here is the human being on the path to enlightenment rather than dogmatic propositions. To propose dogmatic formulae in themselves as the 'end' or object of faith distracts from the purpose of revelation since, "the knowledge proper to faith does not destroy the mystery; it only reveals it the more."¹¹⁹ Far from ending the search, revelation, wherever we find it, urges us to search further because "this knowledge refers back constantly to the mystery of God which the human mind cannot exhaust but can only receive and embrace in faith."¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *F&R*, 44. "This wisdom comes to know by way of connaturality."

¹¹⁸ *F&R*, 32. Further "the martyrs stir in us a profound trust because they give voice to what we already feel and they declare what we would like to have the strength to express."

¹¹⁹ *F&R*, 13.

¹²⁰ *F&R*, 15. "Revelation therefore introduces into our history a universal and ultimate truth which stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort; indeed, it impels reason continually to extend the range of its knowledge" Also relevant is *F&R*, 38 "philosophy yearns for the wisdom ... and does all it can to acquire it."

Fides et Ratio seems to support this model in its repeated insistence that “human knowledge is a journey which allows no rest,”¹²¹ urging man on to greater effort to discover and comprehend it, in fundamental openness to the transcendent God who “neither deceives nor wishes to deceive.”¹²² Since the truth is found in the origin of all truth, it is the primary task of human beings to search for truth, and thus for God.¹²³ It is not only revelation itself that spurs us on to discover truth: it is our deepest human desire to know the truth and embrace it as our own.¹²⁴ The encyclical echoes the proponents of a transcendental model of faith in insisting that all knowledge, and even the search for it, leads us ultimately to the one who is the Truth, the Word made flesh.

Even the concept of an “anonymous Christian”, if seen as a genuine seeker of truth, seems to find support in the idea that there are many paths to truth but only one final goal, Jesus Christ.¹²⁵ It might receive a certain qualified support from the closing paragraphs where the author declares the Church’s commitment to genuine dialogue in truth with all who love the truth excluding neither those who are ignorant of the ultimate source of truth nor even those who “are hostile to the Church and persecute her in various ways”.¹²⁶

¹²¹ *F&R*, 16, 17, 18, 33.

¹²² *F&R*, 8.

¹²³ *F&R*, 17. “In God there lies the origin of all things, in him is found the fullness of the mystery, and in this his glory consists; to men and women there falls the task of exploring truth with their reason, and in this their nobility consists.”

¹²⁴ *F&R*, 24. “In the far reaches of the human heart there is a seed of desire and nostalgia for God.”, 25 “all human beings desire to know.”

¹²⁵ *F&R*, 38. “There are many paths which lead to truth, but since Christian truth has a salvific value, any one of these paths may be taken, as long as it leads to the final goal, that is to the Revelation of Jesus Christ”; (Also relevant is 102 “People today will come to realize that their humanity is all the more affirmed the more they entrust themselves to the Gospel and open themselves to Christ”).

¹²⁶ *F&R*, 104 (citing *Gaudium et Spes*, 92).

Fides et Ratio shares the transcendentalist's optimism regarding reason. Where the encyclical acknowledges that reason can mislead it attributes the error to human sin¹²⁷, an improperly attuned will,¹²⁸ rather than to reason. Even admitting that reason is "limited" the encyclical insists it is possible to know truth by reason.¹²⁹

Rahner's primacy of conscience, essential to a model of faith which plays down the necessity of authoritative revelation, might perhaps find support in the admonition to greater use of conscience.¹³⁰

It is hardly surprising that this shared optimism regarding reason leads to further agreement in the conclusion that all people should be encouraged to trust and exercise reason in their ongoing search for truth.¹³¹

Negative

While *Fides et Ratio* does assert that God has placed his truth "in time and history"¹³² the document is referring to the specific revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word and second person of the Blessed Trinity. The proponents of the transcendental model claim that their search for truth has Christ as its end. But, even if the individual is

¹²⁷ *F&R*, 17. "If human beings with their intelligence fail to recognize God as Creator of all, it is not because they lack the means to do so, but because their free will and their sinfulness place an impediment in the way."

¹²⁸ *F&R*, 28. "The natural limitation of reason and the inconstancy of the heart often obscure and distort a person's search."

¹²⁹ *F&R*, 16. "With the light of reason human beings can know which path to take, but they can follow that path to its end, quickly and unhindered, only if with a rightly tuned spirit they search for it."

¹³⁰ *F&R*, 68. "In order to apply these to the particular circumstances of individual and communal life, Christians must be able fully to engage their conscience and the power of their reason."

¹³¹ *F&R*, 56. "Nonetheless, in the light of faith which finds in Jesus Christ this ultimate meaning, I cannot but encourage philosophers—be they Christian or not—to trust in the power of human reason."

¹³² *F&R*, 11.

not aware of this at stages of the journey, the specific rejection of dogmatic formulae seems to be what *Fides et Ratio* warns against in several places.¹³³ We are further warned of the disastrous results of any attempt to seek the truth that divorces us from the sure guiding hand of God's self revelation.¹³⁴ As the encyclical says, our inner conflicts, concerns and fear of where the truth may lead us can distort our perception of truth.¹³⁵ In addition to general natural failings of human reason, there is a constant danger specific to each culture and age which has the potential to lead us astray¹³⁶. This is why *Fides et Ratio* urges us, with the words of Saint Paul to "See to it that no-one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition ... and not according to Christ."¹³⁷ The encyclical also provides examples of the early Fathers struggling against the prevailing errors of their day by clinging to the revealed truth.¹³⁸

Thus *Fides et Ratio* urges theologians to remain firmly within their "ecclesial context"¹³⁹ and submit themselves to the guidance of the Magisterium which responds with warnings to those who stray from the path to genuine wisdom.¹⁴⁰

¹³³ *F&R*, 48. "Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal." Also relevant are *F&R*, 2, 5, 6, 8, 12 and 37.

¹³⁴ *F&R*, 5. "sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice.", 6, 21, and 75 "In refusing the truth offered by divine Revelation, philosophy only does itself damage, since this is to preclude access to a deeper knowledge of truth."

¹³⁵ *F&R*, 28. "The search for truth, of course, is not always so transparent nor does it always produce such results. The natural limitation of reason and the inconstancy of the heart often obscure and distort a person's search. Truth can also drown in a welter of other concerns. People can even run from the truth as soon as they glimpse it because they are afraid of its demands."

¹³⁶ *F&R*, 55. "This happens when theologians, through lack of philosophical competence, allow themselves to be swayed uncritically by assertions which have become part of current parlance and culture but which are poorly grounded in reason."

¹³⁷ *F&R*, 37 (Col 2:8).

¹³⁸ *F&R*, 37 (Saint Irenaeus and Tertullian).

¹³⁹ *F&R*, 101.

¹⁴⁰ *F&R*, 49.

Conclusion to the Transcendental Model

The transcendental model places great importance on reason. Where reason is darkened, faith provides light. Where it is limited by its natural capacity it is reinvigorated by supernatural faith. Where supernatural matters seem so far beyond our mundane existence that they are unnatural to us, faith infuses us with a connaturality with the things of God. Where a person does not believe, or even explicitly denounces certain beliefs, this model places great hope in reason leading them to what is their proper fulfilment in the truth. In placing hope in reason, even assisted reason, to find transcendent meaning, the proponents of this model assume that both human beings, and the universe they inhabit, are fundamentally coherent, and coherently point us to truth that transcends this universe.

The Fiducial Model

Faith, in the fiducial model, is trusting surrender to God's promises to save us. The model seems to find its beginnings in the Scriptures themselves. The Hebrew and Greek words translated into English as 'faith' usually include the concept of trustfulness in their semantic fields. In the case of the Old Testament, the primary meaning of these words seems to be the trustworthiness of the object of faith rather than a focus on the belief of the subject. There is no word in Hebrew that directly corresponds to the modern word "faith".¹⁴¹

The Hebrew word אָמַן in its simplest form means to support or sustain.¹⁴² The *niphal* form, meaning "to be established as reliable, trustworthy etc", is used predominantly of God.¹⁴³ In the *hiphil* form the meaning is primarily "to stand firm", or "to trust" which is often translated "to believe."¹⁴⁴ Where the word is used of people it refers to their trust, or lack of trust in the faithfulness of God. Another Hebrew word often translated as "trust" is בָּטַח. Almost all the occurrences of this word indicate surety, trust and proper hope in God or some other trustworthy object. Even the New Testament πιστις should perhaps be translated as "trust" as much as "faith."¹⁴⁵ The majority of Scriptural uses

¹⁴¹ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 7. (Dulles points out that of the three Hebrew words most often translated to the Greek πιστις, none correspond exactly to the Greek meaning.)

¹⁴² William L. Holladay, Ed. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988), 20. This simple meaning only in its Qal passive participle form "was sustained." The predominant use is in the *niphal* and the *hiphil*.

¹⁴³ Wigram *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance* (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1984). Some exceptions include: Gen 42:20 where Joseph keeps one of his brothers hostage to ensure the 'faithfulness' of the remaining brothers to their agreement. Another example is the reference to God raising up a 'faithful' priest, 'faithful' being defined by the fact he 'will do what is in [God's] heart and mind.'

¹⁴⁴ Wigram *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*, 103-104. The semantic field of this word, as it is used in Scripture, includes 'faithful/ reliable (58), believe (41), confirmed/true (23), trust (9), sure/assurance (8), established (8), lasting/enduring (5), nurse (5), guardian (4), firm (4), fulfilled (2), doorpost (1)', and even indicates the 'steady hand' of a skilled sculptor in Song of Songs.

¹⁴⁵ Walter Bauer et al, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 2nd Ed*, 662.

refer to acting with certainty that something is trustworthy and reliable, particularly God in fulfilling His promises. God knows best and thus we trust Him by doing as He commands, because we *know* it is good for us, even if we cannot understand why.

Theologians in the fourth century, including St Augustine, responded to the Pelagian heresy by emphasising the fallen nature of human reason.¹⁴⁶ In his early writings, Augustine suggests that the mind's vision of God is clouded by our immersion in the material world and confusion of the senses.¹⁴⁷ In his *Confessions*, he speaks of certainty of mind but blames his own pride and sensuality as distorting factors.¹⁴⁸ Later writings such as *City of God* speak of faith as a conscious choice to believe the God who descends into the 'darkness' of the world to reveal himself as light and to rescue us.¹⁴⁹ According to Augustine, this darkness serves to protect us from intellectual pride, and to teach us to rely on God in order to know.¹⁵⁰ Faith is essentially an act of obedience to God's word, both moral and intellectual. Later in life, Augustine still insists that faith is

¹⁴⁶ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 23. According to Dulles, Basil the Great (330-379), Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390) and Gregory of Nyssa (335-394) all emphasised the inability of man's reason to rise to the truth of God, and the necessity of faith in God's revelation to grasp the divine truth.

¹⁴⁷ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 26.

¹⁴⁸ cf. Maria Boulding Tr. *The Confessions of St Augustine*, 193 (Bk VIII.11). "I had grown used to pretending that the only reason why I had not yet turned my back on the world to serve you was that my perception of the truth was uncertain, but that excuse was no longer available to me, for by now I was certain. But I was still entangled by the earth and refused to enlist in your service." Dulles (26) claims Augustine places more emphasis on his own pride than on sensuality in *Confessions*.

¹⁴⁹ Phillip Schaff, *Saint Augustine's City of God and Christian Doctrine* (Kessinger, 2004). Dulles refers to *City of God* XI, 29 "For the knowledge of the creature is, in comparison of the knowledge of the Creator, but a twilight; and so it dawns and breaks into morning when that creature is drawn to the praise and love of the Creator."

¹⁵⁰ Phillip Schaff, *Saint Augustine's City of God and Christian Doctrine* IX, 537. "I do not doubt that this [darkness] was divinely arranged for the purpose of subduing pride by toil, and preventing a feeling of satiety in the intellect, which generally holds in small esteem what is discovered without difficulty."

a pure gift, freely given by God. Justifying faith comes through *hearing* Christ and receiving faith through hearing the incarnate Word.¹⁵¹

The fiducial model seems to find some support in the canons of the Council of Orange (529AD) itself a response to a development of Pelagius' error.¹⁵² The Council affirms that "the sin of the first man has so impaired and weakened free will that no one thereafter can either love God as he ought or believe in God or do good for God's sake, unless the grace of divine mercy has preceded him."¹⁵³ In the era of the Reformation, when the matter of faith and works was hotly debated, both Catholics and Protestants affirmed the canons of the Council of Orange regarding faith and works.¹⁵⁴

Where scholastics saw faith as an act of the intellect and hope as a function of the will, Martin Luther (1483-1546) criticised the scholastic tendency to place importance on reason and 'works' which he called Pelagian.¹⁵⁵ Luther referred to an 'alien righteousness' which is imputed to us by God and which we passively receive.¹⁵⁶ God creates this faith by his Word, which comes to us through proclamation and the administration of the sacraments. For Luther, faith and reason are in constant conflict.

¹⁵¹ 1 Cor 3:7, *In Joan. Evang.*, 26:7 cited in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 27.

¹⁵² Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity Vol.I* (Philadelphia: Fortress,1985), 210-211. "The so-called Semipelagian controversy ... was fed from two sources: the ascetic and the traditionalist."

¹⁵³ John. H. Leith, *Creeeds of the Churches* (Louisville, John Knox Press, 1982) p43. Concluding paragraph of the Council of Orange, 529AD (cf Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 28).

¹⁵⁴ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 28. "They were accepted by Catholics and by most Protestants as valid and decisive."

¹⁵⁵ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 44. "[Luther] particularly criticised what he took to be a Pelagian tendency in Scholasticism to attach too much importance to human reason and human works as approaches to faith."

¹⁵⁶ Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness" in Timothy J. Wengert, *Harvesting Martin Luther's reflections on theology, ethics and the church* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004), 47-48. "There are two kinds of righteousness... the first is alien righteousness, that is, the righteousness of another, instilled from without. This is the righteousness of Christ by which he justifies through faith." (citing a sermon given in 1519 by Martin Luther called *Two kinds of Righteousness*).

Faith endures a constant attack from experience and doubt which is only combated by faith firmly clinging to God and the believer submitting reason completely to faith. In fact he describes faith as a sacrifice of reason, saying “for by this sacrifice they [the believers] slay reason which is the greatest and most invincible enemy of God.”¹⁵⁷

Luther defined two types of faith. First, ‘historic’ faith, and second, accepting what God says is true and trusting in God’s promises. The latter definition is the kind of faith which alone justifies. This ‘faith alone’ which saves is complete trust in God’s promises in revelation.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, John Calvin (1509-1564) defined faith as “firm knowledge of God’s benevolence towards us... both revealed to our minds and sealed in our hearts [by the Holy Spirit.]”¹⁵⁹ This idea of faith is summarised in the words of the (Calvinist)

Second Helvetic Confession;

What is faith? Christian faith is not an opinion or human conviction, but a most firm trust and clear and steadfast assent of the mind, and then a most certain apprehension of the truth of God presented in the Scriptures and in the Apostles’ Creed, and thus also of God himself, the greatest good, and especially of God’s promise and of Christ who is the fulfilment of all promises.¹⁶⁰

Although the Council of Trent specifically rejected a fiducial position,¹⁶¹ it is still possible to find limited support in later Catholic authors. St John of the Cross (1542-

¹⁵⁷ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, 1535; LW 26:229 in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 45.

¹⁵⁸ Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 366. “To cling to him with all our heart is nothing else than to entrust ourselves to him completely.” Also relevant are The Apology to the Augsburg Confession, IV, 41 (Tappert, 113) and 58 (Tappert, 115).

¹⁵⁹ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 46.

¹⁶⁰ Arthur C. Cochrane, ed. *Reformed Confession of the 16th Century*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 257 in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 52.

¹⁶¹ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 49. Although canon 5 of the *Decree on Justification* reflects the Augustinian theme that nothing happens without being moved by God’s grace, it insists that

1591) for example, says faith is a means of uniting the intellect with God in this present life, a kind of dark, illumination¹⁶² which does in this life what the vision of God will do in the next life. In fact, he suggests that as our faith grows it must learn to dispense with sensory and intellectual evidence. He proposes that faith nullifies the light of the intellect.¹⁶³ After something of a conversion experience, the brilliant Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) literally sewed words into his clothing that God is “not [the God] of philosophers and scientists” but rather of “certitude, feeling, joy and peace.” Faith, says Pascal rests on total submission to God’s authority.¹⁶⁴

Over a century later, the Danish Protestant, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) insisted that faith was an “absolute paradox” offensive to reason.¹⁶⁵ He argued that faith regards proof as its enemy, seeking no assurance other than itself.¹⁶⁶ He nonetheless confesses a kind of ‘demented’ admiration for the incomprehensible faith of Abraham.¹⁶⁷ Wilhelm

we freely cooperate with grace. Canon six incorporates a Scotist theme that faith is one of a number of preparatory acts, and that faith is “assent to the truth of the proclaimed message”. Faith comes from hearing, we are led (freely) toward God. We fear hell, love God, hate sin, hope in God, are baptised etc.¹⁶² Kieran Kavanaugh OCD & Otilio Rodriguez OCD Trs. *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross* (Washington: ICS, 1979), 111. “Faith, a dark and obscure cloud to man (also a night in that it blinds and deprives him of his natural light), illumines and pours light into the darkness of his soul by means of its own darkness.” (*Ascent of Mount Carmel* Bk II, 3,4).

¹⁶³ Kavanaugh & Rodriguez Trs. *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, 118. “For other knowledge can be acquired by the light, if that light of the understanding, but the knowledge that is of faith is acquired without the illumination of the understanding, which is rejected for faith.” (Bk II, 3).

¹⁶⁴ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 63. See also Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Chatham: Oxford University Press, 1996), 278 “Because of his prevailing scepticism, coupled, however, with a deep faith, Pascal has been compared to Kierkegaard as a leading example of religious conviction based on an existential commitment to faith rather than on reason.”

¹⁶⁵ Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 48. “Faith is this paradox, that the single individual as the particular stands in absolute relation to the absolute. This standpoint cannot be mediated, for all mediation occurs precisely by virtue of the universal; it is and forever remains a paradox, inaccessible to thought.”

¹⁶⁶ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 80; He rejected the theories of Hegel and the (then) rigid Danish Lutheran Church cf. Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 207.

¹⁶⁷ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 53. “Abraham is ... either a murderer or a believer. Abraham lacks the middle term that saves the tragic hero. That is why I can understand a tragic hero but I cannot understand Abraham, even though in a certain demented sense I admire him more than all the others.”

Herrmann (1846-1922) denounced Catholicism and even the remnants of it in Luther's theology, saying that doctrine is only useful as a preamble to faith as a "trustful surrender."¹⁶⁸

Some Protestant scholars returned to a form of the fiducial model in a theory first espoused by Jürgen Moltmann (1926-) in *Theology of Hope* in 1967 and emerging from a dialogue with a Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch. Moltmann returned to Calvin's idea that hope is inseparable from faith.¹⁶⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-) suggests that the record of God's action in history reveals God as faith-worthy, but faith is the surrender of oneself into this same God. He says certainty of faith comes when the message of God is "grasped completely."¹⁷⁰ Moltmann disagreed that history provides a reliable foundation but agreed that "faith is called to life by God's promise and we hope in the God who cannot and will not lie."¹⁷¹ Moltmann also maintains that this hope does not preclude thinking. In fact, he says, it is hope that enables and empowers our thinking.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Wilhelm Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God* (New York, Williams and Norgate, 1906), 40. "By this breach from scholasticism, we gain for theology the opposite result from that which our breaking loose from mysticism brings about for the inner life of the Christian. There is less theology; there is a richer life within. Our rejection of the practice of Roman Catholicism suggests the true course for the accomplishment of our task. Our object is to set forth the real communion of the Christian with God." Cf Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 97.

¹⁶⁹ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 161 Citing Jürgen Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, 5th ed. (1965; ET, *Theology of Hope*, London: SCM, 1967). "Faith hopes in order to know what it believes. Hence all its knowledge will be anticipatory, fragmentary knowledge forming a prelude to a promised future."

¹⁷⁰ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man 2nd Edition* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 229. "Where the message of God's nearness is grasped completely and in full trust, salvation itself is already effective." cf. Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 175. "The certainty of faith consists in the completeness of trust." Citing Pannenberg in "Response to the Discussion" in James Robinson, & John Cobb eds., *Theology as History* (New York: Harper Row, 1967), 273.

¹⁷¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, 5th Ed. (1965; ET, *Theology of Hope*, London: SCM, 1967), 44.

¹⁷² Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, 18 "If it is hope that maintains and upholds faith and keeps it moving on, if it is hope that draws the believer into the life of love, then it will also be hope that is the

Also, on the fiducial paradigm, August Sabatier (1839-1901) supported a “symbol-fideism.” That is, symbols lead us to the truth but true faith is a deep inner conviction. Faith is seen as a moral act, a consecration of the self to God, as opposed to a merely intellectual assent to historical or revealed truths.¹⁷³ They expressed their justification formula as “we are saved by faith, independent of beliefs.”¹⁷⁴

Preliminary Thoughts on the Fiducial Model

The fiducial model seems to present an extremely pessimistic view of reason, discounting it as a reliable source of truth, discovering truth or even of properly interpreting truth. This epistemic pessimism is evident in Marilyn McCord Adams’ commentary on *Fides et Ratio*. She acknowledges that while the Holy Spirit affects our search,¹⁷⁵ it does not guarantee certainty.¹⁷⁶ In his critique of Adams, Hillary Martin admits that even great thinkers such as Anselm and Aquinas acknowledge that we understand reality “rather weakly and in the diluted manner.”¹⁷⁷ Epistemic uncertainty

mobilizing and driving force of faith’s thinking, of its knowledge of, and reflections on, human nature, history and society.”

¹⁷³ August Sabatier, & Jean Reville, *Religions of authority and the religion of the spirit* (BiblioLife, 2009), 335. “I have carefully distinguished between faith and belief, reserving the first expression for that act of heart and will – an essentially moral act – whereby man accepts the gift of God and his forgiveness, and consecrates himself to him; applying the second to that intellectual act by which the mind gives its consent to a historic fact and to a doctrine.”

¹⁷⁴ Sabatier & Reville, *Religions of authority and the religion of the spirit*, 335.

¹⁷⁵ Marilyn McCord Adams, “Sceptical realism: Faith and Reason in Collaboration” in Anthony Fisher & Hayden Ramsay, *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?* (Adelaide, ATF Press, 2004), 17. “The Spirit surrounds, enfolds, nudges, tries to pull into focus, as St Paul says, “with sighs too deep for words.”

¹⁷⁶ See Hillary Martin OP, “Comments on ‘Sceptical realism: Faith and Reason in Collaboration’” in Anthony Fisher & Hayden Ramsay *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?* (Adelaide, ATF Press, 2004), 21. “While Adams is a realist about reality, she is not a realist about human knowledge of that reality.”

¹⁷⁷ Hillary Martin OP “Comments on ‘Sceptical realism: Faith and Reason in Collaboration’” in Anthony Fisher & Hayden Ramsay *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?* (Adelaide, ATF Press, 2004), 21.

notwithstanding, Adams is not prepared to abandon reason as some more vigorous proponents of the fiducial model advocate.¹⁷⁸ In the face of epistemic uncertainty, most proponents of the fiducial model propose the complete submission of will to objective truth revealed by God, specifically to his promise of salvation. As we have seen, some even denounce reason in their attempt to elevate faith.

Nevertheless, engaging in a submission of reason involves reason itself, moved by the will. Thus this view is not a complete rejection of reason even if it seems to allocate to reason a different role. At the very least, reason must be employed to discern what is received and trusted as revelation. Reason must then engage revelation in order to comprehend what form surrender to God would take in our own life. And reason must be engaged in the ongoing application and assessment of our application of these determined principles. Without reason we would be unable to distinguish true inspirations of the Holy Spirit from delusions. Finally, even if this model of faith were reduced to a single self determining act such as a ‘decision for Jesus’ this would still be an act of the mind which, as an act of surrender of the whole person, involves all faculties of the person, including the intellect. Reason must be surrendered to God. Despite some protestations of its proponents, this does not seem to be a rejection of the use of reason but of reason as a source of surety in itself.

¹⁷⁸ Marilyn McCord Adams, “Sceptical realism: Faith and Reason in Collaboration” in Anthony Fisher & Hayden Ramsay *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?* (Adelaide, ATF Press, 2004), 10. “In philosophy, anti-realism strikes me as a bad bargain, ... it pays the exorbitant price of admitting that the Truth we wanted to reach is not even there.”

It may be possible to apply one of Friedrich Nietzsche's critiques of Christianity, in a rather more specific sense, in the case of this model of faith. Nietzsche wrote that, worse than merely being too weak to ascend to greatness, Christian piety turns this weakness into a virtue.¹⁷⁹ Nietzsche denounces this "cunning of impotence" as profoundly dishonest and unhelpful if we are to acknowledge reality and strive to reach our potential. Perhaps we could argue that, while acknowledging the pitfalls of human reason, it would be unhelpful to allow this weakness to be 'lied' into something meritorious rather than healed, nurtured and urged into something genuinely meritorious, the search for truth.

The Fiducial Model in *Fides et Ratio*

Positive

Even while expounding the compatibility of faith and reason, *Fides et Ratio* still warns against uncritical reliance on philosophy in our search for truth. It points out that philosophy has fallen into grave error in the past, especially so in recent times,¹⁸⁰ and that these errors have cast doubt onto the "pure and simple faith" of the People of God. It sees the duty of the Church's Magisterium as warning against any of these philosophies which contradict revealed truth.¹⁸¹ Even in the opening paragraphs the document emphasises the unreliability of human reason, citing 1 Cor 13:12 to suggest that we cling now to revealed truth because in the present life we will only ever "see in a

¹⁷⁹ Winifred Wing Han Lamb, "Truth in the Inward Part': Faith and the Scalpel of Suspicion" in Anthony Fisher & Hayden Ramsay *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?* (Adelaide, ATF Press, 2004), 81.

¹⁸⁰ *F&R*, 49.

¹⁸¹ *F&R*, 50.

mirror dimly”.¹⁸² This model’s pessimistic view of reason might seem to have some support in *Fides et Ratio*’s complaint that reason sundered from truth has “lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being.”¹⁸³

Fides et Ratio observes that human reason is not only compromised by an overload of data from experience¹⁸⁴ but it might be said to be fundamentally flawed in itself.

Original sin, described as the primal disobedience, has “so wounded reason” that human ability to know the truth has been “impaired” by its rejection of God, the source of truth.¹⁸⁵ Trapped by the devastating results of original sin, reason becomes “a prisoner to itself”¹⁸⁶ and this “inconsistency of the heart” often obscures and distorts our view.¹⁸⁷

The effect of sin does not end with distortion of the truth. Even when people are able to hear some of the demands of truth they “run from the truth as soon as they glimpse it because they are afraid of its demands.”¹⁸⁸

Philosophy, as a product of this fallen reason, has throughout history fallen into error, especially in recent times.¹⁸⁹ According to *Fides et Ratio*, certainty of truth cannot be attributed solely to human reason but is a gift from God.¹⁹⁰ Even this revelation itself is

¹⁸² *F&R*, 2.

¹⁸³ *F&R*, 5.

¹⁸⁴ *F&R*, 5. “Reason ... has wilted under the weight of so much knowledge.” And 28 “Truth can also drown in a welter of other concerns.”

¹⁸⁵ *F&R*, 22. And 51. “Human reason [is] wounded and weakened by sin.” And 75 “[Philosophy is] seriously handicapped by the inherent weakness of human reason.”

¹⁸⁶ *F&R*, 22.

¹⁸⁷ *F&R*, 28.

¹⁸⁸ *F&R*, 28.

¹⁸⁹ *F&R*, 49.

¹⁹⁰ *F&R*, 15. “The truth made known to us by Revelation is neither the product nor the consummation of an argument devised by human reason. It appears instead as something gratuitous.”

“always fragmentary and impaired by the limits of our understanding”¹⁹¹ so that it is only possible to understand through the gift of faith.¹⁹² Echoing the First Vatican Council, *Fides et Ratio* asserts that there is a knowledge “peculiar to faith” which surpasses human reason. This knowledge is obtained from the “most certain truth”, God himself.¹⁹³ Without revelation this truth cannot be known with certainty.¹⁹⁴ So the human person assents to the truth revealed by God on the basis of God’s guarantee of truthfulness.¹⁹⁵ Even further, *Fides et Ratio* seems to support the primacy of faith asserted by Fideism when it says that we “can accomplish no more important act in our lives than the act of faith.”¹⁹⁶ Even in moral matters man seems unable to determine what is good and evil without reference to the highest truth.¹⁹⁷

Negative

It may seem that *Fides et Ratio* at least implicitly supports fideism, but the selected texts above are undone by examination in context and overwhelmed by counterclaims and clear denunciations of fideism later in the encyclical.

¹⁹¹ *F&R*, 13. Also relevant are *F&R*, 9 “There are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known” and *F&R*, 23 “It is here that every attempt to reduce the Father’s saving plan to purely human logic is doomed to failure.”

¹⁹² *F&R*, 13. “Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently.” Also relevant is *F&R*, 7. “There are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known.”

¹⁹³ *F&R*, 8.

¹⁹⁴ *F&R*, 9.

¹⁹⁵ *F&R*, 13.

¹⁹⁶ *F&R*, 13. Also relevant is *F&R*, 13. “The Church has always considered the act of entrusting oneself to God to be a moment of fundamental decision which engages the whole person”.

¹⁹⁷ *F&R*, 22.

Fides et Ratio turns to the very revelation acclaimed by fideism as the only reliable source of truth to demonstrate the essential role of reason in the search for knowledge.¹⁹⁸ Not only does revelation seek to assist reason in its search¹⁹⁹ but the witness of revelation is that faith and reason are natural and necessary partners in the search.

Although *Fides et Ratio* acknowledges the impact of our flaws on the use and usefulness of reason, the document is far from agreeing with fideism that reason is fatally flawed. It claims, rather, that the certainty of reason is only “partially obscured and weakened” in its natural state,²⁰⁰ and that “Christ ... redeemed reason from its weakness, setting it free from the shackles in which it had imprisoned itself”²⁰¹ since it is sin that holds reason back.²⁰² Far from avoiding reason as misleading, *Fides et Ratio* strongly urges a renewed confidence in reason’s ability based on the fact that faith perfects, illuminates and complements reason.²⁰³ The desire for truth is so deeply ingrained in human beings that to refuse to search would be to “cast our existence into jeopardy.”²⁰⁴ We are urged therefore to bind together in order to soar to the contemplation of transcendent truth.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ *F&R*, 16. “What is distinctive in the biblical text is the conviction that there is a profound and indissoluble unity between the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith.”

¹⁹⁹ *F&R*, 13. “To assist reason in its effort to understand the mystery there are the signs which Revelation itself presents. These serve to lead the search for truth to new depths.”

²⁰⁰ *F&R*, 82.

²⁰¹ *F&R*, 22.

²⁰² *F&R*, 19. “If human beings with their intelligence fail to recognize God as Creator of all, it is not because they lack the means to do so, but because their free will and their sinfulness place an impediment in the way.”

²⁰³ *F&R*, 43. “Just as grace builds on nature and brings it to fulfilment, so faith builds upon and perfects reason”

²⁰⁴ *F&R*, 29. Also relevant is *F&R*, 33. “Men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable.”

²⁰⁵ *F&R*, 48, 83 and 84.

“Faith therefore has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it,”²⁰⁶ specifically seeking reason’s assistance in understanding, interpreting and communicating the contents of divine revelation to God’s people and to those yet unbelievers,²⁰⁷ since the truth conferred by Revelation is a truth to be understood in the light of reason²⁰⁸ and exegetes ignore philosophy at their peril.²⁰⁹

Fides et Ratio does not suggest we accept all the efforts of reason uncritically. As we have seen above, it properly points out examples of the mistakes that are possible when reason unmoors itself from the port of Revelation. The document urges us to join the Church in a properly critical assessment of systems of reason.²¹⁰ It speaks of a “critical consciousness” of the Fathers in relation to philosophy as indicating that “they were not naive thinkers”²¹¹ but exercised intellectual honesty in order neither to accept reason uncritically nor to engage in “a prejudiced rejection of it”.²¹² Nor does faith seek to dominate reason but intervenes to ensure its proper and pure operation.²¹³

Relying solely on faith will expose theologians to the risk, firstly, that an unreasonable faith soon degenerates into mere superstition and, secondly, that in the use of language, logical structures and attempting to understand what it is they believe and apply it to

²⁰⁶ *F&R*, 43.

²⁰⁷ *F&R*, 5.

²⁰⁸ *F&R*, 35.

²⁰⁹ *F&R*, 55. “Those who... study Sacred Scripture should always remember that the various hermeneutical approaches have their own philosophical underpinnings, which need to be carefully evaluated before they are applied to the sacred texts.”

²¹⁰ *F&R*, 39. “It is clear from history, then, that Christian thinkers were critical in adopting philosophical thought.”

²¹¹ *F&R*, 41.

²¹² *F&R*, 43.

²¹³ *F&R*, 16. “Faith intervenes not to abolish reason's autonomy nor to reduce its scope for action.”

life, theologians necessarily adopt and assume philosophical presuppositions. Without a consciously critical approach, “theologians run the risk of locking themselves within thought-structures poorly adapted to the understanding of faith.”²¹⁴ Finally, the artificial attempt to sunder the relationships between faith and reason is an attack on our very nature.²¹⁵ More importantly, it undermines the truth itself.

It is understandable, then, that *Fides et Ratio* specifically warns against “a resurgence of *fideism*”²¹⁶ and its variants²¹⁷ which seeks to reduce the search for truth to Sacred Scripture, to a core of dogmatic formulae, and rejects the breadth of revelation in Scripture and Tradition, together with the doctrines which the Church has properly reasoned from this basis.

Drawing on Pius XII,²¹⁸ *Fides et Ratio* reminds the reader that neglecting the philosophy that underpins traditional terminology risks misunderstanding the Church’s teaching at the very least.²¹⁹ Thus theologians are urged to “to pay special attention to the philosophical implications of the word of God” in their studies.²²⁰

²¹⁴ *F&R*, 77.

²¹⁵ *F&R*, 85. “The segmentation of knowledge, with its splintered approach to truth and consequent fragmentation of meaning, keeps people today from coming to an interior unity.”

²¹⁶ *F&R*, 55.

²¹⁷ *F&R*, 55. Highlights a latent fideism in which “the scant consideration accorded to speculative theology, and in disdain for the classical philosophy from which the terms of both the understanding of faith and the actual formulation of dogma have been drawn.”

²¹⁸ *F&R*, 55 citing *Humani Generis*, 1950.

²¹⁹ *F&R*, 55, cf 65. “not only in grasping the logical and conceptual structure of the propositions in which the Church's teaching is framed, but also, indeed primarily, in bringing to light the salvific meaning of these propositions for the individual and for humanity.”

²²⁰ *F&R*, 105.

Conclusion to the Fiducial Model

This model seems pessimistic, even deeply suspicious of reason. According to the fiducial model, reason is flawed, perhaps fatally, and cannot be relied upon to enable us to reach the truth about God. Even worse than mere incapacity, reason may actively mislead us about God, leading us away from the truth. Nevertheless, reason is employed in every aspect of this model of faith. This model first engages reason to decide that there is a God. Second, to discern which writings to consider revealed by God. Third, to decipher the sentences contained in these books of revelation to determine which of these sentences contain promises of God. Fourth, to determine which of these promises are salvific (in this model: God's promises of forgiveness, mercy and salvation). Fifth, to determine that these promises should be applied to the individual reader. And, finally, reason is engaged in the act of submission to God. Even a deliberate act of laying reason aside (if that were humanly possible) is itself an act of the intellect, moved by the will. While acknowledging that some truths about God are beyond human reason, this model does not abandon the practical use of reason in its methodology, even if denouncing it to varying degrees in its theory.

The Affective / Experiential Model

The fourth model in Dulles' scheme makes a strong link between faith and human experience. Faith, in this model, is not a message which must be believed but an experience of the divine which becomes the message. It might be possible to find elements of an emphasis on human experience in faith among some Mystics, and among various pietistic movements. Indeed it would be difficult to describe faith in any meaningful way while at the same time excluding reference to any kind of human experience. But in reaction to the extreme rationalism of the seventeenth century, there sprang up a deeply sentimental view of faith. Some prominent examples include, as we noted in passing above, the profound conversion experience of the Catholic Pascal. Pascal's conversion experience led him to a new understanding of faith inspired by the experience itself.²²¹ The case of John Wesley (1703-1791) also led to a changed theological view of faith, based on the experience itself. While Pascal's experience led him to emphasise complete reliance on God, his personal peace in total surrender to God forms a significant part of his account of faith. Wesley experienced "a strange warming of the heart" while hearing the preface to Luther's commentary on Romans read aloud.²²² He remained committed to the doctrine that we are justified by grace alone, but began preaching a faith which he described as a personal experience and a resultant

²²¹ Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 278.

²²² Bonamy Dobree, *John Wesley* (London: Duckworth, 1933), 65. "A layman was reading aloud Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*; and then, at about a quarter to nine, while the voice was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, Wesley felt his own 'strangely warmed.' All at once he was sure that he did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given him that the Son of God had taken away *his* sins, *his*, and saved *him* from the law of sin and death. Ah yes, he had believed before, but with the faith of a servant, not that of a Son. Then, faith had been assent, even if an assent to what God had revealed because He had revealed it; but this, now, was a sensation, a warming of the heart; it felt like a physical embrace. At last." cf. Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 68-69.

piety (good works). Wesley's 'Methodism' involving a kind of subjective experience as at least a partially determinative factor in faith, is still influential today.²²³

In the early nineteenth century Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) heralded a new era in theological study of faith, developing an emphasis on individual experience into a theology of culture as shared experience.²²⁴ Schleiermacher sought to take account of sentiment, community, tradition and history as they are experienced and interpreted by the individual. He described faith as the feeling of certainty that dependence on a "transcendent reality" brings.²²⁵ Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) seems to take up the theme of Auguste Sabatier (1839-1901) who taught that religious dogmas were simply human attempts to describe a common religious experience.²²⁶ Schillebeeckx laid much emphasis on experience in regard to faith, placing emphasis on the local community over the authority of the entire Church and an emphasis on the individual experience of Christ over the dogmatic formulations.²²⁷ According to this model, attempts to express the faith in dogmatic formulae are incomplete expressions of truth so it is impossible to consider them binding on individual faith. Schillebeeckx

²²³ Methodist ecclesial communities claim a total of over 6 million communicants worldwide (The Catholic Encyclopaedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10237b.htm> Accessed 18 May, 2010.)

²²⁴ Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, Intervarsity, 1968), 108. "It is with justice that Karl Barth applied to Schleiermacher some words ... first applied to Frederick the Great: 'He did not found a school, but an era.'"

²²⁵ Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (London, T&T Clark, 1999), 12. "The self-identical essence of piety, is this : the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God." Paraphrased by Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 78.

²²⁶ Edward Schillebeeckx OP, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (Maryland, Sheed & Ward, 1963), 65. "Symbolising ... creates the possibility of grasping what has been experienced; it makes it possible to intensify his religious experience. So the "external cult" becomes a manifestation of the "internal worship of God."

²²⁷ Gregory Moses calls Schillebeeckx as a "partial constructivist". By which he means that Schillebeeckx believes that experience and traditional structures affect each other, as opposed to the total constructivist who believes that the movement is one way. (Gregory Moses, "Faith and Reason: Naturalised and Relativised" in Fisher & Ramsay, *Faith and Reason – Friends or Foes in the New Millennium?*, 41-42.

insisted that dogmatic formulae must be open to revision on the basis of ongoing human experience. H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) followed Schleiermacher in beginning the study of faith with an analysis of human religious consciousness. Niebuhr emphasised the relationship between Christ and culture, defining culture as the “temporal and material realisation of values.”²²⁸ Niebuhr spoke of a culture-devoid-of-Christ as opposed to a culture-transformed-by-Christ, advocating the latter.²²⁹ Niebuhr argues that faith is found in every human community in the form of mutual trust and loyalty. Faith is triadic in that it involves the individual, the community and the cause by which they are united. The ‘cause’ of Christ evokes the trust and loyalty which unite the community. Jesus is present not so much in the accounts of first century witnesses but in the experience of the community of faith.²³⁰

While Schleiermacher and Sabatier saw faith as an experience,²³¹ George Tyrrell (1861-1909) saw experience as revelation by which we receive knowledge. Although Tyrrell enters “an emphatic caveat against the sentimentalism, or emotionalism rightly or wrongly associated with the name of Schleiermacher”, he insists that the spirit-life

²²⁸ D A Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008), 12.

²²⁹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 12. “Under this definition, Christ appears to be embraced by culture. Niebuhr survives this problem by restricting culture to the domain of the “temporal and material realisation of values” and by associating “culture” with what the New Testament means by “world”: that is, by “culture” he means something like “culture-devoid-of-Christ.” Then, as the discussion progresses and he works out what the relationship between Christ and culture might be, that culture might, for instance, be “transformed” by Christ, so that it is no longer “culture-devoid-of-Christ” but now something that it was not before: “culture-transformed-by-Christ.” The slipperiness of the “culture” terminology is palpable.”

²³⁰ H Richard Niebuhr, *Faith on Earth*, (New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 23-30 in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 128. (See also Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 129. “The risen Jesus is found today, not primarily in biblical stories of the empty tomb and appearances to the witnesses of antiquity but rather in the present community of faith.”

²³¹ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 79.

penetrates our knowledge, feelings and will. Therefore it is impossible to think with Christ if we do not also feel with Him.²³²

In the encyclical dealing with the modernists, Pope Pius X described faith as an interior longing for the divine that connects the individual with the divine.²³³ The experience of faith which is or perhaps results from this 'faith' is also considered revelation in the proper sense. No external source of revelation is necessary nor of a higher authority.²³⁴ Dogmas proposed by the Church are not revealed truth but simply benchmarks on the journey to truth.

Preliminary thoughts on the Affective / Experiential Model

Proponents of the affective/experiential model of faith seem paradoxically to harbour a very optimistic view of reason, trusting reason to decipher or even determine the nature and form of truth from experience. It is additionally positive in that it actively encourages the search for truth within our experience of life. Discerning some kind of sense from random happenstance requires an active reason, particularly since proponents of the model tend to discount revelation or dogmatic formulae as authoritative or even as reliable guidelines. Since formulae of faith written by others are merely indicators of the authors' own 'faith experiences', the proponent of the

²³² George Tyrrell, *Lex Credendi – A Sequel to Lex Orandi* (Bibliolife, 2009), 16. "Religion does not consist in knowing; it does not consist in feeling; it does not consist in willing and doing, nor is it a sum or addition of all three; but it is a life, an operation in which the mind can view now under one, now under another of these aspects. It is not possible to feel with Christ, unless we think with Him, nor to think with Him, unless we feel with Him, for the spirit-life is one and indivisible."

²³³ *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 7. "The need of the divine, according to the principles of *Fideism*, excites in a soul with a propensity towards religion a certain special *sentiment*, ... It is this sentiment to which Modernists give the name of faith, and this it is which they consider the beginning of religion."

²³⁴ *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 8. "*Religious consciousness* is given as the universal rule, to be put on an equal footing with revelation, and to which all must submit, even the supreme authority of the Church."

affective/experiential model is left with reason alone as the final determinant of truth, if any such thing as ‘truth’ can be clearly identified in this model.

A problem with deciphering the divine from the mundane is related to the nature of the Christian God. In Christian doctrine, God is, by definition, outside of His creation. If God is not part of this world, then how can we hope to perceive him? The Christian faith points to certain experiences of the divine, the sacraments being the primary example, but these can only clearly be seen as divine in light of revelation; the experiences of the outward symbols themselves do not reveal the entire truth contained within.²³⁵

Another significant concern is that experience seems to be treated without suspicion in this model. That is, the ‘message’ of experience is normative, or at the very least received as ‘morally neutral.’ As I have suggested, reason is required to discern random happenstance from meaningful experience, but such a judgement would seem difficult without some clear guidelines. Since the proponents of this model do not seem to base their definition of an experience in mere pleasant sensations, how would they discern a ‘good’ experience from a ‘bad’ experience? In order to discern a transcendent value from a particular experience human beings need some sort of objective criteria.²³⁶ It is

²³⁵ Robert Sokolowski, B001H9XPQ4 *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 134. “If the Christian God is not part of the world, there is a sense in which we cannot hope to perceive or experience him, because he would have to be presented as one of the kinds of things in the world, differentiated from other kinds, and the experience that presents him would have to be different from our other perceptions.”

²³⁶ Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition after Vatican II* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 80. “If the will is to be receptive to a virtuous development, especially to being motivated by charity and love, it must have an experience of goodness; and if the intellect is to be receptive to a virtuous use, especially to perfection by the theological virtue of faith, then it must first have some experience of truth; and if the memory is to be receptive to the theological virtue of hope, then it needs an experience of the beautiful.”

possible some experiences may even seem to contradict the truth. Without some sort of criteria, human beings would be abandoning themselves to be driven before the random winds of experience.²³⁷

The model seems to leave open the question of the object of faith. What is it exactly that the intellect grasps when a proponent of this model talks about having ‘faith’ based on individual or shared experience? There would seem to be nothing objective or certain about the object of this belief, leaving individual reason with the unenviable task of determining the object, assenting to it and simultaneously guaranteeing its certainty. The sharing of this ‘message’ gained from experience would also engage reason to cipher the transmission in such a way as to effectively communicate a ‘truth’ which could only be obtained by one’s experience. Presumably the transmission itself counts as an experience for the person to whom it is being communicated, but the communication experienced would need reason to decipher, analyse and determine its meaning.

The Affective/Experiential model in *Fides et Ratio*

Positive

With the proponents of the affective/experiential model, *Fides et Ratio* describes the human search for truth beginning with man’s wonder at his surroundings²³⁸ which leads

²³⁷ Robert Spaemann, “Rationality and Faith in God” in *Communio – Winter 2005*, 624. “The good, which does not manifest itself, or does so only on occasion, in those things that actually occur, but rather in the quiet but inexorable voice of conscience. This voice was always understood by those who believe as the voice of God, even though it is possible to be mistaken about this voice, just like any other. For Thomas Aquinas, the voice is ... nothing other than the voice of practical reason, and reason too needs guidance and correction in order to be what it is: namely, reasonable.

²³⁸ *F&R*, 4. “These fundamental elements of knowledge spring from the *wonder* awakened in them by the contemplation of creation.”

him into a deeper contemplation of his own unique place in creation.²³⁹ This search for knowledge is so deeply set in the human heart that it is unstoppable.²⁴⁰ To deny it would “cast our existence into jeopardy.”²⁴¹

This agreement goes further still in relation to human experience being a legitimate starting point in the journey to discover truth. The daily experience of suffering ensures that questions such as “*Does life have a meaning?*” cannot be ignored²⁴² particularly in light of our inevitable death. The experience of existence is the starting point in the human search for truth,²⁴³ constituting a “privileged locus” for metaphysical enquiry.²⁴⁴ Every human being is, therefore, a seeker of truth.²⁴⁵

The encyclical notes that humans have recorded aspects of this search in various artistic forms,²⁴⁶ even while highlighting philosophy as the greatest application of human ability in the search for truth. It seems to push this agreement with the affective/experiential

²³⁹ *F&R*, Introduction. “The more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing.”

²⁴⁰ *F&R*, 33. “men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable.”

²⁴¹ *F&R*, 29. “The thirst for truth is so rooted in the human heart that to be obliged to ignore it would cast our existence into jeopardy.” Also relevant is *F&R*, 17 “The desire for knowledge is so great and it works in such a way that the human heart... yearns for the infinite riches which lie beyond, knowing that there is to be found the satisfying answer to every question as yet unanswered.”

²⁴² *F&R*, 25. “The daily experience of suffering—in one's own life and in the lives of others—and the array of facts which seem inexplicable to reason are enough to ensure that a question as dramatic as the question of meaning cannot be evaded.”

²⁴³ *F&R*, 25. “The truth comes initially to the human being as a question: *Does life have a meaning? Where is it going?*”

²⁴⁴ *F&R*, 83. “In a special way, the person constitutes a privileged locus for the encounter with being, and hence with metaphysical enquiry.”

²⁴⁵ *F&R*, 28. “One may define the human being, therefore, as *the one who seeks the truth.*”

²⁴⁶ *F&R*, 24. “Through literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture and every other work of their creative intelligence they have declared the urgency of their quest.”

model further suggesting that people seek to shape a personal “philosophy” based on their personal and communal experience.²⁴⁷

Far from being limited to contemplation of the mundane, both the affective/experiential model and *Fides et Ratio* assert that “in the far reaches of the human heart there is a seed of desire and nostalgia for God”²⁴⁸ and that this search for truth is one which enjoys divine assistance.²⁴⁹

This search is legitimately hopeful because God intends to reveal himself to “all people, in every age and in every part of the world.”²⁵⁰ Our reason is capable of discerning transcendent truth from the experience and events,²⁵¹ and so we have good reason to hope that reason can soar to the contemplation of transcendent truth.²⁵²

One of the earliest aspects of human wonder is the realisation that we share this existence with others like us, people who share our experiences and our search for the truth.²⁵³ The communal nature of human beings is a revelation in itself, according to *Fides et Ratio*, leading us to contemplate the meaning behind other people’s experiences

²⁴⁷ Weinandy suggests that Webster is so concerned about *Fides et Ratio*’s support for the Experiential approach that he, Webster, portrays John Paul II as a ‘Schleiermacher in white’ Weinandy, Thomas “*Fides et Ratio: A Response to Thomas Webster*” *New Blackfriars* Vol. 81, n.952, p229, 2000.

²⁴⁸ *F&R*, 24.

²⁴⁹ *F&R*, 16. “Faith sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of Providence.”

²⁵⁰ *F&R*, 64.

²⁵¹ *F&R*, 99. “Philosophical enquiry can help greatly to clarify the relationship between truth and life, between event and doctrinal truth, and above all between transcendent truth.”

²⁵² *F&R*, 41. “Reason could rise to the higher planes of thought, providing a solid foundation for the perception of being, of the transcendent and of the absolute.”

²⁵³ *F&R*, 4. “Human beings are astonished to discover themselves as part of the world, in a relationship with others like them, all sharing a common destiny.”

and the shared traditions of the culture in which man finds himself immersed.²⁵⁴ It is within this community that man learns that to trust the wisdom and technology which underpins and enables the community to function, is to *believe*.²⁵⁵

From the very beginning the Church has engaged with culture.²⁵⁶ The community of believers is not tied to one culture²⁵⁷ but is described “a partner in humanity’s shared struggle to arrive at truth.”²⁵⁸ Indeed the Church sees in each culture a limited manifestation of the search for ultimate truth and thus offers “different paths to the truth.”²⁵⁹ The encyclical even suggests that for culture to flourish it must remain open to “assimilating new experiences.”²⁶⁰ For her own part, the Church insists that each culture be allowed to preserve their cultural identity²⁶¹ and that she must pay attention to the cultural context of her audience when communicating divine revelation.²⁶²

²⁵⁴ *F&R*, 31. “Human beings are not made to live alone. They are born into a family and in a family they grow, eventually entering society through their activity. From birth, therefore, they are immersed in traditions which give them not only a language and a cultural formation but also a range of truths in which they believe almost instinctively.”

²⁵⁵ *F&R*, 31. “Who, for instance, could assess critically the countless scientific findings upon which modern life is based? Who could personally examine the flow of information which comes day after day from all parts of the world and which is generally accepted as true? Who in the end could forge anew the paths of experience and thought which have yielded the treasures of human wisdom and religion? This means that the human being—the one who seeks the truth—is also *the one who lives by belief*.”

²⁵⁶ *F&R*, 70. “From the time the Gospel was first preached, the Church has known the process of encounter and engagement with cultures.”

²⁵⁷ *F&R*, 71. “No one culture can ever become the criterion of judgment, much less the ultimate criterion of truth with regard to God’s Revelation.”

²⁵⁸ *F&R*, 2.

²⁵⁹ *F&R*, 70. “Therefore they offer different paths to the truth, which assuredly serve men and women well in revealing values which can make their life ever more human.”

²⁶⁰ *F&R*, 71.

²⁶¹ *F&R*, 71. “the proclamation of the Gospel in different cultures allows people to preserve their own cultural identity.”

²⁶² *F&R*, 72. cf. Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition after Vatican II*, 45-46. “The logic of John Paul II’s statement in *Fides et Ratio* is that, notwithstanding the geographical provenance of this culture, it retains a value for people of all societies, since ... Greco-Latin culture can in part be defined by its quest for the achievement of a universal culture.”

Negative

The discordance between the affective/experiential model of faith and *Fides et Ratio* is not so much in the discussion of the value of experience in the search for truth, but in the denial of objective revelation and authoritative truth entrusted to and promulgated by the Church on behalf of her Lord Jesus Christ.

The encyclical cites the uncertainty of experience,²⁶³ the tragic reality of the horrific experiences of our age and the despairing nihilism it has inspired²⁶⁴ as reasons that we “cannot stop short at experience alone”²⁶⁵ in our search for meaning. If our search for truth is solely based on experience we risk reducing our understanding of transcendent truth to the limits of our experience.²⁶⁶

Part of the problem seems to be the attribution of experience to faith rather than reason. While *Fides et Ratio* acknowledges the value of experience it attributes experience and its interpretation to reason, while faith relies specifically on divinely revealed truth.²⁶⁷ In fact the encyclical distinguishes between scientific investigation based on evidence and experience, philosophical inquiry engaging the speculative intellect and finally religious truth which engages philosophy but is based on revealed truth.²⁶⁸

²⁶³ *F&R*, 80. “Experience is not absolute: it is neither uncreated nor self-generating. God alone is the Absolute.”

²⁶⁴ *F&R*, 91. “This nihilism has been justified in a sense by the terrible experience of evil which has marked our age.”

²⁶⁵ *F&R*, 83.

²⁶⁶ *F&R*, 97. “An ecclesiology developed solely on the model of civil society, would be hard pressed to avoid the danger of such reductionism.”

²⁶⁷ *F&R*, 9. “Based upon God’s testimony and enjoying the supernatural assistance of grace, faith is of an order other than philosophical knowledge which depends upon sense perception and experience and which advances by the light of the intellect alone.”

²⁶⁸ *F&R*, 27.

Fides et Ratio points out that one of the dangers of relying solely on experience in our search for truth is an “undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid” based on a pessimism regarding truth itself.²⁶⁹ In attempting to remain open to all truth claims, such pluralism necessarily denies the objective truth claims proposed by the Church.²⁷⁰ Specifically, that in Christ alone we find complete salvific truth.²⁷¹

In seeking to emphasise human experience, seekers of truth are in danger of “exchanging relevance for truth”²⁷² which necessarily abandons hope in an answer capable of satisfying the basic questions which began the search. While never abandoning her search for truth in the experiences of history, the Church has always taken great care to critically examine the input of various cultures and philosophies in the light of the revealed truth entrusted to her.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ *F&R*, 5.

²⁷⁰ *F&R*, 69. “Others still, prompted by a mistaken notion of cultural pluralism, simply deny the universal value of the Church's philosophical heritage.”

²⁷¹ *F&R*, 38. “There are many paths which lead to truth, but since Christian truth has a salvific value, any one of these paths may be taken, as long as it leads to the final goal, that is to the Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

²⁷² *F&R*, 87. “By exchanging relevance for truth, this form of modernism shows itself incapable of satisfying the demands of truth to which theology is called to respond.”

²⁷³ *F&R*, 37. “Following Saint Paul, other writers of the early centuries, especially Saint Irenaeus and Tertullian, sound the alarm when confronted with a cultural perspective which sought to subordinate the truth of Revelation to the interpretation of the philosophers.” Also relevant here is *F&R*, 55 “This happens particularly when theologians, through lack of philosophical competence, allow themselves to be swayed uncritically by assertions which have become part of current parlance and culture but which are poorly grounded in reason.”

As noted above, natural reason can easily flounder when it is cast adrift from the guiding light of revelation.²⁷⁴ Without this guidance, philosophy is in grave danger of doing itself damage,²⁷⁵ taking side tracks,²⁷⁶ straying from the path of truth.²⁷⁷ As *Fides et Ratio* warns, “sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice.”²⁷⁸

Far from denying the value of experience, the Church asserts the primacy of those experiences of the community of faith which are reliable markers in the search for truth and genuinely transcend the everyday.²⁷⁹ She acknowledges that we belong to a community and culture with a heritage which cannot be abandoned in favour of a limited expression of human experience such as a modern ‘culture’. So our search for truth is properly sustained within its “*ecclesial context*”.²⁸⁰ It is in this context that we can assert that revelation is indeed “immersed in time and history” but that this is concretely expressed in the incarnation of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity.²⁸¹

²⁷⁴ *F&R*, 28.

²⁷⁵ *F&R*, 75. “In refusing the truth offered by divine Revelation, philosophy only does itself damage, since this is to preclude access to a deeper knowledge of truth.”

²⁷⁶ *F&R*, 48. “Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal.”

²⁷⁷ *F&R*, 73. “reason is offered guidance and is warned against paths which would lead it to stray from revealed Truth and to stray in the end from the truth pure and simple.”

²⁷⁸ *F&R*, 5.

²⁷⁹ *F&R*, 85. “The appeal to tradition is not a mere remembrance of the past; it involves rather the recognition of a cultural heritage which belongs to all of humanity. Indeed it may be said that it is we who belong to the tradition and that it is not ours to dispose of at will.”

²⁸⁰ *F&R*, 101.

²⁸¹ *F&R*, 15.

Conclusion to the Affective / Experiential Model

This model seems to express a sincere longing for the truth, but rejects the extreme positions which propose that truth can only be reached by 'reason alone' or 'revelation alone'. In abandoning both the extreme of rationalism and rejecting blind adherence to dogmatic formulae, the affective/experiential model seems to be an attempt to restore reason to its proper relationship with the data of human experience. Although it rejects reason as the sole source and arbiter of truth, it relies heavily on reason to discern between experience as a message of truth and random happenstance. In doing so the proponents of this model seem to presume that the world, and our experience of it, are coherent. The pessimism this model seems to hold regarding dogmatic or absolute truth is not a demotion of reason but a grand promotion of reason. Reason, in this model, has the heavy responsibility of sifting and weighing the data of experience alone, without the aid of revelation or magisterial guidance.

The Obediential Model

The fifth model of faith in Dulles' schema emphasises obedience to divine authority.

Faith, in this model, begins with acknowledgment of man's inability to reach knowledge, virtue or salvation on his own power. We must abandon all efforts to understand, work, cooperate or in any way contribute to our own redemption. We must instead commit ourselves to complete obedience to God as the sovereign Lord whose Word has a sovereign claim over believers. Faith is abandonment of all attempts to save ourselves and total surrender to God's saving plan.

Not to be confused with a doctrine of righteousness by obedience to the law, this model emphasizes obedience to God as abandonment of hope and pride in our own efforts and ability in favour of complete submission to God as the only hope for us. To some extent this model is supported by the Old Testament use of **הסתה**²⁸² in a similar manner other Hebrew words usually translated as 'faith' (discussed above). The word usually means "to take refuge" (usually in God).²⁸³ St Paul too points to this divine trust when he speaks of "the obedience of faith"²⁸⁴ and "the obedience that leads to righteousness."²⁸⁵

A genius in science and mathematics, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) retired to a monastery after an intense personal conversion. He declared in his *Pensees* "[This] is what faith is: God perceived intuitively from the heart, not reason."²⁸⁶ Faith, says Pascal, rests on

²⁸² Wigram *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*, 449. **הסתה** is used 37 times in the Old Testament.

²⁸³ Holladay, Ed. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 111. "To seek refuge."

²⁸⁴ Rom 1:5, 16:26.

²⁸⁵ Rom 6:16.

²⁸⁶ Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, Intervarsity, 1968), 58.

total submission to God's authority. We know God through an intuition of the heart, not by reason.²⁸⁷ As a Catholic attempting to promote a view of faith that seemed to reflect the Protestants of a century before, Pascal was regarded as something of an oddity in his time, even if he was admired for his brilliant mind.²⁸⁸

It was indeed a Protestant, a Swiss Reformed theologian, Karl Barth (1886-1968), who later proposed a 'dialectic theology'²⁸⁹ that insisted faith is not intelligible: it is its own presupposition.²⁹⁰ No finite creature, according to Barth, is capable of comprehending the infinite. In fact, attempting to adhere to a 'religion of reason' is a positive barrier to true faith because it limits God's sovereignty.²⁹¹ So to have faith is to 'leap into the dark'²⁹² but not to abandon hope. Barth spoke of abandoning false hope, that is, hope in our own ability to know or to save, and because we abandon ourselves as saviours we also abandon despair, since placing trust in human endeavour can only lead to despair. True hope is hope gained by trusting God for everything.²⁹³ Nevertheless he insisted that theology, when grounded in faith, can be a truly rational discipline.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁷ Martin Turnell, Tr. *Pensees* (Harvill Press, 1962), 163. "The heart has reasons which are unknown to reason... It is the heart which is aware of God and not reason. That is what faith is: God perceived intuitively by the heart, not reason." in Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, 59.

²⁸⁸ Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, 60.

²⁸⁹ Also called "crisis theology" cf. Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 236.

²⁹⁰ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 99. "There are, however, no preliminaries to faith, no required standard of education or intelligence, no peculiar temper of mind or heart, no special economic status. There are no human avenues of approach, no 'way of salvation'; to faith there is no ladder which must first be scaled. Faith is its own initiation, its own presupposition."

²⁹¹ Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* cited in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 116.

²⁹² Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 107. "God is ... the justifier of those who dare to leap into the void."

²⁹³ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 17. "It was not Paul who had 'begun the good work' in Philippi, nor did the Philippians themselves do so by becoming converted. God began it. That strips them and him of *all* glory, *all* self-assurance, but precisely therewith also of all despondency."

²⁹⁴ Henri DeLubac points out that "To reduce everything to obedience where faith is concerned may be a manner of saying that you do not care the slightest about truth. And it is lacking thereby in the deepest

A contemporary of Barth, and partner in ‘dialectic theology’,²⁹⁵ Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976) defines faith as an abandonment of our attempts to save ourselves and as a complete surrender to God.²⁹⁶ Like Barth, Bultmann describes faith as “a leap into the dark” but insists this is not a risk for those of faith, because they know whom they are leaping towards. Also associated with ‘dialectical theology’, Lutheran philosophical theologian, Paul Tillich (1886-1965), insisted that faith is perfected only when we are grasped by the ultimate truth, and in being grasped we find assurance, knowledge and peace.²⁹⁷

Another Lutheran theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), espoused a seemingly Barthian view (in 1932) that all knowledge is a gift of faith and that theology is the attempt to set forth what is already possessed by faith. Christ creates faith in us which causes us to believe. Although agreeing with the Protestant assertion that we are saved by ‘faith alone’ Bonhoeffer is concerned with a distortion of this doctrine which leads to

kind of obedience, that of spirit.” Henri DeLubac, *Paradoxes of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 222.

²⁹⁵ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 116. “In different ways Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich exemplify the dialectical movement.”

²⁹⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Vol.1* (London: SCM Press, 1957), 330-331.

“Faith’s obedient submission to God’s “grace,” the acceptance of the Cross of Christ, is the surrender of man’s old understanding of himself, in which he lives “unto himself,” tried to achieve life by his own strength, and by that very fact falls victim to the powers of sin and death and loses himself. Therefore, “faith” – as “obedience of faith” – is also released from these powers. The new self-understanding which is bestowed with “faith” is that of *freedom*, in which the believer gains life and thereby his own self.”

²⁹⁷ Paul Tillich, *The New Being* (London: SCM Press, 1956), 77. “Looking at God, we realise that all the shortcomings of our experience are of no importance. Looking at God, we see that we do not have Him as an object of our knowledge, but that He has us as the subject our existence. Looking at God ... we may not grasp anything in the depth of our uncertainty, but that we are grasped by something ultimate which keeps us in its grasp and from which we may strive in vain to escape, remains absolutely certain.”

what he calls “cheap grace”.²⁹⁸ That is, the false belief that faith in God saves even where there is no corresponding obedience to God’s love. While maintaining the formula faith alone saves, he insists faith is never alone. That is, faith is necessarily accompanied by obedience and love or it is not genuinely faith. Faith moving us to profound obedience is the main theme for Bonhoeffer.²⁹⁹ Faith itself drives the act of complete submission of life to obedience to God. Jesus did not call us to religion, says Bonhoeffer, but to life with Him. Failure to obey is abandonment of Christ Himself and, therefore, of Christianity.³⁰⁰

Preliminary thoughts on the Obediential Model

In common with the fiducial model, the obediential model is pessimistic about human reason. It seems that, for the proponents of this model of faith, the ‘image of God’ in man has been so damaged by original sin that it has no effect. Where the fiducial model urges trust in God’s promises of redemption, the obediential model calls on man to abandon any confidence in his own abilities. Trust in any human ability, including reason, is therefore distrusted as unbecoming pride and doomed to failure. The only hope for man is to humbly acknowledge his pathetic state and submit himself utterly to the Lord, who rightly claims our obedience as proper to himself.

²⁹⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London, SCM, 1993), 35. “Cheap grace means the justification of the sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before.” And, *ibid*, 36 “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without Church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession.”

²⁹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 69. “The call of Jesus ... was the call of the Word of God himself, and all that it required was single-minded obedience.”; 70 “it is only to this obedience that the promise of fellowship with Jesus is given.” (cf. The entire third chapter of the same work on “single-minded obedience.”)

³⁰⁰ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 44. “We Lutherans have gathered like eagles round the carcass of cheap grace, and there we have drunk the poison which has killed the life of following Christ.”

While criticising *Fides et Ratio* for, among other things, neglecting to focus on the Word of God as the only source of truth, John Webster argues that a focus on *intellectus fidei* runs the risk of losing proper respect for God as utterly other.³⁰¹ Webster articulates the Protestant idea that calls for an acknowledgement of the failure of reason due to sin and for exegetical study of the texts to find the truth.³⁰² His Catholic respondent, Thomas Weinandy agrees that we are called to an obedience of faith to the proclaimed Word.³⁰³ But, even with this limited view of God's revelation, it would seem that reason is required to discern what truth, claiming to be "revealed" by God, is to be trusted. Once we have somehow determined that the Christian Bible is the sole source of truth, reason must be employed to apprehend the command of God within that revelation, and to determine how that command can and/or should be applied in a concrete situation.³⁰⁴

Since Scripture does not specifically address each of us personally by name, the individual hearer must rely on reason to grasp the command of God and determine it as applying to himself. After all, if it has not been explicitly stated in revelation that God has promised something to Joe Smith, then Joe Smith must rely on his reason to deduce that a revealed promise applies specifically to Joe Smith.

³⁰¹ John Webster, "'Fides et Ratio', articles 64-79" in *New Blackfriars* Vol. 81, n.949, 2000, 76.

"*intellectus fidei* is described as the process of arranging the saving meaning of the propositions of divine Truth... but this is theology without terror, theology without deep suspicion of arranging the truth about God. No theology should ever dare to be positive unless it is also, at the same time, deeply conscious of its own impossibility."

³⁰² Webster, "'Fides et Ratio', articles 64-79" in *New Blackfriars*, 68-76.

³⁰³ Thomas Weinandy, "*Fides et Ratio: A Response to Thomas Webster*" *New Blackfriars* Vol. 81, n.952, 2000, 232. "Nonetheless, I want to emphasize that the *auditus fidei* is ultimately a matter ... of accepting in the obedience of faith the truth of the proclaimed Word."

³⁰⁴ Weinandy, "*Fides et Ratio: A Response to Thomas Webster*" *New Blackfriars*, 232. "Exegesis of Scripture and of 'the canon of Christian commentary' is... the enduring *theological* task, and so it is part of the *intellectus fidei*, the doing of theology ... The *auditus fidei* is the object upon which the *intellectus fidei*, the doing of theology, is founded and the source from which it springs and not vice versa."

Even then, engaging in a determining act of submission to the divine Lord also engages the entire person, including the capacity to reason. Given that theologians of this view build their religious views using complex reasoning, it seems their profession of distrust in reason is not applied to all use of reason.

The Obediential Model in *Fides et Ratio*

Positive

While *Fides et Ratio* encourages the search for knowledge, surety is based on the trustworthiness of God who reveals himself³⁰⁵ and to whom is owed the obedience of faith. Indeed “faith is said first to be an obedient response to God.”³⁰⁶ It is in this complete trusting surrender to God that a person can find certainty of faith.³⁰⁷

The act of obedience to God is described as an act that engages the entire person in a fundamental expression of personal freedom.³⁰⁸ In complete commitment to God, the obedience of faith is possible by His grace.³⁰⁹ Profound humility marks this model even once the person has committed themselves completely to God. Faithful obedience is

³⁰⁵ *F&R*, 8. “This knowledge expresses a truth based upon the very fact of God who reveals himself, a truth which is most certain, since God neither deceives nor wishes to deceive.”

³⁰⁶ *F&R*, 13. (explicating *Dei Verbum*, 4).

³⁰⁷ *F&R*, 33. “It is in this faithful self-giving that a person finds a fullness of certainty and security.”

³⁰⁸ *F&R*, 13. “This is why the Church has always considered the act of entrusting oneself to God to be a moment of fundamental decision which engages the whole person. In that act, the intellect and the will display their spiritual nature, enabling the subject to act in a way which realizes personal freedom to the full.”

³⁰⁹ *F&R*, 15 citing Deut 30:11-14.

based on “fear of God”³¹⁰ whose sovereignty and goodness provide us with certain comfort.

Fides et Ratio expresses concern that many modern philosophers have lost hope in philosophy’s ability to seek answers to the greatest questions.³¹¹ While this concern is related to certain regrettable trends in modern philosophy, the encyclical’s concern regarding the reliability of reason is not restricted to modern philosophers. It seems to share the obdiential model’s concern that humanity’s primal disobedience has so wounded reason that its “capacity to know the truth was impaired.”³¹² Under sin, reason too becomes the prisoner of sin,³¹³ helpless to reach for any meaningful answer to life’s big questions.

This tragic state of affairs has been evident throughout history where philosophy has often fallen into error.³¹⁴ The encyclical points out that the earliest Church thinkers expressed profound doubts about the value of philosophy.³¹⁵ The Scriptures themselves seem to denounce “the wisdom of the world” in favour of the wisdom of God revealed

³¹⁰ *F&R*, 18. “Such a path is not for the proud who think that everything is the fruit of personal conquest [but] grounded in the “fear of God” whose transcendent sovereignty and provident love in the governance of the world reason must recognize.”

³¹¹ *F&R*, 5. “The hope that philosophy might be able to provide definitive answers ... has dwindled... rather than make use of the human capacity to know the truth, modern philosophy has preferred to accentuate the ways in which this capacity is limited and conditioned.”

³¹² *F&R*, 22.

³¹³ *F&R*, 22. “The eyes of the mind were no longer able to see clearly: reason became more and more a prisoner to itself.”

³¹⁴ *F&R*, 49. “Yet history shows that philosophy—especially modern philosophy—has taken wrong turns and fallen into error.”

³¹⁵ *F&R*, 41. “Consider Tertullian's question: “What does Athens have in common with Jerusalem? The Academy with the Church?” This clearly indicates the critical consciousness with which Christian thinkers from the first confronted the problem of the relationship between faith and philosophy.”

in Christ crucified.³¹⁶ Even when man receives divine revelation, the encyclical suggests that reason cannot be given sovereignty over its interpretation.³¹⁷

Unable to rely on reason to discover or to alone reliably interpret revelation,³¹⁸ the believer is encouraged to rely on the authoritative self revelation of God. This gift is freely and graciously given by God and without it we cannot hope to know and grasp the truth about him.³¹⁹ While human reason can discern and grasp some limited knowledge about God, his existence, goodness and so on, the knowledge that is peculiar to faith surpasses human reason.³²⁰ In fact “The teaching of the Saviour is perfect in itself and has no need of support.”³²¹ Thus the human being can be defined as “*the one who lives by belief.*”³²²

Negative

As discussed in the fiducial model, this pessimistic view of reason is clearly rejected by *Fides et Ratio*. To reject reason’s quest for meaning is to undermine the very nature of humanity.³²³ Revelation itself urges men on to a continuous and exhaustive search for

³¹⁶ *F&R*, 23 citing (1 Cor 1:20).

³¹⁷ *F&R*, 42. “Reason in fact is not asked to pass judgement on the contents of faith, something of which it would be incapable, since this is not its function.”

³¹⁸ *F&R*, 15. “The truth made known to us by Revelation is neither the product nor the consummation of an argument devised by human reason. It appears instead as something gratuitous, which itself stirs thought and seeks acceptance as an expression of love.”

³¹⁹ *F&R*, 9. “There are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known.”

³²⁰ *F&R*, 8. “There exists a knowledge which is peculiar to faith, surpassing the knowledge proper to human reason.”

³²¹ *F&R*, 38.

³²² *F&R*, 31.

³²³ *F&R*, 29. “The thirst for truth is so rooted in the human heart that to be obliged to ignore it would cast our existence into jeopardy.”

truth.³²⁴ The encyclical states that the Church not only encourages this search but that she values reason's ability to "attain goals which render people's lives ever more worthy."³²⁵

Against the proposal that humanity finds its answers solely in God's self revelation and thus does not need reason's search, the encyclical asserts that even though the truth revealed by God may never have been discovered by reason, this truth is accessible to reason once it is revealed.³²⁶ The Church sees philosophy "an indispensable help" in understanding revelation and in communicating the truth to others.³²⁷

Acknowledging the limitations of reason, and the detrimental effects of our fallen nature, the encyclical explains the basis of this trust in reason as God's transforming grace which builds on reason's natural capacity and perfects it for God's purposes.³²⁸

In opposition to the proponents of the obediential model, *Fides et Ratio* asserts that "faith has no fear of reason"³²⁹ but faith actively seeks the cooperation and assistance of reason in their mutual search,³³⁰ because the proper object of *both* is the Truth himself.

³²⁴ *F&R*, 14. "Revelation ... stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort; indeed, it impels reason continually to extend the range of its knowledge until it senses that it has done all in its power, leaving no stone unturned."

³²⁵ *F&R*, 5.

³²⁶ *F&R*, 76. "Revelation clearly proposes certain truths which might never have been discovered by reason unaided, although they are not of themselves inaccessible to reason."

³²⁷ *F&R*, 5.

³²⁸ *F&R*, 43. "Just as grace builds on nature and brings it to fulfilment, so faith builds upon and perfects reason."

³²⁹ *F&R*, 43. "Faith therefore has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it."

³³⁰ *F&R*, 34. "On the contrary, the two modes of knowledge lead to truth in all its fullness."

Faith does not seek to replace or reject reason³³¹ but to enhance and assist it to search beyond the mundane to the transcendent. Not only is it possible for human beings to come to a unified understanding of truth,³³² but it is impossible to attempt to separate faith and reason without severely retarding man's ability to succeed in the search.³³³

Not only does reason have its unique scope of action in the search, reason is essential for understanding, interpreting and applying the truth revealed by God.³³⁴ Without reason, faith would run the risk of "withering into myth or superstition."³³⁵ As discussed above, understanding what revelation proposes for belief requires at the very least a basic application of logical principles of language and thought which are proper to philosophy. Whether the proponents of this model like it or not, every hermeneutic has its own philosophical basis and requires critical use, continuous and careful evaluation before and after they are applied to the Sacred texts.³³⁶ If theologians naively ignored the philosophical underpinnings of hermeneutics they would run the risk of "locking themselves within thought-structures poorly adapted to the understanding of faith."³³⁷

³³¹ *F&R*, 16. "Faith intervenes not to abolish reason's autonomy nor to reduce its scope for action."

³³² *F&R*, 85. "the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge."

³³³ *F&R*, 16. "reason and faith cannot be separated without diminishing the capacity of men and women to know themselves, the world and God in an appropriate way."

³³⁴ *F&R*, 35. "Revelation is a truth to be understood in the light of reason."

³³⁵ *F&R*, 48.

³³⁶ *F&R*, 55. "the various hermeneutical approaches have their own philosophical underpinnings, which need to be carefully evaluated before they are applied to the sacred texts."

³³⁷ *F&R*, 77.

It is hardly surprising that *Fides et Ratio* specifically denounces those who do not share her confidence in reason³³⁸ and urges theologians to pay “special attention to the philosophical implications of the word of God.”³³⁹

Conclusion to the Obediential Model

Of all Dulles’ models, the obediential model seems to be the least optimistic about reason. Even more than the fiducial model, it emphasises the flaws and limitations of human reason to the point where it seems hopeless, even dangerous, to place any hope in reason in the search for truth. The proponents of the obediential model, however, do not abandon reason entirely. Reason is necessary to recognise our limitations, to recognise the surer hope in God’s revealed truth, to interpret revelation and for each individual and to apply God’s promises to those individuals specifically. The single self-determining act of surrender to God is still an act of the whole human person, including the action and participation of the intellect and will. Reason is, therefore, utilised as a tool of this method, even if not trusted as a reliable source of truth in itself.

³³⁸ *F&R*, 52. “The censures were delivered even-handedly: on the one hand, *fideism* and *radical traditionalism*, for their distrust of reason's natural capacities.”

³³⁹ *F&R*, 105.

The Praxis Model

Confronted by examples of tragic disparity in various situations, liberation theologians developed a concept of faith as ‘praxis’. Faith is action towards God’s emancipation. Proponents of this model might claim support from the Old Testament where some psalms, for example, ask specifically for justice, restoration from oppressors and even vengeance against a hated enemy.³⁴⁰ The idea of a physical redemption promised or at least promoted by God portrays faith as a “subversive memory” which recalls the freedom of Jesus and emancipates us from every kind of enslavement to earthly powers. To have faith is to actively involve oneself in the ‘praxis’ of liberation.

We may find something of a seed of this preference for the downtrodden in the writings of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, where he describes his home country as “Deepest Darkest England” and admonishes the Christians of that country for their lack of concern for the poor and weak.³⁴¹

When Peruvian Gustavo Gutierrez (1928 -) published his work *A Theology of Liberation: History Politics and Salvation* in 1971 he made only a few passing references to faith as such, but they represent a significant shift in thinking. This “Liberation Theology”, as it is called, developed themes from certain European

³⁴⁰ eg. Ps 1:8-9, 3:7, 9:3-6, 34:15-22, 35:9-10.

³⁴¹ William Booth, *Deepest Darkest England and the way out* (London: McCorquodale & Co, 1890), 18. “What, then, is Darkest England? For whom do we claim that "urgency" which gives their case priority over that of all other sections of their countrymen and countrywomen? I claim it for the Lost, for the Outcast, for the Disinherited of the World. These, it may be said, are but phrases. Who are the Lost? Reply, not in a religious, but in a social sense, the lost are those who have gone under, who have lost their foothold in Society, those to whom the prayer to our Heavenly Father, "Give us day by day our daily bread," is either unfulfilled, or only fulfilled by the Devil's agency: by the earnings of vice, the proceeds of crime, or the contribution enforced by the threat of the law.”

theologians (e.g. Schillebeeckx and Moltmann) who had made efforts to link faith more closely with social and political activism.³⁴² Faith is, according to Gutierrez, “an act of trust... a commitment to God and neighbour, a relationship with others ... the total human response to God, who saves through love.”³⁴³ This ‘salvation’, according to Gutierrez’s later writings, seems to emphasise the immediate and socio-political more than the eternal. He insists that faith, while not providing a specific plan for social organisation, demands that we work actively for a just society. This faith, lived within human history, brings Christ’s victory into the world in order to overcome it. He contends that the God of the Bible is a God who acts in concrete historical salvation *within* history, and that God orients history in a specific direction. Through his faithful people, God changes the world better to resemble his kingdom. God calls his people to be faithful to his social ideal, specifically in his constant call to uphold the downtrodden, oppressed and powerless. In Jesus Christ, God becomes the poor and suffering whom we must tend and defend. Faith does not end in personal belief but shines in action, in lived faith. To believe, then, is to “love God and to be in solidarity with the poor and exploited of this world”, and an engagement in the struggle for greater justice and liberation.³⁴⁴ He draws on Karl Marx’s theory that the praxis that changes history is the way in which people discover themselves and their world. He insists there is no such

³⁴² Gustavo Gutierrez, “A Theology of Liberation” in J Wogaman & D Strong Eds., *Readings in Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 341. “The theology of liberation offers us ... a new way to do theology. Theology as critical reflection on historical praxis is a liberating theology, a theology of the liberating transformation of the history of mankind and also therefore that part of mankind – gathered into *ecclesia* which openly confesses Christ.”

³⁴³ Gutierrez, “A Theology of Liberation” in Wogaman & Strong, *Readings in Christian Ethics*, 341.

³⁴⁴ Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, (1979; ET, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis, 1983), 17 in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 156.

thing as a permanent theology, theology brings faith to the world it finds itself in and finds some means of bringing about the kingdom of God and returns to faith.³⁴⁵

Another South American, Juan Luis Segundo (1925-1996) suggested that human life presupposes a “choice of some ideal one presumes will be satisfying.” He suggests that most people choose the ideal of their family or friends or, in rarer cases, someone who embodies ideals they resonate with (such as Ché Guevara, or Christ). Faith does not attain any absolute object but is, rather, a process of ‘learning to learn’. What man learns is ideologies (or a system of objects or goals), and through them new ideologies to deal with new situations that arise in history. Faith without ideologies, he says, is dead. Faith only makes sense if it is the foundation of a functioning ideology. Segundo too suggested that faith must be made historically concrete through the acceptance of a specific ideology. Although he admits adopting a Marxist ideology, Segundo denied he did so uncritically.³⁴⁶ He contends that liberation theology, when distinguished from some extreme views associated with it, has a legitimate place within orthodox Catholic teaching.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ The Theology of Liberation claims the support of Karl Rahner who, “two weeks before his death, ... wrote to the Cardinal Archbishop of Lima and proclaimed, “I am convinced of the orthodoxy of the theological work of Gustavo Gutierrez. The Theology of Liberation that he represents is entirely orthodox.” Juan Luis Segundo *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 18.

³⁴⁶ Segundo claims that his “careful epistemological critique”, outlined in an entire volume of his *Faith and Ideologies*, is evidence that “it would only be foolish to say that, in this case, “impatience and a desire for results” has led [him] “to turn to ... Marxist analysis.” Segundo *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, 15.

³⁴⁷ Segundo claims support for his theology in the concept of “the same preferential option for the poor that the Church *as a whole* has made its own.” Segundo *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, 136.

John Paul II's development of a theology of work (drawing on Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*) seems to promote at least some aspects of a Marxist critique of capitalism in denouncing 'economic progress' as the determinative factor in culture.³⁴⁸ John Paul II insists that the dignity of human beings cannot be set aside in the work place and picked up again by engaging in more human pursuits after hours. He insists that "not only is culture constituted through praxis, but human praxis in its authentically human character is also constituted through culture."³⁴⁹ In placing the dignity of work in terms of the transcendent, suggesting that "beauty exists to entice us to work" John Paul II seems to blend Augustine, Thomas and Marx in his theology of work and culture.³⁵⁰ While he seems to employ some Marxist critiques, John Paul II's emphasis on transcendent values protects him from the more extreme solutions proposed by proponents of the praxis model of faith.

Preliminary thoughts on the Praxis Model

In order for reason to deduce that mistreatment of the poor is injustice, reason must build on the foundation of some sort of objective standard or at least draw on an established concept of the dignity and equality of all human beings. From the Christian premise of an all powerful and all loving God, faced with contemporary examples of offenses against human dignity, proponents of this model are not alone in decrying the

³⁴⁸ Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition after Vatican II*, 66. Rowland connects John Paul II's comments with Alastair MacIntyre's critique of "the *ethos* of civil society".

³⁴⁹ Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition after Vatican II*, 67. Rowland adds that "this is essentially the same insight as MacIntyre's notion of there existing a two-way relationship between virtuous or vicious practices and the *ethos* of institutions."

³⁵⁰ Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition after Vatican II*, 67. Rowland believes this insight is "more Platonic and Augustinian than Aristotelian" and connects it to the thought of "Morris, Belloc, Gill, Chesterton, Day [and] Santamaria."

tragedies brought about by injustice.³⁵¹ But the praxis model seems to utilise reason of a sort to imply that some sort of ideology which results in action, correcting the injustice, as a legitimate expression of ‘faith’ in this God. Faith, in this model seems to have a negative focus rather than positive. It seems to place the focus of faith on what humans should be free *from* rather than what, or whom, they should be free *for*. From Greek Philosophers arguing for human freedom to pursue the good to the Church arguing for freedom to love and serve God and neighbour, the focus remains positive.

The praxis model does seem to reflect an “authentic, if obscure, perception of the dignity of the human person”³⁵² but it seems that pragmatic reason is elevated into a place of prominence over objective truth, revelation or reasoning based on revelation. A proponent of this model would need to employ reason to develop a suitable ‘ideology’ to enact that ideology, or at least have considered and accepted someone else’s, as suitable for achieving their pragmatic ends. The praxis model seems optimistic in that it almost assumes a kind of ‘right reason’ in both determining and in applying ideologies to a particular context.

³⁵¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 31. “Is there anything more tragic, is there anything more opposed to belief in the existence of a good God and a Redeemer of mankind, than world hunger? ... Isn’t the problem of feeding the world – and, more generally, are not social problems – the primary, true yardstick by which redemption has to be measured? ... Marxism – quite understandably – has made this very point the core of its promise of salvation: It would see to it that no one went hungry any more.”

³⁵² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Instruction on certain aspects of the “Theology of Liberation”*, 2. “This yearning shows the authentic, if obscure, perception of the dignity of the human person, created ‘in the image and likeness of God’ (Genesis 1:26-27), ridiculed and scorned in the midst of a variety of different oppressions: cultural, political, racial, social, and economic, often in conjunction with one another.”

The question remains; what is an appropriate ‘ideology’. If that is to be derived from revelation, how does one apprehend, interpret revelation? What is the basis of surety in such situations? The proponents of the praxis model do not seem to be interested in discussing objective truth as an object of faith. But without any universal guidelines it would seem that reason is left to determine not only the pragmatic application of the ideology to follow but to determine which ultimate ‘goods’ one is hoping to protect and promote in doing so.

The Praxis Model in *Fides et Ratio*

Positive

The praxis model seems to be proposed in communities where suffering, or at least some perceived injustice, is a daily reality. Proponents of the praxis model of faith would find some agreement with *Fides et Ratio* when the encyclical names “the daily experience of suffering” as one of the most prominent factors that prompt human beings to question the meaning of life.³⁵³ Since the poor and oppressed are usually the victims of those more rich and powerful, they would take heart from the encyclical’s insistence that philosophy is not reserved for an elite few, but is practical wisdom for living for all human beings.³⁵⁴ This suffering is a direct result of “a disordered exercise of human freedom.” The answer to this evil is Jesus Christ, who is “the perfect realization of human existence.”³⁵⁵

³⁵³ *F&R*, 26. “The daily experience of suffering—in one’s own life and in the lives of others—and the array of facts which seem inexplicable to reason are enough to ensure that a question as dramatic as the question of meaning cannot be evaded.”

³⁵⁴ *F&R*, 37. “It was easy to confuse philosophy—understood as practical wisdom and an education for life—with a higher and esoteric kind of knowledge, reserved to those few who were perfect.”

³⁵⁵ *F&R*, 80.

Since faith in the praxis model is defined as a ‘subversive memory’ which recalls the freedom of Jesus and emancipates us from every kind of enslavement to earthly powers, and the encyclical draws our attention to the salvific nature of God’s intervention in history,³⁵⁶ a proponent of this model would see the subversive memory of Christ as a prompt to act to bring about justice. In this they might find some support in the fact that the Church sets great value on reason’s efforts to “render people’s lives ever more worthy.”³⁵⁷

Fides et Ratio insists that the Church has not mandated any one philosophy in exclusion of all others,³⁵⁸ but encourages her children to present the truth in a way which “meets the needs of our time.”³⁵⁹ Philosophers are urged to be especially attentive to the issues arising in contemporary contexts. In the context of what the encyclical names “the current ferment of ideas”³⁶⁰ philosophers are reminded that philosophy has a profound effect on the development of culture and over personal lives.³⁶¹ It would seem that *Fides et Ratio* is echoing the concerns of a praxis model when it calls for a philosophy which will provide “true and planetary ethics which the world now needs.”³⁶²

³⁵⁶ *F&R*, 10. “Contemplating Jesus as revealer, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stressed the salvific character of God’s Revelation in history” citing *Dei Verbum*, 2

³⁵⁷ *F&R*, 5.

³⁵⁸ *F&R*, 49. “The Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any one particular philosophy in preference to others”; also relevant is *F&R*, 51 “This is why no historical form of philosophy can legitimately claim to embrace the totality of truth, nor to be the complete explanation of the human being, of the world and of the human being’s relationship with God.”

³⁵⁹ *F&R*, 92. “this certain and unchangeable doctrine, always to be faithfully respected, must be understood more profoundly and presented in a way which meets the needs of our time.”

³⁶⁰ *F&R*, 104.

³⁶¹ *F&R*, 100. “The importance of philosophical thought in the development of culture and its influence on patterns of personal and social behaviour is there for all to see.”

³⁶² *F&R*, 104.

This search for a philosophy that answers the questions of a particular culture is hardly new. As the encyclical points out, even the evangelists in the Acts of the Apostles display evidence of wrestling with the philosophical and cultural insights and problems of those they preached to.³⁶³ The encyclical acknowledges that there is, in every culture, “an intrinsic capacity to receive divine revelation”³⁶⁴ and that theology has always had the task of responding to the demands of different cultures.³⁶⁵ In a context of injustice of oppression it would seem that the proponents of a praxis model could point to the encyclical’s reminder that philosophy has the proper task to make people’s lives “ever more human”.³⁶⁶

Perhaps aiming to exercise the freedom and responsibility which surpasses the law³⁶⁷ the proponents of a praxis model seek a philosophical model which best captures the society they live in and the ethical principles required to bring about peace and justice for all.³⁶⁸

Negative

As we have seen, *Fides et Ratio* points out that reason can make mistakes, and that philosophy has taken many a wrong turn in history.³⁶⁹ Speaking of the obligation to be

³⁶³ *F&R*, 36. “The Acts of the Apostles provides evidence that Christian proclamation was engaged from the very first with the philosophical currents of the time” also relevant is *F&R*, 70 “From the time the Gospel was first preached, the Church has known the process of encounter and engagement with cultures.”

³⁶⁴ *F&R*, 71. “Lying deep in every culture, there appears this impulse towards a fulfilment. We may say, then, that culture itself has an intrinsic capacity to receive divine Revelation.”

³⁶⁵ *F&R*, 92. “theology has always had to respond ... to the demands of different cultures, in order then to mediate the content of faith to those cultures in a coherent and conceptually clear way.”

³⁶⁶ *F&R*, 70. “they offer different paths to the truth, which assuredly serve men and women well in revealing values which can make their life ever more human.”

³⁶⁷ *F&R*, 68. “In the New Testament, human life is much less governed by prescriptions than in the Old Testament. Life in the Spirit leads believers to a freedom and responsibility which surpass the Law.”

³⁶⁸ *F&R*, 68. “In other words, moral theology requires a sound philosophical vision of human nature and society, as well as of the general principles of ethical decision-making.”

vigilant against such errors, the encyclical warns philosophers and theologians not to ignore these “erroneous opinions” so they can carry out their duty to defend the truth against error.³⁷⁰

The proponents of a praxis model may take the Scriptures into account as a “subversive memory” but they reject the Scriptural mandate as authoritative in some matters, to which the encyclical raises the alarm, citing St Paul, Saint Irenaeus and Tertullian who warned against similar relativistic errors in their day.³⁷¹ In doing so they, even while trying to achieve a noble goal, damage not only their own philosophy³⁷² but also the good towards which they are striving.³⁷³

True philosophy, says *Fides et Ratio*, must not be so fixed on attempting to be relevant to immediate problems as to be lured into inadequate responses³⁷⁴ by a mistaken notion of “cultural pluralism.”³⁷⁵ It must look to “the truth of the good,”³⁷⁶ knowing that as God is absolute,³⁷⁷ the truth which draws us to him is true in all places, times and cultures.³⁷⁸

³⁶⁹ *F&R*, 49. “history shows that philosophy—especially modern philosophy—has taken wrong turns and fallen into error.” Also relevant here is *F&R*, 52. “philosophies developed in ways which were themselves erroneous and negative.”

³⁷⁰ *F&R*, 54. “Catholic theologians and philosophers, whose grave duty it is to defend natural and supernatural truth and instil it in human hearts, cannot afford to ignore these more or less erroneous opinions.”

³⁷¹ *F&R*, 37. “Following Saint Paul, other writers of the early centuries, especially Saint Irenaeus and Tertullian, sound the alarm when confronted with a cultural perspective which sought to subordinate the truth of Revelation to the interpretation of the philosophers.”

³⁷² *F&R*, 75. “In refusing the truth offered by divine Revelation, philosophy only does itself damage, since this is to preclude access to a deeper knowledge of truth.”

³⁷³ *F&R*, 48. “Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal.”

³⁷⁴ *F&R*, 97. “the temptation always remains of understanding these truths in purely functional terms. This leads only to an approach which is inadequate, reductive and superficial at the level of speculation.”

³⁷⁵ *F&R*, 69. “Others still, prompted by a mistaken notion of cultural pluralism, simply deny the universal value of the Church's philosophical heritage”, also relevant is *F&R*, 98 “Faced with contemporary challenges in the social, economic, political and scientific fields, the ethical conscience of people is disoriented.”

The encyclical says that the cure to this kind of dogmatic pragmatism,³⁷⁹ is a renewed focus on metaphysics.³⁸⁰ Only in light of the absolute³⁸¹ can a genuinely practical solution be proposed which holds all the human goods in respect without compromising one for another.³⁸² A philosophy that ignores questions relating to the meaning of life would soon become a kind of tool or accessory rather than its proper role in the noble search for truth.³⁸³ As such it would render itself incapable of offering a proper response to life's questions, or even to the circumstances it seeks to address.³⁸⁴ The truth which sets us free is not confined to one culture, nor different for certain historical circumstances³⁸⁵ but is declared in public revelation as the same truth for all. To attempt to offer freedom on the basis of a 'truth' dictated by regional or cultural accidents is doomed to failure. As the encyclical so eloquently says; "Once the truth is denied to

³⁷⁶ *F&R*, 98. "moral theology must turn to a philosophical ethics which looks to the truth of the good, to an ethics which is neither subjectivist nor utilitarian."

³⁷⁷ *F&R*, 80. "It is there that we learn that what we experience is not absolute: it is neither uncreated nor self-generating. God alone is the Absolute."

³⁷⁸ *F&R*, 27. "Every truth—if it really is truth—presents itself as universal, even if it is not the whole truth. If something is true, then it must be true for all people and at all times."

³⁷⁹ *F&R*, 97. "the temptation [to dogmatic pragmatism] always remains of understanding these truths in purely functional terms. This leads only to an approach which is inadequate, reductive and superficial."

³⁸⁰ *F&R*, 83. "A theology without a metaphysical horizon could not move beyond an analysis of religious experience, nor would it allow the *intellectus fidei* to give a coherent account of the universal and transcendent value of revealed truth."

³⁸¹ *F&R*, 27. "people seek an absolute which might give to all their searching a meaning and an answer—something ultimate, which might serve as the ground of all things." Also relevant here is *F&R*, 69 "philosophical enquiry enables us to discern in different world-views and different cultures "not what people think but what the objective truth is".(93) It is not an array of human opinions but truth alone which can be of help to theology."

³⁸² *F&R*, 25. "It is essential, therefore, that the values chosen and pursued in one's life be true, because only true values can lead people to realize themselves fully, allowing them to be true to their nature."

³⁸³ *F&R*, 81. "A philosophy which no longer asks the question of the meaning of life would be in grave danger of reducing reason to merely accessory functions, with no real passion for the search for truth." And 47 "instrumental reason", [is] directed—actually or potentially—towards the promotion of utilitarian ends, towards enjoyment or power."

³⁸⁴ *F&R*, 87. "By exchanging relevance for truth, this form of modernism shows itself incapable of satisfying the demands of truth to which theology is called to respond."

³⁸⁵ *F&R*, 95. "Truth can never be confined to time and culture; in history it is known, but it also reaches beyond history."

human beings, it is pure illusion to try to set them free. Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery.”³⁸⁶

It is hardly surprising that the encyclical warns against theology based on local problems. Citing *Divini Redemptoris*,³⁸⁷ *Fides et Ratio* stresses that Catholics are warned against an approach that is so focussed on the imminent that it loses sight of, or even actively rejects objective truth.³⁸⁸ It goes on to explicitly denounce liberation theologians (the main proponents of the praxis model) for an uncritical adoption of Marxist philosophy.³⁸⁹

As we have seen above, the encyclical acknowledges that the immediate experience of suffering prompts and to some extent guides our search for truth. In order to guard against the imminent dominating our thinking, *Fides et Ratio* reminds us that the proper context for theology is within the Church. The vast array of wisdom, both accumulated over the ages and the present contributions of different fields of learning and different cultures within the faith, helps theologians avoid the many pitfalls on the path to truth.

Perhaps an answer of a sort might be offered to the liberation theologians from the closing paragraphs of *Fides et Ratio* where the Virgin Mary is offered as an exemplar of

³⁸⁶ *F&R*, 90.

³⁸⁷ Pope Pius XI *Divini Redemptoris* (1937), 9.

³⁸⁸ *F&R*, 54. “Here the pronouncements of Pope Saint Pius X are pertinent, stressing as they did that at the basis of Modernism were philosophical claims which were phenomenist, agnostic and immanentist. Nor can the importance of the Catholic rejection of Marxist philosophy and atheistic Communism be forgotten.”

³⁸⁹ *F&R*, 54. “the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith has more recently had to intervene to re-emphasize the danger of an uncritical adoption by some liberation theologians of opinions and methods drawn from Marxism.” Citing *Libertatis Nuntius*, (1984) in which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith warns against certain aspects of liberation theology.

wisdom. Though she was persecuted and forced to flee those who would take her Son's life for their own selfish gain, she offered herself entirely to God, committing herself utterly to the truth revealed by the angel. Prudence Allen takes the Pope's theme further in her discussion of Mary as the 'table of wisdom.'³⁹⁰ Portraying Mary holding the lifeless body of Christ, freshly taken from his unjust suffering and death on the cross, Allen sees the Blessed Virgin as "Mary, the Throne of Wisdom. Her lap becomes another table which holds the mystery of death and life." The encyclical urges theologians likewise, to offer their reasoning to God, and with their "fiat" to His divine Word, they lose nothing of the autonomy of reason, and gain the very Truth which answers all the injustices in the world.³⁹¹

Conclusion to the Praxis Model

The praxis model displays an optimistic view of reason. By playing down the authority of the Church or her teachings, the proponents of this model place their trust in reason to determine the object of their 'faith' and, especially, in the practical implementation of their stated goals. The model seems to assume some moral principles, such as the dignity of every human being, the goods of life, liberty and so on, which should be made possible for every human being. Reason is necessary, therefore, for the proponents of the praxis model in order to determine and defend these principles and in order to

³⁹⁰ Prudence Allen, "Mary and the Vocation of Philosophers" in *New Blackfriars* Vol 90 n.1025, (2008), 65.

³⁹¹ *F&R*, 108. "Just as the Virgin was called to offer herself entirely as human being and as woman that God's Word might take flesh and come among us, so too philosophy is called to offer its rational and critical resources that theology, as the understanding of faith, may be fruitful and creative. And just as in giving her assent to Gabriel's word, Mary lost nothing of her true humanity and freedom, so too when philosophy heeds the summons of the Gospel's truth its autonomy is in no way impaired."

determine, critique, apply and defend a suitable ideology. The praxis model seems to rely heavily on practical, or instrumental, reason.

The Personalist Model

The word “believe” in English is etymologically connected to the word “love”, just as the Latin word *credere* implies a “gift of the heart”.³⁹² To believe, then, means to hold the object of belief as dear, preferred, or worthy of allegiance.³⁹³ Christian faith, according to the personalist model, is interpersonal. It sees faith as the union, or at least the longing for the eventual union, of the human person with the divine persons. It is a “participation in the life of a person, in the mystery of his death and resurrection... and a sharing in the life of the three Persons of the Trinity.”³⁹⁴

According to this model, knowledge comes through faith by way of an intimate relationship with God. The earthly analogy that comes closest to explaining this relationship is the marital embrace. When Dulles writes “faith is a total self gift, which calls to mind the reciprocal gift of two spouses”,³⁹⁵ he is reflecting a strong Biblical theme. God is presented as the bridegroom to his chosen people in the Old Testament,³⁹⁶ a theme which is further developed in the New Testament,³⁹⁷ portraying Christ as the bridegroom and his Church as the bride. The gospel of John in particular, penned by

³⁹² Marthaler, *The Creed – The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology*, 19. “Literally and originally, ‘to believe’ means ‘to hold dear.’ This is the meaning that the German equivalent *belieben* still has in the sense of ‘prefer’ or ‘give allegiance to.’”

³⁹³ Marthaler, *The Creed – The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology*, 19. “Etymologically, “believe” is related to a broad range of familiar words, some archaic, like *life* (dear, willing), some still in use, like ‘beloved’ and ‘love.’”

³⁹⁴ Jean Mouroux, *I Believe* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1959) as cited in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 179.

³⁹⁵ Henri de Lubac, *The Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 145-146 in Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 179.

³⁹⁶ eg. Hos 2:14-16. “Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her ... In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master’”; Isa 62:5. “As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.”

³⁹⁷ eg. Eph 5:22-33 (cf 1 Co 11:3). St Paul compares Christ’s relationship with his Church with that of a husband to a wife. cf. Parables of the ‘bridegroom’ Mt 25:1-13 and the wedding of the bridegroom to his bride in Rev 19:7.

“the disciple Jesus loved”,³⁹⁸ culminates in the resurrected Jesus provoking a threefold declaration of love from Peter, a love which is grammatically and theologically linked to Peter’s role as Christ’s earthly representative, the spiritual head of his bride, the Church.³⁹⁹

Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) proposed that, in Christianity, the term ‘faith’ has a meaning unparalleled in any other faith or secular context. Christian faith is a total gift of oneself in response to God’s gift of himself in Christ.⁴⁰⁰ The mutuality of the interpersonal gift, initiated by the gracious and loving gift of Christ to us, involves the entire human person.⁴⁰¹ Without being a merely intellectual act, faith involves the intellect in belief. Christ is not merely ‘proposed’ to us but instead enters history and calls us into God’s kingdom, involving a call to every part of his creation, to every one of his creatures.

The intellect accepts the testimony of God which also “resounds in the heart of the individual” and in the Church’s confession of faith.⁴⁰² DeLubac sees this relational model as taking humanity back to the intimacy of the pre-fall paradise, where man and God related intimately and innocently.⁴⁰³ According to Ratzinger, this intimacy is

³⁹⁸ Jn 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20, 24.

³⁹⁹ Jn 21:15-20.

⁴⁰⁰ cf Gal 2:20.

⁴⁰¹ Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 228. “Faith, if it be really faith, is always one, always entire. It envelops the totality of its object – even in those parts of it which have not yet been made plain, or in those aspects which have not yet been explored.”

⁴⁰² Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 133

⁴⁰³ de Lubac, *Paradoxes of Faith*, 216. “Is it the Father’s Garden we yearn for, or simply the warmth of the maternal breast? Religions – and their modern substitutes – tend to give us back that warmth. To remedy our growing old, they bring us back to our first childhood, indeed to our prenatal period. The time

“‘more interior’ to us ‘than we are to ourselves.’”⁴⁰⁴ Not the product of human learning, it springs from a “face-to-face dialogue” with Christ our brother and God our loving Father.⁴⁰⁵

Although, as we have seen above, the God of the Old Testament displays the same intimacy with his people and desire for personal relationship, describing ‘faith’ as a personal intimacy with the divine is only possible in the context of a clear understanding of the humanity of the second Person of the Trinity. In contrast with the sense of remoteness from God, Karl Adam called attention to Jesus’ humanity. His divinity is not the only, and for this day and time not the most important, aspect of Jesus’ person. The spark in him is the appearance of the divine in the human. Jesus became our brother.⁴⁰⁶ Only in the eternal word made flesh can we truly meet God ‘face-to-face’.⁴⁰⁷

This face-to-face meeting is not a neutral exchange, but a meeting of intimate passionate love. In this model of faith the divine communication is not mere propositions. As Maurice Blondel (1861-1949) writes “divine love has found the means of

they restore to us is that before our history. Christianity, however, lets us back into the Garden... Through it we share once more, not only in the youth of the world, but in the Youth of the Eternal.”

⁴⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 24. “[Jesus] stands before us as “the beloved Son.” He is, on one hand, the Wholly Other, but by the same token he can become a contemporary of us all, “more interior” to each one of us “than we are to ourselves.”” (Citing Augustine’s *Confessions* III, 6, II).

⁴⁰⁵ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 7. “Jesus teaching is not the product of human learning, of whatever kind. It originates from immediate contact with the Father, from “face-to-face” dialogue – from the vision of the one who rests close to the Father’s heart. It is the Son’s word. Without this inner grounding, his teaching would be pure presumption.”

⁴⁰⁶ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The friend we have in Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 60

⁴⁰⁷ Schnackenburg, *The friend we have in Jesus*, 59. “Christ should be seen not only as the divine deliverer enthroned at the right hand of the Father but also as one bonded with us, the firstborn among many brethren. Otherwise his human friendliness, totally encompassing love, and human nearness are slighted. For although we know Jesus as God and man, we must take his humanity seriously.”

*communicating the incommunicable.*⁴⁰⁸ God's love is powerful and affects profound changes in those he loves. According to Blondel, God's love is a radical programme of divinization.⁴⁰⁹ This intimacy with the divine does not, however, allow for a familiarity that breeds contempt. Far from promoting a kind of crass familiarity with 'my mate Jesus,' Blondel insists that we cannot enter into this relationship without "fear and trembling" before the majesty of God, coming to us.⁴¹⁰ But, according to Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), it is losing ourselves in this divine embrace that frees, empowers and dignifies our intellect. Citing Bonaventure, he insists that "the *excessus* of love, far from leaving the reason behind, actually implies the highest form of *intelligentia*."⁴¹¹

Dulles describes a disagreement between Balthasar and certain scholastics who, in his opinion, so emphasised the authority of God that they neglected the content of faith.⁴¹²

Balthasar offers a similar criticism in response to Rahner's transcendental theology, namely, that Rahner emphasises the experience of faith at the expense of the content, the

⁴⁰⁸ Alexander Dru, & Illyd Trethowan, Trs. *Maurice Blondel, The Letter on Apologetics & History and Dogma* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 76. "I believe that divine love has found the means of *communicating the incommunicable*, not in order to oppress and brutalize man, but on the contrary in order to join him in the intimacy of a union which cares nothing for difference of essences."

⁴⁰⁹ Olivia Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel - A Philosophical Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 339. "God's love is an exacting love. If God humanizes himself out of love for human beings, it is in order "to divinize us, not metaphorically, not mimetically, not anthropomorphically, but inflexibly, 'foolishly,' by crossing the metaphysical abyss, by reversing moral impossibilities, by communicating paradoxically, through grace and within the forum of personal secrets and inviolable wills, what is incommunicable by nature but still in an order of things, of joys and of goods that can be handed over and given in accordance with all propriety."

⁴¹⁰ Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel - A Philosophical Life*, 339

⁴¹¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic III – The Spirit of Truth* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005), 140. "For, according to Thomas, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that he sets forth with such genius all serve to infuse into our cognitive powers an *instinctus* that operates by divine love, imprinting the secrets of faith upon us and assimilating our inner attitude of faith to the mystery; in Bonaventure the *excessus* of love, far from leaving the reason behind, actually implies the highest form of *intelligentia*."

⁴¹² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol.1, *Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982), 154.

fides qua at the expense of the *fides quae*.⁴¹³ Just as Balthasar will not divide faith and experience, he also refuses to artificially divide faith and knowledge. As we have noted above, in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, trust in God's promises does not exclude knowledge.⁴¹⁴ Dulles seems to sympathise with the scholastics' criticism of Balthasar. He insists on more general definitions of faith, not clearly distinguishing it from hope, trust, love, obedience, assent and contemplation.

Preliminary thoughts on the Personalist Model

This model of faith seems to engage the entire being of a person in an act of self giving, which necessarily involves reason as both gift and at least joint agent of giving. This model portrays an integrated faith, hope and love engaging the entire person in communion with the divine. It links 'knowing' the object of faith with loving the same object. In fact it asserts that we cannot truly know without the complete self giving of love and the loving reception of the other.

Far from eliminating reason on the basis that 'love is blind', this model presumes a relationship which is at least comprehensible enough to us to allow us to commit ourselves utterly to the divine person. Faith, in this model, engages our reason, memory and will completely in this living and active love with God. Reason is not reduced to a single act of surrender. Instead, this model describes reason as thriving, even soaring to its full potential once transformed by the love of its object. It could be argued that such a focus on the relational aspect of faith might possibly allow a neglect of the precision of

⁴¹³ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 148.

⁴¹⁴ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol.1, *Seeing the Form*, 592 & 134 for Old Testament and New Testament respectively cf. Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 149.

revealed truth, but a proper focus on the object of our affection and belief would surely engage one in a closer and more sincere study of everything we *know* our divine spouse wishes us to know of himself.

This model has profound implications for the sharing of the faith with others. At first glance it may seem that a person could only describe how this faith-love ‘feels’ inside in terms of a racing heart, warm flushes, or turmoil in the stomach when confronted by the object of affection (which, when described to a doctor would likely result in a prescription for antibiotics). Most lovers, even in mundane relationships, would try instead to tell you about the one to whom they are prepared to entrust their entire life and future happiness; not so much to convince their interlocutor that their choice is based on firm grounds, but to articulate something of the attributes of their loved one which has drawn them to this state of devotion.

The Personalist model in *Fides et Ratio*

Positive

At the very beginning of human beings’ struggle to understand themselves in order to understand the meaning of life,⁴¹⁵ they begin to understand that their search is one common to all humanity. That is, they share basic conditions of existence, experiences, and similar struggle for meaning with their fellow human beings. Set within the context of a community of beings who draw comfort and inspiration from the fact that others share a similar journey of discovery, they find they key to discovery within their

⁴¹⁵ *F&R*, 1.

relationship with others.⁴¹⁶ According to *Fides et Ratio* human beings are, to a certain extent, defined by relationship. As the encyclical says “human beings are not made to live alone.”⁴¹⁷ Living within these relationships would be impossible if an individual insisted on personally verifying every proposition with objective criteria, and so it is life in relationships that teaches human beings trust in the other as one of the keys to human existence.⁴¹⁸ Even the specific search of an individual is assisted and enhanced by “trusting dialogue and sincere friendship”, whereas a climate of isolation on the grounds of distrust would undermine the search.⁴¹⁹

The encyclical cites Saint Bonaventure to show that the interpersonal skills learned through human relationships are essential in the search for truth⁴²⁰ because the search for truth is a search to enter into a profound relationship with a *person*.⁴²¹ As the

⁴¹⁶ *F&R*, 4. “These fundamental elements of knowledge spring from the *wonder* awakened in them by the contemplation of creation: human beings are astonished to discover themselves as part of the world, in a relationship with others like them, all sharing a common destiny.”

⁴¹⁷ *F&R*, 31. Also relevant is *F&R*, 32. “Human perfection, then, consists not simply in acquiring an abstract knowledge of the truth, but in a dynamic relationship of faithful self-giving with others.”

⁴¹⁸ *F&R*, 31. “Nonetheless, there are in the life of a human being many more truths which are simply believed than truths which are acquired by way of personal verification. Who, for instance, could assess critically the countless scientific findings upon which modern life is based? Who could personally examine the flow of information which comes day after day from all parts of the world and which is generally accepted as true? Who in the end could forge anew the paths of experience and thought which have yielded the treasures of human wisdom and religion? This means that the human being—the one who seeks the truth—is also *the one who lives by belief*.”

⁴¹⁹ *F&R*, 33. “Reason too needs to be sustained in all its searching by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship. A climate of suspicion and distrust, which can beset speculative research, ignores the teaching of the ancient philosophers who proposed friendship as one of the most appropriate contexts for sound philosophical enquiry.”

⁴²⁰ *F&R*, 105. “Saint Bonaventure ... invites the reader to recognize the inadequacy of “reading without repentance, knowledge without devotion, research without the impulse of wonder, prudence without the ability to surrender to joy, action divorced from religion, learning sundered from love, intelligence without humility” (quoting Bonaventure).

⁴²¹ *F&R*, 32. “It should be stressed that the truths sought in this interpersonal relationship are not primarily empirical or philosophical. Rather, what is sought is *the truth of the person*—what the person is and what the person reveals from deep within.”

encyclical points out it is in the contemplation of God's love for humanity that we discover the meaning of true love,⁴²² which urges humanity on towards the truth.⁴²³

While this relational model of knowing may seem less exact than, for example, the precision of the propositional model, it seems to draw a person to a deeper and richer level of understanding than can be achieved by evidence or adherence to dogmatic statements. A personal relationship draws the person into an intimacy with The Truth.⁴²⁴ As Saint Anselm says, the more the intellect learns to love the truth, the more urgently it seeks the truth.⁴²⁵ As people entrust themselves to this relationship, they learn to know and love the truth, and eagerly embrace it for themselves.⁴²⁶

The search for truth is, in fact, intimately linked with the search for a person who to whom we can completely trust.⁴²⁷ This is why the priority of Christian preachers has always been to invite people into a personal encounter with the Risen Christ. The relationship itself brings about the "conversion of heart" which leads the new believer to seek to know various particulars of the truth out of love for the one who is the whole

⁴²² *F&R*, 7. "As the source of love, God desires to make himself known; and the knowledge which the human being has of God perfects all that the human mind can know of the meaning of life."

⁴²³ *F&R*, 107. "I ask *everyone* to look more deeply at man, whom Christ has saved in the mystery of his love, and at the human being's unceasing search for truth and meaning."

⁴²⁴ *F&R*, 32. "Belief is often humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person's capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring."

⁴²⁵ *F&R*, 42.

⁴²⁶ Weinandy summarises Webster's objections to the 'phenomenological anthropology' underpinning *Fides et Ratio* by saying he believes John Paul II has undermined the 'biblical truth' of man as the hearer of the word." Weinandy, Thomas "Fides et Ratio: A Response to Thomas Webster" *New Blackfriars* Vol. 81, n.952, 2000, 232. Weinandy suggests that John Paul II could have legitimately supported his anthropology by a study of Genesis 1:26-27.

⁴²⁷ *F&R*, 33. "Men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable—a search for the truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves."

truth.⁴²⁸ It is this love that provides the transformation and illumination so valued by proponents of the transcendental model of faith.⁴²⁹

The encyclical drives this point home by offering the example of the martyrs. It is only with an understanding of faith as a relationship with the divine person of truth that we can properly understand why neither suffering, nor even a horrid death could shake the martyrs' love for the truth.⁴³⁰

This analogy of faith as a relationship does not discount reason in favour of a kind of emotive attachment to truth. Faith cannot do without reason, nor can reason do without faith.⁴³¹ While distinguishing between the two, faith and reason work in "mutual friendship", each with its own role and importance.⁴³² *Fides et Ratio* offers the Virgin Mary as the clear demonstration that a relationship involves the gift of the entire person, including the ability to reason.⁴³³ Just as Mary gave herself utterly over to the truth, in

⁴²⁸ *F&R*, 38. "The first and most urgent task was the proclamation of the Risen Christ by way of a personal encounter which would bring the listener to conversion of heart and the request for Baptism."

⁴²⁹ *F&R*, 43. "Illumined by faith, reason is set free from the fragility and limitations deriving from the disobedience of sin and finds the strength required to rise to the knowledge of the Triune God." Also relevant here is *F&R*, 22 "The coming of Christ was the saving event which redeemed reason from its weakness, setting it free from the shackles in which it had imprisoned itself."

⁴³⁰ *F&R*, 32.

⁴³¹ *F&R*, 48. "Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal. Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so run the risk of no longer being a universal proposition."

⁴³² *F&R*, 57. "Just when Saint Thomas distinguishes perfectly between faith and reason", the Pope writes, "he unites them in bonds of mutual friendship, conceding to each its specific rights and to each its specific dignity."

⁴³³ *F&R*, 108. "Just as the Virgin was called to offer herself entirely as human being and as woman that God's Word might take flesh and come among us, so too philosophy is called to offer its rational and critical resources that theology, as the understanding of faith, may be fruitful and creative."

order to bear The Truth in her womb, the Church sees the act of any person entrusting themselves to God as an act engaging the entire person.⁴³⁴

It is to the Truth born in Mary's womb that the Church points all truth seekers. God has revealed himself finally and definitively in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.⁴³⁵ As Augustine points out in his rebuke of the Platonists, it is foolish to seek the truth but reject the Word made flesh.⁴³⁶ It is in the Word made flesh that we encounter the "enduring and definitive synthesis" which could not be reached by human reason alone.⁴³⁷ Indeed, we are able to come to a deeper understanding of God through relationship than we could through mere propositions.⁴³⁸ God chose to reveal Himself most clearly in the incarnation of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity⁴³⁹ and it is here that "the Whole lies hidden in the part, God takes on a human face."⁴⁴⁰ Through Christ, human beings now have access to both Him, the Father and the Spirit.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁴ *F&R*, 13. "The Church has always considered the act of entrusting oneself to God to be a moment of fundamental decision which engages the whole person." Cf Allen, Prudence, "Mary and the Vocation of Philosophers" for an excellent discussion on Mary as the "table of wisdom" in *F&R*, 108; See also Meconi, David Vincent SJ, "*Philosophari in Maria* – And Mary as the Model of Created Wisdom" in Foster, David Ruel, & Koterski, Joseph W. Eds. *The two wings of Catholic thought: essays on Fides et Ratio* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

⁴³⁵ *F&R*, 9 (citing 1 Jn 5:9; Jn 5:31-32).

⁴³⁶ *F&R*, 40. "Though he accorded the Platonists a place of privilege, Augustine rebuked them because, knowing the goal to seek, they had ignored the path which leads to it: the Word made flesh."

⁴³⁷ *F&R*, 12. "In the Incarnation of the Son of God we see forged the enduring and definitive synthesis which the human mind of itself could not even have imagined."

⁴³⁸ *F&R*, 32. "Belief is often humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person's capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring."

⁴³⁹ *F&R*, 11. "The truth about himself and his life which God has entrusted to humanity is immersed therefore in time and history; and it was declared once and for all in the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth."

⁴⁴⁰ *F&R*, 12.

⁴⁴¹ *F&R*, 7. "through Christ, the Word made flesh, man has access to the Father in the Holy Spirit and comes to share in the divine nature." Also relevant here is *F&R*, 11 "To see Jesus is to see his Father (*Jn* 14:9)."

In Christ, human beings do not merely come to knowledge of God that makes salvation possible. Knowing God personally, as it were, people come to realise that God reveals himself precisely *in* that salvific act.⁴⁴² The divine self revelation in the incarnation of Christ reveals a God who not only wants to be known by us, but also reveals his divine purpose in doing so. The divine purpose is to invite us into communion with himself , for eternity.⁴⁴³

It is only Christ's transformation of suffering and death into the saving act of a loving God that answers the deepest questions raised by our own suffering.⁴⁴⁴ God's answer is a person. People come to know the mystery of the Word made flesh in his incarnation, life, passion, death and ascension⁴⁴⁵ and in knowing this Person mankind finds meaning and peace.⁴⁴⁶ Even so, *Fides et Ratio* insists that our understanding of this mystery will be severely hampered if we ignore the contribution of philosophy. Our human mind finds it difficult to grasp that suffering and death can express a gracious self giving

⁴⁴² *F&R*, 10. "By this Revelation, then, the deepest truth about God and human salvation is made clear to us in Christ, who is the mediator and at the same time the fullness of all Revelation."

⁴⁴³ *F&R*, 10. "Out of the abundance of his love speaks to men and women... so that he may invite and take them into communion with himself." Also relevant here is *F&R*, 11 "The whole work of creation and salvation comes to light; and it emerges clearly above all that, with the Incarnation of the Son of God, our life is even now a foretaste of the fulfilment of time which is to come."

⁴⁴⁴ *F&R*, 12. "Where might the human being seek the answer to dramatic questions such as pain, the suffering of the innocent and death, if not in the light streaming from the mystery of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection?"

⁴⁴⁵ *F&R*, 93. "The approach to this mystery begins with reflection upon the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God: his coming as man, his going to his Passion and Death, a mystery issuing into his glorious Resurrection and Ascension to the right hand of the Father."

⁴⁴⁶ *F&R*, 24. "Almighty and eternal God, you created mankind so that all might long to find you and have peace when you are found" (citing a prayer from Good Friday liturgy).

love,⁴⁴⁷ and yet, without the contribution of philosophy a coherent understanding of this mystery will not be possible.⁴⁴⁸

The sacramental character of revelation invites human beings to look past the outward signs and into a deeper relationship with the personal God who has offered himself in this way for all, and continues to offer Himself in the Eucharist.⁴⁴⁹

Fides et Ratio insists that “the intimate essence of God and of the human being become intelligible: in the mystery of the Incarnate Word.”⁴⁵⁰ Not only do we come to see God’s self revelation in Christ but also the revelation of everything we are as human beings and, more importantly, everything God has created us *to be*.⁴⁵¹ Grasping the reality of God revealed in Christ is embracing the truth of our own existence.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁷ *F&R*, 23. “The true key-point, which challenges every philosophy, is Jesus Christ’s death on the Cross. It is here that every attempt to reduce the Father’s saving plan to purely human logic is doomed to failure.”

⁴⁴⁸ *F&R*, 93. “The human mind, which finds it inconceivable that suffering and death can express a love which gives itself and seeks nothing in return. ... a coherent solution to them will not be found without philosophy’s contribution.” And 23. “In order to express the gratuitous nature of the love revealed in the Cross of Christ, the Apostle is not afraid to use the most radical language of the philosophers in their thinking about God. Reason cannot eliminate the mystery of love which the Cross represents, while the Cross can give to reason the ultimate answer which it seeks.”

⁴⁴⁹ *F&R*, 13. “Just as Jesus Christ went unrecognized among men, so does his truth appear without external difference among common modes of thought. So too does the Eucharist remain among common bread.”

⁴⁵⁰ *F&R*, 80.

⁴⁵¹ *F&R*, 80. “In the end, the word of God poses the problem of the meaning of life and proffers its response in directing the human being to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, who is the perfect realization of human existence.”

⁴⁵² *F&R*, 15. “The truth of Christian Revelation, found in Jesus of Nazareth, enables all men and women to embrace the “mystery” of their own life” and 80 “The intimate essence of God and of the human being become intelligible: in the mystery of the Incarnate Word.”

Negative

Though it seems strongly in favour of a personalist perspective, *Fides et Ratio* acknowledges our understanding is negatively affected by the limits of human reason,⁴⁵³ the “inconsistency of the heart”⁴⁵⁴ and overwhelmed by “a welter of concerns.”⁴⁵⁵ The encyclical also acknowledges that knowledge obtained via a personal relationship with the divine is “an imperfect form of knowledge.”⁴⁵⁶ Such knowledge is “not primarily empirical or philosophical.”⁴⁵⁷ Admittedly, this is not so much a point against the personalist model as a warning that intimacy without attention to precise definitions could lead to dangerous false confidence in mistaken beliefs.

Fides et Ratio warns that enjoying an intimate relationship with a personal God does not dispense with the need for philosophy’s continued search for precision in understanding and expressing truth. Citing early Christianity’s initial disinterest on the basis that “a satisfying answer to the hitherto unresolved question of life’s meaning that delving into the philosophers seemed to them something remote and in some ways outmoded,”⁴⁵⁸ the encyclical argues that it would be a major mistake to abandon the search to understand

⁴⁵³ *F&R*, 13. “It is true that Jesus, with his entire life, revealed the countenance of the Father, for he came to teach the secret things of God. But our vision of the face of God is always fragmentary and impaired by the limits of our understanding.”

⁴⁵⁴ *F&R*, 28. “The natural limitation of reason and the inconstancy of the heart often obscure and distort a person’s search.”

⁴⁵⁵ *F&R*, 28. “Truth can also drown in a welter of other concerns. People can even run from the truth as soon as they glimpse it because they are afraid of its demands.”

⁴⁵⁶ *F&R*, 32. “On the one hand, the knowledge acquired through belief can seem an imperfect form of knowledge, to be perfected gradually through personal accumulation of evidence.”

⁴⁵⁷ *F&R*, 32. “It should be stressed that the truths sought in this interpersonal relationship are not primarily empirical or philosophical.”

⁴⁵⁸ *F&R*, 38. “The encounter with the Gospel offered such a satisfying answer to the hitherto unresolved question of life’s meaning that delving into the philosophers seemed to them something remote and in some ways outmoded.”

truth by philosophy, imagining that intimacy with the Truth Himself absolved us from the search.

As we have noted above, human relationships can be clouded by the same sin that clouds our reasoning.⁴⁵⁹ Even having the amazing gift of a personal relationship with the one who is Truth, we require the objective propositions of truth, together with the interpretation and guidance of the Magisterium, to keep our relationship purely focussed on this Truth. It is perhaps in this personalist model of faith that the need for a clear theology focussing on the truth who is the Word made flesh is most pressing. Prudence Allen invokes the portrayal of Mary and the Devil locking eyes in the crowds surrounding Christ's way of the cross in the movie *The Passion of the Christ* as an artistic portrayal of John Paul II's point,

Catholic theologians and philosophers, whose grave duty it is to defend natural and supernatural truth and instil it in human hearts, cannot afford to ignore these more or less erroneous opinions.⁴⁶⁰

It is the particular role of Theologians, says Allen, to lock eyes with the devil and denounce his deception, while pointing and leading all to her son, the Son of God, The Truth and our salvation.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ *F&R*, 51. "it is necessary to keep in mind the unity of truth, even if its formulations are shaped by history and produced by human reason wounded and weakened by sin." Also relevant here is *F&R*, 13 "If human beings with their intelligence fail to recognize God as Creator of all, it is not because they lack the means to do so, but because their free will and their sinfulness place an impediment in the way."

⁴⁶⁰ *F&R*, 54. "Catholic theologians and philosophers, whose grave duty it is to defend natural and supernatural truth and instill it in human hearts, cannot afford to ignore these more or less erroneous opinions."

⁴⁶¹ Allen, "Mary and the Vocation of Philosophers" in *New Blackfriars*, 64.

Conclusion to the Personalist Model

The personalist model is not only positive and optimistic about reason but it portrays reason as an integral part of the entire human being's action in faith. Reason must first determine the object of faith is a personal God, who desires a relationship with those he created. Further still, reason must deduce that this relationship has been made possible for us by God. The act of faith then becomes an act of total self giving over to this personal God. This complete submission of self to the loving embrace of a personal God necessarily engages human reason. Just as a lover seeks to understand and please her beloved, so the believer seeks to understand and please his/her God. Reason is actively engaged in efforts to comprehend and think with the personal God who is the object of faith. In the understanding of the personalist model, this complete self giving fulfils and enhances the entire person, including the capacity to reason, and raises our humanity to what it was intended to be. Thus reason is enhanced, elevated and freed to truly comprehend the truth about the object of faith, the beloved and personal God.

Thesis Conclusion

This study adopted the models of faith described by Avery Dulles in *The Assurance of Things Hoped For* as a convenient means of surveying a broad range of understandings of “faith” in the context of the Christian religion. Each of Dulles’ models was briefly described, including some examples from proponents of the respective models, some preliminary observations about the relationship between faith and reason in the respective models were offered; and, finally, by examining the Church’s teaching on faith and reason in *Fides et Ratio*, the relationship between faith and reason according to each model was discussed. The specific questions in each case were,

Whether “faith” is compatible with reason

Whether “faith” requires reason.

Although the fiducial and obediencial models share a certain pessimism regarding reason, neither denounces reason entirely. Both models of faith place a great deal of importance on revelation as the only reliable source of truth. Proponents of both models, therefore, require reason to decipher and interpret revelation, to apply it to their own situations and to involve reason in the complete abandonment of self to God. The single self determining act of surrender to God is an act of the whole human person, including the action and participation of the intellect and will. Reason is, therefore, utilised as a tool of this method, even if not trusted as a reliable source of truth in itself.

On the other hand, the transcendental, affective/experiential and praxis models share a certain optimism in regards to reason. In their various ways, these models of faith

express a sincere longing for the truth, while all downplaying, if not rejecting, the role of Christ's guiding hand in the authority of divine revelation and magisterial authority. The affective/experiential model relies heavily on reason to discern meaningful experiences from random happenstance. The praxis model relies on reason to determine the best possible ideology to achieve the goals set, and relies heavily on practical reason to implement that ideology. The transcendental model places great hope in reason to see past the mundane problems and experiences of life to the transcendent truth in and beyond them. Reason in the transcendental model is supernaturally enhanced, enlightened and trusted to soar to the contemplation of transcendent truth.

The propositional model, together with the personalist model, portray revelation as much more authoritative than it is portrayed in the affective/experiential, praxis and transcendental models, but do not attempt to exclude reason in the manner of the fiducial and obediencial models. Reason is emphasised most purely in the propositional model in that it specifically insists on the *reasonableness* of faith. The propositionalists rely on the coherence of God's revealed truth with truth obtained from all sources, encouraging reason to seek and assimilate the truth it finds, guided by the magisterial authority of the Church, into the life of Christian faith. The personalist model also displays a strong belief in the coherence of God's revelation with the world, but focuses specifically on the truth of the human person in relationship with a personal God, especially in the 'Word made flesh'. That God wishes to engage the entire human person in a deep and intimate relationship, encompassing all aspects of that human person, necessarily involves and enhances reason, encouraging and enabling reason to

soar to its full potential in contemplation of the God who is the object of his/her faith and love.

It is evident that all models of faith presented and studied in this paper are compatible with reason and, in fact, require reason to be attempted, let alone successfully implemented. This thesis has argued that, not only is faith compatible with reason, but that all models of faith described by Dulles require reason.

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