

2. Faith: The Way of the Heart

Christianity *IS* about a way of life, a path. This is one of the central features of the emerging paradigm.

Earlier paradigm: "faith" means "believing" a set of statements to be true. This turns Christian faith into a "head matter". Before modern times of last few hundred years, faith was matters of the "heart"—deep level of self, below thinking, feeling and willing; below our intellect, emotions and volition. (In this context "below" does not mean "lesser", but "deeper".)

The Centrality of Faith

Faith is the heart of Christianity. "Justification by grace through faith."

Four Meanings of Faith

1. **Assensus**—faith as belief; mental assent to a proposition.
 - a. In Protestant Reformation new denominations distinguished themselves by a particular set of beliefs. "Orthodoxy" changed from "right worship" to "right belief".
 - b. Birth of modern science and ways of knowing: truth identified with factuality. Truth must be verifiable as fact. Factuality of parts of Bible and Christian teachings called into question. Therefore, Christian faith = believing questionable things to be true. When knowledge fails, use faith (beliefs) and use faith when belief and knowledge conflict.

Opposite = doubt and disbelief. Both are experienced as sinful.

Life of bondage: believe all the right things but still be miserable. Assensus has very little transforming power.

2. **Fiducia**—radical trust in God. Relaxing—trust that God will keep you afloat, keep you safe.

Opposite = mistrust, anxiety, worry. Trust in cosmic generosity (Sermon on the Mount).

3. **Fidelitas**—faithfulness to our relationship with God. Commitment of our self at deepest level. Radical centering in God.

Opposite = infidelity, unfaithful to our relationship with God; adultery (term can be used in *more* than sexual relationship). Idolatry—centering in something finite rather than the sacred. See first several of the Ten Commandments and the Shema ("love God with all your heart, mind, and strength").

Be *attentive* to our relationship with God. Love what God loves.

4. **Visio**—a way of seeing the whole. Do we see reality as:
 - a. *hostile and threatening*? If yes, our response will be to live defensively. God as punisher to those who did not "get it right".
 - b. *indifferent to human purposes and ends*? If yes, our response will be to build up what security we can in the midst of an indifferent universe.
 - c. *life-giving and nourishing*? If yes, we will see reality as gracious. Jesus' view in Sermon on the Mount. Response is radical trust. To spend ourselves and to allow ourselves to be spent. Trust in generous reality.

Is this naively optimistic? One *cannot* demonstrate that reality is "nice". We do know the evil we can do to each other. How we see reality is what matters and it affects how we experience and live our lives. Is life a gift or a curse to endure?

Emerging paradigm focuses on the last three ways of seeing faith. Radical centering in God leads to a deepening trust that transforms the way we see and live our lives.

Faith as Assensus

Does play a roles in three foundational affirmations:

1. Being Christian means affirming the reality of God;
2. Christian faith means affirming the utter centrality of Jesus—what a life full of God looks like without saying he is the *only* such disclosure of God;
3. Christian faith means affirming the centrality of the Bible as our foundational-identity document; our story.

Affirm these *deeply* (loyalty and trust at deepest level) and *loosely* (humbly; avoid excessive precision and certitude). Assent freely given to a persuasive and compelling vision that is *not* rejected by our mind.

Faith as Believing

"Believe" and "believing" in pre-modern sense (before Enlightenment) is *not* give intellectual assent to literal truth *but* instead "I give my heart to". The creeds become: "I give my heart to God" and the rest of the creed gives the story.

"Believe" = to hold dear; to commit oneself. "To believe" = "to love". Faith is believing God and all that God loves.

Questions

1. How has "faith" changed with the rise of modern science?
2. What does Borg mean when he talks about faith is often a "head matter"?
3. Why would such a faith (q. 3) have little power to transform lives?
4. What examples of faith as trust can you come up with?
5. What three affirmations does Borg give that are foundational to the Christian life in the emerging paradigm? Are there any other ones for you?
6. How does viewing (seeing) reality as gracious give us freedom?