

## THE FAITH OF JESUS

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TRADITIONAL CHRISTOLOGICAL thinking did not normally even raise the question of the existence and nature of faith exercised by Jesus during his earthly life. It seems to have been widely taken for granted that his divine identity and his human knowledge of God were such as to rule out the possibility of genuine faith.<sup>1</sup> This unwillingness to entertain any attribution of faith to Jesus has obviously affected the translation of certain New Testament passages which might be construed as presenting Jesus as a model for our faith. Thus the Revised Standard Version translated a key phrase from Hebrews 12:2 as "Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith," even though the original Greek text does not include "our."<sup>2</sup> The 1989 New Revised Standard Version has kept the same translation. The 1985 New Jerusalem Bible makes a similar addition and impression by translating the phrase as "Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection."

At the same time, where the New American Bible originally rendered the phrase from Heb 12:2 as "Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith," its 1988 revised NT version shifted to calling Jesus "the leader and perfecter of faith." A number of theologians recognized exemplary faith in the life of Jesus. He is "the witness of faith" for Gerhard Ebeling.<sup>3</sup> James Mackey calls Jesus "a man of faith," qualifying his faith as "extraordinarily radical."<sup>4</sup> Jon Sobrino dedicates a

<sup>1</sup> Some typical examples are: Romualdo Galdos, *Misterios de la Vida de Cristo* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1927) 474-76; M.-J. Lagrange, *Evangile selon Saint Luc* (Paris: Gabalda, 1948) 98; Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Cork: Mercier, 1966) 162-65.

<sup>2</sup> The 1978 New International Version followed suit by rendering the phrase "Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith."

<sup>3</sup> Gerhard Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith* (London: Collins, Fontana Library, 1966) 44-57. In Ebeling's "Jesus and Faith," in *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973) 204-46, the witness of faith, Jesus, became the source and ground of our faith. On the passage from the faith of Jesus to faith in him, see also Ernst Fuchs, "Jesus und der Glaube," in *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960) 238-57.

<sup>4</sup> James Mackey, *Jesus the Man and the Myth* (New York: Paulist, 1979) 171.

chapter of his *Christology* to "The Faith of Jesus."<sup>5</sup> Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thüsing, in their interdisciplinary study, explore the theme of Jesus as "believer."<sup>6</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar argues that we cannot take the genitive in the Pauline phrase "the faith of Jesus Christ" as simply an objective genitive,<sup>7</sup> though he hesitates to attribute to the earthly Jesus the same faith required of all humans. He concedes that problems about not recognizing in Jesus *the* paradigm of biblical faith arose in the history of theology.<sup>8</sup>

Yet serious limitations affect the way these and other defenders<sup>9</sup> of Jesus' faith have so far tackled the question. Some do not distinguish clearly enough between the confession and the commitment of faith—a distinction which is vital for the discussion of Jesus' faith. Others do not analyze sufficiently the range of relevant NT texts. None of them sees the possibility of recognizing in the earthly Jesus a commitment and confession that are *analogous* to ours. Roman Catholic defenders of Jesus' faith have not yet faced sufficiently the difficulty posed forty years or more ago by some official teaching on Jesus' human knowledge. So far no Roman Catholic has grasped the quiet switch on the issue of Jesus' human knowledge signalled by three

<sup>5</sup> Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978) 79–145.

<sup>6</sup> K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie—Systematisch und Exegetisch*, Quaestiones Disputatae 35 (Freiburg: Herder, 1972) 211–26. This was translated as *A New Christology* (London: Burns and Oates, 1980) 143–54. Carlos Palacio, "A Comparative Study of the Treatment of Jesus' Obedience in Some Modern Christologies," *Concilium* (Nov. 1980) treats this same material under the rubric of obedience. He maintains that the NT gives "a three-fold description of Jesus' obedience; in the first place, it is the mode of being characteristic of his *earthly life* (Heb 5:7 ff.; Phil 2:8; Heb 10:7); in the second, it denotes Jesus' intrinsic and total *reference to God*, to the extent of not being able to live or understand himself except standing before the Father; finally, it delineates the unique and unrepeatable character of *Jesus' way*: leading in faith and bringing it to perfection (Heb 12:2), the principle and source of all salvation (5:9; see 10:10, 14; 12:1–2) for those who obey him" (ibid 74).

<sup>7</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *La Foi du Christ* (Paris: Aubier, Montaigne, 1966) chap. 1. In a relevant citation he says: "Il faut ici reprendre la question du sens de deux formules fréquentes chez Paul, 'foi de Jésus-Christ' . . . et 'foi en Jésus-Christ' . . . Il est impossible en tout cas de voir dans le génitif un simple génitif objectif (ne serait-ce qu'à cause du datif de la seconde formule): il ne s'agit pas seulement de la foi dont Jésus-Christ serait l'objet. On ne peut pas non plus y voir simplement un génitif subjectif, désignant l'acte de foi du Christ lui-même; il peut prendre un point de vue plus large" (38). The German original, "Fides Christi," is found in *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1961) 45–79.

<sup>8</sup> "Si la théologie postérieure a laissé tomber le sens proprement biblique de l'attitude chrétienne fondamentale, jamais pourtant, surtout chez les mystiques, n'a cessé de s'imposer un concept dynamique de la vie éternelle, selon lequel, au sein de la vision, la créature ne cesse pas de découvrir en Dieu du nouveau, d'attendre toujours de lui, dans un abandon d'elle-même toujours nouveau" (ibid. 67).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Jacques Guillet, *Le Foi de Jésus Christ* (Paris: Desclée, 1980).

documents from the International Theological Commission (1979, 1981, and 1985). Dissatisfaction over these and further points motivated the writing of this article.

Any attempt to discuss the faith of the earthly Jesus and reach solidly founded conclusions (either for or against attributing faith to him) requires reflection in at least three areas: the nature of faith, the question of Jesus' human knowledge, and NT data that bears on claims about Jesus' faith. Let us begin with some working account of faith.

#### THE NATURE OF FAITH

Thomas Aquinas described faith as the assent of the intellect to that which is believed.<sup>10</sup> Two qualities necessary for faith, he maintained, are that a person be willing to believe, and that the contents of belief be proposed to that person.<sup>11</sup> Aquinas, therefore, held that faith involves both a voluntary commitment and a cognitive content. His scheme (*credere Deum*, *credere Deo*, and *credere in Deum*)<sup>12</sup> developed, first, two aspects of (a) the cognitive side of things—that is to say, the way faith is oriented toward meaning and truth. While (a<sup>1</sup>) *credere Deum* refers to believing that God exists, (a<sup>2</sup>) *credere Deo* entails believing what God has revealed; (b) *credere in Deum* is believing in God or self-commitment to God. Dimension (a) concerns the content or object of faith (*fides quae*), whereas (b) concerns the act of faith (*fides qua*). It is a distinction between (a) firmly holding to be meaningful and true the Christian message as revealed by God, and (b) entering a loving, obedient, and trusting relationship with the God who graciously forgives us and gives us life. We could distinguish two aspects of (b): on the one hand, faithful commitment here and now (b<sup>1</sup>); on the other hand, a persevering confidence that entrusts our future to God's hands (b<sup>2</sup>). Just as the cognitive content of faith (a) can be seen to have two aspects, so also with faith's voluntary commitment (b). At the same time, a working account of faith can follow Aquinas's general lines by distinguishing between "believing that/what" and "believing in," while recognizing how the content of faith (*fides quae*) and the act

<sup>10</sup> ST 2-2, q. 1, a. 4 c: "Fides importat assensum intellectus ad id quod creditur."

<sup>11</sup> ST 1, q. 111, a. 1 ad 1: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod ad fidem duo concurrunt. Primo quidem, habitus intellectus, quo disponitur ad obediendum voluntati tendenti in divinam veritatem: intellectus enim assentit veritati fidei, non quasi convictus ratione, sed quasi imperatus a voluntate; *nullus enim credit nisi volens*, ut Augustinus dicit. Et quantum ad hoc, fides est a solo Deo. — Secundo requiritur ad fidem, quod credibilia proponantur credenti. Et hoc quidem fit per hominem, secundum quod *fides est ex auditu*, ut dicitur Rom 10:17."

<sup>12</sup> ST 2-2, q. 2, a. 2.

of faith (*fides qua*) belong together. In these terms faith is (b) an obedient and trusting response to God who is (a) acknowledged as revealed to us as having acted on our behalf.<sup>13</sup> In a lapidary statement on faith the First Vatican Council equivalently taught the same doctrine by calling faith “the full homage of intellect [=a] and will [=b] to God who reveals” (DS 3008).

This version of faith could obviously be much further nuanced and expanded. There is, for example, the issue of grace and freedom. How can faith be simultaneously a gift from God and the free act of a human being? How can it be “inspired and assisted by the grace of God” (DS 3008; *Dei Verbum* no. 5) and yet remain our free act? Second, granted that there is a cognitive content of faith, it focuses on a physically invisible goal (2 Cor 5:7; Heb 11:1; see also Rom 8:24). “Seeing” is normally, but not always, understood to exclude “believing.”<sup>14</sup> Conversely, believing is usually understood to imply some element of not-seeing.<sup>15</sup> How does that not-seeing qualify “believing-that” and “believing-in”? Third, what of those believers who sin gravely? How does

<sup>13</sup> Standard accounts of faith, with somewhat different emphases, include both dimensions: the trusting, personal relationship and the confession of (revealed) truth. See, e.g., Avery Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971) 17–59; Keith Clements, “Faith,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) 207; Stéphane Harent, “Foi,” in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 6.55–514; Hans-Jürgen Hermisson and Eduard Lohse, *Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981); Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, “Faith,” *Dictionary of Theology*, 2d ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 167–68; Richard Swinburne, *Faith and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 104–24.

<sup>14</sup> Aquinas calls faith “that habit of mind by which eternal life begins in us, making the intellect assent to things that are not evident” (*ST* 2-2, q. 4, a. 1 c; italics ours). Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966) analyzed the five verbs used to express “seeing.” In most cases these verbs express only physical seeing though occasionally they can mean seeing a sign and coming to seemingly adequate sight (501–3). In commenting on John 20:15–16, Brown mentions that Mary Magdalene saw Jesus but did not recognize him. He concludes that the “mere sight of the risen Jesus does not necessarily lead to understanding or faith” (1009). “Necessarily” is important here, as John’s Gospel sometimes does present seeing as an occasion for belief (1:14; 11:40; 14:8–9; 20:8; 20:29). See also Ferdinand Hahn, “Sehen und Glauben in Johannesevangelium,” in *Neues Testament und Geschichte: Festschrift O. Cullmann*, ed. H. Baltensweiler et al. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972) 125–41.

<sup>15</sup> “Some element” is important here. Entailing a personal knowledge of God and oneself or a new understanding of God and oneself, faith means “seeing in a mirror dimly” and “knowing in part” (1 Cor 13:12), and even “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4–6). See P. Rousselot, “Les Yeux de la Foi,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 1 (1910) 241–59 and 444–75, and various converts (e.g. Arnold Lunn, *Now I See* [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1933]) who describe their move to faith as coming to see, even if faith’s knowledge remains a “cognitio obscura (a shadowy knowledge).”

their option against God affect their “believing-that” and “believing-in”? These are merely some of the issues that could be developed at considerable length. The question of seeing/knowing or believing will turn up later in this article. But for our discussion a distinction between “believing-that” (confession; see Rom 10:8–10) and “believing-in” (commitment)—or, in Paul’s terms “the obedience of faith” (Rom 1:5; 16:26)—should be enough to let us raise questions about the existence and nature of faith exercised by the earthly Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

#### JESUS’ HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

Aquinas and the subsequent Catholic theological tradition held that in his human mind Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision and hence lived by sight, not by faith.<sup>17</sup> Aquinas expressed this problem classically: “When the divine reality is not hidden from sight, there is no point in faith. From the first moment of his conception Christ had the full vision of God in his essence. . . . Therefore he could not have had faith” (*ST* 3, q. 7, a. 3).<sup>18</sup> Along with this knowledge of vision, Jesus’ human knowledge was recognized to include “ordinary,” experimental knowledge but was credited with embracing special, “infused” knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

Notable difficulties can be brought against the thesis which holds that Jesus’ human knowledge embraced the beatific vision. First, how could he have genuinely suffered if through his human mind he knew God immediately and in a beatifying way?<sup>20</sup> Second, such a vision raises problems, to put it mildly, for the free operation of Jesus’ human will. Despite the way Aquinas qualifies somewhat Jesus’ knowledge of

<sup>16</sup> On the general topic of faith, see also, e.g., John O’Donnell, “Faith” in *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1987) 375–86; Jaroslav Pelikan, “Faith,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 250–55.

<sup>17</sup> On the issue of Jesus’ human consciousness and knowledge, see E. Gutwenger, *Bewusstsein und Wissen Christi* (Innsbruck: Rauch, 1960); Ph. Kaiser, *Das Wissen Christi in lateinischen (westlichen) Theologie* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1981); Karl Rahner, “Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ,” *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1979) 5.193–215; H. Riedlinger, *Geschichtlichkeit und Vollendung des Wissens Christi*, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 32 (Freiburg: Herder, 1966); Lothar Ulrich, “Der Glaube Jesu Christi,” in *Lexikon der Katholischen Dogmatik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1987) 197–99; J. H. P. Wong, “Karl Rahner on the Consciousness of Jesus: Implications and Assessments,” *Salesianum* 48 (1986) 255–79.

<sup>18</sup> In the Middle Ages the view that Jesus had no faith was common teaching: see, e.g., Peter Lombard, *Sent.* 3, dist. 26, cap. 4; Alexander of Hales, *Summa Theologica* 3, inq. 2, tract. 1, cap. 4, 694.

<sup>19</sup> See Aquinas, *ST* 3, qq. 10–12.

<sup>20</sup> In his doctoral dissertation, *Mark 15:34 in Catholic Exegesis and Theology 1911–1964* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1984), Paul Zilonka summarizes well the Thomistic response to the problem of Jesus suffering on the cross while simultaneously enjoying the beatific vision (84–91). See also Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* 164.

vision,<sup>21</sup> such an immediate, beatifying vision of God in this life would seem to rule out the possibility of human freedom. Here and now the exercise of freedom requires limited knowledge. Third, Jesus was remembered to have remained obedient toward his Father, despite trials and temptations (see e.g. Mark 1:12–13; Luke 22:28; Heb 2:18; 4:15). The steady possession of the beatific vision would seem to rule out any genuine struggle on Jesus' part. His "trials and temptations" could not have been real threats but only a "show" put on for our benefit and edification. Fourth, how can one reconcile the knowledge of vision (which Aquinas interprets as also including a comprehensive grasp of all creatures and everything they could do) with Jesus' human knowledge of the world? As human, such knowledge grows and develops through experience, but always remains limited. Knowledge in this life that entails (from conception) a comprehensive grasp of all creatures and everything they could do appears to be so superhuman that it casts serious doubts on the genuine status of Jesus' human knowledge. Fifth, the Synoptic Gospels contain passages that suggest ordinary limits in Jesus' human knowledge (e.g. Mark 5:30–32; 13:32).<sup>22</sup> Sixth, the ontological fact of the hypostatic union (the two natures of Christ united in the second person of the Trinity) does not as such necessarily imply something special, let alone something unique like the beatific vision, about the range of Jesus' human knowledge. Admittedly being and consciousness/knowledge are intimately linked. In the question at issue, from its very beginning Christ's human nature had the unique, ontological status of being hypostatically united to the Word of God. Nevertheless, the Council of Chalcedon's insistence on Christ's human nature preserving the "character proper" to it (DS 302) should make one cautious about attributing quite special properties (in this case, the quite extraordinary knowledge of the beatific vision) to his human mind. Christ's human mind and knowledge were maintained and not made superhuman through the hypostatic union. The comprehensive grasp of *all* creatures and *all* they can do (which Aquinas holds to belong to the beatific vision) would lift Christ's knowledge so clearly beyond the normal limits of human knowledge as to cast serious doubts on the genuineness of his humanity, at least in one essential aspect.

For these and related reasons many Catholics now decline to endorse Aquinas's thesis that the earthly Jesus' knowledge included (surely one would have to say was dominated by?) the beatific vision. While recognizing in Jesus an immediate, primordial awareness of his divine

<sup>21</sup> See Aquinas, *ST* 3, q. 10 ad 2.

<sup>22</sup> See Raymond Brown, *Jesus: God and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

identity and unique relationship to the God whom he called "Abba," they insist on what was implied for the *human* knowledge of the eternal Word in taking a human nature as a second principle of activity. Inasmuch as and as long as the divine Subject acted through a human nature in this earthly life, the Logos acted through a nature limited in knowledge. Otherwise the genuine status of that human nature would be suspect, and Jesus would not have been "truly" human in the terms classically defined by the Council of Chalcedon.

Before moving on to the relevant data from the NT, we should recall three church documents which contain teaching about Christ's human knowledge including the beatific vision. The first occurs in the Holy Office's decree *Lamentabili* of 1907 (DS 3434), the second in a 1918 decree of the Holy Office (DS 3645–47), and the third in a 1943 encyclical from Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (DS 3812).

*Lamentabili* condemned Christological errors selected from here and there in the writings of the Modernists. In particular, the position on Christ's knowledge selected for condemnation is, on any showing, complicated:

A critic cannot assert that Christ's knowledge was unlimited, unless by advancing the hypothesis, which is historically inconceivable and morally repugnant, that Christ as man had God's knowledge and yet was unwilling to communicate so much knowledge to his disciples and posterity (DS 3434).

Was the Holy Office merely asserting that some Modernists were wrong in arguing that claims about Christ's unlimited (human) knowledge necessarily depended on the hypothesis that is indicated? In any case, what positive, enduring and revealed teaching for our salvation is found in this statement of the Holy Office?

The 1918 decree took up the question of "the soul of Christ" enjoying the beatific vision continuously. It declared, for example, that the following proposition could not be "taught safely": "It is not certain that the soul of Christ during his life among men had the knowledge which the blessed, that is those who have achieved their goal (*comprehensores*), have" (DS 3645). Among the traditional theological qualifications, "safe teaching" is one of the lowest. Today, in a changed ecclesial, theological, and cultural climate, to teach that during his earthly life Christ enjoyed the knowledge which the blessed have in heaven might itself not be such "safe" teaching. For many people it would seem to inject a strong element of make-believe into the whole of his life story and cast doubt on his authentic humanity. Leo the Great, the pope who loomed over the Council of Chalcedon, warned against edging out Christ's humanity: "It is as dangerous an evil to deny the truth

of the human nature in Christ as to refuse to believe that his glory is equal to that of the Father."<sup>23</sup>

*Mystici Corporis*, the most authoritative of the three documents in question, affirms that right from his mother's womb Christ possessed in his human intellect the beatific vision and knew all future members of the Church. Yet it needs to be pointed out that this encyclical was concerned with the mystery of the Church and not as such with doctrines about Christ.

In short, contemporary Catholics should continue to give these documents a respectful hearing. But we fail to see any clear obligation to reendorse the view that Christ during his earthly existence enjoyed the beatific vision. Neither his unique personal dignity as Son of God nor his unique function for revelation and redemption necessarily and clearly requires such extraordinary knowledge.

It is significant that in its Christological documents, "Select Questions of Christology" (1979), "Theology, Christology and Anthropology" (1981), and "The Consciousness of Christ concerning Himself and His Mission" (1985), the International Theological Commission never claimed that the earthly Jesus possessed the beatific vision.<sup>24</sup> This quiet abandonment of that maximal position about Jesus' knowledge is all the more significant, inasmuch as the Commission took various positions on his consciousness and knowledge. The 1985 document endorsed the view of many NT scholars that in his words and works the earthly Jesus claimed divine authority and showed that he was aware of standing in a unique relationship to the God whom he called "Abba (Father dear)." This is an assertion about Jesus being humanly conscious of his *divine identity*. Both the 1981 and 1985 documents went further in claiming that in his human consciousness Jesus was aware of his personal *preexistence* as Son of God. At the same time, this claim was mitigated by "implicitly" and "implied": "At least *implicitly*" Jesus Christ showed that he was conscious of "his eternal existence as the Son of the Father" (1981 document); "the consciousness that Jesus had of his mission *implied* an awareness of his 'preexistence'" (1985 document). It is one thing to be aware of his divine status as *the Son* (and of his redemptive mission). But it is another thing to be humanly conscious, at least implicitly, of existing eternally before his concep-

<sup>23</sup> Leo the Great, "In Nativitate Domini Sermo VII" (Sermo 27.1), in René Dolle, ed., *Léon Le Grand: Sermons* (Sources chrétiennes 22; Paris: Cerf, 1964) 150.

<sup>24</sup> The English translation of these documents can be found in the work edited by Michael Sharkey, *International Theological Commission, Texts and Documents 1969-1985* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989) 185-205, 197-223, 305-16.



tion and birth. Obviously much depends here on how we understand "implicitly." But our point is this: in three documents the International Theological Commission has dealt with Jesus' human consciousness and knowledge, along with other Christological questions. The 1985 document took as its principal theme Jesus' human consciousness of himself and his mission. But none of these documents asserted that during his earthly life Jesus possessed an immediate, beatific vision of God. Nor for that matter was there any talk of special, *infused* knowledge. The key affirmations about Jesus' "psychology" are that he was (humanly) conscious of (1) his divine identity as Son of God and (2) his revealing/redemptive mission.

Those two affirmations must play a role in our discussion of the existence and nature of Jesus' faith. Let us turn our attention to the NT claims and evidence.

#### JESUS' HUMAN FAITH

##### *Outside the Gospels*

"To believe (*pisteuein*)" and "faith" (*pistis*)" are among the most common words in the NT, the verb occurring 241 times and the noun 243 times. But nowhere do we find the Gospels or any other NT books explicitly saying that during his earthly life "Jesus believed." The phrase "faith of Jesus" occurs only once: "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev 14:12 NRSV). The phrase "faith of Jesus Christ" and similar expressions occur eight times in the Pauline letters (Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 2:16a, 16b, 20; 3:22; Eph 3:12; Phil 3:9). The "faith of Jesus" (cf. Rev 14:12) has been interpreted as an objective genitive: "faith in Jesus,"<sup>25</sup> or "our faith in Jesus."<sup>26</sup> Sometimes the question is just ignored.<sup>27</sup> The possibility of translating the phrase as "the faith exercised by Jesus" does not seem to be an issue for recent commentators on Revelation.

As regards the "faith of Christ," James Mackey makes much of the grammatical possibility offered by Gal 2:16 and understands the pas-

<sup>25</sup> Pheme Perkins, *The Book of Revelation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1983) 85.

<sup>26</sup> E.-B. Allo, *L'Apocalypse* (Paris: J. Galbalda, 1933) 241.

<sup>27</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Revelation," in *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Reginald H. Fuller et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 99-120; J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975). Referring to Rev 1:5; 2:13; 3:14 and 19:11, J. D. G. Dunn takes the genitive in Rev 14:12 as subjective; see his "Once More Pistis Christou," *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, ed. Eugene H. Lovering (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991) 732-33.

sage to mean that we are justified not through believing *in* Jesus Christ (as the object of our faith) but through (being infected by) the faith *of* Jesus (the personal subject of his own faith).<sup>28</sup> Here Mackey has ignored the priority of context over mere grammar. In the context it is clear that Paul is writing, at least primarily, of *our* faith *in* Jesus Christ. Every contemporary translation we have checked (the New American Bible [both the original edition of 1970 and the revised NT version of 1988], the New International Version, the New Jerusalem Bible, the New Revised Standard Version, and the New English Bible) takes the passage in that sense.<sup>29</sup> So too the standard commentators.<sup>30</sup>

In a presidential address to the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, Morna Hooker summed up the main lines in the modern debate about the Pauline "faith of Christ." She adds further bibliography on the issue and concludes that the phrase "must contain *some* reference to the faith of Christ himself," understanding the phrase "as a *concentric* expression, which begins, always, from the faith of Christ himself, but which includes, necessarily, the answering faith of believers, who claim that faith as their own."<sup>31</sup> Despite the support from Hooker and others,<sup>32</sup> the tide does not seem to have seriously turned in favor of those like Mackey who take the Pauline "faith of Christ" to mean the "faith exercised by the earthly Jesus."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Mackey 163, 188.

<sup>29</sup> For all eight occurrences in Paul, however, footnotes in the NRSV leave open the possibility of understanding "the faith of Jesus Christ" as the faith exercised by Jesus. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Walter Bauer, William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979) s.v. *pistis* lists some of the older discussions of this phrase, in particular attempts to interpret the phrase as a subjective genitive (663).

<sup>30</sup> For example, see Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 115–19; Joseph Fitzmyer, "Galatians," *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* 784–85; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982) 137–38; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1965) 94.

<sup>31</sup> Morna D. Hooker, "Pistis Christou," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989) 321–42, at 341. In summarizing the reasons (including the theological presuppositions) "why there has been considerable opposition in the past to the interpretation of *Pistis Christou* as a subjective genitive" (324), Hooker simply overlooks the way crediting Christ with superhuman knowledge (specifically, the beatific vision) also militated against recognizing the faith he exercised.

<sup>32</sup> R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (Chico: Scholars, 1983) 140–42, 157–76.

<sup>33</sup> This matter is explicitly covered by James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (Dallas: Word, 1988) in his comments on Rom 3:21–26 (174–76, 182–83). See the debate between Dunn and Hayes over the "faith of Christ" in *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, 714–29 (Hays) and 730–44 (Dunn).

As further scriptural warrant for recognizing that Jesus experienced faith, Mackey appeals to two passages from Hebrews: "As Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (5:8), and "[He is the] pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (12:2).<sup>34</sup> Mackey interprets these texts as saying that just as we human beings "*learn* faith or obedience through what we suffer," so did Jesus. His "faith was perfected, and he was freed from the fear of death which makes us slaves, and he thus became the pioneer and perfecter of faith, the one we follow when we have faith like his."<sup>35</sup> Mackey further argues that only a person who has such faith can truly convey it to others.<sup>36</sup>

Mackey is right in turning to Heb 12:2, even if he misses the fact that the original Greek does not have the word "our" qualifying "faith." Exegetes, however, have not always been in accord with the interpretation that Mackey offers. For instance, Spicq says that Heb 12:2 indicates that Christ gives to (our) faith his full achievements and accomplishments, and ultimately a heavenly reward. All Christian life and faith depend on Christ. The NT never portrays Christ as a believer. Hebrews 12:2 represents him as guiding his disciples in the race of faith and guaranteeing their final victory.<sup>37</sup>

When Westcott comments on this same verse he takes the opposite approach. The faith invoked by the author of Hebrews is of the absolute type of which this author has traced the action (Heb 11:1–12:1) under the Old Covenant. In Jesus we have the perfect example of that faith which we are to imitate. Jesus exhibited faith in the highest form. As the head of a great army of heroes and heroines of faith, he carried faith, "the source of their strength, to its most complete perfection and to its loftiest triumph." Westcott adds that "this ascription of 'faith' to the Lord is of the highest importance for the realization of his perfect humanity,"<sup>38</sup>

When Attridge discusses Heb 12:2 he says that "it is neither Christ himself nor his followers . . . that are perfected, but that faith that both share."<sup>39</sup> Not only is Christ the perfectly adequate model of what life under the new covenant involves, but the faith which Christ inaugurates is "the fidelity and trust that he himself exhibited in a fully adequate way and that his followers are called upon to share."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Mackey 168.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 169.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Gabalda, 1953) 2.386.

<sup>38</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1920 [reprinted 1965]) 395.

<sup>39</sup> Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) 356.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Graham Hughes tackles the question as to whether Jesus, as described in Heb 12:2, is to be thought of as the *source* of faith or its greatest *exemplar*.<sup>41</sup> He notes that English versions of this passage (he specifically cites three: RSV, NEB, TEV) are almost unanimous in making the former interpretation. Hughes suspects that the translators have suffered from a subconscious unwillingness to see Jesus as a participant in faith as well as the object of faith. But, he continues, from the context which shows the way in which Jesus is brought into direct continuity with the readers in their situation, this passage can only mean that "here Jesus is understood, as in his humanity he stands before the dark uncertainty of his impending death, to be repudiating the possibility of unbelief and on the contrary allowing that threatening present to be illuminated by his confidence in the future. . . ."<sup>42</sup> He judges that in this way Jesus "becomes a perfect model for the Christian readers, whose own darkly threatening future seems to be an important, if not the most important, factor in their contemplation of the abandonment of their confession."<sup>43</sup> Both Heb 10:36 and 12:2 show a striking similarity in their statements about the "will of God." "In both cases the stance of Jesus becomes what might be called a 'disclosure situation'; God's election of 'suffering' as an appropriate way to glory is shown nowhere more clearly than in the prototypal life of 'the pioneer.'"<sup>44</sup> The author of Hebrews, Hughes concludes, grasps the fact that Jesus had a faith of his own as among the clearest implications of incarnation and accordingly as neither an inappropriate nor unwelcome aspect of Jesus' meaning as "pioneer" of, or model for, faith.<sup>45</sup>

Since Hughes published his book on Hebrews, the NEB which translated Heb 12:2 as "Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish" has revised (1989) the translation to "[we must] run with resolution the race that lies ahead of us, our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." This changes the emphasis from Jesus as source of faith to Jesus as exemplar of faith.

Otto Michel would agree with this opinion.<sup>46</sup> Albert Vanhoye translates Heb 12:2 as "gazing at the leader and fulfiller of the faith,

<sup>41</sup> Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics* (New York: Cambridge University, 1979) 80.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 83–84.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 86.

<sup>46</sup> Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966): "Weil Jesus in der schwersten Anfechtung den Glauben bewahrt und ihn damit auf die Stufe höchster Vollendung erhoben hat, geht er allen anderen im Glauben voran und ermöglicht ihnen, seinem Vorbild zu folgen" (434).

Jesus,"<sup>47</sup> and explains that Jesus is the model of those whom God takes for his children.<sup>48</sup>

In a recent article Dennis Hamm lines up with those like Westcott, Attridge, Hughes, Michel, and Vanhoye who, with minor differences of nuance, interpret Hebrews as portraying Jesus as not only (a) enabler and facilitator of faith but also as (b) model and exemplar of faith.<sup>49</sup> Heb 12:1–2, which may not be considered apart from 11:1–40, underlines (b), the parallel between the faith-race of Jesus and the faith-race to which disciples are called. Hamm directs us also to other passages in Hebrews which indicate how being "like" us "in every respect" except sin (Heb 2:17; 4:15) included faith, albeit a faith that was lived in an utterly exemplary way. As high priest in the service of God, Jesus was *pistos*, trustworthy and faithful (Heb 2:17; 3:2). In his suffering Jesus exhibited *eulabeia*, that faithful obedience to God despite temptation (Heb 2:17–18; 4:15) which serves as model for Christian believers (Heb 5:7–8; 10:5–10).<sup>50</sup>

By speaking of Jesus' prayer and obedient suffering "in the days of his flesh" (Heb 5:7–8), Hebrews encourages us to accept what we might glean from elsewhere, above all from the Synoptic Gospels, about Jesus' faith and what it involved.

Repelled by unfounded speculations about Jesus' inner life, some scholars refuse to make any claims about Jesus' interiority and experience of God. David Tracy, for example, dismisses the possibility of saying anything at all about Jesus' interior life: the "psychology of Jesus is unavailable to modern scholarship."<sup>51</sup> But not all modern theologians and biblical scholars agree with this flat statement.<sup>52</sup> Beyond question, the Synoptic Gospels do not aim at presenting the inner life of Jesus, and as documents written out of faith, they cannot be read

<sup>47</sup> Albert Vanhoye, *A Structured Translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964) 32.

<sup>48</sup> Albert Vanhoye, *La Structure Littéraire de L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Desclée, 1963) 196. This same idea of Jesus as the model is echoed by Myles Bourke, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* 940.

<sup>49</sup> Dennis Hamm, "Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Jesus Factor," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990) 270–91.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid* 284–85.

<sup>51</sup> David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 326.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., some statements on the earthly Jesus which the Pontifical Biblical Commission made in a 1984 document, translated by Joseph A. Fitzmyer in his "The Biblical Commission and Christology," *TS* 46 (1985) 407–79, at 424, 436–38. The cautious and nuanced claims made about Jesus' most ordinary experience and awareness of his filial relationship and redemptive mission obviously involve some claims about his "psychology."

as “normal” historical sources. Nevertheless, both from what they let us know about his characteristic attitudes and actions and from authentic sayings they preserve we can reach some modest, yet important conclusions about his interior dispositions. It is clear that Jesus spoke repeatedly of the divine kingdom and his Father (e.g. Luke 11: 20; 23:8–9; Mark 8:38), showing an awareness of his own relationship to the kingdom and his divine Father. By reflecting on that awareness we can uncover something of what Jesus thought about himself in this relationship. Not to know much about the “psychology of Jesus” is not equivalent to knowing nothing at all.<sup>53</sup>

Let us turn now to the evidence from the Synoptic Gospels.

### *The Synoptic Gospels*

It is easy to recognize that during his earthly existence Jesus exemplified a “believing in,” a *credere in Deum* which expressed itself in a totally obedient self-commitment to the God whom he called “Abba” (Mark 14:36). Publicly this “believing in” was lived out in Jesus’ total openness to and unconditioned trust in the divine kingdom that was breaking into the world. We could hardly sum up better his public ministry than by describing him as being utterly at the service of God’s reign. Not only Jesus’ actions but also some of his sayings reflect this dimension of his faith. Take, for example, this apparently authentic saying: “If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry-tree, ‘Be rooted up and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you” (Luke 17:6).<sup>54</sup> Through those whose faith truly puts them at God’s disposition, extraordinary results (like the healings and other miracles of Jesus) would happen. Joachim Gnilka reflects on this logion: “As Jesus’ word this [saying] can hardly be interpreted in any other way than as a statement about his own faith.” Gnilka continues:

For the miraculous healings not only the faith of the one who received help but also the faith of Jesus is relevant. . . . In that Jesus was open to God in a unique way he showed his unique faith. . . . When Jesus according to Mark 9:23 says

<sup>53</sup> In explaining the virtue of faith Aquinas distinguishes between its principal act, believing, and its secondary, external act, which is to confess, witness, and give testimony (*ST* 2-2, q. 3, a. 1). In these terms we might think of arguing from the secondary, external testimony of faith communicated through Jesus’ words and deeds back to the principal act of his inner belief. The 1984 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, cited in the previous note, speaks of Jesus’ internal dispositions from a modern biblical perspective.

<sup>54</sup> Joachim Gnilka argues, like others, that “mulberry-tree” goes back to Jesus, and that “mountain” (Mark 11:23; Matt 17:20) is a secondary development (*Jesus von Nazareth: Botschaft und Geschichte* [Freiburg: Herder, 1990] 134).

to the father of the epileptic boy, "All things are possible to him who believes," that is an invitation to share in his faith.<sup>55</sup>

In this episode Jesus complains of his contemporaries as being "a faithless generation" (Mark 9:19). They have "little faith" (Matt 6:30 = Luke 12:28) and should learn to trust in divine providence. He reproaches his disciples as a group and Peter in particular for having "little faith" (Matt 8:26; 14:31; 17:20). He promises that God will hear those who ask in prayer (Matt 7:7–12 = Luke 11:9–13). Some, or probably much of this language goes back to Jesus himself. He speaks about faith as an insider,<sup>56</sup> one who knows personally what the life of faith is and wants to share it with others (see 2 Cor 4:13).<sup>57</sup>

The "private" side of Jesus' faith "in" God showed itself through (and presumably was fed by) the life of prayer he assiduously practiced (see, e.g., Mark 1:35; 6:46; 14:12–26; 32–42; Matt 11:25; Luke 3:21). Praying like that expressed a deep sense of dependence and trust—in other words, a strong relationship of faith in God.<sup>58</sup>

Not only authentic sayings of Jesus, but also NT writings themselves (and their traditional sources) witness to his *fides qua* in his trusting (Mark 14:25),<sup>59</sup> persevering (Heb 10:36; 12:1–2), developing

<sup>55</sup> Ibid 135 (translation ours).

<sup>56</sup> As regards "little faith," however, Joseph A Fitzmyer, commenting on Luke 12:28 (= Matt 6:30), doubts that the word goes back to Jesus: "A Greek compound adj. *oligopistos*, added to the tradition already in "Q," lacks any real equivalent in the Semitic languages, and hence is scarcely traceable to Jesus himself" (*The Gospel according to Luke* [Garden City: N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985] 979). Ulrich Luz understands "person(s) of little faith" (in Matt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31) as coming from the tradition, but does not discuss whether it goes back to Jesus himself (*Das Evangelium nach Matthäus 1* [Zürich: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985] 369).

<sup>57</sup> Paul may be applying to Christ the words of the psalm "I believed and so I spoke" and imagining that he (Christ) speaks here. If this interpretation is correct, "Paul would be claiming to share in Christ's *own spirit of faith*: 'Paul in all probability takes the verse from Ps. 116 as an utterance of the Messiah, an utterance of faith in God's salvation'" (A. T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974] 17–18, 213; see also his *The Pioneer Ministry* [London: SCM, 1961] 76–78).

<sup>58</sup> Mackey speaks of Jesus' faith having "its deepest roots in the most ordinary experience of everyday life," but not in prayer (*Jesus the Man and the Myth* 171). Leonardo Boff does better by recognizing the role that "prayer and mediation" with "the reading of the Scriptures" played in Jesus' life of faith (*Passion of Christ, Passion of the World* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987] 61).

<sup>59</sup> The authenticity of this saying is affirmed by Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (New York: St. Martin's, 1966) 547; also by Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 192. Jeremias believes that Jesus is equivalently saying: "I would very much have liked to eat this passover lamb with you before my death. (But I must deny myself this wish.) For I tell you I do not intend to eat of it again until God fulfills (his promises) in the kingdom of God" (211).

(Luke 2:52; Heb 5:9; 7:28) and obedient (Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8) characteristics. The difficulties arise much more with the dimension of *fides quae* or "believing that/what."

Not only in the past (when the Catholic theology followed Aquinas in attributing the beatific vision to the earthly Jesus) but also today, some "special" aspects of Jesus' consciousness can seem to rule out any recognizable kind of "believing that/what." Jean Galot, for instance, finds no basis for claiming that Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision during his mortal life<sup>60</sup> but soon modifies this position. He states that Jesus had "other knowledge that could not have resulted from his experience or from the normal exercise of his intellect, and which can be explained as stemming from a higher source."<sup>61</sup> Jesus possessed "certain pieces of infused information, but he did not possess infused science ["knowledge"] *per se*."<sup>62</sup> These "pieces of infused information" included the awareness on Jesus' part that he was divine.<sup>63</sup> Galot concludes that, although Jesus experienced ordeals closely resembling the trials of faith, "since Jesus is the Son of God and possesses the consciousness proper to this sonship, it is impossible to attribute faith to him in the strict sense of the word."<sup>64</sup>

But is it possible to reckon with some limitations in Jesus' "believing that/what" caused by his "special" knowledge and then recognize in him faith in an analogous sense? Let us take up the difficult question of the possibility and scope of a *fides quae* for Jesus.

Certain very important convictions did not and could not enter Jesus' confession of faith. The evidence from the Synoptic Gospels supports the conclusion that he had a primordial awareness of being the unique Son of the God whom he addressed as "Abba" (Mark 14:36) and of being *the* final agent of salvation for human beings (Mark 8:38; Luke 11:20; 12:8–9).<sup>65</sup> Jesus *knew* his divine identity and redemptive mission. He did not and could not *believe* that he was the Son of God and Savior of the world. Further, since his crucifixion and resurrection had not yet taken place he could not confess his redemptive death and resurrection in the way Christians began to do so (e.g. Rom 1:3–4; 4:24–25; 10:8–10; 1 Cor 15:3–5). Here, however, one might argue that a historical nucleus behind the passion predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34; see also 12:1–11; 14:25) shows us Jesus confidently confessing his coming passion and vindication. But leaving aside for the mo-

<sup>60</sup> Jean Galot, *Who is Christ?* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1981) 354–56.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 360.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 362.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 380.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 382.

<sup>65</sup> See the documents of the International Theological Commission and Fitzmyer's "The Biblical Commission and Christology" (notes 24 and 52 above).



ment this question, we can reasonably claim that some essential convictions, above all, his divine identity (and with that the very existence of God) and saving mission, were matters of knowledge and not of faith for Jesus.

What then was left to make up his *fides quae*? Without distinguishing and speaking of “the *confession* of faith,” Mackey tells us that Jesus’ faith

had its deepest roots in the most ordinary experience of everyday life. The man Jesus—apart from his tradition, of course, which had already tried to verbalize this faith—had no more ‘information’ about God than could be gleaned from the birds of the air, the farmers in their fields, kings in their castles, and merchants in the market-place.<sup>66</sup>

This is to privilege the confession of faith in God the Creator, the God revealed for everybody in the world and in the experiences of everyday life. The revelation of God, communicated through the history of Israel and (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) recorded and interpreted by the Hebrew scriptures becomes a mere parenthesis and not even that. In Mackey’s version Israel’s “tradition” had “tried to verbalize *this* faith” (italics ours), that is to say a faith rooted, not in the history of the people, but in “the most ordinary experience of everyday life.” Surely Jesus’ faith, while rooted in creation, was also (even more?) rooted in the special history of God’s call of and dealings with the chosen people? Mackey is right in drawing attention to the *present* “object” of Jesus’ faith, that *fides quae* in God the loving and provident Creator which we express in the opening words of the Creed and which Jesus expressed in terms of the Shema (Mark 12:28–34; see Deut 6:4). Nevertheless, the past and future could also have constituted Jesus’ *fides quae*.

Creeds of Israel confessed, not so much God revealed in creation, as God revealed through the divine acts in the history of the people:

A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Deut 26:5–9; see 6:20–25; Jos 24:2–13).

<sup>66</sup> *Jesus the Man and the Myth* 171.

These historical creeds made up the typical confessional element for Jewish faith, and, one can reasonably argue, for the *fides quae* of Jesus. He quotes the Shema (Mark 12:29–30), which in its original setting (Deut 6:1–25) drew its meaning and support from the way God fulfilled promises to the people by delivering them from Egypt and giving them “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Deut 6:3, 10–12, 20–23).

The Synoptic Gospels do not contain any suggestion that Jesus had special sources of knowledge about the religious history of his people. Nor do they contain any suggestion that Jesus refrained from confessing the old creeds with his fellow Jews.<sup>67</sup> In short, the credal summaries found in the Hebrew Bible point us to the confessional content of Jesus’ faith, the traditional faith he shared with devout Jews.<sup>68</sup>

In our Apostles’ Creed not only the present and the past but also *the future* (“I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting”) figures among the objects of *faith*. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, admittedly, articulates matters rather in terms of *hope*: “We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” We might speak here of the *spes quae* (“hope that”) and recall Paul’s words about waiting in hope for the invisible blessings of the future: “Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Rom 8:24–25). Nevertheless, this relationship to the invisible blessings of the future can be thematized in other ways. Echoing Isa 64:34 Paul puts *love* at the heart of the relationship: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:9–10). Finally, as in the Apostles’ Creed, *faith* is applied to those who obey God and trust the divine promises, without seeing (Heb 11:1) the future rewards, or seeing them only “from afar” (Heb 11:13). The future can be listed among the objects of our faith. According to Aquinas, faith, like the other theological virtues, orders human beings toward the future beatific vision. Through faith we assent not only to the way of salvation prescribed by God but

<sup>67</sup> Joachim Jeremias judges that the Last Supper was a Passover Meal (*The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* 41–84), and shows how Jesus kept the minute prescriptions for its celebration, e.g. by eating the paschal lamb in the precincts of Jerusalem, by maintaining the minimum number of ten to be present, by interpreting the special elements of the meal, and so on. Jesus, who was thus sharing the prayer-life of his people, was certainly sharing their faith.

<sup>68</sup> Within the NT itself Zechariah’s canticle (Luke 1:67–80), Stephen’s speech (Acts 7:2–53) and the praise of ancestors (Heb 11:1–40) contain many elements (reaching back beyond Abraham even to Abel) which provided the content for Jesus’ confession of faith.

also to God as our end.<sup>69</sup> In the case of Jesus, if we agree that he did not yet have the beatific vision, could his faith have ordered him toward it? Did his faith lead him to assent, not only to the way of salvation which the divine kingdom involved but also to his Father as his last end?

Once again the question of Jesus' knowledge is decisive. Was his knowledge of his own destiny and of the parousia such as to rule out his confessing "resurrection and life everlasting?" Here one walks into a minefield of problems that have been exploding at regular intervals for a century or more. How much of Mark's chapter 13 about the signs of the end and the day of the Son of Man, for example, goes back to Jesus himself?

If we are satisfied that we can establish some sayings from Jesus himself, what did he mean by his eschatological language? Does it indicate claims to some special knowledge of the future or rather limits in his knowledge of the future (Mark 13:32)?

Without entering into detailed debate and the immense literature on the eschatological knowledge and expectations of Jesus,<sup>70</sup> it seems to us that a reasonable case can be made for holding that Jesus believed and hoped for what he did not yet see. As with the heroes and heroines of Heb 11:1–40, the as yet invisible blessings of the future formed part of Jesus' confession of faith.

#### CONCLUSION

Such then is our thesis about the *fides quae* of Jesus, in its past, present, and future dimensions. This position means holding that the content of faith, even within the special, biblical history of revelation and salvation, can be analogous. The *fides quae* of Jesus did not coincide perfectly with that of later Christians. In some ways it was different even from the faith of his Jewish contemporaries, inasmuch as, for example, he knew and could not in the technical sense of the word confess the existence of God. At the same time, Jesus' confession of faith could coincide substantially with that of contemporary and earlier Jews. An analogous approach to the content of faith allows for similarities and differences between the faith of devout Jews, Jesus' faith, and subsequent Christian faith.

This position means parting company with those who argue for a more or less uniform content of faith. Aquinas, for example, held that, even though the gospel had not yet been proclaimed, the Israelites had *essentially* the same faith as Christians, since the real object of their

<sup>69</sup> *ST* 1-2, q. 62, a. 3.

<sup>70</sup> See Raymond Brown, *Jesus: God and Man* 59–79; Anthony Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982) 87–97.

confession was the same. On the basis of Hebrews 11:6 (“whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him”), Aquinas maintained, like others, that belief in God’s existence and rewards constituted the primary, essential content of faith. By holding this faith, the Israelites implicitly grasped the entire revealed mystery of God, and hence, could be seen to have already had essentially the same faith as (later) Christians.<sup>71</sup>

Instead of thus “levelling” the content of faith down to the lowest common denominator, we are proposing the alternative of allowing for variations in the confessional *fides quae*. In what they confessed about God in creation and history, there are similarities and differences between devout Israelites, Jesus, and early Christians. There is no need to argue, for instance, that the faith of the Israelites was essentially, if implicitly, the same as that of early Christians responding to the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

As well as acknowledging an analogy between Jesus’ *fides quae* and ours, we should also reckon with an analogy at the level of his commitment or *fides qua*.<sup>72</sup> We have seen above how the NT evidence clearly supports conclusions about his “believing” or obedient self-commitment to the God whom he called “Abba.” At the same time, we should recall the NT’s insistence on the perfect quality of that obedience (e.g. John 8:46; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 2:8; 1 Pet 2:22–24; 1 John 3:3–5). As Brian McDermott argues, “Jesus’ unity” with his Father was “of an incomparable quality”; he “knew no sin.”<sup>73</sup> The radicality of Jesus’ unconditional commitment means that we should recognize analogy also at the level of his *fides qua*.

We have seen how, with the exception of Hebrews 12:2, the NT never explicitly makes the earthly Jesus the explicit subject of the verb “to believe” or clearly characterizes him by using the corresponding noun “faith.” Faith in the NT Church was very much associated with believing the proclamation of Christ’s resurrection from the dead (e.g.

<sup>71</sup> *ST* 2-2, q. 1, a. 7.

<sup>72</sup> To use “faith” analogously is no startling innovation. Any large-scale NT dictionary will illustrate how the usage and meaning of *pistis* and *pisteuein* vary between Paul, the Synoptics, Hebrews, and John—not to mention the different nuances to be found in other NT books. Like Paul (Rom 4:1–22), the First Eucharistic Prayer holds Abraham up as a great model of faith. “Our father in faith,” however, even if he obeys God’s commands and trusts God’s promises in an exemplary way, can only have a *fides quae* which is radically less than and very different from ours. Given his place at the very beginning of salvation history, when we speak of the content of his faith we do so in a thoroughly analogous way.

<sup>73</sup> “Faith in the God of Jesus Christ,” in *Faithful Witness: Foundations of Theology for Today’s Church*, ed. L. J. O’Donovan and T. Howland Sanks (New York: Crossroad, 1988) 211 n. 24.

Rom 10:9–10), with baptism in the name of Jesus himself (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5) or “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:9), and with faith *in* Christ (e.g. Acts 20:21; Gal 3:26; Col 1:4). These associations undoubtedly made it harder to draw from the memory of Jesus’ ministry the conclusion, which is drawn in the Letter to the Hebrews, that we are called not only to believe *in* the risen Christ but also to believe *like* the earthly Jesus. Despite the tension, there is no contradiction here. To find in Jesus the supreme exemplar for the life of faith in no way excludes believing in him as the risen Lord of our lives.

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