

Faith and Evidence: Why Faith Should Seek Understanding

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Faith and Evidence: Why Faith Should Seek Understanding

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Robert Pasnau

This project considers two views concerning the relation between faith and evidence. First, Lara Buchak proposes that faith requires one to cease looking for evidence in order to go ahead and act on one's faith. Second, Thomas Aquinas states that faith involves seeking evidence to better understand of one's faith. In first turning to analyze Buchak's account, I argue that Buchak's view is mistaken because it rules out that the faithful person seeks evidence to better understand his or her faith. In addition, I find that Buchak's view raises an important question regarding the relationship between faith and evidence: If faith is acting on a lack of evidence, how is it that finding evidence in support of one's faith serves to supplement rather than supplant one's faith? The second chapter turns to address this question by examining Aquinas' account of faith. I argue that Aquinas allows us to see how faith rooted in charity on the part of the will shows how faith is not replaced by finding evidence. Moreover, Aquinas' account offers several ways in which faith is supplemented by seeking evidence. I conclude that Aquinas' account offers a fuller account of faith than Buchak's view of faith.

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INTRODUCTION

A feature of faith that is commonly thought to be essential is that faith involves a venture of some sort in that faith involves acting on the basis of a lack of evidence. Propositional faith, for example, is thought to involve believing in or having a disposition to act on the basis of a particular proposition in which one does not have conclusive evidence. Moreover, evidence is typically seen as being at odds with faith, on the common account of faith. Evidence provides arguments, reasons, facts, and/or demonstrations in support of one's beliefs all of which seems to diminish that which is unknown or lacking about a proposition in which one has faith. As a result, one way to look at the relation between faith and evidence is to say that remaining in full faith with respect to a proposition requires not seeking evidence to support one's faith. Lara Buchak offers an account of faith that captures this very contrast between faith and evidence. Buchak's account of faith requires the faithful person to *cease looking for evidence* because seeking evidence constitutes a "lack of faith." The faithful person, Buchak thinks, is willing to act without diminishing this portion of the unknown with evidence and thus faith requires ceasing to look for evidence. Buchak's account captures the view that faith is had to its fullest extent when one does not seek evidence to diminish the unknown element of a proposition. However, I will argue in this thesis that such a stark contrast between faith and evidence seems to disregard important ways in which faith works with evidence and can even be nourished by evidence.

The “faith-seeking-understanding” tradition as set forth largely by Augustine and developed by Thomas Aquinas, offers a view of faith’s relation to evidence that centers on the idea that seeking out evidence and reasons in support of one’s faith provides the faithful person an important opportunity to progress to an understanding of one’s faith; one’s faith can be clarified or supported (or both) by analysis, reasons, arguments, and/or evidence. Augustine claims “science begets faith in us, and nourishes, defends and strengthens it.”¹ Moreover, Aquinas builds on Augustine’s view and states that science and demonstration can aid one in “removing obstacles” to one’s faith.² Thus on their view, evidence is not starkly at odds with faith. Rather, seeking evidence enables one to have propositional understanding of one’s belief and this supplements rather than merely supplants one’s propositional faith.

Both Buchak’s view of faith and that proposed by Augustine and Aquinas offer valuable, yet seemingly incompatible views of faith. Buchak’s view raises the worry that faith is diminished or replaced by evidence and thus requires that the faithful person must cease looking for evidence in order to retain one’s faith, while Augustine and Aquinas find that evidence is beneficial to one’s faith and thus supplements rather than merely supplants one’s faith. With these two views in mind, a central question arises, a question that this project will aim to inform: Given that faith is acting on a lack of evidence and evidence is something that fills in this lack, how it is that seeking evidence to gain propositional understanding of one’s faith supplements one’s faith without supplanting or fully replacing one’s faith?

In setting out to answer this question, I will begin by analyzing Buchak’s account of faith in

1 Augustine, St. *De Trinitate*, XIV, I (PL 42, 1037).

2 Aquinas, Thomas, St. “Summa Theologiae 2a2ae Q.2.art10. Reply Object. 2.” *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas ...* Ed. Anton C. Pegis. New York: Random House, 1945. N. pag. Print.

order to gain insight into what is right about her view and what is missing. As a result of my analysis I find that Buchak's account of faith draws too stark of a contrast between faith and evidence by stating that the faithful person must prefer to act on his or her faith without first seeking evidence. Though her account captures the intuition that the faithful person is one who may not need to seek evidence, or prefer not to seek evidence before acting, I will argue, in Chapter 1 of my thesis, that evidence is something that can contribute to the faithful person's understanding of his or her faith by supporting the belief component of his or her faith, and thus seeking evidence *is* something that the faithful person desires. Contrary to Buchak, I argue that seeking evidence does not merely constitute a "lack of faith." As a result of Buchak's account, I find that a fuller account of faith will account for how faith involves belief, or a doxastic component of some sort, and explain how this belief grows through seeking evidence to gain understanding. Moreover, a fuller account of faith will show how, despite faith involving belief in a proposition on the basis of a lack of evidence, seeking evidence to gain propositional understanding of one's belief supplements rather than supplants one's faith.

Chapter 2 of this project will turn to Aquinas' account of faith as a way of answering this question and as a result providing, what I think to be, a fuller account of faith. In this chapter I will offer an interpretation of Aquinas' account of faith and argue that his account offers a view of faith that concedes that faith is acting on a lack of evidence one has about a proposition, but at the same time it offers a description of how propositional faith is nourished and/or supplemented rather than supplanted by gaining propositional understanding. In setting out Aquinas' account of faith, I will present what I take to be the central aspect of his view of faith: faith is rooted in the will's charity. I argue that his account enables us to see unique ways in which propositional faith is consistent with

and nourished by having propositional understanding as a result of seeking evidence. In conclusion, I find that Aquinas' account of faith provides an answer to the question concerning the relation between propositional faith and propositional understanding and provides a fuller account of faith than that proposed by Buchak.

CHAPTER 1

LARA BUCHAK'S ACCOUNT OF FAITH

1.1 Buchak's View Of Faith

To begin, I will outline two main components of Buchak's view that will provide the basis of my analysis of her account of faith. In addition to laying out her account of faith, this section will aim to set out how her view supports faith as acting on that portion of the unknown (or lack of evidence) and what relation evidence and faith bear for Buchak. Moreover, I will point out the virtues Buchak claims belong to her account of faith. In the section following this, I will move to critique Buchak's account.

1.1.1 Faith In Terms Of Action

Faith, according to Buchak, is linked with action. She writes: "The first thing to notice is that faith statements typically involve a proposition to which the actor involved acquiesces."³ Buchak continues, "Faith is thus linked to a *disposition* to act."⁴ ⁵ Based on this observation she states: "I

3 Buchak, Lara. "Can it be Rational to have Faith?" Chapter 12 of *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Jake Chandler and Victoria S. Harrison. Oxford University Press. p.2. All page references are to the online version of Buchak's paper.

4 Buchak, p.3. Buchak writes: "Along the same lines, having faith typically involves an action: a person's having faith in something should make a difference to her behaviour. However, this needn't be an actual action. It would be enough for faith that if a person were put in a particular situation, she would then manifest the relevant behaviour (assuming that there are no forces that would stop her). Faith is thus linked to a disposition to act."

5 Buchak reiterates her view of faith in terms of action-commitments in a reply to a commentator on her view of faith simpliciter; Buchak writes: "I can say something about the general spirit of my position that is relevant to this question. I see faith as *primarily* a matter of action-commitments rather than cognitive-commitments." This response is given within Buchak's discussion of her view concerning how faith is different from belief—a relationship she is admittedly not clear about. (Buchak, Lara. "Symposium on the Epistemic Nature of Faith." *Association for the Philosophy of Judaism*. N.p., 21 Aug. 2012. Web. 17 Dec. 2012.)

propose, then, to make *faith that X, expressed by A* the basic unit of analysis, where *X* is a proposition and *A* is an act, and define the other constructions in terms of this one.”⁶ In terms of faith and action, Buchak concludes: “A person performs an act of faith (or acts on faith) if and only if he performs some act *A* such that there is a proposition *X* in which he has faith, expressed by *A*.”⁷

1.1.2 Faith And Evidence

Buchak states: “My final preliminary observation is that having faith seems to involve going *beyond* the evidence in some way.”⁸ Buchak thinks that faith requires going beyond the evidence by ceasing to look for evidence because engaging in an inquiry by seeking evidence itself constitutes a lack of faith. She writes:

There is something to Kierkegaard’s idea that one can never arrive at faith by engaging in empirical inquiry—that faith instead requires an act of will. However, this is not because faith requires a kind of certainty that empirical inquiry cannot provide, nor because faith must precede inquiry. Instead, it is because engaging in an inquiry itself *constitutes* a lack of faith. That is, faith requires not engaging in an inquiry whose only purpose is to figure out the truth of the proposition one purportedly has faith in.⁹

Buchak posits that an inquiry that seeks evidence to find out the truth of the proposition one “purportedly has faith in” is something that diminishes one’s faith. Buchak states that her account of faith explains cases such as this one, what I will call the faithful-spouse case. She writes:

Consider an example. If a man has faith that his spouse isn’t cheating, this seems to rule out his hiring a private investigator, opening her mail, or even striking up a conversation with her boss to check that she really was working late last night—that is, it rules out conducting an inquiry to verify that his spouse isn’t cheating.

Capturing what she takes to be basic cases of faith and how faith is beyond the evidence, the faithful-spouse case identifies faith as a willingness to act without first seeking further evidence. In

6 Buchak, p.5

7 Buchak, p.7

8 Buchak, p.5

9 Buchak, p.13

other words, for Buchak, faith is had when one is ready to act on the evidence, or lack thereof, that one currently has without seeking (or feeling the need to seek out) further evidence. Buchak, as I will later show, specifies the evidence that the faithful person cannot seek. Now, I will discuss how Buchak uses this basic idea regarding how faith works to formulate a definition of faith.

1.1.3 Buchak's Central Tenet Of Faith

In Buchak's central tenet, she states conditions that are jointly necessary and sufficient condition for faith. She writes:

We can now formulate my final analysis:

A person has faith that X , expressed by A , if and only if that person performs act A when there is some alternative act B such that he strictly prefers $A \& X$ to $B \& X$ and he strictly prefers $B \& \sim X$ to $A \& \sim X$, and the person prefers {to commit to A before he examines additional evidence} rather than {to postpone his decision about A until he examines additional evidence}.

According to Buchak, one has faith if and only if one prefers to perform the act in question rather than postpone the decision in order to examine further evidence. Although Buchak doesn't pin down exactly what evidence is, she continues to refer to it broadly as objective reasons, facts, or information. By way of fleshing out her condition for faith, Buchak gives the example of Anne and Erin. In the following sections, I will refer to this example to elucidate the central tenet of her view.

Buchak writes:

... for example, assume Ann and Erin have the same evidence about Dan's secret-keeping ability; that both have $p(\text{Dan will keep a secret}) = 0.9$; that both have the same utility functions (that is, the stakes are the same for both of them). Now assume that each has a choice whether to ask a third party what he thinks about Dan's secret-keeping ability before deciding whether to tell Dan her secret. Ann decides to simply tell her secret; Erin decides to ask the third party, and then ends up telling her secret to Dan on the advice of this third party. Here, Ann displays faith that Dan will keep a secret (expressed by the act of revealing her own secret), whereas Erin does not display faith, even though she also performs this act. So the

same act in the same circumstances can be done with or without faith.¹⁰

Here we see that the faithful person is the one who commits to performing the act in question without first seeking evidence. Erin, Buchak asserts, does not have faith because she seeks evidence in order to perform the action instead of going ahead and acting. Anne, on the other hand, commits to the action without first seeking evidence and thus performs an act of faith. Buchak's central tenet attempts to capture the idea that if a person performs the action only after seeking evidence, that person does not have faith because that person was not willing to perform the act on the basis of faith.¹¹ Moreover, I find that Buchak's account works from the common intuition that seeking evidence to decide about performing the act in question before performing the act means that Erin, when she performs the act, acts less on faith and more on evidence because evidence replaces (or significantly lessens) that which one takes on faith.

1.1.4 The Purported Virtues Of Buchak's Account

Buchak highlights two purported virtues of her account, the first regarding total commitment, the second regarding the role of the will. She writes:

As mentioned above, my analysis vindicates part of Kierkegaard's insight that faith does require total commitment, and that looking for evidence reveals that one is not totally committed. But what one must commit to is an *act*, not a belief: specifically, one must commit to performing an act regardless of what the evidence reveals. My analysis also vindicates the idea that faith requires an act of will—on my account one consciously chooses not to look for more evidence (even though doing so might be tempting!) ...¹²

The first virtue Buchak claims is that her account helps explain that faith requires total commitment,

¹⁰ Buchak, p.16-17.

¹¹ Just to note, this relates to another issue Buchak does not address concerning what actions she is talking about. One might think there is an important difference between actions – some acts are one-time sorts of acts (pushing a button, say) while other acts are more continuous (believing in God, say). Buchak doesn't adequately distinguish between those two sorts of acts.

¹² Buchak, p.16.

and this total commitment to an act is had when one performs the act of faith. Building on the above picture of faith, Anne not only has faith but total commitment to her faith in virtue of meeting the condition for faith. Secondly, Buchak thinks a virtue of her account is that it explains why an act of the will is necessary in faith. On her account, the faithful person is the one who consciously wills not to look for evidence before committing to the act. I will return to these “virtues” or attributes of her view in my analysis of her account to assess whether they are actually virtues of her account.

So far, what is clear is that Buchak looks at faith as an all-or-nothing deal; one has faith when one performs the act in question without first seeking evidence and one does not have faith if one either does not perform the act in question or performs the act in question only after first seeking evidence to decide to perform the act. Buchak’s account captures the intuition that if one has faith one is willing to act on the proposition in which one has faith without the need to seek out further evidence to justify one’s action before acting; the faithful person goes ahead and acts.¹³ Moreover, though she does not explicitly state it, her view captures the intuition that seeking evidence diminishes one’s faith; the faithful person is one who acts on one’s faith without the need to diminish the unknown (or replace part of one’s faith with evidence) before acting. If Buchak is right about her view of faith, then it follows from her account that the proper thing to do in order to have faith is to stop searching for evidence and to simply commit to the act of faith; faith requires one to stop one’s seeking reasons or evidence in order to perform the act. With just this much, we

13 The objection might be raised that what Buchak is proscribing is unreasonable in certain cases where one happens to learn more evidence. For example, if one happens to learn additional evidence, would Buchak say that the thing the faithful person would do is not take that evidence into account? This seems unreasonable. Based on what she presents in this paper, it isn’t clear how Buchak would respond. Given that she thinks faith requires an act of the will in refraining to look for evidence, it seems to me that she would say yes, the faithful person would not take the evidence into account even if they learned of it by no means of their own.

see that evidence plays a role in faith in that one must stop seeking it on Buchak's account because seeking evidence in the way she prescribes is a sign of a lack of faith. As I will next go on to argue, Buchak's account's restriction of the evidence the faithful person seeks has several undesirable limitations.

1.2 Critique Of Buchak's Account Of Faith

In this section I will take issue with Buchak's account based on three points. First, I find that her account of faith in terms of action leaves out a crucial doxastic component that belongs to propositional faith. Second, Buchak's view of total commitment leads to counterintuitive results because it fails to acknowledge that one's commitment to one's faith might well be stronger, and thus not "total," if one has a belief in the proposition in which one has faith. Third, I take issue with the role evidence plays in Buchak's account of faith because her account mistakenly rules out an important use of evidence to gain understanding for the faithful person.

1.2.1 Faith In Terms Of Action

Buchak's view relies heavily on the fact that faith is had when one performs the act in question or has the disposition to act. However, there is reason to believe that faith is better thought to be expressed in terms of one's holding a belief (or degree of belief/credence) in a proposition rather than if one performs an action or not. First, there is a worry that not all propositions in which one has faith translate into an action that can be performed, nor do they clearly lead to a disposition to act. An example is the case of God in existential propositions, for example, that God exists as the creator of the world or that this God is one with who we can connect or have a personal relationship. In this case it isn't clear if or how belief in this proposition has a relevant action or a relevant disposition to act that expresses this belief. In this regard, it is more plausible to identify

one's faith in a proposition expressed in a belief in that proposition rather than faith as an action or disposition to act when one has faith in that proposition.

Additionally, faith is better thought to be in terms of belief or degrees of belief rather than merely action because actions, or dispositions to act, are typically thought to begin with cognitive commitments (i.e., beliefs or degrees of beliefs). Richard Swinburne's *Faith and Reason* outlines what some refer to as a traditional account of faith which states that faith essentially involves a doxastic component.¹⁴ Buchak's account, however, does not explicitly allow that faith entails cognitive commitments; she thinks faith is better cashed out in terms of action commitments. In a commentary on her paper she writes: "it might be that there are cognitive-commitments that underlie action in the sense that to intend to act in a certain way entails that one has these commitments (e.g., to "take it on board that X")."¹⁵ Here Buchak states that there may be cognitive commitments that underlie action. Moreover, Buchak admits that a belief or degree of belief may be involved in an act of faith, but she is reluctant to require that one has a certain degree of belief of any kind when performing an act of faith.¹⁶ Her account in no way posits that one must have a cognitive commitment in order to have faith. Why this is worrisome for her view is not only that

14 Swinburne, Richard. *Faith and Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981.

15 Buchak furthermore writes: "That one has *rational faith* – or that one ought to have faith – does entail certain facts about one's credences, and importantly, about one's utilities and the character of the potential evidence "out there" in the world. It does not entail that one has a high credence in the relevant proposition, although given that rational faith depends on the utilities and (in particular) the potential evidence, it will turn out that in most actual situations one needs a high degree of belief in X in order for faith in X to be rational." Buchak, Lara. "Symposium on the Epistemic Nature of Faith." *Association for the Philosophy of Judaism*. N.p., 21 Aug. 2012. Web. 07 May 2013.

16 Buchak: "So all these points add up to my not being very clear about the relationship between credence and belief, which also means I am not sure what follows from my account about the relationship between faith and belief. (Can one believe X if one has a very low credence in X? Maybe." She goes on to say: "I see faith as *primarily* a matter of action-commitments rather than cognitive-commitments. However, cognitive-commitments will be relevant in two ways: first, faith can only be *rational* if one has certain cognitive commitments. Second, it might be that there are cognitive-commitments that underlie action in the sense that to intend to act in a certain way entails that one has these commitments (e.g., to "take it on board that X")." Buchak, Lara. "Symposium on the Epistemic Nature of Faith." *Association for the Philosophy of Judaism*. N.p., 21 Aug. 2012. Web. 07 May 2013.

because her view leaves out that one must have a doxastic commitment of some kind motivating one's preference to act, but her view allows those who have faith to in no way believe (or have a degree of belief) that the proposition is true. In her example of Anne and Erin, Anne has faith in virtue of her acting without first seeking evidence to decide to act on that proposition. On this view, Anne could have faith while even thinking the proposition on which she is acting is false. In this case, it is difficult to call Anne's act an act of faith. Buchak's account calls out for a cognitive or doxastic component in her account of faith. This becomes even clearer in her account of total commitment. As I will now show, it's not only odd to think that Anne has faith in the story I've described, but that Anne can total commitment to her faith without having a degree of belief of some kind to the proposition on which she is acting.

1.2.2 *Total Commitment*

Buchak thinks one is committed when one performs the act of faith without first seeking evidence, and that one is "totally committed" to the action at that time. Again, Buchak writes:

... my analysis vindicates part of Kierkegaard's insight that faith does require total commitment, and that looking for evidence reveals that one is not totally committed. But what one must commit to is an *act*, not a belief: specifically, one must commit to performing an act regardless of what the evidence reveals.¹⁷

On her view, not only can one have faith without any doxastic component, as we've seen, but one can have total commitment to one's faith simply by meeting the necessary condition for faith. Yet, applying this to the case of Anne, it's not only odd to think that Anne has faith without a cognitive commitment or some kind, or degree of belief in the proposition on which she is acting, but it's very odd to think that that proposition is inscrutable, or incomprehensible, to Anne yet she has total commitment to that proposition on which she acts. This is a startling result. I find that it is clearly

¹⁷ Buchak, p. 16

more intuitive to think that one could be more committed to an action if one were to have a strong or robust belief (or high credence) in the proposition on which one is acting. Yet, Buchak's view requires no such requirement for total commitment to faith and her account fails to explain what makes total commitment "total" commitment if it leaves out a doxastic component altogether. Additionally, as I argued in section 1.2.1 and this section, analyzing faith only in terms of actions or dispositions to act, as Buchak does, not only excludes cases where beliefs do not translate into actions and leads to counterintuitive results, but, as we will now see, her view of faith also ignores important ways in which faith is connected with evidence.

1.2.3 Faith And Evidence

In this section I will present the intuitions underlying Buchak's formulation of faith and her restriction on evidence. I find that her account captures two main intuitions about faith. After first discussing these intuitions, I will argue that though her account captures these two underlying intuitions regarding what characterizes the faithful person, her account's restriction on the evidence promotes too stark a contrast between faith and evidence. I find that one can have faith without meeting her condition for faith because her restriction on the evidence the faithful person can seek fails to take into account the faithful person's use of evidence to grow in understanding of one's faith.

1.2.3.1 The Intuitions Underlying Buchak's Account

Buchak's account of faith captures two main intuitions about faith's relationship to evidence that this section will outline. As for the first intuition, her account captures that the faithful person is one who does not need to seek further evidence but is willing to commit to an act on faith. Buchak writes, seeking evidence constitutes a "lack of faith" in that the faithful person is one who does not

need to seek further evidence but is willing to act without such evidence. Referring back to the faithful-spouse case, Buchak thinks that the faithful person is one who does not need to see additional evidence in order to remain constant in one's faith; the husband has faith because he does not need to look at the evidence in order to continue having faith in his wife's constancy.¹⁸ Buchak spells out this view in terms of preferences; again, she writes:

A precise way to spell out that the act doesn't depend on the evidence is that the faithful agent is willing to commit to A before viewing any additional evidence in the matter of X ; indeed, he wants to commit to A . In preference terms, he [the person of faith] prefers to commit to A before viewing any additional evidence rather than to first view additional evidence and then decide whether to do A .¹⁹

As we've seen, a person has faith, then, for Buchak "if and only if ... one prefers {to commit to A before he examines additional evidence} rather than {to postpone his decision about A until he examines additional evidence}." The faithful person is not only one who does not need further evidence to act but prefers to act rather than seek evidence according to Buchak.

A second intuition underlying Buchak's account, though Buchak does not explicitly state that this is an intuition her account captures, is a common notion of faith and its relation to evidence. Faith typically involves acting on that which one does not know and evidence is something that makes known this unknown element. Thus, on the surface at least, it seems right to think that finding support for one's beliefs with evidence means one lessens the amount that one takes on faith by making known that which one previously did not know. Thus for Buchak, the faithful person is not only one that does not need further evidence to act, but that action is one that preserves the

18 Buchak writes: "faith seems to require not looking for further evidence even if one knows that the evidence is *readily available*. For example, consider a case in which a man simply stumbles across an envelope which he knows contains evidence that will either vindicate his wife's constancy or suggest that she has been cheating. He seems to display a lack of faith in her constancy if he opens it and to display faith in her constancy if he does not." Buchak, 14.

19 Buchak, P.16

unknown aspect of faith by being taken on without using evidence to diminish the unknown aspect. In this way we see one way to support her claim that seeking evidence before acting results in acting on a lack of faith.

Before moving on to discuss these intuitions her account captures, it is important to note that Buchak specifies the kind of evidence that the faithful person does not seek; evidence sought for the purposes of deciding to perform the act in question. She writes:

The reason that we would say that the apologist has faith in the resurrection even though he continues to look for evidence is that he doesn't consider his decision to attend church dependent on the outcome of his investigation. Indeed, if he had no desire to convince other people, he would not look for evidence ... So what these examples show is that the claim that the faithful person does not look for evidence at all is too strong. Instead, the faithful person does not look for evidence *for the purposes of deciding whether to do A*. Thus, if he does look for evidence, he considers this search irrelevant to his decision to do *A*.

According to Buchak, the apologist does not use the evidence to help him *decide* to remain in faith and perform the act of going to church. Thus, Buchak thinks that one has faith if and only if one prefers to perform the action without first looking for evidence *for the purpose of deciding whether to act*, but instead one performs the act in question. I take it that she means two things by seeking evidence to *decide whether to perform* an action: 1) The evidence is sought for the purpose of diminishing the unknown so one acts less on the risk in an act of faith, the unknown or faith, and more on evidence, the known. 2) The evidence is sought in a way that the outcome of the investigation, either evidence in support of or against the proposition in question, is intended to help one decide on whether to act on the belief or not. In next opposing her view, I will be sure to take this specification on the evidence into account.

1.2.3.2 Buchak's Unnecessary Condition For Faith

Based on the above-outlined two intuitions about the faithful person, I want to argue that Buchak's account of faith is mistaken because, though it captures some intuitions about the faithful person, her restriction on the faithful person's search for evidence mistakenly rules out other important intuitions concerning the faithful person's desire to seek understanding of his or her faith. I find that her account does not take into full enough consideration the faithful persons' desire to use evidence in a positive way, to grow in understanding of his or her beliefs on which his faith is based. As a result, I argue that one can have faith without meeting Buchak's necessary and sufficient condition for faith and that Buchak's account's restriction on evidence the faithful person seeks rules out important ways in which the faithful person uses evidence to grow in his or her belief.

As for the first intuition, Buchak's account captures the intuition that the faithful person is one who is willing to act on his or her faith without first seeking evidence by stating that the faithful person *prefers* to act without first seeking evidence. However, the first thing to note about Buchak's claim that the faithful person has this preference is that it isn't clear that one's willingness or desire to perform the action without seeking evidence is enough to make one actually prefer to act without first seeking evidence. In other words, it isn't clear that one's faith in terms of desire and/or willingness to act without first seeking evidence translates into Buchak's idea that the faithful person prefers to act without first seeking evidence. If preference is viewed as an all-things-considered decision in which all of one's desires are taken into account, the faithful person's having this one desire may not amount to the faithful person's preferring this. It may be that the faithful person has other desires in regards to her faith that must be taken into account.

What other desires might the faithful person have? The desire for understanding the beliefs

on which one's faith is based is another desire that the faithful person may have. For example, one may hold one's beliefs so dearly on faith that one is very willing to act on one's beliefs yet one also knows that seeking evidence to gain understanding of one's beliefs would put one in a better epistemic state of understanding one's beliefs. Moreover, this desire could make one desire to refrain from acting, despite being willing to act on one's beliefs, and instead seek evidence to gain an understanding of the beliefs on which one's faith is based. The faithful person is also, by my lights, one who desires understanding the beliefs on which her faith is based and thus seeks evidence to aid her in engaging in a rigorous inquiry about her beliefs, an inquiry that could result in one's rejecting one's dearly held beliefs (and the action taken there on) depending on the outcome of the evidence. As a result, we see that the faithful person could have two desires concerning her faith that lead to two different actions. On the one hand she desires to go ahead and act without seeking evidence. On the other hand, she desires to refrain from acting and instead seek evidence (for the purposes of deciding whether to act on her beliefs) because she knows the evidence could help her understand her faith as a result of engaging in a rigorous inquiry into her beliefs. Thus, if preferences take into account all desires the faithful person might have about his or her faith, then contrary to Buchak's account, the faithful person is not always one who prefers to first commit to an act instead of seeking evidence to decide to perform the action. Rather, the faithful person might be one who prefers to seek evidence instead of going ahead to act on his or her belief because one could want to seek evidence to gain understanding of one's faith.²⁰

To better clarify how these preferences work, take the following case of Tom as an example. Tom is a faithful man and he has faith that his friend Bob is trustworthy. Tom both is willing to act

20 I am assuming here that the case of faith I'm talking about involves a belief, or at least a doxastic component of some kind.

on his faith by telling Bob his secrets, and he does not need any further evidence in order to go ahead and tell Bob his secret. Tom even desires to tell Bob his secret. In addition to this desire, Tom has the desire to seek evidence about the truth or falsity of his belief. That is Tom knows that seeking evidence to help him better understand what trust is, if Bob is loyal, etc. could help him in holding a true belief and maybe put him in a better epistemic state than just holding his belief on faith. Though he loves Bob and does not need further evidence to act on his love, he knows that this evidence would be good for him. We could even say that Tom holds his belief in Bob so dearly that he would be devastated if it turned out his belief was false, so he seeks understanding of his belief. In this case, Tom has two, what seem like conflicting, desires. Because preferences are the kinds of things that look at all the desires and weigh them, Tom decides to prefer seeking evidence to better understand his belief and to better understand if it is a good belief, instead of just immediately acting on his belief. I maintain that Tom has faith, even though he does not meet Buchak's necessary condition for faith. Tom not only prefers to seek evidence before acting but, more specifically, Tom is seeking evidence in the way Buchak specifies that the faithful person does not: he seeks evidence to decide whether to engage in the act of faith. That is, Tom is seeking evidence in a way that his decision to act depends on the outcome of the investigation; this is part of what makes Tom's investigation a genuine and rigorous investigation. Again, in this case, I think it is right to say that Tom has faith despite preferring to first seek evidence to help him decide about the truth or falsity of the beliefs on which his faith is based instead of acting on his beliefs because Tom does so for the sake of understanding his beliefs. We even might say Tom's desire to seek evidence for these reasons displays an act of faith because Tom takes on an additional risk by seeking evidence of possibly rejecting his dearly held beliefs. Based on this case of Tom and the faithful person's desire

to seek understanding, I find that Buchak's account is mistaken because it only takes into account one intuition about the faithful person's desire and thus prescribes that the faithful person must prefer to restrict her search for evidence. Yet, when other desires the faithful person may have to seek evidence to understand one's faith come into play, this preference to restrict one's search for evidence is not one the faithful person must have to remain in faith, contrary to what Buchak claims. As a result, Buchak's restriction on the evidence that the faithful person seeks is too strong in that it mistakenly rules out important desires the faithful person may have to seek evidence to grow in understanding of his belief.

As for the second intuition concerning the relation between faith and evidence that Buchak's account captures, I find that yet again this intuition need not be cashed out in Buchak's terms of restricting the evidence the way she prescribes. Though Buchak does not state that her account supports this specific intuition, her account advances the idea that faith is diminished or is lacking when one decides to first seek evidence because faith is based on the unknown and evidence makes the unknown known and thus taken less on faith. Thus if one adopts this picture of the relation between faith and evidence, then, at least on the surface, it is clear that the person who first seeks evidence to support one's beliefs before acting on one's faith that person's act is based more on evidence and less on faith. Referring back to Buchak's faithful-spouse example, if the husband were to open the envelope and see it support his belief that his wife is loyal, when he continues to have faith in her loyalty he is acting more on the basis of the known rather than the unknown (faith) as a result. I find that though Buchak's account captures this intuition of the relation between faith and evidence, her account goes too far in restricting one's search for evidence. Even if evidence plays this role of diminishing the unknown element of faith by causing one to take more things on

evidence, evidence also, as I've argued, advances one's understanding of one's faith. This positive use of evidence is especially pertinent to the case of the person who already has a dearly held belief on which one's faith is based and this person seeks evidence to better understand one's faith even if this means trading off what one took on faith for knowledge (evidence-based reasons); in other words, one acts less on the basis of faith as a result. Therefore, even if evidence has this relation to faith such that seeking evidence before acting means that one acts more on evidence and less on faith, restricting the faithful person's search for evidence by stating that the faithful person is always one who prefers to act, rather than seek evidence before deciding to act, rules out that a faithful person can use the evidence to grow in understanding of his or faith. On Buchak's view this faithful person simply does not have faith if she uses the evidence to diminish the unknown instead of preferring to go ahead and act on her faith. Yet, as I've argued, the faithful person can remain in faith despite preferring to first seek evidence for the sake of understanding one's faith. Moreover, contrary to this intuition about faith and evidence, it isn't clear that evidence only serves to lessen that which one takes on faith by taking more things as known, and therefore lessen the unknown—that which one takes on faith. There is reason to believe, as Augustine and Aquinas in the faith-seeking-understanding-literature claim, that seeking this understanding strengthen one's faith. I will take up and expand upon this view in chapter 2.

1.2.4 Summary Of Findings

Based on my analysis of the ideas and intuitions underlying and supporting Buchak's account, I find that Buchak's view is mistaken because of the restriction she puts on evidence in her account of faith. One who has faith may or may not prefer to cease seeking evidence but instead act on one's faith in cases where the person of faith also has the desire to seek understanding of one's faith.

Buchak's restriction on the evidence that the faithful person seeks rules out an important way in which the evidence serves to aid one in better understanding one's belief.

Despite these mistakes, however, I find that Buchak's account spurs a probing question regarding the relationship between faith and evidence. Though Buchak's account puts too heavy of a restriction on the faithful person's search for evidence by ruling out an important positive role in understanding one's belief, Buchak's account points to the need for an answer as to what the role evidence has in faith is. If seeking evidence need not be restricted so as to retain the unknown element of faith, as Buchak's account suggests, but rather evidence can serve to aid one in understanding one's faith even if it diminishes that which one takes on faith, what is the story behind the relationship between evidence and faith such that faith is not diminished but rather remains despite attaining this evidence? One might just think that gaining evidence to have understanding about a proposition seems to just replace or severely diminish one's faith in that proposition. Thus, a precise way to formulate the question at hand is: how is it possible for one to have propositional understanding of a belief gained through supporting one's belief with evidence, known facts, yet at the same time one has propositional faith in that same belief? In chapter two, this will be the central question under investigation. There I suggest, in light of Aquinas's view, that propositional understanding supplements rather than replaces propositional faith.

1.3 Implications Of My Analysis

Based on my analysis of her view, I find that there are three important implications that result.

Buchak's two claimed virtues of her account are not virtues of her account, and my analysis of her view brings up new questions regarding what a fuller account of faith would look like and how one should understand the dynamic between faith and evidence.

First, my analysis of Buchak's view calls for a reconsideration of the two supposed "virtues" of her account. As for the first supposed virtue, Buchak claims that her account explains how faith involves an act of the will; any person of faith enacts their will to refrain from seeking the evidence and go ahead and perform the action. Yet, if seeking evidence withholds the potential for the person of faith to grow in their faith, then the faithful person may enact her will to refrain from performing the action or resist the urge to continue in her old ways of performing the action and instead seek evidence so as to rigorously analyze her beliefs and gain the opportunity to act with a better understanding of her belief (instead of continuing to act on that belief in ignorance). Thus, in this case, the faithful person uses her will in a way opposite of what Buchak proposes.

As for the second supposed virtue of her account, Buchak claims that her account explains why faith requires total commitment to one's faith. On her view, one must perform that action to be totally committed—more specifically one must prefer to perform the action without first looking for evidence. Total commitment to an act, according to Buchak, requires that one commit to an act regardless of the evidence; it is sufficient for one to have faith if one acts without first seeking evidence to decide to perform the action. However, as I've argued, her account of total commitment allows for one to have total commitment to an act without any kind of belief or degree of belief in the proposition on which one acts. Yet, it is not only difficult to think that one has faith without having some kind of doxastic commitment to the proposition on which one is acting, but it is also odd to think that one can be totally committed to one's faith without such a doxastic commitment of some kind. Moreover, it could even be said that those, like Tom, who prefer to seek evidence before acting on their faith not only have faith, but have more faith, or are more committed to their faith, than those who do not seek out understanding of their faith, or who act without a doxastic

commitment to their faith. As a result, I find that her view of total commitment is not a virtue of her account because it leads to counterintuitive ideas about what it means to be totally committed in one's faith.

Concerning the third implication, I think my analysis of Buchak's account implies what a fuller, more desirable account of faith would look like. As I've pointed out in section 1.2, Buchak's account's rules out important ways in which the faithful person could use evidence to grow in understanding of his or her belief, nor does her account admit of a doxastic commitment involved in one's faith because for her faith is only in terms of action commitments. Thus (1) we want a view of faith that accounts for the doxastic component of faith and (2) we want a view of faith that helps fill in the story about the relationship between faith and evidence such that seeking evidence to gain propositional understanding of one's faith does not merely supplant one's faith, but supplements it by offering a better understanding of the beliefs on which one's faith is based.

CHAPTER 2

AQUINAS' VIEW OF FAITH

In turning to Thomas' Aquinas' account of faith in the *Summa Theologiae*, I find that Aquinas' account of faith meets both points outlined above of a fuller account of faith. In what follows, I will present Aquinas' account of faith while explaining how his account informs what the relationship is between propositional faith and propositional understanding.²¹ First, I will present Aquinas' definition of faith and the role the will plays in an act of faith. Focusing on his view of faith on the part of the will, I find that Aquinas' view of faith centers on faith rooted in the will's charity. Taking some of the essential components of Aquinas' account of faith, I will go on to discuss how these components of his view informs the relation between propositional faith and propositional understanding. I will argue that Aquinas's view of faith provides a way of seeing how propositional understanding supplements rather than supplants propositional faith. In the last section, I will offer several ways in which Aquinas thinks evidence works to supplement one's faith on the part of the intellect and the will. Based on my interpretation of Aquinas' account of faith, I conclude that Aquinas' account of faith informs not only how propositional faith is not replaced by propositional understanding but also how propositional faith is supplemented and nourished through seeking evidence to gain propositional understanding. I conclude that his account is a fuller account of faith than that proposed by Buchak because his account offers a more nuanced

21 By propositional faith, I just mean faith with respect to a proposition. I am leaving open the question of whether there are other types of faith. Propositional understanding, as I've already stated, is an understanding gained through supporting one's beliefs on the basis of evidence, facts, and/or demonstration.

explanation of the relation between faith and evidence and how evidence can serve to supplement one's faith.

2.1 Faith Defined

In presenting Aquinas' definition of faith, I will break down his definition to what I take to be its essential components. These components, I will go on to argue, when understood as part of his account of faith all help to fill in the story about the relationship between faith and evidence.

Aquinas' formal definition of faith, to the extent he gives a formal definition, is as follows:

Accordingly, if anyone would reduce the foregoing words to the form of a definition, he may say that faith is a habit of the mind, whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is non-apparent.²²

I find that this definition has three essential components that need explaining in order to grasp his account: 1) faith as a habit of the mind/intellect, 2) the intellect's interior act of assent to or belief in a proposition, and 3) the intellect's assent as commanded by the will.

To begin, Aquinas claims that faith is a "habit of the mind." Though Aquinas thinks habits are deeply connected with virtues insofar as their goal is to perfect one's nature, or in this case, one's intellect, and hence has a detailed account of what habits are, I will only provide an outline of Aquinas' view of habit that will suffice for our purposes. A habit, for Aquinas, is had "inasmuch as something is disposed in a particular way ..." ²³ Habit in the mind, then, is a cognitive disposition one has toward something. One way to characterize habit as a disposition, according to Aquinas, is a disposition to act. Aquinas writes: "... since habits are known by their acts, and acts by their objects, faith, being a habit, should be defined by its proper act in relation to its proper object. Now the act of faith is to believe ..." ²⁴ Aquinas writes that the habit of faith can be understood through its

²² *The Summa Theologiae* 2a.2ae.q.4.art.1

²³ ST.I.II.Q49art1, habit is disposition in a person in a particular way. A person "has" habere a particular disposition.

²⁴ ST. 2a.2ae.q.4art.1.

action and object on which it acts. The act that is faith is to believe. The object of faith, Aquinas continues on to say, is the “First Truth,” or in other words, that which relates to and is revealed by God concerning the divine.²⁵ More specifically, he states, that the objects of faith are propositions about the divine.²⁶ Though Aquinas limits his talk of faith to cases of propositions about God, and faith as we’ve been discussing in Buchak’s account includes many cases of faith (i.e., propositions dealing with God, but also interpersonal trust), Aquinas’ account concerning the divine not only inform faith in propositions about God, but, as I will later discuss, his account also gives us the apparatus to apply to non-divine cases of faith. At this point, however, we see that an essential component of faith is that it is a habit of the mind (or intellect) wherein the mind is disposed to perform an act. This act is, Aquinas writes, the intellect’s assent to a proposition as a belief; assent is belief. This brings us to the second key component of his definition of faith that needs explanation: what is this interior act of faith and what is involved in the act of believing?

The second crucial component of faith, as I call it for Aquinas’s account, is the interior act of faith that is performed on the part of the intellect and the will. Aquinas writes: “Now the act of faith is to believe ... which is an act of the intellect determined to one object by the will’s command.”²⁷ The act of faith takes place on the part of the intellect “believing,” or in other words the intellect assenting to a proposition, but this act involves the will because the will is what causes

25 ST. 2a.2ae.q1.art1. “Consequently, from this point of view also the object of faith is, in a way, the First Truth, inasmuch as nothing comes under faith except in relation to God ...”

26 ST 2a.2ae.q1.art2. “the object of faith may be considered in two ways ... secondly, on the part of the believer, in this respect the object of faith is something complex, such as a proposition.” Also, see John Bishop’s description: “Aquinas says, ‘the object of faith *is something non-composite*’ (non-propositional)—namely God himself. Nevertheless, grasping the truth of propositions *is* essential to faith, because ‘*from the perspective of the one believing* ... the object of faith is something composite in the form of a proposition’ (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, 1, 2 (O’Brien 1974, 11 & 13), my emphases).” Bishop, John. “Faith.” (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Stanford University, 23 June 2010. Web. 01 Apr. 2013. Bishop refers to O’Brien, T.C. (ed.), 1974. *Faith: St Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae, Vol. 31 (2a2ae. 1–7)*, London & New York: Blackfriars.

27 ST. 2a.2ae.q.4art.1

the intellect to assent to these propositions in an act of faith. To better understand what this act of faith is and why the will plays the role of commanding the intellect to assent, I will now turn to discuss the third essential component to his view of faith: the role of the will.

2.2 The Role Of The Will

Aquinas thinks that the will plays an essential role in faith because, as we've just seen, the will is that which commands the intellect to perform the act of faith—that is, to believe in a proposition of faith. Because the will plays such an essential role in the act of faith, according to Aquinas, I will take this section to discuss several aspects of the will's role according to Aquinas. In what follows, I will start by briefly outlining what the intellect and will are for Aquinas and how they are distinct. Following this explanation I will explain why Aquinas thinks faith involves the will commanding the intellect in the act of faith. Next, to better understand the causes behind the will's movement, I will then move to discuss two ways in which the will is moved in an act of faith according to Aquinas: the will is moved by God, and the will is moved by the good the will recognizes in the propositions of faith. Last, I will discuss what I take to be the key component necessary for faith according to Aquinas: charity in the will. With these components of his theory in place, I will later argue what impact faith in the will has on the discussion of faith and evidence.

What Aquinas means by “the will” and “the intellect” is complex and beyond the scope of this paper to define sufficiently. With this in mind, I will resort to a brief outline that will suffice for our purpose of shedding light on the will's role in an act of faith. The will, for Aquinas, is “a rational appetite” which, just like every appetite, pertains to what is apprehended as good. Aquinas writes: “Consequently, in order that the will tend to anything, it is requisite, not that this be good in very truth, but that it be apprehended as good. Therefore the Philosopher says that the end is a good, or

an apparent good.”²⁸ The will is an appetite for the good, or for what appears to be good. Aquinas writes: “Hence an act of faith is related both to the object of the will i.e. to the good, and the end, and to the object of the intellect i.e. to the true.”²⁹ Thus, roughly speaking, a crucial distinction Aquinas makes between the will and the intellect is that the will is a rational appetite that tends to an object as good and the intellect is not an appetite. What characterizes appetites is that they are drawn to the good they recognize in the object, the intellect is something distinct from (though related to) the rational appetite, in that it is drawn to the truth of the object. I will expand on this shortly in more detail, but with just this much we can see that one performs an act of faith when one’s will’s appetite responds to the good in the object (i.e., which is a proposition about God, the object being God), and it is out of the will’s recognition of this good that it commands the intellect to assent to that proposition (to believe in that proposition).

2.2.1 *Why The Will?*

To better grasp why Aquinas thinks it is up to the will to play the role of commanding the intellect in an act of faith, it is helpful to draw upon his distinction of the will and the intellect by exploring why Aquinas thinks faith involves the intellect’s assent to the “non-apparent.” Explaining this aspect of his view aids us in seeing why the will is necessary in an act of faith according to Aquinas.

To begin addressing this question, I find it is best to start by emphasizing Aquinas’ thought that the object of faith is something “non-apparent” and not something the intellect assents to on its own. Aquinas describes this “non-apparent” object to which the intellect assents in the following way. Aquinas writes: “... when we go on to say, *of things that appear not*, we distinguish it from science and understanding, the object of which is something apparent” (2a.2ae.q.4art.1). Aquinas

28 ST. 2a1ae.q8art.1 (p. 246)

29 ST.2a2ae.q.4.art.1. (p1095).

articulates that the “non-apparent” is another way of saying that which science or human understanding does not grasp on its own. By “non-apparent,” Aquinas means those things that are not something the intellect has knowledge of in any scientific, demonstrative sense, nor can the intellect “see” enough to be moved to assent to on its own. Aquinas writes: “Now those things to be seen which, of themselves, move the intellect or the senses to knowledge of them. Therefore, it is evident that neither faith nor opinion can be of things seen either by the senses or by the intellect.” To help explain why the intellect isn’t moved to assent to the “non-apparent” propositions, Aquinas outlines in question 1 article 4 “On Faith” that the intellect works in one of two ways:

Faith signifies the assent of the intellect to that which is believed. Now the intellect assents to a thing in two ways. First, through being moved to assent by its very object, which is known either by itself (as in the case of first principles, which are held by the habit of understanding), or through something else already known (as in the case of conclusions which are held by the habit of science). Secondly, the intellect assents to something, not through being sufficiently moved to assent by its proper object, but through an act of choice...³⁰

Propositions of faith, according to Aquinas, fall under the latter category because they are not things that the intellect assents to on its own; they are not objects of science.^{31 32} As a result, we see that the will is required to command the intellect to assent because the intellect on its own will not assent to that which it does not “see.”³³

30 ST. 2a2ae.q.1art.4

31 Here is the full quote: In ST 2a2ae.q.1.5 on “Whether those things that are of faith can be an object of science?” Aquinas writes: “I answer that, All science is derived from self-evident and therefore *seen* principles; and so all objects of science must needs be, in a fashion seen. Now ... it is impossible that one and the same thing should be believed and seen by the same person. Hence it is equally impossible for one and the same thing to be an object of science and of belief for the same person. ... Nevertheless, that which is proposed to be believed equally by all is equally unknown by all as an object of science. Such are the things which are of faith absolutely. Consequently, faith and science are not about the same things.

32 In ST 2a.2ae.q.6 art.2, Aquinas states that the things of faith are beyond human reason, he writes: “I answer that, two things are requisite for faith. First, that the things which are of faith should be proposed to man; and this is necessary in order that man believe something explicitly. ... For the things which are of faith surpass human reason, and hence they do not come to man’s knowledge, unless God reveal them” (2a2aeQ.6.art.2).

33 Aquinas in ST 2a2ae.q.4art.2 “Whether faith resides in the intellect” he writes “... to believe is an act of the intellect, inasmuch as the will moves it to assent.” Aquinas references another passage highlighting this same thought. In 2-2q.2art1 reply obj.3, he writes that in an interior act of faith: “The intellect of the believer is

2.2.2 *What Moves The Will Into Action?*

Now that we see that the will has a role to play in faith, I will turn to what that role is for Aquinas. The will, for Aquinas, is the source of faith because it, unlike the intellect, is sufficiently moved by the propositions of faith. In the case of the intellect, though Aquinas does not expand in great detail in this immediate text (in his treatise “On Faith” in the *Summa Theologiae*) what he means by saying that the propositions of faith alone are not sufficient to move the intellect, he thinks that the propositions of faith are about the divine and that human reason is “very deficient” in understanding the things about the divine. The view, I take it, is not that human reason cannot grasp certain propositions enough to assent to them; it’s just bad at doing so when it comes to the propositions of faith; the intellect “falls into many errors” about things it does not “see” (i.e., the divine).³⁴ The will, however, is more dependable in propositions of faith because it is moved due to two causes: faith is infused by God, and the will recognizes the good in the propositions.^{35 36}

determined to one object not by reason, but by the will, and so assent is taken here for an act of the intellect as determined to one object by the will.”

34 Aquinas writes: “Human reason is very deficient in the things concerning God. A sign of this is that philosophers, in their inquiry into human affairs by natural investigation, have fallen into many errors, and have disagreed among themselves. And consequently, in order that men might have knowledge of God, free of doubt and uncertainty, it was necessary for divine truths to be delivered to them by way of faith, being told to them, as it were, by God Himself Who cannot lie.” (2a2ae.q.2.art4) The fact that Aquinas thinks faith is about those propositions whose objects are “unseen” by the intellect, and thus require the will, puts into question if his view of faith could apply to other truths or propositions that the intellect cannot sufficiently grasp (for example, propositions about love and its goodness). Though Aquinas sticks strictly to talking about faith in the divine, I think there is reason to believe his account of faith could apply to other cases of propositions. As I will later suggest, his account of faith provides an apparatus to apply to propositions other than just those about God.

35 Aquinas does not talk of “dependability” or “reliability” of the will, nor does he does talk reliability of the will verses the intellect (in the passages I’m focusing on at least, there is no sign of this talk of reliability). I am invoking this language as a way of account for why it is that the will is reliable in its own way for Aquinas.

36 That the intellect cannot understand sufficiently enough to move itself to assent to the propositions of faith does not mean that the intellect cannot grasp these propositions in great detail.. Stump explains Aquinas’ view by providing an example of the intellect grasping a proposition enough to even assent by itself, but the will overrides the intellect’s understanding. She writes: She writes: “it is also possible to think of examples in which the will’s influence on the intellect is apparently for the better, epistemologically speaking. In George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, Dorothea Casaubon finds her friend and admirer Will Ladislav in a compromising embrace with the wife of one of his friends. Although it is possible (and in the novel is in fact the case) that there is an exonerating explanation for Ladislav’s conduct, the evidence available to Dorothea strongly suggests that Ladislav’s behavior is treacherous. But because of her commitment to him, Dorothea, in spite of evidence, cleaves to her view that Ladislav is a good man, not a scoundrel and a traitor. As becomes clear to Dorothea and to the reader of the novel, Dorothea’s belief

Faith stemming from the will is dependable or reliable in its own way for Aquinas because it is something infused in the will on behalf of God. A requirement for faith, though not the only necessary condition for faith according to Aquinas, is that God move the will, what he calls an “inward” movement. Aquinas writes:

As regards ... man's assent to the things which are of faith, we may observe a twofold cause, one of external inducement, such as seeing a miracle, or being persuaded by someone to embrace the faith; neither of which is a sufficient cause, since of those who see the same miracle, or hear the same sermon, some believe, and some do not. Hence we must assert another internal cause, which moves man inwardly to assent to what belongs to faith ... by assenting to what belongs to faith, man is raised above his nature, this must needs come to him from some supernatural principle moving him inwardly; and this is God. Therefore faith, as regards the assent which is the chief act of faith, is from God moving man inwardly by grace. (2a.2ae.q.6.art.2)

Aquinas here states that because the propositions of faith are above man's nature—or his reason in the sense that the propositions are about divine truth revealed by God, faith requires an inward movement by God to assent to these propositions.³⁷ A necessary condition for faith, then, according to Aquinas is God's infusing the will to assent to the propositions of faith. However, despite what it

based on her desires about her relationship to Ladislav is veridical; without the influence of her will on her intellect, Dorothea would have formed a false belief about Ladislav.” (Stump, Eleonore. “Theological Virtue: Faith.” *Aquinas*. London: Routledge, 2003. 363-64. Print). Stump picks out a case where the will, because it sees the goodness of Dr. Ladislav's character, goes against the intellect's evidence or works “in spite of the evidence.” Though the proposition in question here is not about the divine, and thus does not overlap completely with Aquinas' account, her example provides a clear way in which the intellect could have evidence, but it is the will's command that causes the intellect to believe in spite of the evidence. It is important to clarify, however, though faith may require acting “in spite of evidence” to the contrary, Aquinas also thinks that the propositions of faith are supported by evidence, science, and logic. Thus, evidence should be considered when trying to understand one's faith—belief in a proposition. As I will argue in the section of Faith and Understanding for Aquinas, seeking evidence plays an important role in nourishing one's faith and thus should be sought out. Moreover, though Aquinas' account in this regard seems to now look a lot like Buchak's account which required the faithful person to act in spite of evidence or without taking into consideration additional evidence, as I will later argue, unlike Buchak's account, Aquinas' account in no way rules out that the faithful person should cease looking for evidence in regard of the truth of the proposition on which one's faith is based.

37 Another example of the point can be seen the following statement made by Aquinas: “Human reason is very deficient in the things concerning God. A sign of this is that philosophers, in their inquiry into human affairs by natural investigation, have fallen into many errors, and have disagreed among themselves. And consequently, in order that men might have knowledge of God, free of doubt and uncertainty, it was necessary for divine truths to be delivered to them by way of faith, being told to them, as it were, by God Himself Who cannot lie.” (2a2ae.q.2.art4)

looks like thus far, Aquinas does not think faith is something human beings must completely depend on God to grant; faith requires something on the part of the believer as well.

What is it that the will does on its own to contribute to faith? The will, according to Aquinas, responds to the good generally, and in particular for the cases of propositions of the divine, the will responds to the highest good it sees in the propositions, God—which the propositions of faith represent. As I’ve previously mentioned, the will is a rational appetite that is moved to act by the good the will finds in the object. More specifically, Aquinas writes that the good the will sees is something pertaining to the general well-being of that individual:

“Now it is the good in general, namely, that to which the will tends naturally, in the same way as each power tends to its object ... For it is not only things pertaining to the will that the will desires, but also that which pertains to each power, and to the entire man. Therefore man wills naturally not only the object of the will, but also the other things that are appropriate to the other powers, such as the knowledge of truth, which befits the intellect, and to be and to live and other like things which regard his natural well-being—all of which are included in the object of the will as so many particular goods.”³⁸

Here Aquinas writes that what moves the will, or that which the will tends as its object, is the good—specifically the good that pertains to one’s overall well-being (the good which pertains to the powers or faculties of the individual. This includes the faculty of the intellect—the good that the intellect seeks as well). In the case of the object of faith it is propositions about the First Truth or divine truth, as Aquinas puts it, that are the objects of faith, as we’ve seen. The propositions of faith, in particular pick out the highest good, God. Thus the will naturally tends to the propositions about God because they represent the greatest good. Stump offers a nice summarized explanation as to why the will tends to the propositions of faith, according to Aquinas. She writes:

To see why the object is sufficient to move the will, it helps to remember Aquinas’ view of the will: the will is by nature the appetite for the good. The ultimate good,

38 ST.2a1ae q.10. art.1

however, and the final end of the will, can be thought of in either of two ways. On the one hand, what the will wants as the greatest good is the happiness of the willer. On the other hand, that greatest good is in fact God; union with him is perfect happiness for every created person. The propositions of faith present the ultimate good under both these descriptions, namely as the happiness of eternal life in union with God; and they present it as available to the believer. For the person coming to faith, the will is drawn to the greatest good present in the propositions of faith; and in consequence it influences the intellect to assent to them.³⁹

As Stump outlines, the good the will tends to in the propositions is consistent with its end of tending toward that which promotes happiness, well-being as a whole. Union with God is just this and so the will tends toward the propositions of God naturally. Though we see that it is the “good” that the will recognizes in the object of faith and causes the intellect to assent to the proposition, we are left in need of further explanation as to what is distinct about the will’s causing one to have a belief in terms of faith. Thus far, his account states that those who have faith were given their faith in part by the grace of God and that the will of the believer recognizes the good in the proposition, namely God. However, it still isn’t clear what on the part of the believer causes the will to recognize this “good” in the proposition and subsequently move to command the intellect to assent to the proposition in an act of faith. For example, why are some moved to believe (i.e. Christians) and some not (i.e. atheists) when both groups can recognize the good in a proposition? A further story is needed about the role of the will and what the agent’s will recognizes about the good it sees in the proposition. Moreover, if we find that the cause of the agent’s willing this good is something that can be attributed not just to the good it recognizes in God, or propositions about God, but can be recognized in propositions concerning the good more generally, there is reason to believe that faith rooted in the will is something that applies to cases about propositions other than the divine. To find an answer, I will now turn to the final and most distinctive element of Aquinas’ account of faith:

39 Stump, Eleonore. Aquinas. P.363-64

faith rooted in charity.

2.2.3 *The Will's Root In Charity*

The most distinctive feature of Aquinas' account of faith is that faith derives not only from the will's recognition of the good in a proposition, but from the will's *love* for the good: charity. Charity is love paired with benevolence. A simple way to understand the kind of love that charity is, without delving into Aquinas' notion of charity in its fullest (and rather complex) sense, is by pointing out that Aquinas characterizes charity as a love one finds in friendship; charity is characterized by the love one has for another in that one wishes the good for another for their own sake.⁴⁰ Moreover, charity is a love for the good for its own sake--that is, a love of the good so that the good may be "wide-spread" and "remain," rather than a love of the good to be "possessed."⁴¹ Additionally, because it is a love of the good, it is a love naturally directed at the highest good, God. In the objects of faith, it is the will's charity that is its love for the good it finds in the proposition of faith that causes the will to move to command the intellect. A person has faith, according to Aquinas, when one's will is drawn to (or "hungers for") the goodness and love it has for God (the object of faith presented in the propositions of faith). Moreover, Aquinas thinks that this charity must be

40 Aquinas writes "On Charity" article 1: "It is written (John 15:15): 'I will not now call you servants . . . but My friends.' Now this was said to them by reason of nothing else than charity. Therefore charity is friendship. I answer that, According to the Philosopher (Ethic. viii, 2,3) not every love has the character of friendship, but that love which is together with benevolence, when, to wit, we love someone so as to wish good to him. If, however, we do not wish good to what we love, but wish its good for ourselves, (thus we are said to love wine, or a horse, or the like), it is love not of friendship, but of a kind of concupiscence. For it would be absurd to speak of having friendship for wine or for a horse. Yet neither does well-wishing suffice for friendship, for a certain mutual love is requisite, since friendship is between friend and friend: and this well-wishing is founded on some kind of communication."

41 Aquinas, Thomas. ST 2a2ae Q.23 art.1 Trans. L. H. Kendzierski. *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. Electronic Edition*. Charlottesville, VA: IntelLex, 2005. N. pag. *Intellex Past Masters Humanities Databases*. Web. 5 May 2013. Moreover in Q.23. art.2 main reply, he states: "Therefore, to love the good in which the blessed participate so that it might be had or possessed does not make man well-disposed toward beatitude, because the wicked also desire this good. But to love that good for its own sake in order that it might remain and be made wide-spread, and that nothing might act against that good, this does dispose man well toward that society of the blessed. This is charity, which loves God for His own sake, and loves fellow-men who are capable of attaining beatitude as it loves itself"--charity is a love of the good, directed foremost at God, the highest good.

something voluntarily on the part of the agent because charity is something that stems from the will and therefore is something voluntary.⁴²

Thus in answering what moves the will to assent to a proposition, we find that it is not just that God moves the will to command the intellect to assent, but faith must happen on the part of the will of the agent and derive from the will's willing the end for love of the good in the end: charity. To further make clear what this charity on the part of the will is, for Aquinas, I will turn to his discussion of the distinction between "formed" faith, or faith based in the will's love for the good, and "formless" faith which lacks charity in the will.

Formed faith, as Aquinas puts it, is characterized by an act of faith performed out of one's charity in the will; the will's love of the good of the object of faith. Formless faith, such as the faith of the demons Aquinas thinks, lacks this love of the good but rather those who have formless faith believe in the propositions of faith due their being convinced by miracles or desire for power that the propositions of faith represent. Stump's interpretation of Aquinas' view highlights the difference between formed faith—the will being moved by the goodness it sees in God—and formless faith. She writes:

The difference between formed and unformed faith is a function of the different ways in which the will can bring the intellect to assent. The will can move the intellect in different ways, two of which are relevant here, according to Aquinas. In

42 He writes in his treatise "On Charity" Q.23 article 1, main reply. Charity must be something voluntary: "Therefore an act which exceeds the entire capabilities of human nature cannot be voluntary to man unless there be added to human nature something intrinsic, perfecting the will, so that such an action would proceed from an intrinsic principle. If, therefore, the act of charity in man does not proceed from an interior habit superadded to a natural potency, but proceeds from the movement of the Holy Spirit, then one of these two alternatives follow: either an act of charity is not voluntary, which is impossible because to love something is to will it; or it does not exceed the capability of nature, and this view is heretical. This difficulty being removed, it will follow, first, that the act of charity is an act of the will. Secondly, if it is granted that the act of the will can be entirely from an extrinsic principle, as acts of the hands or feet, it will also follow that if the act of charity is only from the movement of extrinsic principle, it cannot be meritorious. For, every agent which does not act according to its proper form but only because it is moved by a another, is an agent only instrumentally, as an axe is an agent only inasmuch as it is moved by a woodsman."

the case of those who have formed faith, the will moves the intellect to assent to the propositions of faith because the will is drawn by its hunger for what is in fact God's goodness. The resulting faith is called 'formed faith' because in it the intellectual assent to the propositions of faith takes its form from the charity or love of goodness that animates the will. In the case of the devils, however, the faith they have is not so much informed as deformed by malice, a hatred of what is in fact true goodness, and a love of the relative good of power instead ... their wills command their intellects to assent because the devils see the power accompanying those who promulgate these teachings ... For both kinds of faith, the will brings about intellectual assent in virtue of certain strong desires; but in the case of formed faith, the desire in question is a desire directed towards real moral and metaphysical goodness, and in the case of the faith of the devils it is directed towards the good of power.⁴³

Stump's interpretation makes clear the distinction between the case of formed faith and unformed faith and why charity on the part of the agent is so central in formed faith for Aquinas. In formed faith, the will must not only be inclined to the good but assent to the propositions of faith out of their love of the good, or charity, that the will is moved to command the intellect to assent to the propositions of faith. Formless faith lacks this charity.

Moreover, we see that though God is the source of faith in both cases of the formed and formless faith by infusing faith in both, it is only in the case that the agent chooses to act from charity in the will that results in formed faith. Aquinas writes that God's role in faith is one where God inclines one to believe, but faith's form depends on the agent's willing out of charity. Aquinas writes, "God inclines man to believe by giving him a certain affection for the good, even when that

43 Stump, 364. Moreover, it might be helpful to see that Aquinas differentiates two movements on the part of the will: those moved by the good, and those, like the demons, who are compelled by their intellect, or in other words, arguments on divine authority. "As we have stated above, the believer's intellect assents to that which he believes, not because he sees it either in itself, or by resolving it to first self-evidence principles, but because his will commands his intellect to assent. Now, that the will moves the intellect to assent may be due to two causes. First, by the fact that the will is ordered towards the good; and in this way, to believe is a praiseworthy action. Secondly, because the intellect is convinced that it ought to believe what is said, though that conviction is not based on the evidence in the thing said ... And in this way faith is not in the demons, but only in the second way, for they see many evident signs, whereby they recognize that the teaching of the Church is from God, although they do not see the things themselves that the church teaches ..." (ST.2.2.Q.5.art.3) This passage is where Stump gives her interpretation..

faith is formless,” but this affection for the good in formed faith takes its root in love for the good, charity, whereas formless faith lacks this love of the good.^{44 45} Faith is only had when the will is moved by a love for the good: charity, which is the love of goodness that animates the will. As a result, we see that the final answer to what the cause of faith is for Aquinas is the agent’s will’s recognition of the object of faith as good and out of this hunger for the good it recognizes, the will is animated to command the intellect to assent to a belief in the proposition.⁴⁶

With this distinctive feature of his view in place, we are able to now see what it is about the will that causes it to not only recognize the good in the proposition but be moved to assent to these propositions. Though both atheists and Christians see the good that the propositions of faith may hold, it is only those who love the good through charity on the part of the will that are moved to believe in an act of formed faith.

Moreover, referring back to the suggestion I made in the last section, that if the source of the will’s movement based on the good it sees is not just a movement based on God, there is room to think that Aquinas’ view of faith applies to propositions not just about God, but the good more generally. I think there is room to think this about charity in the will. Though it is beyond the scope

44 I take the following passage to support the view that faith requires not just God’s infusion but something on the part of the will to have faith: “The deformity of an act belongs to the nature of the species of an act, considered as a moral act, as was stated above; for an act is said to be deformed through being deprived of an intrinsic form, the due commensuration of the act’s circumstances. Hence we cannot say that God is the cause of a deformed act.” (ST.2.2.q.6.art.2.reply.2) Also, Aquinas writes: “Therefore formless faith is a gift from God” (2.2.q.6.art.2)—but the deformity of the faith is not caused by God, but by the agent. Moreover, charity, what is required for formed faith resides in the will of the believer and is part of the voluntary choice of the believer. Furthermore, because faith involves free choice, and it is the choice of the agent to choose to command the intellect from love of the good or not, we see another reason why charity is cultivated at least in part by the will of the agent. Aquinas writes: “our actions are meritorious in so far as they proceed from free choice moved with grace by God ... the act of faith is subject to free choice in relation to God and thus can be meritorious” (2.2.q.2.art10).

45 Though interesting, it is beyond the scope of this paper to decide to what extent Aquinas thinks charity is cultivated by the individual or given as a gift from God. What I do wish to make clear, however, is that Aquinas thinks it is not enough for God to infuse faith into the will and incline the will toward the good, for he does this in the case of demons as well.

46 This does not mean that any proposition about God is one that the faithful person believes in. Aquinas thinks faith is about propositions *revealed by God* and thus are true.

of this paper to provide a full case for how Aquinas' account of faith rooted in charity can be extended to propositions other than the divine, I think that to the extent the objects of charity are found in objects other than God, there is room to believe that charity on the part of the will applies to propositions concerning these objects. Likewise, insofar as faith is rooted in charity in the will, faith could be about those propositions that involve the objects of charity. What are these other objects? As we've seen, charity is directed at the good, and therefore it is foremost directed at the highest good, God, but under God, however, there are other goods toward which charity is ordered; friendship with another person, for instance is an object of charity. "This is charity, which loves God for His own sake, and loves fellow-men who are capable of attaining beatitude as it loves itself"

⁴⁷Charity applies to love of the good for one's "fellow men." Moreover, he writes: "if any man loves not his neighbor, neither does he love God, not because his neighbor is more lovable, but because he is the first thing to demand our love: and God is more lovable by reason of His greater goodness."⁴⁸ Again we see that Aquinas thinks that charity applies to love of one's neighbor.⁴⁹

47 Aquinas, Thomas. ST 2a2ae Q.23 art.1. Also see, Aquinas, ST 2a2ae. Q.26 art.2 "The Order of Charity". Aquinas writes: "But it has been said above that the love of charity tends to God as to the principle of happiness, on the fellowship of which the friendship of charity is based. Consequently there must needs be some order in things loved out of charity, which order is in reference to the first principle of that love, which is God."

48 Q.26 art.2 reply to objection one new advent. Here is the entire passage:
Aquinas writes: "Reply to Objection 1. A thing is a cause of love in two ways: first, as being the reason for loving. On this way good is the cause of love, since each thing is loved according to its measure of goodness. Secondly, a thing causes love, as being a way to acquire love. It is in this way that seeing is the cause of loving, not as though a thing were lovable according as it is visible, but because by seeing a thing we are led to love it. Hence it does not follow that what is more visible is more lovable, but that as an object of love we meet with it before others: and that is the sense of the Apostle's argument. For, since our neighbor is more visible to us, he is the first lovable object we meet with, because "the soul learns, from those things it knows, to love what it knows not," as Gregory says in a homily (In Evang. xi). Hence it can be argued that, if any man loves not his neighbor, neither does he love God, not because his neighbor is more lovable, but because he is the first thing to demand our love: and God is more lovable by reason of His greater goodness."

49 Also see Selner-Wright, Susan C. "The Order of Charity in Thomas Aquinas." *Philosophy and Theology* 9.1/2 (1995): 13-27. "Thomas articulates the proper priority among charity's objects based on his understanding of charity as rooted in the fellowship of eternal happiness. God, as the source of the happiness, is our principal "fellow" in it and so first in the order of charity. The individual's fellowship with himself or herself, with the "inner man," is most intimate, and so the individual comes next in the order. Then come our neighbors, all of whom are our fellows now and may be our fellows for eternity. Finally, the body is itself properly an object of charity, for it is by means of the acts we perform in the body that we may come to share in the fellowship of eternal happiness."

Though charity is intimately tied with one's love of God, it is helpful to see that charity, as a love of the good, can apply to objects other than God as a result of the good one sees in those objects. Again, a full discussion of the objects of charity are out of reach in this paper, but I do want to suggest that to the extent that these objects that are other than God cause charity in the will, Aquinas' theory provides support for faith being not just about God but also about propositions concerning the objects of charity more generally (i.e. propositions about a friend). In section 2.4, I will suggest how Aquinas' view of faith provides a framework that helps to inform the case of Tom's faith in his friend.

Given these features of Aquinas' account of faith, we are now in a place to see what his account offers in terms of the question with which we began: how it is that faith relates to evidence in such a way that gaining propositional understanding does not replace but rather supplements one's faith.

2.3 Faith And Evidence

Aquinas' account of faith provides two ways of informing the question of how propositional faith relates to propositional understanding. First, his notion of faith rooted in charity in the will establishes that no matter the evidence one gathers to gain propositional understanding, propositional faith on the part of the will is not supplanted or diminished. Second, Aquinas' account of faith allows us to see that though evidence may diminish the "unseen" element of faith, propositional understanding does not replace or fully diminish one's faith but rather nourishes one's faith by removing obstacles to one's faith. In what follows, I will work to explain his view and the perspective it gives to the relation between propositional faith and understanding based on these two points.

Aquinas' view of the relation between faith and evidence as well as the role of charity is best described in his account. In an article titled: "Whether reasons in support of what we believe lessen the merit of faith?" Aquinas writes:

The reasons which are brought forward in support of the authority of faith are not demonstrations which can bring intellectual vision to the human intellect; and so the unseen is not removed. But they remove obstacles to one's faith, by showing that what faith proposes is not impossible; hence such reasons do not diminish the merit or the measure of faith. On the other hand, though demonstrative reasons in support of the preambles of faith, but not the articles of faith, diminish the measure of faith, since they make the thing believed to be seen; yet they do not diminish the measure of charity, which makes the will ready to believe them, even if they were unseen. And so the measure of merit is not diminished.⁵⁰

Aquinas distinguishes between two uses of reason in this passage. Aquinas outlines that reasons in support of the authority of faith, reasons that are separate from demonstrations as one would find in science, do not diminish or replace one's faith, but rather support and "remove obstacles to one's faith." Aquinas provides the example of reasons revealing that "what faith proposes is not impossible." Aquinas presents these reasons in support of one's faith as distinct from demonstrative reasons in that they do not make "seen" the elements of faith, but merely remove obstacles to one's faith by letting one know that what one believes is not impossible. Demonstrative reasons in support of the propositions of faith, however, do diminish the measure of faith insofar as evidence makes "seen" some of the elements of faith that were previously taken on the basis of faith-- the "unseen." Thus, demonstrative reasons diminish the measure of faith. An example of what Aquinas has in mind here can be seen in his view that things provable by demonstration are among what is of faith. He writes:

Things which can be proved by demonstration are reckoned among what is of faith, not because they are believed absolutely by all, but because they are a necessary presupposition to matters of faith so that those who do not know them by

50 2.2.q.2.art10. reply object. 2.

demonstration must possess them at least by faith.⁵¹

Here Aquinas expresses that reason can grasp certain elements of the proposition in which one has faith. Though the proposition in which one has faith is, as I stated before, unknowable by reason completely, the propositions of faith are based on other propositions which can be known by reason. For example, faith in the proposition “that God is the Trinity” itself may not be able to be known through demonstration and the gathering of evidence, but propositions on which this proposition is based can be, such as “that God was once man (Jesus).” Thus, the measure of faith, or the number of propositions one takes one faith is diminished when one gathers evidence because one now knows by reason what one only took on faith before. However, even so, faith is not fully replaced or diminished by evidence for Aquinas. On Aquinas’ account, we see that to the extent that one can gain propositional understanding, in terms of evidence and demonstrative reasons, where one previously had propositional faith is only about some of the propositions on which one’s faith is based.

The second key point Aquinas’ statement acknowledges is that though evidence may diminish the measure of faith, the amount (or measure) of charity remains undiminished. As we’ve seen, charity, for Aquinas resides principally in the will and is something that exists with or without the evidence. Aquinas writes: “... yet they [demonstrative reasons in support of one’s faith] do not diminish the measure of charity, which makes the will ready to believe them, even if they were unseen. And so the measure of merit is not diminished.” Faith rooted in charity in the will is

51 *The Summa Theologiae* 2-2.q.1.a.5 Aquinas addresses “Whether the things that are of faith can be known.” In this article the following objection is raised: “Furthermore, things that are proved demonstratively are known, since demonstration is a syllogism making one to know. But some of the things contained in faith are proved demonstratively by the philosophers, such as that God is, that God is one, and other things of this kind. Therefore the things that are of faith can be known. Aquinas, Thomas, St. *On Faith: Summa Theologiae* 2-2qq.1-16 of *St. Thomas Aquinas*. Trans. Mark D. Jordan. Vol. 1. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1990. p. 43.

something that one has with or without evidence—that is, with or without demonstration for the propositions of faith that can be understood through demonstration. In other words, since charity is what makes one's faith *formed* faith, and charity is something that takes place in the will, whatever the intellect finds (i.e., via evidence) in support of or against one's belief is consistent with remaining in faith on the part of the will.^{52 53} Thus, Aquinas finds that because the will remains ready to act on its love of the goodness it finds in the propositions of faith, the merit of faith is not diminished when the measure of faith is (i.e. faith diminished due to finding evidence in support of the pre-requisites of one's faith).

2.4 Implications Of Aquinas' Account Thus Far

Before moving to discuss how evidence sought to gain propositional understanding works to nourish one's faith according to Aquinas, I want to take a moment and discuss both the implications of Aquinas' view in cases of faith in propositions about interpersonal relationships and further how his view informs Buchak's account of faith and the example of Tom's, or the faithful person's

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- 52 Aquinas writes that one fault of the demon's "formless faith" is that formless faith is a faith based on only the evidence of things (i.e., that miracles and the signs of God are convincing). Aquinas writes: "As we have stated above, the believer's intellect assents to that which he believes, not because he sees it either in itself, or by resolving it to first self-evidence principles, but because his will commands his intellect to assent. Now, that the will moves the intellect to assent may be due to two causes. First, by the fact that the will is ordered towards the good; and in this way, to believe is a praiseworthy action. Secondly, because the intellect is convinced that it ought to believe what is said, though that conviction is not based on the evidence in the thing said ... And in this way faith is not in the demons, but only in the second way, for they see many evident signs, whereby they recognize that the teaching of the Church is from God, although they do not see the things themselves that the church teaches ..." I take it that the demons are convinced on the part of the intellect and do not have faith rooted in the will's goodness; those with formed faith have faith through the will's love and how it responds to the good in the propositions of faith.
- 53 There might be a limit here as to how much counter-evidence one can have on the part of the intellect and still have faith on the part of the will (i.e., charity). Two points make me think this: 1) Aquinas thinks charity is in important ways to one's reason, or knowledge about the object of charity. So it could be that at some point, if one comes to think that the proposition is false after much investigation, then one's charity diminishes. Michael Sherwin talks about the relation between charity and knowledge in "By Knowledge, and By Love" 2) In point three of my explanation of faith and understanding below, I suggest that the will is something that tends toward the object based on reasons' correct apprehension of that object. Thus, if reason says that object is bad or false, the will tends toward that object as something false and so it is questionable to what extent the intellect impacts the will's movement. Aquinas does say, however, that because the propositions of faith are true, the will should always assent despite what the intellect says.

desires. Aquinas, as we've seen, limits faith to cases about the divine, but, if, as I've suggested, his account of charity on the part of the will can be applied to other propositions (i.e., propositions involving friendship with another person) Aquinas' view does some explanatory work in the case of Tom.⁵⁴ Applying faith rooted in love (charity) to the case of Tom, I think we can see a way of filling in the story about the desires that Tom has as a faithful person. That is, I find that applying faith rooted in charity on the part of the will to the case of Tom, helps to see why Tom as a faithful person would have the two desires I proposed that he has (i.e. to both seek evidence before acting, and not need to seek evidence before acting, but hold his beliefs so dearly that he desires not to seek evidence before acting). Moreover, Aquinas's view of faith rooted in charity allow us to see why it is that Tom's faith is not supplanted by his gaining propositional understanding about his belief.

To begin with the latter point, applying Aquinas' view to the case of interpersonal relationships can help explain cases where gaining propositional understanding does not replace faith if faith is rooted in charity or a love for the good one finds in the propositions. Returning to the case of Tom, Tom has faith that his friend is trustworthy and he believes this because he loves his friend (the object of faith), or in Aquinas' words, his will acts through charity to cause the intellect to assent to the proposition *that my friend, Bob, is trustworthy*. Moreover, just to better match the case of Tom with Aquinas' case of propositions one has faith in, Tom's belief is one both where Tom does not have conclusive evidence (say, he has some evidence that his friend is trustworthy but only some), nor is the proposition one that Tom can gain conclusive, demonstrative evidence

54 To really know if Aquinas' account can be expanded to apply to cases of faith about interpersonal relationships (etc.), I would have to take up an investigation of his account of faith in more detail in light of his account of charity on the part of the will. As a future project, I would like to take up this question. For now, however, I think his account merely provides a framework from which to see some potential explanatory work in the case of faith about interpersonal trust, and friendship, particularly regarding the story behind the desires Tom has as a faithful person and why Tom's faith may not be affected by seeking evidence.

about.⁵⁵ In this case, if Tom gains evidence that his friend is trustworthy (i.e., that Bob keeps promises), the evidence enables Tom to have propositional understanding but Tom's faith, because it is rooted in his love of his friend, is not diminished as a result because his faith is rooted in his will's charity (love of his friend). Though Tom's faith is less based on the unseen after having gained support for his belief, (or come to propositional understanding about her belief), Tom's faith rooted in his love for his friend is not diminished based on this evidence. In applying Aquinas' account of faith to the case of interpersonal relationships, we see that one way to understand why one has propositional faith despite having propositional understanding is due to charity on the part of the will. The evidence, or his gaining propositional understanding does not replace his faith, rather, his faith due to the will's charity continues if Tom had or didn't have evidence in support of the propositions of faith.⁵⁶

In applying Aquinas' view of faith rooted in charity to Buchak's account of faith, we also gain insight into the story behind Tom's conflicting desires. We see that one reason why Tom might have the desire to act without seeking evidence may be due to the fact that his faith is rooted in charity, thus Tom may have the desire to act without the need to seek further evidence because he loves his friend and this love (as one manifestation of charity, the object being the good of friendship with Bob) is enough for him to desire to go ahead and act on his faith. However, because faith also takes place on the part of the intellect, and, as I will next go on to show, faith can be nourished on the part of the intellect through seeking evidence, he also desires to seek evidence to

55 For example, the proposition of faith is beyond reason such that there is always an element of the unseen, as Aquinas would say. Thus we think that propositions concerning interpersonal trust are not ones that reason fully comprehends and makes "seen"

56 Moreover, because Aquinas holds that the propositions of faith are one's that one is not able to gain propositional understanding about (at least based on demonstration and evidence), it could be said that Tom would need to have propositional faith despite having propositional understanding.

better understand his belief. In this way, Aquinas's account helps to fill in the story behind the two desires the faithful person has in the case of Tom. To further fill in this story, I will now turn to develop how propositional understanding *supplements* or nourishes one's faith on the side of the intellect according to Aquinas.

2.5 Faith And Understanding

Aquinas holds that seeking evidence in support of one's faith promotes understanding of one's faith, but one's understanding at the same time nourishes one's faith. As cited in the previous section, reasons in support of one's faith aid one in "removing obstacles to one's faith" by allowing one to know that the things of faith are possible. Though in this discussion Aquinas specifies that the reasons that "remove obstacles" to one's faith (see section 2.3) and thus nourish one's faith are not demonstrative (or evidential) reasons (rather demonstrative reasons "diminish the measure of faith") I will argue that his account of how reason nourishes faith includes evidential, demonstrative reasons in that these reasons nourish faith on the side of the intellect through growth in commitment to one's faith.

In the *Summa Theologiae* Q.5, article 4 titled "Whether faith can be greater in one man than in another?" Aquinas writes that faith can be greater on the part of the intellect due to explicitness; he writes:

The things which are proposed as the matter of our belief are many and can be received more or less explicitly; and in this respect one can believe explicitly more things than another, so that faith can be greater in one man because of the greater explicitness of faith. ... [M]oreover, since the act of faith proceeds both from the intellect and from the will, as was stated above ... a man's faith may be described as being greater, in one way, on the part of his intellect, because of its greater certitude and firmness, and, in another way, on the part of his will, because of his greater promptitude, devotion, or confidence.⁵⁷

57 2a2ae.Q.5.art.4

Faith on the part of the intellect increases when one's beliefs are more explicit. Though Aquinas does not go into detail concerning what "explicitness" is, given that Aquinas thinks the intellect appeals to science, and demonstration, one way to understand how things become more understood or perhaps explicit on the side of the intellect is through gaining evidence to support one's beliefs.⁵⁸

⁵⁹ In this way we see that seeking evidence makes one's faith more understood on the side of the intellect and that this results on one's increased commitment to one's faith. Though Aquinas does not go into detail as to how this explicitness and growth in faith through commitment on the side of the intellect works, to help develop how his account works in light of my discussion of faith's growth through seeking evidence, I will offer one example of how this might work for Aquinas by referring to Norman Kretzmann's example of the biologist. Kretzmann uses the example to explain how Augustine's view of faith facilitates gaining propositional understanding as a means of supplementing one's faith. Kretzmann writes:

For example, a biologist makes progress when she is finally able to put a well-founded claim in place of a conviction she had about a theory. Her transition from the lower to the higher ranking cognitive state involves supplanting her particular conviction but it only supplements and strengthens her commitment to the theory. As a beginner in biology, she subscribed to the theory on the basis of reasonable authority alone; her commitment to it has grown as she acquired understanding of its component claims, which earlier she had only believed.⁶⁰

Kretzman's example emphasizes that the biologist's commitment to her belief in the theory as a

58 Aquinas writes: "Now the intellect assents to a thing in two ways. First, through being moved to assent by its very object, which is known either by itself (as in the case of first principles, which are held by the habit of understanding), or through something else already known (as in the case of conclusions which are held by the habit of science). Secondly, the intellect assents to something, not through being sufficiently moved to assent by its proper object, but through an act of choice, whereby it turns voluntarily to one side rather than to the other ... if there be certainty and no fear of the other side, there will be faith."

59 It may be that explicitness Aquinas refers to here does not refer to the explicitness that might concern the evidence for a given proposition, but instead it might concern the number of propositions believed – e.g., the expert believes a great many obscure theological propositions that ordinary folk are entirely ignorant of. This reading might have nothing to do with greater evidence. Because, Aquinas does not make this distinction nor does he make his view either way clear, I take that he is talking about explicitness that has to do with evidence.

60 Kretzmann, Norman. "Faith Seeks, Understanding Finds: Augustine's charter for Christian Philosophy" P.18-19

whole increases when she supplants her particular conviction with knowledge about a component of the theory. This example overlaps nicely with Aquinas' account. On Aquinas' view, we see that one's faith in a proposition can be increased through gaining knowledge of those components of the proposition, or the "pre-requisite beliefs," that can be understood by evidence and reasons. Referring back to the example of faith in a proposition "that God is the Trinity" and its underlying propositions "that God was human (Jesus)" etc., evidence in support of or making known the elements of faith that can be made known serve to increase the intellect's understanding (or make more explicit to the intellect), the proposition of faith. Like the biologist whose commitment to the theory increases when she gathers this evidence in support of her belief, so too does the faithful person grow in commitment on the side of the intellect through supporting a component of one's belief with evidence—that is, making one's belief more explicit on the side of the intellect. Kretzmann calls this growth in commitment the "way of faith" where propositional understanding promotes one's commitment to one's faith as a whole.

Furthermore, we see on this picture that growing in faith or explicitness on the side of the intellect to gain propositional understanding need not replace propositional faith; as we've seen, propositional understanding (in terms of demonstrative evidence at least) will never be able to fully replace propositional faith (the propositions of faith are not things one can gain conclusive evidence about) and furthermore, faith can exist on the side of the will's charity despite one's gaining propositional understanding. As a result, we see one way in which Aquinas' account of faith provides insight into how faith is supplemental to rather than replaced by propositional understanding based on evidential-type reasons. Evidence aids one to gain explicitness on the side of the intellect and increase one's commitment to one's faith.

Another way in which seeking evidence, or scientific justification, to support (or find out the truth about) one's beliefs nourishes one's faith according to Aquinas can be seen in Aquinas' phrase "science begets and nourishes faith by way of external persuasion."⁶¹ Though again Aquinas does not explain this statement, but merely mentions it in a reply to an objection, one way to view how this statement could be interpreted by again by Kretzman's example. As the biologist example points out, attaining facts and support for a component of one's belief aids one's commitment to the theory or belief overall, including one's commitment to perhaps all kinds of component, or accompanying beliefs belonging to one's faith; in this way science, or evidence, in a way "begets" faith in us.⁶²

A final way in which Aquinas' account offers insight into how evidence works to nourish one's faith is through his description of the role the intellect has in presenting propositions to the will. Aquinas writes that the more rightly and clearly the intellect grasps the proposition and presents it to the will, the more the will will tend to it as something right and good. As a result the intellect's pursuit is something that impacts the will's tending to something as good. Aquinas writes in ST 1a. 2ae.Q.19art.3 titled "Whether the goodness of the will depends on reason?": "I answer that, As we have stated above, the goodness of the will depends properly on its object. Now the will's object is proposed to it by reason ..." He continues in the reply to object 2, "Now in regards to the means, the rectitude of reason depends on the conformity with the appetite of a due end; and yet the very appetite of the due end presupposes a right apprehension of the end, which is the work of reason."

Here we see that reason not only has a role in presenting the proposition to the will, or making the

61 ST.2a2ae.Q.6art2.reply obj.1

62 In addition, I think Aquinas' statement could apply to the case of the person who is coming to grasp a proposition for the first time. By seeking scientific facts in support of a view, one then becomes aware of the proposition. For example, Aquinas thinks that people can come to the faith by being persuaded by miracles or external facts, etc. In this way, science or evidence works to propose faith to us.

will aware of the proposition, but it also has the role of “rightly apprehending the end.” Moreover, when reason fails to rightly apprehend the end, the will can tend toward the end as something good or bad. Thus the work of evidence can aid one in rightly apprehending the end for which the will tends so that the will will tend toward the end as good. An example of what Aquinas has in mind is the following; he writes:

If, therefore, the erring reason propose it as an evil, the will tends to it as to something evil ... In like manner, to believe in Christ is good in itself, and necessary for salvation; but the will does not tend thereto, except inasmuch as something evil, the will tends to it as to something evil; not as if it were evil in itself, but because it is evil accidentally, through the apprehension of the reason.⁶³

Aquinas states that the will is affected by and depends on reason’s right apprehension of the proposition of faith. Thus one way in which one could use evidence to facilitate one’s faith is to rightly apprehend the proposition (i.e. rightly apprehend the evidence in support of the proposition being good) and thus point the will in the right direction to tend to the proposition as something good. As a side note, using evidence to rightly grasp a proposition is particularly important in the case of interpersonal relationships because the propositions themselves are not absolutely true as in the case of divine propositions and thus may demand more on the side of the intellect to rightly apprehend them and direct the will to see them as good or not. In sum, insofar as the intellect affects the will by rightly apprehending the end, the intellect’s search for evidence could nourish and strengthen one’s faith by causing the will to tend toward the propositions of faith as something good.

As a result of these several ways Aquinas’ account provides to show how evidence works with one’s faith, I find that Aquinas’ account provides insight into how propositional understanding supplements rather than supplants faith.

⁶³ Q.19 art. 5 the goodness of the will.

2.6 Concluding Thoughts

Both Buchak's and Aquinas's account of faith aid us in better understanding the relation between propositional faith and propositional understanding. Though both agree that faith involves acting in some way on a lack of knowledge, Buchak's account displayed evidence as something that diminishes one's faith and she argued that the faithful person must cease looking for evidence because seeking evidence displays a lack of faith. My analysis of Buchak's account pointed out that her account drew too stark of a contrast between faith and evidence. Buchak's view rules out that the faithful person could desire to use faith to gain understanding of one's belief and nourish one's faith because her account states that one only has faith when one prefers to commit to act rather than seek evidence to decide about the truth of one's faith. As the example of Tom displays, Buchak's view of faith in terms of preference does not hold when the faithful person has the desire to seek understanding and thus seek evidence to decide about the truth of one's belief before acting on one's faith.

Aquinas' account, as I've interpreted it, provides a fuller account of faith in that it helps to fill in the story behind the faithful person's desire to seek understanding to supplement one's faith by elaborating on the relation between faith and evidence in his account of faith on the part of the will and intellect. Aquinas' account of faith rooted in charity in the will enables us to see a way in which faith is not supplanted by evidence when faith is rooted in the will's charity. Moreover, the components of his account of faith provide insight into how his view can be expanded to cases other than faith in God. I find that his view enables us to see how faith is consistent with evidence and helps to inform the stark contrast of faith and evidence Buchak's account portrayed. Though demonstrative evidence makes known some elements of faith, and thus diminishes the measure of

faith according to Aquinas, evidence also plays the role of nourishing one's faith by removing obstacles to one's faith and increasing one's commitment to one's faith. Aquinas' account then provides a way of understanding the question with which we began by filling in the story behind the relation between faith and understanding and by showing that faith is nourished by evidence in important ways. In light of his account, we find insight into why it is that persons of faith should seek understanding.

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