

THE MÉLANGE OF FAITH AND REASON

STELLA BASSEY ESIRAH Ph.D

St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene

Affiliate of university of Calabar

ABSTRACT

As has been explicitly shown in this work, the relationship between faith and reason has been a subject of debate from ancient times to the contemporary period. Divergent views have been put forth but no universally satisfying response has been given yet. This research while acknowledging this, contributes to this engaging debate. It defends the stance that, faith and reason cannot give us a true picture of reality; they are two wings upon which humanity could ride to attain complete knowledge. This research is basically explorative, though philosophical tools of critical analysis was also adopted.

KEYWORDS: *faith, reason, theology, philosophy, science*

INTRODUCTION

The human person is endowed with reason and the longing for the Infinite reality underlying human existence and existential enigmas¹. This fact not only sums up the common description of the human person as a ‘rational and religious being’ (among others), but also showcases both the imperative and the struggle towards synthesizing the guiding principles of faith and reason in his existential voyage². The mélange of faith and reason is therefore engraved in human existence and it is an age-long philosophical discourse that has engaged thinkers with varying stand points, right from the time of Thales till date.

Yet, faith and reason are two prisms through which the knowledge of reality could be grasped. Reason seeks to systematize our beliefs with justifiable facts as proofs while faith is grounded in revelation and knowledge of the Scripture, which transcends the confines of the intellect. It is in the nature of reason to doubt, argue, critically examine and evaluate a reality before reaching a conclusion, while the point of departure of issues of faith are usually trust and an already established set of beliefs.³ Whereas reason may uphold human life as an accidental and the Scripture as a barrier to truth, faith upholds life and existence to be purposeful and the Scripture as an infallible source of truth.⁴

¹ Religion and Society Today, (Koinonia, 2017), 19

² This is because an attempt towards neglecting one at the expense of the other may not augur well in making certain choices that bothers on the individual existential journey.

³ Steve Wilkens, (ed), *Faith and Reason(Three Views)*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2014),8.This starting point of faith renders certain questions viable and relevant for the domain of reason(Philosophy)

⁴ Ibid

In history, the contention between faith and reason culminated in a quandary where thinkers toed two different parts. Those in the camp of reason assert that faith is antithetical to clear thoughts and is inherently hostile to science. In their view, to rely on faith and revelation (its substratum) is to cage humanity in pessimism and to dabble into the abyss of superstition with its impending doom and hindrances on progress. Suffice it to deduce that in their view, faith is worth nothing than to be dumped in the “dustbin of history”.⁵ Contrarily, proponents of faith deem reason as a humanistic enterprise, an archenemy of faith and a threat to salvation.⁶

Be that as it may, faith and reason are interconnected and mutually dependent on one another. The quest for truth undertaken by various sciences can be tangibly attained through the proper synthesis of faith and reason. As Joseph Okine-Quartey avers, historical antecedents prove that attempts to separate faith from reason is not only an exercise in futility but also a source of the world’s woes and man’s inhumanity to man, since the duo are interconnected and interrelated.⁷

The philosophical discourse on the *mélange* of faith and reason is relevant in the present epoch; there is the need to examine the various postulations in the various epochs and to philosophically situate it in the contemporary epoch, owing to the fact that the duo is mutually compatible.

DELINEATING THE CONCEPTS OF FAITH AND REASON

Etymologically, the word “faith” stems from the Latin *fides* which also means trust and loyalty.⁸ It is quite peculiar to Philosophy of Religion and the Christian Religion. It is the voluntary acceptance of views that are not rationally or empirically proven, especially religious beliefs;⁹ by faith we believe truths (of Christianity) that are beyond reason's pale.¹⁰ Faith is a contrast to scientific knowledge, which is verifiably supported by testable facts, and philosophical knowledge, which is rationally proven.¹¹ Terminologically, “Faith” gained prominence with Paul who employed it in his discourses to connote Christians’ attitude of believe in the words or works of Christ.¹² His conception of faith as the gift of God was later expatiated upon by Aquinas and Augustine.

⁵ Ibid, 9

⁶ Ibid, 10

⁷ Joseph Okine-Quartey, “Reason At The Service of Faith” in *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 18, 2016), 24

⁸ Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2014), 247.

⁹ Ibid, 248

¹⁰ K. Scott Oliphint, *Reasons for faith: Philosophy in the service of Theology*, (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2006), 17

¹¹ Jerry A. Coyne, (*Faith vs. Fact (Why Science and Religion are incompatible)*, New York: Penguin Publishing Group Penguin Random House LLC, 2005), 161. However this does not imply that faith, especially religious faith, completely abjure evidence. Faith (Christian faith) yearns for proofs; “The perpetual search for Jesus’s tomb and Noah’s Ark underline this yearning for evidence.”

¹² Ibid

In medieval times, the attempt to reconcile faith and knowledge became a major philosophical theme. In the view of Immanuel Kant¹³, faith is the acceptance of transcendental ideas, God, freedom, and immortality, which are beyond the realm of experience and are therefore not objects of theoretical knowledge. They nevertheless play a great role in moral affairs.¹⁴ Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche all dealt extensively with the topic of faith. Ethically, however, faith implies keeping promises.

While “faith” refers primarily to any truth, or belief¹⁵ in a truth, that is beyond the ability of reason to prove. “Reason” denotes any truth, or belief in a truth, that is or can be known without the aid of any source external to it.¹⁶ Etymologically, reason stems from the Latin *ratio*. Anthropologically, it is a general faculty common to all or nearly all humans.¹⁷ It seems to be of two sorts: a faculty of intuition by which one ‘sees’ truths or abstract things (‘essences’ or universals, etc.), and a faculty of reasoning, i.e. passing from premises to a conclusion (discursive reason).¹⁸ In the view of Peter Kreeft, reason prior to Socrates, meant everything that distinguished man from animals, including intuition, mystical experiences, and dreams.

The medieval thinkers, following their theocentricism construed reason as a gift of God. Commonly, the early Christian writers like Augustine were of the view that reason is the “highest” human function; that part of the soul which is the most divine, the “image of God” in us. However, this view, according to Wilkens, is more Platonic than Scriptural.¹⁹

Be that as it may, with Socrates coupled with Descartes and Kant, the conception of reason received an advanced logical approach.²⁰ It is deduced from the Socratic discourses that reason implies giving clear definitions and logical proofs. To this, Descartes constricted it to something more or less like the scientific method, even in philosophy: the act of calculating, reasoning, proving, rather than wisdom or understanding. In his psychologized reason, Kant avers that our reason constructs or shapes the world rather than discovering it, so it cannot know things as they are in themselves; we cannot know objective reality by reason.²¹ Reason can be theoretical or practical.²² For Kant, the latter issues in action rather than beliefs, but at a deep level, the two capacities are same.²³ Kant is also credited with contrasting reason, which is concerned with mediate inferences, understanding and power of judgment, which are concerned with acquiring concepts and passing judgments, respectively.²⁴ Other

¹³ Kant is not a Medieval Philosopher. He is a key figure in the 19th Century Philosophy.

¹⁴ Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, 248.

¹⁵ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith, Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 12. “A belief is a lever that, once pulled, moves almost everything else in a person's life”.

¹⁶ K. Scott Oliphint, *Reasons for faith: Philosophy in the service of Theology*, 17

¹⁷ Michael Proudfoot and A. R. Lacey, *The Routledge Dictionary of Philosophy* (4th ed), (London/New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), 341

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Steve Wilkens, (ed), *Faith and Reason (Three Views)*, 91.

²⁰ Peter Kreeft, *Faith And Reason: The Philosophy of Religion (Course Guide)*, (Rome: Recorded Books, LLC) 9

²¹ Ibid 9

²² Kant made this distinction following Aristotle.

²³ Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, 591

²⁴ Michael Proudfoot and A. R. Lacey, *The Routledge Dictionary of Philosophy* (4th ed), 341

views worth mentioning are those of Hegel and Hume etc. Hegel asserts that the view on reason alters at different stages of historical development. Hume restricted practical reason to finding means to obtain the ends set out by the passions; this view on “means–ends” has been rejected by later thinkers. Reason enters the account of institutions through models of the interaction of the choices of individuals and through the direct assessment of practices and societies.²⁵

HISTORICAL EXCURSUS ON THE MUTUALITY OF FAITH AND REASON

The contention between faith and reason and the attempts towards establishing its *mélange* is as old as the birth of western philosophy. To start with, the Miletian trio (Thales, Anaximander and Anaximander) are most often credited with initiating the rational quest for the quiddity of existence. Anaximander, by debunking Thales’ thesis on water as the substance of existence, is often credited with the birth of logic. However, far beyond these, the Miletians shifted the attention from the common loyalty to the Athenian gods as the origin of natural phenomena to the use of reason in explaining the same natural phenomena, and the quest for knowledge and certainty of truth, generally speaking. Okine-Quartey argues that Socrates’ execution on account of corrupting the youths must have been preeminent, because he attempted to employ reason in the search for truth as against the prevalent Athenian faith in the gods.²⁶ Scholars who suffered similar faith in history are worth mentioning here.²⁷ Within this epoch, Aristotle insisted on the importance of rational thought and the accumulation of empirical evidence. This view contrasts Plato’s, who insisted on the world of forms as the noumenal world. His assertion on the existence of the ‘absolute form’ points to some elements of faith in the unknown, hence, it could be deduced that Plato attempted to synthesize faith and reason in his philosophizing.

In the medieval epoch, the *mélange* of faith and reason engaged a handful of thinkers. The medieval thinkers before Augustine seem to accent to the inherent wedlock of faith and reason, as they construed reason as a pillar of faith and faith as that which indispensably needs reason as a collaborator in the epistemic enterprise. Generally, Stephen F. Brown and Juan Carlos Flores observe that,

“Although medieval thinkers within all three religious traditions could justify the use of reason in their attempts to understand God’s revelation to them, by affirming that God is the author of the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature, and that any conflict between the two books could only be apparent,

²⁵ Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, 591

²⁶ Joseph Okine-Quartey, “Reason At The Service of Faith” in *West African Journal Of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 18, 24

²⁷ In the 17th Century, the story of Galileo Galilee whose rational scientific discovery which was seemingly not at par with Scriptural and ecclesiastical teaching earned him early grave, is well pronounced.

the medieval Christian authors provide many more explicit reflections on conflicts between faith and reason.”²⁸

In stressing the mutuality of faith and reason, Justin avers that the best Philosophy is the greatest possession since it leads us to God. Philosophy (reason) leads us to God and is very honourable before Him; hence Christian Gospel and Greek philosophy do not compete.²⁹ He asserts a commonality between Plato and the Scripture, on the premise that in both, the human soul has an affinity to God. Based on the assumption that both Socrates and Plato were acquainted with the Pentateuch, Justin infers that they both must have had a good grasp of the truth. This conclusion is also reached based on the Gospel of John the Evangelist which holds that the *Logos* (Christ) gives light to all mankind. Against this premise, Justin concludes that both Greeks and non-Greeks have the ability of discovering fragments of God’s truth apart from the Bible.³⁰ In the view of Justin, Socrates, Plato and Abraham were Christians before Christ because they followed the Divine Reason within them. In this sense, the Greek philosophy and Old Testament were preparatory phases that culminated in Christianity.³¹ Based on this, Justin opines that “there should be no dichotomy between Christianity and intellectual heritage, as all truth is God’s revealed truth, whether it comes from the mouth of the prophet or it is implanted in philosophy by the Divine Logos”³²

In the late second century and early third century, Tertullian- the early Christian theologian argued decisively in favour of faith. This is evident in his famous rhetorical questions: first, “what does Athens have to do with Jerusalem”. His view here is that reason (Athens) has nothing to do with faith (Jerusalem).³³ Second, when faced with contradictions regarding the concept of incarnation, Tertullian says, “I believe because it is absurd”. His view is that faith is so distinct from reason; that faith is essentially irrational.³⁴ He contends that religious faith is both contrary to and superior to reason.³⁵ For Tertullian therefore, philosophy of every type was the source of heresy, not the source of truth.³⁶

Contrarily, Clement of Alexandria who lived roughly the same time with Tertullian took a positive view of Philosophy. He contends that God causes all things to happen, either primarily or by consequence. And that philosophy is probably a gift to the Greeks till Christ’s coming.

God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily, as of the Old and the New Testament; and of others by consequence, as philosophy. Perchance,

²⁸ Stephen F. Brown and Juan Carlos Flores, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval Philosophy And Theology*, (U S A: The Scarecrow Press, 2007), xxxiii.

²⁹ Joseph Okine-Quartey, “Reason At The Service of Faith” in *West African Journal Of Philosophical Studies*, (vol. 18), 30

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Samuel Enoch Stumpf and James Fieser, *Philosophy, History and Problems*, 7th ed., (np: McGraw-Hill, nd), 116

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Stephen F. Brown and Juan Carlos Flores, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval Philosophy And Theology*, xxxiii.

too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring the Hellenic mind, as the law the Hebrews, to Christ. Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ.³⁷

Generally, both Brown and Flores contend that the views of Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria represent the negative and positive views toward philosophy within the tradition of the Christian Fathers of the Church.³⁸ It must be noted too that, Medieval Muslim writers interpreted their Scriptures within the tradition of the heirs to the Prophet. Their Jewish counterparts followed in the footsteps of the interpreters of their Law. Christian theologians took their lead from the early Church Fathers, in whose writings the battle between faith and reason had already been waged.³⁹

In the debate between faith and reason, Augustine in the 4th century is remarkable among those Christian theologians who took a moderate view, but with priority on faith. In his view, it is faith that illuminates reason, without which they can be no understanding. His view is inspired by the book of the prophet Isaiah: “Unless you believe, you will not understand”. Hence Augustine’s view could be summarized by the expression, “faith seeking understanding” (*fides quaerens intellectum*).⁴⁰ Augustine avows that true philosophy is not possible without the synthesis of faith and reason.⁴¹ Augustine holds that the concrete condition of human existence cannot be understood without first considering ourselves from the point of view of faith. And this requires that the whole world be considered from the vantage point of faith. Hence one cannot truly philosophize, except his human will be transformed; clear thinking is only possible under the influence of God’s grace.⁴²

Research shows that after Augustine, many medieval scholars were at variance in their views on the mélange of faith and reason. Scholars like John Scotus, Roscelin and Abelard took a decisive stand on reason against faith. Those who also concurred to faith against reason are: Peter and Damian, Bernard of Clairvaux etc. Anselm took a moderate stand with emphasis on the postulations of Augustine. He also attempted to prove some major Christian doctrine using reason.

These notwithstanding, among the medieval thinkers, Aquinas is outstanding for attempting a logical synthesis of faith and reason. He asserts that reason and faith are two ways of knowing. Whereas, reason encapsulates that which is knowable by experience and logic alone, faith covers truths that are grasped through God’s special revelation to us which come through the Bible and Judeo Christian tradition.⁴³ By faith, we can know, for instance, that God came into the world through Jesus Christ and that God is triune (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Certainly, these truths about God cannot

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Samuel Enoch Stumpf and James Fieser, *Philosophy, History and Problems*, 7th ed., 116

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Gerard M. Verchuuren, *Aquinas And Modern Science (A New Synthesis of Faith and Reason)*, (USA and UK: Angelico Press, 2016), 20

be known by reason alone. However, faith builds on reason and must be harmonious with reason. Since faith and reason are two different ways of arriving at truth and since all truths are compatible with one another, faith is consistent with reason.⁴⁴ For Aquinas, the conflict between faith and reason only arises due to the myopic understanding of the duo. He is very confident in defending the idea that faith cannot be against reason. He argues that God does not create contraries. Instead, God is reason, as such, He cannot act against His own nature by doing what is contradictory.⁴⁵ Though God is absolutely free, His freedom is not arbitrary, hence, He cannot go against what is true and right. We are able to know this, because our own power of reason is rooted in creation and thus participates in God's power of reason. Aquinas reiterates his argument that God cannot create what is logically contradictory by citing the following examples: God cannot create square circles; God cannot make someone blind and not blind at the same time; God cannot declare true what is false; God cannot undo something that happened in the past; and the list goes on and on. "To use a silly example: God does not even have the power to make a stone so heavy that He Himself cannot lift it; that would be contradictory, and therefore against reason".⁴⁶

Aquinas, probably, based on the fact that reason and faith are the substratum of philosophy and theology, respectively, argues that the distinction between the former can be situated in the later. He asserts that, theology gives us knowledge through faith and revelation, whereas philosophy gives us knowledge through the natural powers of the intellect common to all people. Therefore, theology and philosophy proceed according to different paths. While theology concerns itself with knowledge derived through divine revelation (of which man must accept by faith), philosophy, is concerned with knowledge that humans acquire through "sensory experience and the use of the natural light of reason".⁴⁷

This distinction provides a formal test for deciding whether a discourse is philosophical or theological. If it relies only on truths that anyone is able to know about the world, after due reflection, and if it leads to new truths on the basis of such truths, and only on that basis, then it is philosophical discourse. On the other hand, discourse based on our accepting as true that there are three Persons in one divine nature, that our salvation was effected by the sacrifice of Jesus, that Jesus is one Person but two natures, and the like, is theological discourse. Yet, it remains true that theological discourse could and should never be in conflict with reason.⁴⁸

The discourse on faith and reason continued after Aquinas, but with a somewhat extreme position in support of either of the two. Some philosophers declared so much confidence in faith against reason and vice versa. This gradually made the attempt to enhance the compatibility of the duo to wane

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Gerard M. Verchuuren, *Aquinas And Modern Science(A New Synthesis of Faith and Reason)*, 21

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

gradually. The proximate cause of the decline in this was the rise in rationalism and the gamut of technological breakthroughs which characterized the modern era in the 17th Century. The innovation of the printing press which also provided an ample opportunity for a mental interaction with the works of critical scholars led to the fall in theocentricism, giving rise to radical rationalism as exemplified in Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza and Leibnitz etc. the attempt to mediate the extremes of rationalism and empiricism by Immanuel Kant in the 19th Century, must also be mentioned.

Be that as it may, re-examining the mélange of faith and reason is an imperative in the present epoch. John Paul II painstakingly undertakes this task in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason). He takes a panoramic view on the indispensability of faith and reason in examining such realities in the world like happenstances, the history and fate of people etc. Faith does not intervene in the events of life in order to barricade the autonomy of reason or lessen its latitude of action “but solely to bring the human being to understand that in these events it is the God of Israel who acts.”⁴⁹ Implicatively, to grasp the world and the events of history, one must profess faith in God who is at work in them; “Faith sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of Providence.”⁵⁰ Reason guides the human person on the right path to tread, faith leads him unhindered to the end, hence, “reason and faith cannot be separated without diminishing the capacity of men and women to know themselves, the world and God in an appropriate way.”⁵¹ Importantly, in chapter four, while examining the various views of scholars on the relationship between faith and reason, John Paul II asserts that, the fundamental harmony between faith and reason is that “faith asks that its object be understood with the help of reason; and at the summit of its searching, reason acknowledges that it cannot do without what faith presents”⁵² This fact affirms his earlier submission that, “there is thus no reason for competition of any kind between reason and faith: each contains the other, and each has its own scope for action.”⁵³

The views of John II met reactions from scholars. Here, we shall consider Andrew Murray. In his work-“*Fides at Ratio: A philosophical Response*”. He argues that John II has not offered any solution to the problem of faith and reason as it arises today; but that it is rather the work of Philosophers and theologians to do so. Instead, what he (John Paul II) has done is just to put himself in and draw us into the lines of Anselm and Aquinas. For Murray, “Christian faith can dare to deal with the challenges that come to it from natural reason, and we can be confident that when different disciplines reach true conclusions about significant issues they will be in agreement”.⁵⁴

⁴⁹John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Relationship between Faith and Reason, *Fides et ratio*, (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid 42

⁵³ Ibid, 17

⁵⁴ Murray, p 2

As it is in the nature of philosophizing, both the thesis of John Paul II and the seemingly antithesis of Andrew Murray and scholars of the likes lend credence to the existing relationship between faith and reason.

THE PLACE OF REASON IN THE STUDY OF FAITH

Reason is to philosophy what faith is to theology. Hence, examining the role of reason in the study of faith is akin to examining the place of philosophy in the study of theology; since reason and faith could be deemed as philosophy and theology systematized. Philosophy has remained a rational search for the truth of realities, an endeavour that provides the essential elements for the critical and systematic study of other sciences. In its nature, philosophy asks critical questions about the basic elements of other sciences and by so doing aid them to provide rational basis for their study. In this sense, one could opine generally, that philosophy systematizes other sciences. John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio* provides the gamut of facts concerning this relationship, especially in the sixth chapter.

Theology has numerous tasks that could hardly be accomplished without philosophy. Theology is structured as an understanding of faith in the light of a twofold methodological principle: the "auditus fidei" and the "intellectus fidei".⁵⁵ Philosophy proves useful in preparing for a correct "auditus fidei" with its study of the structure of knowledge and personal communication, especially the various forms and functions of language. It fosters a coherent understanding of the Church's tradition, the teaching of the magisterium and the teaching of the great masters of theology. It is useful in discussing theological issues such as the use of language to speak about God, the personal relations within the trinity, God's creative activity in the world, the relationship between God and man or Christ's identity as true God and true man. The different themes in moral theology which employ concepts like moral law, conscience, freedom, personal responsibility, etc are in part defined and systematized in philosophical ethics. Fundamental theology also benefits from philosophy since its concern is to justify and expound on the relationship between faith and philosophical thought.⁵⁶ Moral theology benefits also from the principles of philosophy. The noble and indispensable contribution of philosophy to theology made it to be termed, from patristic period onwards, "ancilla theologiae" (Handmaid of Theology).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid 65 "With the first(*auditus fidei*), Theology makes its own the content of Revelation as this has been gradually expounded in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Church's living Magisterium. With the second (*intellectus fidei*), theology seeks to respond through speculative enquiry to the specific demands of disciplined thought.

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 63

⁵⁷ Ibid 72

REASON, FAITH AND SCIENCE

Science is the systematic body of knowledge obtained by observation and testing of facts. Scientific investigations are carried out in the laboratory through the use of certain apparatuses. Scientific knowledge is based on concrete facts that could be touched, felt and practically falsified in order to make proofs of their authenticity. Science relates to reason, since, the latter is the seat of the intellect. Science also relates to faith, since it (faith) is what it relies on for the explanation of events that cannot be subjected to laboratory tests. For instance, the occurrences after death cannot be scientifically explained; hence, it is in the realm of faith that transcendental realities are demystified. Reason tells us that there exists motion in the world; it tells us that there is the source of motion which in itself remains immovable.⁵⁸ On this, while science, given its limited physical scope of enquiry cannot offer proofs, faith authenticates the existence of God; providing us with possible ways with which to know him, love him and serve Him. Reason tells us that the human person has both body and soul; science explains the biological aspects of the human person, while faith takes over the spiritual dimension.

Our contention here is that both reason, faith and science are inter-related, since there are sources of knowledge; even though they vary in scope and methodology. This view is corroborated by Coyne, who argues that, “religion, like science, philosophy, and literature, is simply another “way of knowing” about the universe, possessing unique methods that yield valid truths.”⁵⁹ In discussing the relationship between these trio, their limitations must critically be taken into due cognizance. The view of Verchuuren provides a fine synopsis.

Science has theories to help us understand nature, but they are subject to change, so we should not make science more than what it is. Religion, on the other hand, has truths to help us understand God, but they never change, so we should not make religion less than what it is. Religion reveals to us truths that no science can reach. But there cannot be any real conflicts between the two. Science tries to reach the truth but has not fully captured it yet. Religion, on the other hand, has the truth but has not fully understood it yet.⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

The quest for truth is the thrust of all philosophical enquiries. In the words of Aristotle, “All men by nature desire to know”. The search for the reliable source of knowledge on the underlying existential realities led to the debate on reason and faith; a puzzle which has engaged thinkers right from the very birth of western philosophy till date. Each epoch of thought has its unique position on

⁵⁸ Aristotle terms this, the “Unmoved Mover”

⁵⁹ Jerry A. Coyne, (*Faith vs. Fact (Why Science and Religion are incompatible)*), 160.

⁶⁰ Gerard M. Verchuuren, *Aquinas And Modern Science (A New Synthesis of Faith and Reason)*, 21.

the faith and reason debate. In the ancient era, attention was focused on reason with very few thinkers in support of the notion of faith. The theocentric character of the medieval epoch was glaring in the debate; even though critical attempt was made by Aquinas to demonstrate the mélange of faith and reason. As earlier mentioned, after Aquinas, philosophers were divided in their stance concerning the relationship between faith and reason. The modern epoch witnessed the exaltation of scientific and rational knowledge which in turn dethroned faith. Similarly, the contemporary epoch is no less characterized by scientific and technological innovation. As seen in our discourse, John Paul II calls for a reexamination of the relationship between faith and reason in our era. This is the onus of his encyclical- *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason).

Reason (philosophy) acts as a watch dog to faith (theology) and science (empirical truths). The philosophical enterprise of enriching the epistemic community has often been achieved through critical questioning and painstaking falsification. Where faith makes claim of the transcendental, philosophy questions the authenticity of such a claim, since transcendental realities are neither touched or felt or possibly affirmed by reason. Reason questions the reliability of scientific proofs, especially with the recent findings that scientific truths are subjects to modification and change. Faith too confronts the limited scope of rational and scientific truths, since the human person and the world is beyond the ephemeral realities grappled with by finite beings. Faith questions the authenticity of scientific truths since it does not take into account those facts that are not verifiable in the laboratory. Hence, reason, faith and science cannot on their own provide the certainty of knowledge, without a critical mélange of their findings and methodology.

Conclusively, in the faith and reason debate, the central issue hinges on determining whether important philosophical and religious beliefs are grounded in the authority of faith or of reason, or some combination of the two. The faith option involves an attitude of trust that is grounded in divine revelation, the reason-option involve belief that is grounded in methodological demonstration. Following the words of John Paul II, “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth...”. For the certitude of knowledge to be attained, the two must be held, as a matter of fact, as interdependent and mutually inclusive. This is supported by Bisong, who avers “faith without reason has been the root cause of most fundamentalism in the world; it has been the root cause of most religious wars and killings; it is behind most religious suicides and martyrdom; it is the reason behind the stifling of ideas and knowledge⁶¹

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bisong, P. B., (2020), Is Religion a Curse or Blessing to the world?, *Journal of Rare Ideas*, VOL.1, No. 1, 1-14.

⁶¹ Bisong, Peter. Is Religion a Curse or Blessing to the world? (Journal of Rare Ideas, p.8)

2. Brown, S. and Flores J. (2007), *Historical Dictionary of Medieval Philosophy And Theology*, U S A: The Scarecrow Press.
3. Bunnin, N. and Yu, J. (2014), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, USA: Blackwell Publishing.
4. Coyne, J. A. (2005), *Faith vs. Fact: Why Science and Religion are incompatible*, New York: Penguin Publishing Group Penguin Random House LLC.
5. Esirah, Stella. (2005), Religion and the Society Today, *Koinonia*, vol. 7 no. 6, 2017.
6. Harris, S. (2005), *The End of Faith, Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
7. John Paul II, (1998), Encyclical Letter on the Relationship between Faith and Reason, *Fides et ratio*, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
8. Kreeft, Peter. *Faith and Reason: The Philosophy of Religion (Course Guide)*, Rome: Recorded Books, LLC, n.d
9. Oliphint, K. (2006), *Reasons for faith: Philosophy in the service of Theology*, New Jersey: P&R Publishing.
10. Proudfoot, M. and Lacey, A. R. (2010), *The Routledge Dictionary of Philosophy* (4th ed), London/New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.
11. Stumpf S. and Fieser, J. *Philosophy, History and Problems*, 7th ed.,(np: MsGraw-Hill,nd), n.d
12. Verchuuren, G. (2016), *Aquinas And Modern Science (A New Synthesis of Faith and Reason)*, USA and UK: Angelico Press.
13. *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 18, December, 2016.
14. Wilkens, Steve (ed). (2014), *Faith and Reason (Three Views)*, Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press.