

## CHAPTER SIX

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# The Fellowship of the Ninth Hour: Christian Reflections on the Nature and Value of Faith

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It is common for young Christians to go off to college assured in their beliefs but, in the course of their first year or two, they meet what appears to them to be powerful defenses of scientific naturalism and crushing critiques of the basic Christian story (BCS), and many are thrown into doubt. They think to themselves something like this:

To be honest, I am troubled about the BCS. While the problem of evil, the apparent cultural basis for the diversity of religions, the explanatory breadth of contemporary science, naturalistic explanations of religious experience and miracle reports, and textual and historical criticism of the Bible, among other things, don't make me believe the BCS *is false*, I am in serious doubt about it, so much so that I lack belief of it. In that case, how can I have Christian faith? And if I don't have faith, how can I keep on praying, attending church, affirming the creed, confessing my sins, taking the sacraments, singing the hymns and songs, and so on? I can't, unless I'm a hypocrite. So integrity requires me to drop the whole thing and get out.

Of course, our student is not alone. Many Christians find themselves for some portion of their lives somewhere on the trajectory from doubt to getting out. Indeed, Christians in the West struggle with intellectual doubt more than they used to, especially university-educated Christians.<sup>1</sup> What should we say to them? Some will say "Get out!," welcoming the development as a path to liberation. We'd like to explore a different response.

We begin by affirming the integrity these Christians display by aiming to live in accordance with their best judgment. Further, we can address the basis of their doubt. But we suspect that many of them—perhaps quite rightly—will still be in enough doubt to cancel belief. They have a problem, a practical problem: should I sacrifice my integrity

<sup>1</sup>See, e.g., Fisher 2017; Kosmin and Keysar 2009; Krause 2006; and The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2015.

to stay in, or should I preserve my integrity and get out? Call this *the problem of the trajectory from doubt to getting out*.

Christians generally have an interest in responding to this problem, not least because of the plummeting population of youth in western churches, many of whom leave precisely because of their doubt. For those of us who are not in doubt and who deem the grounds for the BCS adequate for belief, there is still the matter of relating well to those who think otherwise. We suspect that a satisfying response will require Christian communities to rethink what authentic participation requires cognitively, and to find ways to encourage doubters—young and old—to participate with integrity despite their doubt.

Notice that the problem presupposes that *if you have enough doubt to cancel belief, then you can't have faith*. We propose to examine this presupposition. Toward that end, we will assess three theories of faith, plump for one of them, and then apply it to the problem of the trajectory.

## I. BELIEF-ONLY

According to the first theory:

Belief-Only. For you to put or maintain faith in someone, in some capacity, is for you to believe that they will come through for you in that capacity.

So on Belief-Only, for you to put your faith in Dr. Huber, as a dentist, is for you to believe that she will come through for you as a dentist, and for you to put your faith in Jesus, as your Savior and Lord, is for you to believe that he will come through for you as Savior and Lord. Belief-Only is often qualified; for example, the belief must be based on testimony or insufficient evidence, or it must be accompanied by certainty or caused by an act of will. Since these qualifications have no bearing on our concerns, we set them aside.

We have three worries about Belief-Only.

First, you can believe that someone will come through in some capacity even if you oppose it or regard it as bad or undesirable; but you can't have faith in that case. That's why you would never have faith in Timothy McVeigh, as a terrorist, even though you believed that he will come through as one. That's why you wouldn't have faith in Satan, as a devil, even if you believed that he delivers all too well on that score. You oppose terrorism and devilry; you regard them as bad or undesirable. Faith, instead, involves (1) a positive evaluation of their coming through, regarding it as good or desirable, as well as (2) a positive conative posture toward their coming through, being for it, in favor of it, wanting it to be so, or even wanting to want it to be so—anything in virtue of which you care with positive valence about whether they come through—where the conative includes desire, will, and the emotions.

Second, you can believe that someone will come through for you in some capacity, and even want them to, without being disposed to rely on them in that capacity; but you cannot have faith in that case. Imagine Jesus calling someone to follow him. Suppose they want to follow him. Yet, due to the demands of discipleship—for example, giving up attachment to wealth, status, autonomy, and the like—they are conflicted and so, perhaps due to weakness of will, they walk away. They lack faith in Jesus *as Lord* since they are not disposed to rely on him in a way that is appropriate to putting faith in him *as Lord*. In short, if you have faith in someone, in some capacity, then you will be *disposed to rely*

on them in that capacity. (For our theory of relying, see Howard-Snyder and McKaughan, unpublished b.)

A third worry arises when we reflect on what makes faith valuable, notably the role that it plays in forming and maintaining relationships of *mutual faith and faithfulness*. Ryan Preston-Roedder (2018) observes three sources of value. First, when you put your faith in someone, as a spouse, or a friend, or the like, you are more likely to see and appreciate their potential and value in these capacities. Second, when you put your faith in someone, in a certain capacity, they are more likely to live up to your favorable view of them because your approval of and reliance on them gives them additional reason to come through for you in that capacity. Third, when you put your faith in someone, there's a sense in which you cast your lot with them; you make yourself vulnerable to them and you rely on them to respond faithfully. If they do respond faithfully, the result is a sort of solidarity, a solidarity that can increase when they reciprocate the faith you have put in them by putting their faith in you, and you respond faithfully. These observations make sense of Teresa Morgan's claim that, in the ancient Greco-Roman world, faith played a crucial role in forming and maintaining relationships of mutual faith and faithfulness "at every socio-economic level," "relationships of wives and husbands, parents and children, masters and slaves, patrons and clients, subjects and rulers, armies and commanders, friends, allies, fellow-human beings, gods and worshippers, and even fellow-animals" (2015: 120).

Now to our worry. Putting your faith in someone can help to promote and sustain valuable relationships in these three ways *only if* your faith is at least somewhat resilient in the face of challenges of various sorts. By way of illustration, unless the faith you put in your spouse can withstand the strains of marriage, your faith in them won't make these valuable things more likely. If you are disposed to pack your bags and head out the door at the first sign of them not coming through as a spouse, your "faith" in them will not make it more likely that you will see them as a spouse favorably, or that they will see themselves as a spouse favorably and act accordingly, or that you both experience marital solidarity. Nor will the relationship benefit from ways that resilient reliance itself contributes to stability and security (McKaughan 2017; Howard-Snyder and McKaughan unpublished a).

## II. RESILIENT RELIANCE

A second theory of faith, which we regard as a plausible understanding of faith as it is exhibited in *The Gospel According to Mark* (GMark), avoids all three worries about Belief-Only. According to our second theory:

Resilient Reliance. For you to put or maintain faith in a person in some capacity is (i) for you to have a positive evaluative-conative posture and a positive cognitive attitude toward their coming through in that capacity, and (ii) for you, in light of your posture and attitude, to be disposed both to rely on them to come through in that capacity and to overcome challenges to relying on them in this way.

(We distinguish faith from trust in McKaughan and Howard-Snyder, unpublished.) We defend our reading of GMark elsewhere (Howard-Snyder 2017), but here's a taste of the argument for it.

In the world of Mark's narrative, Jesus explicitly commends someone's faith three times, and on each occasion their most salient feature is *resilient reliance*, a disposition to overcome challenges to relying on Jesus and/or God to be or do something that is important to them.

Consider the woman with a hemorrhage (Mk 5:21-34) whom we will call "Veronica," in accordance with tradition. A synagogue leader named "Jairus" begs Jesus to come to his home to heal his dying daughter (v. 22).<sup>2</sup> Jesus consents and, as they walk together, a "large crowd" follows (v. 24). At the rear of the crowd is Veronica, who suffers from "a flow of blood" (continuous uterine bleeding), unable to find a cure, and getting worse (vv. 25-26). Mark says that "she had heard about Jesus" and that she knew of his ability to heal (v. 27). So she weaves her way through the crowd, which is "pressed in on him" (v. 31) trying to get close. When she does, she secretly touches his cloak from behind (v. 28). Immediately, she is healed (v. 29). Jesus senses that "power [has] gone forth from him," stops, pivots, and asks who touched his cloak (v. 30). The disciples balk at the question, given the size and nearness of the crowd (v. 31). Jesus persists. Eventually Veronica falls down before Jesus, "in fear and trembling", and tells him "the whole truth" (v. 33). As she finishes, he says, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (v. 34).

The narrative emphasizes how she relied on Jesus to heal her despite numerous obstacles to her acting on her faith in him. Mark says, "She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse" (5:26). Her condition, her feeling of hopelessness induced by twelve years of medical failure, her getting worse, and her anemia-burdened struggle to approach Jesus through the "large crowd" were all obstacles she overcame to get to Jesus. Moreover, the purity laws prohibited an unclean woman from mixing with the crowd and from touching nonfamilial men. In reaching out to Jesus, relying on him to heal her, she overcame her internalization of these prohibitions and fear of reprisal, and she may have even overcome a Torah-inspired fear that in touching a holy man she would die.

Now Jesus knew of her resilient reliance when, as she finished her story, he commended her faith. Indeed, resilient reliance seems the most evident fact about her. So it seems plausible that Jesus fastened on it when he commended her faith. The same goes for the characters in two other stories in which Jesus commends someone's faith: blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52) and the friends of the paralytic (Mk 2:1-12).

Very briefly, here are six considerations that underscore the centrality of resilient reliance to faith in GMark. First, as we just indicated, in three stories in which Jesus commends someone's faith, he fastens on their resilience in the face of challenges to relying on him to heal on their behalf. Second, in no other story does Jesus commend someone's faith; resilient reliance always attends commendation. Third, on four other occasions that Mark uses the Greek words for faith, he twice associates resilient reliance with faith—in the story of Jairus (Mk 5:21-24, 35-43) and the father of the demon-possessed son (Mk 9:14-29)—and he twice associates lack of resilient reliance with a lack of faith—in the disciples' lack of faith in him on the stormy sea (Mk 4:40) and their lack of faith in God to heal the demon-possessed boy (Mk 9:19). Fourth, in two other stories—the Syrophenician woman (Mk 7:24-30) and the woman who anoints Jesus at Bethany (Mk 14:3-9)—Mark does not use the Greek words for faith but

<sup>2</sup>Biblical quotations in this chapter are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

when Matthew and Luke, who relied on GMark as a source, retell these stories (the first in Mt. 15:21-28, the second in Lk 7:36-50), they see them as exemplars of faith, having Jesus explicitly commend them for their faith and, when he commends them, he plausibly fastens on their resilient reliance on him. Fifth, Mark encourages us to view Jesus as a role-model and, when we do, we see him as modeling a faith closely associated with resilient reliance, especially in his prayer in Gethsemane (Mk 14:32-42) and his execution on Golgotha (Mk 15:21-37), but also in the faith he maintains in his disciples. Sixth, as Teresa Morgan argues, in the Greco-Roman world surrounding the early churches, faith centrally involved resilient reliance in the face of challenges—especially, she repeatedly notes—in the face of fear, doubt, and skepticism. As such, faith held together relationships in times of crisis and, as such, it was considered a virtue (Morgan 2015: 7, 117, 120, 121).

These six points together strongly suggest that “without doubt, the leading characteristic of Markan faith is sheer dogged perseverance” in the presence of challenges to relying on Jesus and and/or God, as Christopher Marshall, the foremost expert on faith in GMark, puts it (1989: 237).

### III. BELIEF-PLUS

Consider now a third theory, which includes all the components that we think are needed for faith but adds a restriction on the positive cognitive attitude. Rather than saying that faith in someone, in some capacity, requires *some positive cognitive attitude or other* toward their coming through for you in that capacity, this third theory requires that the positive cognitive attitude in question is *belief* that that they *will* come through for you in that way. So we have

Belief-Plus. For you to put or maintain faith in a person in some capacity is (i) for you to have a positive evaluative-conative posture toward their coming through in that capacity and *believe* that they *will* come through in this way, and (ii) for you, in light of your posture and belief, to be disposed both to rely on them to come through in that capacity and to overcome challenges to relying on them in this way.

While Belief-Plus improves on Belief-Only, we suspect that its belief-condition goes too far. There are several reasons for this. We mention five.

*Reason 1.* The faith exhibited in GMark does not require such belief. Consider Veronica again. Although in the world of the story it was common knowledge that Jesus was *able* to heal, it was not a foregone conclusion that he *would* heal. Indeed, Veronica had plenty of evidence that counted against Jesus healing her. She had suffered medical failure for twelve long years and was only getting worse, despite expert treatment; moreover, by her lights, there was a very good chance that if she touched Jesus, a holy man, she would die, or be stoned for violating the purity laws. To suppose that in the face of such evidence Veronica nevertheless *believed* that Jesus *would* heal her is to uncharitably impute to her an irrational degree of credulity, especially when, in the world of the story, there is a semantically and culturally attuned option available (Morgan 2015): faith in Jesus to heal her without belief that he would heal her.

The same can be said about Jairus. In the world of the story, he has too much counterevidence to sensibly *believe* that his daughter *is* alive and so a candidate for healing. Mark highlights this fact repeatedly. First, the messengers come from Jairus’s house to inform him that “Your daughter is dead” (Mk 5:35). Second, when they arrive

at his home, they are met by “a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly” (v. 38), a ritual mourning for the dead. Third, after Jesus asserts that she is only sleeping, the ritual mourners laugh at the suggestion (v.40). Fourth, Jairus then “went in where the child was” and sees her with his own eyes (v. 40). Perhaps his wife cradled his daughter in her arms, crying while she stroked her hair; perhaps when their eyes met, she conveyed to him the hopelessness of the situation: it’s too late, she’s dead. In his telling of the story, Mark explicitly calls our attention to this incrementally mounting counterevidence. It seems uncharitable to attribute to Jairus the belief that his daughter is alive, especially when there is another reading available, one that ascribes no intellectual deficiency to Jairus and one that is well within the semantic space and first-century cultural understanding of *faith*: Jairus retains his faith in Jesus, to heal his daughter, from the beginning of the story until the end, even though just prior to the vindication of his faith, he lacks both the belief that she *is* alive and the belief that Jesus *will* heal her.

The faith of other minor characters in GMark seem plausibly seen in this light, too; especially Bartimaeus and the father of the demon-possessed son.

*Reason 2.* Some exemplars of faith lack the required belief or anything like it; indeed, some even lack belief that God exists.

Consider a Christian exemplar: Saint Teresa of Calcutta. In 1942, after what she took to be a call from the Lord, she vowed to give her life completely to him, no matter what, and to serve him in the poorest of the poor. At the time, she did not expect that the “no matter what” clause of her vow would include five decades of belief-canceling doubt. It appears from her private writings that she not only experienced the felt absence of God during that period but also experienced doubt so severe that she lacked belief. “*There is no One to answer my prayers,*” she wrote, “So many unanswered questions live within me—I am afraid to uncover them—because of the blasphemy.—*If there be God, please forgive me*” (Kolodiejchuk 2007: 186–8, emphasis added). Later she wrote,

In my soul I feel just that terrible pain of loss—of God not wanting me—of God not being God—*of God not really existing (Jesus, please forgive my blasphemies—I have been told to write everything).* The darkness that surrounds me on all sides—I can’t lift my soul to God—no light or inspiration enters my soul.—I speak of love for souls—of tender love for God—words pass through my lips—and *I long with a deep longing to believe them.*—What do I labour for? If there be no God—there can be no soul.—If there is no soul then Jesus—You also are not true. (192–3, emphasis added)

This was not a single occurrence but an experience that lasted from her late thirties until her death in her late eighties, the five-decade long crucible in which her sainthood was formed. In her retreat notes from 1959 she wrote,

Do I value the salvation of my soul? I don’t believe I have a soul. There is nothing in me. Am I working in earnest for the salvation of the souls of others? There was a burning zeal in my soul for souls from childhood until I said “yes” to God & then all is gone. *Now I don’t believe.* (349, emphasis added)

In 1965, she wrote, “And because *I want to believe*, I accept the darkness of faith with greater joy and confidence” (253, emphasis added). Her condition is such that, with respect to whether there are souls or whether there is a God, she can say only “Now I don’t believe,” “I want to believe,” and “I long with a deep longing to believe them.”

How are we to understand Saint Teresa? Early on, she described herself as having lost her faith (187). However, under the supervision of her spiritual director, she came

to a more mature understanding when she described her faith in Jesus with nine short words: “to live by faith and yet not to believe” (248). If we follow Saint Teresa in her later self-understanding, then we can see her as an exemplar of faith, resolving to act on the assumption that the BCS is true—and keeping her vow to serve Jesus despite her belief-canceling doubt.

Let us be clear. Even if Saint Teresa’s faith in the Christian God did not include belief that the BCS is true, she could not have had such faith while *disbelieving* the BCS. *Disbelief* is too negative a cognitive attitude for faith. Rather, you can have faith in the Christian God only if you have *some positive cognitive attitude or other* toward the BCS, something belief-like. Of course, belief itself is a belief-like attitude. Early on in her life, Saint Teresa believed that *the BCS is true*. But as her doubt grew and crowded out her belief, perhaps another belief replaced it; perhaps she believed that *the BCS is more likely than not*, or perhaps she believed that *the BCS is more likely than any credible alternative worldview*. Alternatively, perhaps another kind of positive cognitive attitude toward the BCS replaced it, a *beliefless* positive cognitive attitude.

In this connection, many people say that belief is not the only positive cognitive attitude one can take toward a proposition; for example they distinguish believing something from accepting it, trusting that it is true, imaginatively assenting to it, hoping that it is true, and giving it some degree of credence (Alston 1996; Audi 2011; McKaughan 2013; Schellenberg 2016; Buchak 2018). We suggest that we might usefully distinguish *believing* something from *belieflessly assuming* it. We develop this suggestion elsewhere (Howard-Snyder 2019a, 2019b; McKaughan and Howard-Snyder forthcoming); here we merely illustrate. Consider the following case:

An army general faces enemy forces. She needs to act. Her scouts give some information about the disposition of the enemy but not nearly enough to settle whether they are situated one way rather than several others. So she assumes that they are situated in the way that seems the least false of the credible options given her information, say, that they are scattered throughout the boulder field near the mountain peak. Then, acting on that assumption, she disperses her forces in the way that seems most likely to thwart the enemy if they are situated in the boulder field, say, a pincer movement with mortar shelling.

Notice that we can easily imagine that, although the general is in doubt about the enemy’s position, and although she neither believes nor disbelieves that they are positioned in any particular way, she *acts on the assumption* that they are in the boulder field. That is, she *assumes—belieflessly assumes—that* the enemy is in the boulder field, and so she acts accordingly.

Perhaps something similar was true of Saint Teresa. She was in doubt about the BCS, and so she neither believed nor disbelieved it. Even so, we can easily imagine that she acted on the *beliefless* assumption that it was true, and so she acted accordingly: she maintained her faith in God despite her doubt, she remained committed to her vows to serve Jesus in the poorest of the poor, and she continued to pray, to confess her sins, to take the sacraments, and so on, relying on God—if such there be, as she would say—to save souls and redeem sinners, herself included.

Faith Glavey Pawl (2018) suggests that there is a better way to understand Saint Teresa’s situation, one that sees her as an exemplar of Christian faith but *not* an exemplar of *beliefless* Christian faith. Suppose we agree, says Pawl, that (1) Saint Teresa is an exemplar of Christian faith and that (2) she experienced unbelief of the BCS for most of her adult

life. Nevertheless, (3) she might also have still believed the BCS. True enough, this is a paradoxical situation, but it is not impossible. More importantly, it follows that, on Belief-Plus, she had faith in the Christian God. After all, she satisfied the belief condition in addition to the other conditions for faith, even though she also experienced unbelief of the BCS for most of her adult life. Consequently, the exemplar-status of Saint Teresa's faith does not favor Resilient Reliance over Belief-Plus.

To get a better understanding of Pawl's proposal, let's consider different things she might mean by her claim that (2) Saint Teresa experienced "unbelief" during most of her adult life.

First, by "unbelief" Pawl might mean *disbelief*. In that case, the suggestion is that Saint Teresa both believes the BCS and disbelieves the BCS for most of her adult life; since she believed, she satisfied the belief condition of Belief-Plus. We have two concerns about this suggestion: One concern is that if you believe that *p* you'll possess a tendency to inwardly assent to *p* when *p* comes to mind, and a tendency to outwardly assent to *p* when asked whether *p*. But if you disbelieve that *p*, you'll lack both of those tendencies. You can't both possess and lack the same tendencies, and so you can't both believe *p* and disbelieve that *p*, not even if you are a saint. Another concern is that Saint Teresa did not disbelieve the BCS. That's because she had faith in the Christian God, and no one can have faith in the Christian God while *disbelieving* that the Christian God exists.

Second, by "unbelief" Pawl might mean "lack of belief." In that case, the suggestion is that Saint Teresa both had and lacked belief of the BCS for most of her adult life; since she had belief, she satisfied the belief condition of Belief-Plus. We have one concern about this suggestion: it asserts a logical contradiction.

Third, by "unbelief" Pawl might mean "doubt." In that case, the suggestion is that Saint Teresa both believes and doubts the BCS for most of her adult life; since she believed, she satisfied the belief condition of Belief-Plus, despite her doubt. Before we assess this suggestion, we need to say a word or two about doubt.

We must distinguish *having doubts* about *p*, *being in doubt* about *p*, and *doubting that p*. For one to have doubts about *p*—note the "s"—is for one to have what appear to one to be grounds to believe not-*p* and, as a result, for one to be at least somewhat less inclined to believe *p*. For one to be in doubt about *p* is for one neither to believe nor disbelieve *p* as a result of one's grounds for *p* seeming to be roughly on a par with one's grounds for not-*p*. One can *have doubts* without *being in doubt*, and one can *be in doubt* without *having doubts*. We must distinguish *having doubts* and *being in doubt* from *doubting that*. If one *doubts that p*, one is at least strongly inclined to disbelieve *p*; *having doubts* and *being in doubt* lack that implication.

With this threefold distinction in hand, we return to the third interpretation of Pawl (3), according to which unbelief is doubt. One concern is that if "doubt" means "doubt that," then the suggestion is that Saint Teresa both believes and doubts that the BCS is true. Doubting that the BCS is true neighbors disbelieving it, and so our two concerns about disbelief above apply to this suggestion as well. A second concern is that if "doubt" means "has doubts"—*mere* doubts, not doubts whose cumulative force results in being in doubt or doubting that—then the suggestion is that Saint Teresa both believes and has some doubts about the BCS. Our concern about this suggestion is that it misrepresents Saint Teresa. She did not simply have mere doubts about the BCS. Her doubt was belief-canceling doubt. What is our evidence for this? Our evidence is her own self-description, quoted above. She says that she lacks belief. She says that she desperately wants to believe. Moreover, these are not things she writes casually, in passing, or in a dark moment;

rather, they are her considered view of herself, expressed to her confessors and spiritual directors. She worries over a prolonged period that it is blasphemous even to confess her doubts, which she would not have done if her doubt was not belief-canceling. We submit that it would be uncharitable to deny her self-description. A third concern is that if “doubt” means “in doubt,” then the suggestion is that Saint Teresa both believed and was in doubt about the BCS. Our concern with this suggestion is that if you are in doubt about whether  $p$ , then you will lack two tendencies that you will possess if you believe that  $p$ , namely a tendency to inwardly assent to  $p$  when  $p$  comes to mind and a tendency to outwardly assent to  $p$  when asked whether  $p$ . Since no one can both possess and lack the same tendencies, Saint Teresa did not believe the BCS while being in doubt about it. Hence, while we are grateful to Pawl for her proposal regarding Saint Teresa, it does not appear to hold up to scrutiny.

Before leaving Saint Teresa, notice that, if she is an exemplar of Christian faith, and if she nevertheless suffered from belief-canceling doubt about the BCS, she exhibits a chief value of the resilience of faith: it can counteract the doubt that might otherwise end a valuable relationship of mutual faith and faithfulness.

Let’s consider a nonreligious exemplar of faith. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, the hero Odysseus tries to return to his wife Penelope after the decade-long Trojan War, but he is prevented from doing so for another ten years. Imagine what that was like for Penelope. When Odysseus departs, she has faith in him, as her husband. Naturally enough, she also believes that he exists.

But now fast-forward twenty years. Does her faith in him require belief that he will come through for her as a husband? Does it require belief that he exists? Penelope is not naïve. Perhaps Odysseus has betrayed her. Is it likely that a strapping champion such as him could resist the siren calls of beautiful young maids and goddesses all that time? Perhaps he’s not even alive. Might he have been killed? Imagine that she receives reports of his capture, reports that raise considerably the likelihood that he is dead, reports that put her in considerable doubt about whether he is alive. Can she nevertheless persevere in her faith in him?

Clearly enough, she could still regard it as a good thing if he is still alive, and she could long for it to be true with all her heart. Moreover, she could still act on the (beliefless) assumption that he is alive, continuing to rely on him to keep his husbandly promises and to make every effort to return. And she could exhibit resilience in the face of challenges to living in light of her reliance on him, turning away suitors and expressing her resolve to remain committed to him by, for example, setting a place for him at the table each evening and entreating the gods for his safe return.

Of course, Penelope’s doubt may present motivational challenges or temptations that she would be less inclined to face if she believed. And maybe it would take heroic grit for her to persevere in the face of such challenges. But none of that implies that she cannot retain her faith in Odysseus in the absence of belief that he is alive. Moreover, there is nothing about the noncognitive components of faith that require that she believes that he is alive; nor does there seem to be anything else that requires it. What, then, would keep us from attributing faith to her?

Upshot: exemplars of faith seem to pose a difficulty for Belief-Plus.

*Reason 3.* A third reason to think that the belief-condition of Belief-Plus goes too far observes that types of positive cognitive attitude other than belief can play the same role in faith that Belief-Plus assigns to belief alone. According to Belief-Plus, you have faith in someone, in some capacity, only if you *believe* that they will come through in that way.

No other type of attitude will do. Not seeming, not credence, not trust, not acceptance, not hope, not beliefless assuming. Only belief is allowed, even though other attitude-types can play any role that belief plays in faith.

*Reason 4.* According to Belief-Plus, when belief is the positive cognitive attitude that you have while you have faith in someone, in some capacity, the content of that belief must be that *they will come through* in that capacity. No “thinner” content will do: not that *it’s likely that they will come through*, not that *it’s more likely than not*, not that *there’s a good enough chance to risk relying on them*, and so on for a long list of ineligible “thinner” propositions. Only the “thickest” proposition that they *will* come through is allowed, even though “thinner” contents can suffice to play the role that the “thickest” one does in faith.

*Reason 5.* Faith can’t play the role that it is supposed to play in a well-lived life—particularly in moments of crisis and doubt—unless we back off the thickest belief condition that Belief-Plus lays down. The role of faith is to render you resilient in the face of challenges to relying on its object for something that matters to you, and it serves this role partly by responding to new counterevidence. While new counterevidence might induce doubt about whether someone will come through for you, faith tends to help keep you behaviorally on track, to help keep you from being deterred or disheartened into inaction. Due to its belief-condition, Belief-Plus cannot account for faith’s role when counterevidence comes in or one runs into other obstacles—just the circumstances in which it is most needed.

By way of illustration, consider a case of faith in oneself. Imagine “a first-generation college student—a child of Mexican immigrants—who discovers, upon entering college, that many of her classmates and teachers hold rather dim views of Hispanic students’ drive and intellectual ability” (Preston-Roedder 2018: 175). Suppose these dim views constitute new counterevidence to her belief that she will succeed as a student, so much so that they induce in her belief-canceling doubt about whether she will come through. However, if she has faith in herself, as a student, her resilience in the face of this counterevidence might help her to overcome the debilitating effects of her belief-canceling doubt, for example, by helping her to keep her nose in the books and motivating her to say “no” to extracurricular temptations. Her faith in herself, as a student, would not help her overcome her doubt if it required her to believe that she *will* succeed.

#### IV. REVISITING THE PROBLEM OF THE TRAJECTORY

Having argued for Resilient Reliance and having raised several objections to Belief-Plus, let’s return to the problem with which we began. What might the Resilient Reliance view of faith counsel us to say to our struggling Christian treading the path from doubt to getting out? Perhaps it would counsel something like this:

Do not give up your concern for the truth or your aim to live with integrity. There seems, however, a way for you to remain a practicing Christian without giving up either of them.

First it is obvious that you care about whether the BCS is true; your distress makes that clear. Moreover, it is obvious that you want to live in light of the BCS, although you are struggling with a serious intellectual challenge on that score. Further, it is obvious that you are resilient in the face of this challenge. In fact, it’s amazing how you have hung in there despite your doubt. But here’s the good news: those three

things about you are exactly what faith looks like in the circumstances that you now find yourself. In fact, you not only do not *lack* faith; you are one of its exemplars. The place you are in right now—exhibiting resilience in the face of intellectual challenges to living in light of your faith—that is exactly where Saint Teresa found herself, and it is arguably where Jesus found himself on the cross, feeling abandoned by God and in serious doubt about God’s faithfulness and love, “teetering on the edge between disillusionment and faith,” as Father John Neuhaus put it (2000). The main question is whether you can find a way to follow their example, and in your case that boils down to whether you can make peace with your doubt while living with integrity.

Perhaps you can. That’s because, although believing the BCS right now is out of the question for you, your doubt need not prevent you from resolving to act on the assumption that the BCS is true. That’s the sort of thing spouses do when things are going especially badly, that’s what parents do when their children go through a rough adolescence, that’s what friends do when changes threaten to tear them apart. In fact, it’s what many people do in all kinds of situations in a well-lived life. We retain our faith in another, despite our doubt about whether they will come through, or even whether they exist, and we do so by acting on the assumption that things will turn out all right in the long run. And you can do the same: despite your doubt, you can act on the assumption that the BCS is true and, on the basis of that assumption, you can continue to follow Jesus, by beliefless faith and not by sight. Moreover, you can do it with integrity because you are not believing against your evidence.

So if what is really tearing you up is that you are in doubt and so you lack the faith required to live with integrity, we suggest that you need a better understanding of faith: one according to which faith is compatible with serious doubt, even belief-canceling doubt; one that allows you to own your doubt, to struggle with it in all honesty, while you continue to practice with integrity.

That is how Resilient Reliance solves the problem of the trajectory from doubt to getting out.

Of course, the friend of Belief-Plus will respond differently to the problem. Faith Glavey Pawl (2018) rightly noticed that the Resilient Reliance solution presupposes that Christian practice with integrity and sincerity requires Christian faith. That’s not so obviously true, however. A fair bit of Christian practice—for example, attending church services, petitionary prayer, pitching in here and there in the parish, church-related social justice activism, and so on—can be grounded in something other than faith, without a lack of integrity or sincerity. For example, couldn’t someone align themselves with the Christian community and practice with integrity and sincerity even if they simply open themselves to experiencing God or had the thinnest of hope in God? Couldn’t such openness or thin hope motivate that alignment and practice? If so, Christian practice with integrity does not require Christian faith.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps that’s right. However, we suspect that there is more at stake here for the Christian community. We want to make three points in this connection.

First, there are norms in the Church according to which—even if one opens themselves to experiencing God or puts thin hope in God, and even if their openness or thin hope motivates their alignment and practice—so long as one lacks *faith* in God or *faith* that the BCS is true, one is prohibited from full participation. For example, in

<sup>3</sup>See Cuneo (2017a,b); Muyskens (1979).

many denominations, those who lack faith and so cannot sincerely confess faith, are not permitted to be baptized, affirm the creeds, practice the liturgy, complete confirmation, become members, take the Eucharist, be married in the church, or serve as leaders. Faith plays a role in Christian theology and practice that openness and thin hope do not. This is not the place to explain why. We only note that the Church picks out faith, and not openness or thin hope, as the central response God desires of humans, and that, in the **NT**, faith, and not openness or thin hope, is closely associated with salvation; moreover, people are rebuked for their lack of faith.<sup>4</sup>

Second, suppose we affirm these faith-requiring norms for full participation. Then, if we also insist, along with Belief-Plus, that people cannot have faith in God unless they *believe* that God *will* come through for them with respect to what they are relying on God for, and if we also insist that people cannot have faith that the BCS is true unless they *believe* that the BCS *is* true, our faith-requiring norms will preclude from full participation people who struggle with belief-canceling doubt. At best, such people will be declared to have only “pretend faith,” not “genuine faith.”

Third, if those faith-requiring norms rest on misunderstandings of the nature of faith, and if faith is compatible with belief-canceling doubt, then, unless the Church reforms its view of faith, it will continue to contribute needlessly to a problem about full participation and belonging in the Church that is increasingly being addressed in the West by walking out the door.

For this reason, we submit that the Church today would do well to take with utmost seriousness the idea of beliefless Christian faith of the sort we have plumped for in these pages.

## V. EPILOGUE

One final thought. During his first Roman imprisonment, Paul suffered just as you might expect. What’s more, he had taken quite a fall. Once a Hebrew of Hebrews, an esteemed rabbinic scholar, maximally zealous, and with respect to living the law, faultless—now he sat in a Roman prison. That’s when he wrote these words to the church at Philippi:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (Phil. 3:7-12)

Among other things, Paul says here that he wants to know “the fellowship of sharing in [Christ’s] sufferings, becoming like him in his death.” This suggests that there’s a fellowship whose members draw near to the Lord *through sharing in his suffering, becoming like him*

<sup>4</sup>Jn 3:16, 5:24, 11:25, 20:31; Rom. 1:16, 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 1:9; Eph. 1:13.

*in his death*. This may involve the suffering of a body broken by disease, injury, or age; or it may involve the suffering of ridicule, ostracism, or martyrdom.

But Jesus knew another kind of suffering. Hear again a crucial part of the Great Passion: “At the ninth hour he cried with a loud voice ... ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” We can easily imagine that, for Jesus, these words expressed, among other things, the suffering of doubt about God’s love and faithfulness, perhaps even God’s existence. Either way, we submit that if there is such a thing as “the fellowship of sharing in [Christ’s] sufferings, becoming like him in his death,” and if one way to become like him in his death is to be in belief-canceling doubt, then we should expect to find among ourselves some—perhaps even many—who are called to become like Jesus in his death, in this specific way.

Of course, suffering in this or any other way is not to be sought for its own sake. Even so, some of the New Testament authors speak of Christ’s followers finding a kind of union, fellowship, and purpose in persevering through suffering in the shared faith that the ninth hour will be followed by the third day.<sup>5</sup> We find it interesting that, at the same retreat in 1959 where Saint Teresa confessed “Now I don’t believe,” she also affirmed a readiness to accept her suffering out of love for Jesus. Elsewhere she wrote, “You have tasted the chalice of His agony—and what will be your reward my dear sister? More suffering and a deeper likeness to Him on the Cross” (Kolodiejchuk 2007: 155–6).

Far from being on their way out of the Church, those on the trajectory from doubt to getting out may well be members of a fellowship that draws near to the Lord through experientially identifying with his suffering doubt. If there is such a fellowship, what should we call it? Perhaps we should call it *The Fellowship of the Ninth Hour*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Rom. 5:1-5, 8:17-21, and 12:12; 2 Cor. 1:3-4, 4:17, 8:1-2, and 12:10; Phil. 1:29-30 and 3:10; Mt. 5:10-12, 10:38; Lk. 6:22-23; Acts 5:41, 9:16, 14:22; Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 3:12; Jam. 1:2-3, 12; 1 Pet. 1:6-9, 2:19, 2:20-21, 3:14, 4:12-14, and 5:9-10; Rev. 2:10.

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