

The Stump-Aquinas-Dawkins Thesis

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Abstract. Stump, Aquinas, and Dawkins & Company seem to think that objectual faith—"faith in"—is identical with propositional belief. I argue that they are wrong. More plausibly, objectual faith requires belief of the relevant proposition(s). There are other forms of faith: propositional faith, allegiant faith, and affective or global faith. We might conjecture that each of these forms of faith likewise require belief of the relevant propositions. More weakly, we might conjecture that at least one of them does. This latter thesis I call the Stump-Aquinas-Dawkins Thesis (SAD). In this essay, I develop one reason against SAD and criticize seven reasons for it.

Alex Rosenberg began a recent debate with William Lane Craig on the question of whether faith in God is reasonable by declaring that it was impossible since "by definition, faith is belief in the absence of evidence".¹ Steven Pinker agrees: faith, he wrote while trashing religion in the *Harvard Crimson*, is "believing something without good reasons to do so".² Not to be outdone by his fellow, self-styled "brights," Richard Dawkins goes one step further: "Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence".³ But no one goes as far as Mark Twain, according to whom faith is "believing what you know ain't so".⁴ These cultured despisers of the religious—the "dims," apparently—share in common the idiosyncratic view that faith is, as a matter of necessity, epistemically defective.⁵ But they share another view that is far from idiosyncratic, the view that faith is propositional belief.

Some of Abraham's children seem to agree with this second view. Take Eleonore Stump, for example. Commenting on Aquinas's theory of the atonement, she writes:

To ally oneself with Christ's making satisfaction involves, first of all, having faith in his passion. That is, it involves believing that the incarnate Christ suffered for the sake of humans and in their stead. But this belief by itself is not enough.... So, Aquinas says, for Christ's passion to be applied to a person, that person must have both faith and charity. He must not only believe that Christ has made satisfaction for his sin; he must also have the love of God and goodness which makes him glad of the fact....⁶

In this passage, Stump identifies a person's "faith in [Christ's] passion" with her *believing that* he suffered for the sake of humans and in their stead, with her *believing that* he has made satisfaction for her sin. More accurately, Stump says that this is Aquinas's view. Since she does not distance herself from it, and since she is well-known as a disciple of the Angelic Doctor, I will attribute his view to her as well.

Now, we might insist that Stump simply does not understand Aquinas. That would be brash, however. Moreover, she is not alone in her understanding of Aquinas on the nature of faith. Richard Swinburne, for example, understands Aquinas in the same way. He tells us that "the Thomistic view of faith" "is the view that, with one addition, and two qualifications, to have faith in God is simply to have a belief-that, to believe that God exists."⁷ The addition "is that to have faith in God, you have to believe not merely that there is a God, but certain other propositions as well," "propositions about what God is like and what acts He has done, and you have to believe these latter propositions on the ground that God has revealed them".⁸ The first qualification "is that the belief that is

¹ Rosenberg and Craig 2013.

² Pinker 2006.

³ http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/r/richard_dawkins.html. On the Brights Movement, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brights_movement and <http://www.the-brights.net/>.

⁴ <http://quotationsbook.com/quote/14040/>.

⁵ For criticism of this the more modest view that one can have faith that something is so only if one has *insufficient* reason or evidence for believing it, see Howard-Snyder 2013, 368-370.

⁶ Stump 2003, 439-440; cf. Rea 2009, 277-78.

⁷ Swinburne 2005, 138.

⁸ Op cit. The idea that to have faith in someone involves believing certain propositions about them on the basis of someone's testimony is an old one. We find it, for example, in Augustine. It's also puzzling. Why would anyone

involved is a belief which does not amount to scientific knowledge (*scientia*)” and the second qualification is that faith is not, as such, “meritorious” since it is meritorious only if it is “voluntary” and “formed by love [*caritas*]”.⁹ But, as Swinburne himself notes, neither the addition nor the two qualifications undermine his claim that, for Aquinas, “faith by itself is a very intellectual thing” (141), “a matter of having certain beliefs” (140), a “theoretical conviction” (138). So Stump is not the only one to think that, according to Aquinas, faith—note well: faith, not faith formed by charity—is propositional belief.

Notice that Stump, Aquinas, and Dawkins & Co. seem to be speaking of what I will call *objectual faith*, the psychological attitude picked out by uses of the locution “S has faith *in* x,” where x typically takes as instances an expression that refers to an object, or some feature or activity of an object, as in “He has faith in God,” or “She has faith in Christ’s having made satisfaction for her sin”. And they seem to identify objectual faith with propositional belief. Of course, brights and Roman Catholics are not alone on this score. Some Protestants make this identification as well. For example, in the aforementioned debate with Rosenberg on the question of whether *faith in* God is reasonable, without so much as a pause to consider what the question was asking, Craig launched into his usual defense of the proposition that *belief that* God exists is reasonable, apparently taking it for granted that to address the latter question is to address the former. Similarly, in its written introduction to an online recording of that debate, Biola Open states that “the reasonableness of faith in God” is an “all important and pervasive question” and “[o]ne’s answer to it will impact nearly all *other beliefs* one holds” (my emphasis). It’s not too much of a stretch to say that, according to many people, secular and religious, objectual faith is identical with propositional belief.

The problem, however, is that this identification is false—for at least one of four reasons. (1) Propositional belief takes a proposition as its object, but objectual faith does not. Of course, we say things like “She has faith in Christ’s having made satisfaction for her sin,” but *Christ’s having made satisfaction for her sin* names a state of affairs and not a proposition, and a proposition, not a state of affairs, is the object of a propositional belief—or so many of us are inclined to think.¹⁰ (2) More importantly, objectual faith is factive, but propositional belief is not. That is, a true utterance of a sentence of the form “S has faith in x” entails the existence of x, while a true utterance of a sentence of the form “S believes that x is F” does not entail the existence of x, nor does it entail the truth of *x is F*—or so many of us think.¹¹ (3) Much more importantly, one has faith in something only if one entrusts one’s welfare to it in some way, but one can believe something without entrusting one’s welfare to whatever it is that the belief is about. (4) Most importantly of all, you can believe that someone exists or that someone has done something on your behalf without being *for* their existence or without looking *with favor* on what they have done; but you cannot have faith in someone or what they have done on your behalf unless you are *for* their existence or look with favor on what they have done. That’s why a member of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party might believe that Mengistu Haile Mariam exists, but lack faith in him. That’s why you might believe that your 15-year old son has sprayed your rhododendrons for you when he proudly tells you he’s done as much, but lack faith in what he’s done on your behalf since you know he can’t tell the difference between Roundup and Miracle-Gro. Objectual faith requires a pro-attitude toward its object; propositional belief does not.¹²

So Stump, Aquinas, and the Dawkins Bunch are wrong, it seems to me. Propositional belief is not identical with objectual faith. Nevertheless, objectual faith might *require* propositional belief. None of my reasons for lack of identity rule out that possibility. Moreover, it is much more plausible that one’s faith in God requires that one believe that God exists, that one’s faith in Christ’s having made satisfaction for one’s sins requires that one believe that he has done as much, and that, more generally, one’s faith in someone or someone’s having done something on one’s behalf requires that one believe that that person exists or has done the thing in question.

Objectual faith is not the only form of faith. For example, there is *propositional faith*, i.e. the attitude picked out by uses of the locution “S has *faith that* p,” as when a woman has faith that God will keep his promises or when a man has faith that the basic Jewish story is true. Moreover, there is *allegiant faith*, i.e. the attitude picked out by uses of the locutions “S is *keeping faith* with y,” or “x is *faithful to* y,” as when a wife keeps faith with her

suppose that a mother cannot have faith in her son even though her faith does not involve believing anything about him on the basis of testimony? After all, she doesn’t need testimony since she knows him personally.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

¹⁰ See McGrath 2012.

¹¹ See Sessions 1994, 27, and Audi 2011, 56.

¹² Contemporary consenting voices include Adams 1995, Alston 1996 and 2007, Audi 1991 and 2011, McKaughan 2013, Schellenberg 2005 and 2009.

husband or a person keeps faith with a dear friend.¹³ Furthermore, there is being a *person of faith*, that is, a person who has *affective* or *global faith*, as it has been called.¹⁴ A person of faith takes up or finds herself with an overall stance or orientation toward matters that govern important aspects of her life, a stance or orientation that structures those aspects into a unified whole. Although when we speak of a person of faith, we typically mean a person of religious faith, there are secular manifestations of this form of faith as well, such as Marxists and the brights.

Are there forms of faith other than the four I've mentioned? Perhaps, but I suspect that we can understand them in terms of these four. To illustrate: sometimes we speak of believing *on faith* or believing *by faith* as when we say, e.g., "She believes on faith that Jesus is the Messiah" or "He believes by faith that God made an eternal covenant with Abraham". We might understand this sort of expression as attributing to her or him *faith in* someone who testifies to Jesus being the Messiah or testifies to God's having made an eternal covenant with Abraham, and on the basis of her or his faith in that person, believing that to which she or he testifies. In other words, insofar as believing on faith involves faith, it involves faith in someone, or perhaps faith that they are trustworthy with respect to that which they testify; thus, believing on faith and believing by faith is not a distinct form of faith in addition to the four I have mentioned.

According to Stump, Aquinas, and Dawkins and his friends your faith in someone or something they have done on your behalf requires your believing that they exist or that they have done it. For each of the other three forms of faith that I have identified, we might construct a similar thesis. We might say, as many have said, that your faith that thus-and-so requires your believing that thus-and-so. Moreover, we might say that your keeping faith with another, your being faithful to them, requires your believing that they exist or that your allegiance to them is worthwhile, or something of that sort. Finally, we might say that your affective or global faith requires your believing of whatever it is toward which you have a unifying stance or orientation that it is the case, or more plausibly that it is good or desirable.

In what follows, I aim to examine each of these four theses. It would be useful to have a way to refer to them collectively. Since Stump, Aquinas, and Dawkins and his crew are our entry point into this examination, I will collectively refer to these four theses as the *Stump-Aquinas-Dawkins Thesis*, although, strictly speaking, those three thinkers seem only to say that objectual faith requires the relevant propositional beliefs. But it would certainly be in the spirit of what they say to extend their claim to these other forms of faith. After all, if you think that a woman has faith in her son only if she believes that he exists, why wouldn't you also think that she has faith that he'll flourish in adulthood only if she believes that he will, and that she is faithful to him only if she believes that he exists or that her allegiance to him is worthwhile, and that she has affective or global faith only if she believes the relevant propositions? Although the latter three theses are not entailed by the first, they seem to be at home with it.

Before I begin my examination of the Stump-Aquinas-Dawkins Thesis (*SAD*, for short), a couple of preliminaries are in order.

First, someone might hear the denial of *SAD*—i.e. the denial of the disjunction of the aforementioned four theses—as the claim that you can have at least one of those four forms of faith even though you don't believe the relevant proposition(s). That much would be right. But people sometimes hear something else, namely the claim that you can have at least one of those forms of faith even though you *disbelieve* the relevant proposition(s). This last claim is false, in my book. Rather, we should take the claim that one can have one of those four forms of faith even though you don't believe the relevant proposition(s) as the claim that you can have faith even though you *lack* belief of them, which is not at all the same as *disbelieving* them.

Second, I have argued elsewhere that faith that *p* does not require belief that *p*, for four reasons.¹⁵ (1) Belief that *p* is incompatible with degrees of doubt with which faith that *p* is compatible. (2) If you believe that *p*, then you'll have a strong tendency to feel surprise upon suddenly discovering that *p* is false, whereas if you have faith that *p*, you need not have any such tendency. (3) You can have faith that *p* even if you don't believe that *p* but rather believe that *p* is *likely*, or believe that *p* is *twice as likely as not*, and so on. (4) Although propositional faith arguably requires what we might call a "positive cognitive stance" toward its object, something other than belief can play that role, e.g. propositional acceptance, propositional trust, and propositional assuming.¹⁶

¹³ Audi 2011, 62.

¹⁴ "Global faith" is Audi's term; see his 2011, 57-58. "Affective faith" is Kvanvig's term; see his 2013, unpublished a, and unpublished b. See also Dewey 1934, chapter 1.

¹⁵ Howard-Snyder 2013; cp. Audi 2011.

¹⁶ On propositional acceptance, see Alston 1996, Howard-Snyder 2013, 361-362, and Howard-Snyder 2016. On propositional trust, see Audi 2011, 68-80, and Frost-Arnold 2014. On propositional assuming, see Howard-Snyder 2013, 363-367, Howard-Snyder 2016, xxx, and Howard-Snyder unpublished. See also McKaughan 2013 and unpublished.

These considerations target the claim that faith that *p* requires belief that *p*. Might they be tailored to target each of the other three disjuncts of SAD? I suspect so, but I won't pursue the matter here. On this occasion, I'd like to develop another line of thought to supplement these four. Without needed qualification, and speaking generally, not about any particular form of faith, the thought is this: faith is *for* something, it has a purpose, a function, a telos, an aim in a healthy psyche; faith does something for the person who has it. And what it does not imply that it requires propositional belief of the relevant propositions. Even so, there might be sufficient reason to think that faith requires belief of the relevant propositions, after all. But what reasons that I have been able to discover are failures. I conclude that the friends of SAD must explain why it is that we should not, at the very least, be deeply suspicious of their thesis.

So what is faith for? What is its purpose, its function, its telos, its aim in a healthy psyche?

Well, when we look at objectual faith, allegiant faith, and propositional faith in their natural home, the domain of personal human relationships, I submit that we can see that their function is to provide the stability and impetus to help us get through the variety of difficulties we sometimes face in those relationships. This basic fact about faith shows up in, among other places, the perseverance characteristic of maintaining faith in one's spouse through the vicissitudes of marriage, in the steadfastness characteristic of keeping faith with an old friend through the changes she undergoes, and in the resilience to counterevidence characteristic of faith that one's children will flourish as adults despite adolescent indications to the contrary.

Of course, faith functions outside the domain of personal human relationships. You can have faith in your hiking sticks; you can keep faith with your country, its ideals and institutions and laws, and you can have faith that Russell Wilson will recover from his 2015 Super Bowl debacle.¹⁷ And, in each of these cases, the function of the form of faith in question is to help you meet challenges one might encounter in relation to the object of faith. Moreover, being a person of faith—that is, possessing affective or global faith—seems to have less to do with personal relationships than it does with ordering one's own life. Nevertheless, in discussing this form of faith, Kvanvig perceptively highlights this basic fact about faith when he describes a person of faith as one who possesses “an orientation or disposition toward retaining [a] goal or plan or project in the face of whatever difficulties are encountered”.¹⁸ We need not go so far as to say *whatever* difficulties, nor need we restrict the object of affective or global faith to plans, goals, and projects; persons, grand narratives, and worldviews might be its object as well. These caveats aside, Kvanvig's remark seems spot on.

For some of us, faith even forms the foundation of inquiry. Impressed by the epistemic circularity that infects our every effort to endorse reflectively the reliability of our cognitive capacities—which is an inescapable presupposition of any inquiry whatsoever—some of us nevertheless have faith that the object of our inquiries is capable of being understood and faith in our capacities to understand it.¹⁹ Moreover, we strive to be faithful to our aim to gain understanding and keep faith with a community of inquirers who share it with us. In fact, our pursuit of understanding might be so central to our lives and bring together so many things that we regard as important, we might well be called people of *inquisitive faith*.

But no matter where faith is found, whether in relation to other people, our sports gear, our inquiries, our life's vocation, or elsewhere, and no matter which form it might take, it will bear some semblance of its purpose: to give us the stomach to surmount obstacles that come our way.

As it is with faith generally, so it is with religious faith. You can have faith in the Lord, but only if you have a tendency to persevere through the ups and downs of that relationship. You can keep faith with the people of God, but only if you have a tendency to stick with them through thick and thin. You can be faithful to the Lord and his calling, but only if you are prepared to gird up your loins and follow him. You can have faith that the basic Christian or Jewish or Muslim story is true, but only if you are resilient in the face of counter-evidence to it.²⁰ And you can be a person of a particular religion only if you gather important chunks of your life into a whole under its basic story or teaching and you do so in such a way that you will have at least some tendency to retain that structure in the face of difficulties. In each of the

¹⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7rPIg7ZNQ8>.

¹⁸ Kvanvig 2013, 111.

¹⁹ On epistemic circularity, see Alston 1993 and 2005, Bergmann 2006, and Sosa 2011.

²⁰ This need not be epistemically improper since there are ways to be resilient in the face of new counter-evidence to *p* that are compatible with properly adjusting one's cognitive stance toward *p* to what one has to go on. See Howard-Snyder 2013: 367-368.

indicated ways, and many more besides, religious faith, of whatever form, bears the mark of faith more generally: it provides the religious practitioner with what it takes to meet the challenges to living the story, and the drive to continue further along the path it prescribes.

So that's what faith is for, or so I propose.²¹ Now let's return to our next question: does the function of faith function of faith in a healthy psyche imply that faith requires belief?

Well, if I have correctly identified its function, I submit that the answer is pretty clearly "no". Your *faith in* your wife can give you the stability and strength you need to remain in that union, even when you learn something about her that leaves you extremely perplexed about whether she has your mutual best interests in mind, or when in certain seasons of your life together you feel disappointed and doubtful of what the future holds. The faith that you have when you *keep faith* with a childhood friend might well provide you with the impetus you need to remain loyal to her, even when as an adult she habitually harms herself and others dear to you, bringing your friendship to the breaking point. Your *faith that* your fifteen-year old son will one day flourish as an adult may well buck you up and keep you hanging in there with him, despite the mounting evidence that he is hell-bent on not even making it to adulthood, much less flourishing in it. The *affective or global faith* you have when you—say, as a Marxist—unify important chunks of your life through your worldview may well serve to keep you faithful to it, despite doubts that have accumulated to the point of leaving you with serious questions about its truth.

And what goes for secular faith goes for religious faith too. Let me develop this point in relation to some remarks of William Alston's on Christian faith. Alston describes certain sorts of Christians who, "in these secular, scientific, intellectually unsettled times," "do not find themselves believing in, for example, a bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead in the distinctive sense of belief," not to mention other aspects of the basic Christian story.²² These "(quasi) skeptical Christians," as he calls them, unlike many of their believing siblings, "are troubled by doubts; they ask themselves or others what reasons there are to believe that all this really happened. They take it as a live possibility that all or some of the central Christian doctrines are false".²³ For them, when it comes to the basic Christian story, "it is not at all clear what is the case," although they may well deem it "the most likely" or "most strongly indicated" from among contrary points of view they deem credible. In this connection, Alston reminds us of T. S. Eliot, who, despite displaying considerable "skepticism" about Christianity, reported that he "accepted" it "because it was the least false of the options open to him".²⁴ One does not sincerely report such a thing unless one has serious reservations about the truth of the basic Christian story.

To fill in this sketch of the sort of person he has in mind, Alston briefly describes three "(quasi) skeptical Christians," one of whom is a woman who "has been involved in the church from her early years, from a pre-skeptical time when she did fully believe, and she finds the involvement meeting deep needs and giving her life some meaning and structure. And so she is motivated to accept Christian doctrines as a basis for her thought about the world and for the way she leads her life," even though she is now "skeptical" about them.²⁵ Alston does not say how she became "troubled by doubts," and he does not describe in much detail what she does with them. So imagine that her story unfolds as follows.

Although she thrived in a Christian community through high school, as many Christian kids do, after a decade of study and reflection that began as an undergraduate and continued throughout her twenties, she finds herself deeply troubled by arguments for atheism that challenge the goodness and love of God, arguments posed by sincere, respectful, and admirable atheists. Moreover, she finds the case for a naturalistic worldview quite powerful, as well as the case for orthodox Judaism. Furthermore, although she does not find objections to the basic Christian story as powerful as many do, she is stunned by the failure of Christian theologians to articulate theories of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement that render those doctrines so much as even marginally plausible. All this has left her in doubt about the basic Christian story, and therefore she finds herself having to admit that she lacks propositional belief of it. That's not to say that she fails to appreciate what can be said on its behalf. On the contrary. By her lights, as she compares what can be said in its favor with what can be said in favor of the alternative she finds most credible, it's the least false. At any rate, that's what she would say if you caught her on a good day. On a bad day, she might be more inclined to say that, so far as she can tell, it's no more false than the best credible option. She vacillates between these skeptical poles.

²¹ I'm not alone in this. Film, literature, biography, clergy, and clinical therapists confirm my conjecture that the function of faith is to provide the stability and impetus to overcome impediments in relation to its object.

²² Alston 1996, 16, 26.

²³ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 19, quoting William Wainwright.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*

But despite her amphibious cognitive situation, she continues to find her involvement in the Church “meeting deep needs and giving her life meaning and structure,” as she did throughout her turbulent twenties. And, the older she gets, the more she finds the sacrificial love modeled by Jesus and many of his followers supremely attractive, so much so that she continues to align her will with his as his disciple, and she belief-lessly assumes, trusts, or accepts the basic Christian story, using it “as a basis for her thought about the world and for the way she leads her life”.²⁶ So, despite her lack of Christian propositional belief, she retains the practices of devotional reading, meditation, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, charity, the sacraments, congregational participation, observing the holy days and holidays, singing the great hymns and songs, teaching her children and the children of others in her Sunday School class how to live the story, and so on. Furthermore, she finds these and related activities and commitments not only satisfying, but activities and commitments around which and through which her life is unified, including her career as a biologist specializing in human evolution.

Her favorite holiday is neither Christmas nor Easter but Good Friday, and her favorite hour of that day is the ninth, an hour she can relate to all too well, just as Mother Teresa did for the five decades that made her a saint.²⁷ In short, our skeptical Christian intentionally opens herself to the presence of the Lord and the power of the Spirit, but to no avail—so far as she can tell. To be sure, she occasionally has religiously-loaded experiences, sometimes when she takes in the beauty of the natural world, sometimes when she hears her pastor preach, sometimes when she sings the great hymns, sometimes when she hangs out with her daughters, and so on. But all this, she thinks to herself, can be just as well explained naturalistically rather than theistically. Nevertheless, she doesn’t let her doubt take the wind out of her sails, she doesn’t let it drain the sap from her limbs; she doesn’t let it dishearten or discourage her from acting on the (belief-less) assumption, acceptance, or trust that the basic Christian story is true, and therewith following Christ whom she calls “Lord”.

Despite her lack of propositional belief of the basic Christian story, our protagonist is clearly a *person of faith*. Her stance toward the Christian story unifies important aspects of her life into a narrative structure that she lives by, despite difficulties she encounters. Moreover, she is a woman of *allegiant faith*; indeed, she seems to be one of its paradigms precisely because she remains faithful to the Lord despite her struggles with doubt. She also has *faith that* the basic Christian story is true, although the positive cognitive stance required by that form of faith is, in her case, not propositional belief, since the degree of her doubt is incompatible with propositional belief. Nevertheless, she belief-lessly accepts, trusts, or assumes the basic Christian story. She also has *faith in* the Lord, despite her doubt. The cognitive element of her faith in him is also belief-less acceptance, trust, or assuming; she accepts, trusts, or assumes that the Lord will remain true to his commitments to those who, like herself, put their faith in him, and she accepts, trusts, or assumes that he has acted and will act favorably on her behalf with respect to her salvation, and she allies herself with what he has done in His passion, even though she only understands the various theories of the atonement metaphorically. Her faith in Him—including her faith that despite her struggles with doubt, He will never leave her or forsake her—provides her with enough stability to battle late-stage breast cancer and its damnable effects, and gives her the impetus to tackle the more ordinary demons of a human life, for example her proclivities to anger and envy, and the insecurities that lie at their root.

It would take a harsh doxolatrous Christian, in my opinion, to deny that this woman has Christian faith, despite her lack of propositional belief of the basic Christian story. Indeed, I am tempted to think that, more than your ordinary Christian *believer*, she exemplifies the faith of Jesus at its finest hour, who when hanging from a Roman cross, and despite his anguished doubt of the Father’s love, entrusted himself to him with his last breath.

I submit, therefore, that the function of faith—in any of its four forms, and whether it is secular or religious—does not imply that faith requires belief of the relevant propositions. SAD, therefore, is false; unless, of course, there is some sufficiently good reason to affirm SAD. Is there?

²⁶ *Op. cit.*

²⁷ Apparently, Mother Teresa suffered such severe doubt on occasion that, by her own lights, she did not believe. In a letter to her spiritual director, Father Neuner, on May 17, 1964, fifteen years after “the call,” she wrote: “Pray for me—for the life within me is harder to live. To be in love & yet not to love, to live by faith and yet not to believe. To spend myself and yet to be in total darkness.—Pray for me” (Kolodiejchuk 2007, 248). See also, e.g., Kolodiejchuk 2007, 192-193. There is some debate over whether Mother Teresa simply lacked the felt presence of God, or whether in addition she at times possessed a degree of doubt incompatible with belief. My reading of her letters is the second.

It has been my experience that proponents of SAD tend to think that the best case for their view can be made with respect to propositional faith instead of the other forms of faith, objectual, allegiant, and affective or global faith. Thus, I will only assess reasons for SAD as it applies to propositional faith and leave as an exercise for the reader whether what I have to say about those reasons applies with at least equal force to these other forms of faith. I merely register my opinion that it does.

One reason to think that propositional faith requires belief of its object begins with the observation that I that I have spoken of *the* function of faith in a healthy psyche, as though there's just one. But there isn't just one. Another function of faith is to induce peace or serenity, or at least to diminish certain negative emotions such as emotions such as fear and anxiety, when one faces risk. But that's not possible unless one believes the relevant proposition(s). Thus, propositional faith requires belief of its object. By way of illustration, consider someone who is resolved to leap over a crevice to seek help for an injured friend but who is very anxious about the risk involved. His friend might enjoin her to "have faith" that she will clear it. His enjoinder is entirely appropriate, but it is appropriate only if significant anxiety about whether she will clear the crevice is incompatible with her having faith that she will clear it, and only belief that she will do so can eliminate or diminish her anxiety.²⁸

What should we make of this argument and its illustration?

Well, regarding the illustration, it is not at all clear to me that only belief that she will clear the crevice can eliminate or diminish her anxiety. Belief that it is very likely that she will clear it can eliminate or diminish it too; and belief that her attempt is of sufficient value can eliminate or diminish it as well, even when she believes it's no more likely than not that she will clear it, or even if she believes that it's unlikely. Moreover, it is not at all clear that his enjoinder is appropriate only if significant anxiety about whether she will clear the crevice is incompatible with her having faith that she will do so. Provided that his enjoinder simply raises the probability that she will clear it, it seems wholly appropriate for him to issue it; indeed, even if he knows that his enjoinder will not raise the probability that she will clear the crevice, it might well be entirely appropriate for him to issue it, for all sorts of reasons.

As for the argument itself, even if one function of propositional faith is to eliminate or diminish anxiety, or increase peace and serenity, when one faces risk, it seems that it is possible for one's faith to have that function even when one lacks belief of its object and has either suitable probabilistic beliefs or one of a variety of non-doxastic positive cognitive stances instead. Even mere hope of the relevant proposition—which, by my lights, can involve a much weaker cognitive component than is required for propositional faith—might increase peace or diminish anxiety, at least somewhat. Moreover, it is not at all clear that, as a matter of necessity, every instance of propositional faith is such that it disposes one to increased peace or diminished anxiety, in the face of risk. For, first of all, it seems at least possible for one to have propositional faith without the presence of risk and, secondly, it seems possible for one to have propositional faith without any disposition to increased peace or diminished anxiety. Perhaps an ideal instance of propositional faith would dispose one to increase peace or diminished anxiety in relation to its object, but we must not confuse the ideal with the real. Propositional faith can be extremely painful and difficult, something to carry one through fear, anxiety, and other negative emotions, not necessarily something that eliminates or diminishes them. Of course, that's not to say that one's propositional faith cannot increase peace or diminish anxiety; indeed, there might even be a high correlation between these things, which would explain why someone might think that one of its functions was to increase peace or diminish anxiety. But if there is a high correlation, it is only a contingent one, perhaps explicable by the fact that most instances of propositional faith involve belief as their cognitive component and are attended by dispositions to increased peace or diminished anxiety.

Robert Adams offers another reason for SAD by focusing on a species of propositional faith he calls "moral faith" which, he says, is typified by faith that a terminally ill friend's life is still worth living. It is characteristic of such faith, he says, that one recognize "the possibility of error," that one "recognize that [one] could be tragically mistaken, mistaken in a way characteristic of false beliefs". He continues: "We do give and entertain reasons for and against items of moral faith.... And the structure of giving and entertaining reasons for them is at least very similar to the structure of reasoning about other sorts of belief. In thinking about items of moral faith, one uses logic, one aims at consistency and at coherence with one's beliefs on other subjects, and one is responsive to one's sense of 'plausibility,' as we sometimes put it. All of that is grounds for classifying moral faith as a sort of belief".

Reply. I don't see it. I don't see why "[a]ll of that is grounds for classifying moral faith as a sort of belief," nor do I see why it is grounds for thinking that propositional faith more generally is "a sort of belief". Instances of non-doxastic propositional acceptance, assumption, and trust can be in error or mistaken. Moreover, in thinking

²⁸ Thanks to John Pittard for bringing this line of thought to my attention. For further discussion of the relationship between faith, peace, and anxiety, see Penelhum 1995, 72-74, Schellenberg 2005, 111-120, and Audi 2011, 77.

about what one has belief-lessly accepted, assumed, or trusted, one can reflect on its plausibility, use logic, and aim for consistency and coherence with other items on which one takes a cognitive stance. But propositional acceptance, assumption, and trust of the sort that has been drawn to our attention in the literature are not propositional belief. Hence, Adams's basis for classifying faith as a sort of belief does not support that classification.

Having said that, perhaps Adams meant to emphasize "sort of" in describing moral faith as "a sort of belief". That is, perhaps he meant to say that there is something *akin* to belief that is required by moral faith. With this I am in full agreement.²⁹ Propositional faith does seem to require a positive cognitive stance toward its object, and anything that plays that role must be *like* belief in the ways that Adams mentions. But the point remains: something other than propositional belief can play that role, and so it is not required.

Four other reasons for SAD can be found in the literature.³⁰

1. If you have faith that *p*, you will have a tendency to assert *p* when asked whether *p* (absent contravening influences). But you have that tendency only if you believe *p*. Thus, you have faith that *p* only if you believe that *p*.

Reply: On Alston's account of the distinction between belief and acceptance, it is not true that you have a tendency to assert *p* only if you believe *p*. You can have that tendency if you accept *p*, and acceptance is not belief.³¹ More importantly, you can have faith that *p* while you have no tendency to assert *p* but rather only a tendency to assert that *p* is likely, or more likely than not, or that *p* is the least false of the credible contrary options, and so on—as when the positive cognitive stance required by faith involves propositional assuming or propositional trust.

2. If you have faith that *p*, then you are disposed to believe *p*; and, since a disposition to believe *p* *just is* believing *p*, you have faith that *p* only if you believe *p*.

Reply: First, suppose the first premise is right that faith that *p* implies a disposition to believe something. Why can't it be a disposition to believe that *p is likely*, or *twice as likely as not*, and the like? Second, the first premise seems false: there are positive cognitive stances other than belief that can fill in for the positive cognitive stance required by propositional faith. Third, the second premise seems false: one can be disposed to believe *p* without believing *p*.³² One might insist that, even if faith that *p* in general does not imply believing *p*, religious faith does. The next two reasons take this tack.

3. If you have religious faith that *p*, then you are totally committed in a practical way to *p*'s truth and to what you see to follow from it—even to the point of making fundamental sacrifices. But you can't be totally committed in that way unless you believe *p* and what you see to follow from it. Therefore, you have religious faith that *p* only if you believe *p*.

Reply: First, religious faith that *p* does not require a *total* practical commitment to *p*'s truth. Maybe at its best it does, but it does not as such. We must not mistake what is required by an ideal instance of a kind for what is required by a real instance of that kind. Second, religious faith that *p* at its best *in some situations* might not require a total practical commitment to *p*'s truth *in those situations*. Suppose that Abraham has serious doubts about whether following Torah will lead to a right relationship with God and God's people, but his doubts are not so severe that he lacks faith that it will. In that case, if he were to dig in his heels and believe it with just the same degree of confidence he had before he had those doubts, he'd exhibit intellectual vice, perhaps pigheadedness or close-mindedness. In the circumstances in which he finds himself, Abraham would be an overall better person if he adopted some other cognitive stance that is more at home with his doubts and yet also at home with an active faith, in which case a degree of practical commitment more consonant with that stance and his doubts would be, all else being equal, more virtuous *for him in his particular situation*, a degree of practical commitment that falls short of "total".

4. Authentic religious faith involves a longing for God as the "all-dominating longing" of one's life, one's "master passion". Belief-less religious faith would involve no such thing. It would at best involve a "longing to know whether or not God exists". Religious faith that *p*, therefore, requires belief that *p*.

Reply: First, authentic religious faith need not involve a longing for God that constitutes one's master passion, one's all-dominating longing. Perhaps at its best it does, but it need not as such. Again: we must not mistake the ideal for the real. Second, a longing for God central to one's life can be wed to a faith

²⁹ For argument, see Howard-Snyder 2013, 361.

³⁰ The first two are stated in Audi 1991; the last two are stated in Gutting 1982, 105ff.

³¹ Alston 1996 and 2007.

³² See Audi 1982 and 1994.

that has something other than belief as its cognitive component; as such, a faith without belief can involve a longing for God suitable to be one's master passion.

A final argument for SAD begins with the observation that people commonly think that the psychological attitude they pick out when they say things of the form "S has faith that p" requires belief that p. Just that p. Just ask them! Likewise, they commonly intend to pick out something that involves belief that p when they use such talk. Furthermore, a vast rule-governed way of using faith-that talk has grown up around this around this thought and intention, a way of speaking that spans centuries and cultures. In that case, the way in which people commonly use "faith that p" *must* pick out something that requires belief that p, if it picks out anything at all. Therefore, faith that p requires belief that p.³³

Reply. Is it really true that there is a vast rule-governed way of using faith-that talk spanning centuries and cultures that has grown up around the thought that the psychological attitude those speakers pick out when they say things of the form "S has faith that p" requires belief that p, and that they intend to pick out something that requires belief that p when they use such talk? A thorough assessment of this argument would involve extensive empirical research into this question, research that has yet to be done, to my knowledge. Moreover, it would involve going into considerable detail into the nature of propositional belief, a matter on which the experts disagree sharply, as you might expect. Nevertheless, two remarks seem to be relevant.

First, suppose that the proponent of the argument means by "belief" a mental state or attitude as described by some philosopher of mind.³⁴ Then the premise in the argument according to which people commonly think that faith requires belief seems dubious. That's because nearly every philosopher of mind understands propositional belief to be an *involuntary* mental state. No one can, just by an act of will, believe something that they do not already believe; and, no one can, just by an act of will, get rid of a belief that they already have. Propositional belief is evidence-sensitive in such a way that we cannot, just by an act of will, gain or lose beliefs. That's what philosophers of mind say, nearly unanimously. However, people do not, in my experience, at any rate, commonly think that the attitude they pick out with "faith that p" *requires* belief thought of as philosophers of mind tend to think of it, i.e. thought of as an involuntary mental state. At least they allow that, sometimes, one can come to have faith that p by voluntarily accepting or assuming p, or by voluntarily resolving to represent the world as being p. Whether they are right or wrong on this matter is beside the point. The mere fact that they think that one can take up the positive cognitive stance required by propositional faith voluntarily falsifies the premise that people commonly think that it requires belief of its object, where "belief" is understood to mean an involuntary mental state, as described by nearly any philosopher of mind.

Second, suppose that the proponent of the argument means by "belief" a mental state or attitude not as described by philosophers of mind but rather as described by what I conjecture people commonly have in mind when they use "belief", namely something they'd report as belief, assent, supposition, acceptance, judgment, affirmation, decision, assumption, confidence, credence, trust, etc. for a long list of items that fall under the rubric of a positive cognitive stance. In that case, the conclusion of the argument must be modified. Instead of concluding that faith that p requires belief that p, the argument concludes that faith that p requires a positive cognitive stance toward p. With this conclusion I am in complete agreement. But it does nothing to support SAD since there are plenty of positive cognitive stances other than propositional belief.

To sum up: Stump, Aquinas, and Dawkins and his fellow brights seem to think that objectual faith is identical with propositional belief. They are wrong, by my lights. More plausibly, objectual faith requires belief of the relevant proposition(s). There are other forms of faith: propositional faith, allegiant faith, and affective or global faith. We might conjecture that each of these forms of faith likewise require belief of the relevant propositions. More weakly, we might conjecture that at least one of them does. This latter thesis I called the *Stump-Aquinas-Dawkins Thesis* (SAD). In this essay, I have argued that the function of each form of faith—namely, to provide the stability and impetus to meet a variety of difficulties for faith—does not imply that faith requires belief of the relevant proposition(s), which provides at least some reason to think that SAD is false. Moreover, I have argued that each of the reasons I know of for thinking that SAD is true is a failure—at least as it pertains to propositional faith, which is

³³ Thanks to Frances Howard-Snyder for suggesting this argument.

³⁴ For the sorts of accounts I have in mind, see the items listed in the bibliography of Schwitzgebel 2014.

the easiest form of faith with respect to which to make a case for SAD. Thus, unless there are good reasons to think that some form of faith requires the relevant propositional beliefs, reasons that I have not considered, the argument that I have given in this paper, supplemented by reasons I have given elsewhere, seems to me to be sufficient reason to look on SAD, at the very least, with deep suspicion.³⁵

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