

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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OF THE CAUSE OF FAITH (TWO ARTICLES)

We must now consider the cause of faith, under which head there are two points of inquiry:

[\(1\)](#) Whether faith is infused into man by God?

[\(2\)](#) Whether lifeless faith is a gift of God?

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Whether faith is infused into man by God?

Objection 1: It would seem that faith is not infused into man by God. For Augustine says (De Trin. xiv) that "science begets faith in us, and nourishes, defends and strengthens it." Now those things which science begets in us seem to be acquired rather than infused. Therefore faith does not seem to be in us by Divine infusion.

Objection 2: Further, that to which man attains by hearing and seeing, seems to be acquired by him. Now man attains to belief, both by seeing miracles, and by hearing the teachings of faith: for it is written ([Jn. 4:53](#)): "The father... knew that it was at the same hour, that Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house"; and ([Rm. 10:17](#)) it is said that "faith is through hearing." Therefore man attains to faith by acquiring it.

Objection 3: Further, that which depends on a man's will can be acquired by him. But "faith depends on the believer's will," according to Augustine (De Praedest. Sanct. v). Therefore faith can be acquired by man.

I answer that, Two things are requisite for faith. First, that the things which are of faith should be proposed to man: this is necessary in order that man believe anything explicitly. The second thing requisite for faith is the assent of the believer to the things which are proposed to him. Accordingly, as regards the first of these, faith must needs be from God. Because those things which are of faith surpass human reason, hence they do not come to man's knowledge, unless God reveal them. To some, indeed, they are revealed by God immediately, as those things which were revealed to the apostles and prophets, while to some they are proposed by God in sending preachers of the faith, according to Rm. 10:15: "How shall they preach, unless they be sent?"

As regards the second, viz. man's assent to the things which are of faith, we may observe a twofold cause, one of external inducement, such as seeing a miracle, or being persuaded by someone to embrace the faith: neither of which is a sufficient cause, since of those who see the same miracle, or who hear the same sermon, some believe, and some do not. Hence we must assert another internal cause, which moves man inwardly to assent to matters of faith.

The Pelagians held that this cause was nothing else than man's free-will: and consequently they said that the beginning of faith is from ourselves, inasmuch as, to wit, it is in our power to be ready to assent to things which are of faith, but that the consummation of faith is from God, Who proposes to us the things we have to believe. But this is false, for, since man, by assenting to matters of faith, is raised above his nature, this must needs accrue to him from some supernatural principle moving him inwardly; and this is God. Therefore faith, as regards the assent which is the chief act of faith, is from God moving man inwardly by grace.

Reply to Objection 1: Science begets and nourishes faith, by way of external persuasion afforded by science; but the chief and proper cause of faith is that which moves man inwardly to assent.

Reply to Objection 2: This argument again refers to the cause that proposes outwardly the things that are of faith, or persuades man to believe by words or deeds.

Reply to Objection 3: To believe does indeed depend on the will of the believer: but man's will needs to be prepared by God with grace, in order that he may be raised to things which are above his nature, as stated above ([Question \[2\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)).

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Whether lifeless faith is a gift of God?

Objection 1: It would seem that lifeless faith is not a gift of God. For it is written ([Dt. 32:4](#)) that "the works of God are perfect." Now lifeless faith is something imperfect. Therefore it is not the work of God.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS006.html](#) loo is faith called lifeless [informis] when it lacks the form due to it. Now the deformed act of sin is not from God, as stated above ([FS, Question \[79\], Article \[2\]](#), ad 2). Therefore neither is lifeless faith from God.

Objection 3: Further, whomsoever God heals, He heals wholly: for it is written ([Jn. 7:23](#)): "If a man receive circumcision on the sabbath-day, that the law of Moses may not be broken; are you angry at Me because I have healed the whole man on the sabbath-day?" Now faith heals man from unbelief. Therefore whoever receives from God the gift of faith, is at the same time healed from all his sins. But this is not done except by living faith. Therefore living faith alone is a gift of God: and consequently lifeless faith is not from God.

On the contrary, A gloss on 1 Cor. 13:2 says that "the faith which lacks charity is a gift of God." Now this is lifeless faith. Therefore lifeless faith is a gift of God.

I answer that, Lifelessness is a privation. Now it must be noted that privation is sometimes essential to the species, whereas sometimes it is not, but supervenes in a thing already possessed of its proper species: thus privation of the due equilibrium of the humors is essential to the species of sickness, while darkness is not essential to a diaphanous body, but supervenes in it. Since, therefore, when we assign the cause of a thing, we intend to assign the cause of that thing as existing in its proper species, it follows that what is not the cause of privation, cannot be assigned as the cause of the thing to which that privation belongs as being essential to its species. For we cannot assign as the cause of a sickness, something which is not the cause of a disturbance in the humors: though we can assign as cause of a diaphanous body, something which is not the cause of the darkness, which is not essential to the diaphanous body.

Now the lifelessness of faith is not essential to the species of faith, since faith is said to be lifeless through lack of an extrinsic form, as stated above ([Question \[4\], Article \[4\]](#)). Consequently the cause of lifeless faith is that which is the cause of faith strictly so called: and this is God, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)). It follows, therefore, that lifeless faith is a gift of God.

Reply to Objection 1: Lifeless faith, though it is not simply perfect with the perfection of a virtue, is, nevertheless, perfect with a perfection that suffices for the essential notion of faith.

Reply to Objection 2: The deformity of an act is essential to the act's species, considered as a moral act, as stated above ([FP, Question \[48\], Article \[1\]](#), ad 2; [FS, Question \[18\], Article \[5\]](#)): for an act is said to be deformed through being deprived of an intrinsic form, viz. the due commensuration of the act's circumstances. Hence we cannot say that God is the cause of a deformed act, for He is not the cause of its deformity, though He is the cause of the act as such.

We may also reply that deformity denotes not only privation of a due form, but also a contrary disposition, wherefore deformity is compared to the act, as falsehood is to faith. Hence, just as the deformed act is not from God, so neither is a false faith; and as lifeless faith is from God, so too, acts that are good generically, though not quickened by charity, as is frequently the case in sinners, are from God.

Reply to Objection 3: He who receives faith from God without charity, is healed from unbelief, not entirely (because the sin of his previous unbelief is not removed) but in part, namely, in the point of ceasing from committing such and such a sin. Thus it happens frequently that a man desists from one act of sin, through God causing him thus to desist, without desisting from another act of sin, through the instigation of his own malice. And in this way sometimes it is

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of prophecy, or the like, is given to some without charity.

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