

July 12, 2005

Faith is assent caused by the will, caused by the will as opposed to what? Caused by the will as opposed to being caused by awareness of evidence. But how do I know that I *should* will to make an act of faith? There must be some kind of evidence behind the intellectual assent to the truth that I should will to make an act of faith.

An analogy: A parent does not want to assent that a child did something wrong. But sometimes a parent is morally obligated to give assent to expert testimony that leads to an act of will overcoming the parent's desire not to want to assent to the child's wrongdoing. I know I should accept the expert's testimony on the basis of evidence showing that it is unreasonable to believe that the expert does not know what he is talking about or is not telling the truth.

I should accept the testimony that I am a sinner in need of salvation, but I may will not to. I should assent that I should stop this sin, but I may will not to.

I can know on the basis of evidence that I should accept someone's testimony that therefore should will to ask for the gift of faith.

xxxFaith and reason, 4-17-01

xxx faith and reason, 2 approaches to ethics, practical knowledge, intellectual fads, May 11, 2005

If the virtue of faith is by its nature supernatural, how could be sinful for us to reject faith? Does not guilt for sin presuppose rational knowledge that what we are doing is wrong? Maybe the following line of thought will help.

Why did not 20th-century intellectuals get on their knees and beg forgiveness for all the harm they were complicit in by promoting Marxism, and even just by failing to condemn communism? And why did Paul Ehrlich not get on his knees and beg forgiveness from all the men in India for wanting to sterilize them. These are not examples mere intellectual pride, intellectual hubris. These are egregious examples of intellectual imperialism, intellectual tyranny.

Perhaps the response will be that no matter how evil the consequences of their actions or failure to act were or could have been, they had good intentions. Since their intentions were good, the fault was a completely intellectual fault and therefore a fault that excuses from guilt by

inculpable ignorance.

Well why were their intentions good? Because the intellectuals were motivated by love for mankind. And isn't that all you can ask? Well, what was the basis of their love for mankind? Is it possible that they had a love for mankind that had an ethically improper basis? Or that lacked an ethically proper basis? If they had a love for mankind that was vitiated from the beginning, then perhaps their ignorance was culpable. If their initial act of will to love mankind was not really a good act of will, but an evil act of will, perhaps their freely putting themselves into the state of ill will may have prevented them from making good practical judgments about what is good for their fellow human beings.

If so, they did not so much love mankind as love their theories of mankind. And their failure to express horror at the implications of their "purely intellectual" mistakes may be evidence for that.

In other words, in some important sense it may be impossible to enlighten selfishness. The phrase "enlightened selfishness" as good practical uses for example, in the case of Alcoholics Anonymous. But maybe on the speculative level, or on a speculatively practical level, as opposed to the practically practical level, enlightened selfishness is a contradiction in terms. In that case, an ethically incorrect way of loving mankind would lead to incorrect practical judgments about what is good for mankind.

We all must make our life deciding decisions on the basis of beliefs for which we do not have absolute rational evidence. We will make them on faith, either faith in particular individuals or faith in what some culture of individuals tells us. If our faith is based on a prior evil act of will, our faith will be incorrect about what is good or bad for us.

What would make a decision to love mankind any improper decision to love mankind? There must be some rationally attainable knowledge prior to the practical knowledge about how to implement love for mankind by which we can judge whether a decision to love mankind is proper or improper. For example, a proper decision to love mankind should be based on a grasp

of the fact that human beings are ends in themselves, that persons, that is, Free rational beings, are that for the sake of which everything else exists.

If our love for human kind fails to be based on that, it is not a love with a proper basis. It still may be an in culpably improper love however, if it is not based on culpable ignorance of the true basis. An example of an improper basis for so-called "love of mankind" would be the feeling of pride that we get for thinking of ourselves as lovers of mankind, the ego boost that leaving ourselves to be lovers of mankind gives us, the feeling of superiority over those whom we consider do not be lovers of mankind, etc.

The grace by which God leads us to make an act of supernatural faith must virtually include some knowledge of a strictly rational nature, if it is sinful to reject that grace. For example, think of the person who prays "oh God, if there is a God . . ." and is rewarded for his prayer by being given supernatural faith. He could have chosen not to make that prayer, perhaps out of intellectual pride, or perhaps out of refusing to believe that if there is a God, God could be merciful to him. Such a choice would have been an evil choice, as measured by rational knowledge of which he was capable.

Therefore, the choice to pray was a morally good choice. A morally good choice is not sufficient to merit a supernatural reward. But responding to a grace of God that virtually includes this morally good choice can be sufficient.

Before having faith, I can wonder whether God has revealed anything to man. And I can search for reasons to think that in a particular religion God has indeed revealed things to man. I might not know what kind of reasons those might be or even what kind of reasons they could be, but I can assume that it is possible for God to do this and that God knows best what kinds of reasons he has to use to let me know that he is revealing something.

But according to rationalists, we shouldn't even get that far. To them, it is a violation of reason to believe that God has revealed anything. So there is something wrong if we even bother looking. In other words, they claim to know that God is unable to give us sufficient reasons for thinking that he is revealing some-

thing. They claim to know that such reasons cannot exist. They know that not even God could find such reasons, because they would be contradictory to the nature of "reason" in the sense of intelligence. Therefore, rather than wondering whether God has provided evidence such that since that evidence exists, we have a moral obligation to believe that what someone says is from God, rationalists know that it would be wrong to think that evidence giving us a moral obligation to believe could ever exist.

Put this way, it is their view that is immediately seen to be irrational. How could they possibly know that it is beyond the mind of God to design evidence such that its existence would be sufficient for us to know that if we do not believe something is God's revelation, we are being morally wrong? How do they know, in other words, that God cannot give us the inestimable gift of knowing things we are incapable of knowing by natural reason?

They might try to reply that kind of evidence I'm talking about is contradictory, and therefore not even God to create such evidence much less design it. They would say it is contradictory because it is asking reason to deny itself. Is not faith something that is beyond reason? Or is not faith in something that is beyond reason? And if reason could justify faith, why would it be faith?

To answer this, we simply have to locate precisely the dividing line between reason and faith. First, Jesus provides sufficient evidence for believing that he says, or will say, is God's revelation. Up until now reason alone is operating. We have not gone beyond reason. Now Jesus tells us something that reason would be incapable of knowing. We are beyond reason now, but we are justified in doing so because within reason itself we saw sufficient evidence for believing that whatever Jesus might say next is true, whether or not what he says next is something that falls within reason or outside of reason.

The importance of the above argument is that we do not even have to give an analysis of how evidence can show us that it is obligatory to believe, in order to reply to the rationalists. And once the folly of that rationalists's reasoning is seen, the obligation of asking ourselves whether God has ever revealed anything is clear.

When we start down that path, the first thing we can do is eliminate those religions and those persons who do not claim to be revealing anything from God. Perhaps the next thing we can do is eliminate those religions and those persons who do not claim to have an answer to the problem of evil. Another thing we can look for is consistency of certain kinds. For instance, one kind of consistency that we should look for but that most people do not is the following. If the leaders of the Christian Church had been free of all sins in their decision-making, we would know that Christianity could not be revealed truth, because the history of the Christian Church would be inconsistent with Christian teaching that leaders of the Church will indeed be guilty of sin.

And when we start down has all looking for whether or not God has revealed anything, we know in

advance that what we are looking for is whether some human being can speak for God. In other words, does the Koran and speak for God? Does Moses speak for God? Etc. and when we put the question that way, the next question is whether some human being who claims to speak for God has credentials that would amount to the kind of evidence we are looking for. If God is going to speak to us, he will either speak to me directly, in which case I am the human being that is the vehicle of his revelation, or he will speak to someone else. Either way he has to give the person he is speaking to sufficient evidence for that person to know that he should believe what is coming next. And so if I should believe what another human being claims to be revelation from God, I need evidence about that human being, sufficient evidence of that human being. And so that human being must have credentials.

But knowing that the human being must have credentials narrows the field considerably. Where are the Muslim miracles, the Buddhists miracles, the Hindu miracles, etc.? Where are the Jewish miracles after Jesus's? Very quickly the field will narrow down to Jesus's, at least to the important extent that the know we have to take a serious look at the credentials Jesus offers. Our question becomes same question that the Jews that had for Jesus's, "are you are the one who was to come, or shall we wait for another?" In McInerney's detective example, what I am deciding on the basis of inductive reasoning, that is, on the basis of whether or not it is reasonable to believe the opposite, is whether I should enter into with this person the kind of relationship that would make it totally inappropriate, totally contrary to the nature of the relationship, to hire a detective to investigate further whether the person deserves that kind of relationship.

Similarly, when I decide that the opposite of putting my faith in Christ is unreasonable, I am entering into a personal relationship which would be broken by certain kinds of doubt.

Also, the kind of certitude given by knowledge that it is unreasonable to believe the opposite of a proposition is not the kind of certitude that constitutes faith. The latter kind of certitude is given as a gift to after acting on the basis of the first kind of certitude. And when that second kind is given as a gift, or after it is given as a gift, it then becomes a personal relationship of the kind that would be broken by the detective type of investigation. So maybe I could read "the grammar of assent" and add the necessary enhancements to it.

"Religious assent": religion is a species of justice. So the issue is that something is due God in this situation. What is due God? The recognition that divinely revealed truth is involved.

If my conscience disagrees with the ordinary magisterium, I must follow my conscience. If an expert disagrees, she is obligated to explain why to other experts, for the sake of enlightening them. But the case of keeping such disagreements the secret from non' experts is gone forever. So the magisterium

must have courage to say publicly that someone whose conscience disagrees is obligated to follow their conscience.

I am obligated to believe that Dr. if I have a family to support, etc.. So prior obligations determine the obligation to believe the doctor's statement that this is the only way to save a life.

December 21st, 2002

Unlike the Greek intellectual, the modern intellectual refuses God's offer of the gift of enlightenment above reason. A gift of superior enlightenment. By reason we can know that it is unreasonable not to believe what Jesus says. (Unreasonable: the goal of reason is to assent to what exists and only what exists; and there are only two kinds of evidence for that. The goal of reason is to assent to what exists on the basis of evidence for what exists.) Reason can know that it is unreasonable to believe the opposite of "I should believe what Jesus says."

Since I know that by reason, I have the obligation to except Jesus's gift of enlightenment superior to reason. But I may also know that by accepting faith I would be accepting certitude, justified certitude, I do not want to believe (for example, that God can give me enlightenment superior to reason, which is what the intellectual does not want to believe). I know that God can give me certitude that I will know it comes from his indwelling in me not from me.

In the Greek intellectual, the absence of faith was a mere negation, not a privation. So the modern intellectual operates with wounded reason, not just incomplete reason. In fact, the modern intellectual has the audacity to claim to know that God is so weak that he cannot figure out a way to communicate to us things that could not be known just by reason alone.

To say that reason is able to know the truth of "I should believe what Jesus says," is not to say that this often occurs without the help of grace. 2 different questions are involved here. What is the nature of such a belief? The answer that question is that it is a natural, rational belief. And what is the cause of such a belief? Grace may well be the cause. Likewise, it is correct to say that reason is capable of knowing the existence of God, in other words, that the existence of God is by nature an element of rational knowledge. But that does not tell me anything about how belief in the existence of God usually comes about. Another example: there are truths about ethics that belong by nature to reason but are also included in what is revealed my faith.

xxx ordinary magisterium,, fallibility, religious assent, unacceptable risk, definitive teachings, March 13, 2002

The unacceptable risk argument against abortion might help us understand the obligation to assent to the fallible. Secularists like Nat Hentoff are against abortion because they realize that since they do not believe in God human life has to be their highest value. In other words they realize that there has to be some highest value; the alternative is chaos, moral chaos.

The response might be that the abortionist grant that human life is the highest value; he just thinks that human life begins at a different point. But the secularist prolifer could respond that if human life really is the only candidate for our highest value (and of course it the only candidate if we do not admit God), then anything that potentially threatens human life is an unacceptable moral risk. Whatever our highest value is, it must be something with respect to which even the risk of violating it is morally unacceptable. If just the risk of violating it is not morally unacceptable, it is not really our highest value. Because our decision to risk it must be based on some other value.

Now consider the person who is saying, consciously saying, I am going to obligate you to assent to this with mind and heart even though I know it could be wrong, even though I am conscious that it could be wrong and therefore that I might have to change from obligating you to assent to it someday. What could such a person be thinking? How could he do something as serious as obligating our assent in a way that binds our freedom if he is not absolutely sure that what he is obligating us to assent to is true?

Well isn't that person in a very similar situation to the prolifer who would be against abortion even if he could not prove that zygotes were persons. The prolifer would be imposing, consciously imposing, a great burden on women even without certitude that abortion would actually violate the highest value. The prolifer would be doing this because the alternative would be an unacceptable risk. Isn't the person who imposes an obligation to assent without absolute certitude on his part doing the same thing by implication?

By implication, isn't he saying that even though I do not have absolute certitude, anything less than obligating you to assent to this proposition would be an unacceptable risk. In other words, given the things that the authority figure does know for certain, which in this case would include both definitively taught doctrines and scientific or historical facts about the world, and given the current state of fallible knowledge concerning the issue under consideration, the authority figure judges that believing a certain proposition or disbelieving a certain proposition would be an unacceptable risk.

An unacceptable risk from what point of view? And even more important point of view than the highest secular value. The authority figure would be judging something to be an unacceptable risk from the point of view of divinely revealed truths concerning eternal salvation. Some truth or truths concerning eternal salvation, or some value or values revealed by those truths, would be what at risk in such a way that the risk would sufficiently outweigh any advantages that accepting the risk would have, given our current state of knowledge, that he, the authority figure, and we are obligated not to take that risk.

For example, the authority figure might judge it very unlikely, given our current state of knowledge, that a particular nondefinitively taught doctrine would turn out not to be true. And if the content of the doctrine made it sufficiently important relative to other truths or other values, the right thing to do might be to assent to the doctrine and to obligate others to assent to the doctrine.

This approach raises a number of questions and a number of problems, but not necessarily insurmountable problems. For example, every teaching of the ordinary magisterium would involve two distinct assertions. One would be the issue in question, for example, the morality of abortion or artificial contraception. The other would be the assertion about the risk involved in the first assertion. With respect to the first assertion, we know that religious assent does not mean belief that the assertion is true. Our obligation to assent does not go that far.

But what attitude are we obligated to have toward the assertion about the risk of the first assertion? Are we obligated to believe that the authority is correct in judging the first assertion to be an unacceptable risk? In other words, with the second assertion fall under the heading of definitive teaching of the ordinary magisterium? Even though the magisterium may change's attitude toward that risk, it may still be true that at the time that was the correct judgments to make about the risk; and it may still be true that we are obligated to believe that at the time that was the correct judgment to make about the risk.

This is an interesting and tricky theological question. But the analysis presented here is on the right track, the practical consequences of this question are not as severe as its theological subtlety might make it appear. For we know now that if it would violate someone's conscience to assent to a nondefinitive teaching, a person can withhold his assent without violating its active faith in the Church as teaching with christ's voice. When

the Church speaks with Christ voice, it must be speaking infallibly, because Christ is infallible. That is what the doctrine of infallibility is all about. Therefore having a conscience that disagrees with some nondefinitive teaching does not make someone a disloyal Catholic.

But the issue of whether we must agree with the second assertion, the assertion about the risk of the first assertion, only comes up for those who do more than disagree in conscience with the first assertion. One can disagree in conscience and decide to keep her disagreement relatively to herself. She can decide not to make her disagreement a public cause. And a reason for deciding not make a public cause can be either that she believes the Church cannot be wrong in making a judgment about current acceptable risks or that she believes the Church has the authority to bind her on the basis of its judgment about acceptable risk even though its judgment may be wrong.

In other words, she can judge that the Church has the authority, the Church is the one that has the authority, to make decisions about acceptable risks even if those decisions are fallible that both levels. For the issue of acceptable risk always involves the common good of the Church, for which the magisterium is responsible; and involving the common good of the Church means involving the eternal salvation of mankind. A mistake that could make what is a sin appear not to be a sin would have serious consequences for the Church's ability to witness to the righteous life, and those consequences could last long after magisterium attempted to correct the problem.

So the only case in which the theological question concerning the status of the second kind of assertion would necessarily have practical consequences would be the case of someone whose conscience went beyond disagreeing with the assertion of the first kind to the belief that she should make her disagreement public and publicly dispute with the magisterium. She would, of course, have to follow her conscience.

But even in this case, the theological aspects that is, the speculatively true aspects, of the problem could be more serious than the practical aspects make it appear. The person's conscience would not allow her to believe that assertions of the second kind are part of the Church's exercise of Christ's teaching authority. If it were an exercise of that authority and she believed it was, her conscious would have to tell her that it was an unacceptable risk for her to go public with her disagreement.

But the problem concerning the second type of assertion may not concern Christ's infallibility but the Church's authority to make decisions concerning the common good, Church teachings of the third kind. Our dissenter might acknowledge that the Church does have that fallible authority but disagree in conscience with the decision that fallible authority has made. If so, the problem is not one of assent to the ordinary magisterium but of the limits of conscientious disobedience to a legitimate authority, whether the disobedience concerns assent to teaching or some other kind of issue. So this case would not add anything to the issue about Church's teaching authority as opposed to its governing authority.

There are some analogies to this analysis of assent to the fallible and our obligation to assent to the fallible. Governments are making decisions binding us on the basis of fallible information, information they know is fallible, all the time. And they are doing it all the time on the basis of the unacceptable risk of the opposite action or lack of action. Of course, where governmental authority is concerned, there is no question of assent of mind at heart to any of the propositions concerned. I might completely disagree with propositions on the basis of which the government made its decision, including propositions about the degree of risk involved and still assent to its right to bind me to obedience to that decision.

But in the case of dealing with a doctor of medicine, I may be obligated to assent to his judgment about risk even though we both know that judgment is fallible. She can tell me that doing something or not doing something would be an unacceptable risk even though we both know that tomorrow a medical journal might publish a new study showing that was not an unacceptable risk. Still on the basis of what we do today, his conscience would require him, correctly, to tell me what I should believe about the risk, and my conscience could tell me, correctly, that I ought to believe what he tells me about the risk.

Likewise, tomorrow a theological journal might publish an article demonstrating that a prior judgment about some unacceptable risk is incorrect, though it might have been correct given the state of knowledge at the time. The fact that such theological enlightenment could come into existence tomorrow does not mean that the Church should not make today decisions it does make concerning what it is or is not an unacceptable risk for Catholics to assent to.

So one way or another the issue is whether the Church has the right to make those judgments about what is or is not an unacceptable risk. By "one way or another" I'm referring to whether assertions of the second kind of fall under the teaching or governing

authority of the Church, and if under the teaching authority but they definitive or are they just as nondefinitive as assertions of the first kind. Either way we want to know why the Church would have that kind of authority.

The Church would be the seat of that authority in much the same way that a medical doctor is the seat of authority about medical risks. But doctor's authority about risks about the unknown is a result of his expertise about the known. Likewise, since the Church is the expert about what has been definitively taught in about values generated by what has been definitively taught, the Church is the expert about the acceptability of the risk of something that might potentially undermine a value concerning what has been revealed about eternal salvation.

Importantly, in saying that the Church is the expert I mean as opposed to the theologian. The theologian is not even guaranteed infallibility in his understanding of the Church's definitive teachings, much more so then is he fallible about nondefinitive teachings. And much more so is he fallible about acceptable risks, since acceptable risks are judged from the perspective of definitive teachings about which he is not the final authority.

If I choose to oppose the Church's judgment about what is or is not an acceptable risk and therefore decide to go public with my dissent, I have to consider the risk involved in my doing that. For example, I might be mistaken about the values involved. I might be mistaken about what value the Church is trying to protect and what it is not trying to protect. For example, consider the current discipline about not allowing Protestants who believe in the real presence to receive. I may believe that ecumenism is so important a value that I should ignore that discipline.

But if I do, I may be doing more to harm Christian unity then to advance it. For the real reason the Church does not allow Protestants to receive may not at all be the Church's worry about the Eucharist's being abused. It may be the Church's worry about the ecumenical conflict rising from our different beliefs, not about the real presence, but about the need for ordination. If we allowed them to receive, the Church could not reciprocate and allow Catholics to receive at Protestant churches that do not have valid orders. If the Church did reciprocate, Catholics would be giving scandal by clearly giving the impression that we considered their Eucharists to be the same as ours. This is the kind of risk to we have to be willing to accept if we challenged the Church's judgment, and its authority to make judgments, about acceptable risks.

But notice that in none of this by giving any concrete examples from the history of the Church of nondefinitive teachings that have changed. Only by analyzing concrete examples and these issues ever be understood. And what if there are no concrete examples? Then we can question whether this is any real issue at all. There might still be an issue, however, during a period of time in which the Church was uncertain about whether a doctrine had been taught definitively. Even those who believe that the Church's position on birth control has been taught definitively might want to allow that at some time in the past there was reasonable doubt about whether it had been taught definitively.

And the nonexistence of past examples would still allow dissenters today to refuse assent to things that had not been definitively taught until they are definitively taught or until the "traditional" teaching about the obligation to assent to nondefinitive teachings has itself been taught definitively. The reason that I have put "traditional" is that this issue really didn't exist before Vatican 1's teaching about infallibility. So the "traditional" teaching on this distinction can't go back more than 125 years or so.

This analysis explains why theologians should not go beyond discussion of the issue among themselves even though the Church is fallible in this matter. The Church is making the judgment that any stronger dissent than professional theological discussion would be contrary to the common good of the Church because it would be an unacceptable risk.

Some popular explainers of magisterium give the impression that they believe that there are no changeable or fallible teachings of the magisterium. For example, one speaks of "solemn infallible definitions" as if there were two kinds of infallible doctrines, the solemn and the unsolemn. So Vatican 1's doctrine of infallibility would not imply that there are fallible teachings. Vatican 1's definition would only mean that there are solemn infallible doctrines in addition to infallible doctrines that are not solemn. Another way I have seen this implied is by reference to definitions that are "infallible in form," as if there were doctrines that are infallible but not in infallible form.

I do not intend to enter into a dispute about whether there are actually any changeable, reformable, or fallible teachings of the magisterium. For the sake of argument, I will here assume that there are such. My purpose is to address those who believe that there are such and to demonstrate to them that we can be obligated to submit to those teachings even though they are fallible.

In reading several sources, Vatican II on the Church, the catechism, the code of canon law, I find a confusing variety of adjectives used to describe teachings that are not part of the extraordinary magisterium. There is the "ordinary" magisterium. The "universal" magisterium. Or perhaps it's the "ordinary and universal magisterium." The "authentic" magisterium. The "definitive" magisterium. To say the least, it is not always clear whether any of these are referring to the same thing or not.

"Ordinary" sometimes seems to refer to infallible teachings about faith and morals to which the assent of faith is required. But some place in the catechism, it states that the ordinary magisterium requires "religious assent" as opposed to the assent of faith. See paragraph 892. But perhaps this paragraph is merely saying that there are two kinds of teachings of the "ordinary" magisterium, definitive and nondefinitive. But there are other places where "ordinary" seems to refer only to infallible teachings while "authentic" refers to both fallible and infallible. But 892 seems the contrast the ordinary teaching, which it describes as fallible, to the extraordinary teaching described in 891, which it describes as infallible.

892 gives a footnote to the Vatican Council's document on the Church when it, 892, uses the phrase "religious assent" as opposed to divine faith. But the paragraph and the council's document to which it refers, paragraph 25, seems to use "religious assent" in way that covers both definitive and nondefinitive teachings.

For example, it says "in matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to with the religious assent." But if they are speaking in the name of Christ, must they not be infallible? But then it goes on to say "this religious submission of mind it will must be shown in a "special way" to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking ex cathedra, and so the description they give of religious submission seems to imply that they are talking about noninfallible teachings.

The document goes on to say that bishops are infallible when "authentically teaching matters of faith and morals they are in agreement on one position as definitively to be held." In this sentence the adjectives "authentic" and "definitive" are associated. The next sentence, however, uses the adjective "universal" and associates it with "the submission of faith." Does that mean that the teachings referred to in the previous sentence cannot require the submission of faith?

The entirety of the following paragraph refers to infallible teachings. It introduces the adjective "irreformable." It uses the adjectives "definitive" in connection with some of the pope's teachings. And it uses of the phrase "assent of the Church" with reference to these infallible teachings, whether of the pope or the bishops. It also uses the phrase "supreme magisterium" for both of these infallible teachings to which "assent" is due.

In the catechism, paragraph 2034, the phrase "endowed with the authority of Christ" is associated with "the ordinary and universal magisterium of the pope and the bishops." (Emphasis in original.) but the next paragraph, 2035, introduces the concept of infallibility as if in contradistinction to what was said in the preceding paragraph, and therefore as if in contradistinction to the ordinary magisterium.

Paragraph 891 associates the body of bishops with infallibility when together with the pope they exercise the "supreme magisterium." The supreme magisterium is then associated with "the obedience of faith". The next paragraph, 892, specifically refers to teachings made "without arriving at it infallible definition and without pronouncing into "definitive manner." And associates it with the "ordinary" magisterium to which no reference was made in the preceding paragraph that talked about the obedience of faith. Then it specifically says that "this ordinary teaching" requires religious assent which is specifically opposed to be "assent of faith," although it is an extension of it.

In paragraph 750 of the code of canon law, however, refers to teachings "proposed as divinely revealed" by the "ordinary and universal magisterium" as requiring belief "by defining and Catholic faith," where "faith" will be distinguished from "religious assent" in paragraph 752. In that paragraph, "religious assent" is associated with the "authentic magisterium," with no reference to ordinary or universal, and to teachings they do not intend to proclaim by "definitive" act.

There are other questions I am not addressing here. For example, I do not intend to give an account of what "religious submission" as opposed to divine faith is. Likewise, I do not intend to explain how one is to tell whether the exercise of the magisterium is "authentic" in the nondefinitive sense. Nor how one is to tell when the intention is to speak "definitively."

On the practical level however, I wish to fallibly and nondefinitively state that the question has been settled definitively by Romans chapter 14.

Another reason not to go public about a theologian's disagreement in conscience is that, notoriously, there have been true positions backed by inadequate arguments.

Unacceptable risk is an entirely valid moral argument. Psychologically, it may seem second-best, but so are non-definitive teachings second-best, or at least the state that they are in his second best.

There are cases where we can know that the teaching has some connection with revealed truth even though the exact connection may not have been sufficiently articulated.

Theologians have a responsibility of looking for that articulation.

Some factors that affect the validity of unacceptable risk arguments: the importance of the value that is at risk. Here it is the value that we can least afford to take any risk with.

Another factor: the degree of risk.

One thing we should all be able to agree on before going any further. On the hypothesis that there are cases in which unacceptable risk arguments must be made, or better, unacceptable risk decisions must be made, we should all agree as to who must make those decisions, the hierarchy. So we should all agree that in the case where an unacceptable risk decision must be made, we know in advance that we will owe religious obedience of intellect and will to whatever decision the hierarchy makes.

August 16, 2002

What follows are thoughts provoked by reading Francis Sullivan's "creative Fidelity". As a member of the body of Christ, I have a sacred and solemn right to know whether a doctrine has been taught definitively by the universal ordinary magisterium. The preceding sentence certainly follows from revelation very closely and may even be included in revelation, since part of revelation, an important part, is a Christian's knowledge of what the hierarchy is able to obligate him to.

Since Christians have a sacred right, the hierarchy has the solemn obligation to inform us what doctrines have been infallibly taught by the universal ordinary magisterium. So the question becomes how does the hierarchy communicate to me that a doctrine has been infallibly taught by the universal ordinary magisterium? Or, how do I tell that a doctrine has been so taught? The first conclusion is that way of doing so must exist or must be able to be brought into existence. The further conclusion that such a and such is the way of doing so

can be determined to be true on the basis of certain conditions.

For example, the method must be clear and indisputable to reasonable people. I submit that for all practical purposes there is only one method that will do: if the pope declares that something has been definitively taught by the universal ordinary magisterium, I must have the right to assume that his declaration is infallibly true. Even if there is no specific tradition on the truth of the preceding statement, that statement follows necessarily from other statements that are part of the tradition, as I said earlier.

The argument in favor of this position is simply that no other method will do. It is simply impractical to expect all the bishops in the world to get together whenever such a declaration is needed. It is also impractical to expect a dogma defined by the pope's own authority every time we need to know whether a doctrine is infallible. What can be done is for the pope poll all of the bishops electronically. Then he can announce to the church that all the bishops and they are in agreement. Since that is the only practical way to do it, it follows that it must be the way it should be done.

Another question to ask, as an argument in favor of this position, is what more I need in order to know that a doctrine is infallible than to have the pope certify that all the bishops and he teach this doctrine definitively. In answer to that question some theologians might say that I can rely on their judgment that a doctrine of the ordinary magisterium has been taught infallibly. In reply that, I point out that we are now dealing with a very educated laity. They are so well educated, in fact, that they know they cannot rely solely on theologians for this judgment. They know that theologians have too often been heterodox for an intelligent layperson to trust them.

But to make this method of settling questions unequivocally clear we would need an ex cathedra statements to the effect that when the pope says that the bishops have been unanimous about a doctrine and that doctrine is infallibly taught.

Another question at least worth discussing is the issue raised by Grisez whether once a doctrine has been taught universally and constantly it cannot later be changed because it has already been taught infallibly. Sullivan argues against this. He cites polygenesis as an example of a forbidden doctrine that is now allowed. But if disagreement among theologians over a doctrine that was formerly universally taught is sufficient to show that the doctrine is not definitive, then theologians would have it in their power to pronounce that a doctrine is

not infallible just by creating controversy about it. In other words, there disagreement would be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

On the other hand, Sullivan can cite cases, as he does in the chapter on Vatican II, where something that was formerly universally taught is no longer taught.

August 9th, 2003, big

Sullivan is right. The submission that is required for nondefinitive teachings must not be assent in the sense of a yes or no judgment. It must be an attitude of submissiveness because it has degrees. Yes or no judgments do not have degrees. The reason we know that it has degrees is that the documents of the office of the doctrine of the faith says that various documents of the magisterium have varying degrees of authority. If the degree of authority varies, then the degree of submissiveness due to them must vary.

Faith 7-18-91

What if God wants to communicate something above reason? He will provide rational evidence that someone's testimony about God is worthy of belief. Included in that rational evidence will be the consistency of revealed truths with reason. But there will *necessarily* be some apparent contradictions to reason. Why? Because even within the confines of reason, human language generates apparent contradictions when talking about God, even though the propositions it asserts are necessarily true. Here paradoxes are generated by concepts even though our knowledge of the concepts is sufficient to reveal that the assertions are necessarily true. What about a connection like that between relatedness and God's essence. There the connection is necessary but understanding of the concepts is not sufficient to reveal it. A fortiori, these assertions can appear contradictory, if even known necessary connections can appear contradictory. For in the former case, there is an additional factor in the concepts that blocks us from seeing their identity. If concepts whose identity is seen can appear repugnant, a fortiori concepts with something that blocks us from seeing their identity can appear repugnant.

xxxMiracles, 6-26-93

(1) Some effect occurs that cannot be produced by the natures of any of the things we know. (2) It is a greater effect, that is, the unknown nature can do what known natures do and more. What the unknown nature does in more by some understandable measure, e.g., it can do what the known nature does and more, e.g., can do it incredibly faster, by the

standard of the speeds of known natures. (Somehow what is done, and hence the cause of what is done, is beyond the laws to which all the natures we know are subject. E.g., everything obeys gravity, is subject to gravity. To be able to walk on water is not just to do something different; it is to do something greater. (Why not say lesser? E.g., gee its too bad that you are not subject to gravity the way we are? Because Christ can do everything we who are subject to gravity can do, but at will can do more. (4) The natures we know are subject to it and hence subordinate to it. It can control the natures we know, i.e., it does things to and with the natures we know, but things beyond what any other natures we know can do, as already explained.

But how do we know this supernature is benign? Either we already know the existene of God or we do not. If we do, miracles are only a sign of his special presence in, say, Jesus. If we do not, miracles may be a sign of the existence of a maker of things that we know (since they are subject to it), and if there is a maker of things, He is good, as metaphysical intuition knows and metaphysical argument can grasp.

Miracles, 3-22-93

In his lecture on ethics, Wittgenstein says when examined scientifically, the supposedly miraculous event loses its miraculous character and simply becomes a fact we have not yet explained scientifically, because we have hitherto failed to group the fact with others in a scientific system. But there are many facts not yet grouped with others in a scientific system that we do not consider miraculous. What is the difference? One differences is that unexplained scientific facts are often really laws, whereas miracles are singular events. On the other hand, each of the events adding up to a law is not considered miraculous individually. For example, each run of the Michleson-Morley experiment produces an anomaly; so we have a universal pattern that does not fit in with other natural laws. But neither does each individual run fit in with natural laws, but we do not consider those results, even individually, to be miraculous.

This negative result, while not showing what it is that characterizes the miraculous, at least shows that there is something that characterizes the miraculous that is other than merely being a fact that does not fit in with other scientific laws.

Faith, and P&CG, 2-19-93, BIG

Though reason cannot cope with evil, there is nothing wrong with reason. Reason is meant to lead us to something greater than reason, just as sense knowledge leads to a higher kind of knowledge, and Egyptian surveying led to

modern mathematics. Perhaps Godel shows this, or perhaps Godel as extended by Putnam in the last chapter of Representation and Reality shows this. There, P says that reason necessarily exceeds its own limits.

Faith, 1-24-93

How faith works: Before the practico-practical judgment (2) that it is good for me to believe that the apostles speak for God, there is the speculative judgment (1), based on miracles and other things, that it is unreasonable to believe that these men are not acting on behalf of God, or that God is not working through them, or some other such proposition. The important thing is that proposition (1) is not a matter of free choice. We cannot not know that it is unreasonable to believe the opposite of it. Only after it, whatever it might be, does the question of a practico-practical judgment based on it come up. I can know the truth of the speculatively practical judgment corresponding to (2), just as the devil does not lack speculatively practical knowledge of the truth. What is free is just the practically practical knowledge.

xxxTheology, anti-catholocism, July 30, 1993

God is serious about not consulting us. He did not consult us about using a screwed up institution sometimes run by evil men as his instrument of salvation.

XxxHow Faith Works

3-29-31

A woman justifies the abortion of a child conceived out of wedlock: "otherwise, two lives would be ruined." She ignores the scores of millions of bastards and their mothers living meaningful lives, and she does it in apparent sincerity and innocence. She is self-deceived not just about herself and her inner states and dispositions. She is self-deceived about publically observable facts so obvious that it takes little effort to confirm them. Julian Simon sights facts almost as obvious about increases in population resulting in increases in the standard of living. These facts are available to all, but in apparent sincerity, august experts go on denying them. Again, they are self-deceived about the most objectively determinable matters.

Our ability to admit facts into our set of beliefs depends on our conative dispostions, our desires, what we want. Yes, at the beginning of consciousness, awareness of facts precedes desire. But at some point in the development of consciousness, our ability to recognize certain facts depends,

to a greater or lesser extent, on our wills, on the relationship of those facts to what we will, to our commitments.

So to with recognizing facts like the resurrection and miracles, even though there is evidence to support them.

How Faith Works, 4-3-91

Follow up to 4-21-88:

The relativist is impressed with how difficult it is for us to know the truth, how limited is the truth once know, etc. Those facts are facts worth being impressed by. But it is also worth being impressed by the *impossibility* of concluding from such facts that we cannot know truth. The *necessity* of the falsehood of that conclusion is also something exciting, something stunning. A Cambridge mathematician was overwhelmed that 319 was a prime number whether we liked it or not. Likewise, whatever our subjective disposition, it necessarily is either true or false that the Statue of Liberty either does or does not have at least one arm raised above her head.

The relativist is so impressed by certain facts that he doesn't want to give up his relativism in the face of other facts. He places an IMPORTANCE on his facts. In other words, he makes a RELIGIOUS commitment to them. And there is nothing wrong with that. We cannot not make religious commitments. So the question is, how do we make good ones and avoid bad ones. The issue is NOT whether or not the commitment goes "beyond" reason. The issue isn't whether it's beyond reason, but simply that it's OTHER than reason. That is, the religious aspect of it is a commitment of WILL, not reason, a volitional commitment to the importance of those facts. So in asking what is a good religious commitment, we are asking what volitional commitments are REASONABLE, are consistent with reason, not contrary to reason, and more than that are indicated and supported by reason.

Given a typical secular university education, for instance, Catholicism is a priori off the list as a potentially reasonable religious commitment. Given a once typical Catholic university education, on the other hand, Catholicism is the reasonable religious commitment.

In neither case is it a matter of absolute proof any more than we have absolute proof that the earth is round. It is a question of what beliefs, which if true would require a religious volitional commitment to their importance, are more reasonable on the evidence.

The fact is that disordered desires, e.g., greed, can blind us to the relation of a factual situation to our true end or ends (think of John Houston movies about greed). That relation is itself a fact, but the disordered desire prevents us from perceiving our true end and hence the relation of the

facts to our true end. So disordered desires can blind us to what we need to know to make reasonable judgments concerning religious commitments, ie., judgments about matters which, if true, would require a volitional commitment to their importance.

(Of course, disordered desire, if culpable, must be the result of freely ignoring some other piece of knowledge that we have.)

On the other hand, the person with ordered desires can have *knowledge* that a particular set of facts has a certain relation to his true ends and, thus, knowledge that the other person's judgment about how to pursue his ends is incorrect. "Knowledge" here means knowledge that a particular belief is the only reasonable one in the situation. For his desire results from not ignoring other things he knows.

The most optimistic liberal knows there is *something* WRONG. E.G., "Why can't our leaders see that war doesn't solve anything, when that fact is so obvious?" Something has to be wrong somewhere. Not ignoring the evidence for Jesus requires us to admit that we are part of the something wrong at our deepest level. Not our deepest ontological level; we are something good there, but at our deepest free volitional level, the deepest level of the exercise of our sovereignty over our lives, our personal autonomy, our "Lordship" over our lives, at that level where we exercise mastery, exercise our status as universes unto ourselves, our status as gods. In other words, at that level which is most sacred to ourselves because it alone is the level that is ours, that we do not receive from outside causality. There is something wrong in the most ultimate sense in which there could be something wrong, since beyond that we are necessarily good. There is something wrong in the only sense in which there could be something wrong, since beyond that we are ontologically good.

Not wanting to admit that, we reject the evidence for Jesus. Even if we have disordered desires, we must be able to see the evidence. Otherwise, rejection of Jesus would not be a sin, and otherwise Jesus could not call sinners to Himself by showing them the evidence that makes faith reasonable. But at that point we can freely ignore the evidence in our decisions, not make it the rule that forms our decision.

So whatever the answer to the question, what is the REASONABLE religious commitment, we can freely ignore the evidence for it because the religious aspect comes in the volitional commitment which is free and, hence, need not be ruled by that evidence.

Josh McDowell, "new evidence that demands a verdict". Lee Strobel, "the case for Christ." (This as a star after it) Dr. Gary Habermas, "the historical Jesus's."

Faith and reason, Mar 1, 1999 BIG

There must be something lacking in the way(s) we state the question of faith and reason. E.g., to say faith is assent to something because God has revealed it leaves open the question of how we are aware that God has revealed it, or why we assent to the proposition that God has revealed it. Do we assent to that proposition by reason or by faith? Isn't how we assent to that proposition the question?

Rationalists like to talk about keeping their minds open, as if that meant never thinking that anything had been settled. But in a much more fundamental sense, the issue of an open versus a closed mind is this: Is reason, as we evaluate it, open to the possibility of God's using it to communicate to us something that reason on its own could not learn? If we are not open to that possibility, do we not have a closed mind? Or at least, is not our view of reason a closed view?

By its very nature, reason is an openness to that which "transcends" reason in the sense that reason did not create its objects and cannot achieve its own goals unless it submits to that which it does not create and conforms to that over which it has no control.

In a crucial sense, we *close* reason if we say that what reason learns about that which transcends it cannot give reason justification for assenting to something which reason could not know on its own, when what reason knows about a person asking for this assent gives justification for thinking that that person can know that for which he asks our assent.

Faith is never just assent to a proposition but is always a case of a person asking us to put our faith in him, to trust him, on the basis of the credentials he presents to reason for that purpose. Or, the proposition(s) in question amount to the proposition "This person is worthy of my trust in these matters."

If we say that God cannot use reason as the instrument for showing us that a person is worthy of trust in matters beyond reason, have we not closed reason's transcendence a priori and in a way that itself lacks rational justification. And if so, are we not on a slippery slope to where what started as a putative glorification of reason has come today, namely, to the view that reason cannot know any truth about what things are?

So if we start with saying that all there is is what reason tells us, can we avoid arriving at the conclusion that there is nothing for reason to tell us, because we have unconsciously closed reason off from some of the things that transcend it, a necessarily arbitrary move and so one that prevents us from appealing to anything that would not be arbitrary.

We can be obligated to assent to propositions like "This person deserves my trust in these matters," "I should put my trust in this person in these matters." And that matters concerned can even be, and often are, life and death matters. For example, a parent can be obligated to trust a doctor about a child's health, even if the parent does not like what the doctor says and would not want to believe it otherwise.

The following premises of conditional syllogisms are not only rational, they are necessarily true and knowably necessarily true by reason. If someone (A) rises from the dead gloriously, can walk through walls etc. (has a teaching that conforms with the best of what reason teaches about morality, e.g., excludes force as a way of dealing with enemies of the religion, etc.), that person is worthy of my trust in these matters. What more could I ask of God to show me that a person was worthy of trust in these matters?

And if another person (B) claims to have witnessed (A), that person is worthy of my trust in these matters if that person can work miracles including raising people from the dead and if that person's teaching conforms to the best of what reason teaches about . . . , and if that person could not have thought up some of these things himself, and if the teaching does not say that eternal life depends on pulling ourselves up by our own boot straps, as if we were not totally dependent on God, but says that eternal judgment depends on our allowing God to do what he wants in us.

what reason learns about that which transcends it can give reason justification for assenting to something which reason could not know on its own, when what reason knows about a person asking for this assent gives justification for thinking that that person can know that for which he asks our assent.

Faith is never just assent to a proposition but is always a case of a person asking us to put our faith in him, to trust him, on the basis of the credentials he presents to reason for that purpose. Or, the proposition(s) in question amount to the proposition "This person is worthy of my trust in these matters."

Reason is not free. When it is aware of sufficient evidence, it cannot keep itself from assenting to that which is evidenced. But God has made it so that salvation requires an assent that is freely made. How can he do this? Only

if the rational knowledge we possess prior to the free assent is such that we know that we should give this free assent, that it would be morally evil not to give that free assent. How can we know this?

It is impossible to answer this question unless we know precisely the proposition(s) to which we are freely assenting. For example, are we freely assenting to "My good is to believe Jesus is the Son of God" because we nonfreely know that we are justified in believing "Jesus should be trusted in these matters"? Or are we freely assenting to "My good is to believe that Jesus is to be trusted in these matters" because we nonfreely know that we are justified in believing something else, something like "I should place my trust in someone who performs miracles?"

We can't hope to possibly understand the reasonableness of faith unless we sort these matters out in precise detail. At a minimum there are three levels that must be distinguished from and related to one another. The first level is the free ultimate practical judgment that my good is to assent to p. The second level is the practical judgment of conscience that I should assent to p. And within this second level there is the universal nonfree judgment, e.g., "I should put faith in what is said by someone who works miracles," and the particular nonfree judgment, .e.g., "Jesus works miracles," leading to the particular nonfree conclusion, "I should put faith in what Jesus says," that precedes the ultimate free practical judgment.

The third level, finally, is the nonfree assent to the speculatively known truths the knowledge of which is the basis for our knowledge of the nonfree universal practical judgment that I should put faith in what is said by someone who works miracles. (See "Natural Obligation" for an explanation of the last point.)

If the choice to refuse to believe p is contrary to right desire, it is contrary to some moral knowledge like "I should believe things of kind K," because not believing things of that kind would be to act as if some speculative knowledge like "Things said by miracle workers express the mind of God."

The question is what kind of moral and speculative propositions does someone act contrary to if he refuses assent to particular speculative proposition like (1) "The alleged miraculous event did not occur" or like (2) "The event that occurred did not manifest divine power." Should we say that they really know the truth of these propositions but that their denials are insincere, that is are lies? If so, his choice to assert that (1) or (2) are true is contrary to right desire automatically.

That is, to justify his assent to "Jesus is not to be believed," he would have to deny that something he knows to be true is not true. Otherwise, he would be admitting that his assent to that proposition was contrary to

right desire.

But what about the person who insincerely assents to that proposition but is never asked to justify his assent? Then the knowledge he has and has not yet denied having is the same knowledge that the person who assents of "Jesus is to be believed" has. What is that speculative knowledge that makes it contrary to right desire not to believe Jesus?

We need to abstract from the case of the person who has been inculpably deluded by philosophical sophism's about miracles. Before we learn philosophy, the reasonable man is clearly justified in believing that the external world and other minds exist. What must the reasonable man who has not been corrupted by philosophical sophisms believe about someone who works miracles? What does he really know in his heart, whether he admits it or not?

(There is of course the case of the people who hear of miracles and go on their way without deciding for or against Jesus, because the Lord has not called on them to make that choice yet. Maybe we should inquire how the Lord goes about creating the situation of their having to decide on way or the other at that time. That may be important.)

But one helpful way of answering that question would be to ask what kind of belief about miracles is the philosophically confused man left with after we disabuse him of the sophisms?

Another helpful approach might be this. What would happen if Jesus chose to use creative miracles such as immediately replacing missing limbs. And what if he did this all the time? Perhaps the evidence would be so overwhelming that we would not be free not to assent to "Jesus is to be believed." And so that kind of merit would be eliminated.

A miracle is either done by God directly or by some created secondary cause to whom God gives that power. But the created secondary cause would have to be a created person, a free cause. If there is such a created secondary cause, we must certainly assume that his ability to know truths about God exceeds our own. So the question of whether to believe him or not would come down to whether he is philosophical malevolent or not. If he is not malevolent, it is unreasonable not to believe him, that is, unreasonable to not believe that he is in a better position to know truths about God than we are.

So maybe "Does this person have good will toward me" is the issue. But is it the issue in the sense of being something we have speculative knowledge of before assenting to what he says, or is it the issue in the sense of something that righteousness would require us to freely assent to, on the basis of some other nonfree speculative knowledge?

Is my good to believe that "This person wants my good?" This person may oppose "my good" in the sense of opposing the ultimate practical judgments by

which I have made unrighteousness that which I am in fact seeking. So those practical judgments may motivate me to freely deny that "This person wants my good," even though I have sufficient evidence to nonfreely assent to the propositions "Persons of type X want my good" "Jesus is a person of type X."

I should believe this person when He talks about God (have an attitude of trust in this person; give this person my faith, my trust; this person is due my trust; I owe this person my trust). But what if I don't want to know the truth about God?

E.g., what if I don't want to know the truth about what God does or does not want me to do?

The modern bargain was: give up faith, put all trust in reason, and reason will give you all truth. Now, 300 years later, modern reason tells us "Well, there really wasn't any truth to find." But that wasn't the bargain. It's a bait and switch instead of a bargain. Could it be that faith is necessary to keep reason straight and/or to defend reason's ability to know truth? Well, isn't the RC church the only place where reason's ability to know truth is defended?

Prior to revelation, relying on reason alone implied no privation affecting the ability of reason to function. But once revelation has taken place, rejecting it wounds reason's ability to know truth. Rejection is a privation. Mere absence of revelation is not.

Title: Faith Is Not Blind; Faith Is Not a Blind Leap

Faith, revelation, belief, practical judgment, Simon, agnosticism, Oct 9, 1997

In the Rationality of Catholicism, Simon says that "Reason can show that believing is a sound, honest, virtuous action, that it is, for sure, the action expected of a man determined to seek the right and avoid the wrong." That is, reason can show that a proposition ought to be believed, where "ought" has a moral sense. Reason can show that I ought to perform the action which is accepting the testimony of this witness.

This gives a way of stating the agnostic's position. He thinks reason shows that it is morally evil, morally wrong, to accept certain kinds of testimony. He thinks we are *supposed* to withhold judgment on things without complete evidence.

So the question is what is the prudentially good thing to do? To withhold judgment or not to withhold? But the least we can say is that just the fact that the evidence is incomplete is insufficient to justify

withholding.

xxx empiricism versus religious language, January 20 9, 79

The empiricist evaluates language as having the goal of organizing and predicting sensible experience, that is, experience exhibiting sensible qualities. The realist sees experienced sensible qualities as means to the goal of knowing that which exists and language is evaluated as having that goal. What is expressed in language is what exists.

Some theologians see Revelation only at the level of religious experience, not in that which is expressed by the language of Scripture. The religious value of the language of Scripture is entirely in a particular way of articulating experience of God. That which is said is culture bound; the experience it articulates is the important thing and is that which is the goal of religious language by which religious language is to be measured.

This is acquiescing to the empiricist's fallacy, which is a version of the epistemological fallacy. Language is not measured as an articulation of experience, but by whether it is an articulation which is adequate to that which is experienced, the extra objective object of experience. The theologian wants to concede the point to the empiricist in order to show him that the theologian's language does conceptualize some experience. But he concedes a bad point.

The goal by which truth or falsity is measured is identity with that which is experience; this is extra objective and, therefore, extra experiential. The qualities experienced are means by which the extra experiential is reached; experience is a vehicle to that which is other than experience. To believe in revelation, you must believe in revealed *truth*, linguistic truth, not just experience. For religious language conceptualizes *that which is experienced*, and if religious language is not adequate to that, it is false even for its own time and culture. And if false, it is not revealed or inspired as such.

You can't justify it as one culture's way of articulating experience; for experience is not that which it articulates. It articulates the object of experience.

xxx original sin, March 29, 87

A very, very tentative reinterpretation of the meaning of Genesis. The Garden of Eden story expresses a God's purposes for man. Purpose is our goals to be obtained in the future. So perhaps the intention of the Garden of Eden story was not to express what previously existed but what was to exist later, in the future, that is, it expresses obtainable goals and says those goals were no longer obtainable because of sin what goals? The Isle of Man rather than Satan being the ruler of the world. The goal of life without death (perhaps in the afterlife, life in heaven as opposed to hell).

xxx "causal realism" index, August 11, 86

For "logical inclusion" add a reference to this section that begins on page 190.

xxx faith and reason, miracles, October 6, 85

The universality of laws is an effect of beliefs about necessary causal connections. The resurrection does not deny those causes, it provides evidence for the existence of different causes, improbable causes. So the question is, when, how, and why do we make the practical judgment that is morally correct to, and would be morally wrong not to, believe in the inductively improbable cause's occurrence.

Check out the Ignatius Smith Memorial volume for the article on miracles.

One reason that it is important for some people to deny miracles. When all is said and done, the argument from miracles does not support religion in general. It only supports one religion, Christianity. And that religion offers us a God who part takes of human suffering, thereby undercutting the argument against God from the existence of evil. It doesn't undercut it by

exposing a specific flaw in its logic but by making us realize there must be a flaw somewhere, just as we realize there is a flaw in arguments against the external world, other minds, the validity of induction, etc. even if we cannot point out the flaw.

November 4, 85

Miracles make it unreasonable to believe that an effect was produced by secondary causes, that is, I created causes. The cause must therefore be the creative cause. The rational knowledge virtually implied in the grace to have faith in the resurrection is that restoring life requires restoring the substantial form, which only the creator can do.

Not everybody understands that rational knowledge. But in fact, it is a piece of rational knowledge. So it does make it unreasonable to believe that a created cause explains the resurrection. And that is sufficient for there to be virtually included in the grace of faith a piece of rational knowledge that on the rational level alone would justify belief that the resurrection is caused by God.

January 23, 86

The title of Nagel's book "sovereign reason." The implication is that one should only rely on reason as opposed to making an act of faith in anything beyond reason. But that assertion is itself beyond reason, that is, that assertion is not warranted by reason. And that illustrates the human condition. We must believe in something beyond the evidence of reason.

But Christian faith means more than using reason to find the most reasonable thing to believe in. Christianity is not just the most reasonable thing to believe in. There must be a moral component to the decision to believe or not believe in Christianity, if the failure to believe can be held morally against us.

The modern skeptic does not believe that God is smart enough to find a way to use reason to lead

us beyond reason, for example, the resurrection.

xxx theology, July 1, 82

The issue is not whether Scripture reflects a culturally conditioned attempt to express religious experience. The issue is whether the result of that attempt constitute revealed truths, whether the result of that attempt consists of revealed truths.

xxx faith and reason, miracles, June 3, 89

Faith is based on the authority of God. But what evidence is it that God is speaking? Miracles. The resurrection, etc., reveals, not a different universal law but the presence of a power or powers that can give life back to a dead body, that is, can accomplish things that no known powers can accomplish. So the nature of the thing with the power to produce the resurrection is different from the other natures we know about.

Levitation? Miracles violate universal laws of nature because they contradict the way the powers of nature act.