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On the value of faith and faithfulness

Daniel J. McKaughan[1]

Abstract There was a time when Greco-Roman culture recognized faith as an indispensable social good. More recently, however, the value of faith has been called into question, particularly in connection with religious commitment. What, if anything, is valuable about faith—in the context of ordinary human relations or as a distinctive stance people might take in relation to God? I approach this question by examining the role that faith talk played both in ancient Jewish and Christian communities and in the larger Greco-Roman culture in which Christian faith talk evolved. I locate the value of faith and faithfulness in the context of relationships involving trust and loyalty and argue that what is most distinctively valuable about faith is the function it plays in sustaining relationships through various kinds of challenges, including through evidentially unfavorable circumstances and significant periods of doubt. In light of this discussion, I set out a view of *relational faith* and, taking Mother Teresa as an exemplar, argue for two further conclusions. First, faith can play the valuable role that it plays in sustaining relationships even without belief of the salient propositions. Second, in at least some circumstances, in order for faith to play this valuable role in a way that does not require epistemic opinions that fail to fit one's evidence, it is important that faith does not require such belief.

Keywords Faith · Faithfulness · Belief · Trust · Doubt · Mother Teresa

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Introduction: the problem of the value of faith

What, if anything, is valuable about faith? Many of us today are confident that faith isn't of value, particularly if we assume that faith is belief on insufficient evidence. This alone, as W. K. Clifford argued, might be sufficient to justify ranking it among the intellectual or moral *vices*, one arguably made all the more dangerous owing to its associations with religious passions that frequently evoke deep fervor, emotional attachment, and out-group enmity, and the fact that religious convictions are often among the short list of things for which people are willing to die (McKaughan 2015). But if we start with the idea that faith is inadequately evidenced belief, we are left with a puzzle. Why have billions of people, across such a spectrum of social and cultural settings and at so many different times and places, thought faith to be vital for a well-lived life? Why would Romans come to so revere *Fides* that they would worship her as a goddess? Why did the Greeks before them personify *Pistis* —goddess of good faith, trust, and reliability—as part of their mythology? Why did ancient Jewish and Christian communities come to see faith as central to the response that God is said to desire of humans, often inviting or even commanding faith of adherents or even regarding faith as definitive of membership in some religious traditions?

There is important philosophical and philological work to be done in coming to grips with the tension between these radically different estimates of the value of faith. The section "What did people care about?" examines the role that faith talk came to play both in ancient Jewish and Christian communities and in the larger Greco-Roman culture in which Christian faith talk evolved. The "Relational faith: faith in the context of a committed covenantal relationship" section offers a characterization of what I call *relational faith* that locates the value of faith and faithfulness in the context of relationships involving trust and loyalty. I argue that what is most distinctively valuable about faith is the function it plays in sustaining relationships through various kinds of challenges, including through intellectually unfavorable circumstances and significant periods of doubt. I illustrate the space that *relational faith* opens up for wrestling with doubt from *within* a covenantal relationship or religious tradition by considering Mother Teresa's lived experience of faith in the midst of doubt and argue for two further conclusions. First, faith can play the valuable role that it plays in sustaining relationships even without belief of the salient propositions. Second, in at least some circumstances, in order for faith to play this valuable role in a way that does not require epistemic opinions that fail to fit one's evidence, it is important that faith does not require such belief.

What did people care about?

There was a time when Greco-Roman culture recognized *pistis/fides* ("faith, faithfulness") as an indispensable social good. Faith played a role not just in religious contexts, but was thought to contribute to stability in ordinary human

relationships in a way that makes them more durable under duress or through various sorts of difficulties.

The significance and function of faith in people's lives and discourse was important enough that it was common to commemorate faith on coins and tombstones. In an extensively documented study, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (2015), Teresa Morgan calls attention to the pervasive value placed on faith in the context of interpersonal relationships in both domestic and public spheres.

> On one level, the omnipresence of *pistis/fides* language in discourse about every aspect of society and social life in this period needs no reiteration…. *Pistis/fides*… is everywhere understood as a basic building block of societies, emerging from the need of individual and groups to make and maintain relationships (Morgan 2015, p. 75).

Cicero takes it that "*fides* is the basis of the stability and constancy for which we look in friendship" in *On Friendship* (Morgan 2015, p. 57). But why?

Greco-Roman faith

Of primary importance within the Greek *pistis* lexicon, for our purposes, are the noun πίστις (*pistis*, "faith, faithfulness"), the verb πιστεύω (*pisteúō*, "to have faith, to trust, to rely on, to believe; to commit, to come to faith, to be faithful/loyal/obedient"), and the adjective πίστός (*pistos*, "faithful, trustworthy, reliable, dependable"). Although their meanings can vary considerably in differing contexts of use, whether secular or religious, the basic semantic range of *pistis* in the first century Greco-Roman Mediterranean world is picked out by "faith, faithfulness" (Dunn 2007).

Overlap with its Latin counterpart *fides* is extensive enough that we can treat *pistis/fides* more or less interchangeably (Dunn 2007; Morgan 2015). People thought of faith as a social bond that strengthens relationships and enables forms of mutually beneficial social cooperation. Both *pistis* and *fides* come from the Proto Indo-European root *$*b^heyd^h$, which means "to trust" (De Vaan 2008; Ringe 2006; Watkins 2011). The *fides* word group includes the nouns *fidēs* ("faith") and *fidēlitās* ("faithfulness, fidelity"), the verb *fīdere (fīdō)* "to trust, to rely upon, confide in," and the adjective *fīdus, fido, fidēlis* ("faithful, loyal, trustworthy") (De Vaan 2008). Notice that trust or reliance is central to the meaning of words in this group, as is faithfulness, trustworthiness, fidelity, or loyalty.

As Dunn correctly points out and as I also shall argue, "the range of meaning should not be treated as though the two senses, "faith, faithfulness," were quite distinct and discrete" (Dunn 2007, p. 408). Faith and faithfulness are indeed conceptually distinguishable: a philandering husband might have faith that his wife will be faithful to her promises, whereas a faithful wife might lack faith that her philandering husband will be faithful to his promises. Moreover, faith and faithfulness are related in the same way as, and are often interchangeable with, trust and trustworthiness. For a wife to have faith in her husband is for her to trust that he will be faithful, being for her good and honoring the commitments they have made

together in large ways and small. However, where our goal is to understand the use of *pistis/fides* in ancient Greco-Roman culture quite broadly and especially in Judeo–Christian Hellenistic religious cultural settings shaped by Semitic languages, we should resist the urge to read too clear a separation between faith and faithfulness back into ancient faith discourse. Even in contexts where one or the other aspect of *pistis/fides* is emphasized, we should often hear both "faith/faithfulness" or perhaps "faith(fulness)".

We can draw the relevant distinctions or point out differences in meaning or emphasis where use and clarity call for it. But I would urge readers not to assume that the tendency among ancients to hold faith and faithfulness together in this way is simply the product of muddled thinking. A paradigmatic or flourishing mutually reciprocal relationship would be such that each party remains faithful to one's own promises or obligations and also aptly trusts in or relies on the other to be faithful to theirs. Moreover, in the kinds of interpersonal relationships in which talk of faith and faithfulness finds primary application, faith in someone is often best expressed by one's own continued faithfulness and loyalty to them in the face of difficulties. Similarly, faithfulness to a companion might take the form of continued reliance on them despite apparent evidence that one's faith is misplaced (subject to normative appraisal in light of appropriate constraints on epistemic and practical rationality and moral considerations). Thus, the mixture of trust and loyalty at work in committed relationships of the sort we have in view leave faith and faithfulness often associated and intimately intertwined. As I shall argue, understanding this dynamic interplay between them is crucial to appreciating the distinctive kinds of goods that faith/faithfulness can make available to us in relationships, including the perseverance, grit, and stability that we might, following Howard-Snyder (2013), call resilience.

Notice the wide range of social relations to which ancient Greco-Roman talk of faith and faithfulness was applied.

> *Pistis/fides,* as we have seen, is one of the key qualities that characterize the relationships of wives and husbands, parents and children, master and slaves, patrons and clients, subjects and rulers, armies and commanders, friends, allies, fellow-human beings, gods and worshippers, and even fellow-animals (Morgan 2015, pp. 117–118).

The terms *pistis/fides* serve to pick out "one of the few qualities which are equally at home in the domestic and public spheres: in the family, the marketplace, the council chamber, the temple, the palace, and the battlefield" (Morgan 2015, p. 117). Salient in each of these examples is that *pistis/fides* talk is used to mark attitudes and acts of faith and faithfulness in the context of reciprocal relationships, with expectations about what is involved in being faithful, loyal, or what it is appropriate to trust, being set by various social roles, common presumptions, or the character of particular promises on which the relationship might rest. The mutual expectations and responsibilities associated with relationships involving *pistis/fides* could be symmetrical. But, as one might expect of terms that pick out relations "found operating at every socio-economic level, between individuals and groups," often they are not (Morgan 2015, p. 6).

Consider, for example, the attempts of Roman emperors to cultivate a relationship of public trust (*fides publica*) with the people over whom they ruled. By the early second century, the Roman empire was expansive and multicultural. It had pushed far beyond Italy and Greece up into the British Isles and spanned from Spain, North Africa, Egypt, into Judea, Syria, and Babylonia. As the Romans expanded their empire, rather than slaughtering newly conquered people after a military conquest, in many cases they started to enter into agreements with the people they subdued. Conquered people were encouraged to trust the Emperor, with the promise that if they would submit to the Emperor's rule and be loyal to Rome he would, in good faith, be merciful.

The Romans promoted *fides publica* in their propaganda, spreading the message that those loyal to Rome will enjoy peace, grain, baskets of fruit, poppies, some basic political protection (dependent on social standing), and greater prosperity. To take just a few arbitrary examples, consider several coins that circulated in the Roman territories spanning from circa 275 BCE to 270 CE. An alliance between the Roman Republic and the Greek Locrians is symbolized on the silver coin, a Greek *ΡΩΜΑ ΠΙΣΤΙΣ* from circa 275 BCE. *Roma* is seated with sword and shield on a low throne being crowned with a wreath by the goddess *Pistis,* the personification of faithfulness, good faith, trust, and reliability. Such mutual good faith and loyalty are promoted in the phrase "*FIDES PVBL*" on a silver Roman denarius from circa 73–74 CE during the reign of Emperor Vespasian and symbolized by clasped right hands, which requires the setting down of swords, to invite common trust in the Emperor to provide goods of peace and prosperity symbolized with grain ears, poppies, and the winged caduceus (the staff of Mercury, patron of trade and commerce). Variations on this theme decorated coins in the Empire for centuries. A silver denarius from circa 134–138 CE, during the reign of Emperor Hadrian, pairs the words "*FIDES PVBLICA*" with a depiction of *Fides*, goddess of trustworthiness and good faith, holding grain ears and a plate of fruit. A coin from circa 268–270, during the reign of Claudius II, couples *Fides* with the lettering "*FIDES EXCERCI*" (other variants use *FIDES EXERC* or *FIDES EXERCITUM*), referring to the fidelity (loyalty) of the soldiers to the Emperor and reminding people of the good faith he displays toward them.

These practices, though of course often falling short of the ideals and propaganda in all sorts of ways, were very effective in establishing social relations that in a clear sense depended on mutual *fides* (trust and loyalty) to the benefit of conquered peoples and in directing loyalties toward Rome. By 70 BCE, in the prosecution of Verres as part of a larger corruption trial brought against a former governor of Sicily, Cicero could write:

> He said that he was a Roman citizen. If you, O Verres, being taken among the Persians or in the remotest parts of India, were being led to execution, what else would you cry out but that you were a Roman citizen?…. Men of no importance, born in an obscure rank, go to sea; they go to places which they have never seen before; where they can neither be known to the men among whom they have arrived, nor always find people to vouch for them. But still, owing to this confidence in the mere fact of their citizenship, they think that

they shall be safe… wherever they come they think that this will be a protection to them (Cicero 1903, pp. 166–167).

As Morgan observes, "Such, claims Cicero, is the power of Roman law to create *fides* (Morgan 2015, p. 116). Social arrangements like this are worth having and are far preferable to a war of all against all. We can see the value of faith/faithfulness by contrasting the relations they enable with how things might stand if they were missing. Cicero's seafaring citizens entrust their safety to a social milieu Rome has established and which would not be available to them in a Hobbesian state of nature.

People who are relying on each other in the ways described above are apt to have concerns. Placing our trust in or depending upon others exposes us to risks or vulnerabilities. The danger of betrayal or of broken promises can be quite acute. It takes little imagination to envision ways in which things end badly for Cicero's "men of no importance" who are "being led to execution," whether owing to Rome's failure to come through for them or to outright betrayal. Yet, the potential goods associated with relationships characterized by faith and faithfulness are so remarkable, so desirable, that people would often go to great lengths to secure those goods with public oaths and pledges.

Judeo–Christian faith in a Greco-Roman world

In the Judeo–Christian tradition, faith/faithfulness (*pistis/ ʾĕmûnâ*) becomes a central category for understanding the personal and corporate relational response that God is said to desire of humans. What sort of response was desired and why was it thought to be pleasing to God?

Ancient Hebrew closely associates faith and faithfulness. Discourse about faith and faithfulness in the Hebrew Bible centers on words derived from the root אמן (*'mn,* a conjunction of the three Hebrew letters *aleph, mem,* and *nun*), meaning "to support, to be firm, secure, reliable, trustworthy, safe"). The most important words in the Hebrew faith lexicon—the niphal (incomplete passive or reflexive voice) and hiphil (causative active voice) conjugations of the verb אָמַן (*'aman,* "is faithful, to be true, to trust"), the nouns אֱמוּנָה (*ʾĕmûnâ,* "faithfulness, faith") and אֱמֶת (*'emeth,* "truth"), and the adverb אָמֵן (*'āmēn,* "surely, truly, so be it")—all come from this stem (Bultmann and Weiser 1968; Donfried and Powell 2011). The fact that *'mn* holds trust and loyalty/fidelity together is brought out nicely in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* entry on "Faith":

> [F]aith and fidelity are intertwined inextricably in the Hebrew Bible, that is, faith is primarily not an intellectual act but an attitude which encompasses the two-sided sense of the root *'mn:* steadfastness, which addresses the concept of acts of obedience; and trust or confidence, which rests on the notion of God's constancy and fidelity (Healey 1992, p. 747).

The Hebrew verb for faith, אָמַן (*'aman*) takes on the connotation of standing firm in trust or in loyalty/fidelity depending on how the verb is conjugated. The niphal verb form נֶאֱמָן (*ne'ĕmān*) usually means "is faithful, trustworthy." Deuteronomy 7:9, for example, presents God as trustworthy in covenantal relations—as "the faithful (נֶאֱמָן *ne'ĕmān*) God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and

keep his commandments, to a thousand generations". The niphal can also be used to refer to ongoing human faithfulness: "I will raise up for myself a faithful (נֶאֱמָן ne'ĕmān) priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind" (1 Samuel 2:25). Samuel is said to be "a trustworthy (נֶאֱמָן ne'ĕmān) prophet of the Lord" (1 Samuel 3:20).

In contrast, the hiphil conjugation הֶאֱמִין (he'emin) expresses the causative action of "to be firmly set in/on something, to hold firm" (Healey 1992, p. 745). Here the emphasis is on "the acceptance of someone as trustworthy or dependable" (Donfried and Powell 2011, p. 280). Whether we take the firmness involved to refer to finding support in the steadfastness of the object or to the subject's standing firm in an internal feeling of confidence or security (as Barr 1961, pp. 175–176 maintains), he'emin is usually best translated with English expressions like "to trust, to rely on, to have faith, or to believe in" and the LXX renders it by πιστεύω (pisteúō) with a high degree of consistency (Bultmann and Weiser 1968; Perry 1953, p. 252; see also Lebens 2016, this issue). For example, the hiphil expresses Moses and Aaron's failure to trust in God: "But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in (לֹא־הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם lō-he'ĕmantem) me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them"" (Numbers 20:12). The hiphil he'emin is also used to characterize Abraham's faith or trust in God in Genesis 15:6: "And he believed [trusted] (וְהֶאֱמִן wəhe'ĕmin) the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness." In contrast, the author of Nehemiah uses the niphal to describe what God found valuable in Abraham's response—a faithful (נֶאֱמָן ne'eman) heart (Nehemiah 9:8). The sense of standing firm in trust and its close connection to being faithful comes out nicely in the Isaiah 7:9: "If you do not stand firm in faith (לֹא־תַאֲמֵנוּ, lō-ṭa'ămînū lō-ṭa'ămînū [hiphal]), you shall not stand (תֵאָמֵנוּ, ṭa'ămînū ṭa'ămînū, [niphal]) at all."

The Septuagint (LXX), a cluster of Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible dating from as early as the third century BCE, consistently renders words deriving from "the Hebrew words from the root 'mn with Greek words with the root pist-" (Lührmann 1992, p. 751). "Truth" is the more typical meaning of the Hebrew noun אֱמֶת ('emeth), reflected in its more frequent translation as ἀλήθεια (alḗtheia, "truth"). However, as the LXX translators recognized, its associations with firmness, stability, reliability, dependability, and steadfastness also allows the meaning of 'emeth to shade into "faithfulness," permitting its rendering by πίστις (pistis) in some contexts or even "righteousness" with the Greek noun δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosynē).

The Hebrew noun אֱמוּנָה ('ĕmûnâ) means "faithfulness, fidelity, trustworthiness, steadfastness." Twenty-four out of the forty-nine occurrences of 'ĕmûnâ in the Old Testament attribute 'ĕmûnâ to God with the sense of fidelity/trustworthiness most clearly in view (Perry 1953, p. 254; Barr 1961, p. 173; but see Lebens 2016, this issue, for a defense of the idea that the Hebrew Bible also attributes faith to God). For the most part the LXX translates 'ĕmûnâ with pistis, though whoever translated the Psalms preferred alḗtheia. The emphasis on faithfulness (rather than faith or trust) better conveys the meaning of 'ĕmûnâ in each of the 49 times it occurs in the Old Testament, with the possible exception of Habakkuk 2:4: "Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith [or faithfulness]

(אֱמוּנָה *'ĕmūnāt*).'' In Habakkuk 2:4, *'ĕmûnâ* admits of either the "faith/trust" or "faithfulness/fidelity" interpretation and Paul reads it as *pistis* (faith/trust) in this passage (Galatians 3:11 and Romans 1:17). Yet even if one were to take the noun *'ĕmûnâ* to unambiguously convey faithfulness in contrast to faith or trust of the sort better designated by *he'emin*, as Perry (1953) points out "trust and obedience" are both part of what is involved in an appropriate response of faithfulness to God: "the Old Testament does not set trust and obedience in contrast to each other as separate ways of satisfying the demands of God. *'emuna* comprehends the totality of what we commonly mean in the familiar expression "faith and works"" and the one who pursues *'ĕmûnâ* in a way that would be pleasing to God, as in Jeremiah 5:1, must seek to both trust and obey God (Perry 1953, p. 255). The noun *'ĕmûnâ* can also be used to refer to a more encompassing way of life in relation to God: "This is how you shall act: in the fear of the Lord, in faithfulness (בֶּאֱמוּנָה *be'ĕmūnāh*), and with your whole heart" (2 Chronicles 19:9; see also Jeremiah 7:28).

In classical Greek πιστεύω (*pisteúō*) can pick out the "action-modifying trust" that made it attractive for conveying the faith/faithfulness of the Hebrew verb אָמַן (*'aman*) (Lindsay 1993, p. 111). The match between *'ĕmûnâ* and the classical Greek usage of *pistis* was imperfect. Although *pistis* can be used to refer to obedience to God (Lindsay 1993, p. 105), the primary semantic range for *pistis* focused either on the subject's attitude toward the object (e.g., one's trust in another person) or on the faithfulness or trustworthiness of the object (e.g., the other person's faithfulness which serves as the basis for one's trust) (Dunn 2007), whereas *'ĕmûnâ* often picks out the faithfulness of the subject to whom it is attributed (e.g., Abraham's faithfulness to God). Nor did *pistis* carry the connotations of truth or righteousness conveyed by the Hebrew nouns. Yet, at least in predominately Jewish communities in the diaspora, as the πιστ-word group was increasingly recruited for use in religious contexts in the Hellenistic period the use of Greek terms in reference to the God of Israel was shaped by familiar Semitic concepts and sacred stories that gave faith talk its content. As Lindsay argues,

> Septuagint translators interpreted the πιστ-word group *in light of the Hebrew* אָמַן and not vice versa. Therefore the Septuagint translation represents *a significant development* in the use of the πιστ-group as faith terminology, πίστις and πιστεύειν gained the meaning of "having firmness, steadfastness" by association with הֶאֱמִין. The πιστ-group also begins to assimilate some other very important nuances, such as a close relationship with "truth" and "righteousness". The end result is that πίστις and πιστεύειν can now have the tendency, just as אֱמוּנָה and הֶאֱמִין, to "extend into the most comprehensive sphere of application… [and to embrace] the whole attitude of a life lived in faith" (Lindsay 1993, p. 117).

The writings of the Greek New Testament are striking for the frequency with which words in the *pist*-group are used and for the central importance which is attached to them. In the collection of writings that make up the Old Testament canon, *'aman* is used 96 times, *'ĕmûnâ* 49 times, and *'emeth* 127 times, with many occurrences concentrated in Pslams and Isaiah. Some of those uses, such as those in

the Abraham story, are very significant and come at key places in Israel's self-understanding as the people of God. But the much shorter collection of Greek New Testament writings make use of words in the *pist*-lexicon some 600 times (*pistis* 242 times, *pisteúō* 241 times, *pistos* 66 times, plus 51 or so uses of other cognates of the *pist*-stem). Even a cursory look at the distribution suggests interesting differences in use among various authors. The Gospel of John uses the verb almost exclusively accounting for 98 occurrences, while making just one use of the adjective and no use of the noun. The author of Hebrews favors the noun (*pistis* 32, *pisteúō* 2, *pistos* 5). In Paul's letters the noun and verb are distributed more evenly, with some preference for the noun and high frequency of occurrences in Romans (*pistis* 40, *pisteúō* 21, *pistos* 0) and Galatians (*pistis* 22, *pisteúō* 4, *pistos* 1).

Morgan (2015) has done pistologists a tremendous service in mapping important nuances and differences and in use of the *pist*-lexicon in the various writings of the Greek New Testament. We learn, for example, that Paul's earliest letters (1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians) assure readers that God is *pistos* and call them to respond directly to God with *pistis*, conceived primarily as "an exercise of trust which involves heart, mind, and action" (Morgan 2015, pp. 259, 247–248, 261). In Galatians, Romans, Philippians, and Philemon, we find a more complex integration of Jesus into faith talk describing the relation between God and humans. In keeping with earlier Jewish uses of ʾĕmûnâ, one rather striking contrast with the surrounding Greco-Roman culture from which the *pistis* lexicon is appropriated, is that the New Testament reserves faith language almost exclusively to refer to relationships between humans and God and/or Jesus (Morgan 2015, p. 235). Christians are called to love their neighbors, but not to place their faith in each other. It is ἀγάπη (*agapē*), rather than mutual *pistis*, that is to form the basis of the community (Morgan 2015, p. 215). Paul, for example, happily thinks of his own relation to God as one of slave to master, describing himself as a δοῦλος ("slave, servant") of Christ in Romans 1:1. The kind of radical life-orienting allegiance, reliance, trust, obedience, and submission that Christian faith involves is such that "Only towards God would such extreme handing over of one's life be appropriate" (Morgan 2015, p. 223).

In the Gospel of Mark, faith is introduced into the narrative on the lips of Jesus with a call to action: "repent and have faith in [πιστεύετε ἐν, ("have faith in," "trust in," or "believe in")] the good news" that the kingdom of God has drawn near (Mark 1:15). What is called for is submission to God's reign, which begins with an act of repentance and a radical reorientation of one's life. This turning from the ways of the world (from sin, self-reliance, and other idols) to God, is closely associated with John's ministry, where it was expressed in the public act of baptism in which one symbolically dies, surrendering one's old self to be born into a new life centered around obedience to God. Through this free and self-conscious act of commitment in response to the proclamation one's life takes on a direction or aim to which all other pursuits and allegiances are subordinated.

Jesus' call is to "Come, follow me" (Mark 1:17; 2:14; 8:34; 10:21). This is not a request that one feel a certain way. Nor is it a presentation of evidence. It is an invitation to do something, to perform an action—to begin to walk with Jesus. This terse call to action, striking for its lack of propositional content, is noteworthy not as

a demand for assent to a set of propositions that would later be articulated in creeds, but as an invitation to begin a walk along a path the destination of which remains enticingly unknown. In Mark's narrative, the disciples are asked to radically alter the course of their lives and to trust, at great risk to their personal well-being and with very little information about who Jesus is. Jesus is quite comfortable leaving people with questions or at best partial understanding. His teachings take the form of parables that offer tantalizing pictures of what God is like but which raise as many questions as they answer and puzzle even his closest followers.

Jesus does, at times, chastise his disciples for having too little faith and the narrative takes it for granted that the presence or absence of faith is an appropriate target of praise and reward (Mark 5:34; 10:52) or of rebuke and lament (Mark 4:40; 9:19). But his goal is not, it seems, to get propositional assent from the crowds. It is not until halfway through the narrative, well after the disciples have left everything to follow him, that Jesus asks "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29). Peter's reply prompts a warning not to tell anyone and Jesus immediately begins to teach that he will not be the sort of Messiah that anyone is expecting, but one who must suffer and die. A proper response to God's faithfulness and to the gift of God's grace is gratitude, praise, and repentance for one's own sinfulness and unfaithfulness to the covenant. But God desires a relationship that is not simply coerced—a relationship into which we freely choose to enter, cherish, and intend to cultivate and sustain over time (McKaughan 2014; Howard-Snyder 2016a).

The notion of covenant, בְּרִית ($b^e r\hat{\imath}\underline{t}$) ($b^e r\hat{\imath}\underline{t}$), which the LXX translates by the Greek word διαθήκη (*diathēkē*), forms a key part of the background setting in which to understand the functional role that both the Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament envision for faith/faithfulness in relationships and the value that they attach to it. The basic idea of a covenant is that of a relationship bound by oaths, in which one or both parties pledge to perform or refrain from actions around which the relationship is structured. The Judeo–Christian tradition makes extensive use of marriage as an analogy for the kind of covenantal relationship that God is said to desire to have with God's people.[1] As part of their wedding vows, for example, a couple might each solemnly pledge themselves to each other setting up a host of obligations and expectations which they might take their vows to explicitly or implicitly involve (e.g., perhaps a lifelong commitment to love and care for each other, to be for the other's good, to live in sexual monogamy, to raise children together, and to care for one another until parted by death). Such vows are often made, sometimes regarded as sacred and some of which are usually legally binding, before a community of witnesses who ratify and celebrate the act over a shared

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[1] Comparisons of Israel's fidelity or infidelity to a faithful or unfaithful spouse is particularly prominent in the prophetic literature: Hosea 1:2–3:5; 4:10–15; Micah 1:7; Zephaniah 3:1–7; Malachi 2:11–16; Ezekiel 16:1–63; 23:1–49; Isaiah 1:21; 50:1–2; 54:5–8; 57:2–10; 61:10–62:5; Jeremiah 2:23–25; 3:1–23; 22:20–23; see also: Deuteronomy 23:17–18; Proverbs 1:20, 2:16–19; 23:27–28. All four of the gospels and Paul take Christ as a symbolic "bridegroom" of his followers or of the church (e.g., Matt 9:15; 25:1; Mark 2:19–20; Luke 5:34–35; John 3:29; Eph 5:32–33; see also: 1 Cor 7:1, 7, 32–34). This nuptial imagery carries into later theological traditions. In *The Liberty of a Christian* (1520), Luther speaks of the "wedding ring of faith" and writes: "Faith unites to soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom." Mother Teresa explicitly understood her own vows and the vows of sisters in the Missionaries of Charity order she founded, as a marriage to the crucified Christ.

meal. The concept of faithfulness enters in reference to the fulfillment of one's promises and in a host of large, small, and unforeseen ways in which loyalty to one's spouse might find its expression. Faith directs our attention to trust in and reliance on the other person to be faithful to his or her promises.

Consider the way that the book of Hosea brings ʾĕmûnâ into close association with the idea of a marriage covenant. God tells Israel: "And I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love [or covenant loyalty], and in mercy. I will take you for my wife in faithfulness (בֶּאֱמוּנָה beʾĕmūnāh); and you shall know the Lord" (Hosea 2:19–20). Faith and faithfulness play the same kinds of roles in covenantal relations that they do in marriage. The presentation of God as ʾĕmûnâ/πιστός (faithful, trustworthy) and God's fidelity to God's promises is a crucial theme in both the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament (e.g., as seen above with reference to Deuteronomy 7:9 and in early Christian preaching such as 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:18; 2 Corinthians 1:18). Some of God's promises are unconditional. Faith enters as trust that God is and will continue to be faithful and it is regarded as an appropriate, perhaps even obligatory, response to God's faithfulness. In the context of covenantal relations, the positive attitudes and acts that constitute the response of faith/faithfulness are closely associated:

> [I]n the Old Testament faith is regarded as 'trust in' [and] is more elemental than 'assent to'… but 'trust' is not to be understood primarily in emotive terms. Trust is a practice that entails obedience to Torah [the law] and its specific requirements. Israel's fidelity to Yahweh, not unlike fidelity in marriage, thus consists of concrete acts that take the other party with defining seriousness (Brueggemann 2002, p. 78).

The biblical canon offers varying pictures of faith. But the basic picture of Judeo–Christian faith/faithfulness that emerges is a response characterized by a persevering commitment to remaining engaged in a sustained trusting relationship with God. Faith/faithfulness is the response that God desires to God's own faithfulness. Freely given trust and fidelity are central ways of participating in an ongoing covenantal relationship with God. This response is embodied in the figure of Abraham, that exemplar of faith who persists in reliance on and fidelity to God, despite appearances of God's unfaithfulness. As Dunn observes:

> Genesis 15:6; 17:1–14; and 22:1–19 were all of a piece. Abraham's trust in God was embodied in and expressed by his obedience. His faith and faithfulness were two sides of the same coin; it was the same word, and the same attitude and action expressed by that word (Dunn 2007).

The value of faith and faithfulness

What, then, did people value about faith/faithfulness? It is perhaps easiest, initially, to see the value of *faithfulness* or *loyalty* as aspects of ʾĕmûnâ/*pistis/fides*. Even knowing nothing else about Paramonos of Edessa, about whom an early third century gravestone reads simply "A good man, faithful to all his friends," we can

understand why that is a lovely thing to be remembered for (Morgan 2015, p. 55). We want friends and allies who will stick with us, even when things get difficult, when it doesn't look good, and when it might not be to their own advantage. We want people in our lives who will say, "I will stand by you. I am available and ready to act if you need me. You can call on me in a moment of crisis. You can count on me to be there for you." A friend's loyalty, where recognized, can serve as a kind of guarantee that they will take appropriate action on behalf of your interests in relevant circumstances. There is no question that being able to rely on others in this way has a value far beyond the confines of friendship. Commanders need soldiers who will stand ready to follow them into the bloody cut and thrust of battle, placing service to a cause, ideal, leader, the good of the empire or of their comrades above their own interests and well-being. Kings want that kind of allegiance and people who are united around a common cause are often drawn together thereby.

Faithfulness bestows particular goods—assurance of action on one's behalf, reliability, security, and stability—that can be gratefully enjoyed and appreciated by the other party as part of a shared relationship. We want cooks who we can trust not to poison us, homes in which we can take refuge, loyal friends or neighbors who we count on in times of trouble, and partners who will act out of consideration for our good as well as their own. Some of these goods are available whether or not they are recognized (e.g., infants benefit from parents whose caregiving and loving kindness is steadfast, reliable, and firm; and sheep benefit from a shepherd who consistently protects them). Other goods become available when faithfulness is properly recognized as such (e.g., as when coming to see that a stranger is trustworthy makes a relationship thereby less anxious and insecure, more durable, and lasting, and so on).

Faith in the sense of trust in or reliance on someone is not, it seems, unqualifiedly valuable. Assessments of the value or appropriateness of faith for the one who has it cannot be entirely detached from questions about aptness of faith. We should ask, in any particular case, whether faith is an appropriate or well-placed response to the other person's (real or perceived faithfulness) in light of one's values and the available evidence and also about the (real or perceived) value or goodness of the object of faith. Faith can be misplaced, sometimes with ruinous consequences. Frances Howard-Snyder (2016b) vividly illustrates this point, presenting us with a languishing character whose quasi-religious trust, devotion, and all too resilient faith in an Amway-style pyramid scheme wrecks her relationship with her daughter and detracts from a flourishing life. The character displays a profile that includes a range of positive cognitive, affective, and behavioral dispositions often associated with faith—trust, reliance, belief, resilience, being for a cause, orientation of one's life around an ideal—and yet her life doesn't go well owing in significant part precisely to the character's faith. The dangers here are real and should be kept in mind as part of any philosophical reflection on the value of faith. However, the fact that such faith can be abused or become unhealthy or irrational in the wrong sort of relationship need not prevent us from recognizing ways in which it might open us to goods like stability, security, and resilience potentially to be found in flourishing relationships—goods to which it might be otherwise difficult to access.

Faith in someone, where it is recognized as deserved, can be enjoyed as a good gift that stems from the other party's faithfulness rather than one's own. In some

relationships, faith might even be something that we owe to those who are in fact faithful to us—something which it would be improper to withhold. Putting one's faith in someone can also clearly open up other kinds of potential goods for relationships. Doctors who are competent and reliable (and some who are not!) benefit when people in their practice trust them. But faith can also add another sort of value to relationships: resilience in the face of challenges (D. Howard-Snyder 2013).

We have already seen several ways in which faith/faithfulness can clearly be of value. But it can also be difficult to maintain over time and in the face of adversity. Faith, at its best, perseveres. In the Christian tradition, as Jesus' Parable of the Sower illustrates, πιστεύω (*pisteúō*) is an obedient hearing that, when flourishing, develops deep roots to endure the weeds that would choke it out—a steadfast response to the proclamation of God's kingdom that is sown which resists falling away (Luke 8:11–15). The resilience of faith need not, of course, be unbreakable. The gospels take it for granted that real faith often falls short of the ideal: even Jesus' closest followers abandon him as he dies on the cross. But the value of resilience is most evident in cases where relationships are under duress or facing certain sorts of difficulties, when faith is tested, and when its active dimensions are most apparent—in what Morgan calls "moments of crisis or decision" (Morgan 2015, p. 75).

Suppose that someone makes a decision to trust you, on some matter that leaves her recognizably open to vulnerabilities that may be quite significant if her faith in you is betrayed and where there is some reason for her to think that you may not come through for her or carry through on your promises. By remaining faithful to her own commitments and by tenaciously trusting or patiently waiting for you, her faith also contributes to the stability and endurance of the relationship through trying times. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Penelope waits twenty long years for Odysseus' return despite evidence which raised considerable doubts about whether he was still alive. The strength and resilience that she brings to their relationship is evident not only in her continued faithfulness to him during this time (evident, for example, in her rejection of other suitors) but also in the trust that she continues to place in Odysseus, such that, if he is alive, he will make every effort to return to her.

Other things being equal, relationships in which trust in or reliance on the other party is readily retracted are, for that reason, fragile. If troops follow and give their tenuous trust to a centurion whom they believe can win the battle stand ready to abandon him at the slightest sign of weakness or suggestion to the contrary, the centurion and perhaps the entire cohort is vulnerable thereby. A relationship in which my own faith and/or faithfulness is contingent on the appearance of the other party's faithfulness and this faith is easily dislodged, is weaker, less stable, and more easily broken than a resilient relationship in which my loyalty and commitment to the other give my continued faithfulness and reliance on the other person a kind of firmness, stubbornness, and grit in the face of challenges.

Relational faith: faith in the context of a committed covenantal relationship

What we have seen about faith's value and functional role gives us some important clues about its nature. One very common view of faith, which I reject, takes a particular psychological attitude, *belief,* to be central to faith and indeed as a prerequisite for having faith at all. According to this view, which I call the *belief plus* view of faith, whatever else Christian (or Jewish or Islamic) faith involves one cannot have such faith while failing to believe the content of the message (e.g., in the central claims of the gospel and associated presuppositions such as that *God exists*) (for characterization and critical discussion of this view, see McKaughan 2013, 2016; for a recent defense see Malcolm and Scott 2016). Here, I aim to present a positive alternative view of faith, which I call *relational faith.* These views have very different consequences for how we think about the relationship between faith and doubt. Although a more complete comparative evaluation of these views must await another occasion, by drawing on insights from the previous sections and then going on to consider the potential resilience of *relational faith* in the midst of severe doubt, I will illustrate both why I think that insistence on the belief requirement is misguided and how interplay between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of faith/faithfulness can confer a durability or resilience that gives it such value in relationships.

As I have argued elsewhere (McKaughan 2016), we can characterize the phenomena associated with faith using what we might call a *CAB* analysis, attending to the *cognitive*, *affective*, and *behavioral* aspects that the complex stance of faith/faithfulness involves. We can understand what it is to have faith in a person and associated phenomena (such as propositional faith) by asking about what is distinctive or characteristic about what one thinks, what one cares about, and what one does when one has faith or is in a relationship in which faith plays a central role. Much of what is most central to the response of faith can be located in the realm of action or behavior. Yet paradigm cases of both faith-in a person and propositional faith also involve some sort of positive cognitive stance and a positive valuation or "being for." In my view, these cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of faith can be filled in a plurality of ways. For example, one can have faith that *God exists* even if one lacks the belief that *God exists,* though such faith is incompatible with confident flat-out belief that *God does not exist* (McKaughan 2016).

What would a relational response need to be like so as to play the roles it would need to play in order to add the kind of value that faith/faithfulness can add to relationships? As I see it, there are two core forms of response that are most central to faith/faithfulness in the context of covenantal relationships: (a) trust in or reliance on another person and (b) active engagement in an ongoing relationship with that person (and/or a commitment to remaining faithfully so engaged).[2] Such a response embodies what I call *relational faith* and can be found in many ordinary human

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[2] Strictly speaking, I am focusing on Judeo–Christian faith as the human contribution to what one takes (perhaps mistakenly) to be a relationship. One could have faith in God even if God does not exist. That faith would consist in that complex of attitudes and actions (a psychological and behavioral stance) that constitute the response and are involved in inaugurating and maintaining it.

relationships such as marriage and friendship. However, because the kinds of expectations, obligations, and practices that might be appropriate to such relationships can vary a great deal, I shall here focus on Judeo–Christian faith in and faithfulness to God.

I take paradigm cases of Judeo–Christian faith/faithfulness (*relational faith*) typically to involve two core forms of personal response:

(a) trust in or reliance on God or Jesus, and
(b) a commitment to walking in God's ways or to following Jesus.

I intend this first aspect of *relational faith* (a) to pick out the kind of turning toward God and entrusting oneself to God's care that God is said to desire of humans as a proper response to God's *pistos* (faithfulness). The second aspect (b) picks out a fidelity to God expressed in an engaged life-orienting commitment to a relationship centered upon loving God and loving one's neighbors, around which one's activities, behavior, and allegiance is structured. Judeo–Christian *relational faith*, at its best, is constituted by a reliant relational response in which faith/faithfulness are intertwined.

As in marriage, one can commit oneself to living in a long-term covenantal relationship to God or to Jesus in which one intends to remain engaged. The concept most directly in view here is a practice or action—a standing commitment to behaviors that are expressed in reliance and loyalty—in contrast both to something fundamentally cognitive and to something fundamentally affective. On this sort of covenant-based understanding of marriage, both parties understand themselves to have freely entered into a mutual relationship that is based on sacred promises or commitments.

Because faith of this active sort is grounded in one's commitment to remaining in relationship with the other, *relational faith* opens up interesting possibilities for how we think about the relationship between faith and doubt. One might decide to carry on, faithfully engaging in the relationship on the assumption that the other is also faithful, even in circumstances where the other party's faithfulness is far from apparent. As a consequence, there is wide room for honestly wrestling with doubt from *within* the Judeo–Christian tradition. Consider again the marriage analogy and the role that decisions or promises play in the context of covenantal relations. Just as in a marriage relationship, at its best, one can remain *committed* to one's spouse through good times and bad times and through the waxing and waning of one's momentary passions and desires, one can be committed to cultivating and maintaining a relationship with God and/or Jesus in a way that is not simply dependent on the ups and downs of either belief (or credence) or desire. What is called for, on this view, is not belief but a *decision* to follow. Even if what one believes is not under our direct voluntary control, one *can* resolve to remain actively and faithfully engaged in a long term relationship even if one comes to doubt God's existence or faithfulness. One can continue to willingly engage in acts of trust or reliance that depend on the truth of the gospel proclamation with an acute awareness of the perceived risks and vulnerabilities that this might involve.

Multiply realizable resilient faith in the midst of doubt

Our discussion of the function and value of faith/faithfulness in "The value of faith and faithfulness" section left us with several candidates for why faith might be worth having, including the resilience that it can give relationships (i.e., maybe faith helps relationships to persevere through difficult times, including moments of doubt, or where the risks, real or perceived, are high). Suppose we take *V* to stand for whatever is valuable about faith/faithfulness—whatever the goal or purpose is that makes faith/faithfulness worth having. What role does the cognitive component of faith play in producing this output? Proponents of the *belief plus* view insist that the psychological attitude *belief* of *p*, for salient content *p*, is required for faith to play whatever role it needs to play in order to have *V*. But why? Suppose, for example, we agree with Joseph Fitzmeyer that for the author of Luke, "faith begins as listening, just as in the Pauline theology, but it does not end there. If faith for Paul begins with a "listening" (*akoe*) to the preaching of Christ (Rom 10:17), it ends as a "submission" (*hypakoe pisteos,* Rom 1:5, 16:26), or better as a personal commitment to God in Christ" (Fitzmeyer 1981, p. 236). Why think that you couldn't get from the input of hearing a testimony (which doesn't require belief) to the output of submission (which is an action) without the psychological attitude of *believing* that *God exists* or other salient content?

The first point to see is that it is at least an open question whether one can have *V* where faith is accompanied by some positive cognitive attitude toward salient content *p* in the absence of belief that *p*. With respect to *psychological state types*, it is important not to forget there are a lot of other mental attitudes in addition to believing that *p,* that might play the needed role here, including: believing that *p* is more likely to be true than not, hoping, assuming, accepting, desiring, fearing that *p*, etc. Proponents of the *belief plus* view owe us an account of why those attitudes are inadequate to play whatever role they take belief to play in faith and also of why belief, rather than certainty, is enough.

Second, what makes faith valuable—giving relationships the firmness and ability to persevere picked out by the term "resilience"—arguably consists of actions or forms of behavioral response (e.g., walking with God, following Jesus). The idea is that the cognitive attitude that one takes toward the salient content *p*, has to hook up with the other stuff (e.g., affections, actions, standing commitments, and so on) in such a way that can still result in the same types of behavior. The claim that *only* belief, in combination with whatever other attitudes it might be accompanied by, can yield those behaviors doesn't look very plausible. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, you can rationally perform the relevant action (e.g., turn to God, follow Jesus, respond to God with thanks and praise, etc.) in the absence of belief (e.g., with a low subjective but non-zero probability for salient *p* and a high valuation of *p*) (McKaughan 2016).

Consider the resilience that we have seen faith can give to a marriage. What exactly is going on in your brain when you take your wedding vows or over time as you remain dedicated to your beloved? No doubt there are answers to these questions, but they strike an odd chord. There is, quite obviously, no one unique psychological state involved in being married. Indeed, typically our emotions and

attitudes will fluctuate widely over the years. Similarly, it is a mistake to attempt to characterize faith (e.g., relying on and walking with God) in terms of unique attitudes or dispositions that must necessarily accompany the sorts of commitment involved in faith that perseveres—either in the lives of various persons or over the course of the life of an individual. Billions of people, through various millennia and across a vast diversity of cultural settings and widely different life experiences, have had faith. We should expect faith to be multiply realizable in many psychological, affective, and behavioral dispositions.

Third, there is reason to think that in some cases faith *couldn't* play its valuable role if belief of the salient propositions were required (at least not without diminishing the value of faith from the point of view of epistemic rationality). In circumstances that are evidentially unfavorable for salient p, belief of p would be epistemically defective. If belief is required for faith, faith couldn't play the role it needs to play to yield V in those circumstances without epistemic defect. How are you going to stick with the relationship through thick and thin, good times and bad, for better or for worse, and in moments of crisis or duress if faith goes away (is lost!) once it encounters evidentially unfavorable circumstances? The resilience of a faith that requires belief is fairly limited. *Relational faith,* in contrast, can coexist with significant doubts in a way and to an extent that belief cannot. So, there is reason to think that belief that p for salient p isn't required for faith in someone—at least if faith can rationally play the role it needs to play to yield V in evidentially unfavorable circumstances.

Mother Teresa as exemplar of resilient relational faith

As an example of faith grounded in a promise to walk with God and to follow Jesus for better or for worse, even in the midst of severe doubt, consider Mother Teresa (now known in the Catholic Church as Saint Teresa of Calcutta). Mother Teresa is widely admired for the seriousness with which she attempted to live out the good and noble teachings of Micah 6:8 to "do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with thy God" and Jesus' central call to love God and neighbor. She set aside her earthly possessions and worldly pursuits to dedicate her life to serving the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, tending to the needs of the sick, downtrodden, vulnerable, and marginalized in concrete and meaningful ways.

Many are shocked, however, to learn that she lived as she did despite the fact that over a period spanning five decades she experienced a "dark night of the soul" that included a feeling that she had been abandoned by God and even profound doubts about whether God exists. Excerpts from her private writings, made public in Brian Kolodiejchuk, *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light* (2007), reveal her complicated interior life which combine haunting expressions of doubts so serious that she regards them as blasphemous with a firm resolve to be faithful to her commitments.

Quite understandably, in the midst of the kinds of suffering she encountered, she faced profoundly human questions about whether the God to whom she had dedicated her life even exists.

Lord, my God, who am I that You should forsake me?…. I call, I cling, I want —and there is no One to answer—no One on Whom I can cling—no, No One. —Alone. The darkness is so dark—and I am alone.—Unwanted, forsaken.— The loneliness of the heart that wants love is unbearable…. So many unanswered questions live within me—I am afraid to uncover them—because of the blasphemy.—If there be God, please forgive me. If this brings You glory, if You get a drop of joy from this—if souls are brought to You-if my suffering satiates Your Thirst—here I am Lord, with joy I accept all to the end of life—& I will smile at Your Hidden Face—always (Kolodiejchuk 2007, pp. 186–188).

We have here a painfully honest expression of significant doubt and it is clear that at times she worried that "there is no One to answer" her prayers (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 187). She writes:

They say people in hell suffer eternal pain because of the loss of God—they would go through all that suffering if they had just a little hope of possessing God.—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). That 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 words [sic, 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…. (Kolodiejchuk 2007, pp. 192–193).

Some of the doubts she articulates here are arguably incompatible with belief in God: she *longs* to believe that God really exists and that Jesus truly saves souls— claims around which she has literally centered her entire life—but does not. Yet, though she fails to believe the claims that she cherishes, even in the midst of these profound doubts she remains faithful. She continues to honor her commitments to serve Jesus and to live in relation to God, for better or for worse, and to orient her life around the central claims of the gospel, for better or for worse:

In the call You said that I would have to suffer much.—Ten years—my Jesus, You have done to me according to Your will—and Jesus hear my prayer—if this pleases You-if my pain and suffering—my darkness and separation gives You a drop of consolation—my own Jesus do with me as You wish…. I am willing with all my heart to suffer all that I suffer—not only now—but for all eternity…. I am ready to wait for You for all eternity.—Your little one (Kolodiejchuk 2007, pp. 192–194).

How should we think about the kind of religious commitment here expressed?

If belief is a largely involuntary state that we simply find ourselves in, many people who, like Mother Teresa, find themselves with significant doubts will be unable to respond to God in faith for reasons of intellectual honesty, regardless of how much they love Jesus, desire to give their lives to God, or choose to live. Some

will say, "Ah well, she lost her faith. She is no longer a 'believer.'" In fact, that's how Mother Teresa herself describes it in places:

> Where is my Faith?—Even deep down, right in, there is nothing but emptiness and darkness.—My God—how painful is this unknown pain—I have no Faith —I dare not utter the words & thoughts that crowd in my heart—& make me suffer untold agony (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 187).

Elsewhere she writes: "I have no faith—I don't believe" (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 193). If the only conceptual resources available for understanding what faith is or can be take belief as a requirement for faith, this seems like the right thing to say.

But to say that Mother Teresa lost her faith is a *spectacularly implausible* description! It is not just that this way of reading the situation confuses ideal faith with real and all too human faith, though it is of course true that faith can be stronger or weaker at various points in the course of a journey—along various cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. More importantly, it is not at all clear that, even during the periods in which Mother Teresa struggled with doubts that she is aptly described as having merely weak faith. To the contrary! It is precisely in such moments in which the essence of faith comes most clearly into view. To classify Mother Teresa as an atheist who merely wishes that there were a God overlooks the fact that these are confessions cast in the form of a prayer and to fail to see the direction of the life in which these painful expressions of profound doubt about whether the God who she continues to love and to serve even exists are a part.

We see, in the above passages, a woman whose resolve in honoring her promise sustained her faith in the midst of experiences of significant doubt of a depth and variety that are pretty clearly incompatible with belief. However, some proponents of the *belief plus* view might wish to argue that Mother Teresa didn't really lack belief, rather than conclude that she lost her faith. But even if there were reason to think that Mother Teresa remained a "believer" throughout the course of her life, we should still consider the significance of the response of Mother Teresa*—a figure like Mother Teresa in other respects who definitely did lack belief that God exists. Moreover, I don't find this reply plausible. There is a danger of trivializing her private and painful thoughts about God, who she sometimes came to refer to as "the Absent One" (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 165), the difficulty she had in articulating them to others, and the fact that she was "afraid to write all those terrible things that pass in my soul" (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 193):

> I understand a little the tortures of hell—without God. I have no words to express what I want to say…. I want to speak—yet nothing comes—I find no words to express the depths of the darkness (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 172).

As Mother Teresa describes her public face: "The smile is a big cloak which covers a multitude of pains" (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 176):

> The whole time smiling—Sisters & people pass such remarks.—They think my faith, trust & love are filling my very being & that the intimacy with God and union to His will must be absorbing my heart.—Could they but know—

and how my cheerfulness is the cloak by which I cover the emptiness & misery. In spite of all—this darkness & emptiness is not as painful as the longing for God.—The contradiction I fear will unbalance me (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 187).

Her inner life, she tells us, was characterized by longing and separation from God:

In my heart there is no faith—no love—no trust—there is much pain—the pain of longing, the pain of not being wanted.—I want God with all the powers of my soul—and yet there is between us—there is terrible separation.—I don't pray any longer—I utter words of community prayers…. But my prayer of union is not there any longer.—I no longer pray. My soul is not one with You —and yet when alone in the streets—I talk to you for hours—of my longing for You (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 193).

Sometimes it is more informative to look at what people do rather than what they say. Mother Teresa's continued life over the decades that were marked by this condition manifest an important kind of faith which, although arguably incompatible with epistemically rational confident belief (in contrast to other available positive cognitive attitudes one might take toward the same content), constitute a response that many recognize as valuable and pleasing to God.

A focus on relational faith within the context of a covenantal commitment, I submit, takes us closer to understanding why. In 1942 Mother Teresa made a personal vow to God, a decision which gave her life a direction or orientation toward God to which all of her other aims were subordinated, an active commitment to be faithful to this relationship. Through an act of decision, or series of commitments, she took herself to have entered into a sacred relationship with Jesus, akin to marriage. Nuns in the Missionaries of Charity regard themselves as a "spouse of Jesus crucified." This promise gave her relationship moorings as she was tossed about on the dark sea of doubt and various other kinds of adversity she faced along life's way. As we shall see, her resolve in honoring this promise sustained her faith in the midst of experiences of significant doubt of a depth and variety that are incompatible with belief. More than 17 years after taking her vow, she wrote:

Since then I have kept this promise—and when sometimes the darkness is very dark—& I am on the verge of saying "No to God" the thought of that promise pulls me up (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 187).

Notice how this kind of *relational faith* can give relationships a stability that is not simply dependent on the waxing and waning of one's momentary desires and beliefs (or fluctuations in one's levels of confidence). Paradigm cases of *relational faith* will indeed involve positive cognitive and affective aspects, but a wide range of responses can play the needed role. Moreover, strengths in one dimension can often compensate for weaknesses along another in such a way as to allow for very stable and robust relationships. For example, given high enough valuations (e.g., valuing God and the possibility of living in relationship with God) it can be practically rational to continue to remain faithfully engaged in what one hopes is a

relationship with God even in the absence of belief that God exists for almost any non-negligible probability one assigns to God's existence (McKaughan 2016).

It is precisely in times of trial, doubt, intermingled with obedient submission to God's will that the steadfast commitment characteristic of faith comes into the foreground. Even in haunting confessions like those above she is still crying to God from deep within, committed to following Jesus to the ends of the earth come what may, and remains fully devoted to a life of servanthood that is grounded in her orientation toward God. The commitments she made to God and to Christ and to which she remained true kept her faith afloat during various storms and dark periods in her life.

It would be far more plausible to attribute a lack of faith to Mother Teresa if, instead of merely experiencing significant doubts, she had renounced that relationship. This fits the case of Mary Johnson, a former nun in the Missionaries of Charity for 20 years and who knew Mother Teresa, who now accepts the label of "atheist" for herself (Johnson 2011). The *relational* view of faith again seems to deliver precisely the right result.

Mother Teresa's commitment to Jesus was not easily identifiable with any one cognitive or affective state. Her faith endured through widely different levels of confidence in central tenets of her faith:

> He is not there. Heaven, souls—why these are just words—words that mean nothing to me.—My very life seems so contradictory. I help souls—to go where? (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 210).

Her faith also endured through broad shifts in affect:

> From my childhood I have had a most tender love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament—but now this too has gone. I feel nothing before Jesus—…. All these things were so natural to me before—…. I loved God with all of the powers of my heart. He was the centre of everything I did & said. Now Father —it [is] so dark, so different and yet my everything is His (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 210).

Undertaking and maintaining the kinds of commitments that are at the core of covenantal faith is compatible with a wide range of cognitive and affective states indeed. In the life of Mother Teresa, we see an example of someone honoring her vow even in the absence of characteristic cognitive or affective states that we typically associate with faith, such as belief and affection. By reflecting on her faith in these moments of crisis or duress, we see that her decision—a commitment to living in a way that is faithful to promises she has made to God and to Jesus—are what is fundamental to her faith.

It isn't hard to see why a response like this, which Mother Teresa once described in the words "to live by faith and yet not to believe" (Kolodiejchuk 2007, p. 248), might be pleasing to God. Indeed, we can see why such commitments might be of considerable value on the level of ordinary human relations. Fully aware of these dark nights, on September 4, 2016 the Roman Catholic Church canonized Mother Teresa as a saint, Blessed Teresa of Kolkata holding her up as an exemplar of steadfast faith to Christians around the world.

Conclusion

I have argued that faith and faithfulness are closely associated in the context of relationships involving trust and loyalty and have located what is most distinctively valuable about *relational faith* in a characteristic perseverance which plays a role in sustaining relationships through various kinds of challenges, including through intellectually unfavorable circumstances and significant periods of doubt. We can clearly recognize the value of such faith/faithfulness in the context of ordinary human relationships and so also understand why ancient Judeo–Christian communities might also take it to be central to the response that God is said to desire of humans. Illustrating such faith with Mother Teresa as an exemplar, I have argued that *relational faith* can play this valuable role in sustaining relationships even without belief of the salient propositions. This too is valuable, since the fact that *relational faith* does not require belief allows it to play this valuable role in times of great duress, including a wide range of suboptimal epistemic circumstances, in a way that does not require epistemic opinions that fail to fit one's evidence. Such a conclusion is significant for faith and faithfulness in religious contexts, for it allows us to understand among other things how one can wrestle authentically with profound intellectual doubts from *within* the Judeo–Christian tradition while remaining firmly and steadfastly committed and undivided in one's deepest loyalties and allegiance. Sometimes, precisely in such moments of struggle, the essence and value of faith comes most clearly into view and we see that such faith is not weak but strong.

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