

Jim Corcoran's condition
remains the same.

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A Fact: God Doesn't Coerce Faith.

"Dear Father: I am still waiting for Arnold Lunn's answer to the interesting question he opened in the Bulletin of December 2..." The question referred to is the following:

Question XIX: Why isn't the evidence for the Catholic Faith coercive? If the Cardinal Archbishop of New York were to remove the Statue of Liberty to Chicago in support of his claims, I'd join the Catholic Church tomorrow, and so would everybody else.

Here, in part, is Mr. Lunn's answer:

God does not coerce faith. Consider this thesis:

The evidence for the Church is sufficient to convince any man of good will who approaches the problem with an open-minded determination to discover the truth. God does not bludgeon us into faith.

Every Christian accepts this thesis and it is therefore most unreasonable of the skeptic to insist that God should work a miracle, the effect of which would be to invalidate a Christian thesis. The miraculous transportation of the Statue of Liberty would disprove the Christian thesis that God does not coerce faith. God works miracles as credentials for, not as refutations of Christian beliefs.

"But why," you ask, "does not God coerce faith? It would take us all our time to avoid mistakes in conduct even if it were easy to avoid mistakes in belief."

People may be divided into two great classes. Those who go to the facts to discover what God has done, and what God has commanded, and those who reject all facts which conflict with their own preconceived view as to how God would behave, or what God would desire.

The man who forms his views on the evidence discovers that God does not, in point of fact, coerce faith. That is a fact, and that fact remains even if we are unable to explain it.

"Perhaps so," the skeptic might counter, "but still it would be easier to accept the fact that God does not coerce faith and to reject the alternative hypothesis that the evidence for Christianity is neither coercive nor even plausible, if you could suggest some reasonable explanation for God's reluctance to furnish completely-conclusive evidence of His Revelation."

Nothing is more dangerous or more presumptuous than to attempt to explain God's motives. I invariably distrust any sentence beginning, "God would not" or "God would," though I am prepared to accept evidence in support of such statements as, "God does" or "God did."

But to those who dogmatically assert that we attribute irrational conduct to God, we can reply with a tentative interpretation which refutes the charge. For if we can suggest any reasonable explanation, we need not prove that this particular explanation is true in order to refute the statement that no reasonable explanation is conceivable.

Question XX. Very well then. I'm all agog to hear your tentative explanation of God's reluctance to coerce faith.

PRIMER: (deceased) Rt. Rev. Msgr. William J. Flynn; Dr. Edward McCabe, uncle of Joe McCabe; sister of Dr. Kamm; friend of Cliff Letcher (Brown.); James Sullivan, friend of old students; aunt of Frs. Frank and John Cavanaugh; mother of Father Kenna, C.S.C. Ill, Mrs. Florence Towne; sister of Ernie Howard. Five special intentions.