The Stump-Aquinas-Dawkins Thesis

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Alex Rosenberg began a recent debate on the question of whether faith in God is reasonable by declaring that it was not so much as possible since “by definition, faith is belief in the absence of evidence”.¹ Steven Pinker agrees: faith, he wrote while trashing religion in the Harvard Crimson, is “believing something without good reasons to do so”.² Not to be outdone by his fellow brights, Richard Dawkins went one step further: “Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence”.³ But no one goes as far as Mark Twain, according to whom faith is “believing what you know ain’t so”.⁴ These cultured despisers of religion share in common the idiosyncratic view that faith is necessarily epistemically defective.⁵ But they share another view that is far from idiosyncratic, the view that faith is propositional belief.

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

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

In this passage, Stump—or Aquinas; the distinction is arguably specious—identifies a person’s “faith in [Christ’s] passion” with her believing that the incarnate Christ suffered for the sake of humans and in their stead, with her believing that Christ made satisfaction for her sin.

Stump, Aquinas, and Dawkins and company seem to be speaking of objectual faith, the psychological attitude picked out by uses of the locution “S has faith in x,” where x takes as instances an expression that refers to

¹ “Is Faith in God Reasonable? Debate: Alex Rosenberg vs. William Lane Craig,” Purdue University, February 1, 2013; emphasis added.
³ http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/r/richard_dawkins.html, my emphasis.
⁴ http://quotationsbook.com/quote/14040/, my emphasis.
⁵ For criticism of this view and the more modest view that one can have faith that something is so only if one has insufficient reason or evidence for believing it, see Howard-Snyder 2013, 368-370.
an object, or some feature or activity of an object, as in “He has faith in God,” or “She has faith in Christ’s making satisfaction for her sin”. And Stump, Aquinas, and Dawkins and his friends seem to identify objectual faith with propositional belief. The problem, however, is that objectual faith is not identical with propositional belief. That’s because you can believe that someone exists or that someone has done something on your behalf without being for their existence and without looking with favor on what they have done; but you cannot have faith in someone or what they have done on your behalf unless you are for their existence or their having done it, unless you look with favor on their existing or their having done it. Objectual faith requires a pro-attitude toward its object; propositional belief does not. Belief, therefore, is insufficient for objectual faith and so it is not identical with it.7

Even so, belief might yet be necessary for objectual faith. It seems much more plausible that you can have faith in someone or in what they have done on your behalf only if you believe that they exist or believe that they have done it.

There are forms of faith other than objectual faith. There is propositional faith, for example, the complex psychological attitude picked out by uses of the locution “S has faith that p,” as in “He has faith that God will keep his promises” or “She has faith that the basic Jewish story is true”. Moreover, there is allegiant faith, that is keeping faith with another, being faithful to them.8 Furthermore, there is being a person of faith, that is, a person of affective or global faith.9 Although when we speak of a person of faith, we typically mean a person of religious faith, there are secular manifestations of this form of faith as well. A person of faith takes up or finds herself with an overall stance or orientation toward matters that govern important aspects of her life, a stance or orientation that structures those aspects into a unified whole.

As we’ve seen, according to Stump, Aquinas, and Dawkins and his minions, you can have faith in someone or something they have done only if you believe that they exist or believe that they have done it. Let’s shorten this to the claim that objectual faith requires propositional belief. For each of the other forms of faith, we might construct a similar thesis. We might say, as many have said, that you can have faith that p, for some proposition p, only if you believe that p; shortened, propositional faith requires propositional

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8 Audi 2011, 62.
9 “Global faith” is Audi’s term; see his 2011, 57-58. “Affective faith” is Kvanvig’s term; see his 2013, unpublished a, and unpublished b. See also Dewey 1934, chapter 1.
belief. Thus, for example, you can have faith that by living the Torah you will be in right standing with God and his people only if you believe that by living the Torah you will be in right standing with God and his people. Moreover, we might say that you can keep faith with another, be faithful to them, only if you believe that they exist and that your allegiance to them is worthwhile; shortened, allegiant faith requires propositional belief. Thus, for example, you can keep faith with your husband only if you believe that he exists and your allegiance to him is worthwhile. Finally, we might say that you can be a person of faith, or have affective faith or global faith, only if you believe that whatever it is toward which you have a unifying stance or orientation is the case; shortened, affective/global faith requires propositional belief.

In what follows, I aim to examine these four theses which I will gather together and call


But before I get down to work, two preliminary remarks are in order.

1. Preliminaries

First, someone might hear the denial of SAD as the claim that you can have faith even though you don’t believe, which he might understand as the claim that you can have faith even though you disbelieve. I think that last claim is false. To illustrate with propositional faith, I think that you can’t have faith that p if you disbelieve p. However, we should not understand the claim that you can have faith even though you don’t believe as the claim that you can have faith even though you disbelieve. Rather, we should understand it as the claim that you can have faith even though you lack belief, which is not at all the same as disbelieving. Thus, to illustrate with propositional faith again, the claim that you can have faith that p even though you don’t believe that p should be understood as the claim that you can have faith that p even though you lack belief that p. Moral: it matters where the negation operator goes.

Second, I have argued elsewhere that SAD restricted to propositional faith is false, for four reasons.\(^{10}\) (1) Belief that p is incompatible with degrees of doubt that faith that p is compatible with. (2) If you believe p, then you’ll have a strong tendency to feel surprise upon suddenly discovering that p is false, whereas if you have faith that p, you need not have any such tendency. (3) You can have faith that p even if you don’t believe p but rather believe that \(p \text{ is likely, or } p \text{ is twice as likely as not, and so on.}\) (4) Although propositional faith arguably requires a positive cognitive stance toward its object, something other than belief can play that role. At any rate, many of us

\(^{10}\) Howard-Snyder 2013; cp Audi 2011.
want to distinguish propositional belief from propositional acceptance, propositional trust, and propositional assuming. Moreover, we understand these other attitudes or states in such a way that they can play the role propositional faith’s positive cognitive stance demands; propositional belief is not required.\footnote{On propositional acceptance, see Alston 1996 and Howard-Snyder 2013, 361-362, and Howard-Snyder 2016, xxx. On propositional trust, see Audi 2011, 68-80. On propositional assuming, see Howard-Snyder 2013, 363-367, Howard-Snyder 2016, xxx, and Howard-Snyder unpublished. See also McKaughan 2013 and unpublished.} Something similar might well be argued for the other three forms of faith.

On this occasion, however, I’d like to develop another line of thought. In a nutshell, it goes like this. Faith is for something, it has a purpose. What faith is for, however, does not imply that faith requires propositional belief. Thus, unless there is some good reason to think that faith requires propositional belief, we should infer that it does not. But there is no good reason to think that faith requires propositional belief. Therefore, we should infer that faith does not require propositional belief. That is, we should infer that SAD is false.

2. What faith is for

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

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

Of course, faith functions outside the domain of personal human relationships. You can have faith in your hiking sticks; you can keep faith with your country, its ideals and institutions and laws, and you can have faith that the Seahawks will defeat the 49ers (which Seahawk fans need a lot of this year!). Moreover, being a person of faith—that is, possessing Kvanvig’s affective faith or Audi’s global faith—seems to have less to do with personal relationships than it does with ordering one’s own life. In discussing this form of faith, Kvanvig nicely highlights what I’ve called the fundamental fact about faith when he describes a person of affective/global faith as one who
possesses “an orientation or disposition toward retaining [a] goal or plan or project in the face of whatever difficulties are encountered”.  

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

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

As it is with faith generally, so it is with religious faith. You can have faith in the Lord, but only if you have a tendency to persevere through the vicissitudes of that relationship. You can keep faith with the people of God, but only if you have a tendency to stick with them through thick and thin. You can be faithful to the Lord and his calling, but only if you are prepared to gird up your loins and follow him. You can have faith that the basic Christian or Jewish or Muslim story is true, but only if you are resilient in the face of counter-evidence to it. And you can be a person of a particular religious faith only if you gather important chunks of your life into a whole under the basic story of that religion and you do so in such a way that you will have at least some tendency to retain that structure in the face of difficulties. In each of the indicated ways, and many more besides, religious faith, of whatever form, bears the mark of faith more generally: it provides the religious adherent with what it takes to meet the challenges to living the story, and the drive to continue further along the path it prescribes.

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12 Kvanvig 2013, 111 (my emphasis). We need not go so far as to say “whatever difficulties are encountered”. Nor need we restrict the object of affective/global faith to plans, goals, and projects; persons and worldviews might be its object as well.

13 On epistemic circularity, see Alston 1993 and 2005.

14 This need not be epistemically unreasonable since there are ways to be resilient in the face of new counter-evidence to p that are compatible with adjusting one’s cognitive stance toward p to what one has to go on. See Howard-Snyder 2013: 367-368.
So that’s what faith is for, or so it seems to me. Now let’s return to our question: does the purpose of faith imply that faith requires belief?

Well, if I have correctly identified its purpose, I submit that the answer is pretty clearly ‘no’. Your faith in your wife can give you the stability and strength you need to remain in that union, even when you learn something about her that leaves you seriously questioning whether she has your mutual best interests in mind, or when in certain seasons of your life together you feel disappointed and doubtful. The faith that you have when you keep faith with a childhood friend might well provide you with the impetus you need to remain loyal to her, even when as an adult she habitually harms herself and others dear to you, taking your friendship to the breaking point. Your faith that your fifteen-year old son will one day flourish as an adult may well buck you up and keep you hanging in there with him, despite the mounting evidence that he is hell-bent on not even making it to adulthood, much less flourishing in it. The faith you have when you—as a naturalistic humanist—live by your worldview may well serve to keep you faithful to it, despite doubts that have accumulated to the point of leaving you seriously questioning whether it’s true.

And what goes for secular faith goes for religious faith too. Let me develop this point a bit more fully in relation to some remarks of William Alston’s on Christian faith. Alston describes certain sorts of Christians who, “in these secular, scientistic, intellectually unsettled times,” “do not find themselves believing in, for example, a bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead in the distinctive sense of belief,” not to mention other aspects of the basic Christian story. These “(quasi) skeptical Christians,” as he calls them, unlike their believing siblings, “are troubled by doubts; they ask themselves or others what reasons there are to believe that all this really happened. They take it as a live possibility that all or some of the central Christian doctrines are false”. For them, when it comes to the basic Christian story, “it is not at all clear what is the case,” although they may well deem it “the most likely” or “most strongly indicated” from among contrary points of view they deem credible. In this connection, Alston reminds us of T. S. Eliot, who, despite displaying considerable “skepticism” about Christianity, reported that he

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15 I’m not alone in this. Film, literature, biography, and conversation with pastors, priests, and clinical therapists confirm my conjecture that the function of faith is to provide the stability and impetus to overcome obstacles in relation to the object of faith.
17 Ibid., 16.
“accepted” it “because it was the least false of the options open to him”. One does not sincerely report such a thing unless one has serious reservations about the truth of the basic Christian story.

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

Although she thrived in a Christian community through high school as many Christian kids do, after a decade of study and reflection that began as an undergraduate and continued throughout her twenties, she finds herself deeply troubled by arguments for atheism that challenge the goodness and love of God, arguments posed by sincere, respectful, and admirable atheists. Moreover, she finds the case for a naturalistic worldview quite powerful, as well as the case for traditional Judaism. Furthermore, although she does not find objections to the basic Christian story as powerful as many do, she is stunned by the failure of Christian theologians to articulate theories of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement that render those doctrines so much as even marginally plausible. All this has left her in doubt about the basic Christian story, and therefore she finds herself having to admit that she lacks propositional belief of it. That’s not to say that she fails to appreciate what can be said on its behalf. On the contrary. By her lights, as she assesses it in comparison with the alternatives she finds credible, it’s the least false of the lot. At any rate, that’s what she would say if you caught her on good day. On a bad day, she might be more inclined to say that, so far as she can tell, it’s no more false than the best of the credible options. She vacillates between these skeptical poles. But despite her amphibious cognitive situation, she continues to find her involvement in the Church “meeting deep needs and giving her life meaning and structure,” as she did throughout her turbulent twenties. And, the older she gets, the more she finds the sacrificial love modeled by Jesus and many of his followers supremely attractive, so much so that she continues to align her will with his as his disciple, and she belieflessly assumes or accepts the basic Christian story, using it “as a basis for her thought about the world and for the way she leads her

18 Ibid., 19, quoting William Wainwright.
So, despite her lack of Christian propositional belief, she retains the practices of devotional reading, meditation, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, charity, the sacraments, congregational participation, observing the holy days and holidays, singing the great hymns and songs, teaching her children and the children of others in her Sunday School class how to live the story, and so on. Furthermore, she finds these and related activities and commitments not only satisfying, but activities and commitments around which and through which her life is unified, including her career as a biologist specializing in human evolution.

Her favorite holiday is neither Christmas nor Easter but Good Friday, and her favorite hour of that day is the ninth, an hour she can relate to all too well, just as Mother Theresa did for the six decades that made her a saint.\(21\) In short, our skeptical Christian intentionally opens herself to the presence of the Lord and the power of the Spirit, but to no avail—so far as she can tell. To be sure, she occasionally has religiously-loaded experiences, sometimes when she takes in the beauty of the natural world, especially on the Pacific Crest Trail, sometimes when she hears her pastor preach, sometimes when she sings the great hymns, sometimes when she is with her sons, and so on. But all this, she thinks to herself, can be just as well explained naturalistically rather than theistically. Nevertheless, she doesn’t let her doubt take the wind out of her sails, the sap out of her limbs; she doesn’t let it dishearten or discourage her from acting on the (belief-less) assumption that the basic Christian story is true, and therewith following Christ whom she calls “Lord”.

Despite her lack of belief, our protagonist is clearly a person of faith. The Christian story unifies important aspects of her life into a narrative structure that she lives by. Moreover, she is a woman of allegiant faith; indeed, she seems to be a paradigm of allegiant faith precisely because she remains faithful to the Lord even though she struggles with doubt. She also has faith that the basic Christian story is true, although the cognitive element of her faith is not propositional belief since the degree of her doubt is incompatible with propositional belief. Nevertheless, she belief-lessly accepts or assumes the basic Christian story. She also has faith in the Lord, despite her doubt. The cognitive element of her faith in him is also belief-less acceptance or assuming; she accepts or assumes that the Lord will remain true to his commitments to those who, like herself, put their trust in him, and she accepts or assumes that he has acted and will act favorably on her behalf with respect to her salvation, and she allies herself with what he has done in His passion, even though she only understands the various theories of the atonement metaphorically. Her

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\(21\) Mother Theresa 2007. There is some debate over whether Mother Theresa lacked the felt presence of God or possessed a degree of doubt incompatible with belief. My reading of her letters is that she experienced both.
faith in Him—including her faith that despite her struggles with doubt, He will never leave her or forsake her—provides her with enough stability and hope to battle late stage breast cancer and its damnable effects, and gives her the impetus to tackle the more ordinary demons of her human life, for example her proclivities to anger and envy, and the insecurities that lie at their root.

It would take a harsh doxolatrous Christian to deny that this woman—our skeptical Christian—has Christian faith. If anything, she is a paradigm of Christian faith, despite her lack of propositional belief of the basic Christian story. Indeed, I am tempted to think that, more than your ordinary Christian believer, she exemplifies the faith of Jesus at its finest hour when, nailed to the cross, despite his deep doubt of the Father’s love, expressed in the cry of dereliction, he committed himself to his Father with his last breath.

I submit, therefore, that what faith is for—whether secular or religious faith—does not imply SAD. Even so, there might be good enough independent reasons to think that SAD is true, in which case we should not infer that SAD is false. So what reasons are there to think that faith requires propositional belief? I will approach this question while focusing on propositional faith. What I have to say on this score can be translated into the other forms of faith.

3. Reasons in favor of SAD

Robert Adams brings to our attention a sort of faith that he says is typified by faith that a terminally ill friend’s life is still worth living. It is characteristic of such faith, he says, that one recognize “the possibility of error,” that one “recognize that [one] could be tragically mistaken, mistaken in a way characteristic of false beliefs”. He continues,

We do give and entertain reasons for and against items of moral faith…. And the structure of giving and entertaining reasons for them is at least very similar to the structure of reasoning about other sorts of belief. In thinking about items of moral faith, one uses logic, one aims at consistency and at coherence with one's beliefs on other subjects, and one is responsive to one's sense of "plausibility," as we sometimes put it. All of that is grounds for classifying moral faith as a sort of belief.22

Reply. I don’t see it. I don’t see why “[a]ll of that is grounds for classifying moral faith as a sort of belief,” nor do I see why it is grounds for thinking that propositional faith more generally is “a sort of belief”. Our non-doxastic acceptances and assumptions can be in error or mistaken. Moreover, in thinking about what one has belieflessly accepted or assumed, one can reflect on its plausibility, use logic, and aim for consistency and coherence with

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22 Adams 1995, 84-85.
other items on which one takes a cognitive stance. But acceptance and assumption of the sort that has been
drawn to our attention in the literature are not propositional belief. Hence, Adams’s basis for classifying
faith as a sort of belief does not support that classification.

Having said that, perhaps Adams meant to emphasize “sort of” in “a sort of belief”. That is, perhaps
he meant to say that there something akin to belief that is required by moral faith. With this I am in full
agreement. Propositional faith does seem to require a positive cognitive stance toward its object, and
anything that plays that role must be like belief in the ways that Adams mentions. But the point remains:
something can play that role without being belief.

Four other reasons for SAD can be found in the literature.23

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

Reply: On Alston’s account of the distinction between belief and acceptance, it is not true that you have a
tendency to assert p only if you believe p. You can have that tendency if you accept p, and acceptance is not belief.
More importantly, you can have faith that p while you have no tendency to assert p but rather only a tendency to
assert that p is likely, or more likely than not, or that p is the least false of the credible contrary options, and so on.

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

Reply: First, suppose the first premise is right that faith that p implies a disposition to believe something.
Why can’t it be a disposition to believe that p is likely, or twice as likely as not, and the like? Second, the first
premise seems false: there are positive cognitive stances other than belief that can fill in for the positive cognitive
stance required by propositional faith. Third, the second premise seems false: one can be disposed to believe p
without believing p.24

One might insist that, even if faith that p in general does not imply believing p, religious faith does. The
next two reasons take this tack. Although I am concerned with propositional faith per se, assessing these reasons
will prove instructive.

3. If you have religious faith that p, then you are totally committed in a practical way to p’s truth and to
what you see follows from it—even to the point of making fundamental sacrifices. But you can’t be totally

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23 The first two are stated in Audi 1991, xxx; the last two are stated in Gutting 1982, 105ff.
committed in that way unless you believe $p$ and what you see to follow from it. Therefore, you have religious faith that $p$ only if you believe $p$.

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

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

*Reply*: First, authentic religious faith need not involve a longing for God that constitutes one’s master passion, one’s all-dominating longing. Perhaps at its best it does, but it need not as such. Again: we must not mistake the ideal for the real. Second, a longing for God central to one’s life can be wed to a faith that has something other than belief as its cognitive component; as such, a faith without belief can involve a longing for God suitable to be one’s master passion.

Another argument for SAD begins with the observation that people commonly think that the psychological attitude they pick out when they say things of the form “$S$ has faith that $p$” requires belief that $p$. Just 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 requires belief that p, if it picks out anything at all. Therefore, faith that p requires belief that p; propositional faith requires propositional belief.25

Reply. A thorough assessment of this argument would involve empirical research of the sort that no one has done to my knowledge. Moreover, it would involve going into considerable detail into what propositional belief is, a matter on which philosophers of mind and psychologists disagree deeply, 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 scholarly account of belief.26 Then the premise in the argument according to which people commonly think that faith requires belief seems dubious. That’s because nearly every scholarly account of propositional belief understands it to be an involuntary mental state. No one can, just by an act of will, believe something that they do not already believe; and, no one can, just by an act of will, get rid of a belief that they currently 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 the scholars say, for the most part. However, people do not, in my experience, at any rate, commonly think that the attitude they pick out with “faith that p” requires belief thought of as scholars tend to think of it, thought of as an involuntary mental state. At least they allow that, sometimes, perhaps even frequently, one can come to have faith that something is the case by voluntarily assenting to it, or by resolving to represent the world as being a certain way. Whether they are right or wrong on this matter is beside the point. The mere fact (if it is fact) that they think this falsifies the premise that people commonly think that faith requires belief, where “belief” is understood to mean a mental state described by (nearly) any scholarly account of belief.

Second, suppose that the proponent of the argument means by “belief” a mental state or attitude not as described by some scholarly account of belief, but rather means by “belief” what I expect most people commonly have in mind when they use the term, something they’d report as belief, assent, acceptance, judgment, affirmation, decision, assumption, confidence, credence, etc. for a long list of items that fall under the rubric of “positive cognitive stance”. In that case, the conclusion of the argument is that faith that p requires a positive cognitive stance toward p; propositional faith requires a positive cognitive stance. With this conclusion I am in complete agreement. But it does nothing to support SAD.

25 Thanks to Frances Howard-Snyder for this argument.
26 For the sorts of accounts I have in mind in philosophy, see the items listed in the bibliography of Schwitzgebel 2014.
All of the reasons for SAD that I know of are failures. Thus, unless there is some good reason to think that faith requires belief that I do not know of, the argument that I have given in this paper seems to me sufficient reason to reject SAD. SAD, you might say, is properly named.27

References


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Kvanvig, Jonathan. Unpublished b. “What is Fundamental to Faith?”


McKaughan, Daniel. Unpublished. “Faith as Active Commitment”.


