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The Implicit Dimensions of Explicit Faith: Inquiring into the Centrality of Belief by Attending to the Holistic Character of Christian Believing

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Lay Summary

This thesis is work of Christian systematic theology that also engages with insights from other academic disciplines in order to better understand why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. In other words, it asks why is it the case that believing, rather than something else, is centrally significant for Christians? By critically engaging the rich theological descriptions of faith alongside various philosophical reflections related to the phenomenology of believing it seeks to show that this central significance becomes more intelligible when we pay attention to the various aspects of Christian believing that are not always immediately perceivable. In order to do this this thesis explores what two twentieth century Protestant theologians (Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann) have to say about the nature of Christian faith. It then moves on to bring in other theological and philosophical voices to further articulate those aspects of a Christian's believing that better explain its central significance.

Abstract

This thesis is first and foremost a work of Christian systematic theology that brings in interdisciplinary resources as is deemed fit for its inquiry into why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity (that is, why is it the case that believing, rather than something else, is so closely tied to the various salvific motifs found in Christianity?). By critically engaging the rich theological descriptions of faith alongside various philosophical reflections on the holistic character of believing it seeks to show that this central significance becomes more intelligible when we attend to the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and to the holistic character of Christian believing. In order to pursue this line of inquiry the thesis begins by presenting what Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann have to say about the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing as they describe the self-involving nature of faith in Christ. It then moves on to bring in other theological and philosophical voices in in order to further articulate an understanding of the holistic character of Christian believing in a manner that supplements and contributes to what Barth and Bultmann offer as well as provide further intelligibility to why belief is centrally significant in and for Christianity. It moves on to focus on a non-reductive dispositional account of believing and on non-reductive accounts of the cognitive/linguistic dimensions of belief as well as on the unavoidable social dimensions of an individual's belief acquisition, formation, and manifestation. It does so in order to add further intelligibility to how we might see the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith holding together. In doing so the thesis describes and argues for an understanding of believing in Christ as not merely one thing among other aspects of a Christian's human existence, but as something that is embedded and enmeshed within all the various aspects of a Christian's human existence (it is a phenomenon that is wholly self-involving in the fact that it involves the entirety of the believer's being and is holistically constituted in the sense that the character of Christian believing is intimately and integrally (not secondarily) dependent on the wider particularities and possibilities of the believer's concrete reality in the world with others). In recognizing the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing the central significance of belief in and for Christianity becomes more intelligible.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

This thesis has developed out of a longstanding and wide-ranging interest in the nature of faith and the phenomenon of believing that crosses both denominational and disciplinary boundaries. There are numerous ways of inquiring into the significant aspects of the character of Christian believing that I would have liked to also pursue and other interlocutors that I would have liked to have engaged further. In the end, however, in choosing to orient this thesis in the way that I have it is my hope that the reader acknowledges that this thesis asks a timely question and provides an insightful answer capable of stimulating further reflection.

I would like to express my gratitude to the University of Edinburgh School of Divinity for their generous financial assistance, without which moving to Scotland to undertake this PhD would not have been possible. Undertaking my studies in the city of Edinburgh, and at the university in particular, has been an invaluable experience that has provided unexpected possibilities. I am grateful to have been able to be a part of the Gifford Lectures here at the University of Edinburgh for the past four years. I would like to especially thank my supervisor David Fergusson for his unfailing availability despite his own busy schedule and for his sound guidance, support, and patience throughout the PhD. The research environment at New College has been excellent. I am grateful for the many conversations that I have had over the years with my fellow PhD candidates and the faculty at New College. Whatever shortcomings remain in this thesis are fully my own.

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Introduction: Why is it that "believing" is centrally significant in and for Christianity?

"But it must be said just as definitely that there is no venture *in* faith that is not simultaneously a venture *of* faith. For otherwise one would come out with exactly as abstract and general a faith as before. What would it mean to say that I might venture something in faith if I did not in so doing venture to believe? It would mean that here, too, faith was understood as a conviction or a state of feeling that lies *behind* my actual life instead of being at work *in* it. It would mean that faith was thought of as a possession of my 'inner life' at which I could look and from which I could then look away to my 'tasks and duties, exigencies and temptations.' No, I 'have' faith only when I have it ever anew *in* my duties and exigencies."[1]

"Of Course, the knowing of faith and its recognition can never be an abstract knowing."[2]

"If faith concerns man's personal being, if it decides who I am before God (that is, one with whom God is), then it includes all that I am, and is related to it all. This is the great thing to be learned, that faith has to be lived not as something in itself, but in concrete existence."[3]

"The Reformers constantly set faith as trust in God's promise in opposition to an understanding of faith as mere knowledge of something that one may have at a distance and without personal involvement."[4]

"Yet in order to account adequately for the truth of beliefs such as 'Jesus is Lord,' something more is needed, namely, some explanation of one's *involvement* in that truth."[5]

Faith, believing in Christ, carries central significance for Christianity. The fundamental question that this thesis seeks to shed light on is, why? Why is it the case that belief, believing, and faith are centrally significant in and for Christian theology, the Christian religion, and a Christian way of life? Why is it that faith (rather than something else) is so closely tied to salvation, redemption, forgiveness, restoration, reconciliation, and transformation? The basic argument of this thesis is that the central significance of belief, believing, and of faith become more intelligible when we attend to the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and to the holistic character of Christian believing because

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[1] Rudolf Bultmann, *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), 56-57.
[2] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, IV.1* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), p. 765. As he continues to state, "In all the so-called truths of faith we have to do with the being and activity of the living God towards us, with Jesus Christ Himself, whom faith cannot encounter with a basic neutrality, but only in the decision of obedience. The idea of an abstract knowledge of this object—we might almost say the idea of a theologian abstracted from the fact that he is a Christian—is one which has no substance" (Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV.1*, p. 765).
[3] Gerhard Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 160.
[4] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol. 3* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 142.
[5] Kevin W. Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 235.

by doing so we not only see the rich and dynamic aspects that make faith what it is, but we are also able to better see how the character of Christian believing is integrally related to everything that a person is, does, and feels both in their particularity and uniqueness and in their continuity and commonality with other Christians and other created persons in general. By attending to the implicit dimensions of explicit faith we are better able to understand how believing is not an isolated phenomenon within the believer's life and by recognizing the pervasive character of Christian believing we are better able to understand its central significance in and for Christianity.

It will be helpful, at the outset, to briefly clarify what is meant by a few key terms that appear in the title of the thesis. For the purposes of this thesis "explicit faith" refers to the common conception of what it means for a person to believe that highlights the intellectual or cognitive dimensions of the character of Christian believing. Namely, the believer's thinking (or trusting) something (or someone) to be true. The "implicit dimensions of explicit" faith are the various other aspects of Christian believing that accompany this explicit dimension of believing that further constitute the character of Christian believing. In referring to the "holistic" character of Christian believing the thesis emphasizes that the various aspects or dimensions of the character of Christian believing are intimately interconnected and mutually constitutive of the nature of a Christian's and the Christian faith. Furthermore, in referring to the "holistic" character of Christian believing the argument of this thesis also emphasizes that the whole person is involved (not merely their mind in an isolated manner) and that the embedded and enacted continuity and particularity of believing persons in time, space, and place is constitutional to the character of Christian believing rather than merely a secondary effect of or parallel occurrence to faith.

Christianity originates from, is oriented around, and is ordered toward the person of Christ and the implications that follow from commitments to his being the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).[6] It is centered around the need and opportunity to receive restoration, reconciliation, redemption, forgiveness, salvation, and renewed opportunities, purposes, relationships, and meaning; in short, it's centered around receiving and appropriating life in its intended fullness in

[6] Even though Christ and Christianity are furthermore rooted in the special relationship that God has with Israel as depicted in the Hebrew Scriptures to such an extent that the two cannot be separated it is still fair to say, as Karl Barth does, that Christian Faith in particular originates from the person of Christ (who's particular identity as the incarnate Son is partially constituted by the particularity of his Jewish ethnicity and the history of God's relationship to Israel).

harmony with God, others, oneself, and one's environment. As the New Testament letter to the Ephesians tells us it is by grace that we are saved in order that we might be enabled to fulfill our purpose in being created, namely to take advantage of the opportunities given to us to do "good works." But as it states, it is *through faith* (albeit not on our own)[7] that we are saved (Ephesians 2:8-10). As the book of Acts recounts the narrative of Paul and Silas' miraculous escape from prison we read the jailor ask them, "What must *I do* to be saved" and they reply "*believe in* the Lord Jesus" (emphasis mine, Acts 16: 30-31). In Genesis we read that Abraham "*believed* the Lord and he credited it to him as righteousness" (emphasis mine, Genesis 15:6). Numerous examples could be drawn on, but the point is clearly found throughout the Christian and Hebrew scriptures and throughout the history of Christian theological reflection: believing and faith are centrally significant for both the Christian way of life and for the reflective practice of Christian theology.

While the central significance of faith for Christianity is relatively clear the many nuances of the character of Christian believing and the nature of the Christian faith are not always fully appreciated or consciously acknowledged. Terms like belief, faith, and trust are readily understood at face value. This, however, is what contributes to the initial puzzlement over the central significance of believing in Christianity. On one level we could say that the central significance of faith and belief is intelligibly understood by recognizing their strong connection to the reception and appropriation

[7] As Eberhard Jüngel nicely puts it, "Faith is, in fact, that self-definition of man in which man, on the basis of his being defined by God, renounces all self-grounding. But faith *can* renounce all self-grounding because self-grounding has already been surpassed by trust in God. . . . If I am human in that I permit another to be there for me, then I am only certain of myself in that other one. Therefore, it is not a law but a promise when we formulate the anthropological principle: *Only he who forsakes himself will come to himself.* This promise, more than any law, constitutes the being of man as man" (*God as the Mystery of the World* [London: Bloomsbury, 1983, 2014], 181) and as Wolfhart Pannenberg states, "If we regard faith itself as guaranteeing the truth and reality of its contents, then we declare it to be in fact the sustaining basis of its contents. But that entails a radical perversion of its nature. The nature of faith is to rely on God as other than itself and thus to have the basis of its existence outside itself" (Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol. 3*, 153). No matter how much we emphasize the role of human agency in faith it is always an agency in dependence and reliance on God, but that does not mean that we have to deny human agency in order to safeguard that dependence and reliance, rather, we simply need a more nuanced grammar of human agency and action since neither human agency nor dependence can helpfully or in good conscience be denied. As Kevin Hector insightfully points out, there is "a seeming paradox at the heart of Christian belief: according to the New Testament's claims about the new covenant, that which is strictly external to one and due solely to God's grace, namely, the possibility of following Christ, must become one's own possibility and therefore recognizable as due to one" (Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics*, 260).

of salvation (with all that that entails),[8] but the question that this thesis seeks to address is deeper than that. The question this thesis is concerned with is, why is it that faith and belief are so strongly connected to the reception and appropriation of salvation and restoration? In other words, why is it *faith and belief* that are centrally significant and not something else? As such the character of this thesis is more speculative than merely dogmatic or historical;[9] sitting somewhere at a crossroads between philosophical, systematic, dogmatic theology, and theological ethics. Its contribution intends to offer an explanation that makes this centrality of faith and belief more intelligible, but it does not intend to be an exhaustive or fully conclusive description of every aspect of what it means to believe or have faith. The aim of the thesis will have been successfully achieved if the reader walks away with a greater appreciation for the depth and richness of the character of Christian believing and is persuaded that the central significance of belief and faith makes more sense once we more closely reflect on the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and on the holistic character of Christian believing.

One initial caveat is worth mentioning up front. For the purposes of this thesis the English words "faith" and "belief" (or "to have faith" and "to believe") are used interchangeably. Some might argue that the fact that in the English language we have two separate words with differing connotations is an advantage that allows for greater clarity, accuracy, and precision in our thinking and speaking about the human phenomena that these terms refer to (as compared to other languages, e.g. the Greek *pistis* or the German *Glauben,* which by and large use the same word to speak about faith and belief).[10] However, in this case it actually hinders our quest to better

[8] In the widest most holistic sense of that term encompassing both judicial standing before God and one's eternal destiny and in the sanctifying restoration that begins in the here and now and works itself out in a life of repentance that consists in continual adjustment and recalibration in believing rightly about the wrong aspects that one encounters and participates in throughout one's life in a still fallen condition.

[9] For a more recent engagement with the nature of Christian faith that remains more or less at a dogmatic level see B.A. Gerrish's *Christian Faith: Dogmatics in Outline* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015).

[10] When giving a paper at the Society for the Study of Theology conference in 2018 at the University of Nottingham on the relationship between faith and doubt I was insightfully asked by a native German speaker why I did not treat the two terms (faith and belief) more distinctly since the English language allows one to do that. I am grateful for his question that generated further reflection on this point. In general "faith" is understood to carry connotations of trust that are more self-involving whereas "belief" is often understood along the lines of a mental act of assent to propositions. A hard and fast distinction between the two, however, does not hold even within the

understand the character of Christian believing and in doing so it clouds our understanding of why faith and belief are centrally significant in and for Christianity for a few reasons. First, philosophically and anthropologically speaking the concept of belief and the phenomenology of believing are much richer than they are commonly taken to be (so even the common distinctions between faith and belief do not always hold).[11] Second, English translations of the Greek *pistis* in its various grammatical forms are interchangeably translated with both faith and belief such that hard and fast distinctions do not obtain. Reductive and overly simplistic accounts of both faith and belief (reductive both theologically and anthropologically) lead not only to shortcomings in our understanding of what it means to believe (in Christ) but they furthermore dampen our ability to intelligibly appreciate the central significance of Christian faith and belief. Furthermore, this type of distinction between "belief" and "faith" is partly responsible for problematizing our understanding of the character of Christian believing and for making it initially more difficult to understand why faith and belief are centrally significant. Both terms are in need of careful examination and articulation and as such throughout the thesis reference to the character of Christian believing is also speaking about the nature of *a* Christian's and *the* Christian faith.[12]

This question concerning the centrality of belief is further intensified when it is asked in an age and time that often acts as if what one believes does not matter, or has no bearing on others beyond the individual doing the believing, and is at best considered a matter of personal taste and

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English language as faith is often understood as "confident belief" and "believing-in" and even "believing-that" share similar connotations that our concepts of trust and trusting have.

[11] The Gifford lectures of H.H. Price at the University of Aberdeen in 1959 to 1961 being only one example in the past 60 years that has shown this and another being the work of Erich Schwitzgebel on the dispositional analysis of believing, more recently, being another. Anthropologically speaking one could also refer to Augustin Fuentes's 2018 Gifford lectures at the University of Edinburgh for a richer account of belief from an evolutionary and anthropological perspective. See H.H. Price's *Belief: The Gifford Lectures Delivered at the University of Aberdeen in 1960* (London: Allen & Unwin LTD, 1969), Erich Schwitzgebel's "A Phenomenal, Dispositional Account of Belief," *Nous* 36:2 (2002), and Agustin Fuentes' *Why We Believe: Evolution and the Human Way of Being* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019). Furthermore along these lines of Fuentes's work, one could also consult Graham Ward's *Unbelievable: Why We Believe and Why We Don't* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2014).

[12] B.A. Gerrish, for example, operates with a sharp distinction between belief and faith that is liable to run into some of the issues mentioned above. As he states, "Faith is taken here in the sense defined: not as belief, but as the insight or discernment evoked by the Christian story, in particular by the manifestation of the gospel in Jesus Christ. . . . I have suggested that we understand faith rather as the reconfiguration of our existence brought about by hearing the word of the gospel" (Gerrish, *Christian Faith*, 133-134). Gerrish's positive description of faith is welcomed, but his conception of the nature of believing is not nuanced enough to adequately reflect the reality of the phenomenon as it actually occurs in believing persons.

private opinion. Such sensibilities, however, exhibit a reductively simplistic understanding of what it means to believe. It is my contention in this thesis that, given the centrality of faith and its pervasive normativity for both the institutional practice of theology (in both church and academy) and for the Christian way of life in general, our understanding of the character of Christian believing will inevitably affect not only various doctrinal discussions (or lack thereof), but it will also affect how we understand theology's relationship to other academic disciplines and add greater intelligibility to the necessary integration of theology's various subdisciplines. If theology is about God, how God relates to us, and everything else as it relates to God, and if knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves are mutually intertwined (which they are),[13] then how we understand the character of Christian believing (the mode of access to God and to redemptive living) will affect not only the content of belief, but also how we go about pursuing, appropriating, and promoting that content in the various activities and relationships we are involved with in our concrete situations in the world. As such, the web of beliefs (holistically understood) that individuals and communities of individuals embody and enact (stemming from a multiform relationship to the person of Christ) will inevitably affect how we relate with, to, for, and against other people as well as condition and guide what courses of action we undertake (and which we abstain from) and how we go about understanding our own identities. One of the intended take-aways of the thesis is that neither beliefs nor believing ought to be understood in an isolated manner and in acknowledging this this thesis seeks to articulate some of the implications that this has for how we understand the character of Christian believing and its significance for how believing normatively and transformatively relates to who we are, what we do, and what we hope to be and see realized in ourselves, in others, and in our various situations in the world and the world to come.

Faith and belief are not static concepts. They cannot be fully understood apart from articulating our involvement or activity in them. This is demonstrated by the fact that the *fides quae creditur* (the faith which is believed) cannot be separated from the *fides qua creditur* (the faith by which

[13] You not only find theological support for this in people like John Calvin (in the opening statements of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*) and Rudolf Bultmann in their various affirmations concerning the interwoven relationship between knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves, but you find philosophical support for this when one is persuaded of the demise of a sharp or strong subject/object distinction concerning human cognition/understanding in general, which is not only present in the more hermeneutical traditions of philosophy but is also gaining traction in 4e cognitive science.

it is believed). In other words, to intelligibly speak about belief one must both speak about the content of that belief as well as the act or disposition of believing, owning, and appropriating that content—the content and the act can be distinguished, but not separated (they both co-constitute each other and together they contribute to what it means to believe). To speak of belief, then, we cannot avoid speaking about the believer doing something (as well as having and being something). Faith, therefore, cannot only be understood as some entirely passive thing (in the mind or body) that is given that then manifests in action, but it must be understood to include the believer's enacted agency inherently from the get-go.

Consider, for example, a common Protestant way of parsing the nature of faith. Protestants have commonly, since the time of Reformed Scholasticism, described genuine faith as consisting of at least three elements: *notitia, assensus,* and *fiducia*. *Notitia* is best understood as cognitive or linguistic content. For someone to have *notitia* is simply for someone to be aware of some sort of information; without further specifying a particular mode of relation to it (in the case of Christian faith it is related to the person of Christ and the gospel). Given one's awareness of the content of the gospel one could: enjoy it, hate it, believe it, declare it, command it, dismiss it, ridicule it, fear it, see through it, etc. *Assensus* is best understood as commitment to the truth of *notitia*. This means that someone not only is aware of particular content but is also committed to the correctness of that content. However, along this line of thinking, you can assent to the truth of some particular content without properly receiving and submitting yourself to that content. The demons mentioned in the New Testament book of James are a classic example: they believe "and shudder" (James 2:19). *Fiducia*, on the other hand, is best understood as trust, appropriation, or confident submission to the content (or to who or what the content refers to) that is believed to be true. This means that someone allows the content that is believed to be true to play a normative role in shaping one's way of existing. As should be apparent, according to this understanding, you cannot have *fiducia* without *assensus* and *notitia*. You can have *assensus* without *fiducia*, but not without *notitia* and you can have *notitia* without either *assensus* or *fiducia*. If all of these are not present (latently at least) you do not have genuine faith, at least not as commonly understood among this prominent trajectory of Protestant thought. In focusing on the essential aspect of *fiducia* in faith we can already begin to grasp some of the important implicit dimensions of explicit faith and when this aspect of *fiducia* is understood to be wholly self-involving (as later theologians began to further articulate, even in their criticisms of this common way of parsing faith) we have a starting point for further articulating how the character of

Christian believing cannot be sufficiently accounted for in an entirely abstracted and disengaged manner (and this becomes more fully articulated in a number of key 20th century Protestant theologians stemming from the work of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, and this thesis will attempt to further contribute to the development of this line of thought). Faith, then, ought to be seen as embedded, embodied, and enacted in believers and not as some sort of objectified entity. Hence, the content as well as the act/disposition of faith is inherently dependent on concrete circumstances of manifestation for both its actualization as well as its intelligibility. In this sense faith is a holistic concept. The believer is involved cognitively, emotionally, volitionally, and physically. It cannot be fully recognized as assent to an abstract idea, statement, or proposition, as a content-less feeling, or as just any type of action, bodily movement, or linguistic utterance. Any of these taken by themselves results in a reductive conception of faith and runs the risk of problematizing our understanding of faith's central significance. As such, faith is not a phenomenon that can be adequately recognized in the abstract (nor is Christian faith something that can be responsibly understood apart from some sort of "real" relation to God).

We believe-that many things are true and that other things are false. We believe that some statements correctly orient us to, and in, reality and that others fail to do so. We believe-that some courses of action are right, good, and beneficial and that others are wrong, corrupting, and harmful. We believe-that some things are right for us and that some things are right for all. We believe-in various causes, other persons, sometimes in ourselves, and sometimes in God (not only that God "exists" or is "real" or that God has revealed and reveals Godself to us in various and specific ways, but we also believe in various divine acts of promise, warning, demand or command to and for us). Both the object of belief as well as the act/disposition of believing are dynamic. At the same time, we also disbelieve-that and disbelieve-in a variety of intentional objects, whether those be states of affairs, other persons, causes, God, etc. We believe strongly in some things and weakly in others. The stronger the belief the greater the informative, normative, and transformative potential for shaping who we are, what we do, how we think, and how we relate to and perceive others, ourselves, our concrete situation and that which transcends our concrete situations. Believing-in and believing-that are related but distinct aspects of how we believe; and disbelieving some things is an unavoidable aspect of believing yet other things. Beliefs do not exist in isolation from other beliefs and believing does not take place abstracted from our concrete intentional existence in the world with others (even when this involves instances of more abstract and theoretical reflection and

articulation "pre-predicative" and intersubjective factors play a role in both constituting and enabling our grasp of the sense of even formal statements and objects of belief and they continue to do so even when we incorporate divine and transcendent dimensions, such as divine grace and revelation, into our understanding of the character of Christian believing, as theologians ought to do). Believing in Christ is pervasive, and it is holistically normative for the believer.

Within the history of theological reflection we can find various discussions over implicit and explicit faith and we can also find the occasional caricatures or extreme versions of both.[14] This thesis, however, promotes a non-reductive account of the character of Christian believing that adequately reflects the implicit dimensions that accompany explicit Christian faith, which make Christian faith what it is and distinguish it from a mere awareness or even a mere assent to the explicit content of faith. There are various ways to relate to and appropriate the content of faith and these are what make up the implicit human dimensions of explicit faith. As H. Richard Niebuhr pointed out, there are two major trajectories of inquiry in the western intellectual traditions concerning the nature of faith (both theological and philosophical). The first has to do with the relationship between faith and sight (and within this trajectory I would include questions concerning the relationship between faith and reason) and the second has to do with the relationship between faith and action (and here this would include the relationship between faith, works, good deeds, vocation, and intentional existence in light of one's faith in Christ).[15] This thesis is primarily interested in this latter trajectory as it contends that the trajectory of inquiry concerning the

[14] Most revolve around the content of faith but discussions of the various implicit human and divine dynamics that are involved in our relationship to the content of faith can also be found, although they are not often referred to using the phrase "implicit faith." Discussions of implicit and explicit faith are readily perceivable in classic Protestant and Roman Catholic polemics (even though both acknowledge the necessity of both implicit and explicit dimensions) or in more recent speculation about those who have, for one reason or another, never had the opportunity to explicitly hear the Gospel message: Such as Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians, or yet again in proposals that react to simplistic and reductive emphases on the propositional nature of belief by opting for an equally reductive position promoting a non-cognitivist and non-linguistic understanding of the ontology of beliefs and the phenomenology of believing.

[15] See H. Richard Niebuhr, ed. Richard R. Niebuhr, *Faith on Earth: An Inquiry into the Structure of Human Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 4-20.

relationship between faith, sight, and reason can most fruitfully be pursued when these are understood as being embedded within our inquiries into the relationship between faith and action.[16]

The "holistic character of Christian believing," then, is a double reference to the reflexive relationship between the multifaceted characters who believe and to the multidimensional character of believing. It gestures toward the supposition that one's understanding of (theological) anthropology significantly affects how one understands the phenomenon of Christian believing (since if we follow Barth, Bultmann, and others, Christian faith is wholly self-involving, variously incorporating all that makes us human). It is assumed that *a* Christian's faith and *the* Christian faith are not encapsulated by or isolated as mere intellectual assent (as we are more than disinterested or disengaged thinkers), but neither is it assumed that faith is devoid of affirming (and variously relating to) a web of statements stemming from Christ and his message, which are inter-subjectively encountered in texts and in the community of relations that make up the church in the world. In both a Christian's faith and in the Christian faith various statements are reflected on and appropriated, various statements are commended and denounced, various statements are embodied and enacted, various statements are imbibed in various ways.[17] But the question is, how ought we to understand the relationship between the statements believed and the peculiar mode of believing that is pervasively a Christian's and the Christian faith?

The character of Christian believing is intentional, and this intentionality is variously mediated through language as we are embedded and embodied in the world. It is directed outward. Christian faith is *in Christ*. This intentionality has multiple dimensions to it as well. Faith is "aimed" at Christ cognitively and it is participated in Christ "ontologically." Now by this I mean nothing more than that Christian faith is inherently constituted by an actual relationship to and encounter with the divine (as other than us and as other than creation, lest it be un-theological) in the particularity and concreteness of the actual, created world. This relationship is not merely to ideas, doctrines, or propositions nor can we properly reduce the intentionality of faith to merely historical

[16] A major portion of this contention is due to a commitment to the fact that in order to grasp the sense of the propositional we understand it within its pragmatic context of utterance and embodiment.

[17] Neither are statements the only form or genre of discourse relevant to the linguistic dimension of the character of Christian believing (as attested to by the polyphonic discourses, to use Ricoeur's phrase, that make up the texts of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament).

and sociological elements of human existence. The intentional dimension of the character of Christian believing is dependent on some sort of actual encounter with the divine. The "implicit dimensions of explicit faith" refer not only to the theological dynamics involved in faith as a holistic relation to God, but also to the variegated ways in which persons relate to what and/or who is believed in (implicitly and explicitly, fluctuating through various levels of conscious awareness and different forms of holistically embodied manifestation). There is implicitly more going on *in* the believer's explicit reflection and confession and implicitly more *than* explicit reflection or audible expression. Reflective awareness (concerning the content and object of faith) is not a continuous phenomenon, but Christian believing is, hence the need for reflection on the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing.

Reductive accounts of the nature of faith (whether they focus overwhelmingly on its propositional nature in an isolated and therefore unsophisticated manner, or those that hastily discharge the propositional altogether) lead to unsatisfactory answers (and to unnecessary debates), as they tend to reductively isolate aspects of human existence and of Christian faith to the detriment of others; whether that be some isolated form of thinking, feeling, or acting. In failing to satisfactorily describe the holistic character of Christian believing in its implicit and explicit complexity we fail to satisfactorily describe faith's relationship to the variegated purpose of our being created, and in failing to do so we fail to satisfactorily reflect the importance of the dynamic gift of faith in Christ in all its intricacy and we problematize our understanding of the centrality of belief in both Christian theology and the Christian way of life.

Faith, *pistis*, *fides*, is simultaneously something that you have and something that you do. It is simultaneously something that you receive and something that you offer (both 'vertically' and 'horizontally'). Faith is something that is simultaneously unique to each individual and something that is shared in common amongst Christians.[18] *A* Christian's faith is part of the Christian faith and both *a* Christian's and *the* Christian faith exhibit diachronic and synchronic novelty amidst continuity (some of which is judged to be good and some of which is judged to be bad). Faith is not some thing you have or some thing that you receive that can be adequately accounted for in isolation or abstraction, but it is only ever received and manifested continually and developmentally in one's

[18] There are certain aspects of commonality with other religions too, but here I am focused on Christianity.

intentional way of existing in light of encountering God in the world. As Gerhard Ebeling succinctly puts it (as referred to above), "If faith concerns man's personal being, if it decides who I am before God (that is, one with whom God is), then it includes all that I am, and is related to it all. This is the great thing to be learned, that faith has to be lived not as something in itself, but in concrete existence."[19] This reality becomes more intelligible when the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing are acknowledged and reflected on and non-reductive dispositional analyses of the nature of belief add further intelligibility to this.[20]

In this regard this thesis attempts to blend a depth of theological description through a critical engagement with the work of Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth concerning the self-involving nature of faith in Christ (as well as other twentieth century theologians as they are deemed helpful) with various philosophical reflections on the ontology of beliefs and the phenomenology of believing as well as reflections on the nature of language, action, and various non-reductive "contextual" accounts of cognition as they helpfully relate to our understanding of the character of believing. The engagement with philosophy is not an attempt to ground the theology but is rather simply a move to critically appropriate philosophical insights for theological purposes concerning the already philosophical dimensions of a theological reflection on the character of Christian believing.[21] By blending aspects of both theological and philosophical reflection concerning the character of believing it is hoped that a theologically rich and philosophically insightful position might present itself in order to offer an illuminating answer to the speculative question that is driving this thesis. The work of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann are appropriate choices for the purpose of this thesis for a number of reasons. First, they are two of the most influential protestant theologians of the twentieth century and they both have a good deal to say about the nature of faith

[19] Gerhard Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 160.
[20] Dispositional analyses of the nature of belief (where belief is understood to be a multiform disposition to act as if a statement were true differently but reliably depending on the situation) further help us understand the normative and holistically transformative dimension of believing as beliefs are seen to be that which are inherently disposed to holistically manifest themselves in reliable yet unique ways that are partially dependent on their contexts of appropriation and embodiment.
[21] Theology and philosophy can and ought to be distinguished, but the language and concepts they utilize cannot be fully separated or isolated. Philosophical work (even when it is done as "Christian philosophy") provides insightful reflections on the ontology of beliefs and the phenomenology of believing but often lack a satisfactorily rich theological description of the nature of faith and theological descriptions of believing often lack philosophical nuances that are available.

and the character of Christian believing. They not only engage with the theology that came before them, but many theologians who came after them are dependent on their work in both their affirmations and in their criticisms of Barth and Bultmann. Second, Protestants are often perceived to have an overly intellectualist or mentalist conception of character of Christian believing when compared to other key Christian traditions such as Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy and this can be seen to affect the forms of worship and ecclesial gathering adopted as well as the conception of the nature of the Christian's place and role within wider society. There is, therefore, ecumenical value in showing that these Reformed and Lutheran theologians actually hold, and can help further develop, a more holistic understanding of the character of Christian believing that does not easily fall prey to criticisms that claim a reductively intellectual conception of the character of Christian believing. This not only helps various Protestant Christians themselves overcome reductive conceptions of the character of their Christian believing but it clears the space for a more fruitful dialogue with Christians in other traditions and denominations by removing unnecessary and unhelpful misconceptions about the nature of faith that not only obscure the intelligibility of the centrality of believing in Christianity but also lead to unnecessary divides and disagreements on theological doctrines, orientations, methodologies, and visions of the Christian's relationship to wider society (politically, socially, historically, and intellectually) among Christians in different traditions and denominations.

Two further clarifications are important to keep in mind as the reader follows the argument of the thesis. First, while a significant portion of the thesis engages with Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann this thesis is not primarily interested in Barth and Bultmann for their own sake. It does intend to contribute to scholarship on Barth and Bultmann, but this is a secondary aim of the thesis rather than its primary aim. Barth and Bultmann (and their conceptual descriptions of the character of Christian believing and the nature of faith) are a means to the end of providing an answer to why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. In this sense the thesis is conceptually oriented and grounded in its motivation rather than being primarily historically motivated. Even though it aims to present Barth and Bultmann accurately and in a way that is defensible amidst Barth and Bultmann scholarship its primary aim is not oriented around solving interpretive disputes in Barth and Bultmann scholarship. This is why the vast majority of secondary literature engaged with in the thesis (whether by theologians, classicists, or philosophers) is more widely oriented around reflections on the character of believing and the nature of faith rather than Barth and Bultmann

secondary literature (although there is also engagement with secondary literature on Barth and Bultmann).[22] Second, the two main strands of questions of this thesis really ought to be seen as structurally united for the purposes of the argument. Much of the content of the thesis focuses on how Christians ought to understand the character of Christian believing and the nature of faith in a holistic manner *because* this is how Christians are able to better grasp the central significance of believing in and for Christianity. Structurally speaking they are not two separate questions in the argument of this thesis. The main question of the thesis "why is believing centrally significant in and for Christianity" is answered by asking the question of "what does it mean to believe in Christ?" in a manner that highlights the holistic character of Christian believing and the implicit dimensions of explicit faith. By highlighting the holistic dimensions inherent in the character of Christian believing and the implicit dimensions of explicit faith the central significance of believing in and for Christianity becomes more intelligible when we attend to the way that believing is not merely an isolated or atomized aspect of a Christian's existence but that it is, constitutionally, normatively and transformatively pervasive in all aspects of the believer's concrete existence (both individually and corporately) in the world, among others, and before God.

The thesis first and foremost ought to be seen as a work of Christian systematic theology oriented around the conceptual theme of the character of Christian believing and the intelligibility of its central significance in and for Christianity. While terms such as phenomenology and hermeneutics are used at times throughout the thesis this thesis is neither a phenomenology nor a work of philosophical hermeneutics. Even though hermeneutical and phenomenological thinkers are engaged with it is done from the perspective and in the service of a work of Christian systematic theology. The thesis points out the importance of attending to the hermeneutic and phenomenological dimensions of the Christian act of faith and the state of a Christian's believing for having a non-reductive understanding of the character of Christian believing but this is not attempted in a manner and a degree to which it would be done in a study that was more explicitly focused on providing a hermeneutics or a phenomenology proper. Hermeneutic and

[22] As such, even if there is exegetical dispute in the Barth and Bultmann community over certain instances of Barth or Bultmann interpretation in this thesis this is not structurally detrimental to the aim of this thesis or the success of its argument if what is presented plausibly presents how Christians *should* think about the character of Christian believing and better understand its central significance in light of reflecting on the issue with Barth and Bultmann.

phenomenological thinkers are engaged and referenced in this thesis from the perspective of theology to the extent necessary to helpfully address the specific question laid out in this thesis.

The reasoning behind the choice of Barth and Bultmann has been explained above but at this point it will be helpful to give some explanation for the other interlocutors that appear in the thesis. Given that the ultimate aim of the thesis is conceptually oriented rather than historically oriented (i.e. this work does not aim primarily to be an intellectual history of Barth and Bultmann and their conceptions of the character of Christian believing) the choice of possible interlocutors who are likewise oriented around the concepts of faith, belief, and believing is vast. However, if this thesis is not primarily an intellectual history but is instead ultimately oriented around a conceptual investigation then it ought to provide some sort of orientation of how Barth and Bultmann's thought relates to other thinkers on the topic in order to be able to better evaluate their particular contribution as well as point out areas of commonality that they share with other thinkers in the Christian tradition.[23] It is important to acknowledge commonalities with other thinkers, and not only their unique contributions, in order to show that even amidst their unique emphases there are aspects that anchor them to a wider continuity with Christian communities across time, space, and place. In Christian theology, which is based in part on the reception of divine revelation and the understanding that God actively works to aid the human reception of God's revelation, the value of theological reflections on any given topic that fail to show aspects of commonality amidst their novelty remain suspect.

To a certain extent the choice of interlocutors has been a pragmatic one. These interlocutors work, but other interlocutors could have worked as well. Beyond the key thinkers engaged with in the body of the thesis there are numerous shorter references to other theologians and philosophers both within the body of the text and throughout the footnotes. These all aim to critically situate and provide a wider conceptual context in which to situate what Barth and Bultmann's work offer us in terms of our conceptual understanding of the character of Christian believing in order to better understand why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. That being said, given the

[23] On the other hand, neither does this thesis attempt to present an exhaustive or even comprehensive account of what theologians and philosophers have had to say about the nature of faith and the character of beliefs and believing so choices had to be made when others could have also been chosen in their place.

aims of the thesis the theological interlocutors chosen in chapter three all have a positive yet critical appreciation for the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein that partially influence their work. The aptness of Wittgenstein's work for the question of this thesis offers some rationale for choosing these theologians rather than others. Fergus Kerr and Cornelius Ernst come from a Roman Catholic background while Rowan Williams and Graham Ward come from an Anglo-Catholic background who all operate as fruitful interlocutors to compare and contrast the novelty and continuity found in Barth and Bultmann coming from their Reformed and Lutheran backgrounds. Teresa Morgan as a classicist, on the other hand, offers an excellent ancient perspective to compare and contrast with Barth and Bultmann in her extensive study on early conceptions of *pistis* and *fides*.[24] In chapter four H.H. Price (and Eric Schwitzgebel), Ludwig Wittgenstein, Robert Brandom, and Andrew Inkpin were chosen because of their specific usefulness for articulating various aspects of a holistic and non-reductive dispositional understanding the character of believing that are able to compliment and further articulate aspects of the character of Christian believing that are brought up in the preceding chapters.

The first three chapters of the thesis engage with the theological reflections of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann on their various understandings of implicit dimensions of explicit faith. Beyond giving a rich description of the character of Christian believing from a theological perspective which includes a number of aspects that are ripe for further development at the anthropological level (such as Barth's conception of the self-involving character of Christian believing and Bultmann's conception of faith as historical deed and as self-understanding, etc.), one of the key aspects that *both* of these theologians do is warn against becoming theologically reductive in our understanding of the human character of Christian believing. For *both* God as the object and subject of Christian faith (as other than us and as other than the world) plays a constitutional role not only in how we go about understanding the *fides quae creditur* but also for how we go about understanding the *fides qua creditur*. Both are insistent that the object of faith (God) constitutionally shapes not only how we understand the object(s) of faith and not only how we go about partaking in the act of faith but also how we go about understanding the act of faith (for both Barth and

[24] See Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Bultmann the two cannot be separated without harming how we go about understanding the character of Christian believing, even if the two aspects can and should be distinguished).

The first chapter on Barth is oriented around presenting his understanding of the implicit dimensions of explicit faith that highlight the non-reductive and holistic character of Christian believing. It focuses on how he understands the object of faith to orient, originate and constitute the character of Christian believing and on how he understands that character to consist of aspects of acknowledgment, recognition, and confession that are understood to be "more than cognitive" and more widely embedded and embodied amidst and within the believer's various ways of being in the world in light of being encountered by God rather than seeing those aspects to be discrete (or always explicit) actions in and of themselves.

The second chapter on Bultmann focuses on presenting his understanding of the implicit dimensions of explicit faith that highlight the non-reductive and holistic character of Christian believing. This chapter presents Bultmann's thought at length and across his corpus partially due to the widespread influence that Barth has had on the poor reception of and engagement with Bultmann's thought on the character of Christian believing in English speaking systematic theology. Bultmann's understanding of the implicit dimensions of explicit faith all add intelligibility to why believing is centrally significant as it more adequately shows the depth and breadth of human existence that the character of Christian believing is involved in. His reflections on the how faith relates to human perception and vision, how the act of faith is not a work but is characterized by a decision of humble obedience and historical deed, how faith consists of a holistically understood conception of self-understanding and development in light of future possibilities and promises, how faith even amidst the concreteness of bodily-historical existence is characterized by an act of desecularization and detachment from ultimate anxieties in the world that results in true freedom all integrate together to offer a plethora of implicit dimensions of explicit faith that begin to help us better understand why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. He rejects virtually every other stock understanding of the nature of faith in an attempt to distinguish an understanding of the character of Christian believing that is less reductive (both theologically and anthropologically), and in doing so he provides fertile ground in which to begin to understand the rich character of Christian believing that make the central significance of Christian believing more readily apparent.

The third chapter operates as a transitioning chapter between the more descriptive first two chapters and the more explicitly constructive fourth and final chapter. Its aim is to more clearly compare and contrast Barth and Bultmann with one another and to bring their insights into conversation with the other theologians mentioned above in order to more clearly discern points of commonality as well as continuing difference and further move toward the constructive dimensions of the final chapter. In the interest of ecumenical relations between those who "follow" Barth and those who "follow" Bultmann the chapter is meant to show that the differences between the two theologians really appear amongst a wider background of continuity and commonality. In the interest of ecumenical relations beyond Barth and Bultmann it seeks to show points of fruitful continuity with Kerr, Ernst, Williams, and Ward as well as begin to point forward to how certain aspects of their thought might be developed further. In its engagement with Teresa Morgan's work it aims to show continuity with ancient conceptions of the character of Christian believing in order to show that the novel aspects found in the way Barth and Bultmann express the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing aren't so novel that they do not have any support in the wider ancient Christian traditions.

The fourth and final chapter of the thesis seeks to further attend to the holistic character of Christian believing by focusing on a non-reductive dispositional approach to understanding the phenomenon of believing. An underlying aim here in light of the overarching argument of the thesis is to further show how the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith might be seen to hold together in a more intelligible fashion and one that gives a clearer explanation of how the character of Christian believing is dynamically capable of development and novelty amidst commonality and continuity. The key philosophical interlocutor here is H.H. Price, but Ludwig Wittgenstein, Eric Schwitzgebel, and Robert Brandom also contribute. Furthermore, by incorporating non-reductive accounts of the linguistic and social dimensions of the cognitive content of faith it can be more clearly seen how belief in and for Christianity is not simply an abstracted, disengaged, or reductively intellectualistic phenomenon. In doing so it helps us better appreciate and understand the significance of declaring that an individual's faith is wholly self-involving in a non-individualistic manner. It also enables us to be in a better position to avoid reductive rejections of the cognitive dimensions of belief while at the same time not be required to affirm reductively intellectualist conceptions of the cognitive dimensions of the character of Christian believing in an abstract and

disengaged manner. In this section Andrew Inkpin and Eberhard Jüngel are the primary interlocutors that help the chapter reflect on these issues (in light of what has come before with Barth and Bultmann) with the ultimate aim of better understanding why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. This chapter is concerned to further articulate the implications for stating that Christian faith is "wholly self-involving" by looking at proper and improper ways to talk about faith in a dispositional manner as well as consider how the human volition/action, emotion, and cognition are intimately connected in an understanding of the character of Christian believing

The thesis as a whole seeks to show how the holistic dimensions of the character of Christian believing and the implicit dimensions of explicit faith make the central significance of belief and believing for Christianity more intelligible. It seeks to point toward the fact that even though we ought not think of Christian belief along the lines of a mere Christian worldview we still ought to understand Christian belief as an intentional way of being in and of perceiving the world in light of the reception of God's revelation to us in Christ. In short it seeks to show that the central significance of belief in Christianity is made more intelligible when one attends to the pervasive extent to which believing is embedded within our many ways and aspects of existing in and with Christ, in, for, and against the world in anticipation of and participation in salvation, restoration, and reconciliation (that God the Father has provided in Christ through the power of the Spirit). Believing is centrally significant because it is not merely one isolated thing among others that is related to those salvific motifs, but is rather an all-encompassing and wholly self-involving intentional way of being that is itself an actualization of those salvific motifs, not merely some thing that is related to them.

Chapter 1: Karl Barth and the Implicit Dimensions of Explicit Faith

Introduction

Karl Barth is well known for his emphasis on God as the object of faith. He is also well known for his many criticisms of other theologians for focusing on the human dimension to the detriment of properly attending to the divine as Other, as sovereign Subject, and as the ultimate Agent of salvation. If we consider Augustine's taxonomy of belief (consisting of the *fides qua creditur* and the *fides quae creditur*) it is fair to say that Barth emphasizes the *fides quae* both ontologically in the event of reconciliation and cognitively in the event of faith. He is strongly critical of theologians who, in his judgment, reduce Christian theology or the Christian faith and a Christian's faith to the Christian religion or to any purely immanent phenomenon. This aspect of Barth's work is well known. This chapter, however, is not primarily interested in this dimension of Barth's work (it is only interested in that aspect insofar as it is necessary to help us understand the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing on the human side of the character of Christian believing). It is primarily interested in what Barth has to say about the human act of faith once he finally gets around to writing about it.[1] For Karl Barth the object of faith plays a central role in constituting the character of Christian believing in all its many facets. One cannot adequately understand the character of Christian believing without a proper recognition and acknowledgment of the central role that Jesus Christ plays in constituting the character who believes and the character of believing in Him.[2] Insofar as an understanding of the object of faith is integral to understanding

[1] It is telling that in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth,* ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), *The Oxford Handbook of Karl Barth,* eds. Paul Dafydd Jones and Paul T. Nimmo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), and in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Karl Barth: Barth in Dialogue* eds. George Hunsinger and Keith I. Johnson (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2020) none have a chapter devoted specifically to articulating Karl Barth's conception of a Christian's faith. Dawn DeVries has a good essay engaging with Barth's understanding of the nature of faith, but it is in a short chapter that devotes space to both Schleiermacher and Calvin as well. See Dawn DeVries, "Does Faith Save?: Calvin, Schleiermacher and Barth on the Nature of Faith" in *The Reality of Faith in Theology: Studies on Karl Barth Princeton-Kampen Consultation 2005*, eds. Bruce McCormack and Gerrit Neven. (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007), pp. 163-190. A lengthier engagement with Barth on this topic, then, oriented around a slightly different question than Devries' chapter ought to offer a needed contribution to Barth scholarship on this topic.

[2] One recent example highlighting this aspect of Barth's emphasis on divine primacy, in a different context concerned to better exposit Barth's understanding of theological rationality, is Martin Westerholm's impressive monograph *The Ordering of the Christian Mind: Karl Barth and Theological Rationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). To take just one example, in speaking about

the human act of faith this chapter will engage with what Barth has to say concerning the object of faith, but, again, its interest in doing so lies in further articulating how Barth understands the human act of faith and in understanding the human act of faith it is interested in how Barth understands the character of Christian believing in a holistic and reflexive sense. Furthermore, in the context of the wider argument and interest of this thesis this engagement with Barth's understanding of the nature of faith is done with the aim of better understanding the holistic character of Christian believing because this is how we can begin to better understand why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity.

In the introduction to his *Christ and Culture* Graham Ward complains that, for all its dogmatic merit, Barth's understanding of the nature of faith in the event of reconciliation comes across as overly autocratic and abstract as it neglects to satisfactorily describe the Christian believer's believing in the event of reconciliation. In Ward's estimation Barth "tells us nothing about the process of that act, namely how God causes human beings to participate in him and have eternal life."[3] He agrees that we ought to continue to affirm God as the initiator of redemption, as ontologically different than creation, and that we ought to continue to deny a Pelagian position concerning the event of reconciliation. However, given that according to Barth "faith paradoxically 'even in its emptiness and passivity . . . has [*trägt*] this character of supreme fullness and activity'"[4] Ward faults Barth for not further unpacking this fullness and activity of the believer. As he goes on to state, "Furthermore, it [faith] is an engagement that can take many different forms, not just passive obedience. What is missing from Barth's account of faith is the experience and practices in which faith becomes

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Barth's conception of the analogy of faith, Westerholm importantly points out the importance of the primacy of divine activity and at the same time subtly points out that Barth also makes an aspect of human activity irreducible to this concept. As he says, "Barth's account of the analogy of faith is important for him in preserving the primacy of divine activity in the knowledge of God; but it has a further importance for us because it also makes a form of human activity irreducible for this knowledge" (*The Ordering of the Christian Mind,* 24). However, Westerholm's monograph does not go into as much detail as it could regarding how Barth understands the human activity of faith in greater detail. This is not a fault of Westerholm's work, as the monograph is only focused on the nature of faith as it sheds light on Barth's understanding of theological rationality, but more work could be done to show the various details of Barth's understanding of the human activity of faith and this thesis seeks to fill that gap.

[3] Graham Ward, *Christ and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 8. Barth would probably counter that the New Testament does not offer many resources regarding an answer for such a "how" question, but the "how" question is still theologically important.

[4] *Christ and Culture,* 8.

operable and evident: the formation of the one who is being faithful. What is missing is a sociology and a phenomenology of believing."[5] For Ward, "what is missing in Barth's account is the process whereby love is received and responded to,"[6] or at least there is not a concrete description of the phenomenon as we might encounter and recognize it in our lived reality, as love, faith, and hope are actually witnessed in embodied believing individuals and communities, with all the hermeneutical intricacies that accompany such embodiment. In short, for Ward "there is in Barth no account of the economy of desire and the productions of faith, discipleship, and personal formation."[7] While Barth himself does not provide a proper sociology or phenomenology (and neither does this particular thesis) this chapter seeks to show places within Barth's thought that could be more fruitfully engaged with by those who wished to do so.

David Ford makes a similar observation when he compares Barth as theologian to Paul Ricoeur as Christian thinker. Ford perceives that differing "conversion experiences" might partially explain the differing emphasis: Barth's on the primacy, nature, activity, and identity of Christ; Ricoeur's on the transformative dimensions of the believer in the event of reconciliation. Drawing on the work of John David Dawson, Ford writes: "He [Dawson] suggests that Frei, a convert to Christianity, was centrally concerned with its distinctive identity, as represented above all by the identity of Jesus Christ. Origen, on the other hand, was born a Christian and at ease in that identity, and was more concerned with how the Christian grows in faith, love, hope, and holiness and is transformed through the Holy Spirit. I suggest that there is some analogy with Ricoeur and Barth."[8] Regardless of whether this is a satisfactory explanation for the different emphasis in Barth and Ricoeur the point remains: Barth's description of the transformative and holistic agency of the believer in faith is perceived to be lacking—especially when one wants to better understand how the theological understanding of faith in the event of reconciliation is witnessed and recognized in the phenomenological realm of our concrete, lived lives.

It is important, however, to note that while we don't find in Barth an extended phenomenological or sociological description of faith, discipleship, personal formation, etc., we do find a discussion of these Christian concepts at a higher level of abstraction from that found in their

[5] *Christ and Culture,* 8.
[6] *Christ and Culture,* 8.
[7] *Christ and Culture,* 8.
[8] David Ford, "Paul Ricoeur: A Biblical Philosopher on Jesus" in *Jesus and Philosophy: New Essays* ed. Paul K. Moser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 183.

concrete embodiment in individual believers and believing communities in various times and places. While Barth might not indulge in the description that Ward, or anyone seeking a thicker description of the nature of faith, might want, the fact that Barth does not himself engage in the endeavor does not mean that he offers nothing of value for those who wish to. The value and need of various levels of description need not be set in an either/or relationship to such an extent that the value of the one invalidates the other. Just because we cannot truly or fully understand, say, the concept of "courage" apart from recognizing and witnessing concrete embodiments of courageous deeds and courageous persons does not thereby invalidate the value of talking about the concept of courage at a level of abstraction and generality. On the other hand, just because we talk about courage in the abstract does not necessarily mean we understand or recognize what it means for *me* or *you* or *us* to be courageous in this or that particular circumstance (nor that we will in fact be courageous). Indeed, one might wonder if we could recognize courageous deeds as courageous if we did not also speak about them at a level of abstraction, and vice versa (i.e. if we could meaningful speak about courage without having witnessed examples of courage embodied in various courageous deeds). As Martin Westerholm rightly points out, "The effect of language is always contingent on the imaginative resources of the one to whom a word is spoken"[9] and when the word "faith" is spoken the imaginative resources for a responsible theological understanding will unavoidably be constituted by abstract or formal descriptions based on revelation *and* perceptions of phenomenological instances of "faith" witnessed and embodied in particular believing individuals in particular situations that simultaneously inform and influence the reception and deepening understanding of the meaning of "faith" simply because the phenomenon of faith is both general and specific, cognitive and holistic, contiguous and novel in its many manifestations variously embodied in individual Christian believers

[9] Martin Westerholm, "Discernment and the Theological," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16:4 (October 2014), 465. In this portion of his paper he goes on to talk about how experience conditions the various depths and ways of understanding using Augustine's discussion of someone who speaks of Carthage. As Westerholm states, "Just as one who speaks of Carthage will be understood in one way by those who know the city, in another way by those unfamiliar with Carthage, who can think only of a city quite generally, and in another way by those who know nothing of cities and will struggle to understand the word 'Carthage' at all" (ibid.). One could add that those who have spent a significant amount of time in Carthage will know of it in a slightly different manner than those who have merely read about it. Something similar obtains concerning the concept and phenomenon of "faith" since faith, like a city, is something that is inherently more than an idea and is likewise a phenomenon that gives itself to various levels of understanding as it is an embodied way of existing in the world in relation to Christ and to others (of course, it ought to be recognized that the concept of a city and the phenomenon of *this* city is also significantly different from the concept and phenomenon of faith).

in relation to Christ, the Christian community past and present, and in their various relations to the non-believing world and its various activities. Faith is a response and relation to a common object (Jesus Christ) by unique (and in other ways similar) individuals and communities, which is constitutive of one's identity and understanding in existence as a whole.

The answer to the jailor's question, alluded to in the introduction, in Acts 16 "what must I do to be saved?" elicits our further question "what does it mean to believe?" An answer to this question involves various levels of understanding not only because the concept and the phenomenon of faith and believing are rich (inherently more than disinterested general assent, but none-the-less involving a level of "abstract" description), but also because human individuals are rich and polyphonically constituted as well (inherently more than abstracted essentialized selves). In a certain sense one must learn (akin to how one might learn a skill from a master craftsman) how to have faith, and in this sense acquiring, manifesting, and forming one's faith is more akin to learning how to be wise or perform an action well that requires multiple dimensions of mastery. It involves instances of perception and judgment as abstract language is appropriated in concrete circumstances as it is witnessed in others and shown in and enacted by oneself. A desire to better understand the self-involving nature of faith requires that we not only reflect theologically on the object of faith that furnishes its unique content and relation, not only on the conceptual differences between assent and trust, but also on how we understand the self—since our understanding of the self (whether it is explicitly reflected on or not) will inherently condition our understanding of the character of the *self*-involvement of faith.[10]

[10] In his paper on how we discern the properly theological, with a different emphasis than this chapter, Westerholm acknowledges the significance that anthropological assumptions have for the outworking of theological understanding. He writes of how Gogarten and Bultmann react differently than Barth to Gerhardt Kuhlmann's "call for reflection on theological anthropology, for it is idealist understandings of the principles of human activity that render the theological problematic, and so solution may reasonably be sought in new understandings of human activity issuing from newer forms of phenomenology and existentialism" ("Discernment and the Theological," 461). According to Westerholm, Barth merely accepts the idealist anthropology and moves to emphasize that all true speech about God must be God's speech while Bultmann and Gogarten go on to interrogate the idealist anthropology and work at an alternative understanding. Differing understandings of theological anthropology and of human activity shape not only how we perceive the possibility of human speech of God, but also how we understand the phenomenon and concept of faith as it relates to living and being in Christ as the believer continues to live in her created/historical present.

In the portion of the *Church Dogmatics IV.1* that we will focus on Barth writes about the nature of faith as it occurs "within the event of reconciliation."[11] In doing so he looks at how we understand faith as it relates to justification, to the work of the Holy Spirit, to the being of the community, to its object, and how we understand faith as it relates to, or is understood as, a free human act. It is the latter dimension that we are most interested in, but for Barth we need to understand those other dimensions in order to properly understand the character of Christian believing in the Christian act of faith. It is instructive to recognize that Barth speaks of the nature of faith slightly differently when he relates it to justification than he does when he relates it to sanctification, and the portions of his thought that come across as most autocratic stem from his focus on this aspect of the distinction. For him, following the common Protestant trajectory, the doctrine of justification must not be blurred into that of sanctification,[12] and how we talk about the believer's activity in relation to both of these doctrines differs slightly, although they are not entirely separated.

When Barth speaks about the nature of faith in relation to the believer's justification he speaks of it in mostly negative terms due to his ultimate concern to demythologize the notion that faith is in any way a means for humans to justify themselves in their own strength. As he says, "If demythologising is anywhere necessary and demanded, it is at this point. Our very first task was to set aside *a limine* a basic misunderstanding, to reject the idea that, in virtue of an inner quality of what the believing man does, faith is the real means which man can use to justify himself and himself to declare the divine pardon."[13] One of the primary aspects in sinful persons that is overcome in the event of reconciliation is one's pride and vanity in oneself apart from a proper recognition of one's dependence on and need for God. Genuine faith, therefore, for Barth is characterized by an act of utter humility and self-criticism and a reliance on Christ alone and on a recognition that Christ has done what the believer could not do on her own—justify, redeem, and restore herself, nor make herself worthy of these prior to God's initiative.[14] Faith for Barth involves a recognition that the believer is not worthy. But he treads carefully here, as he says, "the exclusion of works [cannot] on

[11] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1 tr. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 643.
[12] See *CD* IV.1, 768.
[13] *CD,* IV.1, 618.
[14] As he puts it, "There is not one, therefore, who has first to win and appropriate this right for himself. There is not one who has first to go or still to go in his own virtue and strength this way from there to here, from yesterday to to-morrow, from darkness to light, who has first to accomplish or still to accomplish his own justification, repeating it when it has already taken place in Him" (*CD,* IV.1, 631).

the basis of this humility have anything to do with indifferentism, quietism or libertinism,"[15] and he exhorts his readers to make sure "that we do not think and speak and live in ways which give substance to these objections and suspicions. Where there is justification, there is also sanctification. Where there is faith, there are also love and works. The man who, justified by faith, has peace with God has also peace with his neighbor and himself. That he lives as one who is righteous by faith to the exclusion of all works is something that he will establish and attest in his works."[16] This necessary relationship between justification and sanctification is made more intelligible when we move beyond reductive and simplistic intellectualist accounts of believing and attend to the implicit dimensions of humility that is an integral aspect in explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing. As Barth goes on to explain;

> That we are good for nothing is true, but it is not so relevant that the confession of this truth has independent significance. Nor can the negative form of faith, faith as a vacuum, be asserted as a singular magnifying of the glory of God, as though that glory were the greater the less man is before it, and greatest of all when man is absolutely nothing. It is significant even for the negative form of faith that it is faith in God. Before God man is not nothing but something, someone. God is far from finding pleasure in the nothingness of man as such.[17]

The positive aspect of faith concerning the believer's agency as it relates to justification for Barth consists in the believer's outward-directed reliance on Christ. If this reliance becomes misdirected and turns inward (notice that the issue isn't how active this reliance is concerning the agency of the believer, which is open to a plethora of potential phenomenological forms of manifestation), or if this act becomes understood as taking place outside of an actual relation to Christ (as the believer is encountered by Christ in the present) then it ceases to be Christian faith.[18] As he says, "its form as humble obedience, in which it is renunciation, openness to this object and therefore faith in Jesus Christ, is in the last resort negative only in appearance. As openness to this object, as the knowing and grasping of the alien righteousness of Jesus Christ, it can be only a maintaining of that humble obedience, a comforted despair, in so far as it is a human form of being, a human act and experience."[19] It isn't a question of the activity or non-activity of the believer, but the character of that activity in relation to Christ as an engaged humble reliance. Here it is important to note that

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[15] *CD,* IV.1, 627.
[16] *CD*, IV.1, 627.
[17] *CD,* IV.1, 628.
[18] See *CD,* IV.1, 632.
[19] *CD,* IV.1, 633.

humble obedience is an implicit dimension of explicit faith that is holistically related to the other dimensions of explicit faith and not something separate to the believer's act of faith that merely occurs as a result of faith.

However, Barth readily affirms early on in his section on faith and justification that "there is more to be said of faith than that in it and by it man comes to his justification."[20] For Barth justification is the central concept of faith (which is perhaps closely aligned with his decision to portray sin primarily as pride) but he writes that "the justification of sinful man, the restoration of his peace with God, is only one of the problems of the Christian life. And so faith has other dimensions than that of its relation to man's justification. It has other forms than that in which it is the knowledge, the apprehension, the realisation of the right addressed to man in the judgment and sentence of God. This is its centre. This is faith in its truest sense. But the centre has a circumference."[21] And these peripheral aspects of faith, these implicit dimensions of explicit faith, contribute to our understanding of the central significance of faith by highlighting the other aspects of human existence that faith is embedded, embodied, and enacted within.

For Barth the work of Christ plays an integral role in the peripheral aspects of faith in, as he calls it, the "subjective realisation of the atonement," which includes both individual believers and the existence of the Christian community in the world. As he says,

> Christology is like a vertical line meeting a horizontal. The doctrine of the sin of man is the horizontal line as such. The doctrine of justification is the intersection of the horizontal line by the vertical. The remaining doctrine, that of the Church and of faith, is again the horizontal line, but this time seen as intersected by the vertical. The vertical line is the atoning work of God in Jesus Christ. The horizontal is the object of that work; man and humanity. . . . The particular problem involved might be described as the subjective realisation of the atonement. The one reality of the atonement has both an objective and a subjective side in so far as—we cannot separate but we must not confuse the two—it is both a divine act and offer and also an active human participation in it: the unique history of Jesus Christ; but enclosed and exemplified in this history of many other men of many other ages.[22]

For Barth it is accurate for us to understand the character of Christian believing as "the subjective realisation of the atonement" and as an active human participation in the redemptive activity of God. Even though Barth acknowledges the role that the Holy Spirit, as sent by Christ, has in this

[20] *CD,* IV.1, 618.
[21] *CD* IV.1, 618.
[22] *CD,* IV.1, 643.

subjective realization by individuals and by the community he acknowledges that the New Testament seems to repel questions of how exactly this takes place.[23] However, he is more forthcoming regarding how the individual Christian believer is related to the Christian community. For Barth the Christian community, in its true sense, is primary and the faith of individual believers is secondary since Christ is the head of the Christian community and the common object of all individual faith. He also speaks of the individual's faith being of central importance for making the faith of the community what it is, but the individual's faith is intersubjectively constituted through participation in the community of saints, past and present.[24] One clear implication of a holistic understanding of the character of Christian believing is that even an individual's faith is not merely individualistically constituted or manifested in a reductively individualistic and isolated manner.

As his life evidenced as well as his writing, this does not mean that individual Christian believers cannot stand against various forms of the visible church. Individual faith and judgment can challenge various sociological and phenomenological manifestations of the visible church. Indeed, for the sake of the true church it sometimes must. But as far as the true Church is understood

[23] See *CD,* IV.1, 648-650.

[24] As he says, "The Christian is first a member of the Christian community and only then, and as such, this individual Christian in his particular Christian being and nature and presence. And this means that the Christian faith is first the faith of the Christian community and only then, and as such, affirmed and shared by them, the faith of the men united in it. It does not have in them, as it were, its original and normative form. It is not the sum, as it were, of the different individual acts of Christian faith, which would necessarily mean the cross-cut, agreement and compromise between them. In and with their individual faith Christians participate in and with the faith of the community. In this their faith has its basis, norm and limit. It derives from it and is built up on it. And the same is true of all the personal knowledge and confession of faith. It is, as such, basically co-ordinated with and subordinated to the knowledge and confession of the community. As personal knowledge and confession it has its own place and right and freedom within the knowledge and confession of the community, not outside it, not elsewhere, not *in abstracto*" (*CD,* IV.1, 705).

correctly in its "third dimension"[25] the individual's faith is always in continuity with the Christian community as the Christian community is in continuity with Christ.[26]

The Human Activity of Faith

The last thirty-nine pages of this volume of the *Church Dogmatics* IV.1 is devoted to investigating faith as a human activity of the individual believer and almost half of those pages are focused on the object of faith. As he says, "We shall give to the individual Christian and his faith the attention which he demands, but it must be at this point—not at the beginning of our way, but very briefly at the end."[27] Barth acknowledges that "In the modern period there have been massive theological structures which have begun at the very point where we now end. They started with the presupposition that, whatever may be the attitude to it, Christian faith as such is a fact and phenomenon which is generally known and which can, as such, be explained to everybody; or rather more cautiously, that a generally plausible account can be given of it because the possibility of it can be demonstrated and explained in the light of general anthropology."[28] It is this aspect of Barth's thought that this thesis is most interested in. Looking back to the beginning criticisms however, one wonders if Barth does or can go about understanding Christian faith apart from some influence of "extra-biblical" anthropological factors whether or not he acknowledges them or not. When he goes on to say that "Christian faith is not in any sense a fact and phenomenon which is generally known and which can as such be explained to everybody"[29] the rhetoric may very well be getting the upper hand here. Surely we can acknowledge that Christian faith cannot be reduced to such a phenomenon

[25] For Barth the nature of the church must not be sought abstractly in its invisibility, nor abstractly in its visibility, but concretely in its special visibility. As he says, "the emphasis in the present context must be upon the fact that the community called into being by the Holy Spirit, although it does not exist and must not be sought abstractly in the invisible, also does not exist and must not be sought abstractly in the visible. It does exist openly in a very concrete form, a historical phenomenon like any other. But what it is, the character, the truth of its existence in time and space, is not a matter of a general but a very special visibility" (*CD,* IV.1, 654). An analogy could be drawn regarding the individual's faith.

[26] Especially since for Barth, "Faith is simply following, following its object. Faith is going a way which is marked out and prepared. Faith does not realise anything new. It does not invent anything. It simply finds that which is already there for the believer and also for the unbeliever. It is simply man's active decision for it, his acceptance of it, his active participation in it" (*CD*, IV.1, 742).

[27] *CD,* IV.1, 741.

[28] *CD,* IV.1, 740.

[29] *CD,* IV.1, 741.

since it is integrally and inherently a relationship to Christ through the Holy Spirit who is not present and visible like fallen individuals are to one another, but Barth here seems to be operating with an all or nothing concept of explanation and understanding that begs for more nuance concerning the human dimensions of the Christian's act of faith. He does not seem to entertain the possibility of levels of understanding in the way he sets up the problem. He acknowledges that "The Christian religion is a fact and phenomenon of this kind" and that "it can be considered and estimated historically, psychologically, sociologically and perhaps even philosophically. But the Christian religion is not as such Christian faith. Christian faith is something concealed in the Christian religion (like the true Church in its visibility),"[30] but he leaves little room for understanding how the Christian faith is related to its phenomenological forms in the Christian religion. He just asserts that it is related and goes on to emphasize that in this relation Christian faith cannot be reduced to the Christian religion.

The crux of the issue, as Barth lays it out here, concerns how we ought to understand the relationship between Christian religion and Christian faith—since a Christian's faith and the Christian faith only ever exist within the phenomenologically rich aspects that make up the Christian religion. Barth seems to think that various liberal theologians do not distinguish the two enough. Barth wants to hold that they are distinct (faith and religion) but not separate (and there is merit to this distinction). Barth's critics, such as is evidenced by Graham Ward's comments above, however, seem to think that Barth separates the two too much and that he does not describe the integral and constitutive connection between Christian religion and Christian faith as carefully as we ought to. While not wanting to entirely dissolve the distinction between the Christian faith and the Christian religion, the connection between the two would benefit by better acknowledging the close relationship between faith and religion as Christian faith is always embedded within the sphere of Christian religion.

It is here where theologians like Ward rightly find fault with Barth. A focus on the anthropological dimensions of Christian faith manifested and embedded in the Christian religion does not necessarily mean one is trying to hastily make it credible to outsiders, nor must it necessarily lose sight of its object in doing so. It is not necessarily reductive. A focus on the anthropological dimensions very well could be motivated by a desire to better know the object of

[30] *CD,* IV.1, 741.

Christian faith as that object is actually encountered in concrete situations in the world thereby gaining a better understanding of the object of faith as well as the reality of faith. Barth seems hesitant to go too far in this direction, lest the Christian's faith be seen to be Pelagian, theologically reductive, or merely anthropological. Given his aims to address anthropological reductions of many sorts it is perhaps understandable why he does not develop these anthropological dimensions further than he does, but it seems that there is room to develop the embodied dimensions of faith that Barth acknowledges further than he himself does—and in a way that acknowledges and articulates both the theological richness of the object of faith and the anthropological richness of the act of faith as it relates to the God who encounters persons in and through their situations in the world.

In Barth's view the emphasis found in much modern theology on the doctrine of faith is characteristic of arrogance. In his view "they rest on the fact that in the last centuries (on the broad way which leads from the older Pietism to the present-day theological existentialism inspired by Kierkegaard) the Christian has begun to take himself seriously in a way which is not at all commensurate with the seriousness of Christianity."[31] While this may be true of some who focus on the anthropological dimensions of the Christian religion to the detriment of the reality and otherness of God it certainly isn't the case that all who give close attention to the individual Christian's subjectivity are likewise motivated. It is possible to undertake such investigations in the humility that characterizes Christian faith that exists in an active dependence in relation to Christ within one's concrete time and place. Furthermore, not only is it possible, but it is *necessary* if we are to have an adequate understanding of the character of Christian believing and a better understanding of why faith is centrally significant in Christianity. The remainder of this chapter will focus on what Barth says about the object of faith to then understand how he understands the act of faith in order to better understand the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith that he presents as being constitutive of the character of Christian believing. It is important to spend time engaging with what he has to say about the object of faith because for Barth the object of faith significantly conditions the character of the Christian's act of faith. This is furthermore done to articulate the holistic character of Christian believing and provide more intelligibility to the central significance of believing in and for Christianity by showing how the notion of believing in Christ is inherently much

[31] *CD,* IV.1, 741.

more expansive than is often acknowledged and pervades more widely into all areas of the Christian's concrete existence.

The Object of Faith: Orientation, Origination, and Constitution

According to Barth, faith is "the basis of the Christian existence" and it is "that which makes a man a Christian."[32] Faith is undeniably a human activity, but, in Barth's words, it differs from other human activities "in spontaneity and native freedom"[33] and it is a human activity in a particular kind of relationship to the object of faith, who is genuinely other than the believer. As he goes on to say, "it is in relationship to its object, to something which confronts the believer, which is distinct from him, which cannot be exhausted in his faith, which cannot be absorbed by his believing existence, let alone only consist in it and proceed from it and stand or fall with it."[34] When it comes to the object of faith (Jesus Christ, the eternal Son incarnate, crucified, and resurrected) the human activity of faith does not condition, constitute, or change it. As he states, "as a human activity it consists in the subjectivisation of an objective *res* which in its existence and essence and dignity and significance and scope takes precedence of this subjectivisation and therefore of the human subject active in it, being independent and superior to this subject and what he does or does not do."[35] We might do well to interpret "subjectivisation" here as appropriation, where the believer relates to the object in such a way as to make it her own, to acknowledge it, and allow it to play a normative role in shaping her existence in a multiform and polyphonic manner.[36] The point is that the object constitutes (and enables) the character of Christian believing, but the believer does not constitute or create the object that is believed in. In Barth's words, when it comes to the object of faith, "faith is simply following, following its object. Faith is going a way which is marked out and prepared. Faith does not realise anything new. It does not invent anything. It simply finds that which is already there for the believer

[32] *CD*, IV.1, 740.
[33] *CD* IV.1, 742.
[34] *CD* IV.1, 742.
[35] *CD* IV.1, 742..
[36] This "subjectivisation" is one point in Barth's thought that could be fruitfully engaged in another studied focused on providing a more in-depth phenomenology of believing. Even though Barth himself does not provide this he offers a dogmatic description that would justifying further investigation rather than outright rejection of Barth as being overly abstract or autocratic.

and also for the unbeliever. It is simply man's active decision for it, his acceptance of it, his active participation in it."[37]

This emphasis on the object of faith, no doubt, is in part to distinguish Barth's understanding from that of Feuerbach's or anyone else who would have us understand the object of faith as something reduced entirely to the immanent realm of human empirical existence. According to Barth, the advantage that the believer has over the unbeliever is that she recognizes that this object is in relation to her as it also relates to the unbeliever, since the object is not dependent on the act of faith of the believer. For Barth, the unbeliever's lack of recognition puts her in an abnormal state. As he says, "Faith is the normalizing of the relationship between man and this object. It is the act in which man does that which this object demands, that which is proper to him in face of this object—the fulfilment of the correspondence to what this object is and means of itself for every man."[38]

As mentioned above, for Barth "the objective *res* subjectivised in faith, is Jesus Christ, in whom God has accomplished the reconciliation of the world, of all men with Himself—the living Jesus Christ Himself, in whom this occurrence, this fulfilment, this restoration of the broken covenant between God and man, is not an event of the past, not a theoretical truth and doctrine, but for all humanity and all men (irrespective of their attitude to Him) a personal present, no, a present person."[39] Faith is concerned with "the normalisation of the human relationship to him."[40] All created persons are in relation to God in Christ, but it is those who relate in faith to Christ that avoid the "the great abnormality of unbelief" that consists in a corrupted and inadequate way of relating to Christ and consequently to oneself and to others.[41] At the broadest level for Barth, faith consists of a human activity in relationship to the object of faith, Christ, who encounters the believer in her particularity.

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[37] *CD* IV.1, 742.
[38] *CD* IV.1, 742.
[39] *CD* IV.1, 742-743.
[40] *CD* IV.1, 743.
[41] *CD* IV.1, 743. Attending to the holistic character of Christian believing also makes the corrupting detriments of unbelief more intelligible, since the person's relationship to the object of belief is a multiform one that is wholly self-involving. It's not just a matter of relating to the object with one's mind in an abstract and disengaged manner.

There are three points that Barth makes to describe how the object of faith and the believer's relationship to it characterizes the nature of a Christian's faith. For Barth faith inherently involves a relationship to God in Christ who is seen to be outside the believer and the character of Christian believing is *oriented to*, *originates in*, and is *constituted by* Jesus Christ.

First, faith "consists in the orientation of man on Jesus Christ."[42] To be oriented on Christ is to be no longer oriented on or unduly reliant on oneself. The believer is aligned with or toward Jesus Christ. Looking to Christ rather than to herself. As he says, "The man who believes looks to Him, holds to Him and depends on Him. He renounces all self-determination in His favour."[43] As Barth goes on to describe, "In faith man is no longer in control at his centre, he is outside himself and therefore in control. The orientation on Jesus Christ which takes place in faith is not external and occasional. It is not one of the orientations in which he may find himself in his relationship with other things and persons."[44] In this sense, although Barth does not go on to describe this further, the orientation that is an aspect of faith in Christ needs to be understood as consisting of more than conscious cognitive reflection. It will at times involve conscious cognitive reflection and at times verbal confessing of statements regarding Christ, but it is not possible for the believer to be constantly oriented to Christ if this is taken to consist of constant conscious cognitive reflection. Believers are not constantly reflecting consciously on the object of their belief, there are tacit dimensions of believing. The orientation that Barth is talking about is not something that is simply another activity or state among the many activities and states that the believer finds herself in but is in some way constituted within all those activities and states of the believer. This orientation is not "external and occasional." This orientation involves cognitive or linguistic content as he will go on to articulate, but it cannot be fully accounted for in an isolated and abstract manner. Believers are not constantly consciously reflecting on Christ, so this orientation needs to be understood in a more holistically self-involving manner. In Barth's description of the orientation of the believer to Christ the believer's orientation to Christ is implicitly more holistically involving (both theologically and anthropologically) than a mere abstract and formal awareness nor an isolated assent of the mind. The theologian interested in further unpacking the character of Christian believing, therefore, finds

[42] *CD* IV.1, 743..
[43] *CD* IV.1, 743.
[44] *CD* IV.1, 743.

some precedent here to unpack the embedded and engaged manner of this orientation in Barth's writing further than Barth himself did.

As he goes on to say, "If a man believes, this means that he has found in Jesus Christ an object which does not merely concern him and concern him urgently, which does not merely call him to itself and therefore out of himself, which does not merely claim him, but which is the one true object, which concerns him necessarily and not incidentally, centrally and not casually. It means that he has found in Him the true centre of himself which is outside himself."[45] For Barth "faith is a human activity that is present and future, which is there, in the presence of the living Jesus Christ and of what has taken place in Him, with a profound spontaneity and a native freedom, but also with an inevitability in face of His actuality. The reverse is equally true: with an inevitability, but with a native freedom."[46] For Barth the human activity of faith involves a reflecting of Christ's glory in and through the believer's own particularity and identity. As he says, "This reflecting of the glory of the Lord is made possible by the uncovering of the human face, by the seeing which is the result of this uncovering, by the fact that in this seeing man becomes the mirror of that which faces him, the 'glory of the Lord,' and, above all, by the 'glory of the Lord' itself."[47]

Furthermore, Barth wants to emphasize that the believer's active orientation in faith in relation to the object of faith is both utterly dependent on Christ and at the same time a genuinely free human act. As he says,

> In this work man himself is nothing. He is not in control. He simply finds himself in that orientation. He accepts it. In it he sees and reaches out and grows beyond himself. In it he is for the first time faithful to himself. For as the doer of this work he loses his own life to find it again as he loses it (Mk 8:35) . . . . But as he does it, he does a genuine and free work, his own proper work. That is the first thing. Faith is in Jesus Christ. It is the action of the Christian in the face of this His Lord, in direct responsibility to Him, in renunciation in His favour.[48]

In line with this and with what Barth said above, this act of orientation that the believer embodies in relation to Christ is, since it is not external or occasional, not necessarily a distinct act among other various acts that the believer might perform but is a way of embodying various actions and states of being. It involves linguistic content, but it is more than a conscious awareness of various linguistic

[45] *CD* IV.1, 743-744.
[46] *CD* IV.1, 744.
[47] *CD* IV.1, 744.
[48] *CD* IV.1, 744.

content understood merely in an isolated or abstracted manner. It is more holistically embodied and embedded within the believer's concrete existence than that. This implicit dimension of orientation in the character of Christian believing pervades the entirety of the believer's existence and this adds further intelligibility to why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. This dimension will be further investigated later on when we look into the act of faith as it consists of acknowledgment, recognition, and confession.[49]

Second, faith is not only oriented on or directed at Christ, but the character of Christian believing is also based or founded on and originated from Christ. In Barth's words, "We do not compromise its character as a free human act if we say that as a free human act—more genuinely free than any other—it has its origin in the very point on which it is also oriented. It is also the work of Jesus Christ who is its object."[50] Barth insists that it is the work of Christ that makes the human act of faith a genuinely free activity. As he says, "The Son makes a man free to believe in Him. Therefore faith in Him is the act of a right freedom, not although but just because it is the work of the Son."[51] The way that Barth speaks about the relation between divine and human agency is one where they are not in competition with one another and where human agency finds its fullness when acting in relation to Christ in humble dependence. Without Christ's enablement the believer would not choose to orient herself on Christ due to the corrupting effects of sin. Faith is based on Christ in this sense in that Christ enables the believer to orient herself on Christ.[52]

Barth sums up this section by asking, "how can sinful man . . . believe?"[53] The believer does not believe in or by her own strength in any kind of Herculean fashion, as Barth stresses, faith is

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[49] It significant to note that these three words are all different forms of *kennen* rather than *wissen* since the former carries more self-involving connotations of knowing rather than the more disengaged connotations associated with *wissen*.
[50] *CD* IV.1, 744.
[51] *CD* IV.1, 745.
[52] Furthermore, for Barth faith was a created good of the human relation to God that was corrupted by sin. As he says, faith "belongs basically and decisively to the good nature of man as God created it that he should be able to believe. Believing might have been more natural to him than breathing. He was created to be the covenant-partner of God and therefore for God. The gulf between him and faith is something contrary to nature. It is created only by his being in the act of pride (*CD* IV.1, 745). Since all humans exist in this act of pride, according to Barth, faith must be enabled and originated from Christ in addition to being oriented on him. The human activity that is involved in the faith that is based and oriented on Christ is one characterized by humble dependence (see *CD* IV.1, 745-746).
[53] *CD* IV.1, 746.

enabled and based on the work of Christ for the believer. However, Barth does not want to view faith or belief as being on the same plane as unbelief. For him Christian believing is on a different level because Christ as the object of faith is not a neutral object that simply allows the believing to choose between two equal options.[54] For Barth this necessary aspect of assurance is due to the nature of the object of faith, namely Christ, in His encounter with the believer. It is not due to something inherent in the believer herself or her actions. This irresistible necessity of the free human activity of faith in relation to Christ is also attributed to the activity of the Holy Spirit. As he says, "it is the awakening power of the Holy Spirit that this impossibility as such and this necessity as such so confront a man and illuminate him that he does the only objective, real and ontological thing which he can do, not omitting or suppressing or withholding but necessarily speaking the Yes of the free act which corresponds to it, choosing that for which he is already chosen by the divine decision, and beside which he has no other choice, that is to say, faith."[55] An aspect of having faith, according to Barth, is the believer's awareness of God's overwhelming power through the Holy Spirit and through Christ for her well-being . Typical of the reformed tradition, Barth further emphasizes this aspect of assurance that is a structural aspect of the believer's faith. As he says,

> Faith means to be awake on the basis of this awakening: to be awake to the strong One who awakens him and who alone can awaken him; to be awake to the necessity with which He does this, a necessity which excludes all pseudo-freedoms: to be awake to the self-evident nature of the arising which, on the part of man, will directly follow his awakening. Faith is at once the most wonderful and the simplest of things. In it a man opens his eyes and sees and accepts everything as it—objectively, really and ontologically—is. Faith is the simple discovery of the child which finds itself in the father's house and on the mother's lap.[56]

In this sense the character of the believer's existence in relation to the object of faith is one dependent on the gracious activity of God in Christ through the Spirit. Furthermore, this dependence is manifested thorough the believer's multiform awareness of God's loving presence for her as she acknowledges, recognizes, and confesses her dependence on Christ in and through her

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[54] See *CD* IV.1, 746-747.

[55] *CD* IV.1, 748. The Holy Spirit is the one who enables the free activity of faith by the believer in Christ. The Holy Spirit is understood as "the power in which the object of faith is also its origin and basis, so that faith can know and confess itself only as His work and gift, as the human decision for this object, the human participation in it which he makes in his own free act but which he can only receive, which he can understand only as something which is received, which he can continually look for as something which is received again and which has to be confirmed in a new act" (*CD* IV.1, 748).

[56] *CD* IV.1, 748.

particular situation(s) in the world. The metaphorical description of being "in the father's house and on the mother's lap" implies that there are implicit emotional dimensions tied up with the cognitive and intellectual dimensions of a Christian's faith further highlighting the point that the character of Christian believing isn't something merely or reductively intellectual that parallels a believer's emotional existence but that it structurally and in inherently includes those dimensions implicitly.

The third and final dimension that Barth discusses concerning the relation of the human activity of faith to the object of faith is that the believer is not only oriented to and based on the object of faith, but she is also constituted by it. The believer is created anew. As Barth says, "in the twofold relationship of faith to Jesus Christ, as faith is oriented and based on Him as its object, there takes place in it the constitution of the Christian subject. And we do not forget that it becomes and is this subject only in this action: not on the basis of a creaturely character of this action as such, but in virtue of the fact that as it is oriented so it is also based on Jesus Christ. Yet it is also true, and we must say it expressly, that in this action there begins and takes place a new and particular being of man."[57] The human activity of faith in isolation is not the direct cause of this new creation, but it actively participates in this constitution of the creature's new identity as it actively relates to the activity of God. Faith, for Barth, is closely tied up with the notion of the redemptive activity of God for the world and with the notion of the consummate new creation to come. As he says, "The faith which has Jesus Christ for its object is therefore faith in this being and action of His for the world, for all men and for every man. And those who can believe in Him—in Paul's phrase, those who are of faith (of faith in Him)—are the first-fruits and representatives of the humanity and the world to which God has addressed Himself in Jesus Christ."[58] The Christian believer attests to this coming consummation that has already begun in and through Jesus Christ for the world. As he says, "What Christians have in and for themselves in the sharply differentiated particularity of their being they have as the bearers and representatives of a specially qualified and emphasized solidarity with all other men."[59] What is revealed to, in, and through Christians and the manner in which they attest to it is not entirely abstract or general, as Barth notes speaking of 1 Timothy 4:10 that Christ's activity for those who believe is "concretely revealed to them and concretely known by them, demanding their concrete service."[60] Barth then moves to briefly describe how the truth of Christ is

[57] *CD* IV.1, 749.
[58] *CD* IV.1, 750.
[59] *CD* IV.1, 750.
[60] *CD* IV.1, 750.

appropriated when he says that "His truth is known in obedience, and acknowledged in humility and confessed in thankfulness, the people which lives and builds up itself to be a light shining in the world (Phil. 2:15) in reflection of His glory."[61] Obedience, acknowledgment, humility, and gratitude are implicit dimensions of the character of Christian believing that imply the fact that the whole self is involved in the character of Christian believing and not merely the intellect in isolation.

Furthermore, Barth also refers to the irreducibly intersubjective dimensions of the character of Christian believing as the individual believer relates to the saints of the Church. As he says, "The faith which has Him as its object is as such faith in Him as the Creator and Lord of the fellowship of the saints. It is faith as it lives by and for and in and with this fellowship—the faith of this fellowship and as such the faith of individual Christians. Just as a man would not be a man in and for himself, in isolation from his fellow-men, so a Christian would not be a Christian in and for himself, separated from the fellowship of the saints. With his personal faith he is a member of this body of Christ."[62] This importantly qualifies the individual character of Christian believing and how we understand the believer's way of relating to the object of faith. This intersubjective understanding of individual identity (first in the Church, but also in the world within one's specific time and place) has implications for how we understand the constitution of an individual's faith as necessarily related to public relations and necessarily and as such cannot be reduced to something entirely private in a psychological sense or entirely isolated in an anthropological sense (in addition to the theological sense of relating to God who encounters the believer from outside the believer herself). For Barth, the individual believer's faith is tied up with her relations to other persons (specifically her fellow saints). It is not something that is constituted in an isolated or individualistic manner.[63]

In building up to the next section where Barth focuses extensively on the act of faith Barth importantly states that "the faith and therefore the acknowledgment, recognition and confession are their act, it is evident that the event of their faith (while it has no creative aspect as their act) is more than cognitive in character. From the point of view of the presupposition at work in their act, from the point of view of the men as its doers, it is clearly the positing of a new being, the occurrence of a

[61] *CD* IV.1, 750.
[62] *CD* IV.1, 750-751.
[63] Even more starkly Barth says, "If faith is outside the church it is outside the world, and therefore a-Christian" (*CD* IV.1, 751). The fellowship of the community is an essential ingredient of the character of Christian believing just as individuals are essential for the community

new creation, a new birth of these men."[64] Barth here importantly acknowledges that the event of faith is more than cognitive and that it is inherently transformative for the believer. Further acknowledging and reflecting on the "more than cognitive" character of Christian believing as it takes place in the ongoing event of reconciliation helps us to better understand the holistic character of Christian believing and in doing so it helps us to begin to better understand the central significance of believing in and for Christianity. While the act of faith changes what and how a believer thinks this change and this act is "more than cognitive." Barth concludes, "To this extent we cannot deny to the event of their faith a certain creative character."[65] However, in line with his hesitations to articulate this event in any way that might give rise to the assumption that the believer herself is responsible for constituting herself anew apart from a proper dependence on God's activity for her Barth makes a point to link this constitutive and creative dimension of the event of faith most directly to the activity of the object of faith that the believer relates to in her act of faith. As he goes on to say, "Because the faith of this sinful man is directed on Him and effected by Him, the event of his faith is not merely cognitive as a human act but it is also creative in character. The new being effective and revealed in it, the new creation, the new birth—they are all the mystery of the One in whom he believes and whom he can acknowledge and recognise and confess in faith. When it is this One who closes the circle around him, a man can and must do that which he does in faith."[66]

In summary Barth states, "On the one hand we are dealing with the being and action of Jesus Christ, on the other with the particular, the most particular, fact of the existence of the individual man."[67] As he goes on to say, "This is—in general terms—the form of His being and activity in which He Himself is the mystery in the event of faith, in which He gives to this event a creative as well as a cognitive character."[68] The creative character is most directly related to the activity of God in Christ while the activity of the believer truly participates in that activity while in no way acting as the sole origin of this new creative constitution. For Barth the particularity of the person and her situation and her relationships are important, and this is an important acknowledgment when we later compare Barth with Bultmann. As he says,

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[64] *CD* IV.1, 752.
[65] *CD* IV.1, 752.
[66] *CD* IV.1, 753.
[67] *CD* IV.1, 753.
[68] *CD* IV.1, 753.

> When a man can and must believe, it is not merely a matter of an "also," of his attachment as an individual to the general being and activity of the race and the community as determined by Jesus Christ. In all the common life of that outer and inner circle he is still himself. He is uniquely this man and no other. He cannot be repeated or represented. He is incomparable. He is this in his relationship with God and also in his relationship with his fellows. He is this soul of this body, existing in the span of this time of his. He is this sinful man with his own particular pride and in his own special case. For all his common life he is alone in this particularity. It is not simply that he also can and must believe, but that just he can and must believe. And if the being and activity of Jesus Christ Himself is the mystery of the event in which he actually does so, then we must put it even more strongly and precisely: that in this event it takes place that Jesus Christ lives not only "also" but "just" as his Mediator and Saviour and Lord, and that He shows Himself just to him as this living One. He became a servant just for him. It was just his place that He took, the place which is not the place of any other. In this place that He took, the place which is not the place of any other. In this place He died just for him, for his sin.[69]

This highlights the fact that the character of Christian believing inherently involves aspects of continuity as well as novelty. It is important that the Christian believer reflect on the *pro me* of Christ's redemptive activity in the most concrete terms as it relates to the believer's honest self-understanding.[70] The point is that for Barth part of the character of Christian believing is an acknowledgment, recognition, and appreciation of the fact that Jesus Christ was and is specifically interested in and came for the individual believer in all her concrete particularity that makes her who she is on the horizontal plane as well as the vertical plane.[71]

For Barth, the self-understanding of the believer is wrapped up in a hermeneutical circle of sorts between the *pro me, pro nobis*, and the *propter nos homines*. An understanding that Christ came to save the individual, the individual as she relates to the community of the church, and the community of the Church as it relates to the redemption of the world through God in Christ and in the Spirit. Having stated all this concerning the believer's relation to the object of faith and the object of faith's relationship to the believer, Barth then moves on to more closely focus on the act of faith within this event of faith that takes place in the believer's encounter with God within her concrete time and place.

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[69] *CD* IV.1, 754.
[70] See *CD* IV.1, 754.
[71] *CD* IV.1, 754-755.

The Act of Faith: Acknowledging, Recognizing, and Confessing

Reflecting on the previous section Barth writes, "We have now said and considered what we had to say concerning the object of faith, its origin, and finally and above all the basis of the Christian subject, and therefore the coming into being and the being of the Christian."[72] He starts out by affirming that, "Christian faith is a free human act."[73] In line with what he articulated in the previous section Christian faith is not understood as one act among other acts but as "*the* act of the Christian life."[74] The act of faith is embedded and embodied within the many manner of ways that a Christian exists within the particularities and continuities of her world. As he says, "By what we have called in the title the act of faith we mean the basic Christian act which, when it takes place, is *the* act of the Christian life, the Christian act which embraces and controls all individual acts and activates, permeating and determining them like the leaven of Mt. 13:33."[75] He acknowledges that from other perspectives love and hope are also central Christian acts. He writes,

> Like love and hope from other aspects, faith is *the* act of the Christian life to the extent that in all the activity and individual acts of a man it is the most inward and central and decisive act of his heart, the one which—if it takes place—characterises them all as Christian, as expressions and confirmation of his Christian freedom, his Christian responsibility, his Christian obedience. On whether or not this act takes place depends whether these acts are rightly done from the Christian standpoint. If a man does them in faith, if in doing them he first performs the basic act of faith, then he does them as a Christian, he does them rightly from the Christian standpoint.[76]

In this sense it is again more than consciously cognitive and can manifest itself in holistic and multiform ways of the believer's intentional existence in the world. Rather than being merely one act among other acts it is holistically embedded and embodied within the believer's intentional way of existing in the world. In this section Barth goes on to develop what he means by saying that the Christian act of faith consists of an acknowledging, recognizing, and confessing. These are understood to be different aspects of the same unified but multiform act, not different sequential stages or distinct actions. They are mutually interrelated and as such they are implicit dimensions of faith that characterize Christian believing in a holistic manner that is beyond a simple understanding

[72] *CD* IV.1, 757.
[73] *CD* IV.1, 757.
[74] *CD* IV.1, 757.
[75] *CD* IV.1, 758.
[76] *CD* IV.1, 757-758. This will be an important point of resonance with Bultmann's understanding of faith as historical deed.

of belief as an isolated mental act of thinking certain thoughts to be true concerning the person and message of Jesus Christ. In highlighting this polyphonic nature of the act of faith Barth contributes to a better understanding of why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity.

Barth is quick to point out that the act of Christian faith consists of a type of knowledge. As he says, "Why a knowledge? As we have seen, underlying it there is the power of His Holy Spirit awakening man to faith. As the event of a human act on this basis, faith is a cognitive event, the simple taking cognizance of the preceding being and work of Jesus Christ. But we are not dealing with an automatic reflection, with a stone lit up by the sun, or wood kindled by a fire, or a leaf blown by the wind. We are dealing with man. It is, therefore, a spontaneous, a free, an active event. This active aspect is expressed in the three terms: acknowledgment, recognition, and confession."[77] Just because the Christian act of faith is more than cognitive does not mean that it is non-cognitive or that it does not have significant dimensions of explicit cognitive understanding. As God reveals himself in and through human language the knowledge of faith does consist in variously relating to, appropriating, and embodying specific linguistic content while one is actively relating to Christ and, for Barth, the act of acknowledgment is the first dimension that should be talked about. As he says,

> It might be objected that acknowledgment includes and presupposes recognition, so that the latter ought to be treated first. This may be true enough in other cases, but when it is the taking cognizance of Christian faith the reverse is true. The recognition is certainly included in the acknowledgment, but it can only follow it. Acknowledging is a taking cognizance which is obedient and compliant, which yields and subordinates itself. This obedience and compliance is not an incidental and subsequent characteristic of the act of faith, but primary, basic and decisive. It is not preceded by any other kind of knowledge, either recognition or confession. The recognition and confession of faith are included in and follow from the fact that they are originally and properly an acknowledgment, the free act of obedience."[78]

In Barth's case you only properly come to true knowledge of God when you encounter God in the right manner, namely in humble obedience. There is no neutral access to true knowledge of God because the knowledge of faith takes place in a relationship to the person of Christ in the present. Acknowledging is not merely an observing correctly or a knowing about accurately, but a relating to properly.

[77] *CD* IV.1, 758.
[78] *CD* IV.1, 758.

Along these lines Barth engages with the classical analysis of genuine faith as consisting of *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*. He states that, "If we were to use the terminology of the older dogmatics, we should have to speak first of *assensus* and only then of *notitia*—although this would have sounded very strange to its authors with their concern for formal logic. The only thing is that acknowledgment is much more than *assensus* and recognition than *notitia*."[79] For Barth acknowledgment and recognition are much more than mere awareness of information and commitment to the accuracy of that information. The commitment and understanding involved is more self-involving than that. In starting to further articulate the dimension of acknowledgment in the act of faith in Christ Barth speaks of the necessity of the "earthly-historical form of His existence."[80] As he goes on to state,

> On the level of an earthly-historical event—of which we are now speaking—his encounter with this object of his faith will therefore be in some form his encounter with the Christian community, a direct or indirect encounter with its ministry or proclamation or one of its activities. And what he will experience in this encounter if he comes to faith will be this, that the relative authority and freedom in which the Christian community exists in the world and in which he experiences its existence will confront him, not in some kind of non-obligatory way, but with such compulsion that he must not only accept and respect it but submit to its law and desire to associate himself with it and join it.[81]

For Barth, the Christian believer's acknowledgment of Christ takes place through the acknowledgment of the relative authority of the Church, rightly understood insofar as it is a faithful witness to Christ. As he goes on to say, "If a man comes to Christian faith, this means that in the encounter with the community of Jesus Christ he encounters Jesus Christ Himself, that in its relative authority and freedom he encounters His absolute authority and freedom, the law to which the community itself is subject, and therefore a law which is superior to him and binds him."[82] For Barth, the church is the vehicle through which the believer acknowledges Christ's authority within it.

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[79] *CD* IV.1, 759. He acknowledges that the classical understanding also included the aspect of *fiducia* in addition to *notitia* and *assensus* but he goes on to ask, "This seems evident enough, for cognizance of a thing implies a prior acquaintance. But what does *notitia* mean in this case?" (*CD* IV.1, 758-759) and "how can there be an acquaintance with the will of God for us taken from His word except in that act of acknowledgment and therefore of obedience and compliance?" (CD IV.1, 759). Here he seems to be reacting against forms of the classical analysis that portray the three aspects as distinct stages or developmental parts of faith rather than simultaneous aspects.

[80] *CD* IV.1, 759
[81] *CD* IV.1, 759.
[82] *CD* IV.1, 759

The acknowledgment is not ultimately directed at the Church, just as faith is ultimately not directed at the individual, but the believer acknowledges Christ through her participation in the church. As he states, "Acknowledgment as the basic moment in the act of Christian faith has reference to Jesus Christ Himself—presupposing, of course, the mediatorial ministry of the Christian community which is His body and the consequence of an active acknowledgment of its existence and the desire to be a member of it."[83]

Just like the object of acknowledgment is not directly and ultimately directed at the church, so too, for Barth, it is not ultimately directed at a specific doctrine or proposition. As he describes it,

> The active acknowledgment of Christian faith, in which recognition and confession are included and from which they result, does not have reference to any doctrine, theory or theology represented by or in the community. It does not have reference to any creed or dogma formulated and championed by the community, not even the most ancient and universal. Even less does it have reference to the dogmatics which gathers together and expounds that dogma, not even the most churchly of dogmatics. Nor does it have reference—as the Reformers so sharply emphasised—to the histories of the Old and the New Testaments, to the prophetic and apostolic theology as such on whose witness the proclamation of the community is founded. At its root as this acknowledgment Christian faith is not the subservient acceptance of any reports or propositions, irrespective of whether they are biblical or churchly or modern. At this root it is indeed an obedient acceptance. But the object of it is the One whom the Bible attests and the Church as taught by the Bible proclaims, the living Jesus Christ Himself, none other.[84]

Here Barth is working with a fine nuance. At one level the various doctrines and propositions concerning Christ are not the ultimate object of acknowledgment. This risks reducing it to mere assent and it also risks reductively intellectualizing the act of faith and construing it merely as the relationship of the believer to ideas and propositions about Christ rather than ultimately to Christ himself. Stated in this way it is more obvious why Barth rejects this type of thinking (as does

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[83] *CD* IV.1, 760.

[84] *CD* IV.1, 760. As he is here quick to point out, in agreement with Bultmann, the acknowledgment is not primarily directed at doctrines, theory, the history of the Bible, a particular community's theology, or reports or propositions of any kind of any time. The acknowledgement and knowledge of faith is directed at Jesus Christ as a living contemporaneous reality. At the same time, almost in a manner of taking back what he gave away, he says "not Jesus Christ portrayed according to the measure and capacity of imagination, metaphysics or history, but as attested by Holy Scripture and proclaimed by the community" (*CD*, IV.1, 760), no doubt in its "third dimension." Like Bultmann, faith becomes non-theological when it loses its object by stopping either at the human level or in propositions/doctrines.

Bultmann). But even a proper ontological relationship to Christ that is undertaken in proper acknowledgment that consist of humble obedience to Christ within the sphere of the Church in the world includes a multifaceted awareness of basic statements about Christ that suffice to identify Him. In talking about faith as consisting of knowledge Barth is equally not wanting to reduce faith to a nondescript feeling or disposition. He wants to emphasize that this proper acknowledgment consists in a proper relation to Christ Himself and not merely ideas about Him nor merely to the community of the Church. As he goes on to say,

> It is He Himself, the living Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, the Lord of Scripture. It is most important to maintain this expressly and in face of all false orthodoxy because this is the point which decides whether we will understand faith rightly: that it is the work of human insight, resolve and action; but that as this human work it is real Christian faith only directly in the encounter with its object, only as the gift of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ Himself, only as the work of the obedience which is pledged to Him as the freedom which is given by Him. This truth is either denied or hopelessly obscured in a conception of faith which involves as its basic act the acceptance of certain statements which attest and proclaim Him, which does not, therefore, consist in simple obedience to Himself.[85]

We might say that for Barth, the acknowledgment of faith in Christ consists of a minimal awareness of linguistic statements about Christ supplied by the believer's engagement in the community of saints and its understanding of Christ through the Scriptures (and this is an important point of agreement with Bultmann). However, the ontological relation and dependence on Christ is primary and will necessarily include one's acknowledgment of various statements about Christ, but it appears that for Barth the important point to note is that one's acknowledgment of having been encountered by Christ is the source of one's acknowledgment of various statements and not the other way around, and certainly not only a relation to ideas about God.

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[85] *CD* IV.1, 760-761. It is here that Barth admits a certain similarity between his thought and that of Rudolf Bultmann and Willhelm Herrmann. As he says, "In the result it might appear so, but perhaps only in relation to the negative element in this result, our opposition to a false orthodoxy, our refusal to ground the act of faith in the acceptance of the texts of the Bible or the propositions of the Church. If only there were an obvious unity on the positive element, that the living Lord Jesus Christ attested by the Bible and proclaimed by the church is the One who must be accepted and acknowledged at the basis of the act of faith, and therefore that the negation must be made only on this ground (and not on the ground merely of certain ethico-anthropological propositions)! To the extent that this is not clear, and so long as it is not clear, it is better to leave open the question of this agreement. For it is much to be feared that in what we are now going to say we shall have the support of neither Herrmann nor of Bultmann" (*CD* IV.1, 761).

Barth then moves on to talk about the recognition involved in the act of faith and in doing so he begins to shed further light on some of these issues. In line with the issue we were just engaging with he states that,

> Recognition is not of itself and as such the basic act of faith, which consists in that obedient and compliant taking cognizance. Faith is a recognition only to the extent that a recognition is included in that obedient and compliant taking cognisance. When we say this, we say that it is only the statement which is secondary. For that which proceeds from the acknowledgment as a second thing is already included in it as the first. If we may, and must, understand and formulate positively the definition given by Calvin—"All true knowledge of God (*omnis recta Dei cognition*) is born of obedience"—then as the basic act of faith this obedience is not an obedience without knowledge, a blind obedience without insight or understanding, an obedience which is rendered only as an emotion or an act of will. How could a recognition proceed from it or in any way follow it if it were not already contained in this first thing as a second?[86]

The act of faith involves the distinct but not separated aspects of acknowledgment and recognition. These are not separate acts, but different dimensions of the same act of faith. The dimension of acknowledgment adds a thicker description of the manner of relation that also includes an aspect of recognition since it is not a blind faith, but a knowing faith. In his words, "there is a recognition in the basic act of that obedience, of that acknowledgment (we must now continue) because the living Jesus Christ who is the object of that acknowledgment, to whom man subjects himself in the obedience of faith, is Himself not without form, but is the Jesus Christ attested in Holy Scripture and proclaimed by the community."[87] Acknowledgment, recognition, and confession, again, are all different aspects of knowing in faith. As Barth continues to describe the aspect of recognition he states,

> What is decisive is the objective truth that in and with the fact that he is called by Him to the obedience of faith he is given ground and cause to recognise Him in His authentic form, and therefore rightly. He would not obey Him if at the same time he did not begin in some way to see and understand Him, if of his obedience there were not born in outline a *recta cognitio*. . . . It is a right recognition in so far as it is in the form determined by His own being and His own revelation of His being that He encounters man in the witness of Scripture and the proclamation of the community; in so far, therefore, as the subjective fulfilment of the knowledge objectively proffered to man is limited and controlled by the fact that it always

[86] *CD* IV.1, 761. In the next paragraph he deals with Calvin's rejection of the *fides implicita.*
[87] *CD IV.1,* 762.

> takes place in the sphere of Holy Scripture which attest Him and the community which proclaims Him in obedience to Scripture.[88]

According to Barth there is a right and a wrong way to recognize Christ and this is judged first and foremost by Christ himself but also secondarily according to the witness of Scripture and the witness of the community insofar as it is aligned with Christ. It is an active and ongoing recognition on the part of the believer, and it is one that is capable of ever deepening understanding. As he says, "This sphere is a wide one, which leaves open to the believer many and different possibilities of seeing and understanding Jesus Christ and therefore of the subjective fulfilment of the right knowledge proffered to him."[89] It is here too that Barth gives some space for developing and understanding of the unity and diversity that constitutes *the* Christian faith and *a* Christian's faith. As he notes, not only are there valid varied ways of recognizing Christin the act of faith, but this variation is something to be expected and celebrated due to the richness of Christ. The richness and variation are to be understood within the bounds of right and wrong recognitions of Christ guided by Scripture and the community's reception of it (ultimately judged by Christ himself), but within these bounds diversity of recognitions is to be expected and celebrated.[90]

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[88] *CD* IV.1, 762.

[89] *CD* IV.1, 762. In the next paragraph he discusses Luther's, Calvin's, and the Heidelberg Catechism's different but equally responsible recognitions made within the sphere of scripture and the church.

[90] As he states at length, "The recognition of Christian faith can and should be varied. The reason for this is as follows. Although its object, the Jesus Christ attested in Scripture and proclaimed by the community, is single, unitary, consistent and free from contradiction, yet for all His singularity and unity His form is inexhaustibly rich, so that it is not merely legitimate but obligatory that believers should continually see and understand it in new lights and aspects. For He Himself does not present Himself to them in one form but in many—indeed, He is not in Himself uniform but multiform. How can it be otherwise when He is the true Son of the God who is Eternally rich? Of course, all knowledge of Jesus Christ will have not merely its basis but its limit and standard in the witness of Scripture and the proclamation of the Church. It is possible only within this definite sphere. It is only in this sphere that Jesus Christ has a form for us men, that He can therefore be an object of our knowledge and known by us. Again, it is a wide sphere with many possibilities. But in correspondence with the uniqueness and unity of Jesus Christ Himself it is a sphere with limits, and these limits are always the criterion in the question whether what we regard as the knowledge of faith in Jesus Christ is true knowledge, whether indeed it can be seriously called knowledge or not. Outside this sphere, Jesus Christ has no form for us; He is not an object of our knowledge and He cannot be known by us. The believer whom He has definitely encountered in this sphere and not elsewhere will not even try to seek Him outside this sphere. If he did, both Jesus Christ and his faith would dissolve into nothingness. The problem of the knowledge of faith in Jesus Christ is, therefore,

Barth here again emphasizes and goes on to emphasize the importance of the believer being engaged in the community of other believers who are likewise acknowledging and recognizing Christ. As he says, "If to believe means *eo ipso* to associate and attach oneself to the community, then the knowledge of faith necessarily consists in the fact that a man enrolls and continues in the school in which the community has always found and from which it can never remove itself, that of the witness of Scripture, in which he cannot help but learn with the community and therefore listen as well to the voice and word of the community."[91] For Barth, the fact that the believer is pursuing knowledge of Christ in this context is of primary importance and the fine details of the content of faith are of secondary (but still of importance). As he says, "In the measure that it takes place in this context, the knowledge of faith is genuine knowledge—and the question of this range and form and particular direction, although it is serious, is only secondary. What matters is that it is a knowledge which is qualified by the context in which alone it can take place,"[92] and that "it is a matter of recognizing in this context the Lord whom we acknowledge. We must all see to it that in our recognition we accept our particular responsibility to Him. As he is the object and origin of faith in general, He is also of the recognition of faith. And He is the ultimate Judge who they are that truly recognise Him when they acknowledge Him."[93] Here again the dimension of humility, this time applied to the recognition of the content of faith, is an important implicit aspect of the character of Christian believing.

At this point, however, Barth shifts his concern and begins to articulate his understanding of the act of recognition in an attempt to safeguard it from any anti-intellectual misunderstandings. He also acknowledges that he has yet to satisfactorily describe what recognition consist of. As he says, "We must not allow ourselves to be persuaded by any anti-intellectualism that there is not a definite element of knowing—of which the existence of this sphere of Scripture and the church is the basis and limit and norm."[94] He acknowledges again that there are different depths of knowledge for the

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absolutely tied up with the existence of this sphere, as is the answering of the problem with respect for this sphere. This knowledge is nourished by the witness of Scripture and its exposition and application in the proclamation of the community. It cannot refuse to accept this as its norm, and to be criticized and corrected by it as it listens to the exposition and application of it in the fellowship of the saints" (*CD* IV.1, 763-764).

[91] *CD* IV.1, 764.
[92] *CD* IV.1, 764.
[93] *CD* IV.1, 764.
[94] *CD* IV.1, 764.

Christian, but he adamantly insists that true knowledge of God is present in even the most elementary act of faith, which consists in a facility for the right words to express that knowledge. In this sense Barth talks about how every Christian ought to be a theologian of sorts. As he later states, "Of course, if what he feels and wants is something without form, then he is not a theologian, but he is also not a Christian. For Jesus Christ is not without form, but in the sphere in which he encounters Him He is both form and object—and in the same sphere in which he listens to the word of Scripture and to that of the community (and therefore to Himself) he can know Him."[95] The genuine character of Christian believing consists in definite knowledge of God in Christ and although it includes more than this awareness it is not less, according to Barth. As he goes on to affirm, "Of course, the knowing of faith and its recognition can never be an abstract knowing."[96] It cannot be abstract primarily in the sense that its content is concretely constituted by the person of Christ and the witness of Scripture and fellowship with the saints who have and are recognizing and acknowledging this content and object. Insofar as acknowledging and recognizing is more than cognitive awareness, the knowing of faith is more than a neutral intellectual understanding, but one that is embodied in various forms of intentional existence and through the various relationships that the particular believer has. Barth is less explicit about this dimension here, but it seems to be implicit in his position. As he mentions, "In all the so-called truths of faith we have to do with the being and activity of the living God towards us, with Jesus Christ Himself, whom faith cannot encounter with a basic neutrality, but only in the decision of obedience. The idea of an abstract knowledge of this object—we might almost say the idea of a theologian abstracted from the fact that he is a Christian—is one which has no substance."[97] He continues this train of thought when he says that, "positively the knowing of faith cannot be an abstract knowledge because it is only one element in the active recognition of faith. It is an indispensable element. It is an integral element. It decides its meaning and direction. It shows us what must be the object and origin of the recognition of faith. But it is only one element. Taken alone, as an abstract knowledge of God and the world and even of Jesus Christ it can only be described as unimportant and even, as Jas. 2:19 tells us, negative, a possibility or impossibility of demonic being."[98] There is a necessary dimension of the believer's

[95] *CD* IV.1, 764-765.
[96] *CD* IV.1, 765.
[97] *CD* IV.1, 765.
[98] *CD* IV.1, 765.

awareness of specific linguistic content that truly and rightly describes Christ, the believer herself, and God's activity for the believer.[99]

Barth goes on at length to further articulate the relationship between the act of recognition as it relates to the *pro me* involved in relating to an understanding of God's activity in Christ for the believer. As he states,

> And in knowing this, the believer knows of himself that he himself is the man for whom Jesus Christ is, for whom, in whose place, He acts and rules, in short, with whom He deals as an all-powerful and all-loving human lord—if there were such a thing—would have to deal with a man who is utterly attached and subject to him. He knows that he himself is the man who is the possession of this Lord. But if this is what he knows concerning Jesus Christ and therefore himself, it is not an abstract or dead or neutral, but a concrete and living and—do we need to say it?—a supremely and profoundly implicated knowledge. Let us say it for once, it is his existential knowledge, his knowledge in the active recognition of his faith.[100]

Barth's hesitancy to refer to this knowledge as existential knowledge indicates that Bultmann's thought is lurking in the background here. In important continuity with Bultmann's thought Barth states that, "if it is an active recognition—a recognition in the full sense of this important word—then necessarily it reaches out from that knowledge to the awareness, the self-understanding and self-apprehension, of the whole man, thus becoming an action and decision of the whole man."[101] The recognition is not an isolated or disengaged recognition, but one that is fully embodied in the believer's intentional way of being in the world that is truly changed as a result of God's action in, for, and through the believer. Barth goes on to ask, "From this knowledge, from the recognition

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[99] Barth again further reiterates, "The knowing of faith is, of course, a true and genuine knowing. It is related to its object. It is an objective and, as such, a theoretical knowing. We can say this quite calmly, and it must not be denied. But, as such, it is at once a practical knowing. It both knows and recognises. It is this to the extent that as a knowing about Jesus Christ it includes in itself from the very first a knowing about the believer himself. It is already included in the root of faith as the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ, it is born of that obedience as cognition, that the One in whom I believe and about whom I can know when I believe in Him, that this One—we now come to the final proposition of our second section—is what He is and does what He does for me, *pro me*; that He is 'my Lord,' as Luther so rightly emphasised in a formula which unfolded so much objective knowledge; that He is my Lord and therefore my Saviour and Mediator, my Redeemer from sin and death and the devil, my hope of service in righteousness, innocence and felicity, because He died for me and rose again for me" (*CD* IV.1, 765-766).

[100] *CD* IV.1, 766.
[101] *CD* IV.1, 766.

characterised by this knowledge, does there not necessarily follow a total disturbance of my being, a radical decision in relation to my salutation *vis-à-vis* myself and the world? Does not this recognition—without ceasing to be recognition, but becoming recognition in the deepest sense—necessarily take on the form of a free act which is characterised as a basic act by the fact that it is—we must not say only, but just—the act of my heart?"[102] Even in describing the act of recognition of the believer as her free act and decision that aligns itself with a radical change in her identity Barth is still concerned to make sure that we do not confuse the penultimate human act with the ultimate divine act. It is this conflation of the penultimate and the ultimate that Barth is concerned that Bultmann and others succumb to.[103] In speaking about the relation between his own understanding and that of Bultmann, Roman Catholics, and others he states, "If only we were agreed—and this applies to my neighbour on the left as well as on the right—that the ultimate and the penultimate things, the redemptive act of God and that which passes for our response to it, are not the same. Everything is jeopardised if there is confusion in this respect."[104] Barth is concerned that they conflate the activity of the believer in faith and the activity of God in Christ for the redemption of

[102] *CD* IV.1, 766-767.

[103] In response to the early Luther and to Bultmann, Barth writes, "The real presentation (*repraesentatio*) of the history of Jesus Christ is that which He Himself accomplishes in the work of His Holy Spirit when He makes Himself the object and origin of faith. Christian faith takes note of this, and clings to it and responds to it, without itself being the thing which accomplishes it, without any identity between the redemptive act of God and faith as the free act of man. Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection do not cease to be its object and origin. It is always grounded in the fact that Jesus Christ becomes and is and remains its object and origin. What takes place in the recognition of the *pro me* of Christian faith is not the redemptive act of God itself, not the death and resurrection of Jesu Christ, not the presentation and repetition of His obedience and sacrifice and victory. What is Bultmann's conception but an existentialist translation of the sacramentalist teaching of the Roman Church, according to which, at the climax of the mass, with the transubstantiation of the elements—in metaphysical identity with what took place then and there—there is a 'bloodless repetition' of the sacrifice of Christ on Golgotha? . . . With the later Luther they will understand faith as a recognition and apprehension (*comprehendere*) of Jesus Christ as the One who died and rose again for us men and in our place, but they will not confuse it with the dying and rising again of Jesus Christ, nor will they confuse the dying and rising again of Jesus Christ with what takes place in faith. Therefore, when they speak of what takes place in faith, they will not speak of an absolute disturbance or an eschatological decision or the redemptive act of God" (*CD IV.1,* 767-768).

[104] *CD* IV.1, 768-769.

the believer; in an unnecessary repetition of the work of Christ.[105] Barth is happy to speak of the believer's active participation in the ongoing reception, appropriation, and manifestation of her redemption that is genuinely transformative in a qualified sense. It is dependent on the real presence and activity of Christ who encounters the believer in her present circumstances in light of what He has done for her in the past and will continue to do for her in the future, but once that is understood Barth has no problem talking about the believer playing an active role in appropriating that redemption in a concrete way.[106] As Barth himself states, "faith is the free act of man. If this is secure, we cannot speak too strongly of what takes place in it as the recognition and apprehension of Jesus Christ, as the subjective realisation of the *pro me*. There is no doubt that in it as this recognition there is a comprehensive disturbance and decision, an act of the human heart which carries with it, and after it, a total change in man's whole situation."[107]

Barth also incorporates two other implicit dimensions of explicit faith when he speaks about the classic concepts of mortification and vivification. Barth states that the believer "expresses himself as a Christina in the fact that he is able and willing to be only in the likeness of Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, in both an inward *mortification* and an inward *vivification*."[108] When it comes to how acknowledgment, recognition, and mortification relate to the believer's self-understanding in relation to the activity of Christ "it follows that I am seriously alarmed at myself, that I am radically and heartily sorry for my condition, that I can no longer boast of myself and my thoughts and words and works and especially my heart, but can only be ashamed of them, that I can think of myself and my acts only with remorse and penitence."[109] Continuing to speak of the inward

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[105] As he says, "Faith is the free act of man, and is wonderful enough in relationship to Jesus Christ as its object and origin. It is a recognition and apprehension of His being and activity for man. But it is not the repetition of it. The being and activity of Jesus Christ needs no repetition. It is present and active in its own truth and power" (*CD* IV.1, 769).

[106] As Bruce L. McCormack notes, in a slightly different context looking primarily at Barth's theological ontology, "true humanity" for Barth "is realized only in the *act* of faith and obedience" and McCormack goes on to note that Barth "[employs] historical categories (categories of lived existence) to overcome the essentialistic treatment of classical theological anthropology" (McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 199). This further highlights the close connection of Barth's conception of the character of Christian believing as being transformatively and holistically embedded in the particularities of the believer's concrete situation(s) in the world in a non-reductive way that maintains the importance of divine otherness.

[107] *CD* IV.1, 769.

[108] *CD* IV.1, 769.

[109] *CD* IV.1, 771.

act of mortification Barth states that "it is the Christian attitude on its negative side. The knowledge of faith involves no less than this. This heartfelt act of penitence cannot be avoided by anyone who knows Jesus Christ as his Saviour and is determined and stamped and enlightened by Him."[110] Speaking of the positive side, alluding to the inward act of vivification, Barth states that "If I know Him and myself in Him—and that is the knowledge of faith—this means that I see myself as the one to whom that right and life are given, as the one to whom He has given Himself as righteous and alive for me."[111] This vivification is closely tied to the believer's assurance and trust that Christ truly is for her. As he states, "on this positive side faith is simply trust—that is why the older theologians talked of *fiducia*. Not an arbitrary trust, but a trust which responds to the Word of God spoken to me. Not an indefinite trust, but a trust which is grounded in the knowledge of faith as the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And we must add that in this responsive and well-grounded trust we have to do not only with myself but with the community and the world.[112] Here Barth indicates that the individual's faith cannot be individualistic.

For Barth, this notion of vivification is tied to a peaceful confidence that God is not only for the believer herself, but for the good of the Church and the world as well. As he goes on to describe, "This is what the older theologians called *vivification*, the *vivification* which does not come to a Christian once only but continually, which does not determine his attitude only occasionally, but is everywhere present—this time as a clear overtone."[113] Barth goes on to further describe and sum up these dimensions of vivification and mortification by stating,

> It cannot be otherwise than that, when a man believes, then, in spite of all the limitations in which he still exists, in the knowledge of the restoration of his right and life as it has taken place in Jesus Christ, he will become a free man, i.e., a man who is no longer a simple servant and victim of his pride, but who is called away from it to the obedience of humility, for which he is also both ready and willing. As he bears that deep wound and accepts that bitter pain of penitence, he will hope for the grace of God and in that hope he will be at bottom a cheerful man. And although on his journey from the beginning of his way to the end he will often enough be assaulted and he will have to fight and he will often be thrown down, but will always rise up again and continue, yet in his relationship with God and man and himself he will be seriously and finally a peaceful man, peaceful because held by the One

[110] *CD* IV.1, 772.
[111] *CD* IV.1, 772-773. Again Barth goes on to qualify this restoration to account for the ongoing struggle with sin.
[112] *CD* IV.1, 774.
[113] *CD* IV.1, 774.

> in whom he is already restored, in whom he is already the righteous and protected covenant-partner of God.[114]

This determining, stamping, and enlightening takes shape in two aspects. That of overcoming one's pride by Christ and that of recognizing one's appropriation of Christ's restoration in oneself. These aspects of vivification and mortification happen continually for the believer, in line with Barth's general commitment to an actualistic outlook rather than seen as a once and for all event. This again also highlights some of the other emotional aspects inherent in the character of Christian believing.

The third and final aspect of the Christian act of faith in Christ is that of confession. As he states, "Christian faith is a confession. At the very first we called it generally an act of taking cognizance. We described this as basically an act of acknowledgment in which we then saw an act of recognition from which this proceeded. In this limited and definite sense Christian faith is man's taking cognizance of Jesus Christ."[115] As he has been at pains to demonstrate, however, Christian faith is not merely a matter of taking cognizance of Jesus Christ. Confessing is also a necessary dimension of genuine Christian faith. Barth boldly states that "The taking is accompanied by giving, the acknowledgment and recognition by confession. A Christian who simply acknowledges and recognises without confessing is not a Christian."[116] One dimension of the character of Christian believing, for Barth, is to be a holistic witness of Christ to others. As he says, "so the goal of faith as the free act of man is the act of his witness and therefore of his confession. What is acknowledged and recognised by man in faith is the radiance of God, his *qabod, doxa, Gloria*, glory, honour, self-manifestation in the being and activity of Jesus Christ. But this radiance cannot be stopped in and by the one who acknowledges and recognises it. It breaks through and lights up the man himself."[117] Alluding to a few biblical metaphors Barth states that "the man who believes in Jesus Christ is, as such, the lighted candle which belongs *per se* to the candlestick. His taking cognizance is also a giving."[118] This witnessing and confessing that takes place in and through the character of Christian believing is one that is unique to her individuality and faithfully reflective of Christ as her life and her words are made manifest in the world for those with the eyes to see. As Barth states,

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[114] *CD* IV.1, 775.
[115] *CD* IV.1, 776.
[116] *CD* IV.1, 776.
[117] *CD* IV.1, 776.
[118] *CD* IV.1, 776.

> The consequence is irresistible that where anyone believes as a Christian a history is enacted: a history of the heart, which, as such, is audible and visible in world-history; an individual history which, as such, calls for impartation and communication; a secret history which, as such, has a public character and claim; a history which is not apparent—for what does it matter that a man finds himself summoned to that obedience and compliance in relation to Jesus Christ, and resolved upon it in his own freedom, and what is the little penitence and confidence in which this is revealed in his attitude?—but a history of immeasurable dynamic because it takes place in the light of the great history of God.[119]

The Christian believer participates in the ongoing redemptive activity of God in and for the world in a transformative way that is publicly manifested for those with eyes to see. Confession, understood in a holistic sense, is this dynamic aspect that is made manifest in the world. As Barth states at some length,

> In general terms, confessing is the moment in the act of faith in which the believer stands to his faith, or, rather, to the One in whom he believes, the One whom he acknowledges and recognises, the living Jesus Christ; and does so outwardly, again in general terms, in face of men. . . . to be that altered man who belongs to Him in our whole being and therefore outwardly as well. . . He is absolutely different only in the mystery of his existence as grounded in Jesus Christ, not in what he himself is and does on this basis. His confessing is striking and extraordinary and surprising and spectacular and aggressive, both in itself and in its effects, only in the eyes and ears of those who lack categories to understand what he is and does on this basis.[120]

Here Barth points out that there are indeed hidden implicit dimensions of the character of Christian believing as they relate to the divine human relationship but he acknowledges that there is also an accompanying public manifestation that is transformative for the believing and potentially transformative for those who witness and come into contact with Christians holistically manifesting the confession of their faith. Again alluding to biblical metaphors Barth writes that "because he is a little light reflecting the great light, his action stands out from that of others, he becomes a witness of the great light, without especially willing to do so, and without in any way helping to do so. His task is that he should not cease to be that little light reflecting the great light. His task is that he should not place that little light under a bushel. If he sees to this, he does the act of confessing which is required of him, the confession of faith."[121] Barth then again touches on the necessarily intersubjective dimension of what it means to be human and therefore as faith involves the whole

[119] *CD* IV.1, 776-777.
[120] *CD* IV.1, 777.
[121] *CD* IV.1, 778.

person of the necessarily social dimension of the individual believer's faith. He asserts that fellowship is naturally and by creation an inherent dimension of humanity and especially of the humanity of the Christian (we might add that concern for the wellbeing of one's neighbor is also, if not natural, an inherent Christian disposition). Along these lines Barth writes, "since faith is his free human act, he cannot perform it without his neighbors, without communication with them. He cannot try to keep it concealed from them. Whatever may be their attitude to him, he owes this to them. To exist privately is to be a robber. . . . This is all the less possible in so far as what is required is not an act of particular heroism, but simply that in the sight and audience of his fellows he should stand to his faith, i.e. to the One in whom he believes and to what his attachment to Him involves for himself, that he should not be unbelieving, but believing."[122] Faith is embedded and embodied within one's way of existing in the world with and for others. While one might argue that there are "private" or "inner" dimensions of faith there is also an inherently public or communal dimension to its constitution both with fellow believers in the Church and with the Churches witness to those in the world. As Barth states, "above all, the necessary summons to confession is concretely given by the existence of others who, according to their confession in the world, are likewise caught up in the act of faith by the existence of the Christian community. It is not on the basis of his own discovery and private revelation, but by the mediatorial ministry of the community which is itself in the school of the prophets and apostles, that a man comes under the awakening power of the Holy Spirit and therefore to faith."[123]

With this understanding it is, according to Barth, the believer's "task to make this known in human language for human ears, and with the act of his human life before human eyes—yet again, not in great deeds, but in the mere fact that he is who he is, and that as such he says what he has to say and does what he has to do and makes open use of the freedom which is given him to do this."[124] Barth's holistic understanding of the act of confession inherent in the act of faith challenges conceptions of the nature of faith that are overly privatized and atomistically individualistic. Like the other aspects, confession is not a special act entirely distinct from everything else that the Christian is and does. This being the case, the Christian's confession is phenomenologically rich, but Barth

[122] *CD* IV.1, 778.
[123] *CD* IV.1, 778.
[124] *CD* IV.1, 779.

doesn't unpack this further, even though he lays the groundwork at a higher level of descriptive generality that is at the same time theologically and Scripturally rich.

Conclusion

Given all this, it is fruitful for those seeking a richer description of the character of Christian believing to engage these aspects where Barth more directly speaks about the active and dynamic nature of the free Christian act of faith and not only those places of his writings that focus on justification and more exclusively on the object of faith, which emphasize the believer's passivity in a manner that does not as adequately speak about the various human dimensions of the character of Christian believing.

Barth's descriptions of the object of faith and the act of faith helpfully articulate some of the aspects that constitute the implicit dimensions of explicit faith. For Barth, understanding how Jesus Christ as the object of the believer's faith orients, originates and constitutes the character of Christian believing is significant for a proper understanding of the human act of believing in Christianity and it adds further intelligibility as to why believing is centrally significant. Barth's multiform conception of the holistic Christian act of faith that consists of the dynamic and implicit aspects of recognition, acknowledgment, and confession adds further intelligibility to how the believer is wholly self-involved and not involved in an isolated, atomistic, or individualistic manner, which again adds further intelligibility to how and why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. The character of Christian believing is not something that can be adequately understood in an isolated or abstractly disengaged manner primarily because Christ as the object is actively involved in encountering the Christian believer. As this chapter has sought to show, Barth's writings are capable of contributing to an account of the character of Christian believing that is more phenomenologically rich and yet remains concretely and specifically Christian. Barth's writings help safeguard our understanding of the character of Christian believing from being theologically reductive in their emphasis on the primacy of Christ as the object of faith and its significance for our understanding of the act of faith and his insights. His emphasis on the *self*-involving nature of faith is packed with latent significance that is congruent with a more phenomenologically rich description of the character of Christian believing that is at the same time neither anthropologically nor theologically reductive (even though his work, nor this thesis, undertakes a properly phenomenological investigation). As a work in Christian theology Barth's multiform conception of

the character of Christian believing and the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith shows the non-reductive character of Christian believing and in doing so it provides greater intelligibility into the central significance in and for Christianity. In emphasizing that Christ as the object of faith orients, originates, and constitutes the believer and that the believer relates to Christ by acknowledging, recognizing, and confessing Him in a multiform and holistic manner amidst one's concrete circumstances in the world Barth's work begins to unpack some of the implicit dimensions of explicit faith that better help us understand why faith is centrally significant in and for Christianity. Barth begins to show us how there are many different aspects that are related to one another that simultaneously constitute the character of Christian believing and he acknowledges that that character is one that cannot be satisfactorily understood in a reductively individualistic way nor in a way that simply operates with an abstract conception of the personal identity of individual believers, nor with an atomistic conception of human cognition.

Chapter 2: Rudolf Bultmann and the Implicit Dimensions of Explicit Faith

Introduction

It is fair to say that interest in Rudolf Bultmann and the reception and productive engagement with his work in English speaking systematic theology (as opposed to New Testament studies) is sparse when compared to Barth; and this is in part due to the wide success of Barth's influence in English speaking systematic theology and his own (at times hasty) interpretations of Bultmann. As Benjamin Myers points out, "Karl Barth was one of the earliest and most influential critics of Bultmann's doctrine of faith; later critics have often done little more than restate the basic objections which Barth had already formulated."[1] Recently Myers, and to a greater extent David Congdon,[2] have begun to reassess Bultmann and engage his work in ways that are constructively fruitful for systematic theology today. In addition to contributing to the main aim of this thesis[3] this chapter in particular aims to also contribute to this reassessment and fruitful engagement with Rudolf Bultmann's work for systematic theology today. The decision to spend an extensive amount of space presenting Barth and Bultmann's various understandings of the nature of Christian faith in the first two chapters and in continuing to more closely compare them with each other (as well as with other theologians) in the third chapter is a direct result of the conviction that Barth poorly represents Bultmann's thought on the nature of faith and that, while there are difference between them, the similarities of thought between Barth and Bultmann on the human act of faith are strikingly apparent. Both have a lot to offer in terms of helping us better understanding the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and in doing so both help the central significance of belief in Christianity become more intelligible. This chapter seeks to extensively articulate Bultmann's understanding of the holistic character of Christian believing in order that he might further help us understand why belief is centrally significant in and for Christianity and that he might be more fairly understood.

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[1] Benjamin Myers, "Faith as Self-Understanding: Towards a Post-Barthian Appreciation of Rudolf Bultmann," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10:1 (January 2008), 22.

[2] See David Congdon, *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann's Dialectical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

[3] Namely, its question concerning why belief is centrally significant in and for Christianity and its argument that by attending to the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and to the holistic character of Christian believing this centrality becomes more intelligible.

Rudolf Bultmann has much to say about the nature of Christian faith and the character of Christian believing. His position on the nature of a Christian's faith is fascinatingly nuanced. This is easily missed if one neglects to attend to the variety of alternative positions that Bultmann criticizes and attempts to differentiate his position from. He criticizes rationalist (and irrationalist), idealist, romantic, and mystic positions. He criticizes various Roman Catholic as well as Protestant conceptions. He also criticizes "pietistic" positions that reduce the concept of faith either psychologically or sociologically. He critiques various strands of both liberalism and orthodoxy. As he says, "the two paths of liberalism and orthodoxy are in error because they are nontheological. In both the object does not determine theology, and for this reason both lose their object altogether"[4] and as such they are false approaches to understand the character of Christian believing adequately.

For Bultmann the *fides qua creditur* cannot be understood apart from its relationship to the *fides quae creditur* and the *fides quae creditur* is only properly encountered through the *fides qua creditur*. Faith is not a general timeless and formless attitude, capacity, or feeling. Nor is faith merely the faith in Christianity, faith in other people's faith. Nor is faith to be understood as a mere assent to propositions, ideas, or "pure doctrine."[5] It is not merely "a resolve to submit to a doctrine,"[6] nor is it a resolve to assent to a universal worldview or system of doctrines. If either was the case then the content of faith and the mode of faith would be possible apart from an actual encounter with God through revelation in one's particular historical situation in the world, and for Bultmann this encounter is never a neutral affair. As he says, "Should there be talk *of God*, then it is of course clear that there can be talk of him only as Lord, that is, as the one who sends the moment and makes his claim in it, as the one whose claim is heard precisely in the claim of the here and now."[7] This further highlights some of the implicit dimensions of explicit faith. Bultmann describes his aversion to thinking of faith as a worldview further,

> In a *worldview,* which means in a theory about the world as a totality—about its formation, its progression, and its meaning—human beings seek to secure themselves by conceiving their existence on the basis of the world understood in thought. It therefore does not matter whether the worldview is based on rational principles, empirical observation, dogmatic tradition, or value judgments, experiences, and the like. It is essential that a worldview

[4] Rudolf Bultmann, *What is Theology?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 49. (Bultmann, *Theologische Enzyklopädie* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1984], 34).
[5] Bultmann, *What is Theology?,* 49. See "reine Lehre" (*Theologische Enzyklopädie*, 33).
[6] Bultmann, *What is Theology?,* 48.
[7] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 71-72.

> proceeds in general propositions that are true when disregarding my concrete existence in the here and now, since this existence can only be understood on the basis of the worldview."[8]

He goes on to describe that "in contrast to this, *Christian faith* claims that this interpretation of human existence overlooks precisely its actual reality. For this existence in the world is always insecure, and indeed because human beings stand under the claim of God, who calls them out of the world. If this claim is heard and affirmed, the person gains a security that is never a worldly phenomenon but rather is only grasped and known in reflection on concrete existence, which is addressed in the here and now by God."[9] He then moves on to explain that those who are drawn to worldview see the essence of human existence as "general and *timeless*." In contrast to this Bultmann views temporality as central to our understanding of human persons and goes on to state that "as temporal, human existence is insecure, which means that it stands always in decision, and faith says that this character of decision consists in the fact that the human person is addressed by God and should hear and obey."[10]

For similar reasons Bultmann criticizes the Roman Catholic view of justifying faith for being mere "theoretical faith in the revealed truths"[11] where these truths are understood as universal truths with little particular purchase (i.e. with very little claim on the believer, challenging her to see/be herself in a certain way in her particular historical situation). He criticizes Protestant dogmatics for a slightly different reason. Although he agrees with the Protestant assertion that justification is acquired apart from works and that faith is not mere assent to universal truths, but "actually a laying hold of grace"[12] as it relates to the promises of God and "is understood in its intentionality as faith *in*, that is, in God's saving deed, as much as it is also trust,"[13] he nevertheless critiques Protestant dogmatics for articulating an abstract notion of trust.

As he says, "Faith is a human possibility only in a specifically historical situation, in which a specific proclamation is transmitted. It is neither an a priori of the human spirit nor a universal

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[8] Rudolf Bultmann, "The Christian Meaning of Faith, Love, Hope" translated by David Congdon in *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann's Dialectical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 846.
[9] Bultmann, "The Christian Meaning of Faith, Love, Hope," 846.
[10] Bultmann, "The Christian Meaning of Faith, Love, Hope," 847.
[11] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 104.
[12] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 107.
[13] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 107.

attitude of soul such as optimism or peace of mind and the like; it is not a 'disposition.'"[14] Furthermore he states that "the *promissiones* cannot at all be seen to be 'true' without the *applicatio* to me."[15] He also criticizes the classic Protestant analysis of faith consisting of *notitia, assensus,* and *fiducia* when this is construed as a type of temporal sequence of progression. As he says, "the illusion arises that the saving deeds must first be assented to before they can be the basis for faith, though they become visible as saving deeds only *in faith*. . . . The result then is that theology establishes itself as the object of faith by demonstrating the truth of the saving doctrines. Then it is no longer God's saving deed mediated through the *notitia* (or the word), but pure doctrine which is regarded as the object of faith."[16] This to Bultmann would be an idolatrous objectification of God, and succumbs to a similar critique as the Roman Catholic position. The object of faith becomes reduced to a relation to ideas about God, rather than to a relation to an actual encounter with God within the particular historical situation.

Conversely, Bultmann criticizes pietism for its tendency to reduce faith to a human attitude and thereby lose sight of the fact that faith is intended toward and in an encounter with God; as real and as Other than the world, the self, and others. This approach he finds in various forms of romanticism and historicism. According to Bultmann, people like Schleiermacher and Troeltsch fall into this error. This position places undue emphasis on the recipient(s) of faith at the expense of a proper consideration of God as the Revealer who is subject in and as revelation to those that he encounters in faith.[17] As he says, "Faith here is thus construed as a universal religious feeling. Nothing at all is believed—experience as such, experience as psychic event, is faith."[18]

Mysticism goes wrong in the other direction. It denies the historicity of our existence and pursues a flight from existence into the being of God; in no small manner due in part to its dualistic anthropology.[19] It acknowledges the utter otherness of God but denies that God encounters *us* (as historical beings) in the world. It, therefore, according to Bultmann, mistakenly holds that "to see God, one must *be free of, be void of self*" and that we must "step outside of self" [20] in order to receive

[14] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 107.
[15] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 108.
[16] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 108.
[17] See Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 87-90.
[18] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 112.
[19] See Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 127.
[20] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 119.

salvation. In the end, for Bultmann, "mysticism cannot have a real relation to the church of the Word, since the Word is directed to the concrete historical person, and intends to teach him to understand his concrete historical situation."[21] Not only is faith intended at the living God, its intentional character is constituted by a word that is understood concretely and is holistically appropriated within the concrete particularities of the believer's world in a non-reductive manner. As he elsewhere states, "Thus faith is also different from mysticism, which knows a soul elevated over time in the same way that every anthropology that contrasts the body with the soul as that which is authentically existential in people is altogether alien to faith, which knows human existence only as bodily, because it is temporal. Thus faith knows nothing of the flight of mystics from bodily-temporal existence; faith knows instead that it is addressed in existence by God, that it is placed in decision and hears the word of forgiveness in and for existence."[22] Bultmann here highlights how he sees bodily-historical particularity to be an integral part of our anthropological constitution and, therefore, as an integral aspect of our understanding of the character of Christian believing. Part of the significance of believing for Christianity becomes more intelligible when recognize how it is integrally constituted within and through the particularities of our lived existence.

Given this wide array of criticism made by Bultmann, those who are quick to criticize his understanding of the nature of faith as merely liberal, or as a reducing of theology to anthropology, or as wanting to understand the nature of faith as entirely devoid of any kind of conceptual content, or as devoid of reference and relation to a truth outside oneself, miss the mark when they do not first grapple with how Bultmann attempted to distinguish his understanding of the nature of faith from these various and wide ranging positions.[23] Despite whatever valid criticisms might remain,

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[21] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 125.

[22] Bultmann, "The Christian Meaning of Faith, Love, Hope," 847-848.

[23] For example, in an early work John Webster describes Bultmann's conception of faith as "not knowledge about certain things, in just the same way that revelation is not revelation of certain things. Faith is not intellectual, it is existential. That means to say that the meaning of faith rests not in the grounds of faith, but merely in the fact of faith's existence. Faith is not meaningful because it is faith in certain things, but because it is an act of man, a decision in obedience to the call of the kerygma" (Webster, *Rudolf Bultmann: An Introductory Interpretation* [Leicester: Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship, 1980], 22). This is a one-sided and over-simplified presentation of Bultmann's conception of faith. It would be better to say that faith is not *merely* knowledge about *things* since knowledge and understanding of God and of oneself are intimately involved. God as the object of faith who encounters the believer in the event of the kerygma is an important part of understanding the nature of faith for Bultmann. Furthermore, the choice between faith being "intellectual" or

whatever constructive development awaits to be done, it is clear that those criticisms cannot be easily or fruitfully made prior to the hard work of trying to grasp the nuances and intricacies of the position Bultmann attempted to put forward. The fact that he initially defies easy categorization promises that an extended reflection on his position is worth the effort (Not merely towards the end of giving him a fairer hearing among his misinterpreters for its own sake, nor even towards recovering Bultmann's position as *the* normative position for today, but primarily as a fruitful means to facilitate a contemporary articulation of what it means to have faith in Christ that is sufficiently nuanced itself.

This chapter focuses on Bultmann's understanding of various implicit dimensions of explicit faith as he understands them to be non-reductively embedded within the believer's bodily-historical existence, and as such it will focus on key themes and concepts that he uses to describe the authentic or genuine character of Christian believing in various places throughout his corpus that go beyond what is readily understood to be involved in what it means to believe in Christ. While it aims to fairly and accurately present Bultmann's understanding of the character of Christian believing (which is often not understood very well) its primary aim is not a historical reconstruction of Bultmann's thought for its own sake, but is ultimately concerned to glean useful insights for truthfully understanding the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing in order that we might better understand why belief is centrally significant in and for Christianity today. As Bultmann himself states there are two forms of historical interpretation: "First, your interest may be to give a picture of a past time, to reconstruct the past; second, your interest may be to learn from historical documents what you need for your present practical life. For example, you can interpret Plato as an interesting figure of the culture of fifth-century Athenian Greece, but you can also interpret Plato to learn through him the truth about human life. In the latter case your interpretation is not motivated by interest in a past epoch of history, but by your search for the truth."[24] In this instance, our engagement with Bultmann is primarily motivated by a "search for the truth" that is relevant to our present concern to better understand the central significance of belief in Christianity by attending to the implicit dimensions of explicit faith rather

"existential" is a false option. This is especially apparent when cognition and the intellect are seen to be significantly constituted within the particularities of the person's lived existence.

[24] Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1958), 51-52.

than one that is primarily concerned to exposit Bultmann in and of himself for his own sake.[25] Bultmann's description of dynamic implicit dimensions of explicit faith that are holistically held together will further aid in providing intelligibility as to why belief is centrally significant in and for Christianity. With that qualification in mind it will nevertheless be helpful to start by looking at what he has to say about the character of Christian believing in his *The Gospel of John* and his two volume *Theology of the New Testament* before engaging with some of his more occasional writings and in more detail with aspects of his *Theologische Enzyklopädie* (translated as *What is Theology?*).

Faith as Dependent, as Obedience, and as Self-Understanding: Initial Insights from *The Gospel of John* and *Theology of the New Testament*

Early on in his commentary on John's gospel Bultmann states that Christian belief "is the appropriate answer to the revelation [of Jesus]".[26] Divine revelation and an understanding of Jesus Christ as the "Revealer" of God and of true human existence are integral to Bultmann's understanding of the character of Christian believing. Like Barth emphasizes even more clearly, Bultmann here notes that the character of Christian believing is constituted by an object who is a subject outside of the believer that actively encounters her. Bultmann furthermore closely links Christian believing with a type of transformation of the believer's existence, a certain type of change in the believer's perceptual awareness that is in some sense beyond natural perception even while this perception remains within human existence. As he states, "It is equally clear that the transference into this new mode of existence is given only to the man who believes in the revelation with which he is confronted in Jesus; further that the new existence is characterized by the illumination which comes from understanding oneself in relation to God: the *tekna Theou* are the *uioi tou photos* (12.36)."[27] He later states that it is the "exalted, glorified Lord who is the object of Christian faith."[28] and it is believers who "see" or recognize and acknowledge his glory.[29] The vision

[25] Furthermore, our engagement with his New Testament writings will, therefore, be guided by our overall theological interest in constructing a theological account of the character of Christian believing and will not be concerned to investigate the finer details of his Greek exegesis nor debates concerning the merits of other aspects of his historical interpretation of this or that detail in this or that portion of the New Testament.
[26] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 51.
[27] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 59.
[28] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 152-153.
[29] See Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 69-70.

of faith for Bultmann is unavoidably historical and at the same time beyond any mere observation of natural events as it is tied to the community of believers who pass it on through history; it cannot be fully reduced to anything immanent in this world since it is inherently directed at and related to the Revealer who cannot be so reduced. It is belief in the mission of the Revealer in the world amongst us in the saving event that makes rebirth and the gift of eternal life possible. As Bultmann says, "The mission of the Son, embracing as it does both his humiliation and his exaltation, is of decisive importance, for it is by faith in this mission that man gains life."[30] As he continues,

> At the same time this means that faith is not one of man's good works, receiving life as its reward; nor is unbelief seen as an evil deed incurring judgement. Just as faith already possesses life (5.24: 6.47), so too unbelief is already lost (3.36; 9.41). Faith and unbelief are the answer to the question posed by God in the mission of Jesus; they are a new possibility for man which is made open to him only by the saving event (cp. 9.41; 15.24). If faith and unbelief are not the works of man, neither are they spiritual dispositions (*diatheseis*) which can be developed. Rather just as *pistis*, so to speak, does not know what it is doing—in as much as it cannot consciously decide to acquire *zoe*—so too unbelief is also ignorant of the fact that it is bringing judgement on itself. It is blind. Yet since faith and unbelief are the answer to the question of the divine *love*, they are (notwithstanding the fact that they are not achievements or spiritual dispositions) responsible *deeds*, in which it becomes manifest what man is.[31]

Faith for Bultmann is wholly self-involving. It is not some "thing" that the believer possesses, but it is a way of living in relationship to Christ within one's concrete historical situation in the world, made up of all of one's various relationships and possible activities. This distinction between works and deeds as it relates to notions of compartmentalization and objectification is important for properly understanding the believer's activity in faith. For now, it suffices to point out that for Bultmann faith (and unbelief as it relates to death) consists in the beginning and continuation of new life itself and is not something entirely prior or separate that brings the believer life. If that were the case then it would indeed be a work, something that the believer could separate herself from and point to as a justification for her reward. Inherent in faith is a recognition of one's "own need for help."[32] Faith for Bultmann is also not an autonomous act either of God prior to the believer's faith, or of the believer prior to God. As he says, "God's work in man occurs in the act of faith, and does not stand in some mysterious sense behind it"[33] since "in Jesus God acts, that his history is an event

[30] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 154.
[31] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 156.
[32] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 207-208.
[33] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 234.

of revelation, that salvation depends on faith in him, and that faith in him is assured of salvation because God himself is active in this faith."[34] As Bultmann later explains further,

> For John there is no 'ethics', no doing of the will of God. which is not primarily the obedience of faith; it is the action demanded by God (cp. 6.29). Admittedly for John there are no 'dogmatics' without 'ethics'; but the love which is demanded of men grows out of faith and cannot exist without it. The consequence of faith is the work of love, because faith is not abstract speculation (neither of course is it the blind acceptance of dogma), but it is the answer to the challenge which is issued in Jesus' word.[35]

Obedience and responsible action in love are integral to how Bultmann understands the character of Christian believing. In other passages Bultmann avoids speaking of the active dimension of the believer as a work. And for reasons of clarity he prefers to speak of it as a deed. In this passage Bultmann does refer to faith as the "work demanded of man" in response to the demand presented by the revelation of God in Christ, and in the last line he refers to the faith of the believers as the work that Christ bears witness to. As Bultmann goes on to state,

> God can only be approached through his revelation (1.18). To have *knowledge of God* does not mean to have adequate information about him, whether this be gained from the tradition (as is the case with the Jews, or with any form of orthodoxy, including Christian orthodoxy) or whether it be derived from general thoughts and ideas; it means to know him as the one who encounters man in his revelation, who puts man in question and demands his obedience. Thus knowledge of God includes true readiness to hear him when he speaks. If this readiness is absent, if, that is, there is a refusal to accept the Revealer, there is not true knowledge of God."[36]

For Bultmann the way that believers approach God through his revelation is faith. And faith is more than a simple awareness of information, even if that information is true. Faith inherently involves a humble submission to Christ not only as savior, but also as Lord, and this takes place in a personal encounter that goes beyond a mere encounter with information. Again, this is not a onetime act or event on the part of believers, nor is the event of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection understood merely as a past event with no continued activity of God in the present. As Bultmann says, "the community does not now enjoy an existence that is already complete and independent in its own right, but exists by believing, i.e. by continually overcoming both the present, mundane existence, and the offence afforded by the fact that the *doxa* can only be seen in the *sarx genomenos*. The

[34] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 234.
[35] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 274-275.
[36] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 283.

community lives, and the believer lives, from the future; and his faith has meaning so long as this future is not an illusionary dream or a *futurum aeternum*."[37] The promise of faith found in the gospel message brings assurance that death for the believer is overcome and that one need no longer fear it. But Bultmann is hesitant to speculate on what life after death might look like. As he explains, "The only thing that is clear is that an existence for the believers with the Revealer beyond death is requested, and thus promised. Death has become insignificant for them (11.25f.); but not in the sense that they can ignore it because their earthly life is not complete and meaningful in itself; but because their life is not enclosed within the limits of temporal-historical existence."[38] As he goes on to say, "Thus it is also true of the believer that his participation in life is not exhausted in his historical existence within time, even though nothing positive can be said about the 'then' beyond death. The Evangelist avoids all speculation about any heavenly journey of the soul, and refrains from any description of conditions of another world, such as form part of Gnostic mythology. But the fact that he has seen that 'the view beyond has been barred' from us, does not make him fall back on the opinion that human life can find its completeness in this world; he knows the double possibility: that it falls to pieces in condemnation, or that it is eternal in faith."[39] Faith, then, for Bultmann is inherently tied to eternal life that breaks into the believers present and promises future existence in life eternally and in this sense is tied to expectations of the future tied to the promises of God made in the message of the gospel, but he is hesitant to speculate much further about what this future existence beyond death might be like.[40] The character of Christian believing involves an assurance of one's continued existence in life after death, but it does not play a central role in shaping the believers existence and initial experience of eternal life within the present world in much speculative detail.

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[37] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 519.
[38] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 520.
[39] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 520.
[40] As he states later on in his commentary, "The question about the *odos* is very quickly deflected into a question about the present fellowship with the Revealer, so that the anxiety in which the believer is placed is not anxiety about the promised other-worldly future, but about the believing existence in the world. This is why the promise of an other-worldly future after death does not contradict the idea that the resurrection is already experienced in faith now (5.24f.; 11.25f.). On the other hand this kind of faith is accompanied by the certainty of the nothingness of impending bodily death—but only on the condition that it does not become an object of anxiety" (Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 602).

One of the goals that faith in the Revealer accomplishes for Bultmann is the restoration of creation, in the sense that the believer exists in the world with a renewed self-understanding that she and the world are in fact the creation of God.[41] As he states, "knowledge of the Revealer is knowledge of one's own existence in him. The description of the Revealer as the light and the life had made it clear from the outset that authentic existence and true self-knowledge are a unity. With this kind of faith-knowledge, however, the original creature-relationship which had been lost has been won back."[42] Although it will be talked about further on in the thesis, this goes to show that Bultmann's understanding of faith as self-understanding is not viciously subjective.

Furthermore, love and faith are integrally related to one another in the existence of the believer as the believer relates to God who is love. As Bultmann says, "The exposition of the command of love as the essential element in constancy of faith makes it clear that faith and love form a unity; i.e. that the faith, of which it can be said, *kathos egapesa humas*, is authentic only when it leads to *agapan allelous*."[43] Later on in the commentary Bultmann expands on this by saying,

> The reason for the emphasis placed on this unity, and for the interweaving of the summons to faith and the summons to love in this way, is that life as we experience it seems to indicate a temporal succession in the order of faith and love, against which the real unity of the two must be maintained.. . . But what is their real relation to each other? It would be a misunderstanding to hold that it is really a succession, to regard the word as an introduction to action, and the action as the application of what has been heard.[44]

Faith and love are not two separate things, but holistically love is an implicit aspect of the character of Christian believing. With the widespread recognition of the significance of love this itself should offer further intelligibility to why believing is centrally significant in Christianity. As Bultmann goes on to state,

> According to John 15 faith and love are, in fact, a unity. Faith is not authentic unless it is steadfast; i.e. unless it is the kind of faith that enables a man to decide beforehand the way all future action is to go. The fact that the Word assures faith of the love of God manifest in Jesus, and that this love is only received when it becomes the means whereby a man is himself freed to love, means that the Word is only properly heard when the believer loves *in that he is a believer*. . . .To summarise, therefore, faith is at once the resolute decision for the word that has been heard, and the resoluteness that embraces all possible future decision.

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[41] For a recent defense of Bultmann's conception of self-understanding see Benjamin Myers' "Faith as Self-Understanding: Towards a Post-Barthian Appreciation of Rudolf Bultmann," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10:1 (January 2008), 21-35.
[42] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 620.
[43] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 529.
[44] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 546-547.

> Thus faith cannot be perceived as an isolated phenomenon, either by the believer himself, or by anybody else who looks on from outside. It is real only in the resoluteness that sustains the whole of life; and because that resoluteness is grounded in the believer's decision for the Word, his faith is sure of it only in the sense that it holds before him the reason for his decision, i.e. it keeps him looking at the Word.[45]

This decision for the word and this hearing is embedded and enacted within the concrete circumstances that individuals and particular communities of believers find themselves in. Here Bultmann describes the holistic character of Christian believing. As he says, "If the Spirit is at work in the word that is proclaimed in the community, then this word gives faith the power to step out into the darkness of the future, because the future is always illumined afresh by the word. Faith will see the 'truth' in each case, i.e. it will always be certain of the God who is manifest in the word, precisely because it understands the present in the light of this word."[46] The message of the gospel continually proclaimed through the activity of the Spirit amongst the believers in the world, the witness embodied in the person of Jesus Christ the Revealer, shapes how the believer perceives and exists in her present circumstances in light of the future promises of the Word of divine revelation.[47] As Bultmann puts it, "The believer's existence is disclosed as itself the possibility given by the revelation; this realisation takes place in the new venture of faith itself. There is no reference at all to a new condition of the world which is still to come in the future. What is to come is real only for faith and in faith (faith as believing existence) and therefore it must always be won against the opposition of the world."[48]

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[45] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 547.

[46] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 574.

[47] As he says at length, "He does not have faith as a timeless possession, but only as a gift that has always to be grasped afresh. . . . In fact, however, every Now that the believer experiences is hall-marked by the fact that in it the first decision taken for Jesus has to be maintained. Faith of course is based on the past, in so far as the eschatological word called it into being in the past; and the Paraclete, who is to show it the *aletheia* in the future, is only to call to mind what has already been heard by it. But the believer is based on the past only in that he was called to the eschatological existence then, an existence that is continually directed toward the future. He remains loyal to the word he has heard when he remains always ready to hear it afresh, when he does not tarry in *his own* past but in the word's actually being spoken; for the speaking of the word, as the eschatological event, is a mode of being that anticipates every act of faith. The believer always has to catch up with this anticipatory existence, which is peculiar to the word; in catching up with it, he is however always at the end of time; his existence stands under the *opsomai humas"* (Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 582).

[48] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 586.

While the character of Christian believing as it is directed at Jesus Christ involves a belief in his words as well as his deeds it also involves a belief in the continued work and application of those words to one's own understanding of oneself in the present as well as one's own appropriate holistic appropriation and emulation of the intention of those words and deeds within one's present circumstances in the world.[49]

The character of Christian believing involves a continued witness and ongoing participation in the redemptive activity of God. However, according to Bultmann, "just as the success of what he did was visible only to faith, so the same will be true of the success they have."[50] The success of both God's redemptive activity and the believer's participation in it is not necessarily immediately visible to those who remain lost in sin. The vision of faith as the believer is encountered by Christ and His message in the present is necessary to discern such "success." At least in the present worldly situation, saying nothing of a possible end time when such "success" is recognized by all. Towards the end of his commentary Bultmann writes that, "For to him [the Evangelist] the faith of 'Christians' is not a conviction that is present once for all, but it must perpetually make sure of itself anew, and therefore must continually hear the word anew. The meaning of faith, however, is to have life in his 'name.'"[51] This life is an "eschatological existence" in the present historical situation as it relates to the in-breaking of God within the world in hope and expectation of the redemption that has already begun and of what is promised to come. As he says, "Because this is so, because eschatological existence must become reality as historical existence, that which is its fruit can also be termed its condition. The believer must affirm, he must himself *want* to be, what he already *is* in the Revealer."[52] Here Bultmann acknowledges that desire is an inherent implicit dimension to explicit faith.

In Bultmann's first volume of his *Theology of the New Testament* he explains how the so-called "Easter-faith" of the disciples was a particular way of understanding the significance of the cross of Christ that went beyond a simple reporting of the facts that constituted its happening. As Bultmann says, "The rise of the Easter faith made necessary *a way of understanding the cross* that would surmount, yes, transform, the scandal of the curse which in Jewish opinion had befallen the crucified Jesus (cf.

[49] See Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 609-610.
[50] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 610.
[51] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 698-699
[52] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 620-621.

Gal. 3:13); the cross had to make sense in the context of the salvation-process."[53] "the call to believe in the one true God is simultaneously a call to *repentance*. According to Heb. 6:1, 'repentance from dead works' in conjunction with 'belief in God' (see above, 2) stands at the threshold of Christianity—i.e. repentance from or turning back from sinful deeds"[54] thereby implying that repentance is an implicit aspect of explicit faith even if it is not its primary aspect. As he goes on to explain, however, even though faith is closely linked with the call to repentance the movement of the will in faith is not primarily that of repentance. As he writes, "The very rarity of the terms 'forgiveness of sins' and 'repentance' in Paul (§ 31) and the similar rarity of *epistrepsein* . . . indicate that the movement of will contained in 'faith' is not primarily remorse and repentance. Of course, they are included in it; but it is primarily obedience which waives righteousness of one's own."[55] The active dimension of faith includes confession not merely as a repentant acknowledgment of one's sin, even if it includes this, but as a confession in the sense of witness and proclamation of who it is that the believer believes in. As he says, "'Faith' is further insured against such misconceptions by the fact that *it is simultaneously 'confession.*' 'Faith' is 'faith' in . . .' That is, it always has reference to its object, God's saving deed in Christ."[56]

There are similarities to Karl Barth's conception of faith as confession, but this also hints towards the intentional nature of faith that Bultmann on numerous occasions affirms. Faith is both epistemologically and ontologically intentionally directed at the person of Jesus Christ and as such cannot be reduced to any kind of general feeling, idea, or activity. As he goes on to describe, "Faith as response to the proclaimed word (which is called *akon pisteos*, 'preaching of faith'), like that word itself, is part of the salvation-occurrence, the eschatological occurrence. As new *possibility* faith is the newly opened way of salvation. It is in this sense that the 'principle of faith' can be contrasted with the 'principle of works' (Rom. 3:27). Faith can also be said to 'come' and 'to be revealed' (Gal. 3:23, 25)."[57] As he goes on to say,

> This, of course, does not take from the concrete 'faith' of the individual that decision-character which belongs to its very nature as 'obedience' (§ 35, 1). Nevertheless the concrete realization of the possibility of faith in the individual's decision of faith is itself eschatological occurrence. Since the believer experiences the possibility of the faith-decision as grace, it is

[53] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, 45-46.
[54] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, 73.
[55] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, 317.
[56] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, 317.
[57] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, 329.

> only as a gift of grace that he can understand his decision—his own decision! And because he knows that it is God who accomplishes his willing and doing—his concrete, historical existing in 'faith'—he is conscious not of being relieved of responsibility for it but on the contrary of being made responsible for it (Phil. 2:13f.; §35, 4)."[58]

Faith then is understood as a gift and as a possibility that is not among the possibilities of natural existence alone. It happens within natural existence but is only made possible by the in-breaking grace of God within the world, and as such offers the possibility of an eschatological existence within historical (and we might add empirical) existence. The gift that is faith is not something inert or some "thing" that could be objectified. It is the gift of a possible way of existing that was not possible prior to encountering the grace of God. The believer is inherently and variously active throughout and is at the same time inherently dependent on God's continued gracious presence in and for the believer. As Bultmann mentions,

> Thus, Paul can say that faith in Christ is 'granted' as a gift (Phil. 1:29). In fact, he can speak of it in downright predestinarian terms (Rom. 8:29; 9:6-29). If such statements about God's 'foreknowing' and 'predestining' or His 'electing' and 'hardening' be taken literally, an insoluble contradiction results, for a faith brought about by God outside of man's decision would obviously not be genuine obedience. Faith is God-wrought to the extent that prevenient grace first made the human decision possible, with the result that he who has made the decision can only understand it as God's gift; but that does not take its decision-character away from it. Only so does the imperative, 'be reconciled to God' (II Cor. 5:20; § 31) make sense. The predestinarian statements express the fact that the decision of faith does not, like other decisions, go back to this-worldly motives of any sort whatever—that, on the contrary, such motives lose all power of motivation in the presence of the encountered proclamation.[59]

The agency of the believer is inherently involved in the act of faith, but it is involved in a way that cannot be described as autonomous or meritorious. Faith is portrayed to be the appropriation of the grace of God and as a reception of the Spirit which enables a new mode of existence within the believer's existence in the world. As he says, "Faith's obedient submission to God's 'grace,' the acceptance of the cross of Christ, is the surrender of man's old understanding of himself, in which he lives 'unto himself,' tries to achieve life by his own strength, and by that very fact falls victim to the powers of sin and death and loses himself (§§ 23, 24). Therefore, 'faith'—as 'obedience of faith'—is also released from these powers. The new self-understanding which is bestowed with

[58] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, 329.
[59] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, 329-330.

'faith' is that of *freedom*, in which the believer gains life and thereby his own self."[60] Again the believer is entirely active in her faith and in her faith with and for others in the world as a witness to God's redemptive deed in Christ, but at the same time the believer is entirely and continually dependent on God, who is not of this world, and God's continual activity of redemption, in which the believer continually participates.

In the second volume of his *Theology of the New Testament* Bultmann further describes the object of faith by describing the revelation that Christians believe in. He writes, "For the Revelation is represented as the shattering and negating of all human self-assertion and all human norms and evaluations. And, precisely by virtue of being such negation, the Revelation is the affirmation and fulfilment of human longing for life, for true reality. That the Revelation is this positive thing can only be seen by such a faith as overcomes the 'offense' and subjects itself to that negation, acknowledging its own blindness in order to receive sight (9:39)."[61] One cannot help but wonder if some of this is a bit hyperbolic as if it were actually possible for revelation to be understood apart from all human norms and evaluations rather than critically and constructively through them. Insofar as those norms and evaluations are thoroughly self-assertive and sinfully rebellious rejecting this line of thinking makes some sense, but even the redemptive understanding of faith that overcomes the "offense" is by some means still understood through human norms and ways of evaluating even as they are redeemed and chastised by the revelatory action of God. At any rate, the point to be grasped here is that faith's link to revelation and therefore to God as the object of faith is intimately tied to the "human longing for life, for true reality." Continuing along with this line of thinking, however, Bultmann asserts that knowledge of the will of God for oneself and knowledge of faith's object is only apparent, in its full significance, to those who have faith and relate to God in faith.

Bultmann states that, "Since it is to *faith* that it makes itself available as Revelation, the meaning of the Revelation can be further clarified by showing what happens when *faith* takes place."[62] The object of faith is Jesus Christ in his person and in his words. His deeds and his words constitute his identity and our understanding of him as the Revealer. As Bultmann says, "The identity of Jesus' person with his word—or of his 'work' with his word—makes it possible for John

[60] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, 330-331.
[61] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1955), 67-68.
[62] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 69.

to speak of '*seeing*' just as he does of 'hearing.'"[63] As he goes on to explain, "The parallelism—or rather, identity—of believing, hearing, and seeing indicates by itself that sight to John is not mystical contemplation. Sight, or seeing, is to him faith's perception: faith recognizes in the historical Jesus the 'truth' and 'life' which only he transmits and which therefore are not perceptible to direct contemplation."[64]

Similar to this the close relationship between believing, seeing, and hearing is a close identity with knowing and seeing. As Bultmann describes, "Sight, then, is *the knowing* that is peculiar to faith. Hence 'see' and 'know' can be combined or be used as alternatives."[65] As he goes on to say, "*Faith is genuine* only insofar as it is a *knowing* faith. This is expressed by Jesus' promise of knowledge of the truth to believers if they loyally 'abide' in his 'word' (8:31f.). Genuine faith must not be confused with a seeming faith that is aroused by Jesus' 'signs' . . . or may also be evoked by his discourse (8:30). Such faith may be a first tentative step toward him, but it has yet to prove itself as genuine faith. As 'hearing' the word must be supplemented by 'keeping' it, so genuine faith can be called 'keeping' the word . . . or as 'abiding in the word' (8:31 tr.)."[66] As he goes on to explain, faith is not something that is separate from knowledge, or something that merely leads to knowledge. Faith is inherently an act of knowing and as such is constituted inherently by knowledge. As he says, "Faith and knowledge, we conclude, cannot be distinguished as two stages. In the Christian Church there are not two classes of people, as there were among the Gnostics, who distinguished between '*pistics*' (men of faith) and '*gnostics*' (men of knowledge). Faith is not the acceptance of a dogma upon which there follows a disclosure of items of esoteric knowledge or a mystic vision. No, faith is everything. Knowledge cannot cut loose from faith and soar on out beyond it; faith, however, also contains knowledge—faith itself knows. Since for John all knowing can only be a knowing-in-faith, faith comes to itself, so to say, in knowing. Knowing is a structural aspect of believing."[67] This kind of knowledge, however, is not a disinterested, abstracted, or disengaged type of knowledge. It inherently includes a knowledge of oneself. As he states, "But this knowing is a believing knowledge, not one that stands off in aloof contemplation. Rather, it is such a knowledge that its possessor lets himself be determined by what he knows. It is an existing in what he knows; hence, his relation to

[63] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 72.
[64] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 72-73.
[65] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 73
[66] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 73.
[67] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 74.

what he thus knows can be expressed as a 'being in' or a 'remaining in' the Revealer of God (15:3f.; 17:21)."[68] The knowledge of faith is a wholly self-involving kind of knowledge that manifests itself in various ways in and by the believer throughout varying levels of explicit conscious awareness (this will be articulated further when dispositional accounts of believing are discussed).

For Bultmann the assurance of faith rests wholly on who and what the believer is believing in. As he says "faith's assurance is both subjective and objective."[69] As he goes on to explain, "As subjective assurance it is described in the shepherd-discourse: the sheep know the shepherd's voice and with sure instinct refuse to follow a stranger's call (10:3-5, 8). . . . But as a faith that hears it finds its assurance not in itself, but in that in which it believes. . . . This assurance cannot be reduced to an experience within the world, and for that very reason it cannot be shaken."[70] The assurance that a believer enjoys is connected to the hearing of the word and as such has both objective and subjective dimensions. The subjective dimension is a resolve to believe the promises of the Gospel. The objective dimension is a trust in the reality, power, and trustworthiness of the God who makes those promises to and for the believer and is the object the ultimate object of trust for the believer.

Bultmann often speaks of the demand for faith or of the need to make a decision for faith. He even speaks of faith as decision. As he states, "This decision does not proceed from motives of this world, but is a decision against the world; it becomes a possibility only through the fact that God appears to man as He who is revealed in Jesus. Since this is so, the decision seems to be determined, but it is not (§43, 1). Admittedly, it is wrought by God, but not as if the working of God took place before faith or, so to speak, behind it; rather, God's working takes place exactly in it. . . . In making its decision, faith understands itself as a gift."[71] In another instance he writes that,

> *The demand for faith*, therefore, is the demand that the world surrender the understanding it has had of itself hitherto—that it let the whole structure of its security which it has erected in presumptuous independence (§42; § 44) of the Creator fall to ruins. The inner unity of this demand with Paul's concept of faith (§35) is clear in spite of its orientation against other antitheses than his. Faith is turning away from the world, the act of desecularization, the surrender of all seeming security and every pretense, the willingness to live by the strength of the invisible and uncontrollable. It means accepting completely different standards as to

[68] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 78.
[69] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2,* 77.
[70] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 77-78.
[71] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 76-77.

> what is to be called death and what life. It means accepting the life that Jesus has and is (5:19ff.; 11:25f.)—a life that to the world's point of view cannot even be proved to exist.[72]

The act of "desecularization" is a description of the implicit dimension of explicit faith that that is not often mentioned in line with Bultmann's understanding of the nature of faith. It is entirely in line with his understanding of faith as eschatological existence and as obedience to the Lordship of Christ. The Christian does not ultimately rely on worldly security, but ultimately on the security that the true life offered by Christ promises. This again is also in line with Bultmann's understanding of faith as the restoration of belief in the world as creation and in an understanding of oneself as God's creature. Before one is too quick to take this act of desecularization to entail a flight from this world, in a dualistic manner affirming only the value of the other world with a complete disregard for the present, Bultmann states that "Faith is *not a dualistic world-view*."[73] By which he means that "Faith is not flight from the world nor asceticism, but *desecularization* in the sense of a smashing of all human standards and evaluations. It is in this sense that the believer is no longer 'of the world' (15:19; 17:14, 16); i.e. since the world is no longer his determining origin (§ 43, 2), he no longer belongs to it."[74] As he goes on to say, "But their not being 'of the world' must not be confused with a retreat out of the world. Jesus prays to the Father: 'I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from evil' (17:15). As God sent him into the world, so he sends his own into the world (17:18), not out of it."[75] Continuing with the theme of desecularization he writes that "As an overcoming of the offense and as a decision against the world faith is desecularization, *transition into eschatological existence*. In the midst of the world the believer is lifted out of secular existence—though he is still 'in the world,' he is no longer 'of the world' (17:11, 14, 16)."[76]

Going back to the relationship between faith and knowledge, or between believing and knowing, Bultmann takes time to articulate the developmental nature of the knowledge of faith as he engages with Paul and John's theology. As he says,

> For the believer must, of course, understand what is proclaimed to him about God and Christ and also how his own situation is thereby qualified. The theological expositions in Galatians and Romans have no other purpose than to unfold the knowledge which is the concomitant gift of faith. Paul clearly saw that this knowledge is not merely capable of

[72] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 75.
[73] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 76.
[74] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 76.
[75] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 76.
[76] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2,* 78.

> development, but also stands in need of development. Faith must prove itself to be living faith by reaching in each case a right judgment as to what is required of the man of faith, for whatever does not come from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). Paul wishes for his readers that their power of judgment may grow and gain in certainty.[77]

There is inherently, then, within the character of Christian believing a capacity for growth and development. Faith and Christian belief are not inert phenomena or static possessions. They are a dynamic way of living and thinking that are theologically normed by the Lordship of Christ and theologically enabled by God's gracious activity, but the character of Christian believing is inherently embedded, embodied, and enacted in the particular circumstances of particular believers. In a certain sense there will be both a continuity and discontinuity amongst believers. There will be similarity in that all their faith is directed at Christ, but there will be slight novelty in that the demand and opportunity to work out their salvation in the character of Christian believing which will be conditioned by their concrete situations (and just as no situation is completely or entirely unique there will also always be points of continuity amidst the different situations). As Bultmann continues, "Such 'knowledge' or 'wisdom' is the knowledge of God's will; i.e. the power of judgment that lies within the Christian's ethical willing and which it is every believer's duty to cultivate and activate."[78]

For Bultmann the New Testament itself is an example and a witness to the developing nature of the Christian faith. However, this faith is not Christian faith without an understanding of God as determining both its manner of believing and the content of what faith believes in. The self-understanding of the believer is always understood in its relationship to an understanding of God as presented in the message and person of Jesus Christ. As he says, "For in the New Testament, faith is not understood as a self-understanding arising spontaneously out of human existence but as an

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[77] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 128.

[78] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 129. Towards the end of the volume Bultmann states that, "The most important thing is that basic insight that the theological thoughts of the New Testament are the unfolding of faith itself growing out of that new understanding of God, the world, and man which is conferred in and by faith—or, as it can also be phrased: *out of one's new self understanding*. For by the believer's new understanding of himself we, of course, do not mean 'understanding as in a scientific anthropology which objectifies man into a phenomenon of the world, but we do mean an existential understanding of myself which is at one with and inseparable from my understanding of God and the world. For I am I, of course, not as an isolable and objectifiable world-phenomenon but I am I in my particular existence inseparably bound up with God and the world" (Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 239).

understanding made possible by God, opened up by His dealing with men. Faith is not choosing to understand one's self in one of several possible ways that are universally available to man but is man's response to God's word which encounters him in the proclamation of Jesus Christ. It is *faith in the kerygma*, which tells of God's dealing in the man Jesus of Nazareth."[79]

Further Insights from Bultmann's other Occasional Writings

It is a common occurrence in Bultmann's writings for him to speak about faith as obedience. The obedience that characterizes faith is primarily a willingness and desire to be of service to God's redemptive activity in the world.[80] It is also common in Bultmann (as well as Barth) to speak of humility as an important implicit dimension of explicit faith. In both thinkers humility and obedience are closely linked but Bultmann here further describes why. In line with this readiness for service Bultmann states that "One aspect of faith is . . . the renunciation of all self-glorification in the presence of God, and the readiness to accept from God this endowment of 'justification', recognition and honour. For this very reason Paul is also able to designate faith as obedience (*hupakoe*) because, in this very renunciation of one's own achievements, it is a radical submission to God. But in its other aspect faith is absolute *trust*, confidence in the grace of God—and Paul is certain of it when he looks at Christ."[81] In this characterization faith is safeguarded from any type of boasting, which would be counter to the nature of faith as humility and as obedience.

Again, another implicit dimension of explicit faith that Bultmann speaks of is a proper detachment from the world even as one continues to live in the world and for its wellbeing and this too is closely linked with a proper humility. This is also closely tied to the implicit dimension of desecularization that Bultmann also speaks about. In his essay entitled "The Understanding of Man" Bultmann states that "Belief means, as the anticipation of every possible future, *the taking of man out of the world*, and his ingrafting into eschatological existence. In this way it gives to the man of faith a peculiar detachment from the world:"[82] This detachment is made possible by God's grace. As he states in his essay "Grace and Freedom," for Paul "Faith is regulated by the *grace of God* become

[79] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 2*, 239.
[80] Rudolf Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological* (London: SCM Press, 1955), 36-37.
[81] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 59.
[82] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 86.

manifest in Christ."[83] As he expands upon this he writes, "What 'by faith' means is already made clear by this. Faith is the attitude opposed to that urge for recognition—the radical abandonment of self-glorification, of the desire for recognition by one's own strength and achievement. It is the knowledge that the recognition which makes him secure for himself and in the presence of God can only be gifted."[84] As he continues to explain, "The simple surrender to God's grace in renunciation of the desire for recognition is *faith.* And God's grace is simply his goodness which recognizes man just as he is, and does not demand that he should make himself a better creature and one more worthy of recognition, but makes him a new and better creature by its acceptance of him as he is."[85] Interestingly enough, however, in this essay Bultmann believes that this type of understanding of faith as "simple surrender to God's grace" is counter to also believing certain propositions about the nature of Christ. As he says, "if we understand by faith in Christ the holding of certain dogmatic propositions as true, for example propositions about Christ's being son of God, about his pre-existence, his natures and so on, then one cannot, in fact, understand how such faith is said to be opposed to works. And the real understanding of faith was and is often obscured in the Church by its being reckoned as the holding of such dogmas to be true."[86] One might wish for Bultmann to further work out how this "simple surrender to God's grace" relates to an intentional understanding of Jesus Christ that does also include a particular way of believing certain statements about Christ even if the believer's relationship to those statements is more than a disinterested awareness or assent. But here Bultmann does not work this out and remains content to criticize such abstract propositions as they relate to belief in Christ.

In this essay however he further describes how obedience relates to the overcoming of pride. He writes, "Obedience is faith because it is the abandonment of pride, and man's tearing himself free from himself—because it is surrender in pure trust, a trust without a guarantee, trust in God,"[87] and he continues to say that "*Obedience and trust are at the deepest level one thing.* Obedience is not vigorous self-control to achieve a work, but the abandonment of all power, submission to God, and readiness to receive from him every power as a gift. Faith is not a trust in God in general terms—that is, the confidence that God will help me here and there, in this and that—but it is radical

[83] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 168.
[84] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 171.
[85] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 173.
[86] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological,* 173.
[87] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 175.

surrender to God's will, which is unknown to me before it happens, . . . Such faith, embracing obedience and trust, is therefore man's *decision* against himself and for God, and as such, faith is an act.[88] The act of faith as it is characterized simultaneously as obedience and trust is directed away from reliance on one's own sinful self and toward a self-forgetful reliance on God.

Crucially (for beginning to better understand how we can go about understanding the agency of the believer in faith) in this essay Bultmann also goes on to describe the difference between an act and a work. As he says, "Indeed, the less faith is a 'work', the more it is an act; and it will now perhaps be clear in what the difference consists: in the case of the 'work' I remain the man I am; I place it outside myself, I go along beside it, I can assess it, condemn it or be proud of it. But in the act I *become* something for the first time: I find my being in it, live in it and do not stand alongside it. If I were to seek to look at myself and my act, I would destroy the act as an act, and degrade it into a 'work'"[89] (this important distinction will be touched on again in further detail when we engage his *Theologische Enzyklopädie* where he talks about this at greater length). He goes on to talk about how faith as a free act relates to faith as a decision. Bultmann states that,

> In the *decision to believe* it is not the same as is normally the case in other decisions of life (which can, of course, also take on the character of decisions to believe from time to time), that is, it is not the case that man remains the same in it, and comes to his decision on the basis of considerations which remain outside the sphere of the decision—considerations which have force for him in all circumstances. Rather are all the considerations which otherwise have a motivating power for a man uprooted in the decision to believe, and are called in question and called to decision, so that man is entirely free—stands, as it were, in the open. Belief comes to pass in the abandonment of all security, and it is just that which distinguishes it from 'works'. Man cannot understand his act of belief as an established work of his own purposeful activity, but simply as a God-given free act."[90]

In that sense the decision character of faith is such that it calls all other decisions that a person might have throughout one's daily living (the various activities and tasks one undertakes and the various persons one comes into contact with) under the normative decision of the character of Christian believing. The decision of faith is a decision that is normatively and transformatively embedded and embodied within the various decisions of the believer's life. Faith in this manner is normative for the entirety of one's existence. In terms of theological understandings of the

[88] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 175.
[89] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 175.
[90] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 180.

relationship between human action and divine action Bultmann states that "Human freedom and divine grace are therefore not mutually exclusive; nor are they, as it were, added up or co-operating as two factors; they are a unity. Indeed we must say that it *is only divine grace that is responsible for man's real freedom*."[91]

The grace that is appropriated in the decision of faith is freedom from one's sinful self for the restoration of the believer and for others. In this Bultmann emphasizes the significant role that bondage to sin plays in the believer's bondage to various external demands and temptations. It is through this faith that believers begin to become free of bondage for themselves and for others. As he concisely states, "In this way dependence on God's grace, and being given over to it, far from limiting our freedom, actually makes us in a real sense free."[92] True freedom is dependent on God's grace, which is appropriated in faith, and because of that Bultmann makes the further statement that "All action apart from faith is basically inessential, in so far that in it we remain our old selves, even when from time to time we become, relatively speaking, new."[93] According to Bultmann, the reception of grace in faith is what makes our free decisions and action "essential." As he goes on to say "the imperative to act as new men has gained meaning for us. Freedom *remains* dependence; that is, standing in grace is not a closed condition, but a gift constantly grasped in freedom. And it is constantly grasped again afresh in our knowing ourselves to be subject to the imperative, to act as new men. Now there is sense in saying 'work out your own salvation in fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure."[94]

In his essay "Faith as Venture" we find similar themes brought out concerning the nature of faith as are found elsewhere in Bultmann's corpus. As he writes, "For faith does not mean to accept the proclamation of God's forgiving love and to be convinced of its truth in general, but rather to regulate one's life by it."[95] Lest we misunderstand this statement, however, Bultmann goes on to explain it further. He mentions that "this does not mean to possess this conviction alongside of others as the most valuable and most important and occasionally or even frequently to reflect on it and to take comfort from it; rather it means to let my concrete now be determined by the

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[91] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 180.
[92] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 181.
[93] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 181.
[94] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological,* 181.
[95] Rudolf Bultmann, *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), 56.

proclamation and faith in it."[96] Here Bultmann again articulates the embedded and embodied character of Christian believing and the implicit dimensions of faith that make explicit faith in Christ what it is in reality. As he continues, "If the proclamation of God's forgiving love is really valid for *me*, i.e., for me in my concrete life situation, then it is not at all understandable apart from that situation. And I am not to believe in *general—also* to believe *alongside of* or *behind* my other relationships—but rather am to believe *here and now* as one who has something to do (or to endure) and who is to do this thing in faith—who is *to venture what he does in faith and venture his faith in what he does*."[97] Again we see that the character of Christian believing for Bultmann is one that is embedded, embodied, and enacted in one's historical and social situation, but which nevertheless is not reducible to one's social or historical situation as this faith is manifested in relation to God's encounter with the believer in the world. Bultmann goes so far as to say that if one does not understand one's faith within one's everyday affairs one does not actually have genuine faith. As he states, "However, this faith would not be genuine if the everyday affairs in which I once again shortly find myself and for which the word is spoken do not appear in its light. If I do not allow my concrete present to be qualified by the word that is spoken to me, then I have not really believed it for all of my hearing. Only when I now actually understand myself and my situation in terms of the word, only when I now see or venture to see my neighbor in the other person who encounters me, only then have I believed and do I believe now."[98] As he later goes on to affirm, the venture of faith only takes place as a venture in faith. As he states,

> But it must be said just as definitely that there is no venture *in* faith that is not simultaneously a venture *of* faith. For otherwise one would come out with exactly as abstract and general a faith as before. What would it mean to say that I might venture something in faith if I did not in so doing venture to believe? It would mean that here, too, faith was understood as a conviction or a state of feeling that lies *behind* my actual life instead of being at work *in* it. It would mean that faith was thought of as a possession of my 'inner life' at which I could look and from which I could then look away to my 'tasks and duties, exigencies and temptations.' No, I 'have' faith only when I have it ever anew *in* my duties and exigencies.[99]

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[96] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 56.
[97] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 56.
[98] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 56.
[99] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 56-57. Bultmann's comments here have a stark commonality with many of Ludwig Wittgenstein's comments in his discussions of the nature of intentions and inattentional action and in his argument against the notion of private language. This will be unpacked further later on in the thesis along with incorporating insights from dispositional

In further reflecting on the nature of faith he acknowledges that the notion of "having faith" is much different than "having money and goods or having convictions and feelings." Rather just as "one does not 'have' friendship or love except as something that is daily new" so one does not have faith except as one participates in or is characterized by it anew each day.[100]

In his essay "The Historicity of Man and Faith" Bultmann helpfully articulates his understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology, which is pertinent to how we go about understanding the character of Christian believing. This is particularly helpful not only because he uses philosophical concepts to articulate his understanding of theological matters (and is often charged for illegitimately doing so), but also because this project draws on philosophical insights as it seeks to offer a dogmatically informed description that at the same time uses philosophical insight in its goal to provide a sufficiently nuanced understanding of the holistic character of Christian believing in order to better understand why believing is centrally significant. As Bultmann mentions in this essay,

> In the sense indicated, then, theology does indeed 'repeat' the work of philosophy; and it must repeat it if what happens in the Christian occurrence that is realized in faith, in 'rebirth,' is not a magical transformation that removes the man of faith from his humanity. It must do it if existence in unfaith is both annulled and preserved in existence in faith. If, through faith, existence prior to faith is overcome *existentially* or ontically, this still does not mean that the existential or ontological conditions of existing are destroyed. Theologically expressed, faith is not a new quality that inheres in the believer, but rather a possibility of man that must constantly be laid hold of anew because man only exists by constantly laying hold of his possibilities. The man of faith does not become an angel, but is *simul peccator, simul justus*. Therefore, all of the basic Christian concepts have a content that can be determined ontologically prior to faith and in a purely rational way. All theological concepts contain the understanding of being that belongs to man as such and by himself insofar as he exists at all. Thus theology should indeed learn from philosophy . . .'[101]

In this we have the beginnings of an articulation of theology and of faith as the renewal and restoration of human existence. Neither are entirely new but a reworking of the old in light of God's revelation in the world. If this type of thinking is not affirmed, then one is hard pressed to uphold the continuity of identity between the man of "unfaith" and the man of faith, between a theology that is done in the world in the midst of God's accommodation to human understanding, or one

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descriptions of believing (which do not operate in the same way as the approaches to understanding faith reductively as a mere disposition that Barth and Bultmann reject).

[100] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 57.

[101] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 96.

that is entirely devoid of any possibility of human understanding. This line of thinking qualifies some of Bultmann's more hyperbolic statements concerning the nature of faith as the only way to true knowledge of God. Despite the rhetoric, this content of faith, the intentional dimension of understanding the significance of Christ, is only ever understood through human language and through the concepts and ways of understanding that are embedded within that. This will be important for future chapters when we focus on the linguistic content of Christian believing as it relates to the believer's holistic appropriation and transformation.

As Bultmann importantly continues to say,

> But what I *cannot* concede to him [Kuhlmann] is that the theological explication of existence in faith may not fall back on the philosophical analysis of man. On the contrary, I affirm that this is precisely what theology *must* do if it at all wants to clarify existence in faith in a conceptual way, i.e., if it wants to be a science and not merely a sermon. That there has to be theology as a science in addition to preaching is, to be sure, neither to be deduced from an idea of science nor to be established by the philosophical analysis of existence. For the latter, theology is indeed 'superfluous.' Theology can have its basis only in the man of faith. Only faith can motivate applying oneself to a science that undertakes a conceptual interpretation of existence in faith, and so theology can only be a movement of faith itself.[102]

Theology and one's understanding and appropriation of Christ as the Revealer always takes place in our world, which is constituted by the languages, concepts, and cultures that make us who we are and form the medium and capacity for intelligent and responsible understanding. Again, Christ encounters believers in their concrete situations not in the abstract, nor does he do so in an isolated fashion. The revelation of Christ makes a claim on believers with normative implications for all of life, which is constituted by God (who becomes present within creation but is also beyond creation) and the concrete particularities of one's various situations in creation that constitute the identities and cognitive capacities of believers.[103]

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[102] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 97.

[103] Again however just like continuity between different situations must be maintained the continuity and translatability of the implications of Christ's claim on believers must be maintained between different languages and conceptualities. Persons who embody different languages and conceptualities have the capacity to learn and work towards mutual understanding. All this is said to deny the notion of purely incommensurable schemes even if we want to affirm the importance of concrete languages, conceptualities, and situations.

Given the situated nature of all human understanding the normativity of theological understanding unavoidably goes back and forth, reminiscent of notions of the hermeneutical circle. One can only understand Christ as the Revealer in light of how one already understands oneself in one's world. Furthermore, one can only understand Christ's normative claim on one's life through Christ's appropriation and accommodation of the concepts and way of understanding that the believer understands. Bultmann goes so far as to say that "What 'revelation' means in general cannot be any more exactly and completely specified by the man of faith than by any man of unfaith. Every man, because he knows about death, can also know about revelation and life, grace and forgiveness."[104] But as Bultmann has frequently argued, the genuine character of Christian believing is not merely concerned with what revelation, or knowledge of God, means "in general." And this is not necessarily (although in some cases it may indeed) to classify such general knowledge as false. As he goes on to say,

> What "more," then, does the man of faith know? This—that revelation has actually encountered him, that he really lives, that he is in fact graced, that he is really forgiven and will always be so. And he knows this in such a way that by faith in the revelation his concrete life in work and in joy, in struggle and in pain is newly qualified; he knows that through the *event* of revelation the events of his life become new—"new" in a sense that is valid only for the man of faith and visible only to him, that indeed only *becomes* visible in the now and thus must always become visible *anew*. The only new thing that faith and faith alone is able to say about revelation is that it has become an event and becomes an event. And what theology can do is, on the one hand, to say the very same thing and, on the other hand, to undertake the conceptual explication of such speaking about the event of revelation, to the end that the man of faith will have critical knowledge of himself and that preaching will actually speak of revelation and faith.[105]

Since genuine faith is more than having a general awareness or even assent to information anyone who remains merely on that level is said to not know God and to not have faith, and as such this further dimension of genuine faith and knowledge of God is invisible to those who do not themselves exist in faith. As Bultmann continues to talk about revelation as the object of faith he writes,

> If the revelation of which faith and theology speak is an event, then it is not an 'original mode of being,' 'a way of existing that stands open to man "in and of himself."' Nor is grace 'a disposable quality of the natural man.' The knowledge about what revelation is in general and man's knowledge about his dependence on revelation (or the denial of this) is indeed a

[104] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 100.
[105] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 100.

> knowledge on the basis of the '*lumen natural*.' And this knowledge has no need of the 'clarification' of the gospel, however certain it is that from the hearing of the gospel such clarification of the natural man can actually be derived and can be appropriated by philosophy—just as an actual friendship can also actualize the 'preunderstanding' of friendship and further its conceptual explication. Whatever the man of faith acquires through such 'clarification,' however, then stands open also to the understanding of unfaith. This is so, on the one hand, because ontological analysis will become all the more certain and complete the richer the ontic experience and, on the other hand, because every ontic experience (as an experience of man) has the ontological conditions of its possibility in the human structure and therefore can be understood as possible on the basis of this structure.[106]

In this Bultmann affirms an interaction between philosophy and theology that does not reduce the one into the other, even if they can both contribute to further developments in their respective fields.

However, he goes on to state that faith receives a clarification of profane existence of which is invisible to philosophy and this clarification could be said to be another implicit dimension of explicit faith. As he states, "It is a 'clarification,' namely, that does indeed permit 'profane' existence to appear as 'always already graced.' Of course, philosophy can even 'understand' this in the formal sense, just as well as it can understand that in actual friendship my eyes are opened with respect to my past so that I recognize what was genuine in it and what was not. But only the man of faith understands (in the ontic or *existentiell* sense) profane existence as graced. This does not mean, however, that 'the *humanum* has again become *theos*,' but rather that the natural man is again discovered as a creature of God."[107] What is made visible in hindsight to those who have faith, which is not visible apart from faith, is also that existence before faith "does not stand in a neutral sphere so that if it is to be moved to love, it must first undergo a miraculous transformation. Love is not *caritas infusa*, but rather is from the outset an ontological possibility of human existence of which man dimly knows. Faith is from the outset an ontological possibility of man that appears in the resolve of despair. It is this that makes it possible for man to understand when he is encountered by the kerygma. For in willing to resolve man wills to believe and to love."[108] With recognizable Heideggerian motifs Bultmann writes that, "being limited by death so far from simply ceases for the man of faith that it rather constantly appears and must constantly be overcome in faith and in

[106] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 100-101.
[107] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 101-102.
[108] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 108.

love."[109] As he goes on to describe, "As *faith* is coming under the eyes of God, so *love* is the resolution that lays hold of the situation, and *hope*, the being ahead of oneself in care, in which one is concerned for himself, but in which this 'for himself,' while not destroyed, is left in the hands of God. And by the same token, *joy* is nothing other than the anxiety that motivates man (as the latter is anxious about 'nothing,' so joy rejoices in 'nothing') in a specific modification, namely, as 'overcome.'"[110] Here once could argue that while love, hope, and joy are not reducible to faith they are possible implicit dimensions of explicit faith in Christ.

In Bultmann's essay "Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul" he makes a few comments that are worth noting for the purposes of better understanding his conception of the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing in order to better understand why belief is centrally significant in and for Christianity. Firstly, he attacks what he terms "subjectivistic anthropology" as being counter to the anthropology of Paul and, in consequence, counter to his understanding of anthropology. As he says, "This non-Pauline anthropology—I will refer to it in brief as the subjectivistic anthropology—presupposes that the 'willing' of which Paul speaks is the willing that is actualized in the individual acts of will of the subject who is lord of his subjectivity; in short, it presupposes that the willing is *conscious*. This presupposition is false. For man is not primarily viewed by Paul as a conscious subject; the propensities of man's willing and doing which give him his character are not at all the strivings of his subjectivity. Rather, according to Paul's view, human existence transcends the sphere of consciousness."[111] This is an important point to note in order to avoid overly intellectualist and reductively cognitive accounts of Christian believing. As he continues to point out, ""Thus it seems clear, first of all, that the 'willing' of which Paul speaks is not a movement of the will that lies in the sphere of subjectivity, any more than—as is clear without any question—are the 'thinking' and the 'mind' of Rom. 8:5-7, 8:27 and the 'desiring' of Gal. 5:17. Rather this 'willing' is the trans-subjective propensity of human existence as such."[112] This is important for our interest in the character of Christian believing insofar as it alludes to an intentional mode of being that is present beyond conscious reflection. In so far as faith and Christian believing involve the will of the believer, which can be found in Bultmann's multiple motifs (e.g. obedience, decision, deed, etc.), this then gives us precedent to begin to understand faith

[109] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith,* 110.
[110] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 110.
[111] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith,* 150.
[112] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 150-151.

itself as a "trans-subjective propensity" or as a holistic and wholly self-involving way of existing in light of the revelation encountered in Jesus Christ, which consists of more than conscious reflection even if it sometimes in some cases manifests in conscious awareness of various aspects of the contents of belief in Christ.

In Bultmann's essay "The Task of Theology in the Present Situation," written in 1933 and originally delivered as a lecture, he writes that "as theologians in the service of the church, we have to develop the basis and meaning of Christian faith for our generation, the first thing we must do is to reflect on what is in principle the relation of faith to nation and state, or the relation between the life of faith and life in the political order" and as he continues to say, "this relation is determined by faith's being directed to the God who is Creator and Judge of the world and its Redeemer in Jesus Christ."[113] This importantly notes the close relationship between the character of Christian believing and the believer's socio-political existence. As he later goes on to describe, "Faith in the Creator is not a philosophical theory or a world-view that one has in the background of his concrete experience and action, but rather is something that we are to realize precisely *in* our experience and action as obedience to our Lord. That God is the Creator means that man's action is not determined by timeless principles, but rather by the concrete situation of the moment," [114] of which God as creator has placed or enabled one to be in. Here again we find Bultmann's rejection of abstract and objectified understandings of the nature of faith that are understood to be behind or above one's concrete existence in the world. God, however, who encounters us in the world remains beyond it and not reducible to it. As Bultmann goes on to state, "God stands beyond the world. Therefore, however much faith understands the world as his creation, indeed, precisely *because* it understands the world as his creation, it acquires a peculiar relation of distance to the world."[115] In this sense faith has a critical relationship to the world as it stands in sin and depravity. As he later continues, "Christian faith must be a critical power in the present discussion, and it must prove its essentially *positive* character precisely in its *critical* stance. How can it do this? Well, it can do it because it knows not only about sin, but also about *grace*—because it knows God not only as the Judge, but also as the Redeemer, who through Jesus Christ restores his original creation. Redemption through Jesus Christ

[113] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 158-159.
[114] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 159.
[115] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 160.

means the forgiveness of sins through the revelation of the love of God, and therefore also means the freeing of man to love in return."[116]

In his "The Meaning of the Christian Faith in Creation" Bultmann moves on to talk again about the decision character of believing. Beyond repeating what he has many times said elsewhere in his corpus, what is of particular interest in this essay is how Bultmann further explains how historical existence is necessarily also social existence, and both are constitutive, in a non-reductive way, of the character of Christian believing. As he writes at length,

> Man's historical existence has this character because it only takes place *with others*, in relation to whom one must make concrete decisions. Man stands in a historical world in which he is bound together with concrete human beings. It is in relation to *them* that he is responsible, not to some universal law or Idea. In this responsibility he wins his true dignity because in it he ventures himself and, through surrender, wins himself. Through these concrete bonds there arise the possibilities that give to my life its richness, or else destroy it. For in this existence with others there is either trust and love or mistrust and hate. Here one either gives himself to the other or refuses himself; he either hears the other's claim or ignores it. And none of this, through which man becomes rich or poor and determines his character one way or the other—none of this happens according to rules that are at the disposal of thinking; it cannot be calculated, but rather constantly demands action, venture, surrender. Thus, in all of this, man is constantly *insecure*. Our mutual ties are not something at our disposal, but rather always stand in danger. Love is possessed neither in giving nor in receiving in the way in which one possesses an insight or a conviction. It is not methodically learned and developed, but only grows in the concrete encounter with its decisions, when I hear the other and exist from him by giving and from him by receiving. And when once love has appeared, it is not simply there, nor does it develop with the immanent necessity of logical thought. Rather it 'develops' only through constantly new tests and decisions; it only *is* in that it is constantly laid hold of anew by constantly hearing anew the claim of the thou."[117]

In this sense the identity of the believer in faith is inherently tied to her relationships and encounters that make up her social life in the midst of her particular historical existence. In this sense the person's identity or self-understanding might be rooted in the believer's encounter with and faith in Christ as the Revealer of her identity, but this identity is at the same time always evolving and developing afresh as it is itself dynamic and constituted by her relationships with others and her ongoing activities in her specific situations in the world. The decision of faith is simultaneously a decision to love others and to grow in love towards others. As Bultmann again affirms, in line with

[116] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 162.
[117] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 214-215.

this understanding of faith as embedded and enacted within both historical and social existence, that the knowledge that is included in such a faith in creation

> is not a knowledge, however, that could prove faith in creation to the understanding; for it is not at all a knowledge that has been acquired by the understanding or that proceeds from rational bases. Rather it has grown out of reflection on human existence. Whether everyone so discovers his nature when he reflects on it must be left to him. All the Christian proclamation can do is to point it out to him and ask him if he understands himself in this way, if he is willing to acknowledge that this is true of him. Without such an acknowledgment, however, i.e., without the acknowledgment that man is a being who lives in time, in history, and in responsible relation with others and therefore is insecure and not at his own disposal—without this acknowledgment, there also is no faith in God the creator."[118]

This knowledge of creation as it is understood to be a structural element of faith, like all knowledge of faith, is dependent on an encounter with the event of revelation of Christ. It is not something that can be discerned or ascertained apart from such revelation. As he states, "*Faith in the Creator can never be possessed once for all as a reassuring insight, but must constantly be won and realized anew*. For if, in receiving forgiving grace, I receive my selfhood as a being from God, then I must at the same time understand and realize it as a being *for* God, i.e., as *a life in love* that I have to fulfill in my personal relations with others."[119] Again the inherently social dimension of and individual's faith is highlighted, along with the continual assertion that faith is something that develops and is sustained ever anew; since it is not an objectified entity of any kind, but is itself a dynamic manner of existing in light of God's revelation and grace. As he goes on to state, "Just as faith in creation is only possible on the basis of faith in redemption, so also can a man truly serve his nation only if he has been set free to love by receiving the love of God in Christ."[120] Furthermore, as he reiterates, "Thus the Christian faith sees the uncanny in evil, over which man does not become lord and which can only be overcome by faith in God's forgiveness, by the faith that works through love. Such faith, however, is not mere knowledge of a dogma. The rational understanding of the Christian proclamation and the Christian faith in creation, which we have here been at pains to develop, has to achieve its true meaning in *existentiell* understanding. Thus Christian faith in creation must constantly be won and realized anew in the decision of the moment."[121]

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[118] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 215-216.
[119] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 220-221.
[120] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 224
[121] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 225.

In another essay, "Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement," Bultmann instructively looks at the relationship between faith and states of consciousness in conversation with Karl Barth. As he says,

> Barth's divergence is shown most plainly in his consistent emphasis on the truth that *faith is not a state of consciousness*. No doubt, along with faith there is also a state of consciousness—at least there can be. But as long as it is a state of consciousness it cannot be faith. To speak of the faith of men is to accept the full paradox of asserting something which cannot be affirmed of by any visible man, something which is completely unverifiable as a spiritual situation and which must never be identified with any such situation. From this concept of faith arises the polemic against all 'religion of experience', against piety, sense of sin, and inspiration. Hence comes the utter skepticism of religion as such, since religion claims to be a particular area of human spiritual life in which inheres the relation of man to God. On the contrary, the real truth is that what is confessed in faith is the calling in question of the *whole* man by God. The justified man, the new man, is believed in faith.[122]

In this Bultmann seems to affirm that a state of consciousness is not a "structural component" of faith like knowledge is but is rather something that can coexist with faith at certain times and at certain points. In the latter part Bultmann affirms that faith cannot be reduced simply to religious practice as nor is it visible to anyone in the world regardless of whether or not they have faith. The close relationship between faith as eschatological existence within historical existence will need to be investigated and articulated further in the next chapter, since Bultmann seems to be walking a fine line here. Both Bultmann and Barth do not do enough to show how the character of Christian believing relates to various states of consciousness and this is something that dispositional analyses of believing will help with in the final chapter of this thesis.[123]

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[122] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 50.

[123] Furthermore, in Bultmann's essay "What Does it Mean to Speak of God?" he states that "our own faith can never be a standing ground on which we can establish ourselves. Faith is continually a fresh act, a new obedience. It always becomes uncertain again as soon as we observe ourselves from outside as men and begin to question ourselves. It is always uncertain as soon as we reason about it, as soon as we talk about it. Only in act is it sure. It is always sure as faith in the grace of God who forgives sin and who, if he pleases, justifies me who cannot speak from God but can only undertake to speak about God. All our action and speech has meaning only under the grace of the forgiveness of sins. And that is not within our control. We can only have faith in it" (Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 64-65). Here again Bultmann affirms the dependence of the believer on the object of their faith for their assurance and security, and this faith is portrayed to be something that only exists ever anew in deeds of the moment. Kierkegaardian motifs have been present throughout our exposition of Bultmann's thought in this chapter, and in his "On the Question of Christology" he affirms that one of his goals is to "turn theology away from the false paths of idealism . . . and mysticism . . . , and thereby to make fruitful the theological work of Kierkegaard" (Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 116).

In "What Does it Mean to Speak of God?" Bultmann affirms the inherently communal nature of the content of Christian faith in an attempt to avoid and entirely irrational conception. As he states, "In reality, however, these truths—no matter how strongly one may emphasize their supra-rationality and anti-rationality—never lose their rational character. For if revelation is seen only in the anti-rational, then it becomes the private concept of the individual; that is, its teachings have the character of revelation only in so far as their rational character has a negative sign. The 'faith by which we believe' is therefore ultimately the resolve to hold as 'true' 'truths' which are not rational. This is self-deception, for one cannot consider as 'true' what is contrary to reason, as W. Herrmann was never tired of insisting."[124] As he goes on to say, "Faith in a doctrine is an impossibility. One can only understand a doctrine (critically) or submit to it by a deliberate resolve. In so far as we speak of faith as 'trust' (*fiducia*), the knowledge and acceptance of 'pure doctrine' are subsequent to it. This kind of theology forgets that the only possible access to the 'faith which is believed' is the 'faith by which one believes'; and that the 'pure doctrine' can be developed only as a doctrine seen in faith."[125] This rejection of improperly focusing on the propositions and doctrines as the object of faith, however, has had equally problematic overreaction. As he states, "Thus it is understandable that theology since Schleiermacher rejects this confusion of faith with theology and the actual elimination of faith from theology which resulted, and sees the object of theology as faith, the 'faith by which one believes'. But it goes to the other extreme. In opposition to the orthodox view that faith follows theology, it affirms the reverse: 'religious faith precedes theology and produces it' (so J. Wendland, RGG, V, col. 1197). The 'faith by which we believe' is made independent of theology."[126] This is an important point and it illustrates the middle road that this thesis itself is trying to both promote and follow. In an insightful summary he writes, "What then is the conclusion? We have seen that the old theology was a science *of* faith as the 'faith which is believed' *for* faith as the 'faith by which one believes'; that the new theology is a science of faith as the 'faith by which one believes' and has therefore lost the 'faith which is believed'; at the same time, it has also lost all reason for existing. For it is now included in the social sciences (Troeltsch) and has gained 'universal validity' at the cost of no longer mattering to anyone."[127] Bultmann continually emphasizes the important dialectical relationship between the object of faith and the act of faith.

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[124] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 117.
[125] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 117-118.
[126] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 118.
[127] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 118.

The object of faith constitutes the both the act of faith and our understanding of the act of faith just as the act of faith enables the fullest understanding of the object of faith. As Bultmann states,

> When theology has abandoned its particular object, the 'faith which is believed', it *can* then no longer understand the 'faith by which one believes'. It assumes that faith to be a human attitude which can be seen without seeing the object of faith. It misjudges the i*ntentionality of faith*. For the 'faith by which one believes' is what it is only in relation to its object, the 'faith which is believed'. Plato long ago knew that love (*eros*) can only be defined as love of something (*eros tinos*). Faith which is conceived as a human attitude, as a spiritual function, as a pious frame of mind, as a sense of the numinous, and the like, is *not* faith at all. Faith exists only as faith *in*, that is as faith in its object, in God known in revelation.[128]

Here again he emphasizes that the particular manner of faith only exists in a constitutive relationship with who it believes in and who it believes in constitutes how believers exist in relation to its object, who is God revealed in the person of Christ. Along these lines in his "Church and Teaching in the New Testament," Bultmann states that "*faith* (*pistis*) is not a human mood or attitude as such—for example, trusting God or the like—but understood strictly in accordance with its intention, is faith *in*, that is, faith in the saving act. Hence faith is obedience . . ."[129] Furthermore in his "The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul" Bultmann similarly states that "The *acknowledgment* of Jesus as the Messiah is the substantive content of the 'revelation'; it means that henceforth Paul *understands* Jesus as the Messiah, for without understanding there is no obedience. To understand another person as Lord correspondingly means *to have a new understanding of oneself,* as standing in the service of that Lord and attaining one's own identity in such service."[130] In this passage he succinctly describes how true knowledge of God inherently involves at the same time a change in one's self-understanding. In his "The Christology of the New Testament" Bultmann writes that

> It is no longer possible to separate piety and teaching and then to understand the teaching as a theoretical explanation of the piety. On the contrary, the life itself is founded on faith in Christ, and that means it is founded on what is taught about Christ in the community. For the new life, dominating the historical life, is neither the mystical state of particular moments nor a power which is mysteriously instilled into the believer, guaranteeing him immortality. Nor, however, is it an idea which has been revealed, by which the nature of God, hitherto misjudged, would now be correctly known so that by it the human soul would be illuminated

[128] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 119-120.
[129] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 208.
[130] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 236.

> and freed from delusion. The new life is *a historical possibility created by the saving event and it is a reality wherever it is grasped in the resolve to act.*[131]

The linguistic content of faith that concerns the person and activity of Christ, which is passed on through the community of believers amidst the presence of Christ encountering them within it is one that is appropriated holistically and embedded within the believer's way of life. Again the dependence on God's activity is highlighted as is the necessity of God's act of forgiveness directed at and appropriated by the believer enabling the believer to no longer live solely for themselves, but for Christ and for the benefit of others. [132] This is furthermore understood to be done within and amidst the concrete particularities of the existence of believers in their polyphonic modes of relation to one another and to the various possibilities of action confronting them in their particular circumstances. As Bultmann mentions, having faith in Christ does not "mean an imitative following of him, in the sense of allowing one's self to be drawn into his faith in God and his way of life. The faith of Jesus has no place whatever in Paul's thought. What Paul calls faith first comes into existence after the death and resurrection of Christ—not before. Faith is certainly following Christ—but by accepting his cross, not at all in the sense of imitation, but as grasping the forgiveness and the possibility of life created by the cross."[133] Here Bultmann importantly notes that the character of Christian believing is not one denoted of a slavish or rote imitation of the life of Christ. The following and appropriating of Christ by the believer is more one of creative emulation that better accounts for the novelty amidst continuity of following Christ in light of one's recognition of the significance of the forgiveness and new life offered by Christ's work on the cross.

Furthermore in line with how the multiform act of faith relates to the dynamic object of faith, in both a novel and developing ways, Bultmann, in his "Theology as Science," has many insightful things to say about how it is within the very nature of faith to further develop understanding. As he says, "Faith thus contains undeveloped theology because it is an understanding faith, just as any practical human attitude toward one's fellow human beings and the world, toward one's own life and destiny, is sustained by an understanding that is capable of being unfolded theoretically and is in need of being thus unfolded. In fact, the very existence of such competing world views demands an explication of the self-understanding of faith."[134] This further developing character of the

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[131] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 276.
[132] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 276.
[133] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 277.
[134] Bultmann, *New Testament & Mythology and Other Basic Writings,* 57.

understanding of faith need not be limited to mere theoretical or disengaged knowledge about oneself and about God. Given that faith involves the whole person and that it is holistically embedded within and as the believer's particular intentional existence this development ought to be understood to include the believer's way of life in its entirety. Faith is not some objectifiable thing but it is always and ever developing and persisting in and through the moment. In light of what he has to say about faith as not being objectifiable (and the believer not being able to "stand alongside it" so to speak) he nevertheless writes about how faith can and should achieve a critical distance from itself. This holistic developing nature of faith is also necessarily accompanied by a self-critical dimension of analyzing itself. As he says,

> This means, however, that it belongs to the very essence of faith that it can stand outside itself, indeed, that it must do so. Because faith is a gift, not a work or a possession, it needs to stand outside of itself so that it becomes conscious of the gift as gift. It needs to reflect on itself, and it is in just this way that it becomes conscious of the full seriousness of what faith means. But this it can do only if it becomes distant from itself, by asking, Why do I believe? Can I, may I, believe? What happens when I believe? Theology develops just these questions—not, indeed, in order to assure itself that faith makes sense and is justified from some outside standpoint (such as that of a profane science or philosophy), thereby justifying faith before the forum of existence outside of faith, but rather in order to become conscious of the meaning of faith by placing existence outside of faith before the forum of faith."[135]

Precisely because faith is not some kind of work or objectified possession, according to Bultmann, it is necessary for faith to critically reflect upon its own nature so as to further its own understanding; and for Bultmann, in this passage at least, understanding the "gifted" nature of faith is primarily achieved through this type of reflection. In this sense along with Barth and Anselm (and others) faith inherently seeks and grows in understanding as a part of its very nature.

In a number of places in this work Bultmann takes it upon himself to address potential misunderstandings of his frequent assertion that faith is a type of self-understanding. Indeed, he had to defend himself against Barth's own misunderstandings of his position. As Bultmann at one point says to Barth in a letter written in 1952, "Your objection against the idea that an understanding of the NT is an understanding of the self obviously rests on a misunderstanding of the concept of self-

[135] Bultmann, *New Testament & Mythology and Other Basic Writings,* 57-58.

understanding."[136] As he states, "From the statement that to speak of God is to speak of myself, it by no means follows that God is not outside the believer. (This would be the case only if faith is interpreted as a purely psychological event)."[137] Here Bultmann is careful to emphasize that the self-understanding of faith is not reductively subjectivist. He goes on to more positively describe the hoslistic, subconscious, and dynamic aspects of nature of faith as self-understanding that variously permeates many aspects of the believing person by stating that,

> Such existential, personal understanding need not take place on the level of consciousness, and this, indeed, is rare. But such personal self-understanding, albeit unconscious, dominates, or exercises a powerful influence upon, all our sorrows and cares, ambitions, joys and anxieties. Moreover, this personal self-understanding is put to the test, is called into question (*ist in Frage gestellt*) in every situation of encounter. As my life goes on, my self-understanding may prove inadequate or it may become clearer and deeper as the result of further experiences and encounters. This change may be due to radical self-examination or it may occur unconsciously, when, for example, my life is led out of the darkness of distress into the light of happiness or when the opposite experience comes to me. Entering into decisive encounters I may achieve a totally new self-understanding as a result of the love which is bestowed upon me when, for example, I marry or make a new friend. Even a little child unconsciously manifests such self-understanding in so far as he realizes that he is a child and that he therefore stands in a special relationship to his parents. His self-understanding expresses itself in his love, trust, feeling of security, thankfulness, etc.[138]

The way that Bultmann here speaks about the multiform and subconscious aspects of the self-understanding of faith has a number of similarities with how H.H. Price speaks about belief as a multiform disposition. He continues to explain the self-understanding of faith by talking more about its embedded and embodied character. As he says,

> In my personal existence, I am isolated neither from my environment nor from my own past and future. When, for example, I achieve through love a new self-understanding, what takes place is not an isolated psychological act of coming to consciousness; my whole situation is transformed. In understanding myself, I understand other people and at the same time the whole world takes on a new character. I see it, as we say, in a new light, and so it really is a new world. I achieve a new insight into my past and my future. I recognize new demands and am open to encounters in a new manner. My past and future become more than pure time as it is marked on a calendar or timetable. Now it should be clear that I cannot possess this self-understanding as a timeless truth, a conviction accepted once and for all. For my

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[136] Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, *Karl Barth ~ Rudolf Bultmann Letters 1922-1966*, ed. Bernd Jaspert, tr. ed. Geofrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 90.
[137] Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, 70-71.
[138] Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, 74-75.

> new self-understanding, by its very nature, must be renewed day by day, so that I understand the imperative self which is included in it."[139]

This holistically embedded and embodied self-understanding that is an implicit dimension of explicit faith is a key aspect that aids our understanding of why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. As Bultmann goes on to further talk about the nature of faith he states that "Faith includes free and complete openness to the future."[140] He later continues on by stating that, "If it is true that the Christian faith involves free openness to the future, then it is freedom from anxiety in the face of the Nothing. For this freedom nobody can decide of his own will; it can only be given, in faith. Faith as openness to the future is freedom from the past, because it is faith in the forgiveness of sins; it is freedom from the enslaving chains of the past. It is freedom *from* ourselves as the old selves, and *for* ourselves as the new selves. It is freedom from the illusion, grounded in sin, that we can establish our personal existence through our own decision. It is the free openness to the future which Paul acclaims in saying that 'death is swallowed up in victory' (I Cor. 15:54)."[141] The obedience and self-understanding that faith consists in are the means of actualizing freedom from past bondage to sin and provides hope in its openness to the future in light of its continual acknowledgment of God's judgment and its continual trust in God's promises. This future oriented dimension is another implicit dimension that constitutes the character of explicit faith.

Faith as Historical Deed

In his *What is Theology?* (*Theologische Enzyklopädie*) we find much that is directly relevant to our understanding of the character of Christian believing and how the implicit dimensions of explicit faith might help us better understand the central significance of belief in and for Christianity. It is a succinct work that spends a good amount of space clearly speaking about aspects of the character of Christian believing that are relevant to the inquiry of this thesis. In it Bultmann states that, "Faith is a human possibility only in a specifically historical situation, in which a specific proclamation is transmitted. It is neither an a priori of the human spirit nor a universal attitude of the soul such as optimism or peace of mind and the like; it is not a 'disposition'"[142] or a mere attitude understood in a

[139] Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, 75-76.
[140] Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, 77.
[141] Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, 77-78.
[142] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 107.

compartmentalized, objectified, and thereby reductive way. There is much that can be developed and gleaned from this latter statement about faith not being a disposition. Bultmann explicitly denies that faith is a disposition. This is true when faith is understood to be merely a reductive disposition, but as will be argued and shown later, incorporating a non-reductive and multiform dispositional analysis of believing is helpfully consistent with how Bultmann wants to speak about the character of Christian believing; and doing so adds greater intelligibility to how the holistic dimensions of faith can be seen to hold together and ultimately contribute toward a better understanding of why belief is centrally significant in and for Christianity.

In many ways Bultmann sees himself as faithfully continuing the Protestant tradition with its emphasis on the importance of trust in the grace of God as revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Although he does not seek to mindlessly repeat previous expressions of the nature of faith, it must be noted that he does not see himself as an external critic and that there are indeed points of continuity between Bultmann and reformation positions on the nature of faith. As Bultmann says, "faith is *faith in the revelation of God* . . . it is a faith in *an historical fact*. But it is such that this fact as objectively verifiable is not revelation. Otherwise faith would be historical knowledge or the uncritical acceptance of historical information, in short, *fides historica*."[143] In this Bultmann is merely in line with the Reformers and those in their wake who held that faith in the veracity of the historical accounts of the gospel is not sufficient to describe genuinely justifying faith. Assent to the truth of historical facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth, like the Protestant tradition has always held, is not enough to constitute genuine faith, and Bultmann lays heavy emphasis on this point.

For Bultmann, here he again emphasizes that the concept of faith is inextricably linked with obedience. It is not something that is prior to and enables obedience, but is itself an act of obedience, or an obedient way of life in light of one's encounter with the revelation of God. For him faith does also still include *notitia*, but it is not understood in an abstract way. It is always understood as a type of self-knowledge where I am made aware of who I am, as a historically constituted person, before God. As he states, "For this reason also faith is not a knowledge of universal truths, ideas, etc., but the obedient acceptance of the message of the forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ,"[144] and he goes on to say that; "Faith is *obedience*, which means that by it I recognize *myself as a sinner*. . .

[143] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 129.
[144] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 130.

and from which only God's deed saves me. . . . I know that of myself I can do nothing, that by my own power I can perform nothing to free me from sin. I rely entirely upon God's *grace*."[145] In short, he says, "I cannot believe in God the Almighty if I will not allow him to rule in me."[146] One of the implicit dimensions of explicit faith is characterized by this mode of relating to God in humble dependence.

Bultmann proceeds to reflect on how faith is trust at the same time that it is obedience. As he says, "Naturally faith, which is chiefly obedience, is also *trust*, and is such *simultaneously*, since it is trust in forgiveness, not something in addition to it. It is trust because it is *justifying trust*, *not a general trust in God*."[147] But again, it is not trust itself that saves us since "trust *alone* does not have the power to transform us from sinners to righteous."[148] If it was faith would lose its intentional character and God would cease to be understood as real and other than us. Faith and theology would become nontheological. The ultimate object of faith would be faith rather than God through faith.

The emphasis on obedience and the active nature of faith leads Bultmann again to consider if this emphasis does not turn faith into a work, which might somehow turn it into an act seeking to merit or earn God's favor and grace. This is something he denies, and he believes that it is important to deny. He again here does so by making a distinction between the concept of work and the concept of deed. As he says, "Still, *safeguarding*, faith as a deed *against the misunderstanding* of construing it as a work is an urgent theological task." [149] He begins to explain this distinction when he says;

> A person's *deed* is seen to be his when seen in its execution, that is, in its historicity, when seen as his conduct in decision, as the concrete possibility of his ability to be, a possibility he himself chooses. He *is* in the deed, he does not stand alongside it. Faith, however, is such a decision on behalf of the word of proclamation. It is a deed. And precisely for this reason it is not something one happens upon, something possessed, but is actual only as seized anew. It is not a work to be presented, not an attribute of mine, but a how, the manner-in-which of my historical existence—just as a human I-Thou relationship is actual only in the deed, and not something one happens upon or is possessed. I do not have the attribute of 'friend,' but

[145] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 131.
[146] Bultmann *What is Theology?*, 133.
[147] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 132.
[148] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 147.
[149] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 134. The key terms here rely on a distinction between *Tat* and *Werk:* see "Aber die *Sicherung gegen das Mißverständnis* des Glaubens als Tat gegen seine Auffassung als Werk ist dringende theologische Aufgabe" (*Theologische Enzyklopädie*, 135).

> I *am* or am not a friend. Faith is therefore not optimism, nor a feeling or mood, but a deed of obedience.[150]

This deed, furthermore, is a historical deed because we are historical persons. It is not an abstract deed, or merely a mental deed. It is a holistic deed, involving the whole person. It takes place within and amongst other actions that Christian performs as part of their existing in the world and is not simply a discrete act among other acts. As he says, "There is a deeper reason for misunderstanding faith's character as deed. It occurs *when the act of faith is isolated from the deed of the moment*. Faith is one-sidedly defined when understood as the obedient hearing of the word of forgiveness in Christ addressed to me. This cannot be believed *in abstracto*, only its relation to the moments of my actual life."[151] Along with understanding faith as obedience and as trust Bultmann also understands the nature of faith to involve a perpetual decision and resolve in each moment, and again this is not an abstract decision, not one the believer has "*alongside* but *within* other decisions."[152] As he explains, "The deed is not done by the existent person (as though he were behind it), as though it were something produced by a machine. Rather, the person *is* in the doing."[153] This again highlights the holistic and character of Christian believing as it is not isolated from or compartmentalized within the believer's existence but is instead integrally embedded within it in a holistic manner. And one might add again that just as intentional decisions and actions need not be conscious, or present to mind neither must faith always be an entirely conscious phenomenon even if we agree with Bultmann that the obedience of faith must be an understanding obedience informed by the word rather than a blind obedience.[154]

At this point Bultmann again has something interesting to say concerning traditional Protestant conceptions of the relationship between a believer's faith (her multiform historical deed) and the work of the Holy Spirit. He mentions that "The Old Protestant dogmatics replies that the deed of faith is *worked in us by the Holy Spirit*. But what does this mean? It means nothing if the Spirit is conceived as a mysteriously magical power at work behind our doing, so that our doing is no longer *ours*, and our faith is no longer *ours*."[155] It seems that many do not appreciate this tension and hold to

[150] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 133.
[151] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 143.
[152] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 145.
[153] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 145.
[154] See Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 156.
[155] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 142.

a sharp distinction between belief and action, where faith is understood as something entirely passive that is received apart from or behind one's way of existing. That in a certain sense, even though we are entirely dependent on God's grace it is ultimately we who believe, not God, seems to be an undeniable fact that is not fully reckoned with, most likely because it is assumed to be the only way to avoid a Pelagian position. As Bultmann goes on to say, however, "Faith is worked by the Spirit (something, by the way, that Paul never says!), insofar as faith has not arisen out of our past, but is offered through the word. Just as I am indebted to my friend for my act of love for which he is the occasion (that is, through him it has become a possibility for me), so the believer is indebted to God for his Spirit who was at work not behind, but precisely *within* the free act of faith."[156]

Again love is closely connected to faith and even more so with faith understood as a deed. As he says "Faith, therefore, is always the presupposition for this love. As our own deed, loosed from the *agape* of God, our love becomes continually uncertain and doubtful. True love exists only on the basis of faith:"[157] However, this love is not merely directed toward God in isolation, nor to oneself and God together, but he affirms that "true *pistis* exists only when active in love"[158] and that "our love for God is true only when it is also love for the neighbor."[159]

It is along these lines that Bultmann's thought might be drawn out fruitfully in relation to Kevin Hector's recent work on faith and the conditions of mineness. In his recent work, Kevin Hector wants to argue that "one's life can be recognizably one's own even if it is not entirely due to one."[160] Similarly for Bultmann, "The possibility of a division here between faith and philosophy is actually rooted in the fact that in the deed of love *the act of freedom and the reception of the gift of the other* are really a unity. But all depends on which of the two establishes the other. Faith says that even the freedom to act is given. Philosophy says that my freedom enables me to receive the gift."[161] Bultmann, however, perhaps more than Hector emphasizes that "*faith* nevertheless states that in the question about himself he must look away from himself, in order to be for the other from the

[156] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 143.
[157] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 136.
[158] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 137.
[159] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 137.
[160] Kevin Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), x.
[161] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 97.

perspective of the other. It states that being a self can only be given in surrender of the self."[162] Even these statements further serve to qualify our understanding of Bultmann's conception of faith as a historical deed. Despite all his emphasis on the agency of the believer he is not easily categorized in a Pelagian fashion even though he rejects the classical Protestant attempt to avert Pelagianism by understanding the believer's faith as a work of the Holy Spirit. One's faith must still be understood as entirely one's own and as entirely gifted by God.

Conclusion

Bultmann has a lot to say about the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith that can better help us understand the central significance of belief in and for Christianity. His reflections on the holistic character of Christian believing and the implicit dimensions of explicit faith are widely present throughout his corpus. By showcasing this breadth this chapter has sought to address the lack of appreciation of the nuance of Bultmann's understanding of the nature of faith and the consistency in which he held to these views throughout his career. By describing the many implicit dimensions that constitute explicit faith and by highlighting that the character of Christian believing cannot be understood in an isolated, atomistic, or objectified manner he adds intelligibility to the central significance of faith.[163] Bultmann's theological work on the nature of faith is rich and complex drawing insight from the New Testament, utilizing aspects deemed helpful from philosophical hermeneutics, and engaging with both Protestant and Roman Catholic theological traditions concerning the relationship between the *fides quae creditur* and the *fides qua creditur*. He simultaneously

[162] Bultmann, *What is Theology?*, 97.

[163] As David Fergusson rightly points out, "Faith, rather than involving intellectual assent to a series of propositions, is more appropriately characterized as a radically new mode of existence. It is a new way of being which determines everything within human experience. It creates a new understanding of God together with a new understanding of the self. The one can never be understood in isolation from the other. . . . Faith becomes a rich theological concept which embraces all the main aspects of the Christian life." (Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann* [London: Continuum, 1992], 33). As pointed out in this chapter, and as will be further developed in the follower chapters, however, Bultmann's hesitancy to view faith "as involving intellectual assent to a series of propositions" ought better to be understood as a hesitancy to understand the nature of faith as a assent to propositions in a reductive manner. Given that he implicitly understands faith as a way of understanding oneself in relation to God amidst the particularities of one's concrete existence that can be verbalized even if it is not always explicitly reflected on and expressed in words by the believer he is committed to understanding faith to involve some level of holistic cognitive commitment to the correctness of verbalizable statements even when faith cannot be reduced to an abstract, objectified, and atomistic conception of assenting to propositions.

refuses to understand the character of Christian believing as a mere disposition or feeling divorced from the content of faith and is equally dismissive of understanding the character of Christian believing as an uninvolved assent to the content of faith understood as propositions or doctrines divorced from an obedient appropriation, which is only intelligible amidst one's concrete situations in life in relation to and in an encounter with God, which is not immediately perceivable in any objectified manner.

Bultmann's understanding of the implicit dimensions of explicit faith all add intelligibility to why believing is centrally significant as it more adequately shows the depth and breadth of human existence that the character of Christian believing is involved in while it retains the importance that the role that God (as other than and beyond our human existence) plays in shaping the human character of Christian believing. His reflections on the how faith relates to human perception and vision, how the act of faith is not a work but is characterized by a decision of humble obedience and historical deed, how faith consists of a holistically understood conception of self-understanding and development in light of future possibilities and promises, how faith even amidst the concreteness of bodily-historical existence is characterized by an act of desecularization and detachment from ultimate anxieties in the world that results in true freedom all integrate together to offer a plethora of implicit dimensions of explicit faith that begin to help us better understand why believing is centrally significant for Christianity. A Christian's faith and the Christian faith is that through which the gift of the new life of redemption and restoration is not only received but is itself the rich manifestation of that new life coming to fruition in relation to the God who comes into contact with and for Christians within and for the wider context of God's creation in all its particularities and intricacies. Bultmann's understanding of the holistic character of Christian believing incorporates rich descriptions of theology that mere philosophy reflecting on the general phenomenon of believing cannot offer (but that's not to say, nor would he say, that incorporating further philosophical insights would not be helpful) and he offers a more promising description of faith than those that neglect to adequately reflect on the intricacies of the human act of faith. By reflecting on the many implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing Bultmann helpfully sheds light on how we might better understand why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. He rejects virtually every other stock understanding of the nature of faith in an attempt to distinguish an understanding of the character of Christian believing that is less reductive (both theologically and anthropologically), and in doing so he provides fertile ground

in which to begin to understand the rich character of Christian believing that make the central significance of Christian believing more readily apparent.

Chapter 3: The Character of Christian Believing Beyond Barth and Bultmann

Introduction

While the previous chapters largely set out the descriptive stage for the thesis this chapter sets out to begin to further evaluate the descriptions of the character of Christian believing in Barth and Bultmann with each other and with some recent theologians in other traditions before moving on to a more constructive final chapter. In general, the thesis is seeking to utilize the work of Barth and Bultmann in order to further articulate the implicit dimensions of explicit faith (both theological and anthropological) in order to better understand why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. In doing so it has sought to highlight the holistic character of Christian believing. A secondary aim of the thesis is to show that Barth and Bultmann's thought on the character of Christian believing has ecumenical value and this chapter seeks to highlight this in order to show that the conceptions of the character of Christian believing offered by Barth and Bultmann employed toward the aim of better understanding why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity is not merely confined to a Protestant understanding of the character of Christian believing. In choosing to ground the study in Protestant dogmatics with Barth and Bultmann it has sought to develop a conception of the character of Christian believing that has ecumenical import by showing that even denominations and traditions within Protestantism that are sometimes taken to have a reductively intellectualist conception of the character of Christian believing are capable of being understood and developed in a more nuanced and holistic manner that is more ecumenically attractive. More adequate descriptions of the character of Christian believing can result from putting Barth and Bultmann in dialogue with theologians in other traditions, but it is equally important to show lines of continuity. In articulating the complexity of a Protestant position and its implicit logic with a variety of other theologians and philosophers (which the next chapter seeks to flesh out further) it seeks to contribute to the mending of unnecessary divisions and, when that is not possible, to enable a depth of understanding that fosters informed disagreement amongst those coming from different ecumenical backgrounds rather than mere caricature.

Both Barth and Bultmann provide a theological depth of description that is lacking in more mere philosophical approaches to describing religious belief in general (in fact they are adamantly against understanding the character of Christian believing in a general way of any kind, whether that be a general feeling, acting, or thinking). They also both emphasize the theological dimension

implicitly involved in and with the character of Christian believing. For both it is of structural importance for understanding the character of the individual's faith that we acknowledge the believer's intentional, outward orientation to Christ and that this is a genuine interaction, participation (rightly understood), and ongoing encounter with God who is genuinely other than believers.

Both Barth and Bultmann are good at criticizing inadequate conceptions that reductively emphasize one aspect of faith to the detriment of others, but their positive constructions and articulations of how the various aspects of the character of Christian believing hang together call for more descriptive adequacy. Both of their rejections of understanding faith as a worldview and of understanding the propositional or cognitive/linguistic dimensions of faith as mere assent to doctrines or ideas about God is persuasive. Neither want to get rid of the cognitive aspect of Christian belief, but in strongly reacting against certain ways of understanding the cognitive aspect their own positive development is often underdeveloped. Their articulations of how we then go on to understand the linguistic dimensions of the character of Christian believing in light of these criticisms could benefit from further articulation. Human persons relate to and apprehend linguistic content in various ways and linguistic content likewise relates to its referent(s) in numerous ways. While the character of Christian believing might not be adequately described as mere assent to a "worldview" or as mere assent to specific doctrines it does involve a dimension of linguistically mediated apprehension of oneself, of God, and of the world. While both Barth and Bultmann retain a place for the linguistic content of Christian believing their articulation of how this aspect relates to the other aspects (and how this is distinct from bad construals of the linguistic dimensions of the character of Christian believing) would benefit from further description, articulation, and explanation. This could be accomplished by further developing their own positions in light of their own implicit logic and by bringing their positions into conversation with other philosophical and theological positions.

Barth and Bultmann Compared

It is common to focus on the differences between Barth and Bultmann when looking at their theologies in general. Bultmann is seen to be existentialist. Barth is seen to be dogmatic. Bultmann emphasizes the act of faith. Barth emphasizes the content of faith. While differences do remain between the two of them even when we are only looking at their various conceptions of the

character of Christian believing, those differences occur within the backdrop of what appears to be a large portion of agreement. As has been shown in the previous chapters, both of their positions on the nature of faith are more nuanced and intricate than they are often taken to be. The links of their disagreements become more apparent if we begin to analyze the implicit logic of how we understand the content of linguistic utterances in light of the embodied, embedded, and enacted environments of reception that all play a role in holistically constituting and enabling the phenomenon of understanding. The proximity of Barth and Bultmann is further illuminated by looking at some of Barth's later writings in *The Humanity of God*. This links Barth into closer proximity to Bultmann than he himself would have perhaps liked to admit in the earlier stages of his theological development. It also helps to better incorporate Barth's thought into the more holistic character of Christian believing that this thesis is seeking to develop in order to be able to better understand why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity.

In his essay "Evangelical Theology in the Nineteenth Century," originally presented in 1957 at the *Goethegesellschaft*, Karl Barth articulates his reservations with much of the 19th century focus on the anthropological dimension of the character of Christian believing. As he says, echoing the Augustinian distinction between the *fides qua* and the *fides quae*, "theologians, when they came to work on their proper task in and for the Church were more interested in the Christian faith than in the Christian message."[1] As he goes on to state, "In terms of content they were more interested in man's relationship to God than in God's dealings with man, or, to quote the well known term of Melanchthon, more in the *beneficia Christi* than in Christ Himself."[2] The way that many 19th century theologians focused on analyzing and describing the character of Christian believing in light of their contemporary situation (in conversation with a variety of contemporary discourses) was, in Barth's estimation, reductive. The pursuit to better understand the character of Christian believing was "erroneously undertaken."[3] As he further describes, "The interest of these theologians focused on the believing man in his past and in his present, in his confrontation and association with Jesus Christ. Theological discussion with the contemporary world centred around the existence of the believing man, and in philosophy of religion particularly around the possibility of this existence."[4] These theological inquiries into the character of Christian believing tended to eclipse the content of

[1] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (London: Collins, 1961), 23-24.
[2] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 24.
[3] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 24.
[4] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 24.

belief and its ultimate, divine referent. However, importantly for the purpose of this thesis, this does not lead Barth to reject the value, importance, or need for analysis, description, and articulation of the human dimensions of the character of Christian believing, but only various reductive ways of doing so. Neither does one's theological engagement with philosophy need to only be done on the grounds of trying to justify theology. It was not problematic that these endeavors were being undertaken, but how they were being undertaken that was at issue. In Barth's judgment, these reductive approaches need not have been reductive by the mere fact that they were focusing on the anthropological dimensions of the character of Christian believing, nor need it be the case for theology done in his present or our own. As he explains, "The prevailing interest in this direction would not necessarily have been erroneous had it been a matter of shift in tone and emphasis for serious and pertinent reasons."[5] As Barth goes on to articulate,

> There is no reason why the attempt of Christian anthropocentrism should not be made, indeed ought to be made. There is certainly a place for legitimate Christian thinking starting from below and moving up, from man who is taken hold of by God to God who takes hold of man. Let us interpret this attempt by the 19th-century theologians in its best light! Provided that it in no way claims to be exclusive and absolute, one might well understand it as an attempt to formulate a theology of the third article of the Apostles' Creed, the Holy Spirit. If it had succeeded in this, 19th-century theology could have irrevocably stressed once again the fact that we cannot consider God's commerce with man without concurrently considering man's commerce with God. Theology is in reality not only the doctrine of God, but the doctrine of God and man. Interpreted in this light, 19th-century theology would not have forgotten or even suppressed, but rather stressed, the fact that man's relation to God is based on God's dealings with man, and not conversely. Starting from below, as it were, with Christian man, it could and should have struggled its way upward to an authentic explication of the Christian faith. It could and should have sought increasingly to validate the Christian message as God's act and word, the ground, object, and content of faith.[6]

As Eberhard Busch helps portray Barth's mature position, he states that Barth "no longer understood 'theology' merely as a 'doctrine of God,' but as 'theanthropology,' that is, 'as "a doctrine of God and man", of the communication and the community between God and man."'[7] This thesis is such an attempt, to struggle "its way upward to an authentic explication of the Christian faith."

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[5] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God,* 24. One is left to speculate what, in Barth's mind, constitute "serious and pertinent reasons." The conclusion of the previous section was an attempt to articulate some potential "serious and pertinent reasons" for theological inquiry to incorporate philosophical and phenomenological material.

[6] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 24-25.

[7] Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 424.

For Barth so long as we keep this *interaction* between God and man in mind then a focus on describing the anthropological dimensions of the character of Christian believing is a legitimate, and even valuable, undertaking. It is when this *interaction* of the human with the divine and the divine with the human is lost sight of that our descriptions of faith become inadequate and reductive.[8] Barth's charge of much 19th century theology was that it was reductive in an overly immanent and anthropological way. However, later on in his essay on "The Humanity of God" (originally delivered as a lecture in 1956 at the meeting of the Swiss Reformed Minsters' Association in Arau) he states, rather surprisingly, that theology can likewise be reductive if it attempts to focus on God without also focusing on the human. As he writes, "Since God in his deity is human, this [theological] culture must occupy itself neither with God in Himself nor with man in himself but with the man-encountering God and the God-encountering man and with their dialogue and history, in which their communion takes place and comes to its fulfillment."[9] On the surface this is strikingly similar to Bultmann's position and is more compatible with the desires of more phenomenologically minded theologians than Barth is often taken to be. In this work Barth also seems to be qualifying his position in light of Bultmann's earlier descriptions and criticisms of Barth's position. Bultmann, as we can recall, at one point describes Barth position thus:

> Barth's divergence is shown most plainly in his consistent emphasis on the truth that *faith is not a state of consciousness*. No doubt, along with faith there is also a state of consciousness—at least there can be. But as long as it is a state of consciousness it cannot be faith. To speak of the faith of men is to accept the full paradox of asserting something which cannot be affirmed of any visible man, something which is completely unverifiable as a spiritual situation and which must never be identified with any such situation. From this concept of faith arises the polemic against all 'religion of experience', against piety, sense of sin, and inspiration. Hence comes the utter skepticism of religion as such, since religion claims to be a particular area of human spiritual life in which inheres the relation of man to God. On the

[8] As Barth goes on to state, "Nineteenth-century theologians spoke of "faith," and we do well to trust that they meant Christian faith. But their assumptions compelled them to understand faith as the realisation of one form of man's spiritual life and self-awareness. The more serious they were in this interpretation, the more the Christian faith appeared to be a windowless monad, dependent on human feelings, knowledge, and will. Like these, faith was supposed to be self-nurturing, self-governing, and self-sufficient. A capacity for the infinite within the finite, faith had no ground, object, or content other than itself. It had no *vis-à-vis*. Faith as the Christian's commerce with God could first and last be only the Christian's commerce with himself. It could express only itself, its own inner dialectics, in so many words and sentences" (*The Humanity of God,* 26). As expressed elsewhere throughout this thesis, however, this need not be the case.

[9] Barth, *The Humanity of God,* 56.

> contrary, the real truth is that what is confessed in faith is the calling in question of the *whole* man by God. The justified man, the new man, is believed in faith.[10]

At this point Barth is still uneasy and unsure of how his theology relates to Bultmann's. As Barth writes, "Whether the theological existentialism of Rudolf Bultmann and his followers, close to which we find ourselves here, carries us further towards this objectivity which is indispensable to good theology remains yet to be seen. It is not yet clear whether and in what sense a genuine, concrete dialogue, history, and communion between God and man is there envisioned, or whether it is concerned merely with a repristination of the theology of the believing individual who reflects on himself in solitude (this time on his reality and unreality) and explicates himself."[11] The previous exposition of Bultmann's understanding of the character of Christian believing with his criticisms of overly subjectivistic and nontheological conceptions of the character of Christian believing in chapter two of this thesis has shown that this objectivity of God and man's relationship to God is surely something that Bultmann and Barth agree on here (despite Barth's hesitation and uncertainty). As Barth continues,

> The fact that to date neither the people of Israel nor the Christian community appears to have constitutive meaning for this theology causes one concern. And what can be the meaning of the 'overcoming of the Subject-Object-Scheme,' recently proclaimed with such special enthusiasm, so long as it is not made clear and guaranteed that this enterprise will not once more lead to the anthropocentric myth and call into question anew the *intercourse* between God and man and thus the *object* of theology? Certainly existentialism may have reminded us once again of the elements of truth in the old school by introducing once more the thought that one cannot speak of God without speaking of man. It is to be hoped that it will not lead us back into the old error that one can speak of man without first, and very concretely, having spoken of the living God.[12]

Barth's concerns here are legitimate, but his anxieties might not be. While Bultmann may not emphasize the role of the Christian community as greatly as Barth there are places in his theology that mention the important communal dimension of the character of Christian believing. As we can recall, Bultmann wrote that, "It is no longer possible to separate piety and teaching and then to understand the teaching as a theoretical explanation of the piety. On the contrary, the life itself is founded on faith in Christ, and that means it is founded on what is taught about Christ in the

[10] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 50.
[11] Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 56.
[12] Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 56.

community."[13] When it comes to Barth's conception of the act of faith the people of Israel' don't constitute much of the meaning either. There may be a valid point to be made when we are talking about the shape of their overall theologies, but when it comes to describing the human act of faith the Old Testament background of the people of Israel does not play a huge, explicit, part in either of their descriptions. Furthermore, Bultmann's selfless acts for his Jewish friends during the wars mitigates any anti-Semitic charges that might be leveled against him (the respect of Bultmann's Jewish friends is still evident at his grave today). This chapter is not focused on evaluating their overall theologies, but only those portions which pertain to their understandings of the Christian act of faith.[14] As mentioned above, the "overcoming of the subject-object Scheme" need not necessarily lead to the reductive form of anthropocentrism. In fact, acknowledging this overcoming of the "subject-object Scheme" allows us to (as Bultmann argued) describe the reality of faith in greater detail and with greater phenomenological adequacy. This need not sublate the genuine *intercourse* between God and humanity that takes place in the event of reconciliation through the character of Christian believing. Existentialism, properly understood and non-reductively engaged with, need not lead us back into solipsistic narcissism.

In light of the dangers (which are not inevitable) Barth is right to affirm the non-private nature of an individual's faith. As he later elaborates,

> For this reason there is no private Christianity. For this reason we cannot but take seriously, affirm, and love this community in its peculiarity. While we cannot but view critically in all details its assuredly human—all too human—efforts for better knowledge and better confession, for its meetings, its inner order, and its outward task, we must also view them as seriously important. For this reason, too, theology cannot be carried on in the private lighthouses of some sort of merely personal discoveries and opinions. It can be carried on only in the church—it can be put to work in all its elements only in the context of the questioning and answering of the Christian community and in the rigorous service of its commission to all men.[15]

What Barth does not elaborate on here is the philosophical and phenomenological dimensions of intersubjectivity that go into constituting cognition and understanding, both within and without of

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[13] Rudolf Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, 276.

[14] From a content perspective, however, Christianity's historical relationship to Judaism and to Christ's Jewishness is an important dimension. I by no means want to come across as if I am lightly dismissing this. In the interest of confining my focus on their various conceptions on the human act of faith Barth's charge against Bultmann is not that detrimental as he himself does not incorporate this into his section articulating the act of faith.

[15] Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 64-65.

the church. The non-private and social dimensions of the character of Christian believing are largely oriented around the relationship of the church and her believers. This is an undeniable and very important aspect, but the relationality of believers out-with the church plays a role that is worth elaborating on as well. This is not to say, however, that Barth does not acknowledge this aspect even if he does not go into great detail. He does acknowledge the intertwined relationality of human persons.

In Barth's "The Gift of Freedom: Foundation of Evangelical Ethics" (originally given at a meeting of the *Gesellschaft für Evangelische Theologie* in 1953) he writes, "I, too, have heard the news that we can speak about *God* only by speaking about *man*. I do not contest this claim. Rightly interpreted, it may be an expression of the true insight that God is not without man. This means in our particular context that God's own freedom must be recognised as freedom to be a partisan for man."[16] Here again Barth affirms the mutually constituting relationship between God and humanity for the understanding that comprises the character of Christian believing. However, of direct relevance to the preceding paragraph, he also goes on to briefly discuss and acknowledge the intersubjective relationality of human persons amongst themselves. He acknowledges this in the context of speaking about human freedom. As he states, "Human freedom is not realised in the solitary detachment of an individual in isolation from his fellow men. God is *a se* (for himself), but He is *pro nobis* (for us). For us! It is true that He who gave man freedom because He is man's friend, is also *pro me* (for me). But I am not Man, I am only *a man*, and I am a man only in relation to my fellow men. Only in encounter and in communion with them may I receive the gift of freedom. God is *pro me* because he is *pro nobis*."[17] Barth here acknowledges the seeds of the important dimensions of human relationality but does not elaborate further. At one point Barth writes,

> *Faith* is the obedience of the *pilgrim* who has his vision and his trust set upon God's free act of reconciliation. This obedience confirms and evinces the transition from sin to righteousness, from the flesh to the spirit, from the law to the sovereignty of the living God, from death to life in the small and preliminary, yet determined, steps of the daily journey. *Love* is the obedience of the *witness* who is summoned to announce this transition. The witness announces God's victorious deed, offered to all his brothers and sisters far and nigh so that they might greet it as their light. This obedience in love and faith is the human response to the divine offer of justification, sanctification, and calling in Jesus Christ.[18]

[16] Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 69-70.
[17] Barth, *The Humanity of God,* 77-78.
[18] Barth, *The Humanity of God,* 82.

There are many aspects in this quote that illustrate similar dimensions of Barth's understanding of the character of Christian believing elaborated on in chapter one of this thesis. Here Barth portrays the Christians faith as the ongoing journey of following Christ amidst the concrete circumstances of her life. This statement is loaded with phenomenological implications that could fruitfully be elucidated. Barth here also alludes to the intimate connection between faith and love. There are many other substantive points of similarity when it comes to Barth and Bultmann's descriptions of the character of Christian believing (as evidenced in the first two chapters).

For example, they both emphasize faith as a form of humble obedience. At times Barth seems to question this. As he writes, "If demythologising is anywhere necessary and demanded, it is at this point. . . .to reject the idea that, in virtue of an inner quality of what the believing man does, faith is the real means which man can use to justify himself and himself to declare the divine pardon."[19] But as Bultmann himself states, "Faith is the attitude opposed to that urge for recognition—the radical abandonment of self-glorification, of the desire for recognition by one's own strength and achievement. It is the knowledge that the recognition which makes him secure for himself and in the presence of God can only be gifted. Faith pronounces the saying 'what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst not receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?' (1 Cor. 4.7). In faith man receives justification, honour and recognition in God's sight."[20] As was shown in chapter one, confession is a significant aspect that constitutes the character of Christian believing for Barth. Bultmann likewise says that "'Faith' is further insured against such misconceptions by the fact that *it is simultaneously 'confession.*' 'Faith' is 'faith' in . . .' That is, it always has reference to its object, God's saving deed in Christ."[21]

James D. Smart wrote *The Divided Mind of Modern Theology* in 1967 where he contrasts the early Barth and the early Bultmann. For him it is an either/or situation. Either we go with the existential theology of Bultmann, or we go with the dogmatic theology of Barth. This seems too simplistic in light of our previous discussion. As Smart writes near the end of his book,

> Shall theology be based on the word to which faith responds or shall it be based on the faith which responds to the word? Here two roads divide. On the first, theology is possible as a knowledge of God that has within it the only true knowledge of man. On the second, theology is possible only in the form of statements about the self-understanding of man

[19] Barth, *CD,* IV.1, 618.
[20] Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 171.
[21] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, 317.

> which has been determined by God and it becomes difficult to prevent theology becoming no more than anthropology and soteriology.[22]

This is a false option, and one that harbors unreckoned-with philosophical assumptions about the nature of understanding the Word, words, or anything or anyone at all. In the wake of those like Wittgenstein and others who have shown how understanding linguistic content is intimately tied up with our various embodied ways of existing with one another in the world this sharp dichotomy between 'existential' understanding and a proper 'objective' understanding breaks down. Furthermore, by not engaging with Barth's later work or Bultmann's *Theologische Enzyklopädie* he neglects to deal with the portions of Barth's writing where he concedes the "existential" dimensions of theology and the portions of Bultmann's writing where he criticizes those who lose God as the object of theology. Ultimately his opening question is an unhelpful question because the word is understood *through* faith, it can no more be *based* on the word apart from faith than it can be *based* on faith apart from the word if an aspect of understanding remains an ever-present dimension of this theological phenomenon.

Insofar as this man is not an abstract man, but a historically and sociologically concrete man, then the understanding of the word, which takes place through faith, must itself be holistically constituted. Barth at least begins to acknowledge this when he earlier says that "God concerns himself with, loves, and calls him as *this* being in his particular totality. In bringing into action his particular nature man, as *this* being, may and should praise Him and be submissive to His grace in thankfulness. It would not do even partially to cast suspicion upon, undervalue, or speak ill of his humanity, the gift of God, which characterizes him as this being. We can meet God only within the limits of humanity determined by Him."[23]

With Barth we ought to agree that we need to speak very concretely about God on the basis of Christian revelation through the Scriptures and through the theological tradition(s) of the Church, but with Bultmann we ought to also agree that we need to speak very concretely about the human appropriation of theological knowledge in all its phenomenological complexity as it actually takes place in lived reality. Anything less would amount to a tacit acting as if the living God (that both Barth and Bultmann emphasize) was in fact not living and acting in our present concrete situations.

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[22] James D. Smart, *The Divided Mind of Modern Theology: Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann 1908-1933* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 228.
[23] Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 54.

Theology and faith construed along stereotypical idealist or stereotypical empiricist (or existentialist) lines is likewise a false option and an unhelpful picture that fails to be both phenomenologically and theologically adequate.

Beyond Barth and Bultmann

Bultmann's rejection of understanding faith as a disposition warrants further explanation and critical comparison between how he understood dispositions as they relate to belief and how this differs from more contemporary dispositional accounts of believing (which are less reductive as they view the various faculties of the mind as mutually intertwined rather than in a more isolated manner). Barth and Bultmann's rejection of conceptions of faith as mere "feeling," as mere "assenting," or as mere "willing" make more sense in a framework that viewed those aspects of human cognition in isolation from one another. In today's setting where, for example, the emotions and the intellect are seen to be mutually conditioning and intertwined it makes less sense to strongly reject that faith and the character of Christian believing ought to be understood (even primarily) as any one aspect in isolation from others. This development need not only be made in conversation with contemporary philosophers and theologians but could also be made in conversation with ancient conceptions of the nature of Christian faith. As has been shown in the previous chapters, for both Barth and Bultmann Christian believing involves the whole person.[24]

[24] J.G. Hamman's writings are something that could help shed light on this dimension, in addition to more contemporary research like that of Mark Wynn, Graham Ward, and others. As John Betz helpfully summarizes this aspect of integration in Hamman's thought, "On the one hand, then, it is out of profound respect for the mystery of marriage as containing some kind of *ultima ratio* that Hamann inveighs against all forms of modern purism. In the *Socractic Memorabilia* he critiqued the puritanical separation of reason from faith; in the *Aesthetica* he critiqued the puritanical separation of reason from the senses and the passions; later he critiques the puritanical separation of reason from language and tradition; and here in the *Essay* he implicitly critiques all of these 'acts of separation,' which culminate in the separation of God from his creation, as embodying the antithesis of the mystery of marriage (and therein, implicitly, the mystery of Antichrist)" (John Betz, *After Enlightenment: The Post-Secular Vision of J.G. Hamann* [Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009], 182). As Hamann himself more graphically states, "Presumably the senses stand in the same relation to understanding as the stomach does to the vessels which secrete the finer and higher fluids of the blood, without whose circulation and influence the stomach could not perform its office. Everything that is in our understanding has previously been in our senses, just as everything that is in our entire body has once passed through our own stomach or our parents'" (Hamann, 'Philological ideas and doubts' in *Hamann: Writings on Philosophy and Language,* tr. and ed. by Kenneth Haynes [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 116).

Contemporary work done on the nature of dispositional accounts of believing and an investigation and how they might differ from prior conceptions of moral dispositions would help bring clarity to Bultmann's reaction against understanding faith as a disposition, and to why we should move beyond this reaction in adopting dispositional accounts of believing for our understanding of the character of Christian believing. Much of what Bultmann says elsewhere about faith as a historical deed overlaps greatly with non-reductive dispositional accounts of believing, and the latter actually adds some descriptive intelligibility to Bultmann's notion of faith as a historical deed. Not all dispositional accounts of believing equate belief with mere moral dispositions in a Kantian fashion, which seems to be the type of conception that Bultmann reacts against.[25] Dispositional accounts of belief as found in Erich Schwitzgebel, H.H. Price, Ludwig Wittgenstein and others seem to be significantly different as they are trying to explain the phenomenon of believing itself (primarily the notion of 'believing-in') with its intermittent aspects of conscious awareness and latent manifestation embedded in various ways of intentional/intelligent forms of existence.

Both Barth and Bultmann acknowledge that there is a dimension both of passivity/reception in the character of Christian believing as well as a dimension of activity/responding that makes the phenomenon what it is. Both acknowledge that faith is a gift received. Barth does acknowledge this fact, though Bultmann's acknowledgment of this dimension is more nuanced than Barth's. Both, however, could benefit from some engagement with relevant aspects of the contemporary philosophy of action.[26] While Barth acknowledges that the Christian's agency is involved in the event of reconciliation Bultmann proposes the beginning of what is a more sophisticated grammar of action. Faith is a verbal noun involving both action and reception or possession (although this last word needs to be carefully understood as faith is not a possession of some sort of objectified

[25] As Manfred Kuehn notes: "To believe in Jesus as the son of God who has taken up human nature can mean for Kant only that we should try to live in accordance with the genuine moral principles he revealed (*R 6:62*). If we believe in this way, we foster in ourselves the kind of disposition that makes the categorical imperative our rule of action (*R 6:66*). And if we do so, we may hope to be pleasing to God. This is what practical faith is and what believing in Jesus means. It is a purely moral disposition" (Manfred Kuehn "Kant's Jesus" in *Kant's Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: A Critical Guide,* ed. Gordon Michalson [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014], 173).

[26] The first chapter of Kevin Hector's *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) does a good job of beginning to engage with contemporary philosophies of action and of narrative as they could helpfully relate to our understanding of the nature of a Christian's faith.

"thing"). Faith is an enacted state that is gifted and enabled by and through the presence of the giver. The possibility of faith is entirely dependent on the presence of this reality, but faith is at the same time something dynamically active from the believer's perspective. We can begin to understand this dimension by comparing it to the notion of love between partners or between friends; and this is an analogy that Bultmann specifically brings up as alluded to in chapter two. Love is at once an active possibility intentionally related to another that is at the same time entirely dependent on one's encounter with the other. In this sense love is gifted to you, but the nature of the gift consists of both active and passive dimensions. It is not some objectified or static thing that you receive or give one another. This leads to further questions concerning the ontology of beliefs and the phenomenology of believing.

What is the ontology of belief (or the phenomenology of believing)? How do I know what I believe? How does one recognize belief in others? Another way of phrasing the question would be, where is belief embedded? Is it in the private recesses of the mind (construed in an atomically isolated fashion), so that it is only available to introspection, or perhaps empirical scientific observation? Barth and Bultmann begin to answer these types of questions theologically. But their account could be aided by bringing others into the conversation. As Fergus Kerr rightly discusses, Wittgenstein critiques the way of thinking implicit in asking these latter questions for being unhelpfully blind to the location and manner in which the phenomenon of believing actually becomes intelligible to us. This also share's similarities with Bultmann's rejection of objectified conceptions of faith as some type of 'thing'. As Kerr goes on to explain,

> Wittgenstein is saying, that, if challenged over some doctrine of faith, I should have to examine my conscience to decide if I believed it: 'Do I really *believe* that, or am I only pretending to myself?' In such cases, introspection, far from being private inspection of some object-like datum, would be remembering past situations, imagining possible ones, assessing the depth of one's feelings and the like. In most cases, if asked whether you believe a thing or love someone, you do not have to go through any of this—you would say yes or no, unhesitatingly. In *some* cases, however, for instance if asked whether you (still) believed the gospel, you would reflect on what you (still) find it possible to do, you might imagine what life would be if you gave up these practices, you might eventually discover, even with some surprise, that, given the things that you say and do without undue strain and embarrassment, you count as a believer—or not: but you need not struggle to locate some burning faith-sensation in your head or heart.[27]

[27] Fergus Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein* (London: SPCK, 1997), 148.

While the possibility of inner speech, inner thought, or inner sensation is not denied the privileging and isolating of interiority in order to explain what it means to believe (or to have faith) is challenged and deemed to be nonsensical. It is not that various forms of interiority do not accompany believing, but Wittgenstein's argument against the possibility of a private language coupled with his understanding of the nature of language and thought (as always holistically embedded in our various forms of life with one another in the world) challenges those who would privilege placing priority on interiority, and it heavily challenges those who focus solely on interiority when they attempt to offer a conclusive ontology of belief or phenomenology of believing and assume that belief is an entity embedded solely "in the mind" (anyone who thinks this is possible is seen as being dishonest with themselves and confused about what actually enables one to analyze and understand the ontology and phenomenology of belief and believing). Faith and belief are not solely invisible private entities or acts (although there is a depth of interiority to them). Beliefs and believing are also visibly shown and publicly manifested (indeed, the argument is that they must be *shown* in order to manifest all their fullness because believing is inherently more than merely having thoughts or speaking words). As Fergus Kerr reflects, "A man lays his hand on his chest when he takes an oath, as he may clutch his brow when he is solving a problem. Why should such instinctive gestures be taken less seriously than theories that faith is an inner state, thought is in the head, love is in the will and so on? Faith, like thought, is often *visible*."[28]

As Kerr goes on to state, "Faith, like hope and much else, is embedded in human life, 'in all of the situations and reactions which constitute human life' (*RPP* II, 16). But instead of simply saying what anyone knows and must admit, we find ourselves overcome by a myth of mental processes (*Z* 211): faith becomes something so inward and spiritual that it can never be exhibited to anyone else, and the believer soon finds that he too does not know whether he has it."[29] How common a sentiment is this in the churches, even amongst some theologians? This is a possible danger within Barth and in Bultmann's thought if it is not explicitly addressed (they do not necessarily succumb to this way of thinking). To be sure there is a veiled or hidden dimension to faith (which Bultmann and Barth, for example, do well to remind us, as well as challenge us to uphold its distinctly theological dimension beyond its mere sociological and mere secular-

[28] Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, 149.
[29] Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, 150.

phenomenological dimensions).[30] Faith is something that one needs to be transformed and sanctified into in order to fully see and appreciate (in large part due to the blindness that has resulted from the corrupting effects of sin), but the ontology and phenomenology of belief and believing even in specifically Christian faith need not be understood problematically in this private and interior way that Wittgenstein and Kerr criticize. In fact, many passages in the New Testament make more sense when one does not understand belief along those lines.

To take just one New Testament example we can look at the story of the paralytic man lowered through the roof by his friends because they believed that Jesus could heal his paralysis (Mark 2:1-12). What is of particular interest is what Mark records in the first part of verse five, "And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'" What does it mean for Christ to *see* their faith? Does he peer into their mind and see them entertaining propositions such as "Jesus is the Son of God," or does he, through his divine power, observe their bio-chemical brain-states? Is this how Jesus *sees* their faith? Is that *what* he saw? By observing the propositions they are entertaining or the neurological events happening in their brains? [31] Is that what belief *really* is? Wittgenstein and those theologians that draw on his work would have us see this as a reductive, and therefore untrue, account of what it means to believe and what it means to have faith in Christ. The phenomenon of believing and the ontology of belief outstrip and exceed simple physiological or rational reductions. The holistic characters who believe exhibit a holistic way of believing. The faith of those men seeking to have their friend healed of his paralysis that Jesus *saw* was their holistic way of living toward Jesus Christ himself, for the love of their friend. What Kerr and other theologians influenced by Wittgenstein's philosophy offer us is a way out of various forms of reduction and into a more integrated understanding of the character of Christian believing.[32]

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[30] It is still true, in a certain sense, that people need the eyes to see faith, but what we mean when we say this is what is at issue.

[31] Others might say no, he sees the Holy Spirit at work in and behind them. But even this is not directly warranted from the text and it has problematic implications for our wider understanding of the holistic character of Christian believing. When the activity of the Holy Spirit is invoked in an attempt to describe the nature of faith *at the expense* of incorporating the embedded and embodied nature of believing as well as the genuine (but still dependent) agency of the believer faith itself becomes reductively mysterious rather than properly mysterious, reductively spiritual rather than properly spiritual. It becomes something loosed from actual, lived reality.

[32] Paul Johnston helpfully describes Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology as it pertains to the public nature of interiority. See his *Wittgenstein: Rethinking the Inner* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

Rowan Williams can also add another constructive dimension to our engagement with and beyond Barth and Bultmann concerning the character of Christian believing. As he says, "So far from signs (including language itself) being a regrettable necessity in view of our minds being sadly muffled up in bodies, they are intrinsic to our actual thinking and living as bodies."[33] In this sense, one could say that, insofar as faith involves thought done by those "living as bodies," the usage of signs and of language is also intrinsic (mutually fundamental) to the character of Christian believing as well. After praising the value of Fergus Kerr's work in *Theology after Wittgenstein* Williams goes on to assert: "What I think St Thomas is saying is that if we try to signify God and his work by resorting to abstract expressions, talking about minds and ideas in a vacuum, we dangerously forget what *we* are (flesh and blood, timebound), and create a phantom world of pseudo-objects alongside our own familiar one."[34] Williams is here primarily talking about the nature of a sacrament, but we could fruitfully apply this line of thought to our understanding of faith. If we only resort to abstract expressions in our description of the character of Christian believing we run the risk of making it into a pseudo-concept, or a pseudo-phenomenon that bares little connection to who we actually are as embedded and embodied persons. As Williams goes on to say, "So far, then: being human, being bodily and being a user of 'signs' are inseparable. We reflect on ourselves and 'answer' our individual and social past by doing things and making things, re-ordering what the past and present world has given us into a new statement of meaning, self-interpretation and world-interpretation."[35] With this understanding, what it means to believe in Christ includes the recreation of our past and present world in both how we choose to live in it and in how we begin to perceive and understand it and ourselves through our reliance and dependence on the continual grace offered to us in Christ.

As Bultmann emphasizes the historicity of our being, here we also find this emphasis in Williams. More so than Bultmann, however, Williams recognizes that historicity and linguisticality are equally fundamental to who we are as persons. As Williams says (engaging with Cornelius Ernst),

> The difficulty, recognized by Ernst, is to hold on to the conviction that sign-making is a material and historical practice, without making it seem like an arbitrary imposing of form on passive stuff 'out there'; and to counter this we need, of course, the kind of philosophical framework which reminds us that the world is never neutral and passive in a simple sense, but already, primitively, known and thought in signs (in language and meaningful action). Symbolic forms are not just lying around, nor are they thought up as arbitrary glosses on

[33] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 200.
[34] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 200-201.
[35] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 201.

> straightforward experience of the world; they are what we live through as humans—as beings capable of recalling and re-moulding what is given us, taking it forward and so re-moulding ourselves, the horizons of our understanding and our hope.[36]

For Williams, despite this emphasis on human agency, faith is still something that is created and graciously gifted to us by God through the Spirit. And again, like Barth and Bultmann, Christian faith is not merely concerned with assent to a general or abstract form of theism. As he says,

> Spirit may be a mode of interpreting the world's Godlessness to the world, it is Spirit which takes us out of infantile transcendentalism, uncriticized theism, into the faith of Jesus crucified. The face of Spirit is—as Vladimir Lossky memorably expressed it—the assembly of redeemed human faces in their infinite diversity. Human persons grown to the fullness of their *particular* identities, but sharing in the common divine gift of reconciled life in faith, these are the Spirit's manifestation. The Son is manifest in a single paradigmatic figure, the Spirit is manifest in the 'translatability' of that into the contingent diversity of history.[37]

Here the believer's relation to Christ in faith through the power of the Spirit shares a common element that is at the same time and in another way manifest in the particularities of each individual person, since trusting in Christ is not something that is done abstractly but amidst the particular situations of one's life, with the particular relationships one has, and with the particular gifts and desires that God has given. The object of faith is concrete, and so is the believer's mode of relating to the object (or in this case Subject). The significance of embodiment as it is intertwined with the historical and linguistic constitution of human beings is another aspect that is underplayed in both Barth and Bultmann (even if they are not against it, rightly understood). Williams, too, writes of the gifted and created nature of faith. As he says,

> In the costly gift of his chosen and beloved to the risk of rejection and death, God uncovers the scope of his commitment in a way that alters the whole quality of human trust and commitment to him: he creates *faith*. And he creates a community of faith called, exactly as Israel is called, to show his nature in their life by following out the logic of Torah itself. Every act must speak of God, but not in such a way as to suggest a satisfying of divine demands, an *adequacy* of response to God's creative act. What we do is now to be a sign, above all, of a gift given for the deepening of solidarity—or, in Paul's language, ethics is about 'the building up of the body of Christ'. If our acts with one another speak of mutual gift and given-ness, they are signs of the radical self-gift which initiates the Church.[38]

[36] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 201.
[37] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 125.
[38] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 204.

Again though, this creation of *faith* is not the creation of a static substance that is given to us (nor merely a neurological event in our brain or a proposition presented to our conscious mind), but it is more akin to a new kind of capacity (even if it cannot be reduced to a capacity). It is the creation and demonstration of a new way of being in relationship with God, with ourselves, and with one another that is entirely dependent on God's first "self-gift" to us in the person, incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that is continually offered to us in the Spirit. In this relationship we do not just proclaim words or think thoughts that signify Christ, we seek to show Christ in our holistic way of existing in relationship to Christ in the Spirit in the world even as we hope for a world to come or for the ultimate restoration of this one.

Perhaps one of the most significant insights that theologians can draw from Wittgenstein's philosophy of language (in general, but also relevant to our topic of concern) is that the practice of theology is not simply about naming objects correctly (even when it is robustly intellectual or academic) and neither is the character of Christian believing adequately understood as mere correct thinking, isolated from the other holistic dimensions of human existence. Faith is not something that is simply parallel to life, it is a particular way of living it that incorporates the whole person. Williams notes that, "There is indeed at the heart of all Christian theology, as Wittgenstein said about the Gospels, a story with an imperative attached. But the question is, what makes us able to learn to recognize such an imperative, let alone respond to it?"[39] As he goes on to write, "Wittgenstein was – famously – prompted to rethink his philosophy of language by the challenge to describe what was the 'logical form' of a particular Italian gesture of abuse. Analysing what was going on in such a context required more than a view that treated propositions as picturing the logical shape of a state of affairs: ordinary language, stripped to its bare descriptive skeleton, turns out to be only a part of a far larger and more variegated pattern of activity."[40] Upholding that a theological understanding of the nature of faith is cognitive, doctrinal, or propositional in an isolated and abstract way no longer makes as much sense. Neither, however, does a total abandonment of the propositional and doctrinal dimension. This line of thinking forces theologians to think of the cognitive, doctrinal, and propositional as embedded in the historical, practical, and lived reality of Christian believers. However, what is not often adequately realized by those advocating a focus on "lived religion" is

[39] Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 3.

[40] Williams, *The Edge of Words*, 3-4.

that the doctrinal and propositional dimensions of religion are part of its phenomenological reality (and crude reactions against that doctrinal and propositional dimension unwittingly perpetuate the binary opposition that they seek to overcome). A further challenge is to not reduce God and the knowledge of God that is an aspect of the character of Christian believing into a purely ethnographic observation (blind to the effects of sin) and thereby lose the normative dimension of a theology that exists by being a reception of a corrective (and enabling) address by a God who is other than ourselves and who is encountered not merely as savior but simultaneously as Lord. Normative judgments, too, are part of the phenomenal reality of lived religion (and they comprise an aspect of the character of Christian believing). Wittgenstein and Williams here help encourage us to avoid this potential pitfall. Both Barth and Bultmann's exhortation that we ought to understand faith *as* obedience to Christ shares similarities and overlapping points of contact with this imperative dimension.

Cornelius Ernst highlights this dimension as well. For him, faith is that reception and response to God "which is the way of surrendering to the purpose"[41] of God that carries ethical as well as intellectual claims. As he explains,

> But because the claim is a response of surrender to a free purpose, it posits human freedom as a paradigm case; what looks like a single choice turns out to provide the whole context for choice. The will of God—his purpose first, its normative character second—becomes the context within which human choices are assessed in light of the crucial instance of human decision as a fidelity of communion with God. There is, I think, nothing very strange about treating the claim-character of the response of faith like this; the claim would be one of Searle's illocutionary acts, like questioning, asking, promising. But illocutionary acts imply contexts of meaning, and I am proposing that the context of the claim of faith is as much ethical as it is assertoric. The ethical order enters constitutively into the theological order posited by the claim 'Jesus is the Christ'.[42]

Here Ernst, like Wittgenstein, Kerr, and Williams (and Barth and Bultmann), is emphasizing that the ethical is closely integrated with the intellectual just as the assertive form of language is closely connected with the imperative form.[43] God's purpose provides teleological normativity for the multiform and holistic character of Christian believing to participate in.

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[41] Cornelius Ernst O.P., *Multiple Echo: Explorations in Theology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 51.
[42] Ernst, *Multiple Echo,* 51-52.
[43] Ernst also speaks about the unity of faith and its relationship to the tradition(s) of the church as it relates to the content of faith: As he says, "Reception of the Church's continuing tradition of

That being said, Ernst, similar to Bultmann and Barth, is concerned that we don't reduce faith to a mere psychological, sociological, or historical phenomenon, but that we recognize that it is also a supernatural reception and enacted response of an understanding of oneself in light of God's message. As he says,

> Now this faith is not merely the immanent life, in part explicit and in part implicit, of a historic community and a culture in which men creatively bring their own meaning to light. The unifying sense of the whole world of meaning accessible in faith is transcendental disclosure of this meaning to and for men: intrinsically, communication to men of meaning as gift. In the traditional theological terminology, this is the dimension of the theological world of meaning which is called revelation or gospel. The meanings entertained and exchanged in this community inform the community—not only in its language but also in its conduct, its institutions, its rites, its art and music—in such a way that, while remaining human meanings . . ., they are in principle capable of unification not in any human meaning, but only in an ultimate meaning, the Meaning of meaning, God.[44]

This certainly has parallels to other theologians who are influenced by Wittgenstein's insights, but it could also have some interesting parallels to Barth and Bultmann's understanding that true knowledge of God is only ever ascertained in faith (the *fides qua* and *fides quae*) where the inherent dimension of obedience and trust in faith is understood concretely within the believer's historical context. Ernst is also critical of those theologies that reduce our understanding of Christian truth to mere assent. As he says, "Perhaps it is only in the formal system of modern mathematics and logic

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theology is a matter of faith. This is not of course to say that every proposition in every theological system is an object of faith; but faith is a presupposition of insight into the meaning of these diverse theologies, of understanding that they are unified in the object or the realm of their concern; very simply, that they are trying to talk about the same things. This is a point of some importance now that we are more ready to admit the existence of plurality and even profound discontinuities within the single continuing tradition. It is no longer seriously possible to offer an anonymous handbook, however large, and call it simply 'Catholic Theology'; it was not long ago that even Karl Barth, with some justification, seemed to suppose that this was so. Communion, ordinary or extraordinary, in the Church in faith, offers access to a universe of meaning, not open to those who reject this communion. So the Church as a continuing historical institution, and its active spiritual communion of faith together form the double *a priori* of theological meaning. This ecclesiality of faith is of course realized in different degrees, while in all degrees tending by an inner impulse to the union of communion; and the continuing validity of the expression 'Catholic Theology' is due to the self-defining activity of the Church from time to time in excluding theological articulations of faith declared not to be Catholic: the *positive* unity of Catholic theology is not itself capable of exhaustive theological articulation but is the one *reality* of God, Christ, the Church" (*Multiple Echo*, 78).

[44] Ernst, *Multiple Echo*, 78-79. Furthermore, for Ernst "theology as 'science' and autonomous discipline can only reflect upon this lived meaning by being itself an instance of lived meaning" (*Multiple Echo*, 79). This too bears similarities to both Barth and Bultmann

that truth is reduced to the display of the internal consistency of axioms and postulates; . . . At any rate, both the Yes-No character of statements and their claim to 'significance', to depth of truth, are prominently and actively present in theological statements."[45] Similarly, when it comes to how theologians ought to think of appropriating various historical methodologies Ernst states that, "Faith is not mediated by the historical method, though of course faith can and must use the historical method when it is appropriate. Faith is communion with God and the heavenly realities declared by the Church."[46] Here, like Barth and Bultmann, Ernst emphasizes a strong theological realism. As he elsewhere explains further concerning the relationship between faith and the nature of grace,

> Now if Jesus were only a man who lived in Palestine many centuries ago, we would have to try to understand him in many of these ways, though we could only expect to meet him through the reports of those who knew him. But in fact those who tell us about him claim that we may meet him in some other way; that although he lived long ago in the past, he is present personally to those who turn to him in a movement which is called faith, and which he himself makes possible. This new kind of meeting is a new kind of understanding, and a new kind of meaning, which extends the whole range of meaning and understanding of each other we had before and modifies it pervasively. Those who turn to Jesus in faith become aware of new possibilities of meeting other people and understanding them. We may think of it as a new dimension of the world of meaning. It is neither (in the first place) 'objective' nor 'subjective', but modifies the whole process of human meaning: it modifies our understanding of meaning itself and of its possible boundaries; it modifies our sense of 'man' and 'God'. It is within this enlarged world of meaning, given in the experience of Jesus Christ in faith, that we wish to locate grace."[47]

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[45] Ernst, *Multiple Echo,* 79-80.

[46] Ernst, *Multiple Echo*, 121. Here in talking about "realities" Ernst is specifically talking about communion with Mary (although he thinks the statement quoted applies to more than that), something Bultmann would surely not agree with.

[47] Ernst, *The Theology of Grace* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1973), 69. Earlier he states that: "In fact we understand each other in an enormous variety of ways: simply leaving each other room to pass in the street (this is already a highly sophisticated activity, contrasted in our practice with the alternative of pushing each other into the gutter); transacting business with each other in virtue of roles which we adopt for the purpose; explaining each other to ourselves, to others or to each other, in terms of more or less sophisticated sociological or psychological stereotypes; appreciating each other in terms of historical or literary traditions; a silent communion of love which by way of words, gestures, a shared life, has gone beyond words into a breathing stillness" (68-69). He later goes on to discuss the relationship between faith and reason, where like Barth and Anselm he sees reason to be an inherent part of faith itself, not something that is antithetical to it or something that merely comes after faith. As he says, "It would obviously be absurd to pretend that reason only became active after the assent of faith, since faith itself demands even that minimum of reason which

This emphasis on the contemporaneity of Christ, if we can call it that, also bears resemblances to Kierkegaard[48] and Bultmann. Furthermore, Christian faith for Ernst is both simple and complex and it cannot be understood in an entirely objective or subjective fashion, again bearing resemblances to both Kierkegaard and Bultmann. Faith is comprised of aspects that we share in common with other believers, but it also has dimensions that are unique to each individual believer. As he explains,

> It is simple in the sense that it emerges in the utterly elementary gesture in which we can open our hearts to Jesus and touch him with the finger of faith. It is complex in the sense that it has an indefinitely wide range of particular public occasions and embodiments, notably participation in the Eucharist and reading or hearing the Scriptures, and also, less clearly but at least sometimes no less powerfully, in meetings and sharings with other human beings and even in the world of non-human nature as in Hopkins's poem, 'The Windhover.' It is important to recognize that this experience of Jesus Christ in faith involves us in going beyond the distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' ways of talking which has become deeply ingrained in our tacit understanding of ourselves and the world. There are many ways in which philosophers and others have tried to go beyond this distinction, conventionally described as 'Cartesian', even in non-religious and non-theological areas of understanding. To try to go beyond the distinction is not to deny that the distinction can and even must be made, but it is to deny that the distinction is as primary and fundamental as it has sometimes seemed to be. For our purposes here it will be sufficient to try to show that our experience of ourselves and the world is not in fact adequately analysed in terms of a distinction between 'objective' and subjective' understanding; and consequently that our experience and understanding of Jesus Christ in faith is still less adequately analysed in such terms.[49]

This desire to move beyond subjective and objective polarities in our thinking is something that Kierkegaard and Bultmann (and Barth) also emphasize; while they all could be seen to be developing lines of thought that stretch back to Calvin's dictum regarding the inseparability and mutually conditioning nature of knowledge of God and knowledge of self (this is particularly evident in Barth in *The Humanity of God*).

Both Barth and Bultmann acknowledge the social dimension of the character of Christian believing. But what they do not do is offer a detailed description of how social relations inter-subjectively contribute to the formation of individual cognition. This is something that could be helpfully brought into conversation with contemporary philosophy of mind and embodied

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consists in the capacity to hear and to hear discriminatingly, to take part in a communication" (*The Theology of Grace*, 133).

[48] See Kierkegaard's *Practice in Christianity, Kierkegaard's Writings, XX,* translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 9.

[49] Ernst, *The Theology of Grace*, 66-67.

cognition. This also touches on the relationship between the private and public dimensions (or the interior and exterior dimensions) of the ontology of beliefs and the phenomenology of believing. This is something that Ludwig Wittgenstein (and other philosophers and theologians engaged with his work) bring further descriptive clarity to. A closer look at the philosophical dimensions of the intersubjective constitution of individuals helps alleviate charges of reductive individualism when focusing on a description of the character of Christian believing. Someone like H. Richard Niebuhr[50] or even Dietrich Bonhoeffer with their focus on the sociality of the self could add further theological articulation and clarification to add to Bultmann and Barth's descriptions of the character of Christian believing.

The close interconnection between the various holistic dimensions found within the character of Christian believing need not only look for contemporary support. According to Teresa Morgan's recent work *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, the ancient context substantiates this claim as well. Her focus on the earliest Christian understandings of the nature of faith in their historical context offers a helpful contrast to our focus on more recent thinkers. While I don't believe many would want to say that the taxonomy of *fides qua* and *fides quae* encapsulates all that it means to have faith or to believe, Morgan points out that it was first Augustine who introduced the taxonomy and that it has gone on to be influential for theologians ever since.[51] Morgan, however, only chooses to look at the very early mentalities toward *pistis* and *fides*. As she notes at the outset of her study, "Trust and belief, too, are intimately related. It is possible in theory, but in practice almost impossible, to separate the roles of emotion, cognition, action, and relationality in trust."[52] When it comes to understanding the believer's agency in faith Morgan helpfully notes that, "*Pistis* and *fides* are, in linguistic terms, 'action nominals', nouns derived from verbs which abandon distinctions of transitivity to encompass both active and passive meanings of the verb. We might assume that active

[50] As Niebuhr states, "Faith, as we have seen, is not something which exists in a person. It is an interpersonal relation; nor does it exist simply between two persons save insofar as they have a cause which transcends them" (H. Richard Niebuhr, ed. Richard R. Niebuhr, *Faith on Earth: An Inquiry into the Structure of Human Faith* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 109).

[51] Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11. When we look at where Augustine first introduces the taxonomy we see that it is very much understood to be an activity that takes place in the mind, in more of an isolated or compartmentalized manner.

[52] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 22.

and passive meanings cannot be in play at the same time, but in practice they often are."[53] This emphasis on the holistic nature of Christian believing combined with the active and passive dimensions of faith embedded in relationship with God and with others shares points of contact both with Bultmann and Barth, as well as lends support to affirming the holistic character of Christian believing.

In one of her later chapters Morgan talks about the interior dimensions of faith. As she says, "So far, we have seen *pistis* and *fides* and their cognates described as virtues, acts of cognition, and emotions, and we have seen that the virtuous, cognitive, and emotional aspects of the lexica are not always easy to distinguish in individual passages. We can conclude that, alongside their ubiquitous relationality, *pistis* and *fides* have a complex and significant interiority. The relationship between different aspects of that interiority, regrettably, remains all but impossible to map for the great majority of passages."[54] She goes on to note that for many places in the New Testament the interiority of faith remains implicit rather than explicit and the articulation of the interiority of faith never really seems to be a priority for the New Testament authors.[55] As she notes when engaging with 1 Corinthians, "Whatever *pistis* means . . . it seems likely again to be a matter of activity and relationality. In most of these passages the interiority of *pistis*, whether cognitive, ethical, or emotional, is not, at least, Paul's primary concern."[56] The concept of interiority, however, is nowhere near as defined as those that Wittgenstein is reacting against. As such, since Wittgenstein and those theologians who are influenced by him do not flat out deny an interior dimension to faith Morgan's work here can be seen as complimentary rather than in opposition to them.

Morgan does a complementary job at describing the social and communal dimensions of the character of Christian believing that Bultmann and Barth allude to in various portions of their work. Morgan shows the inherently social and interpersonal dimension of individual faith. As she says when engaging with the letter of James she notes, "*Pistis* here [in James 2] is strongly relational, with affective overtones. God chose the poor of this world to be 'rich in *pistis'* (2.5), and told them to love one another as they were loved: this is the 'royal law' of God's kingdom (2.8). *Pistis* is therefore

[53] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith,* 31. She goes on to give an example of this by talking of how the Roman magistrate was simultaneously seen to be trustworthy and trusting in many things (e.g. the law, the gods, the people to allow him to govern, his virtue, etc.).
[54] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 460-461.
[55] See Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith,* 467.
[56] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 466.

a relationship which brings a certain status and membership of a community. As such, it cannot be a wholly interior quality: it must at least involve activity and interpersonal interaction."[57] Morgan here points out that the relationality of faith is not only between human and divine, but simultaneously interpersonal as well. It includes a depth of interiority, but that interiority is also inherently connected with external relationships of activity with other persons. As she elaborates further,

> But Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian sources alike take frustratingly little interest in exploring the nature and internal relationships of *pistis/fides* as an emotion, and act of cognition, and a virtue, and virtually never distinguish between interiority, relationality, and action in portraying its role in society. The message seems clear: interiority, relationality, and action are inseparable wherever *pistis/fides* operates. There are many emotions one can practise on a desert island, and at least a few virtues (wisdom, temperance, self-control). Cognition is by no means constrained by the absence of company. But *pistis/fides* (along with justice, mercy, and a few others) is one of those qualities that can only be practised today socially: it is inherently relational and characteristically expressed in action towards other human beings (or, occasionally, animals). As such, though they acknowledge its interiority, neither Christian nor other writers of the early principate make it the focus of their interest.[58]

This analysis lends credence to J.G. Hamann's criticism of Kant and other enlightenment thinkers for being "separation artists" and to Wittgenstein and others who emphasize the important role of relationality and human activity in the world. Although Barth and Bultmann (and others) do not succumb to this separation, Morgan also laments the strong separation between ethics and systematic theology. As noted above there is a close relationship between assertive and imperative language, between ethical and intellectual dimensions that are tied up in the nature of faith itself. As Morgan notes, "Despite its traditional identification as one of the three 'theological virtues', the ethical aspects of *pistis* tend to be overlooked both in the studies of *pistis* and in studies of ethics in the New Testament, where *pistis* is usually treated as one of the foundations of Christian life rather than as a moral issue on par, for instance, with chastity or the swearing of oaths."[59] The key for systematic theology is to integrate it with these other dimensions and the foundation that Barth and Bultmann have laid in the previous two chapters go a long way to integrating these aspects by emphasizing the inherent dimension of obedience in faith, and in their various attempts to understand faith as an holistically embedded phenomenon.

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[57] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 469.
[58] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 472.
[59] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 473. Although Kant certainly emphasized the ethical dimension.

Interestingly, according to Morgan, the early Christian understandings of *pistis* and *fides* share a lot in common with their surrounding context, but it is mostly the content of *pistis* and *fides* that causes them to uniquely stand out in their cultures. This statement is of course made from a non-theological perspective (not taking into considerations the implicit theological dimensions that are believed and perceived to be taking place in the event faith in light of revelation). As Morgan says,

> Despite the many ways in which early Christian *mentalités* and praxeis relate to the worlds in which the cult arose and remain engaged with it, the communities and ways of thinking which we have seen emerging from this study, in those aspects shaped by *pistis*, are already in some ways rather different from those around them. They are distinctive less because their understanding of the concept and praxis of *pistis* and related concepts in itself is distinctive (though occasionally it is), than because they focus *pistis* on god, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the salvation offered to the faithful by God through Christ. They are distinctive also because the shape of the divine-human and intra-human relationship and community that are formed by *pistis* (in various slightly different shapes in different churches) is not quite like that of any other community of which we know in the first century. By the combination of ways in which they understand and practise *pistis*, Christian communities (in their various forms) are already, by the end of the first century or the beginning of the second, in many ways unique. At the same time, at this point they, and their understanding of *pistis/fides*, are still close to the beginning of a journey which continues to this day.[60]

This way of thinking does two things. First, it gives credence to Barth's emphasis on the importance of the unique message and content of faith. Second, it contributes to justifying the necessity (or at the very least the legitimacy) of a philosophical and phenomenological investigation within a wider theological investigation into the character of Christian believing. In order to have the most adequate theological understanding of the character of Christian believing as it actually takes place in the world both more abstractly dogmatic and phenomenological/philosophical perspectives will need to be incorporated. Failing to do so risks becoming both theological and phenomenological inadequate and in doing risks failing to take seriously the reality of God and the reality of the character of Christian believing in the present situation (problematically reducing God on the one hand and faith on the other). Insofar as theology is about God *and* the human relation to God a theological inquiry into the nature of faith ought to be phenomenologically as well as theologically adequate, availing itself of any philosophical and sociological insights that are deemed helpful. This is not a succumbing of theology to philosophy (theology becoming 'untheological' if you will) but is itself theology being properly theological; taking seriously the fact that God is real and that this is in

[60] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith,* 509.

fact the world and environment created by God for fellowship with humanity. Sharp distinctions between theology and philosophy are indeed untheological. Such a sharp distinction operates with implicit and unreflective assumptions about how human understanding takes place (as it is tied to natural language and the various forms of our existence with others in the world). Theology and philosophy are distinct disciplines, but they cannot be sharply separated, but even more so human persons cannot be neatly separated into philosophical and theological inquirers. Humans inquire theologically through the particularity of their embodied form of existence and through the concepts that their language enables. Insofar as the character of Christian believing is the hallmark of that interaction between God and humanity then an investigation into the nature of faith must be both theologically and phenomenologically adequate if we are to take God and the reality of our relationship to God seriously and not treat it as a mere idea. In other words, our theological reflections on the nature of faith and on the character of Christian believing need to adequately reflect how we actually receive them and enact them within the particularities of our concrete lives in the world.

Conclusion

Both Barth and Bultmann reject understanding faith merely as acceptance of a Christian worldview. Again, as Bultmann states,

> In a *worldview*, which means in a theory about the world as a totality—about its formation, its progression, and its meaning—human beings seek to secure themselves by conceiving their existence on the basis of the world understood in thought. It therefore does not matter whether the worldview is based on rational principles, empirical observation, dogmatic tradition, or value judgments, experiences, and the like. It is essential that a worldview proceeds in general propositions that are true when disregarding my concrete existence in the here and now, since this existence can only be understood on the basis of the worldview.[61]

And as Barth states,

> But it is not the business of Holy Scripture or of Christian faith, with which we have to occupy ourselves here, to represent a definite world-picture. The Christian faith is bound neither to an old nor to a modern world-picture. The Christian Confession has in course of

[61] Rudolf Bultmann, "The Christian Meaning of Faith, Love, Hope" translated by David Congdon in *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann's Dialectical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 846.

> the centuries passed through more than one world-picture. And its representatives were always ill-advised when they believed that this or that world-picture was an adequate expression for what the Church, apart from creation, has to think. Christian faith is fundamentally free in regard to all world-pictures, that is, to all attempts to regard what exists by the measure and with the means of the dominant science of the time. As Christians we must not let ourselves be taken captive either by an ancient picture of this nature or one newly arisen and beginning to be dominant. And above all we must not combine the Church's business with this or that *Weltanschauung*. For *Weltanschauung* is very near 'religion'. But by the decisive content of the Bible, Jesus Christ, we are by no means enjoined to adopt a *Weltanschauung* for our own. We Christians are once for all dispensed from attempting, by starting from ourselves, to understand what exists, or to reach the cause of things and with or without God to reach a general view. So my advice would be, that if you are faced with any such general view, you should bracket it, even if it should be called a Christian *Weltanschauung*.[62]

However, Bultmann's understanding of faith as self-understanding embedded in historical deed in the context of encountering Christ in the kerygma, in the world, commits him to understanding faith as a way of viewing the world. Barth, too, in affirming the cognitive dimensions of the character of Christian believing cannot help but be committed to understanding faith as a way of viewing oneself and the world in relation to and through one's apprehension of revelation in Christ even if this is distinguished (but still related) to various worldviews. As Bultmann goes on to add, "in contrast to this, *Christian faith* claims that this interpretation of human existence overlooks precisely its actual reality. For this existence in the world is always insecure, and indeed because human beings stand under the claim of God, who calls them out of the world. If this claim is heard and affirmed, the person gains a security that is never a worldly phenomenon but rather is only grasped and known in reflection on concrete existence, which is addressed in the here and now by God."[63] Faith for both Barth and Bultmann still involves a particular way of viewing the world, oneself, and God's action in the world as God encounters the believer. As Barth elsewhere states,

> The knowledge received in enlightening and empowering by the Holy Ghost will never be closed but always open. Yet it is the objective side which is really decisive. As we have seen, we do not have to perceive immanent qualities and determinations of creaturely occurrence, but divine actions by which it is continually given afresh its function, telos and character. In the freedom of faith man follows the way and movement of the divine providence which is free in a very different sense. What God has done to-day, and revealed to man as His action, He will do again to-morrow, but He will perhaps do it quite differently, and reveal it to man in a very different form. That to-morrow as to-day He will give creaturely occurrence its

[62] Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (London: SCM, 1949), 59-60.
[63] Bultmann, "The Christian Meaning of Faith, Love, Hope," 846.

> function, telos and character is the faithfulness of God on which we can and should count, the constant element for which the believer will look even in respect of to-morrow. But what he cannot say is how God will do it. His world-view as his understanding of creaturely occurrence and the divine providence reigning in and over it will always be that which corresponds to the present measure of his faith and knowledge, to the insight given him by God to-day.[64]

Faith as a "way of viewing the world" is a holistic and ontological notion of being and believing in Christ within the particularities of one's lived context, culture, language, relationships, etc. There is a subtle difference between "worldview" and "way of viewing the world," but it is an important one that Barth and Bultmann could have taken more time to work out in greater detail (even though their understanding of faith pushes this way). A "way of viewing the world," as I am using the phrase, is a more holistic or involved notion, whereas assent to a worldview is abstracted and relegated to the intellect, understood in an objectified manner. A "way of viewing the world" has more phenomenological undertones, whereas "worldview" has more of an idealist connotation that is largely understood in a way that is distanced and isolated from a living relationship to God, who is encountering the believer in her present concrete reality.

The complex character of Christian believing played a central role in Bultmann's theology. Forty years after Bultmann's death, the same might be said of Graham Ward in the first volume of his systematic theology. The reflexive relationship between the holistic characters *who believe* and the multidimensional character *of believing* (or *of faith in Christ*, which is inherently constituted by some sort of actual relationship to the divine in the particularity and concreteness of the created world), is a central axiom for Bultmann and Ward (and an important one for Barth also, even if the phenomenal complexity is underplayed). Ward, however, seems to offer an additionally nuanced position drawing out more aspects of this reflexive relationship.

As Ward mentions, "If theology is a proclamation of life in Christ, as that life issues from the double-helix of Scripture and the Church, then the oxygen and blood which sustains that life is faith seeking understanding."[65] As he continues, "There is no life in Christ—where my breathing is also the breathing of the Spirit of God within me—without participation by faith in Christ; and that

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[64] Barth, *Church Dogmatics III.3 (§§ 48-51)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), 56. As he goes on to state, "He will not, of course, believe in this partial world-view. But as he believes only in God the Lord, he will have enough light to make some such partial view of world-occurrence-the part which meets his own requirements -indispensable" (*CD III.3*, 57).
[65] Graham Ward, *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 224.

participation 'seeks'; and what it seeks is to understand what it is to be more deeply hidden with Christ in God."[66] However, like Bultmann's criticism of abstract and over-intellectualized understandings of the nature of trust (which are also consonant with insights from Wittgenstein's philosophy), the understanding which faith seeks is not isolated or abstracted contemplation of "what it is to be more deeply hidden with Christ in God." It is inherently engaged in our way of being in the world. It is inherently theological, but in remaining inherently theological it is also inherently embedded and embodied in our understanding and existing in the actual world that we understand and exist in. As Ward goes on to mention, "concepts like faith, understanding and their conjunction have a history, just as they have a language and a grammar from which they emerge. We might call these the historical and philological contexts of the concepts. But as concepts I wish to emphasis that we are naming actions and processes. . . . faith can be a substantive when we talk about 'the Faith' as the contents of what the Christian Church believes (summed up in one of the Creeds or the Articles of the Faith). But neither faith nor understanding here are substantives in this way. They are governed by the verb 'seeking'; they are active and engaged, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially."[67] Bultmann himself does not do as much with the concept of "faith seeking understanding" (Barth does), but what he attempts to do with the notion of trust combined with self-understanding and historical deed shows parallels with Ward's project to provide a more holistic description of what it means to seek understanding in faith in an embedded and embodied manner.

Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty Ward states, "'Perceptual faith' is the seeing of meaningful form (what has been referred to as Merleau-Ponty's 'gestalt ontology') through intentional expectation and projection. If it is a 'faith' in an invisible *logos* that opens horizons of meaning within *phusis*, it is not then some intellectual assent to the unknown that denies material reality. It is a 'faith' that is co-posited with perception itself."[68] Points of contact can be discerned between this way of thinking about perceptual faith and Barth's way of speaking about perceiving

[66] Ward, *How the Light Gets In*, 224.
[67] Ward, *How the Light Gets In*, 224.
[68] Ward, *How the Light Gets In*, 229. Ward here is aware of the problems of assuming 'pure' notions of descriptive perception or 'experience.' As he states, "how is it possible to achieve a pure description that is not already interpreted by the very concepts called forth by the intuition? To be fair, Merleau-Ponty was aware of this fact from the beginning: the 'elementary even [of intuition] is already invested with meaning' and concludes that perception must be 'understood as interpretation'," (Ward, *How the Light Gets In*, 233).

divine action in the world. Perceptual faith is a way of seeing the invisible within the visible. Of holistically experiencing the transcendent within the immanent. The 'conviction of things not seen' in Hebrews 11:1 is thus not so much a conviction about a world of Platonic forms, but more so a conviction of the invisible workings of the Father in Christ through the Spirit in the created world. This conviction, while not necessarily barring an eschatological world to come, is embedded and embodied in our particular ways of existing in relation to Christ. The symbolic, narratival, and doctrinal are closely intertwined with the somatic, active, and lived reality of particular believers diachronically and synchronically participating analogically[69] in the activity and life of God in and for creation with and for one another.[70] Perceptual faith involves seeing the world and one's place in it as God's creation with the mind of Christ which simultaneously involves a holistic way of being in the world since the character of Christian believing is more than disinterested intellectual assent. This involves creative discernment to see the particularity of one's life in a way that Christ would have you see it, and it simultaneously involves enacting one's life in a way that Christ would have you live it. Faith is a living, dependent, and transforming (or creatively conforming) relationship. In this sense Ward would have us see faith as prayer and as love and as hope, where none of those concepts could be adequately understood as mere knowledge, assent, or trust in abstraction from an actual relationship with the divine in the actual created world that we live in.

In the end, perceptual faith in Christ dynamically affects how one views the world, but unlike mere assent to a world view it affects and involves the whole character of Christian believing; embedded, embodied and all. In this sense it better accounts for the wholly self-involving nature of the character of Christian believing. This type of articulation of the holistic character of Christian believing is what is needed to better appreciate why believing is centrally significant for Christianity.

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[69] Like Barth, Bultmann, and Kierkegaard, amidst this way of thinking Ward still affirms the ontological difference between God and creation. Hence, why participation is understood analogically. However, given Ward's affirmation of a certain form of panentheism coupled with his stronger appreciation for created materiality, his understanding of the relationship between God and the created material universes is capable of a much thicker description than Bultmann and Barth

[70] This also makes sense of Barth's notion of perceiving the 'true' church in its 'third dimension' where an understanding of the church can't be reduced either to merely sociological and historical dimensions, nor can it be reduced to an entirely ethereal dimension. Its true theological dimension is somehow invisible within the visible, perceptible to those with faith.

Chapter 4: A Non-Reductive Dispositional Approach to the Character of Christian Believing

Introduction

Hans-Georg Gadamer once wrote, "The gospel does not exist in order to be understood as a merely historical document, but to be taken in such a way that it exercises its saving effect."[1] Along with Barth and Bultmann the Reformers also adamantly differentiated between genuine faith and mere belief in the historicity of the gospel accounts. One of the main ways Protestants have articulated this difference is by distinguishing *fiducia* from *assensus* and *notitia* (all of which are understood to be aspects of genuine faith) where *fiducia,* typically understood as trust, most fully accounts for how the gospel is understood "in such a way that it exercises its saving effect," and is as such characteristic of genuine faith. The central aim of this chapter is to show how a dispositional description of believing helpfully articulates and more intelligibly differentiates the integral aspect of *fiducia* in genuine faith and that it also more intelligible make sense of how the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believe as described in Barth and Bultmann can be better seen to hold together. It does so by holistically accounting for the dynamic implicit and explicit dimensions intrinsic to the concept of faith itself as an embodied concept that accounts for the rich complex of aspects that constitute the character of Christian believing. In doing so it more intelligibly distinguishes genuine faith (*fiducia*) from mere intellectual assent (*assensus*) and adds intelligibility to how faith normatively relates to living in the world by better articulating the relationship between belief and intentional existence. In describing the character of Christian believing as a multiform and non-reductive disposition it not only does not succumb to Barth and Bultmann's criticisms but it enhances the intelligibility of their rich and dynamic descriptions of the nature of a Christian's faith. It also seeks to further show how we might go about understanding the intellectual or cognitive content of faith in a manner that is not reductively intellectualist but is at the same time not entirely anti-intellectual or fully non-cognitive either.

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[1] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 307. The above quotation is part of Gadamer's argument that application is an integral element of understanding itself, rather than something that takes place only after understanding has occurred. Furthermore, under Gadamer's notion of understanding even "historical faith" inevitably consists of a certain type of inherent application even if it is distinguishable from the application involved in "genuine faith." Unlike Paul Ricoeur, however, I realize that Gadamer did not see himself as a Christian. As he states elsewhere: "Anyway, I have no religious faith at all. I always say that with a certain amount of regret" (Jean Grondin, *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 25).

A few preliminary clarifications are in order. First, at the outset it should be recognized that this chapter is not (nor is this thesis) focused on articulating the relationship between divine action and human action, although it assumes that genuine faith never takes place in isolation from divine action and the grace of divine presence. As Kevin Hector has pointed out, there is "a seeming paradox at the heart of Christian belief: according to the New Testament's claims about the new covenant, that which is strictly external to one and due solely to God's grace, namely, the possibility of following Christ, must become one's own possibility and therefore recognizable as due to one."[2] This chapter is not an attempt to sort out that paradox directly. Rather, the concern of this chapter is to further articulate latter half of that paradox as it is primarily focused on the relationship between a Christian's belief and the Christian's embedded and embodied intentional existence and it seeks to articulate that relationship through further theological and philosophical conceptual analysis of the character of Christian believing.[3] Second, it should be noted that since the goal is a

[2] Kevin Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics*, 260.

[3] In this sense this project should be seen primarily as a subset of theological anthropology concerned with an aspect of soteriology (concerning both individual and cosmic redemption and restoration). It takes for granted that faith occurs in an ontological and personal encounter with the living God through the Holy Spirit in the midst of our concrete existence; and that it is sustained by that relationship and union with Christ. Moreover, it assumes that this encounter is substantially different than any of our human encounters by virtue of the fact that the Holy Spirit does not remain external to Christian believers, but in some mysterious sense is understood to indwell Christian believers (see William P. Alston, "The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," in *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989], 239-252). The fact that God is not an object among objects or a self among selves further problematizes any simplistic analogy with human relations. Since a Christian's believing is inherently reliant on God, regardless of how integral the believer's personal agency is to the concept of faith it can still be understood to depend on God's grace because the believer's faith is never manifested in isolation (i.e. it is always a response to the call of God and in an encounter with God who remains free), it is grace not because God mechanically operates the believer, but because the believer is operating (in a reliant, responsive, yet genuine way) in the presence of God. Nor is it the believer's act of faith the ultimate object of trust. As Wolfhart Pannenberg helpfully states: "If we regard faith itself as guaranteeing the truth and reality of its contents, then we declare it to be in fact the sustaining basis of its contents. But that entails a radical perversion of its nature. The nature of faith is to rely on God as other than itself and thus to have the basis of its existence outside itself" (Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol. 3*, 153). Faith as an act is not directed upon itself as a faith in the act of faith, but as faith in Christ. It is this supernatural encounter with the contemporaneous Christ and its particular content that distinguishes Christian faith from other forms of faith and belief and only as such is it *sui generis*. In other respects, Christian faith can, indeed, inevitably must, be described analogously to how we describe the phenomenon of human belief in general. As Louis Berkhof writes: "As a psychological phenomenon faith in the religious sense does not differ from faith in general" (Berkhof, *Reformed Dogmatics Volume II* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1932], 94). Similarly Charles Hodge writes: "What is the psychological nature of the act or

description of Christian believing it is not concerned with justifying Christian belief in God and, as such, doesn't deal with arguments in the philosophy of religion concerning the hiddenness of God and arguments from nonbelief such as are found in the work of J.L. Schellenberg.[4] Third, as should be apparent from the previous chapters that faith is a gift from God is not disputed, rather the nature or dynamic character of that gift is what is at issue. There is a common enough tendency among some Protestants, concerning the believer's action and agency, to articulate the nature of that gift in an entirely passive way. That is disputed, for reasons that I hope have begun to become clear in the previous chapters and will hopefully become even more clear below.[5] Fourth and finally, faith

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state of the mind which we designate faith, or belief? In this aspect the discussion concerns the philosopher as much as the theologian" (*Systematic Theology Volume 3* [Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1873, 2008], 42).

[4] See J.L. Schellenberg, *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[5] Perhaps surprisingly, the Reformed theologian John M. Frame explicitly states, "Faith, after all, is something we do. We are the ones who believe, not God" (Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord* [Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing Company, 2006], 192). Berkhof also points out that "when the Bible speaks of faith, it generally refers to faith as action," and "that faith is an activity of man as a whole" (*Reformed Dogmatics Volume II*, 97). Calvin, however, articulates his understanding thus: "We shall now have a full definition of faith if we say that it is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favor toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit" (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960] Bk. 3, Ch. 2, §7, 475). For all its merit, Calvin's description of the believer's faith tends to lend itself to be understood as an implantation and passive reception of some "thing" in the mind that nevertheless involves the affections of the heart. The way that he speaks about faith as "the principle and cause of that action" (*Ibid.*, §31, 475) tends to portray faith as the subject of the believer's action as opposed to the believer, who has faith, being the subject of his or her action. Akin to viewing "the will" as acting on the agent causing intentional action, rather than seeing the agent with a will as the subject of his or her action as opposed to what Frame and Berkhof state above. Perhaps here we are misled by a metaphor based on physical causality rather than one more appropriate to personal agencies. A dispositional account of faith must avoid this as well. As Dallas High states: "My attempt to display the active force of the verb 'to believe' and its cognates is to take exception to those accounts which view 'believing' (generally discussed in terms of the substantive, 'belief') as a mere behavioral or mental disposition to act in a certain way or which look upon 'faith' as something utterly given to a passive recipient. Of course this is not to deny dispositions, even religious ones . . . but it is to reverse the whole course of our conceptualization of them, i.e. that they are not a function of causal dependence but are, among other things, intentional placings by human beings. Dispositional accounts of 'believing' not only do injustice to the active force of language in general, and 'believing' in particular, but vitiate the very concept of 'person,' since only 'you' and 'I' can be the subject of 'believing'" (High, *Language Persons and Belief* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1967], 156-157). This understanding of a disposition is along the lines of what Barth and Bultmann criticize, but a dispositional account of believing need not succumb to this criticism as it need not be so reductively understood.

is not a simple concept. It is expressed in a variety of ways and in a variety of situations within Scripture and it should come as no surprise, then, that there have been a variety of approaches to understanding it throughout the history of Christian theology.[6] A comprehensive description of the implicit dimensions of explicit faith is not attempted here but only that which is helpful in illustrating both the intelligibility of a complex holistic concept of the character of Christian believing and the central significance of belief in and for Christianity. It aims to take a closer look at how a dispositional description of belief can more helpfully describe how the integral aspect of *fiducia* in classical Protestant understandings of the nature of faith is inherently more, although not less, than cognitive as beliefs are understood to be inherently embedded in one's concrete activity in the world (though not reducible to it), and to more helpfully describe how faith relates to a believer's transforming intentional existence in a manner that is neither theologically or anthropologically reductive.

Faith is not a static concept. It is not something that can be fully understood apart from articulating our involvement or activity in it. This is demonstrated by the fact that *fides quae creditur* (the faith which is believed) cannot be separated from *fides qua creditur* (the faith by which it is believed).[7] In other words, to intelligibly speak about belief one must both speak about the content of that belief[8] as well as the act or disposition of believing that content—the content and the act can be distinguished, but not separated.[9] Hence, to speak of belief we cannot avoid speaking about the believer doing something. Faith, therefore, cannot be understood as some entirely passive thing that

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[6] For a helpful survey of this variety, both in Scripture and in the history of Christian theology (both Protestant and Roman Catholic), see Avery Dulles' *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith*. Dulles himself suggests seven models as heuristic aids for understanding the various emphases throughout the history of Christian theology.

[7] Francis Turretin, for example, asserts that faith is sometimes "taken objectively for the faith 'which is believed' or the doctrine of the gospel" and other times "is taken subjectively and habitually for the faith 'by which it is believed,' which is again distinguished by some into the faith 'by which we believe God' or 'by which we believe in God' . . . so that to believe God is to believe that God is; to believe in God is to have faith in God speaking; and to believe in God is to place confidence in him" (Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Vol. 2* [Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1994], 559).

[8] A belief is always understood amid our concrete activity in the world in light of other held beliefs and part of understanding the content of a belief is understanding how that belief is normatively related to other beliefs, as will be further explained below. Furthermore, when we speak of faith in God we are not only speaking about faith in his existence but also in his particular disposition and action towards and for us.

[9] However, one must also distinguish between the conscious entertainment of a belief and a latent possession of a belief, as is discussed more below.

is given that then manifests in action, but must in some way be understood to include the believer's agency inherently.

Protestants have traditionally, since the time of Reformed Scholasticism, described genuine faith as consisting of at least three elements: *notitia, assensus,* and *fiducia.*[10] *Notitia* is best understood as cognitive content.[11] For someone to have *notitia* is simply for someone to be aware of some sort of information; without specifying a particular propositional attitude regarding it. Given one's awareness of the content of the gospel one could: enjoy it, hate it, believe it, desire it, declare it, doubt it, command it, dismiss it, ridicule it, or fear it etc. *Assensus* is best understood as commitment to the truth of *notitia*. This means that someone not only is aware of particular content but is also committed to the correctness of that content. However, you can assent to the truth of some particular content without properly submitting yourself to that content. The demons mentioned in the second chapter of the Epistle of James are a classic example: they believe "and shudder." *Fiducia*, on the other hand, is best understood as trust, appropriation, or confident submission to the content that is believed to be true. This means that someone allows the content that is believed to be true to play a normative role in guiding one's thought, behavior, and perception. As should be apparent, according to this understanding, you cannot have *fiducia* without *assensus* and *notitia*. You can have *assensus* without *fiducia*, but not without *notitia* and you can have *notitia* without either *assensus* or *fiducia*. If all of these are not present in one's conception of the nature of faith (at least latently) you do not have genuine faith.

Furthermore, faith is a holistic concept. The believer is involved cognitively, emotionally, volitionally and physically. It cannot be fully recognized as assent to an abstract idea or proposition, as a content-less feeling, nor as just any type of action, bodily movement, or linguistic utterance. Any of these taken by themselves results in a reductive conception of faith. As such faith is not a concept that can be adequately recognized in the abstract. Faith is an inherently embodied concept. As will

[10] Francis Turretin expands these three basic acts of faith into seven direct acts and one reflex act: act of knowledge, theoretical assent, fiducial and practical assent, act of refuge, act of reception and union, reflex act, and act of confidence and consolation (see his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology Vol. 2*, 560-564).

[11] *Notitia* is often translated as "knowledge," but knowledge is commonly understood as "justified true belief," although this understanding of knowledge is debated (see Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23, [1963], 121–23), so in order to better distinguish *notitia* from *assensus* it is more helpful to think about *notitia* along the lines of one's awareness of content without specifying one's relationship to that content as holding it to be justifiably true.

be argued further, *fiducia* becomes more intelligibly distinguished from *assensus* only when we look at a believer's concrete activity or existence in the world. In order to move beyond *assensus* in recognizing what *fiducia* is we have to look at it in light of our concrete activity in the world and our concrete relations with others, and a dispositional analysis of believing helps do that.

A Non-Reductive Dispositional Account of Christian Believing

What is a disposition? In one sense, "a disposition is a property (such as *solubility, fragility,* elasticity) whose instantiation entails that the thing which has the property would change, or bring about some change, under certain conditions,"[12] but we are not concerned with understanding a disposition along the lines of natural causation (understood in a deterministic and impersonal fashion). In another sense a disposition is understood to be "a person's inherent qualities of mind and character."[13] Here we are concerned with dispositions of persons, which are analogous to, but different than dispositions of mere physical substances. A major difference being that in the case of physical substances, *ceteris paribus*, the relation between the disposition and its manifestation necessarily follows, while in the case of personal dispositions the relationship between the disposition and its manifestation is not a necessary one—this is complicated by the fact that persons have multiple dispositions that can come into tension.[14] This importantly acknowledges the fact that we don't always act in accord with our professed beliefs and, furthermore, that we are never only dealing with one belief. We deal with a complex of related beliefs, which we hold to with various degrees of commitment (which also fluctuate between being implicitly and explicitly expressed). Beliefs also have various degrees of prescriptive weight based on the particular activities that we are engaged in and value.[15]

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[12] D.M. Armstrong, C. B. Martin, U. T. Place, and Tim Crane, *Dispositions: A Debate* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1.

[13] Angus Stevenson and Christine A. Lindberg, *New Oxford American Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), s.v. "disposition."

[14] See H. H. Price, *Belief: The Gifford Lectures Delivered at the University of Aberdeen in 1960* (London: Allen & Unwin LTD, 1969), 261-262. I am indebted to the work Anthony C. Thiselton for pointing me toward H.H. Price and to dispositional accounts of belief. See his *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 19-42, where he is primarily concerned to show how a dispositional account of belief helps us understand the dynamics of doctrinal formation.

[15] For a related, but slightly different, discussion on the relationship between holding true beliefs and not using them see Kevin Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics,* 218-219. The point I am referring to here is that the prescriptive weight of beliefs are integrally tied to our activities in the world. While it must be the case that some of your taken-true beliefs retain value across multiple contexts and in

What, then, is a dispositional description of belief? In its simplest form a dispositional account of belief asserts that to believe something means to be disposed to "act as if *p* were true." As H.H. Price states, "When we say of someone 'he believes the proposition p' it is held that we are making a dispositional statement about him, and that this is equivalent to a series of conditional statements describing what he would be likely to say or do or feel if such and such circumstances

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various activities (and in various ways and for various reasons some are more or less voluntarily held) it is also true that the value of some taken-true beliefs are context and activity specific. One's purposeful activity regulates what beliefs are valuable and this occurs on the macro and micro level such as when one considers the purpose of life in general or when one considers the purpose of a specific skill or recreational game. One's macro belief's about the purpose of life can filter down into and guide one's choice of micro activities, but the importance of certain beliefs are drastically contingent on the activity that one is engaged in. For example when I am engaged in playing a game—whether it is a physical sport like soccer, baseball, golf, snowboarding etc., or some strategic board game such as chess—certain beliefs, that are otherwise trivial, rise in importance because of the purpose of my activity. Likewise, some of my macro beliefs coupled with specific desires will condition the activities I choose to engage in (which in turn will throw a combination of involuntary beliefs at me and allow me the opportunity to develop voluntary beliefs as well). In the context of a game, then, a soccer player's belief that a pass on the ground will work better than a pass in the air, a pitcher's belief that a curveball will be more effective than a change-up, a golfer's belief that due to a moderate tailwind he should choose to hit the ball with his 8-iron instead of his 7-iron, a snowboarder's belief that 10-21 degree wax will work better today than will the usual 18-28 degree wax, or a chess players belief that a certain strategy will work well against this particular opponent all gain significance relative to the purposeful activity. Apart from involvement in such activities certain beliefs lose their significance. We not only believe in states of affairs, but also in the propriety of actions.

William Alston, however, denies that beliefs can be voluntary and instead chooses to distinguish "belief" from "acceptance" (see Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith" in Jeff Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality: Philosophy of Religion Today* [Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996], 3-28). However, the success and necessity of such a clear cut distinction is contested (see Hamid Vahid, "Alston on Belief and Acceptance in Religious Faith," *The Heythrop Journal* 50, no. 1: 23-30). While it may be true that beliefs are not under my "direct voluntary control" if that is taken to mean that I can't just believe absolutely anything I arbitrarily choose to believe apart from any outside constraints pushing back on me, then after that anti-solipsistic statement is affirmed it does seem to be the case that there are many ways in which our voluntary action can genuinely determine what we believe, thereby giving us some control over what we believe. Alston affirms this possibility to a degree when he states: "In some cases I can perform voluntary acts that will have some *effect* on what I believe on certain matters, by, for example, selectively exposing myself to pro or con considerations; but that is a long way from being able to exercise effective, much less immediate, voluntary control" ("Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 7). Even in cases when belief is understood to be strongly involuntary we are still actively involved in believing it and it seems that Alston here undervalues the significance that purposeful voluntary action plays in belief formation. At any rate, debating the intricacies of the voluntary/involuntary nature of belief is beyond the scope of this present chapter.

were to arise."[16] However, this does not mean that beliefs can be quickly and easily discerned by observing behavior without a more extensive understanding of the particular person and her situation. Price would have us understand belief as a "complex and multiform disposition"[17] where the agent's purpose for acting needs to be taken into account in order to accurately understand whether the agent was indeed acting in accord with her beliefs. Price uses an example of someone who believes "coal gas and air form an explosive mixture," proceeds to enter a room, smells the coal gas, and lights a match. Depending on the agent's purpose, she either did not truly believe the mixture was explosive or she wanted to commit suicide, or collect insurance money, or disliked the architecture for whatever reason, etc.[18] The main point to be grasped is that correctly reading off what someone believes from what they do is not necessarily straightforward and, therefore, cannot be reduced merely to a cursory observation of behavior. We must also be able to account for what Price terms as "losing one's head."[19] Sometimes in moments of high stress or "emotion-arousing situations" people act contrary to what they profess to believe and of course people can act in disingenuous ways.[20] But even when people do act in disingenuous ways, or not according to their professed beliefs, their behavior is often recognizable as such once a greater knowledge of the situation is obtained without needing to appeal to a mysterious inner realm that only the disingenuous person has access too.[21] In fact, when we do recognize someone as disingenuous it is

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[16] Price, *Belief,* 20.

[17] Price, *Belief,* 299. Thinking about beliefs as complex and multiform dispositions, as well as recognizing the need for understanding the situation and intentions of the agent is crucial because "the very same action can be described in two mutually incompatible ways: *either* as an example of acting as if a proposition *p* were true, *or* as an example of acting as if *p* were false" (*Belief,* 263). Again this is important for understanding faith dispositionally in that it restrains our understanding of faith from falling into a naïve reductionism into simple behaviorism.

[18] See Price, *Belief*, 259-260.

[19] See Price, *Belief,* 260-263.

[20] See Price, *Belief,* 262,

[21] In this one need not deny the existence of the inner, only the necessity of access to it to discern disingenuous behavior such as lying or acting as if one believed. For a conversation of this see Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein: Rethinking the Inner* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 31-32. As Price states: "Beliefs which are never in fact acted upon might perfectly well exist, if the Acting-as-if Analysis is correct. The difficulty is that there would be no way of discovering that they exist. Neither the believer himself, nor others, could possibly find out that he does believe some propositions (very many, perhaps) in this purely theoretical way. It is all very well for him to say to others, or even privately to himself, 'I believe that *p*.' But this, according to the Acting-as-if Analysis, is very weak evidence for the hypothesis that he does believe it. We must have deeds, not words; and so must he, if he is to find out what his own beliefs are" (Price, *Belief*, 265). He goes on to state, though, that in cases of theoretical beliefs where the agent has limited or no opportunity to manifest a belief in

always because of public observation, investigation, conversation, and never because we gain access to the private recesses of the disingenuous person's mind. Even though our observations are fallible, due to our often limited understanding of the person and the situation, they are not fallible because we don't have access to the inner psychology of the person.[22] Why should we not think about beliefs along the same lines? For a number of legitimate reasons Price rejects simple observations of actions as an infallible indicator of a person's beliefs[23]—knowledge of the person, his or her intentions, and of the situation are needed to correctly discern what a person believes, and this is not always easily perceived. It does not make sense to say that a person always and with no exception acts in perfect accord with their beliefs—understanding a person's integrity, other relevant beliefs, desires and motivations (all of which might come into tension) in a particular circumstance complicate our ascribing beliefs to a particular person, but we often correctly do so.

For the purposes of this thesis there are two hallmarks of a dispositional description of belief worth noting: latency in regard to conscious states; and what I will call holistic inferential manifestation. Both will be important for refining a dispositional understanding of faith that is more intelligibly able to account for how the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing could hold together.

It is commonplace to think that believing something consists of having some sort representation in the mind—whether that be a proposition or an image, or perhaps even a feeling—but representations tend to be individually separate and distinct occurrences that are at once present to consciousness and then gone from it (not to mention that their transitions and relations to one another are more or less left unexplained). Belief, however, is an ongoing phenomenon despite

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action the agent could manifest it in various other ways besides overt action should the agent encounter the proper circumstances. As alluded to above, in a similar vein in regards to holding a true belief with little to no manifestation, but in a slightly different context discussing the adjudicatory relationships between different beliefs, Kevin Hector states: "it is not uncommon for one to take another's assertion to be true, yet never use it to judge other beliefs — indeed, to take it to be true knowing well that one will never so use it" (*Theology Without Metaphysics*, 222). Such beliefs will not be strongly committed to because they are not relevantly applicable to one's activities in the world—or one's valued activities.

[22] On this issue current work being done by various neuroscientists on mirror neurons could be explored further.

[23] See Price, *Belief*, 260.

intermittent conscious attention.[24] Ludwig Wittgenstein helpfully distinguishes dispositions from states of consciousness in the following way:

> I want to talk about a "state of consciousness", and to use this expression to refer to the seeing of a certain picture, the hearing of a tone, a sensation of pain or of taste, etc. I want to say that believing, understanding, knowing, intending, and others, are not states of consciousness. If for the moment I call these latter "dispositions", then an important difference between dispositions and states of consciousness consists in the fact that a disposition is not interrupted by a break in consciousness or a shift in attention. (And that of course is not a causal remark.) Really one hardly ever says that one has believed or understood something "uninterruptedly "since yesterday. An interruption of belief would be a period of unbelief, not, e.g., the withdrawal of attention from what one believes, or, e.g., sleep.[25]

Price speaks of two general ways to go about analyzing belief: the traditional occurrence analysis and the dispositional analysis. He understands the traditional occurrence analysis of belief to be "primarily an analysis of assenting,"[26] where the notion of entertaining a proposition is central. As he goes on to say, "Assenting to a proposition is, of course, something more than just entertaining it. But entertaining it is an essential precondition for assenting to it—or for rejecting it either, or for questioning it, or for taking up any other mental attitude about it."[27] The occurrence analysis of belief, according to Price, is primarily concerned with analyzing belief when it is explicitly and actively entertained in a person's consciousness.

In the dispositional analysis of belief, however, the analysis of believing is not reduced to active assenting. Belief acquisition and loss of belief are occurrences as are manifestations of belief, but having a belief is understood as a disposition with the capacity for variable occurrent manifestations.[28] These various types of manifestations are explained below.

The phrase "holistic inferential manifestation" is meant to account for the fact that a person's believing-disposition manifests in reliable behavioral, phenomenal, and cognitive ways.[29]

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[24] See Eric Schwitzgebel, "A Phenomenal, Dispositional Account of Belief," *Nous* 36:2 (2002), 249.
[25] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology Volume II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 9-10. Beliefs under a dispositional analysis have duration as well, but are not as neatly individuated as they are in the occurrence analysis and generally have a much longer duration as they are not limited to conscious entertainment.
[26] Price, *Belief,* 190.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Price, *Belief,* 363.
[29] See Eric Schwitzgebel, "A Phenomenal, Dispositional Account of Belief," 252.

Price suggests that we think of belief as a "multiform disposition" where overt action is only one possible manifestation of belief. As he states,

> It should now be clear that if '*A* believes that *p*' is a dispositional statement about *A*, the disposition we attribute to him is a multiform disposition, which is manifested or actualized in many different ways: not only in his actions, not only in his actions and his inactions, but also in emotional states such as hope and fear; in feelings of doubt, surprise and confidence; and finally in his inferences, both those in which a belief just 'spreads itself' from a proposition to some of its consequences (certain or probable), and those in which the inference is a self-conscious and self-critical intellectual operation.[30]

The dispositional descriptions of belief that we are drawing on share affinities with inferential approaches to understanding conceptual content. According to an inferential approach to conceptual content, as articulated by Robert Brandom,[31] grasping a concept consists of having "practical mastery over the *inferences* it is involved in—to know, in the practical sense of being able to distinguish, what follows from the applicability of a concept, and what it follows from."[32] Since beliefs, according to the dispositional account being drawn upon here are inherently conceptual, how we understand conceptual content is important. Price talks about the inferential nature of belief when he speaks of the "extension of belief" and of "relying" on a proposition. As he says, "A proposition is relied upon when it is available to us as a premiss for inferences, whether theoretical or practical."[33] When we believe or assent to a proposition it is done, if only tacitly, in light of other beliefs. This pushes us towards thinking of a "web of beliefs" and towards a type of holism. As he says, "we shall certainly have to say that this 'spreading' of belief from a proposition to its consequences is one of the most important ways in which such a disposition is occurrently manifested."[34]

However, we are not only talking about how many different beliefs are inextricably and normatively linked and dependent on one another, but we are also talking about how believing a *single* proposition necessarily explodes out into relevant consequences and potential implications in

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[30] Price, *Belief,* 294.
[31] Brandom himself draws on, among others, Wilfrid Sellars who was a student of H.H. Price for a time. See Willem deVries, "Wilfrid Sellars", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/sellars/>
[32] Robert Brandom, *Making it Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, & Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 89.
[33] Price, *Belief*, 293.
[34] Ibid.

various circumstances. Not all of these inferences will be made with the same degree of commitment, but believing a proposition is more than just having an awareness of it, and a distinctive difference between being aware of a proposition and believing it is knowing how it ought to be used or understanding its implications—hence its affinities with an inferential approach to understanding conceptual content. It is similar to Wittgenstein explaining understanding as "knowing how to go on,"[35] in that when we believe in something it impacts more than our knowledge of its existence. It is inevitably used and applied in some sort of dispositional way (albeit, one that is not a mere "differential responsive disposition,"[36] i.e. one that is more than a result of mindless conditioning or programming and rote behavior, but one that understands why what one is doing accords with what one believes and is able to give reasons if asked as well as understand, to a certain degree, its normative extensibility). Importantly, this inferential nature of belief can be both latent and present to consciousness and can be intelligibly manifested in intentional action even when the linguistic statement or statements is not consciously entertained and can be normatively/inferentially expressed in a variety of intelligible ways that go beyond the explicit contemplation and verbal communication of propositional relations.[37] This pushes us toward a more embodied understanding of faith and of Christian believing itself; rather than understanding beliefs, in a rationalistic fashion, as something entirely distinct that merely accompany particular ways of acting and being in and with others in the world.

Even when we merely want to talk about assenting to propositions, "when we believe a proposition, our belief does extend itself to at least some of the consequences of the proposition. We need beliefs because we need guidance not only in our actions but in our thoughts also."[38] Hence, in a very significant sense beliefs are not merely descriptive, but prescriptive as well—and not only prescriptive for thought. As Price also says, "What spreads itself or extends itself from the proposition believed to its consequences, or at least its obvious consequences, is the whole complex disposition which we call 'believing,' and this includes the disposition to have the feelings we have

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[35] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* Revised 4th edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2009), 65-67.
[36] See Brandom, *Making it Explicit,* 85-89.
[37] Here I am thinking about Wittgenstein's discussion on the nature of intentional action and his rejection of the need to view 'intentions' as necessary psychic antecedents, or as concurrent, entities of action. See *Philosophical Investigations*, 176, and Michael Scott "The Context of Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Action," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36, no. 4 (October 1998), 595-617.
[38] Price, *Belief*, 291.

discussed."[39] Hence, this pushes us toward an inherent holistically normative way of understanding faith as a way of being in the world and a way of relating to other persons, to God, and to ourselves.

What then is the upshot of all this for articulating an understanding of the nature of faith? More specifically how does this help us better articulate the necessary aspect of *fiducia* in genuine faith and in doing so help us better distinguish genuine faith from mere intellectual assent and more intelligibly understand how one's having faith is normatively manifested in our lives? How does this further articulation of *fiducia* help us better understand how the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing might hold together? First, while the traditional description of faith as a mental act consisting of *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia* can still be held to be an accurate way of describing faith, a dispositional description of belief, in forcing us to account for the latent dimension of having faith, requires us to explicitly acknowledge that faith itself is more than having a mental occurrence—of any kind—thereby forcing us to move away from a rationalist reductionism and towards a more holistic and embodied understanding of faith. In other words, faith is not merely a type of mental belief or assent to cognitive content that merely accompanies a specific way of living and being in the world (which could theoretically remain separate) although it is not less than cognitive. Faith is itself a particular type of description of such living and being and as such cannot be thought to be some mental "thing" antecedent or separable from concrete lived existence.

To be sure, having faith involves awareness of specific cognitive content concerning Jesus Christ as well as a particular orientation towards that cognitive content—such as affirming it to be true, authoritative, and beneficial in some sense for one's life—but having this particular conscious state cannot capture what it means to have faith in Christ because, for one reason, we are never continuously in such a conscious cognitive state.[40] If we understand faith to be a multiform disposition its constancy is accounted for in the various ways we are disposed to act, perceive, and be in the world and this faith is manifested in more ways than in explicit thoughts or audible proclamations depending on the various circumstances the believer is encountering. This point warrants further explanation.

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Not that faith ever was, in the best of the theological tradition, reduced to merely having certain thoughts, but in acknowledging the latent dimension one is steered away from such an error.

If faith is understood as a multiform disposition, then the believer's manifestation of faith need not always include conscious entertainment of propositions—although in relevant situations it most certainly will include these. Faith can be equally manifested *in* various actions and *in* multiform reactions, and not only in verbal actions—whether spoken or thought. Furthermore, when faith is manifested in various actions it need not necessarily be preceded or accompanied by the conscious entertainment of the cognitive content relevant to the gospel—but subsequent questioning of and reflection on that faithful action could make the implicit intentionality explicit. In other words, faith manifested *in* action need not be explained as such by appeal to antecedent or accompanying conscious reflection on the propositions of the gospel. If faith was only understood cognitively along the lines of mental acts, then we might be forced to think this way. However, if faith is understood as a holistic and multiform disposition, as a way of being, then antecedent or accompanying conscious states about the content of the gospel need not be appealed to in order to explain faith manifested *in* intentional action. A believer's manifestation of faith *in* action can be understood apart from conscious entertainment when this action is intentionally in accord with what is believed. In order for us to understand faithful action one could recognize the action to be such and upon questioning the particular believer about the particular action we would find that she is able to give reasons why this particular action was a normative extension in accord with faith in Christ, but she need not have had particular propositions present to mind while acting in faith—faith would be understood to be implicit in the action and made verbally explicit when it was later reflected on. So, then, accounting for the insight regarding conscious latency from dispositional descriptions of belief into the traditional Protestant analysis of faith forces us to think about faith beyond conscious entertainment and in doing so differentiates genuine faith from mere intellectual assent by affirming that faith is manifest *in* what we do, and *in* who we are, and not just in what we consciously think or how we consciously feel. Hence, there is an inherently public nature to the concept of faith (but not necessarily one that does not also include initially hidden dimensions to the untrained eye) that can't be accounted for within the hiddenness of the mind,[41] nor can the believer's agency in faith be understood in an entirely passive way even if it must still be understood in a non-autonomous[42] and a non-meritorious way.

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[41] Again, this line of thinking is influenced by and indebted to Wittgenstein's argument against private language and his discussions on intentional action.

[42] By non-autonomous, among other things, I mean theologically understood faith never occurs or takes place outside of an ontological encounter with and in the gracious presence of God.

Second, understanding faith as a complex and holistic disposition to act as if *p* were true in relevant circumstances makes greater sense of the transition from having a belief to acting on a belief than does a view that understands belief solely along the lines of a mental act or as a kind of mental entity, which leaves the transition from the belief to its manifestation more or less unexplained. A dispositional account of faith makes the concept of faith's inherent interaction with the concrete activity and identity of the believer in the world more intelligible as beliefs are that which the believer is inherently disposed to manifest in a multiform manner and are that which are concretely constituted by this interaction within the believers concrete situation and their polyphonic experience within it.

Charles Spurgeon has an insightful illustration worth quoting in its entirety along these lines of the enacted and holistically manifested character of Christian believing. It is from his sermon on James 2:17, entitled "Fruitless Faith." Although he tends to view the action as a proof or pointer to faith, this illustration nicely points out the necessary embedded nature of faith in particular concrete contexts of activity. As he narrates:

> There is a vessel drifting. She will soon be on the shore, but a pilot is come on board; he is standing on the deck, and he says to the captain and crew, "I promise and undertake that, if you will solely and alone trust me, I will save thy vessel. Do you promise it; do you believe in me?" They believe in him; they say they believe the pilot can save the vessel, and they trust the vessel implicitly to his care. Now listen to him. "Now," says he, "you at that helm there!" He does not stir. "At the helm there! Can't you hear?" He does not stir! He does not stir! "Well, but, Jack, haven't you confidence in the pilot?" "Oh! yes. Oh! yes, I have faith in him," he says; "he will save the vessel if I have faith in him." "Don't you hear the pilot, as he says have faith in him, and you won't touch the helm?" "Now, you aloft there! Reef that sail." He does not stir, but lets the wind still blow into the sail and drift the vessel on to the coast. "Now then, some of you; look alive, and reef that sail!" But he does not stir! "Why, captain, what shall I do? These fellows won't stir or move a peg." But "Oh!" says the captain; "I have every confidence in you, pilot. I believe you will save the vessel." "Then why don't you attend to the tiller, and all that?" "Oh! no," says he; "I have great confidence in you. I don't mean to do anything." Now when that ship goes down amid the boiling surges, and each man sinks to his doom, I will ask you, had they faith in the pilot? Hadn't they a mimicking, mocking sort of faith, and only that? For if they had been really anxious to have the vessel rescued, and have trusted in the pilot, it would be the pilot that had saved them, and they could never have been saved without him. They would have proved their faith by their works. Their faith would have been made perfect, and the vessel would have been secured.[43]

[43] Charles Spurgeon, "Fruitless Faith" A Sermon (No. 3434) Published on Thursday, November 26th, 1914. At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington. On Lord's-day Evening, February 21st, 1861. <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/3434.htm>

As a spiritual parable this illustrates the distinction between *fiducia* and mere *assensus*. *Fiducia* necessarily involves one's concrete activity in the world as one submits and appropriates oneself to Christ after being encountered by him. However, if we approach this illustration hermeneutically, coupled with a dispositional understanding of faith, which is dependent on concrete circumstances for particular manifestations, then we are also able to illustrate the context dependent nature of faith embedded *in* action, and, therefore, an element of dependence on particular circumstances of activity for recognizing instances of genuine faith. While on one level there is a legitimate abstract understanding of what faith entails at another level we cannot fully recognize what faith is apart from it being appropriated in concrete circumstances and practices—and this is vitally important if an essential part of genuine faith is appropriating it in our lives, as traditional articulations of *fiducia* have affirmed. In a certain sense, then, the fullness of *fiducia* cannot be told, but must be shown. In Spurgeon's illustration above genuine faith would have been manifested in manning the helm and taking in the sail and in the feelings that accompanied that action in those circumstances. Those would not need to be understood as effects of antecedent or accompanying cognitively conscious states but would genuinely be a proper manifestation of faith as intentional actions performed in accord with one's faith in the pilot. Such a person would have the disposition of faith in Christ and it would have been manifested *in* those actions in that particular circumstance.

In contrast compare one of J. Gresham Machen's commentary concerning the faith of the centurion found in Matthew 8:5-13, he says this;

> the centurion is presented as one who had faith; and faith, as distinguished from the effects of faith, consists not in doing something but in receiving something. Faith may result in action, and certainly true faith in Jesus always will result in action; but faith itself is not doing but receiving.[44]

Now in this context it is perfectly legitimate for Machen, in light of the end goal of the healing of the paralyzed servant, to point out that the centurion's faith was not the direct act that healed the servant, nor was the centurion's own action the object of trust, but it does not make sense to sharply contrast "receiving" with "doing;" if for no other reason that the fact that believing involves some sort of activity on part of the believer. The centurion's faith was manifested *in* his requesting Jesus to heal his servant and also *in* his trusting that Jesus could and did heal his servant by the power of his

[44] J. Gresham Machen, *What is Faith?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), 89.

word.[45] Instead of saying that "faith itself is not doing" it would be more accurate to distinguish the believer's "doings" of faith from the "doings" of the one in whom that faith is in, and Barth and Bultmann do a much better job at describing the nuances of human agency in the act of faith. In this passage Jesus did not seek out a centurion, who was passively sitting at home, and declare that he was going to heal his servant. Instead, becoming aware of Christ's presence the centurion encountered Christ and manifested his faith *in* his actions of approaching, requesting, and trusting—particular actions of which displayed an inherent realization that the centurion was unable to heal his servant himself. Those actions were an integral part of the centurion's faith, not merely a distinct effect of it. At the same time, he genuinely performed actions to procure the healing of his servant, but the type of actions he performed were of such a kind that he recognized that he himself was incapable of achieving his desired end. Such actions might be understood as actions done with non-meritorious intent or motivation,[46] or more simply, actions done in humility as Barth and Bultmann would describe. Furthermore, in this case worries about autonomous faith are dissolved because the agent's actions are directed at and in the presence of Christ—who remains free to act as he chooses, in accord with his character and wisdom.

This dispositional account of believing also better accounts for the similarity and differences found within the Christian faith and between various individual's appropriation of that faith. How a university professor, a stay at home parent, a professional athlete, a foreign missionary, a person in business, a politician, a student, an artist, etc., manifests genuine faith will both significantly resemble and differ from one another since one's recognition and exhibition of genuine faith is dependent on one's concrete circumstances of activity, identity, and gifting in the world. Even though the *fiducial* aspect can be understood and spoken about abstractly and generally its particular form cannot be recognized as such apart from the particular circumstances of activity in the world. The preceding was meant to articulate that a believer's faith cannot be fully described occurrently, nor can it be fully recognized abstractly as its recognition is partly dependent on the various circumstances in which the particular believer is encountered with since genuine faith itself is inherently an embodied concept. Understanding faith dispositionally better equips us to account for this similarity and

[45] Although neither should his faith be reduced to those specific activities. If such were the case, then, when those activities ceased so would his faith. Hence the reason why faith needs to be understood dispositionally as an overarching description of a particular way of life.
[46] Here my understanding is in general agreement with Paul K. Moser. See his *The Severity of God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 144-159.

difference. It also forces us to since we are not only concerned with assent to certain propositions. If one asks how to recognize genuine faith speaking about it is not enough since genuine faith is more than cognitive when the cognitive is understood in an abstract manner removed from our living in the world; it is an embodied phenomenon and as such must be witnessed and encountered in the midst of the particularities of life.

This approach to understanding faith also makes greater sense of how faith normatively extends into the entirety of one's life. It better accounts for how the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing hold together. It is better able to account for the phenomenon of growing and maturing in faith by giving it a fuller description than that of a greater acquisition of knowledge or as an intensification of conviction (understood in a merely pious or emotional fashion). Furthermore, it understands this transformation to be publicly manifested thereby adding greater intelligibility to how Christian's are holistic witnesses to the object of their faith, Jesus Christ, without being reductively nontheological.[47]

A primary objection to understanding faith dispositionally is the reality that people do not always act according to what they profess to believe. As alluded to earlier, however, the relationship between a belief and its manifestation is not an immutable one and, furthermore, persons possess multiple dispositions that often come into tension—as well as multiple beliefs that have to be adjudicated and related to one another.[48] Christians do not have perfect faith, and, regretfully, sometimes Christians do not act in accord with their faith in Christ, but again, Christians are not ultimately trusting in their faith. They are ultimately trusting in Christ for their salvation. So admitting this fallible relation between belief-dispositions and their manifestation doesn't necessarily curb the cash value of incorporating insights from dispositional analyses of belief in order to understand faith dispositionally in order to better understand how the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of believing hold together in in doing so more articulately show why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. In cases where one truly did believe but acted contrary to one's professed belief that belief-disposition would eventually manifest in contrition and repentance. Understanding that we hold to beliefs in various degrees also helps mitigate the force of

[47] See 2 Thessalonians 1:3.
[48] Furthermore, this is made more intelligible by the fact that faith is something that grows and is not fully realized all at once.

this criticism.[49] As Eric Schwitzgebel states, "If to believe is to possess a multi-track disposition or a broad-track disposition or (as I myself prefer to put it) a cluster of dispositions (which can include cognitive and phenomenal dispositions as well as behavioral ones), then there will be inbetweenish cases in which the relevant disposition or dispositions are only partly possessed."[50] All a multiform dispositional account of belief, or of faith, needs to affirm is that we normally behave, react, and think in accord with the truth of what we believe in appropriate ways in the appropriate circumstances, *ceteris paribus*. [51]

Another concern, coming from a particular Protestant perspective, has to do with dispositional development in relation to being justified as opposed to sanctified. This chapter has not been concerned with articulating the nature of justification even though the concept of faith is closely tied to that topic. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer at one point states, "Because we are justified by faith, faith and obedience have to be distinguished. But their division must never destroy their unity, which lies in the reality that faith exists only in obedience, is never without obedience. Faith is only faith in deeds of obedience."[52] While the dispositional account here has not been understood merely as a disposition to have faith, but rather that we think about faith itself dispositionally, this particular view of faith as a disposition need not necessarily be seen as predicating justification as being contingent on this cultivated disposition in an objectified or autonomous manner. The descriptions that Barth and Bultmann provided of the various implicit dimensions of humility and dependence that are characteristic of the Christian's and the Christian faith should mitigate that anxiety. Again, this faith is still faith in Christ and in his doing what the Christian could not do and in being what the Christian could not be on her own. Furthermore, this is not a reductive or objectified disposition in the believer so Bultmann's rejection of understanding faith as a disposition is not relevant and this

[49] Refer to the discussion in footnote 15 for a more detailed reflection on the degrees of believing.
[50] Eric Schwitzgebel,. "Acting Contrary to Our Professed Beliefs or The Gulf Between Occurrent Judgment and Dispositional Belief," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly,* 91 (2010), 535.
[51] See Ibid.*,* 541.
[52] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 64. As he says towards the end of that book: "The fears we have about doing good works as a pretext to justify our evil works is a notion which certainly is foreign to scripture. Scripture never sets faith over against the good work which hinders and destroys faith. Grace and deeds belong together. There is no faith without the good work, just as there is no good work without faith" (Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 277-278).

way of understanding the nature of believing adds more intelligibility to Bultmann's polyphonic conception of the holistic character of Christian believing.

It may be that this understanding of faith has interesting implications for the Protestant debates regarding the nature of justification, but this dispositional account of faith was primarily employed here to better articulate how faith relates to a believer's intentional way of being in the world in order to better understand how the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing might be seen to hold together and in doing so to better understand why belief is centrally significant in and for Christianity. It was not directly concerned to jump into debates on justification. However, this account of faith may challenge those understandings of the nature of faith that are liable to understand the dichotomy between faith and works as being synonymous with a dichotomy between belief and action. This may will complicate some's understanding of what we mean when we say that Christians are saved by grace through faith and not by works, but it is a complication that is necessary in order better understand the central significance of belief in and for Christianity. Especially when we wish to better understand the coherence between the divinely stated purpose of humans being creating in order to do good works and the central significance that believing holds in and for Christianity.

The Non-Reductively Social and Linguistic Character of Christian Believing

Both Barth and Bultmann affirm the sociality of faith and the linguistically mediated cognitive aspect of the character of Christian believing while they at the same time criticize certain ways of understanding these aspects. Accounts of the propositional, cognitive, and linguistic dimension of Christian belief are reductive if, on the one hand, they neglect to account for the horizontal prepredicative factors that give propositional statements their sense, or if, on the other hand, they focus entirely on horizontal prepredicative factors to the neglect of adequately understanding them "vertically" in the context of a human divine encounter within the believer's concrete created reality.[53] Belief as this multiform disposition manifests itself in various ways in various levels of conscious reflection and expression and in different forms of embodied intentional action. It is from the perspective of this holistic and multiform dispositional account of believing that this further

[53] While the linguistic dimension involved in the character of Christian believing goes beyond that of relating to statements it is statements that we will focus on.

inquiring into the cognitive, propositional, and linguistic dimension of Christian belief needs to be undertaken. Christian belief is more than abstractly cognitive, but Christian belief is also intimately tied up with understanding mediated in language, in the world, with others, and with the God who addresses humans. As Eberhard Jüngel states, "Faith is understood here as the relation of man who responds to the God who addresses him, a relation which is made possible by the event of the God who speaks and which is existentially called into being."[54] Language and sociality, as has been evidenced throughout this thesis, are closely linked to one another. As Jüngel also states, "the ego within the horizon of language is always understood as a subject which is defined by sociality. Whoever calls man a being distinguished by its language has also understood him as the ego within a lingual and living community."[55] How we understand language and its sociality is important for properly understanding cognitive dimension of believing that is not merely reductive in its formality and abstraction.

Andrew Inkpin's recent work on the phenomenology of language is helpful for understanding how we might understand the cognitive and linguistic dimensions of Christian belief in a non-reductive manner. In *Disclosing the World* Inkpin initially engages with the Heidegger of *Being and Time* in order to focus on the disclosive function of language in order to set up a broadly Heideggerian framework for his unified account of a phenomenology of language, where he engages with Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein to complement inadequacies that he sees in Heidegger's account concerning a further articulation of the pragmatic and presentational sense of language. He ends his book by suggesting how his phenomenological account challenges the formal semantics that dominate much post-Fregean analytic philosophy of language, how this account suggests that the choice between idealism or realism is a false option, and how his philosophical account of the phenomenology of language is complimentary to work currently being done in 4e cognitive science.[56] All these aspects contribute to an understanding of the holistic character of Christian believing that helps us better understand why believing is not an isolated phenomenon and, as such,

[54] Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 163.
[55] Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 174.
[56] While I am aiming to be exegetically faithful to Inkpin's work in the portions that I do engage with my ultimate concern is not with Inkpin's philosophical positions as such, but with its potential profitability for a theological understanding of the propositional, cognitive, and linguistic dimension of the character of Christian belief. In doing so I am actually emulating Inkpin's own mode of engagement with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Wittgenstein: seeking to faithfully depict their thought, but ultimately concerned with what they can offer for his (or my) own project.

better understand why it is centrally significant in and for Christianity. It furthermore helps continue to promote the cognitive and linguistic dimensions of the character of Christian believing that is not intellectually reductive.

Language is a phenomenon of created reality and, especially in the Reformed Christian tradition, belief is integrally tied up with awareness of linguistic content. At the same time, however, a Christian conception of belief as it is manifested through faith in Christ is something more than an awareness of linguistic content on its own, even more than mere assent to the truth of that content. Faith is tied up in a wholly self-involving changed and changing way of life in relation to Christ, in relation to oneself, and in relation to others in the world. Andrew Inkpin's discussion of how we grasp the content of statements helps offer us a more intelligible account of the relationship between the cognitive and linguistic aspects of Christian belief and of intentional Christian existence in light of a "God who addresses us" (to refer back to Jüngel).

As Inkpin states, Heidegger has a "distinctive emphasis on the 'derivative' nature of predication and the possibility of prepredicative language use" and that this prepredicative level of meaning consists of "factors that are functionally and structurally presupposed in propositional content, but which remain irreducible"[57] to propositional content as such, abstractly understood. These other factors are presented in bodily gestures and in our relations with one another and pragmatically in our various activities in the world. To illustrate this point Inkpin refers to Heidegger's discussion of the declarative statement, "The hammer is heavy." In an entirely formal or abstract way the meaning of this declarative sentence could be grasped as primarily describing a property of the hammer. But in order to fully grasp the sense of this statement requires awareness of both its presentational and pragmatic sense as it is manifested in its concrete situation of utterance. The utterance, "The hammer is heavy" might be an expression of concern, trepidation of having to lift it, or fear of being hit by it. The concrete context of utterance as it is manifested constitutes the sense of the propositional content. As Inkpin goes on to state,

> In other words, what looks homogeneous at the level of propositional content may be eliding important differences in the way entities are understood. This raises the possibility that there might be several different kinds of content-constitution process[es] that underlie

[57] Andrew Inkpin, *Disclosing the World: On the Phenomenology of Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 16-17.

> meaningful sentences. But whether there are several such processes or just one, the core idea is that prepredicative factors are to effect the constitution of propositional content.[58]

Language here is understood to be more than an isolated or abstracted formal system of signs, but one that is significantly embedded and embodied in human forms of life. Abstract propositional content is constituted in this way, and it is insufficiently understood apart from this larger awareness of how it is actually manifested in the world. Inkpin describes his approach to the philosophy of language as "language-in-the-world." As he goes on to state,

> The point Heidegger is making is that any theory of signs focusing exclusively on formal and relational properties will yield no insight into the phenomenal basis from which its abstractions proceed, and in this sense will tell us nothing about what it is actually to be or to function as a sign. . . . The point of his antiformalism is rather to insist that an abstract formal conception of whatever kind of relationship—be it semiotic, syntactic, or semantic—*can provide only an uninformative schematism. To be revealingly informative such a conception must be complemented by an account of what it is for those kinds of relationship to be realized in actual phenomenon* [emphasis mine].[59]

The same can be said about the character of Christian believing and the argument of this thesis is that it should be. Any account of the nature of Christian belief that remains at an isolated formal level of abstraction (especially concerning the linguistic and propositional dimensions) fails to give a satisfactory account of the nature of Christian faith as it is realized in actual Christian existence. In order to give an adequate account of the phenomenon of Christian believing one must move beyond formal description as the character of Christian belief is itself more than abstract assent to formally presented theological statements. The sense of the propositional content of Christian belief is dependent on its holistic appropriation and manifestation in concrete circumstances.[60] These ways of understanding the nature of belief and of faith highlight the holistic transformative potentiality of belief and by highlighting how believing is constitutionally embedded within and among the particularities of lived existence they begin to help us better understand why faith and belief are centrally significant in and for Christianity as believing is significantly and broadly interacting in and through the particularities of the lived realities of believing persons.

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[58] *Disclosing the World,* 59.
[59] *Disclosing the World,* 56.
[60] This also potentially adds intelligibility to Barth and Bultmann's distinction between knowledge *about* God and knowledge *of* God, as well as further articulate the significant distinction between Barth's use of *kennen* with its connotations of knowledge by acquaintance rather than *wissen* with its connotations of theoretical or formal knowledge; which is consistent with many of the Apostle Paul's writing on the knowledge of God that includes significant personal connotations.

This line of thinking brings attention to a different approach to understanding how the cognitive and linguistic content of faith can be more holistically understood in a way that Barth and Bultmann do not sufficiently incorporate into their thinking about the cognitive content of faith. This line of thinking also more intelligibly shows why even the cognitive and linguistic aspects of the character of Christian believing are centrally significant as they are constitutionally tied to the believers' pragmatic and existential realm of existence in the world. In other words the thought of faith is not merely abstracted and disengaged from the believer's lived reality, but neither can cognitive and linguistic elements of the character of Christian believing be entirely disregarded from our conception in the favor of some form of reductively dispositional and non-cognitive conception of believing *since those linguistic and cognitive elements that are normatively related are part of the phenomenological reality of the believer's existence as well*. It would be phenomenologically inaccurate and unfaithful (let alone theologically inconsistent) to not continue to include an appreciation for the normative cognitive dimension of the character of Christian believing even while we promote a more holistically embedded and embodied understanding of the character of Christian believing that exhibits multiple implicit and latent dimensions that are holistically embedded and embodied within the believer's existence that are not always explicitly verbal or consciously present to the believer's mind.

Conclusion

A dispositional analysis of believing does not succumb to the criticisms that Barth and Bultmann have of viewing Christian faith as a mere disposition. It also adds greater clarity to our understanding of how the various implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing that they mention might hold together. A non-reductive dispositional analysis of believing not only helps us understand how the complexity of faith can be understood to hold together, but they also bring greater intelligibility to how Christian belief relates to transformed and transforming Christian existence in a non-reductive manner. Furthermore, a dispositional analysis of Christian believing more intelligibly describes why genuine faith is always accompanied by good works and it makes greater sense of why it makes sense for the, on the one hand, the purpose of our being created to be the doing of good works and, on the other hand, the central significance of believing in and for Christianity.

By incorporating non-reductive accounts of the linguistic and social dimensions of the cognitive content of faith it can be more clearly seen how belief in and for Christianity is not simply an abstracted, disengaged, reductively intellectualistic phenomenon. In doing so it helps us better appreciate and understand the significance of declaring that an individual's faith is wholly self-involving in a non-individualistic manner. It also enables us to be in a better position to avoid reductive rejections of the cognitive dimensions of belief while at the same time not be required to affirm reductively intellectualist conceptions of the cognitive dimensions of the character of Christian believing in an abstract and disengaged manner. In doing so the central significance of belief in and for Christianity can be better appreciated by recognizing the scope in which belief extends into the various multitude of dimensions of being human: (both individually and in relation to others) within the concrete realities of human existence in creation in light of the Creator who enables and sustains it all. Given the various contexts for the possibility of intellectual growth in understanding in the various spheres of human existence it would be reductive not to retain a proper place for the cognitive and conceptual content of the character of Christian believing that reflects the God-given capacity for human reflection in and through language amidst our concrete circumstances and activities in the world.

Conclusion: The Holistic Character of Christian Believing and the Central Significance of Faith

"The many facets of faith in the Old and New Testament make it a forgone conclusion that the concept of faith in Christian theology will be rich, dynamic, and controverted."[1]

"The main theological point is that *I am human in that I let someone else be there for me*. That can also be called trust, and with regard to the 'someone else' who as God has promised himself to us, we must call this *trust in God*. This is precisely what is meant when we speak of *faith*."[2]

The question of this thesis has been, why is belief centrally significant in and for Christianity? In order to answer this question it has been the argument of this thesis that by attending to the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing the central significance of belief in and for Christianity becomes more intelligible. This question is further intensified when it is asked in an age and time that often acts as if what one believes does not matter and is at best a matter of personal taste and private opinion or when others act as if simplistic assenting to certain abstract propositions alone is sufficient to account for the character of Christian believing even if it is not sufficient to account for the character of the Christian life (nor by itself does an isolated and abstract conception of trust help alleviate the issue). The implicit assumption within both these ways of understanding belief is that believing is in some sense isolated or abstracted from the entirety of our identities, relationships with others, and activities in the world. Such sensibilities, however, exhibit a reductively simplistic understanding of what it means to believe and of how faith and believing "exist" in human persons or how human persons "exist" in and through their believing. This thesis has sought to show that by attending to the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing the central significance of belief for Christianity (and believing in general) becomes more intelligible. Put succinctly, belief is centrally significant because belief is not merely belief (as it is commonly understood). Believing in Christ is embedded, embodied, and enmeshed into every aspect of the believer's human existence both individually and relationally.

The overarching aim of this study has been to investigate the nature of a Christian's faith and the Christian to better understand why believing is centrally significant in and for Christianity. In doing

[1] Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 18.
[2] Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 180.

so, with the help of Barth and Bultmann, it sought to provide a non-reductive account of the character of Christian believing that more intelligibly accounts for why "faith" is *the* central component through which human restoration is actualized (or through which the process of actualization is initiated) in reconciliation with God, oneself, and with others. The study was grounded in an exposition and critical engagement with the work of Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth concerning the self-involving nature of faith in Christ. It proceeded to develop an account of the character of Christian believing in conversation with other theologians and, as deemed useful, with philosophers (in both the so-called analytic and continental traditions) in order to further work out under-developed insights implicit in their respective accounts and to redress aspects of their accounts that ought to be corrected in light of other theological commitments. In doing so it furthermore sought to offer an approach to better understanding how the many implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing might hold together and explain its dynamic informative, normative, and transformative potential for the Christian believer.

In the process it also aimed to: (a) contribute to the current interest in reassessing Bultmann within Barth studies, (b) evaluate Barth's continued significance in light of criticisms from more phenomenologically/hermeneutically minded theologians, (c) to redress reductive accounts of faith (whether they be overly "privatized" or too hastily "publicized," one-sidedly ethnographic or myopically dogmatic) that lead to unnecessary disputes and reductive accounts of the task of theology and the Christian life generally, (d) provide a contemporary description of the character of Christian believing with ecumenical import that adequately accounts for its implicit complexity and pervasive normativity (as a phenomenon that takes place embedded and embodied in the world, yet in relation to God who is other than the world and other than us) while retaining a rich theological (dogmatic) description.[3]

[3] Given that among the various denominations and traditions of Christianity Protestants are commonly seen to have an overly intellectualized conception of what it means to believe showing that two of the most prominent Protestant thinkers of the 20th century are more nuanced therefore provides value for ecumenical dialogue. Furthermore, by showing the points of commonality between Barth and Bultmann those Lutheran or Reformed Christians that continue to be influenced by them can see further common ground in which to carry on their discussions. By showing points of commonality between Barth and Bultmann and thinkers in other traditions, both modern and ancient, the thesis also shows valuable common ground in which to have more fruitful ecumenical dialogue on the nature of faith with those coming from a Roman Catholic or Anglo-Catholic background that are typically more readily used to speaking about the character of Christian believing in more holistic terms.

Putting Rudolf Bultmann in conversation with Karl Barth was deemed to be advantageous for a number of reasons. Beyond frequently being touted as the two most influential Protestant theologians of the twentieth century (rightly or wrongly), stereotypically, they both emphasize opposing aspects of Augustine's taxonomy of belief to the detriment of the other. Bultmann supposedly emphasizes the *fides qua creditur* (the faith by which it is believed, act/disposition, believing). Barth supposedly emphasizes the *fides quae creditur* (the faith which is believed, content, what or who is believed-in). In reality both are more nuanced than they are often taken to be, and both share a number of similarities (both in their affirmations and in their criticisms of other positions) when compared to the wider theological tradition. Both, in their respective ways, offer rich descriptions of faith that grounded the thesis theologically.

Given the centrality of faith and its pervasive normativity for both the institutional practice of theology (in both church and academy) and for the Christian way of life in general, our understanding of the character of Christian believing will inevitably affect not only various doctrinal discussions (or lack thereof), but it will also affect how we understand theology's relationship to other academic disciplines and sources of knowledge and it adds greater intelligibility to the necessary integration of theology's various subdisciplines. If theology is about God, how God relates to us, and everything else as it relates to God, and if knowledge of God and knowledge of self are mutually intertwined (which they are), then how we understand the character of Christian believing (the mode of access to God) will affect not only the content of belief, but also how we go about pursuing, appropriating, and promoting that content in the various activities and relationships we are involved with in our concrete situations in the world. A non-reductive conception of the propositional, cognitive, and linguistic aspect of Christian belief suggests that Christian theology in the academy ought to try and walk a third way between "purely" abstract theological reflection and mere ethnographic or sociological description. A way that is thoroughly interdisciplinary, but one that remains distinctly theological. Understanding propositional content is an aspect of faith, but the understanding of theological propositions in faith cannot be obtained in a purely formal manner. A full understanding of the content of theological propositions requires an understanding of how those propositions have been and are currently being embedded and embodied in the lived reality of Christian believers in the church and in the world, where prepredicative factors contribute to the constitution of the meaning of the propositional content of the character of Christian believing. This

is not something that can be observed simply, but it is something that requires theological discernment. Theology as a discipline within the academy, therefore, ought to seek to avoid overly disengaged, abstracted, and isolated engagements with dogma, but it ought to equally avoid a complete abandonment of engagement with dogma in favor of a reductively ethnographic or sociological approach that loses the force of the normative aspect of the linguistic content revealed by God in Christ and passed on through the faith of Christian believers and the texts that make up the Christian tradition(s). Barth and Bultmann are vitally helpful here with their unwavering emphasis on the importance of the theological object of faith in Jesus Christ in a non-reductive manner. Theology as a discipline ought to seek and promote the full understanding of theological propositions that make up *a* Christian's and *the* Christian faith, which requires both an engagement with the dogmatic content of the tradition and with the present phenomenological and hermeneutical manifestation of that content amidst believing Christians in the particularities of their world today. Neither abstract and isolated dogmatic reflection nor mere ethnographic description will do.

As was articulated, faith (and belief) are not static concepts. They cannot be fully understood apart from articulating our involvement or activity in them. This was demonstrated by the fact that the *fides quae creditur* (the faith which is believed) cannot be separated from the *fides qua creditur* (the faith by which it is believed). In other words, to intelligibly speak about belief one must both speak about the content of that belief as well as the act or disposition of believing that content—the content and the act can be distinguished, but not separated (they both co-constitute each other and together they contribute to what it means to believe). To speak of belief we cannot avoid speaking about the believer doing something at the same time that we cannot avoid speaking about the believer receiving and being dependent on many things. Faith, therefore, cannot only be understood as some entirely passive thing (in the mind) that is given that then manifests in action, but it must be understood to include the believer's dependent agency inherently from the get-go. Neither can faith, when it is understood to be wholly self-involving be sufficiently accounted for in an entirely abstracted and disengaged manner. Faith is embedded, embodied, and enacted in believers (it is not an objectified entity). Hence, the content as well as the act/disposition of faith is inherently dependent on concrete circumstances of manifestation (for both its actualization as well as its

intelligibility).[4] In this sense faith is a holistic concept. The believer is involved cognitively, emotionally, volitionally, and physically. It cannot be fully recognized as assent to an abstract idea, statement, or proposition, as a content-less feeling, or as just any type of action, bodily movement, or linguistic utterance. Any of these taken by themselves results in a reductive conception of faith. As such, faith is not a phenomenon that can be adequately recognized in the abstract or isolated from the lived realities that at the very least constitute part of its content as well as its manners of manifestation (nor is Christian faith something that can be responsibly understood apart from some sort of 'real' relation to God). Acknowledging this holism makes greater sense of the central significance of belief in and for Christianity.

We believe-that many things are true and that other things are false. We believe that some statements correctly orient us to, and in, reality and that others fail to do so. We believe-that some courses of action are right, good, and beneficial and that others are wrong, corrupting, and harmful. We believe-that some things are right for us and that some things are right for all. We believe-in various causes, other persons, sometimes in ourselves, and sometimes in God (not only that God 'exists' or is 'real' or that God has revealed and reveals Godself to us in various and specific ways, but we also believe in various divine acts of promise, warning, demand or command to and for us). Both the object of belief as well as the act/disposition of believing can be dynamic. At the same time, we also disbelieve-that and disbelieve-in a variety of intentional objects, whether those be states of affairs, other persons, causes, God, etc. We believe strongly in some things and weakly in others. The stronger the belief the greater the informative, normative, and transformative potential for shaping who we are, what we do, how we think, and how we relate to and perceive others, ourselves, our concrete situation and that which transcends our concrete situations. Believing-in and believing-that are related but distinct aspects of how we believe; and disbelieving some things is an unavoidable aspect of believing yet other things. Beliefs do not exist in isolation from other beliefs and believing does not take place abstracted from our concrete intentional existence in the world with others (even when this involves instances of more abstract and theoretical reflection and articulation 'pre-predicative' and intersubjective factors play a role in both constituting and enabling our grasp of the sense of even formal statements and objects of belief and they continue to do so even when we incorporate divine and transcendent dimensions, such as divine grace and revelation,

[4] This is even more so the case once a strong subject/object dichotomy is no longer held to be tenable.

into our understanding of the character of Christian believing, as theologians ought to do). Believing is pervasive and it is holistically normative.

Within the history of theological reflection we can find various discussions over implicit and explicit faith and we can also find the occasional caricatures or extreme versions of both. This thesis, however, has been focused on a non-reductive account of the character of Christian believing that reflects the implicit dimensions that accompany explicit Christian faith, which make Christian faith what it is and distinguish it from a mere awareness or even a mere assent to the explicit content of faith. There are various ways to relate to and appropriate the content of faith and these are what make up the implicit human dimensions of explicit faith.

The 'holistic character of Christian believing,' then, is a double reference to the reflexive relationship between the multifaceted characters who believe and to the multidimensional character of believing. It gestures toward the supposition that one's understanding of (theological) anthropology significantly affects how one understands the phenomenon of Christian believing (since if we follow Barth, Bultmann, and others, Christian faith is wholly self-involving, variously incorporating all that makes us human). It is assumed that *a* Christian's faith and *the* Christian faith are not encapsulated by or isolated as mere intellectual assent (as we are more than disinterested or disengaged thinkers), but neither is it assumed that faith is devoid of affirming (and variously relating to) a web of statements stemming from Christ and his message, which are inter-subjectively encountered in texts and in the community of relations that make up the church in the world. In both a Christian's faith and in the Christian faith various statements are reflected on and appropriated, various statements are commended and denounced, various statements are embodied and enacted, various statements are imbibed in various ways. The question is, how ought we to understand the relationship between the statements believed and the peculiar mode of believing that is pervasively a Christian's and the Christian faith? When we understand the mode of believing in a holistic manner the central significance of faith becomes more intelligible.

The character of Christian believing is intentional, and this intentionality is variously mediated through language as we are embedded and embodied in the world. It is directed outward. Christian faith is *in Christ*. This intentionality has multiple dimensions to it as well. Faith is 'aimed' at Christ cognitively and it is participated in Christ "ontologically." Now by this I mean nothing more

than that Christian faith is inherently constituted by an actual relationship to and encounter with the divine (as other than us and as other than creation, lest it be un-theological) in the particularity and concreteness of the actual, created world. This relationship is not merely to ideas, doctrines, or propositions nor can we properly reduce the intentionality of faith to merely historical and sociological elements of human existence. The intentional dimension of the character of Christian believing is dependent on some sort of actual encounter with the divine. The "implicit dimensions of explicit faith" refer not only to the theological dynamics involved in faith as a holistic relation to God, but also to the variegated ways in which persons relate to what and/or who is believed in (implicitly and explicitly, fluctuating through various levels of conscious awareness and different forms of holistically embodied manifestation). There is implicitly more going on *in* the believer's explicit reflection and confession and implicitly more *than* explicit reflection or audible expression. Reflective awareness (concerning the content and object of faith) is not a continuous phenomenon, but Christian believing is.

Reductive accounts of the nature of faith (whether they focus overwhelmingly on its propositional nature in an isolated and therefore unsophisticated manner, or those that hastily discharge the propositional altogether) lead to unsatisfactory answers (and to unnecessary debates), as they tend to reductively isolate aspects of human existence and of Christian faith to the detriment of others, whether that be some isolated form of thinking, feeling, or acting. In failing to satisfactorily grapple with the holistic character of Christian believing in its implicit and explicit complexity we fail to satisfactorily describe faith's relationship to the variegated purpose of our being created, and in failing to do so we fail to satisfactorily reflect the importance of the dynamic gift of faith in Christ in all its intricacy.

Faith, *pistis*, *fides*, is simultaneously something that you have and something that you do. It is simultaneously something that you receive and something that you offer (both 'vertically' and 'horizontally'). Faith is something that is simultaneously unique to each individual and something that is shared in common amongst Christians.[5] *A* Christian's faith is part of *the* Christian Faith and both *a* Christian's and *the* Christian faith exhibit diachronic and synchronic novelty amidst

[5] There are certain aspects of commonality with other religions too, but the focus of this thesis has been on Christianity as the character of Christian believing is fundamentally constituted and conditioned by that in whom the Christian believes in.

continuity. Faith is not some thing you have or some thing that you receive that can be adequately accounted for in isolation or abstraction, but it is only ever received and manifested in one's intentional way of existing in light of encountering God in the world. When the implicit dimensions of explicit faith and the holistic character of Christian believing are acknowledged and reflected on the central significance of belief (why it is *faith* that is so closely tied to our reception and appropriation of salvation) in and for Christianity becomes more intelligible because it is easier to see that faith is not simply something necessary to receive salvation and redemption but is itself the beginning and continuing actualization of redemption, reconciliation, restoration, salvation, and new creation in the here and now that cannot simply be reduced to the here and now.

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