

Q. 23I. By what kind of act do we believe the doctrines contained in the Bible and in Divine Tradition?

We believe the doctrines contained in the Bible and Divine Tradition by an act of divine faith, which means that we accept them on the authority of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

(a) Divine faith is a theological virtue by which we firmly believe the word of God because He is all-wise and all-truthful. Since all the doctrines contained in the Bible and Divine Tradition are the word of God, we must believe them with divine faith.

(b) Since it is reasonable to accept the statement of a learned and truthful man when he tells us something about which he is an expert, it is most reasonable to believe all that the infinitely wise and truthful God has revealed.

(c) Some of the truths of divine revelation were communicated by God only implicitly - that is, contained in more general doctrines -- and were recognized explicitly by the Church only in the course of time. Such for example, are the doctrines of Mary's Immaculate Conception and bodily Assumption into heaven.

(d) The Catholic Church possesses the same authority to explain and to interpret Divine Tradition as it has to explain and to interpret the Bible.

Although the Roman Catholic Church's dogma concerning Tradition is a prime example of ecclesiastical authority as a source of religious beliefs, other examples come easily to mind, e. g., the cults.

Whether we speak of Theosophy, Christian Science, Rosicrucianism, Unity, Baha'ism, Swedenborgianism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventism, the Unification Church, or the Worldwide Church of God, there is one feature common to all of them. They all hold that there is an authoritative extra-biblical writing (usually that of the founder of the cult) that must be added to the Bible in order to understand the Bible and Christianity correctly. Usually this writing gains the ascendancy over the Bible, not theoretically but functionally.

For Theosophy the writings are those of Helena ("Madame") Blavatsky and Annie Besant. For Christian Science it is Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. For Rosicrucianism it is Max Heindel's *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-conception or Mystic Christianity*. For the Unity School of Christianity it is Charles and Myrtle Fillmore's writings. For Baha'ism it is the authoritative interpretations of Baha'u'llah's writings by 'Abdu'l-Baha. For Swedenborgianism it is the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, especially *Arcana Coelestia* and *The True Christian Religion*. For Mormonism it is Joseph Smith's *The Book of Mormon*. For the Jehovah's Witnesses it is Charles Taze Russell's *Studies in the Scriptures* (6 vols. ). For Seventh-Day Adventism it is Ellen G. White's *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*. For the Unification Church it is Sun Myung Moon's *Divine Principle*. And for the Worldwide Church of God it is the writings of Herbert W. Armstrong, especially as published in *The Plain Truth*.