

WHY WE SHOULD BELIEVE IN GOD & HIS CATHOLIC CHURCH

Back in 1865, in his work *The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*, the English Prelate Cardinal Manning summarised the issues for our consideration in this lesson in four short sentences:

“[I]t is a violation of reason not to believe in the existence of God... it is a violation of our moral sense not to believe that God has made himself known to man... that the revelation he has given is Christianity; and... that Christianity is Catholicism... ”



*Henry Edward Cardinal Manning (1808-1892)
Archbishop of Westminster*

Let's consider each of the elements he mentions in turn.

It is a violation of reason not to believe in God,

We start, when we argue with non-believers, with plain facts. 1) You did not bring yourself into existence ; 2) You do not keep yourself in existence ; 3) You did not choose to come into existence as a man, rather than, e.g., as a monkey, a donkey or a dog. The choice was made for you by another.

The issues are reduced to these—

[WHAT I am

I have a cause of both [& that is, of my *essence* (or quiddity, or nature), & my *existence*

[THAT I am,

(or be), and I must be able to account rationally for both these effects. Moreover, I have to posit a cause of my *continuing* existence because it does not follow from the fact that I exist in one moment that I will exist in the next, as experience teaches.

Let us not forget that 'cause', *that which exercises influence unto the be, or existence, of something*, must be distinguished into two categories—

				[form
[intrinsic	-	of which there are two	[&	
[&			[matter	
[[efficient	
[extrinsic	-	of which, also, there are two	[&	
			[final	

So if the non-believer insists (as evolutionists do) that matter is a sufficient cause of his existence, the reply is that, since matter's causation is limited merely to *being determined*, it certainly is *not* sufficient. Water can be hot and can be cold. If it was hot from itself, wherever there was water there would only be hot water. But water can be cold, can be luke-warm. It follows that whatever is the cause of water being cold or luke-warm or hot, it is not the water itself. Similarly with matter. If matter can be a dog and can be a tree and can be water, whatever it is that causes it to be a dog, a tree, or water it is not the matter itself. It is something non-material, which we call *form*, that makes matter be each of these different things. And they differ precisely because the substantial form of each is different. Hence, the cause that determines matter to be you, a human being, is your substantial form or soul, which is evident also from this, that if your soul leaves your body you die. And this analysis doesn't yet address the need, as a table needs a carpenter to make it, of a maker who puts the substantial form in matter to produce the human being.

There is another thing. You are an *intellectual* being, and more does not come from less. Therefore, the one who made you, your Author, must also be an intellect, one of immense power. It is reasonable to believe in God : it is irrational not to do so !

a violation of our moral sense not to believe God has made himself known to man...

Just as we, who are intellectual creatures, communicate with each other, it is morally irrational not to accept that he who is our Author, and necessarily an intellectual being, has not communicated with us, and made known his existence and something of his nature ; that he has not made known to us also the reason why He created us, and the end that he has in store for us as the highest and most noble of his creatures. (Note that the Cardinal is not using 'moral' here in the sense in which it is used when referring to the *moral* law, or to the *moral* virtues. He is using it in the sense of a natural or quasi-natural inclination. See *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 58, a. 1)

...(not to believe) that the revelation he has given is Christianity...

How many religions are there on the earth ? All of them, save one, were founded by men. One was founded by God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity become man, Jesus Christ. In Him the revelation of God was made manifest as St Paul teaches, "In many and various ways in times past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets, but now, in our days, He has spoken to us through His Son." (*Hebrews* 1 : 1) How do we know that it was *he* who provided this revelation. St Thomas explains, as he criticises the founder of Mohammedanism :

“(Mohammed) did not bring forth any signs produced in a supernatural way, which alone fittingly gives witness to divine inspiration ; for a visible action that can be only divine reveals an invisibly inspired teacher of truth.” (*Summa Contra Gentes* Bk I, 6 [4])

Christ showed he was God *by his miracles*, particularly his miracles of raising people from the dead, and lastly, by raising himself from the dead, a fact to which there were some 500 witnesses.

...(not to believe) that Christianity is Catholicism...

Many sects refer to themselves as 'Christian'. But each defaults from Christian principle in refusing to accept all the truths Christ revealed, picking and choosing from among them the truths their members find acceptable. So, for instance, some refuse to accept that Christ established a visible Church which He would never disown ; refuse to accept that the successor of St Peter in apostolic succession is the visible head of that Church (the Pope) ; refuse to accept Christ's clear teaching about the indissolubility of marriage ; refuse to accept Christ's teaching on hell, and so forth. St Thomas exposes the defect at the heart of this, the Protestant, approach as follows :

“[H]e who adheres to the teaching of the Church as to an infallible rule, assents to whatever the Church teaches. It is otherwise if he holds what he chooses to hold of the things taught by the Church and rejects what he chooses to reject, for he no longer adheres to the teaching of the Church as to an infallible rule, but to his own will... It is clear that such a heretic with regard to one article has no faith in the other articles, but only a kind of opinion in accordance with his own will.” (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 5, a. 3; cf. II-II, q. 11, a. 1)

The Protestant principle is that it is the believer, not Almighty God, who determines what he shall, or shall not, believe. From this flawed theological principle there developed the philosophical error of subjectivism which holds that truth is determined not by reality but by *what the individual accepts* as reality. The rejection of God's authority is implicit in every non-Catholic assertion of Christianity.

Even as the Catholic acknowledges it is God who determines what he shall believe, he realises that the faith is not so much from him, as from God. It is a gift of God which he may lose if he does not exercise the greatest care in his living and in his choices.
