

## DOES FAITH ENTAIL BELIEF?

Daniel Howard-Snyder

Does faith that *p* entail belief that *p*? If faith that *p* is identical with belief that *p*, it does. But it isn't. Even so, faith that *p* might be necessarily partly constituted by belief that *p*, or at least entail it. Of course, even if faith that *p* entails belief that *p*, it does not follow that faith that *p* is necessarily partly constituted by belief that *p*. Still, showing that faith that *p* entails belief that *p* would be a significant step in that direction. Can we take that step? In this essay, I assess, and reject, seven reasons to think we can. Along the way, I discuss *having faith in a person*, *being a person of faith*, *believing something by faith*, and *believing a person*.

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

In this they are not alone. Take, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas. Commenting on his theory of the atonement, Eleonore Stump tells us that, according to Aquinas,

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.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rosenberg and Craig, *Is Faith in God Reasonable?*

<sup>2</sup>Pinker, "Less Faith, More Reason."

<sup>3</sup>Dawkins, quoted in McGrath, *Christianity*, 102.

<sup>4</sup>Stump, *Aquinas*, 439–440.



In this passage, Stump seems to say that Aquinas 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.

Richard Swinburne says something similar about Aquinas. 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."<sup>5</sup> 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."<sup>6</sup> (The idea that faith in someone involves believing something on the basis of his say-so is an old one. It's also puzzling. Why can't a mother have faith in her son even though it does not involve believing anything about him on the basis of his say-so, or the say-so of anyone else? After all, she doesn't need anyone's say-so; she knows him better than the back of her hand.) The first qualification "is that the belief that is involved is a belief which does not amount to scientific knowledge (*scientia*)" and the second is that faith is not, as such, "meritorious" since it is meritorious only if it is "voluntary" and "formed by love [*caritas*]."<sup>7</sup> But, according to Swinburne, neither the addition nor the two qualifications undermine his claim that, for Aquinas, "faith by itself is a very intellectual thing," "a matter of having certain beliefs," a "theoretical conviction."<sup>8</sup>

So Stump and Swinburne seem to agree: according to Aquinas, faith—note well: faith, *not* faith "formed by love"—is propositional belief. One might disagree with their interpretation of Aquinas. However, I will not delve into the matter since I am more concerned with the view they attribute to him than whether he in fact held it.

Notice that Rosenberg and Stump's-and-Swinburne's Aquinas speak of what I will call *objectual faith*, the psychological attitude or state picked out by paradigmatic uses of "S has faith *in* x," where x takes as instances an expression that refers to a person, or some activity or property of a person. And they identify objectual faith with propositional belief. Others seem to identify objectual faith with propositional belief, too. For example, in his debate with Rosenberg on whether faith *in* God is reasonable, Craig launched into a defense of the proposition that belief *that* God exists is reasonable. Similarly, Biola Open's introduction to that debate 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 emphases). At least some people, both secular and religious, seem to identify objectual faith and propositional belief.

<sup>5</sup>Swinburne, *Faith and Reason*, 138.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 140–141.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 141, 140, and 138.

This identification is false, in my opinion. We can begin to see why when we notice that an instance of objectual faith is relative to some domains but not others. For example, I have faith in my sixteen-year-old sons—as students, and even as budding drivers (*God help me!*), but not as horticulturalists. With the domain-relativity of objectual faith in mind, notice that, in so far as faith in someone is relevantly similar to trust in them, you can put your faith in someone, to do or be thus-and-so, only if you are disposed to rely on them to do or be it. However, you can believe that they will do or be thus-and-so without that disposition. That's why, for example, you might believe that your neighbor is a dentist, but lack faith in her, as a dentist—because you are not disposed to rely on her as one. So we can't identify objectual faith with propositional belief.

Consider a second identification. We not only say things of the form “S has faith *in* x” and “S has faith *in* x's *doing/being thus-and-so*”; we also say things of the form “S has faith *that* p,” where p takes as instances an expression that refers to a proposition, as when we say “She has faith that God will keep his promises” or “He has faith that the basic Jewish story is true.” Call the attitude picked out by paradigmatic uses of this locution *propositional faith*.

It can seem quite natural to identify faith in someone, as thus-and-so, with faith that she is thus-and-so, or faith in someone, to do thus-and-so, with faith that she will do thus-and-so. After all, what difference could there be between, say, Mary's having faith in the Lord, to exercise providence, and Mary's having faith that the Lord will exercise providence? Although I'm far from sure about it, I tend to think there is a difference. That's because it seems we can imagine them coming apart. For example, I have faith *that* Anne's baby will survive his impending hazardous birth, but I do not have faith *in* him, as anything, since I am not disposed to rely on him in any way at all. And the same goes for having faith in the Lord, to exercise providence. To be disposed to rely on the Lord to exercise providence goes beyond simply having faith that he will. So propositional faith is distinct from objectual faith.

Consider a third identification: propositional faith is identical with propositional belief. This seems false to me, too. That's because you can believe something and yet not be *for* its truth, you can believe something and yet not look on it *with favor*, but you cannot have faith that something is so and not be *for* its truth, you cannot have faith that something is so and not look on it with favor. This is why we do not have faith that terrorism will occur frequently in the twenty-first century, although we might well believe that it will.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Consenting voices include Adams, “Moral Faith”; Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith” and “Audi on Nondoxastic Faith”; Audi, “Faith, Belief, and Rationality” and *Rationality and Religious Commitment*; McKaughan, “Authentic Faith and Acknowledged Risk” and “Faith as Active Commitment”; Schellenberg, *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion*, *The Will to Imagine*, and *Evolutionary Religion*.

Suppose we agree that neither objectual faith nor propositional faith can be identified with propositional belief, and that they cannot be identified with each other. Even so, we might yet insist that both objectual faith and propositional faith are necessarily partly constituted by propositional belief. That is, we might insist that faith in someone or someone's being/doing thus-and-so is necessarily partly constituted by belief that they exist or belief that they are or have done or will do thus-and-so, and we might insist that faith that something is so is necessarily partly constituted by belief that it is so. What should we make of these two partial constitution theses? In what follows, I'll focus on the second of them; but I expect that what I have to say about it will, by and large, apply to the first. Before I turn to that task, however, four preliminaries are in order.

First, in addition to objectual and propositional faith, there is the faith involved in being a person of faith. To be a person of faith is to be a person who takes up or finds herself with an overall stance or orientation toward matters that govern important aspects of her life, one that structures those aspects into a unified whole, one that involves a disposition to retain that stance/orientation in the face of difficulties in living it out.<sup>10</sup> Although when we speak of a person of faith, we typically think of someone who is religious, there are secular manifestations of this sort of faith as well, as many a bright illustrates. Following Robert Audi, let's call this sort of faith *global faith*.<sup>11</sup>

Now, we might be tempted to think that global faith is not something "in addition to" either or both of objectual or propositional faith.<sup>12</sup> There's good reason to resist the temptation, however. That's because neither of them must involve the sort of unification distinctive of global faith. For example, I might have faith in Christ or faith that the basic Christian story is true, but my faith-in and faith-that might be so psychically compartmentalized that it does not govern most matters of importance to me, as witnessed by my failure to engage deeply in Christian practices and Christian approaches to moral, social, and political matters.

If what I have said up to this point is correct, we have what we might call three *basic* forms of faith: objectual faith, propositional faith, and global faith. Are there other basic forms of faith? I suspect not. At any rate—and this is the second preliminary—the best candidates for another basic form of faith seem wholly understandable in terms of those I have mentioned.

For example, sometimes we speak of *believing on faith* or *believing by faith* or *taking on faith*. Focus on the first for a moment, believing on faith, as illustrated by "She believes on faith that her son will be rescued." We can understand this expression as attributing to her *faith in* someone who testifies to her son being rescued, and relying on their word to believe that

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<sup>10</sup>Dewey, *A Common Faith*; Kvanvig, "Affective Theism and People of Faith," "Epistemic Fetishism and Deweyan Faith," "What is Fundamental to Faith?"

<sup>11</sup>Audi, *Rationality and Religious Commitment*, 57–58.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.

to which they have testified. In other words, believing something on faith involves faith in someone or, alternatively, faith that they are trustworthy with respect to that to which they testify. Thus, believing something on faith does not involve any distinctive sort of faith in addition to objectual and propositional faith. The same goes for believing by faith and taking something on faith.

Here's another example: sometimes we speak of *believing x*, where *x* is a person, as in "Abraham believed the Lord, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). According to Elizabeth Anscombe, there was a time when "faith" was "used with just this meaning, believing someone."<sup>13</sup> This use of "faith," she continues, involves "necessarily always also 'believing that,'" and so, she says, in order to distinguish it from "believing in," which is often distinguished from "believing that," it is better expressed as "S believes *x* that *p*," which she understands as "S 'trusting [*x*] for the truth' about *p*."<sup>14</sup> Suppose she's right. Then it seems that, in so far as this use of "faith" as believing someone involves faith at all, it involves putting one's faith in *x*, trusting *x*, to tell the truth about *p*. So, if Anscombe is right, "faith" understood as believing someone does not involve a sort of faith in addition to objectual faith.

Third preliminary. Let's say that if *x* is necessarily partly constituted by *y*, then *x* entails *y*, i.e., it is absolutely impossible for *x* to exist without *y*. For example, if water is necessarily partly constituted by oxygen, then water entails oxygen; and if knowledge is necessarily partly constituted by belief, then knowledge entails belief. Likewise, if faith that *p* is necessarily partly constituted by belief that *p*, then faith that *p* entails belief that *p*. But it is not the case that, if *x* entails *y*, then *x* is necessarily partly constituted by *y*. Water entails gravity, but water is not necessarily partly constituted by gravity; and knowledge entails minds, but knowledge is not necessarily partly constituted by minds. Likewise, *even if* faith that *p* entails belief that *p*, it *might be* that faith that *p* is not necessarily partly constituted by belief that *p*. Upshot: the entailment relation is weaker than the necessary partial constitution relation. Thus, showing the weaker claim is not sufficient for showing the stronger. Still, if we can show the weaker, we will have taken a significant step toward showing the stronger. Can we take that step? I will assess, and reject, seven reasons to think we can.

Final preliminary. Someone might hear the *denial* of the claim that, necessarily, you can have faith that *p* only if you believe that *p* as the claim that you can have faith that *p* even though you *don't believe* *p*. That is correct, but people sometimes hear something else. They hear that you can have faith that *p* even though you *disbelieve* *p*. That is incorrect, in my book. Rather, we should understand the claim that you can have faith that *p* even though you don't believe that *p* as the claim that you can have faith

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<sup>13</sup>Anscombe, "What is it to Believe Someone?," 1.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 2.

that *p* even though you *lack* belief that *p*, which is not at all the same thing as *disbelieving* that *p*.

Enough preliminaries. Let's turn to the view which is our focus, namely this:

*Faith Entails Belief.* Necessarily, *S* has faith that *p* only if *S* believes that *p*.

You cannot have faith that *p* without belief that *p*; faith that *p* cannot be tokened absent belief that *p*. Note that this is not the claim that, necessarily, *S* has faith that *p* only if *S* believes something or other, which is obviously true. Nor is it a generic claim akin to *dogs have four legs*, e.g., *faith that p includes belief that p*. So then, why suppose that Faith Entails Belief is true? Here are seven reasons.

*Reason 1.* Robert Adams focuses on a species of propositional faith that he calls "moral faith" and 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 recognizes "the possibility of error," that one "recognize[s] 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.<sup>15</sup>

*Assessment.* I don't see it. I don't see why "all 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." Let me explain.

Although propositional faith involves what I will call a "positive cognitive stance" toward its object, something other than propositional belief can constitute that positive cognitive stance. There are several alternatives in the literature. To see the one I have in mind, consider two cases.

*The defensive captain.* The captain of the defensive team is trying to figure out what play the opposing quarterback will call next. From his experience of playing against him and his coach, and given the current situation, it seems most likely to him that, of the credible options, he will call a plunge into the middle of the line by the fullback. Does the captain *believe* that this is the play he will call? No. Who can predict exactly what a quarterback will do in a given situation? The captain's experience prevents him from believing any such thing. Nevertheless,

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<sup>15</sup>Adams, "Moral Faith," 85.



he acts on the assumption that he will call a fullback plunge and he aligns his defense on that basis.

*The army general.* Consider an army general facing enemy forces. She needs to act. Her scouts give some information about the disposition of the enemy but not nearly enough to believe that they are situated one way rather than another. So she assumes that they are situated in the way that seems to her the least false of the options she finds credible given the information she has. Then, acting on that assumption, she disposes her forces in the way that seems most likely to be effective.<sup>16</sup>

I want to make six observations about these two cases.

First, we can easily imagine that neither of our protagonists believes the target proposition. The defensive captain does not believe that the quarterback will call a fullback plunge, as evidenced by the fact that he lacks the dispositional profile of belief: he has no tendency to assert that the quarterback will call a plunge if asked, no tendency to mentally assent to that proposition if it is brought to mind, and no tendency to be surprised upon learning just after the snap that the quarterback made another call. The army general does not believe that the enemy forces are situated thus-and-so, as evidenced by the same fact: she has no tendency to assert that they are disposed thus-and-so if asked, no tendency to mentally assent to that proposition if it is brought to mind, and no tendency to be surprised upon suddenly learning that they are disposed otherwise.

Second, we can easily imagine that each of our protagonists is in doubt about whether the target proposition is true. That's because each of them thinks that, given what he or she has to go on, the target proposition is only most likely or the least false among the credible options, which is compatible with it being no more likely than its negation. In that case, we might easily imagine that it appears to each of them that what he or she has to go on with respect to the truth of the target proposition is roughly on a par with what he or she has to go on with respect to its falsity and, as a result, neither believes nor disbelieves it.

Third, despite their lack of belief, and despite their being in doubt, each of them acts on a certain assumption. The captain acts on the assumption that the quarterback will call a fullback plunge; the general acts on the assumption that the enemy forces are situated thus-and-so. Take note: *there really is some cognitive stance that each of them acts on*. Each of them *assumes that* some proposition is true. Call this stance "belieflless assuming."

Fourth, our protagonists act on the basis of their beliefllessly assuming something, and they act in ways you would expect them to act in light of their beliefllessly assuming it, given their aims. The captain beliefllessly assumes that the quarterback called a fullback plunge, so he puts six men on the line, given his aim to stop the offense. The general beliefllessly assumes

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<sup>16</sup>Here I tweak Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 10, and Alston, "Audi on Nondoxastic Faith," 133.

that the enemy is situated thus-and-so, so she disperses her troops for a pincer movement, given her aim to thwart the enemy.

Fifth, we use “assume” and its cognates in different ways. We sometimes use “assume” to refer to our cognitive stance when we take something for granted, as when we say that we assume the world is more than five minutes old. I do not mean to use “assume” in this way because, so used, it refers to a stance too much like belief—indeed, it just *is* belief. On other occasions, we use “assume” to refer to our cognitive stance when we introduce a proposition into thought simply for the purpose of considering what follows from it, as when we assume for *reductio* that some times are earlier than themselves. I do not mean to use “assume” in this way because, so used, it refers to a stance that is too little like belief—indeed, it seems to be no more than a bit of mental what-if-ery. Our defensive captain and army general might be seen to illustrate this third notion of assuming since we can easily imagine that, although the captain assumes that the quarterback will call a fullback plunge and the general assumes that the enemy is situated thus-and-so, neither of them believes the target proposition and neither puts it forward as a bit of what-if-ery. In the sense of assume that I have in mind, one can assume something without believing it and while being in doubt about it.

Sixth, since (beliefless) assuming that *p* is distinct from belief that *p* and compatible with being in doubt about whether *p*, we might wonder how it differs from belief that *p*. We might also wonder how it is similar to it. As for differences, since belieflessly assuming that *p* is unlike belief that *p* in that it is compatible with being in doubt about whether *p*, and since when one is in doubt about whether *p*, one *lacks* a tendency to mentally assent to *p* upon considering whether *p*, and one *lacks* a tendency to verbally affirm that *p* when asked whether *p*, and one *lacks* a tendency to be surprised upon suddenly learning not-*p*, it follows that the dispositional profile of beliefless assuming that *p* lacks these tendencies as well. As for similarities, like belief, beliefless assuming is a representational state with a mind-to-world direction of fit. If you belieflessly assume that *p*, you represent that world as being *p*; and, if the world turns out not to be such that *p*, then your beliefless assumption is false. Moreover, beliefless assuming functions similarly to belief in reasoning and other behavior. Specifically, if one belieflessly assumes that *p*, then, if one takes *q* to follow from *p*, one will tend to belieflessly assume *q* as well. And if one belieflessly assumes that *p*, then, if one engages in practical or theoretical reasoning, one will tend to use *p* as a premise when appropriate. And, in general, if one belieflessly assumes that *p*, then, given one’s goals, aversions, and other cognitive stances, one will tend to act in appropriate ways. So it is with our two protagonists. Although their beliefless assumptions lack some tendencies definitive of belief, their beliefless assuming leads them, given



their goals, to call out a particular defensive formation, to order a pincer movement combined with mortar shelling, etc.<sup>17</sup>

My proposal, then, is this: faith that *p* involves *some* positive cognitive stance or other toward *p*, but it need not be belief that *p* and it need not entail belief that *p*; belieflessly assuming that *p* of the sort I have described is such a stance. Others might do the job as well, e.g., presupposing, trusting, hoping, accepting, credencing, assenting, etc.<sup>18</sup>

Now let's return to Adams. According to Adams, because moral faith, and perhaps propositional faith more generally, can be in error or mistaken, and because one can reflect on its plausibility, use logic, and aim for consistency and coherence with other items on which one takes a cognitive stance, such faith can be classified as "a sort of belief." But, as we've seen, that's not true. That's because instances of beliefless assuming can be in error or mistaken; moreover, in thinking about what one has belieflessly assumed, one can reflect on its plausibility, use logic, and aim for consistency and coherence with other items on which one takes a cognitive stance. Finally, beliefless assuming can play the role frequently assigned to belief in propositional faith. Hence, Adams's basis for classifying moral faith as a sort of belief does not support that classification; nor does it support classifying propositional faith more generally as a sort of belief.

Having said that, perhaps Adams meant to emphasize "sort of" when he classified moral faith as "a sort of belief." After all, there is something *akin* to belief that is entailed by moral faith, as with propositional faith more generally, namely a positive cognitive stance. But the point remains: arguably, there are positive cognitive stances toward *p* other than belief that *p* and they have the features of belief that Adams describes.

*Reason 2.* Our second reason begins with the observation that there are important connections between faith and the emotions. Robert Audi writes:

Even outside religious contexts, faith tends to eliminate or diminish fear and other negative emotions concerning the same object, such as anxiety, depression, and anger. This seems to be a manifestation of the sense in which faith that something is so is a kind of trusting that it is.<sup>19</sup>

We can parlay Audi's observation into an argument for Faith Entails Belief, as follows. Someone who has faith that *p* tends to have diminished fear, anxiety, or other negative emotions, in the presence of perceived risk.

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<sup>17</sup>For a fuller development of this account of belief-less assumption, see Howard-Snyder, "Propositional Faith" and "Acting on the Assumption that *P*."

<sup>18</sup>See Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith" and "Audi on Nondoxastic Faith"; Audi, "Faith, Belief, and Rationality" and *Rationality and Religious Commitment*; McKaughan, "Authentic Faith and Acknowledged Risk," "Action-centered Faith, Doubt, and Rationality," and "Faith as Active Commitment"; Pojman, *Religious Belief and the Will*; Poston and Dougherty, "Divine Hiddenness and the Nature of Belief"; Schellenberg, *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion, The Will to Imagine, and Evolutionary Religion*; Swinburne, *Faith and Reason*.

<sup>19</sup>Audi, *Rationality and Religious Commitment*, 77.

But that's not possible unless one believes that *p*. Thus, propositional faith entails 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. Her friend might enjoin her to "have faith" that she will clear it. His enjoinder to have faith is entirely appropriate, but it is appropriate only if her having faith diminishes significant anxiety; and her faith can diminish significant anxiety only if she believes that she will clear the crevice. What goes for this illustrative case goes for every case.<sup>20</sup>

*Assessment.* What should we make of this argument and its illustration? Regarding the illustration, it seems false to me that, if she has faith that she can clear the crevice, then her faith can diminish her anxiety only if she believes that she will clear it. Belief that it is likely that she will clear it can diminish her anxiety too. Indeed, I would think that, so long as she regarded the attempt as well worth the risk, her faith that she will clear the crevice can diminish her anxiety even if her faith had as its positive cognitive stance the belief that it's about as likely as not that she will clear the crevice. Even mere hope might do the trick. And this point generalizes to the argument itself. Even if faith that *p* necessarily brings with it a tendency to diminished fear, anxiety, or other negative emotions in the presence of perceived risk that not-*p*, one might yet have the required tendency absent belief that *p*.

By way of response to this assessment, we might urge that faith and the emotions are related in such a way that faith does *more* than simply tend to decrease certain negative emotions. According to Lindsay Rettler, "Having faith helps people feel peaceful, it makes them happier."<sup>21</sup> Further, she writes:

When a person has faith that *p*, she has settled the matter in a way that is reflected in, or indicated by, her feelings and actions. . . . For example, a person who has faith that she will do well on her piano performance tends to be very calm and collected prior to the performance. . . . One who has faith that *p* tends to experience various emotions made fitting by the truth of *p*: having faith that things will work out fosters contentment, having faith that God will take care of me fosters peace, having faith that my spouse will surprise me for my birthday fosters excitement, and so forth.<sup>22</sup>

In reflecting on Rettler's words, it behooves us to remember that we are talking about what faith that *p* entails. I rather doubt that, necessarily, for any person *S*, *S* has faith that *S*'s spouse will surprise *S* for her birthday only if *S*'s faith fosters excitement. After all, can't those with more subdued personalities still have faith with that content even if it only fosters a wee bit of pleasure and a little inner smile?

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<sup>20</sup>Thanks to John Pittard for bringing this line of thought to my attention.

<sup>21</sup>Rettler, *Doxastic Agency and Responsibility*, 28.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 17–18.

Still, Rettler's general point remains. In general, it is necessary that, for any *S*, *S* has faith that *p* only if *S* has "settled the matter in a way that is reflected in, or indicated by, her feelings and actions." With this astute observation I am in full agreement. And we might parlay it into an argument for Faith Entails Belief, again focusing on cases of faith in the presence of perceived risk, as follows. Necessarily, *S* has faith that *p* only if *S* tends to be calm, collected, content, serene, or peaceful to a high degree in the presence of perceived risk that not-*p*. But that's not possible absent belief that *p*. Thus, faith that *p* entails belief that *p*. By way of illustration, consider a recent Ph.D. who, on a campus visit in a competitive job market, prepares to demonstrate her in-class teaching skills to a class she's never met before, with the faculty sitting in the back row judging her. Unless she believes that she will do well, she won't be calm, etc. to a degree entailed by faith that she will do well. And what goes for her goes for every case.<sup>23</sup>

There are several things to say about this argument and its illustration. I restrict myself to two.

First, suppose that it is true that, necessarily, *S* has faith that *p* only if *S* tends to be calm, etc. to a high degree in the presence of perceived risk that not-*p*. Why can't one possess that tendency without belief that *p*? After all, it seems that our fresh Ph.D. *might* have a tendency to face the situation calmly enough to have faith that she'll teach well even though she only believes that it is likely, or more likely than not that she will. Likewise, she *might* do the same even though she only belieflessly assumes that she will, or only accepts or trusts that she will. Indeed, she might even get by with mere hope. It all depends on the rest of her psychology. If she has a personality that thrives on uncertainty, or if she tends to welcome and even embrace risk, or if she's "in her element" when most others similarly placed are paralyzed by fear and anxiety, she may well be calm and collected enough to count as satisfying Rettler's condition on faith, even if she lacks belief that she will teach well.

Second, is it really true that, necessarily, *S* has faith that *p* only if *S* tends to be calm, etc. to a high degree in the presence of perceived risk that not-*p* is true? Sure enough, it is necessary that, for any *S*, *S* has faith that *p* only if *S* has "settled the matter in a way that is reflected in, or indicated by, her feelings and actions." But it is not clear to me that, even if someone has "settled the matter" whether *p* by believing that *p*, a *high degree* of calmness, etc. will, as a matter of necessity, be among the appropriate feelings fostered by such a faith. Indeed, I would think that we would exhibit a paradigmatic form of faith if we were, by an act of will alone, to muscle through the *lack* of calmness, etc. that so often besets us as we aim to live in light of what we believe. Suppose you know with certainty that the only way in which you can do the Father's will is by submitting yourself to cru-

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<sup>23</sup>For a similar argument, see Rettler, *Doxastic Agency and Responsibility*, 17–18. For more on faith and serenity, see Penelhum, *Reason and Religious Faith*, 72–74, and Schellenberg, *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion*, 111–120.

cifixion on a Roman cross, but every fiber of your being cries out against it, so much so that your anguish produces sweat “like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.” Despite the terror that you feel, you dig down deep and resolve by an act of will that, no matter how you feel, and no matter what the authorities throw at you, you will not bend from your Father’s will. If that isn’t a paradigmatic display of faith—e.g., faith that, come what may, the Father’s will is well worth doing—what is it? And, hours later, when hanging from that cross, your shame laid bare for all to see, your expectation of the Father’s presence crushed, you can’t help but cry out with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” There is no calm here, no peace or serenity. But there is faith. Faith that, despite the pain that wracks your body and despite your shattered expectations, your Father will, in the end, make all things well. So it is that, with your last excruciating breath, you commend your spirit into his hands—and die. Exciting? Hardly. Excitement is more appropriate to your faith when you find yourself three days hence sitting in the dark on a cold slab of rock. Calm, peaceful, serene? Not even close. They are more appropriate to your faith as you ascend to the right hand of the Father. But as you face your worst nightmare and as you hang nailed to a cross, such feelings cannot be expected of you or the faith to which you cling. (Our new Ph.D. would do well to approximate your example in the garden and on the hill, relying on her faith that she will teach well and, facing her fear and self-doubt head on, grit her teeth and lean into it to keep her steady.)

*Reason 3.* You can’t have faith that *p* unless you have a tendency to assert *p* when asked whether *p* (absent contravening factors). But you can’t have that tendency unless you believe *p*. Thus, it’s impossible for you to have faith that *p* unless you believe that *p*.<sup>24</sup>

*Assessment:* First, as we’ve seen, on my account of propositional faith, you can have faith that *p* even though you lack a tendency to assert *p* when asked whether *p*. So, if you find my account plausible, you’ll have some reason to deny that having faith that *p* entails a tendency to assert *p* when asked.

Second, independently of my account, it is worth pausing over two features of Faith Entails Belief, and an implication of them.

Notice how specific the cognitive stance toward *p* must be if one is to have propositional faith. It must be *propositional belief*. No other cognitive stance will do: not acceptance, not presupposition, not beliefless assumption, not imaginative assent, not trust, not credence, not hope, not judgment, not this, and not that. Suppose seemings are distinct from beliefs, as many of us think, and suppose that beliefs are not entailed by seemings, as many of us also think. Now consider the heuristic device of a mental box for each mental-state type. Imagine that, for some reason, Bob’s belief box is empty of both *p* and not-*p*, and anything else *p*-ish; but

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<sup>24</sup>This argument appears in Audi, “Faith, Belief, and Rationality.”

his seeming box isn't. It contains *p*. Do we really want to say that, in that case, Bob *must* lack faith that *p*?

Notice also how specific the content must be. It must be *p* that is believed. Nothing else is acceptable: not it's likely that *p*, not it's more likely than not that *p*, not *p* is more likely than any of its credible contraries, not it's plausible that *p*, not any other content. Notice that that's not how it is with other complex propositional attitudes, e.g., fear that *p*. Propositional fear has cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Focus on the cognitive. It can be belief that *p*, but it can also be belief that it's likely that *p*, belief that it's more likely than not that *p*, and so on. I expect that the range of possible contents of propositional fear exceeds the range of possible contents of propositional faith. Nevertheless, if faith that *p* has belief as its cognitive component, doesn't it seem that, like fear that *p*, the range of possible contents is more than *p* alone?

An implication of these two features of Faith Entails Belief is at the heart of the current reason under discussion, specifically the premise that, necessarily, you have faith that *p* only if you have a tendency to assert *p* when asked whether *p*. Only *p* can do the trick. Nothing else. Before my sons were into the thick of adolescence, my faith that they would flourish as adults had as its cognitive component belief of that proposition. Since then, however, there have been times when I have been unsure. On some of those occasions, I was unsure enough to lack any tendency to assert that they will flourish when asked. Even so, on those occasions, I thought it was likely enough for me to be disposed to say when asked, "Well, I'm far from sure they will, but I'm also far from sure they won't. Still, all told, I suppose there's a good enough chance of it," or something along those lines. To suppose that I don't retain my faith that they will flourish simply on account of this fluctuation in my assertive dispositional profile imputes a sort of specificity to faith that it lacks, or so it seems to me. More importantly, it overlooks a fundamental fact about faith—a fact alluded to above, one that deserves a paper unto itself<sup>25</sup>—namely, that the function of faith is, among other things, to keep us firmly grounded when counter-evidence assaults the object of our faith, evidence enough to knock the wind out of assurance and assertion, yet not enough to buckle the knees of a rich variety of faith-fostered behavioral, affective, and volitional responses.

Let's look in a different direction for reasons for Faith Entails Belief. One might insist that, even if faith that *p* *in general* does not imply belief that *p*, *religious* or *Christian* faith does. The next four reasons take this tack. But here I must register a complaint. To suppose that there is anything that answers to "religious faith," thought of as a psychological attitude, state, stance, or orientation, other than what answers to "faith" more generally, strikes me as mistaken. And the same goes for "Christian faith." There is faith or various forms of faith—e.g., objectual, propositional, and global faith—and they can have distinctively religious or Christian objects or con-

<sup>25</sup>See Howard-Snyder, "The Skeptical Christian" and "The Function of Faith."

tents, and they can play a more or less central role in how we conceive of our relationship with God and others. But to suppose that those attitudes, etc. *themselves* are distinctively religious or Christian is like supposing that there's a distinctive form of religious or Christian ingestion and excretion, or pain and pleasure, or belief and desire—which is absurd. Still, this is what some people say. Suppose they're right. Let's see what follows.

*Reason 4.* You can't have religious faith that *p* unless 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 that *p* and what you see to follow from it. Therefore, it is impossible for you to have religious faith that *p* unless you believe that *p*.<sup>26</sup>

*Assessment:* First, religious faith that *p* does not entail 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 entailed 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 entail a total practical commitment to *p*'s truth *in those situations*. Suppose that Samuel 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, Samuel would be an overall better person if he adopted some other positive 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 that might fall short of "total."

*Reason 5.* Authentic religious faith that God exists involves a longing for God that is the "all-dominating longing" of one's life, one's "master passion." Belief-less religious faith that God exists can involve no such thing. At best, it would involve a "longing to know whether or not God exists." Religious faith that God exists, therefore, entails belief that God exists. And the same goes for faith whose contents are other central tradition-specific claims.

*Assessment:* 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. Moreover, a longing for God central to one's life can be wed to a faith that has something other than belief as its positive cognitive component; as such, propositional faith without belief that God

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<sup>26</sup>This and the next reason appear in Gutting, *Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism*, 105ff.



exists can involve a longing for God—and not just a “longing to know whether or not God exists”—suitable to be one’s master passion.

*Reason 6.* According to Alvin Plantinga,

Belief in God means trusting God, accepting God, accepting his purposes, committing one’s life to him and living in his presence. To the believer the entire world speaks of God. Great mountains, surging ocean, verdant forests, blue sky and bright sunshine, friends and family, love in its many forms and various manifestations—the believer sees these things and many more as gifts from God. The universe thus takes on a personal cast for him; the fundamental truth about reality is truth about a *person*.<sup>27</sup>

“So,” concludes Plantinga, “believing in God is indeed more than accepting the proposition that God exists.” And indeed it is. “But,” he continues,

if it is more than that it is also at least that. One cannot sensibly believe in God and thank him for the mountains without believing that there is such a person to be thanked and that he is in some way responsible for the mountains. Nor can one trust in God and commit oneself to him without believing that he exists; as the author of Hebrews says, “He who would come to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).<sup>28</sup>

Now: it is important to realize that Plantinga writes these words in the context of a lament over the state of contemporary theology, which he finds steeped in the deplorable influence of religious noncognitivists such as Richard Braithwaite and religious fictionalists like Gordon Kaufmann, John Hick, and Don Cupitt. I join him in that lament. However, noncognitivism and fictionalism couldn’t be further from our concerns.

Nevertheless, Plantinga’s words might suggest an argument that is easily adapted to our concerns, as an anonymous referee insists. It is this. You can’t have faith in God unless you are grateful to God, trust God, and commit yourself to God. But you can’t be grateful to God, trust God, and commit yourself to God unless you believe that God exists. Thus, it is impossible for you to have faith in God unless you believe that God exists. Furthermore, says our referee, Plantinga’s words “are easily adapted to certain articles of propositional faith,” as follows. You can’t have faith that God saves and redeems you unless you trust God and commit yourself to God. But you can’t trust God and commit yourself to God unless you believe that God exists. So, it is impossible for you to have faith that God saves and redeems you unless you believe that God exists. “Granted,” our referee concludes, “these items of faith are special cases, but they are very important special cases, so if Faith Entails Belief holds for them, then it applies where its advocates most care about it applying.”

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<sup>27</sup>Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” 18.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

*Assessment.* What should we make of these arguments? I have five things to say.

First, I'm aware of no advocate of Faith Entails Belief who says it holds just for these "special cases." But suppose there are such people; perhaps the referee is one of them. I should think that, at the very least, he or she must explain what it is about faith such that, unlike all other "nonspecial cases," when its object is God or propositions about God's salvific purposes, belief that God exists and belief of those propositions are entailed.

Second, it is a fact of life that those of us who are Christians sometimes flag in our gratitude to the Lord for the marvelous things he has done on our behalf. That's why clergy repeatedly aim to stir it up in us by, among other things, retelling the magnificent stories of creation, fall, redemption, reconciliation, resurrection, adoption, inheritance, and so on in ways that make vivid the gloriousness of what the Lord has done and the disgracefulness of our ingratitude. Of course, faith absent gratitude is defective. That goes without saying. But it also goes without saying that defective faith is faith nonetheless.

Third, "believing in God," says Plantinga, "is more than accepting the proposition that God exists." Note the word "accepting." That should bring to mind the previous point that propositional belief is not the only cognitive stance that might partly constitute faith in God; moreover, *God exists* need not be the only content of a belief that partly constitutes such faith.

Fourth, what about trusting God? Can we trust God even though we only accept or belieflessly assume or presuppose or trust that God exists? Can we trust God even though we only believe that it's more likely than not that God exists? It seems so. Trusting God is a *de re* attitude. In that respect, it's like trusting Hud Hudson. But, obviously enough, you can *de re* trust Hud even if you lack belief that he exists. So why can't you *de re* trust God almighty even if you lack belief that God exists? Similar points apply to committing ourselves to God. Imagine a wife who learns, after that sad knock at the door, that her special ops husband has been missing in action behind enemy lines for two weeks. As a result, she has no idea whether he's dead or alive. Suppose that, as luck would have it, and unbeknownst to her and anyone else but him, he's alive, hunkered down in the bush of a remote jungle, evading capture, slowly making his way back. Might she still remain committed to him—as his wife, as the mother of his children, as his lover, as his friend, as the one designated to put the trash by the curb on Friday mornings? It seems so. So why can't we remain committed to the Lord even when we lack belief that he exists?

Finally, let's take a brief look at the verse Plantinga quotes, Hebrews 11:6. I haven't space to do it justice, but I must say something. That's because first-language English-speakers who insist on Faith Entails Belief often rely heavily on English translations of ancient Greek and Hebrew texts like this one, and I suspect that their allegiance to those translations

accounts heavily for their insistence. So let me make a point or two about Plantinga's use of this beloved verse.

First, he appears to use it as evidence for what appears to be the view that you can't have faith in God unless you believe that God exists, evidence that will have a great weight for those with a high view of the authority of Scripture. This is unfortunate, in my opinion; for the verse does not readily lend itself as support for this view. You can begin to see why when you notice that Plantinga does not quote it in full. In the New Revised Standard Version, it reads: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." Notice the noun "faith" in the bit Plantinga left unquoted. English has no verb form for the noun "faith," in the way, e.g., "belief" has "to believe" and "desire" has "to desire" and their cognates. But Greek does. We can highlight this fact by bringing the noun/verb parallelism, in Greek, to the fore: "And without *pisteos* [πίστεως] it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must *pisteusai* [πιστεῦσαι] that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." All else being equal, a careful translation would preserve this parallelism. For example: "And without *faith* it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must *faith* that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." Unfortunately, that's ungrammatical since, again, in English there is no verb form of the noun "faith." But we could translate it like this: "And without *faith* it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must *have faith* that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." So translated, there's no temptation to think that the verse lends credence to the view that you can't have faith in God unless you *believe* that God exists. At best, it is some evidence for the view that you can't have faith in God unless you *have faith* that God exists, which leaves it wide open whether you can have faith that God exists even though you lack belief of that proposition. While most translators use "faith"/"believe that," some do not. For example, the Complete Jewish Bible uses "trust"/"trust that," the Good News Translation uses "faith"/"have faith that," and Phillips uses "faith"/"faith in," while the Orthodox Jewish Bible prefers "Emunah"/"Emunah in." The lexical range of *pisteos/pisteusai* offers alternatives to "faith"/"believe that."

And there's good reason to exploit that range. For, as Jonathan Kvanvig observes, the standard translation, according to which whoever would approach, or draw near to, or seek God must believe that God exists, seems more than a tad bit puzzling. He writes:

We can often find evidence of a translation gone amiss by registering disagreements with what the translation says, and such is the case here with Hebrews 11:6. Upon reading the claim in question, one ought to be suspicious. One should wonder why such doxastic confidence in the existence of God and in his character as a rewarder are required in order to (try to) draw near to him. An extremely strong preference for nearness to God could prompt efforts to draw near to him in spite of significant uncertainty about

whether he rewards those who seek him, for example. If the preference is strong enough, a mere hope that God would reward the search would seem to be strong enough.<sup>29</sup>

This strikes me as just plain right. To translate Hebrews 11:6 in such a way that it is evidence for the claim that, by the lights of its author, faith in God entails belief that God exists, is to translate it in such a way that it expresses an obvious falsehood. *Obviously* someone can approach, draw near to, or seek God even if one lacks belief that God exists, just as you can approach, draw near to, or seek a rumored, reclusive monk even if you lack belief that he exists; indeed, even if you have a mere hope that he exists, as Kvanvig notes. Consequently, if we're going to take away anything from Hebrews 11:6, viewed in isolation, we should take away two things: (i) someone can approach, draw near to, or seek God only if she has faith that God exists *and* (ii) someone can have faith that God exists even if she has a mere hope that God exists. This two-fold take-away would lead us far, far away from Faith Entails Belief. Indeed, it would lead us to countenance seriously the view put forward by Louis Pojman, and recently championed by Daniel McKaughan, that you might have faith that God exists even if your cognitive stance toward that proposition is "a mere hope."<sup>30</sup> But, whether or not the Pojman-McKaughan view is right, the take-away seems to be that, viewed in isolation, Faith Entails Belief is unsupported by Hebrews 11:6, contrary to what Plantinga seems to think.<sup>31</sup>

*Reason 7.* A final argument for Faith Entails Belief begins by observing 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 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 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 entails belief that p, if it picks out anything at all. Therefore, faith that p entails belief that p.<sup>32</sup>

*Assessment.* 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" entails belief that p, and that they intend to pick out something that entails belief that p

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<sup>29</sup>Kvanvig, "What is Fundamental to Faith?," 20.

<sup>30</sup>See Pojman, *Religious Belief and the Will* as well as McKaughan, "Authentic Faith and Acknowledged Risk," "Action-centered Faith, Doubt, and Rationality," and "Faith as Active Commitment."

<sup>31</sup>I must leave for another occasion an exploration of other things Plantinga has to say about the cognitive element of faith in *Warranted Christian Belief*, ch. 8.

<sup>32</sup>Thanks to Frances Howard-Snyder for impressing upon me the need to address this argument.

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.<sup>33</sup> Then the premise in the argument according to which people commonly think that faith entails 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, dispense with 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*” entails belief thought of in this way, 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 taking up a positive cognitive stance toward *p*. Whether they are right or wrong on this matter is beside the point. The mere fact that they think that one can do it falsifies the premise that *people commonly think that* faith entails 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, acceptance, acknowledgement, judgment, affirmation, decision, assumption, confidence, credence, trust, seeming, etc. for a long list of items that fall under the rubric of a positive cognitive stance toward a proposition. In that case, the conclusion of the argument must be modified. Instead of concluding that faith that *p* entails belief that *p*, the argument much more perspicuously concludes that faith that *p* entails a positive cognitive stance toward *p*. With this conclusion I am in complete agreement. But it does nothing to support Faith Entails Belief, at least if “belief” as it appears in that thesis is supposed to be distinguished from other positive cognitive stances one might take toward a proposition.

So, either the argument has a dubious premise or a conclusion that does not support Faith Entails Belief.

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<sup>33</sup>For the sorts of accounts I have in mind, see the items listed in the bibliography of Schwitzgebel, “Belief.”

It is time to bring these reflections to a close. I have argued that neither objectual faith nor propositional faith is identical with propositional belief. Moreover, I have argued that seven reasons I know of for thinking that, necessarily, faith that *p* entails belief that *p*, are failures. I suspect that those reasons would also be failures if they were changed into reasons to conclude that faith in *x* entails belief that *x* exists, or if they were changed into reasons to conclude that faith in *x*'s doing/being thus-and-so entails belief that *x* did/is thus-and-so, although I have not done the work here to show that. Assuming that we could deliver that work, I conclude that we need better reasons to think that these forms of faith entail beliefs of these sorts. Of course, even if we discover those reasons, we will have taken only a step in the direction of the thesis that faith that *p* is *necessarily partly constituted by* belief that *p* and the analogue of that thesis for objectual faith. But it will be a significant step. I hope I live to see the day when it is taken.<sup>34</sup>

Western Washington University

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## DOES FAITH ENTAIL BELIEF?

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