

Faith and the First Vatican Council

Dei Filius - Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith (24 April 1870)

- ⇒ Approved by Bl. Pope Pius IX; unanimously accepted by the Council Fathers.
- ⇒ Four short chapters: (1) On God, Creator of All, (2) On Revelation, (3) On Faith, and (4) On Faith and Reason.

The definition of faith

- † We are bound by faith to give full obedience of intellect and will to God who reveals.
- † **Faith:** A supernatural virtue by which we, with the aid and inspiration of the grace of God, believe that the things revealed by Him are true, not because the intrinsic truth of the revealed things has been perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself who reveals them, who can either deceive not be deceived.
- † “*Faith is the beginning of salvation.*” - Council of Trent (Session VI, 13 January 1547)
- † “*The first condition of salvation is to maintain the rule of the truth faith.*” - Fourth Council of Constantinople (869-870 AD)

Characteristics of Catholic Faith

- ⇒ Faith is consonant with reason.
- ⇒ Faith is universal (for all men). It is meant to be accessible to all.
- ⇒ Faith has an objective dimension: creed, definitions, revealed propositions that must be believed.
- ⇒ Faith comes from God. It is infused into man via sanctifying grace. One receives it at baptism and only loses the gift of faith by knowingly and willfully doubting or denying a dogma of faith.
- ⇒ God graciously provides external proofs; for example, *miracles* and *prophecy*. These stem from God’s omniscience and omnipotence. They are suited to man’s intelligence.

“Somehow or other an extraordinary idea has arisen that the disbelievers in miracles consider them coldly and fairly, while believers in miracles accept them only in connection with some dogma. The fact is quite the other way. The believers in miracles accept them (rightly or wrongly) because they have evidence for them. The disbelievers in miracles deny them (rightly or wrongly) because they have a doctrine against them.” - from *Orthodoxy* (1908) by G.K. Chesterton

Faith and the Mystery of Grace and Free Will

- ⇒ Faith can exist without the supernatural gift of charity.
- ⇒ Faith is a grace.
- ⇒ Man must cooperate with this grace. Faith is a free obedience by man. Faith can be resisted.
- ⇒ Faith is a ‘work of salvation’ by grace (see James 2:14-20, 1 The 1:3, 2 The 1:11, Phil 2:12).

Some Errors Regarding Faith

- Faith is not a blind movement of the intellect.
- Faith can not be divorced of doctrine, be purely subjective, or lack logical support and tangible evidence. Faith is not just a generic ‘passionate commitment to God’ as held by Søren Kierkegaard.
- Faith is not, as the modernist holds, an ‘interior sense of man’s need for the divine.’ Faith does not well up from *within man*. Such an error makes faith purely subjective and changeable serving man’s own perceived ‘needs.’ It makes faith independent of reason and yet subject to natural knowledge.