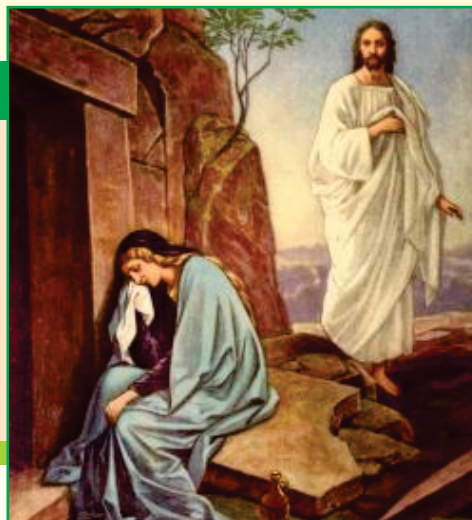


CHAPTER 11

Faith and Reason



January 16th 2009, LaGuardia airport in New York, Airbus A 320 of American Airways started its flight for North Carolina with 155 passengers. When the plane reached the height of only 3200 feet, pilot Chelsea Ulan Bergen noticed one thing. A flock of straying birds was flying in front of the plane. He did not get any instruction from the control room which ought to give information about the direction of birds and winds. The entities of science were still and in no use. Calculations went wrong. The flocks of birds hit plane and both the engines failed to move. Tall buildings and human dwellings are below. Inside the plane there were 155 human beings including babies. The pilot has forty years of long experience in this field. But he could only close his eyes in utter helplessness with the motionless engines between Heaven and Earth. Science and reason are only in script. In these moments of unanswered anxiety, in his innermost being, he heard a voice. Here are his own words: "What God inspired me, I did." With the courage and strength he obtained in silent prayer, he instructed the passengers: "Be careful all of you; we are going to let the plane down urgently". Passing through the New Jersey Manhattan Shores, he let the plane move to the frozen Hudson River. There was neither any powerful explosion nor drowning. Plane was floating on water like a boat. All the passengers came out safely.

This is a very good example of God's protection and providence. We cannot interpret this event with reason; because what happened in this event is beyond reason. But faith and reason (religion and science) are two realities of human life.

Mutually Complementary

When faith and reason (Religion and Science) mutually support and complement, there

will be peace and progress in the world. In 1951, Pope Pious the XIIth said to the members of 'Pontifical Academy of Science': "as if God stands behind every door which science opens hopefully, the more the genuine science progresses, the more it manifests God." Material science can understand more about creatures through observation and experiments and thus lead man to the creator through it. Linnaeus the Nature Scientist once said: "My soul behold God's image in creatures and I am dumbfounded."

Scientists like Galileo (1564-1642), Kepler (1571-1630), Isaac Newton (1642-1727), Gregor Mendel (1822-1884), Louis Pasteur (1822-1845), Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Gaillard D' Sheridan (1887-1955) proclaimed God's glory and praised God through their inventions. They prayed continuously for the success of their scientific investigations. Once Albert Einstein wrote: "I cannot imagine of a real scientist who did not have profound faith. Science without religion is defective; religion without science is blind". Bacon says thus: "A little science keeps man away from God. Complex and wide science leads man to God."

False Thought of Rationalists

The great scientists have concluded that faith and reason or religion and science are mutually dependent and complimentary. But recently humanity faces two problems.

1. There is nothing immaterial and supernatural. The argument is that there is only this material universe exists.
2. There is another thought that faith is simply personal. Individualistic feelings, experiences and reason have no place in it. People who spread this idea are those who like to be addressed as radicals among the faithful.

Taking into account these modern false trends, Pope John Paul II wrote: "Faith and reason are like the two wings for the human mind to fly towards the meditation of truth. God has placed in man a desire to know oneself- to know the truth. Knowing and loving God, man should reach the perfection of truth about himself" (Fides et Ratio).

Ways to Know the Truth

It is natural for man to seek the truth. It is an inborn method. It is a spiritual necessity. But the means to know the truth are sensory experiences, reasoning, faith and intuition. Materialists like the first two means. They argue that the last two means are not rational. An average believer considers only the last two as truthful.

However, all the four are doctrinal means to know the truth. Philosophers of the East and

the West are of the same opinion about this. In the midst of differences of language, culture and race, the question man asks to seek the truth is the same:

1) Who am I?, 2) How is the beginning and the end of the universe?, 3) Why is there evil in this world?, 4) What is the meaning of life?, 5) What happens after death?

These questions are philosophical. They seek truth beyond material world. Hence, in a mixed field of faith and reason alone, we can find out the answers. If we avoid one, the answer will be incomplete.

Meaning of 'Believing'

For Christians faith is a gift. It is for a charisma that enables man to see the invisible God and accept Him and to surrender himself totally to God. Thirst for God is imprinted in human heart because man is created by God and for God. God never ceases from attracting man to Him. Man will get the truth and bliss, which he constantly seeks, only from God. Unless man accepts this reality and surrenders himself to the creator, he cannot lead a complete life in truth.

Throughout history, until today, man has given expression to his search for God through religious beliefs, ceremonies and practices, prayers, sacrifices, expressions of worship, meditation etc. Such forms of religious expression are universal. Man should try to approach God and maintain relationship with Him through these. But the relationship between God and man based on faith can be forgotten, ignored or even rejected externally. (This is an important reason for this trend). Important reasons for this are the evils in this world, religious ignorance and lack of interest, the anxieties of this world, riches, misunderstanding due to the scandal given by the faithful, antireligious thoughts and sometimes man's tendency to hide himself from God out of fear and to run away from his vocation (GS.19-21).

Still, God never rests from calling each man to seek Him. In this search for God, total effort of intellect and truthfulness of mind are necessary. This is termed as reason. This is not a rational argument of the atheists.

The Relevance of Reason

Reason is a gift of God. It is an intellectual process analyzing and discerning the relation between fact and reason behind it. Objectivity and precision are its hallmarks. It helps to read faith, which is beyond the senses in human circumstances. But rationalism is different.

Rationalists are people who interpret that anything which cannot be preceded by reason is not reality and the idea or imagination about God cannot be proved by reason and hence it is not a

reality. Their argument is that anything that is not experienced by senses is not reality. They think that man's ignorance and weakness are the source of faith in God. They think that God is an imagination of man; i.e. man coined a reason to explain the manifestations of the universe for which he could not find a real reason and God is that reason for them. Rationalists say that the unsolved sorrows and miseries of this life and the anxieties they produce helps to develop and maintain this imagination.

Rationalists hold high or highlight the material achievements of science. Man conquered space. They claim that through modern genetic experiments we can conquer death. But real scientists who have profound scientific knowledge points out that the little knowledge of rationalists is dangerous. Important among them are five means.

Rational Faith

The presence of God is reflected in all creation. The Psalmist proclaims that the creation is filled with divine light and glory. Man's intellectual and mental capacities are the created forms of God's power. By this very fact, these capacities can lead him to God. Ist Vatican Council teaches that human intelligence can understand the existence of God. "Man's natural intelligence can undoubtedly know the only true God, our creator and Lord with the help of creatures". Man the seeker of truth, created in the image and likeness of God and called to know and love Him uses his intelligence and finds out certain ways to know God.

Five Means

St. Thomas Aquinas points out five arguments which help us to be convinced of the existence of God.

1. The universe we see is moving. There must be a Lord who moves the universe. The Lord that moves the universe is God.
2. No object is the cause of its origin. There must be a cause different from it for each object. There must be a cause for the origin of this big world. And he is God.
3. Experience teaches us that all things are provisional and have a beginning and end. There should be an eternal cause for the beginning of temporary things. God, who has no beginning and end, is that eternal essence.
4. We see virtues like truth, goodness and beauty in various measures in different created objects. It is not reasonable to attribute the origin of these different virtues to the creatures. There must be an infinite goodness who gave share of His goodness in

different measures. That total goodness is called God.

5. We see the cosmos and all the creatures therein moving towards a goal like the arrow that darts towards its goal. Just as there is a shooter behind the moving arrow that flies towards the goal, there is one who controls the proper systematic movement of the universe. That person or controller is God.

There is an arena of faith in man above the zones of philosophy and materialism. Even in life, we act on the basis of faith. Those who travel in vehicles believe that the drivers will take them to their destination safely. Modern science itself has proved that there is a 'God-spot' in every man. Faith above reason is ultimately the basis of human existence. Conviction of the Church is that faith and reason sustains mutually. They influence each other, and offer purifying criticism.

I. Find out the Answers

1. Faith and reason (Religion and science) are complementary. Illustrate.
2. How does Pope John Paul II look at faith and reason?
3. What are the means to know the truth?
4. What are the five means of St. Thomas Aquinas?
5. What is the meaning of 'to believe'?

II. Let us Discuss

1. How will you convince a co-student who says that reason alone is truth and faith is mere emotional feeling about the relevance of faith?
2. Share in your group one or two experiences of divine providence in your life.

III. Activity

I will try to bring to a life of faith people who keeps themselves away from faith.

IV. Let us Enlighten our Hearts

"All things can be done for the one who believes" (Mk. 9:23).