

## COMMENTS ON “FAITH AND QUASI-FIDEISM,” BY EYOB ZEWDIE

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### BRIEF SUMMARY OF PAPER:

Two views of faith:

- A) Pritchard’s quasi-fideist view of faith.
  - a. (At least some) religious beliefs are hinge commitments, a-rational commitments that are insensitive to evidence.
  - b. Parity argument: non-religious beliefs are (or are based on) hinge commitments, so religious beliefs are just as (ir)rational as many everyday beliefs.
- B) Tripartite, Reformed view of Christian faith.
  - a. Three parts of faith: understanding, assent (of the gospel), trust (in the Spirit’s testimony).
  - b. Sin of unbelief: If you reject the Spirit’s testimony, you make God out to be a liar, which is morally wrong. (NB: could accept the tripartite view without accepting this).
  - c. (Different than the basic reformed epistemology thesis, that belief that God exists can be rational even if not based on an argument.)

Summary of main argument:

- 1) Tripartite view of faith is true.
- 2) Tripartite view conflicts with Pritchard’s view.
- 3) So, we should reject Pritchard’s view.

### THREE COMMENTS:

- 1) Agree that there are problems with Pritchard’s view.
  - Religious belief/faith isn’t (always) ir- or a-rational.
  - Furthermore, Pritchard’s view strikes me as somewhat uncreative. Faith can, for example, be steadfast in light of some counterevidence without being steadfast in light of any amount of counterevidence. The commitment-aspect of faith doesn’t force us to accept fideism.
- 2) Worry: It’s not clear to me that Pritchard’s view conflicts with the tripartite view.
  - Why couldn’t we have control over our deep, fundamental hinge commitments? Not clear why a choice couldn’t be involved here (and, FWIW, if a having choice is key, then this might be a problem for the tripartite view, insofar as it requires belief, since most think beliefs aren’t under our voluntary control.)
  - I don’t see why we couldn’t maintain that some hinge commitments are “bad” (either immoral or irrational)—so this could explain the moral “badness” of unbelief.
  - It also seems like the Spirit could be the source of hinges.
  - The tripartite view (at least as presented in this paper) also doesn’t really directly speak to normative questions (apart from sin of unbelief): e.g. how can faith be rational? Does faith go beyond the evidence? So it’s not even clear that it would conflict with quasi-fideism.
- 3) Worry: While the tripartite view of faith is *interesting*, I’m not convinced that it’s *true*.
  - I agree that biblical exegesis and tradition are also important for understanding Christian faith. But I worry that (i) we should consider Scripture as a whole, and not just one passage; (ii) as non-experts, we should be careful and defer to biblical studies scholars; and (iii) philosophical theorizing also has a large role to play here as well.
  - On (iii), there are lots of other views of Christian faith in the philosophy literature that are worth considering. There’s been some recent work challenging, e.g. the idea that Christian faith always requires belief. And many argue that Christian faith involves desire, which isn’t really addressed by the tripartite view.
  - Suppose there are genuine conflicts between the tripartite view and Pritchard’s. I worry Pritchard may simply just reject the tripartite view, or at least the aspects of it that conflict with his view (e.g. that unbelievers make God a liar).