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Abstract

The πίστις Χριστοῦ (*pistis Christou*) debate continues to be a lively point of scholarly interest. While a vast amount of literature appears on the subject, interpreters often repeat a few main arguments in support of their position. This essay discusses the main exegetical arguments for the two major sides in the *pistis Christou* debate and how others have responded to the arguments. Arguments for the objective genitive are treated first, followed by those for the subjective genitive. The essay closes with a discussion of the way interpreters have relied on their prior understanding of the larger concept of Paul's theology as the decisive argument for their position. As such, the essay finds that this larger hermeneutical question of the nature of Paul's gospel is the true locus of the *pistis Christou* debate.

Keywords

faith, faithfulness, genitive, justification, Paul, pistis Christou.

Introduction

Few topics in New Testament studies have garnered as much recent attention as the πίστις Χριστοῦ (*pistis Christou*) debate. New publications continue to flood the market arguing for either an objective ('faith in Christ') or subjective ('faithfulness of Christ') reading of the phrase. While these are not the only two translational options available, they are by far the most popular (for an excellent introduction to a 'third view', see Sprinkle 2009: 165-84). Terminologically speaking, the objective genitive can also be called the 'anthropological' reading and the subjective genitive the 'christological' reading. This is not to suggest that one reading limits or heightens the work of Christ more than the other. However, this terminology does highlight a difference between the two:

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the objective genitive generally emphasizes human belief; while the subjective genitive generally emphasizes Christ's faithfulness.

While a vast amount of literature appears on the subject, interpreters often repeat a few main arguments in support of their position. This essay surveys the main exegetical arguments for both sides of the debate and how these arguments have been addressed in response. By 'main' I refer to those arguments that appear most commonly or have the clearest place in the debate. To be sure, the *pistis Christou* debate is a theological discussion with theological implications, but we confine ourselves here to the exegetical arguments in play (for a review and assessment of the debate from a theological perspective, see Stubbs 2008).

A trend that will become evident as the essay progresses is that appeals to grammatical or immediate contextual arguments have been largely refuted on both sides (even though both types of argumentation continue to appear), and so interpreters have either intentionally or unintentionally relied on their larger understanding of Paul's theology to support one position or the other (for a treatment of linguistic issues with a view to their usefulness in the debate, see Porter and Pitts 2009: 33-53).

Anthropological Arguments

Definite Article

A common argument for the anthropological reading centres on the presence or absence of the definite article. The argument posits that if *pistis* has a definite article, then it is subjective, but it if lacks it, then it must be objective. This argument has been advocated by Hultgren (1980: 253), Dunn (2002: 253) and Fee (2007: 224-25).

This argument has been thoroughly rebutted by interpreters on both sides. In the christological camp, Hays (2002b: 295), Williams (1987: 432), Campbell (2009a: 643, 847, 1101-1102 n. 14, 1149 n. 40 and 41; 2009b: 66-67 n. 28), and Wallis (1995: 70 n. 26) have all critiqued this definite article argument as a grammatically untenable claim. From the anthropological side, Silva writes:

> Incidentally, the presence or absence of the definite article is of no help whatever in determining the force of the genitival construction… The presence or absence of the article is motivated by other factors (sometimes inscrutable) and is no clue to the semantic import of the genitival relationship (2004: 227).

Porter and Pitts, however, have recently reaffirmed this case for the anthropological perspective (2009: 49-51), and so may have reopened this argument for further debate.

Πίστις ἐν Χριστῷ (Pistis en Christō) *is not a Pauline idiom*

Another grammatical argument for the anthropological reading is that πίστις ἐν Χριστῷ (*pistis en Christō*; 'faith in Christ') is not a Pauline idiom, and so Paul resorts to *pistis Christou* instead. Related to this is the suggestion that native Greek speakers of the time would have read *pistis Christou* objectively. This is advocated by Hultgren (1980: 254), Matlock (2002: 306), and Silva (2004: 228-30).

Matlock offers the only effort at defending this claim (whereas Hultgren and Silva simply stake this claim as an observation without further defence). To support his claim that early Greek speakers would read *pistis Christou* as *pistis en Christō*, Matlock points to the manuscript P^{46}, which he takes as a commentary on *pistis Christou*. In Gal. 3:26, the most likely textual reading is διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησου (*dia tēs pisteōs en Christō Iēsou*; 'through faith in Christ Jesus'). However, P^{46} has a textual variant that replaces *pisteōs en Christō* with simply *pisteōs Christou*. The *en* with the dative *Christō* is substituted for the genitive *Christou*, and we know that this resulting construction is an objective genitive (so Matlock argues) because a subjective genitive would not be an adequate representation of *pisteōs en Christō*. The objective genitive construction of *pisteōs Christou*, therefore, proves a grammatical possibility for this early scribe (Matlock 2003: 437). This shows that the objective genitive was a common (or at least valid) formulation for average Greek speakers (2003: 438).

However, as Campbell has pointed out, the question of intentionality in textual variants is difficult. Under Matlock's thesis, the scribe would either have had to change the text purposefully or inadvertently because the variant reading still made sense of the earlier text. However, other possibilities exist: the scribe could have been fatigued, he could have been in a rush, he could have misread or misheard the word in question, or he could have not known Greek very well (Campbell 2009a: 877-78, 1099-1101 n. 11). In other words, the scribe could have simply written the wrong thing.

Furthermore, Campbell argues that Matlock makes an assumption by reading the majority text as an objective notion of faith. It is just as possible, in Campbell's estimation, that the scribe of P^{46} read the prior text and surrounding context subjectively and supplied a smoother subjective genitive construction to fit (2009a: 1099-1101 n. 11).

Another approach studies early readings of similar genitival constructions (see especially Harrisville 1994 and 2006; Wallis 1995; and Elliot 2009; cf. Foster 2002, who, assuming non-Pauline authorship of Ephesians, reads the letter as an early interpretation of *pistis Christou* in the authentic letters of Paul). Harrisville takes up the case for the objective genitive. His two articles begin with a promising premise: to study how early Greek speakers both inside and outside the church read similar genitival phrases. His first article deals with the Greek Fathers' interpretation of the debated Pauline *pistis Christou* phrases. Methodologically, he uses a computer program to search out applicable words (such as *pistis*, ἐν αὐτοῦ [*en autou*; 'in him'], *Christou*, etc.) in Patristic sources (1994: 234), and then tests to see how these phrases are read. He concludes that the Fathers do occasionally read a subjective genitive with *pistis*, but only as *pistis autou* ('his faith')—not as *pistis Christou* (1994: 241). He furthermore concludes that the Fathers use *pistis* with a genitive both subjectively and objectively, and so we cannot assume that Paul intends the phrases the same way each time he uses them (1994: 241). Matlock's observation that Origen and Chrysostom read the objective genitive without feeling need for further defence may be more evidence that the Fathers typically read the phrase objectively (2009: 87).

In his second article (2006), Harrisville searches the Perseus 2.0 database for pre-Christian formulations of *pistis* or πιστεύω (*pisteuō*; 'to believe') with the genitive. His stated goal is to determine if *pistis* with an objective genitive is 'good Greek' (2006: 353-54). He runs through a number of examples in ancient Greek writings, where he finds that the typical practice was to use the dative to express faith in or reliance on someone,

but that the objective genitive was still common enough to call it good Greek (2006: 353). The subjective genitive is also good Greek (2006: 356). He also shows how one author can use these genitival phrases both ways (objectively and subjectively), and so again he suggests that interpreters cannot assume the same intention each time an author uses a genitival phrase (2006: 356).

Harrisville's examples, therefore, do not discredit the subjective genitive reading or prove the objective genitive reading. At best, his articles demonstrate a grammatical possibility for both readings. This case that similar phrases can be read both ways in the same author is a significant consideration for moving forward.

However, his two articles do have their flaws. In the second article, he does not offer any examples of *pistis* with an objective genitive of a person. Furthermore, Hays critiques his methodology, suggesting that a computer search is not sufficiently detailed and does not take into adequate account the contexts or theological assumptions in play with each example (2002a: xlviii-l).

On the christological side, Ian Wallis devotes an entire monograph (1995) to the faith of Christ in early Christian traditions (both in the NT and in the early Fathers). Wallis looks at the thematic level rather than just the lexical level, and he finds that *pistis Christou* was read subjectively until theological concerns—namely the fear of Arianism—dictated otherwise (on this shift, see especially 1995: 200-12). Elliot disagrees, concluding that 'any "reintroduction" of "the faith of Jesus Christ" will occur, it seems, *despite* the evidence of the witness of the tradition of Christian theology' (2009: 289, emphasis his).

*εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν (*eis Christon Iēsoun episteusamen*) in Galatians 2.16 explains* pistis Christou

Many defenders of the anthropological reading point to Gal. 2.16 as a key to understanding *pistis Christou* in Paul. Galatians 2.16 has three key phrases: *dia pisteōs Ihsou Christou* ('through faith in Jesus Christ' or 'through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ'), εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν (*eis Christon Iēsoun episteusamen*; 'we believed in Christ Jesus'), and ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (*ek pisteōs Christou*; 'by faith in Christ' or 'by the faithfulness of Christ'). The first and last phrases are genitives and so they are on the list of debated passages. Some advocates of the objective genitive—such as Murray (1968: 371), Hultgren (1980: 255), Schreiner (1998: 185), Silva (2004: 232), Fee (2007: 224) and Matlock (2009: 83-86)—have argued that the middle phrase (*eis Christon Iēsoun episteusamen*) elucidates the other two phrases, thereby showing that these outer phrases are objective genitives.

Advocates of the christological reading have attempted a response. For one, Campbell insists that these interpreters are assuming that the middle phrase can only be translated in a traditional 'faith in Jesus' manner, i.e. 'we believed in Christ Jesus'. However, he suggests 'we also believed concerning Christ Jesus' as another possibility (2009a: 841).

Secondly, some christological advocates accuse anthropological readers of assuming that the middle phrase explains the other phrases (Caneday 1995: 12; Campbell 2009a: 1145-46 n. 25). The text itself appears to give no clear signal that the inner phrase interprets the outer phrases (for the only effort making a case that it does, see Matlock 2009: 83-86).

Works of law v. pistis Christou*—both must be human-orientated*

Another common argument for the objective genitive centres on the relationship between works of law and *pistis Christou*. Since works of law and *pistis* are often paired (as in Rom. 3.28, 4.5, 4.13-16, 9.32, 10.4; Gal. 2.16, 3.2, 3.5, 3.11-12, 3.23-26; Eph. 2.8; and Phil. 3.9), it appears that these must be somehow linked. That is, if works of law is the antagonist, then the protagonist *pistis Christou* must be of the same general conceptual framework to answer the shortcomings of the antagonist. This point is not debated. The debate centres on what the issue and answer are with regard to works of law and *pistis Christou*. On the anthropological side, Murray (1968: 365-67), Hultgren (1980: 258-59), Dunn (2002: 270-71) and Fee (2007: 226) have argued that works of law is a human work, and so *pistis Christou* must also entail a human response. As such, *pistis Christou* must be a person's faith in Christ.

However, while anthropological supporters may contrast human faith with human works, some christological supporters contrast divine action with human action. For example, Markus Barth writes:

> It is unlikely that the alternative preached by Paul to perverse, external, optimistic works-righteousness consisted of nothing better than a supposedly healthy, inverse, passive self-assertion. If Christ's own faith counted nothing, and if men were totally delivered to the sincerity, depth, certainty of their own faith—how could any man ever be saved? Doubts about himself and his own honesty would trouble him without end. But there is no doubt about the perfect faith of Jesus Christ (Barth 1969: 368-69).

Likewise, Hooker (1989: 336, 341), Keck (1989: 454), Matera (1992: 100), Caneday (1995: 20), Wallis (1995: 74 n. 45, 110-111, 119-20), Martyn (1997: 271) and Choi (2005: 480) have all argued for a contrast between divine and human action. This distinction is arguably as fair as a human works versus human faith situation. Either way, this argument starts to look valid only after diving into perhaps an even larger debate over works of the law.

Abraham as model of faith, not faithfulness

The example of Abraham is another debated issue. Paul famously quotes Gen. 15.6 in Romans and Galatians: 'Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness' (Rom. 4.3; Gal. 3.6); and in Rom. 4.16 Paul writes, 'For this reason [the inheritance is] by faith, so that [it may be] according to grace, in order to be the guarantee of the promise to all the descendants, and not to those by the law only, but also to those by the faith of Abraham [ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ; *ek pisteōs Abraam*, another genitival construction], who is the father of us all.'

On the anthropological side, Dunn (2002: 265, 270-71; 2007: 418-19; 2008: 361) and H. Johnson (1987: 192) have argued that Abraham in such texts is a model of *faith*, and not *faithfulness*. That is, Abraham is remembered for believing in God rather than being faithful to God. If *pistis Christou* follows the example of *ek pisteōs Abraam*, and if Abraham is a model of faith, then *pistis Christou* would call for a similar concept.

Following the example of Abraham's faith, humans have faith in Christ. In response, Hays points to Gal. 3.9, which refers to Abraham with the adjective ὁ πιστός (*ho pistos*) which usually means 'faithful', i.e. 'the faithful Abraham'. Furthermore, Hays questions the semantic validity of a clear distinction between 'faith' and 'faithfulness' (2002b: 295). Furthermore, Schenck (2008) has argued that Paul does indeed picture Jesus as having faith, so it is possible that *pistis Christou* can maintain the same basic conceptual framework as Dunn's reading of Abraham's faith and still refer to Jesus' belief in God.

More than this, christological interpreters suggest that the example of Abraham causes serious problems for the anthropological reading of *pistis*. For one, there is the problem of object. Abraham's object of trust is not Christ (who the anthropological reading suggests is the object of human faith), but God. As Hays asks, 'If Abraham could be justified by trusting God, why should we need to believe in *Christ* to be justified? Why not simply put our trust in God, as Abraham did?' (2002a: 151, emphasis his).

Secondly, Campbell finds a temporal problem. Galatians 3.23 insists that 'faith came' at some point after the law (treatments of the singular 'faith' here are addressed below): 'Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.' If faith had not come in Abraham's day, then how is he the model of such faith (2009a: 1162-63 n. 130)?

No one from the anthropological perspective has adequately addressed these problems, but the example of Abraham without further explanation does little to help the christological reading, either.

Summary

Having surveyed the main arguments for the anthropological reading of *pistis Christou*, we found that each argument has been challenged by supporters of the christological reading. These challenges await response. Nevertheless, without a consistent alternative reading to fill the vacuum, supporters of the objective genitive will likely not be persuaded. We turn now to arguments for the other side.

Christological Arguments

The objective genitive creates redundancies

One of the earlier and most popular arguments for the christological reading revolves around perceived redundancies in Paul created by the anthropological reading. For example, with regard to Rom. 3.22, supporters of the subjective genitive argue that if πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (*pisteōs Iēsou Christou*; 'faith in Jesus Christ' or 'faithfulness of Jesus Christ') is read objectively, then the latter half of that sentence ('to all who believe') becomes redundant. Therefore, Paul must have meant something else with *pisteōs Iēsou Christou*. This argument has been advocated by Barth (1969: 368), O'Rourke (1973: 189), Williams (1975: 47-48; 1980: 274), L. T. Johnson (1982: 79), Hooker (1989: 322, 336), Keck (1989: 454-56), Matera (1992: 100-101), Howard (1992: 758), Campbell (1992: 64) and Hays (2002a: 158).

However, as others have pointed out, repetition is not always a bad thing. As Dunn insists, it is often used for emphasis (2002: 262; 1988: 166). Matlock has likewise rebutted

this argument in two different places (2002: 307; 2007). Knowing that this argument is ultimately unhelpful, Campbell—a supporter of the christological reading—has advised christological supporters to abandon this argument (2005: 221-22 n. 19; 2009a: 1093 n. 15, 1146 n. 25; 2009b: 66 n. 27).

Pistis *followed by a genitive of a person never refers to faith in that person*

Howard (1967: 460-61), Robinson (1970: 78-79), Williams (1987: 434), I. Wallis (1995: 88) and D. Wallace (1996: 116) have all suggested that when *pistis* is followed by a person in the genitive case, it never refers to faith *in* that person. Among others, Dunn (2002: 253), Moo (1996: 225), Cranfield (1998: 84-85) and Fee (2007: 224-25) have all responded with examples in the New Testament that go against this claim. The commonly cited passages in rebuttal are Mk 11.22, Acts 3.16, Jas 2.1, Rev. 2.13 and Rev. 14.12, in which *pistis* is said to be linked with a person in an objective genitival construction. However, interpreters should take note that none of these references is a Pauline construction. Furthermore, not all of these texts are as applicable as they may first appear. Mark 11.22 is not faith in Jesus, but faith in God (which the christological reading would have no problem with); Acts 3.16 is faith in 'his name' (and so not necessarily faith in a person); Rev. 2.13 could be a possessive rather than an objective genitive ('my faith'—as the ESV and NASB translate it); and Rev. 14.12 can be subjective, as the NRSV translates it: 'the faith of Jesus'.

Nevertheless, the anthropological interpreters' point still stands: the christological supporters are probably overstating the case when they claim *pistis* is *never* associated with an objective genitive of a person. Once again, the debate has strongly challenged another grammatical argument.

How does human faith reveal God's righteousness?

Another argument from the christological camp (which reads more like a critique of the anthropological reading) centres on Rom. 3.21-22, where Paul suggests that God's righteousness has been revealed by *pistis*. The NRSV offers a traditional translation that pictures human faith as the means of disclosure for God's righteousness: 'But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ [*dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou*] for all who believe.' Some christological interpreters question how human faith can disclose God's righteousness, as translations such as these suggest. Robinson (1970: 80), Keck (1989: 456), Hays (2002a: 158-60; 2002b: 283; 2005: 139), Choi (2005: 476) and Campbell (1992: 63; 1994: 272-76; 2005: 197; 2009a: 379, 610; 2009b: 67-70) have all suggested that a subjective genitive makes sense of God's righteousness having been disclosed. For example, Campbell writes:

> Human 'faith' cannot function instrumentally within a process of divine disclosure. This is semantically impossible. 'Faith' does not function actually to disclose information; it does not make something that is invisible visible. This is not what it means or denotes. Yet these texts speak of disclosure, and from the divine realm to the human. Something is progressing from God to the world, and this is by means of 'faith'. Hence Christ, again, is the most obvious reading of this data (2005: 197).

For Campbell, human faith is an assent to or an ongoing reliance on the truth of something already revealed (2005: 197 n. 41; 2009b: 68). Under the christological reading, therefore, the righteousness of God has been revealed in the faithfulness of Christ.

Dunn (1988: 167) and Schlatter both have responses to this argument. Schlatter understands God's righteousness as the action that establishes individual behaviour, which he considers 'the faith that is predicated upon Christ and is directed to him' (1995: 94). For Schlatter, therefore, God's righteousness causes human faith. The action of Christ, not human faith, reveals God's righteousness (1995: 94). By reading the text this way, Schlatter maintains an anthropological understanding of faith in Christ while at the same time reserving the disclosure of God's righteousness to a divine action.

The usefulness of this argument for the christological reading is predicated on an understanding of human faith as a human action. However, some supporters of the anthropological reading may still understand human faith as a divine action. For example, in his response to Hays, Silva suggests that the christological argument 'makes sense only if one assumes (quite falsely) that the concept of "faith in Christ" is incompatible with, or in some sense minimizes, the principle of "gracious divine initiative" ' (2004: 234). To do the fair task of debate, christological readers must engage with the anthropological interpreters who may read *pistis* as a divinely-enabled human response, and these anthropological interpreters must likewise prove exegetically that such a conception of *pistis* is correct. Those supporting the christological reading, therefore, cannot consider their case made on this point. Many other issues of Paul's theology must be worked through first before claiming that human faith cannot reveal God's righteousness.

Habakkuk 2.4 and ek pisteōs

Paul's use of Habakkuk 2.4 is a key for the debate. Hanson (1974: 40-45), Hays (2002a: 132-41), Campbell (1994: 281-84; 2009a: 613-16; 2009b: 64-66), Wallis (1995: 110-11), and (more cautiously) Heliso (2007) have all argued for a christological reading of Hab. 2.4 in Rom. 1.17 and Gal. 3.11. By this reading, the righteous one in the quoted passage is Jesus and, since Hays, the passage points to the narrative of Christ's faithfulness to the point of death and his subsequent resurrection.

In response, Cranfield asks how Paul could have expected his readers to know 'the righteous one' in Rom. 1.17 was Christ. Jesus is last mentioned in Rom. 1.8-9, whereas 'everyone who believes' is mentioned immediately before in 1.16 (1998: 88). If Hays and Campbell are correct that this association between the righteous one and Christ was in the consciousness of early Jewish Christians (Hays 2005: 121-36; Campbell 2009a: 613-14; 2009b: 64-65), then the christological camp may have a reply. Nevertheless, Watson, who reads Hab. 2.4 as a reference to a generic human, questions the strength of this association, and insists that even if 'the righteous one' was a messianic title in play, there is no indication that this title derived from Hab. 2.4 (2009: 155-59).

H. Johnson offers another response. Johnson suggests that the christological reading sets up an untenable parallel in Gal. 3.11, because the first half of the verse would read in general or universal terms, while the second half would refer specifically to Jesus. Under the christological reading, Gal. 3.11 would read: 'Because through law no one is being justified before [or delivered by] God, clearly because "The righteous one

by faithfulness will live." ' This singular latter half does not, in Johnson's estimation, adequately address the problem of universal enslavement as pictured in the first half of the verse (1987: 190). That is, if Paul imagines a universal predicament in the first half, then the latter half must offer a universally-available answer to the predicament.

Johnson's challenge has found no direct response. However, it is conceivable that if one puts the emphasis not on the universal/specific issue, but rather on the means (that is, the law is delivering no one in the first half, but the faithfulness of Christ provides deliverance in the second half), then the christological interpretation of the verse may still be tenable. Perhaps this remains another example of an inescapable hermeneutical circle. Still, Johnson's case awaits an adequate response from the christological camp.

Hays and Campbell extend the role of Hab. 2.4 even further. Since Paul uses *ek pisteōs* ('by faith') only in Galatians and Romans, where he quotes Hab. 2.4, and *ek pisteōs* appears in Hab. 2.4, Campbell suggests that Paul uses *ek pisteōs* as an allusion to this quotation. Granted a christological reading of Hab. 2.4, *ek pisteōs* becomes an allusion to Christ's faithfulness recalled in the quotation (Campbell 1992: 67; 1994; 2009b: 58-60; cf. Hays 2002a: 132-33). (Watson [2009] agrees that *ek pisteōs* comes from Hab. 2.4, but he reads Hab. 2.4 anthropologically.) In response, Matlock suggests that each time Paul uses *ek pisteōs*, he could be recalling the antithesis between *ek pisteōs* and ἐξ ἔργων (*ex ergōn*; 'by works') (2000: 21). Furthermore, H. Johnson (writing before Campbell) suggests that while this thesis may work in Romans (since *ek pisteōs* first appears with Hab. 2.4 in Rom. 1.17), it may be a more difficult reading in Galatians, where Paul uses the term in Gal. 3.6-9 before the Hab. 2.4 quotation appears in 3.11 (1987: 189). Similarly, Dunn suggests that *ek pisteōs* phrases in Galatians point back to Gal. 3.6-9, where people are said to be sons of Abraham *ek pisteōs* (2007: 418; 2008: 361).

The christological position does not stand or fall by a christological reading of Hab. 2.4, but it is certainly a key text for the debate moving forward. At this stage, neither position has won the day.

Arrival of singular, external pistis

Finally, Wallis (1995: 87-88, 113), Hays (2005: 139), Choi (2005: 475) and Campbell (2005: 196, 225-230; 2009a: 869-74) have pointed to the arrival of a singular, external *pistis* in Gal. 3.23 as another support for the christological reading. Matera also notices this issue, but he does not develop it (1992: 101). The NRSV translates the verse: 'Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed.' The verse is clear that this is not the arrival of the 'possibility' of faith, but the coming of a singular, external *pistis*. This is not, therefore, an awakening of a possibility inside individuals. That is, since this faith is something external that comes one time, faith in this case cannot be the ability to believe boiling up within individual humans.

Furthermore, Campbell shows that the *pistis* here and the seed in the surrounding verses (especially 3.16 and 3.19) are both described as 'coming' and are both linked to 'the promise'. Campbell, therefore, claims that both point to the same thing (2009a: 869). Paul insists that the singular seed ('offspring' in the NRSV) is Christ in 3.16, and the law was put in place until the arrival of this seed in 3.19. But then, in 3.23, Paul switches to the singular *pistis*. Humanity was enslaved under the law until *pistis* would be revealed.

If this is the same expected coming and the same law under which people are held, then the *pistis* and the seed (who Paul insists is Christ) is the same person.

Dunn offers a rebuttal. For Dunn, the coming of *pistis* is the coming of the *era* of *pistis*, which he describes as 'the human response that is the necessary complement to the coming of the seed' (2008: 364). Still, while Paul says that *pistis* has come, Dunn introduces the concept of an 'era of faith'. Therefore, this argument awaits a stronger response.

Summary

Having surveyed the main exegetical arguments for the christological reading, we found nearly every argument adequately challenged (except perhaps for the arrival of a singular external *pistis* in Galatians). At this stage, perhaps Jewett's conclusion will suffice: 'Both the subjective or objective theories as currently presented have loopholes, and therefore a high degree of certainty should not be claimed in deciding between them' (2007: 277).

The Locus of the Debate

Debating the *pistis Christou* phrases and their immediate contexts appears inconclusive. As such, interpreters resort either intentionally or unintentionally to their larger models for reading Paul that are already in place. This is a natural consequence of the hermeneutical circle, but if left unacknowledged, this practice can appear as begging the question. Both camps are guilty on this point; and, indeed, whichever interpretation is more ingrained is more susceptible to this fallacy. Here I offer examples only from the anthropological reading, but advocates of the christological reading are not immune either (as, for example, our treatment above of human faith and the revelation of God's righteousness showed).

Proponents of the anthropological reading have a relatively tight model for reading Paul. However, if interpreters forget that they are operating within this model, and so take it for granted, this can lead to an awkward argument that uses a model for reading Paul (which is informed by an anthropological reading of *pistis Christou*) to defend an anthropological reading of *pistis Christou*. I offer a few examples.

A common example appears something like this: 'If we ignore these disputed phrases, then Paul does not write about Jesus' faithfulness anywhere else.' For example, Cranfield writes: 'If the faith of Jesus Christ was as central to Paul's thought as these assertions indicate, it is strange indeed that his letters contain no single unambiguous reference to it' (1998: 94). Likewise, Fee writes: '[N]owhere else does Paul in plain speech (rather than in a prepositional phrase with an usual meaning) say anything about our salvation resting on Christ's faithfulness' (2007: 225); and Dunn writes: 'What we don't find is that Paul made a point of stressing Jesus' "faithfulness" as such, apart from the disputed πίστις Χριστοῦ [*pistis Christou*] phrases, whereas he was quite ready to stress God's Πίστις [*Pistis*] ("faithfulness") on various occasions' (2009: xvi-xvii). Similarly, Schreiner writes:

> [N]owhere is there any unambiguous indication that Paul spoke of the faith/faithfulness of Christ… Those who support the subjective interpretation point to Rom. 5:18-19, Phil 2:6-11,

> and the close connection between faith and obedience in Pauline theology. Granted, the obedience of Christ is an important element in Pauline theology. But there is not a shred of evidence anywhere else that he speaks of that obedience as Christ's πίστις [*pistis*]. The parallel between Rom. 5:15-19 and πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [*pistis Iēsou Christou*] is hardly as strong as proponents of the subjective interpretation claim (1998: 185).

However, excluding from the start every *pistis Christou* reference and writing off without defence such passages as Romans 5 and Philippians 2 proves little. This is tantamount to saying that if we ignore much of Galatians 2, then we have no other evidence in Paul's letters that Paul confronted Peter. That may be true, but it does not advance the conversation.

Another example comes as interpreters express their fears that the christological reading will disrupt a prior understanding of Paul's theology. Moule, for example, writes: 'To throw so much weight upon what God in Christ has done is…seriously to reduce necessary reference to man's act of will in response to God's approach' (1956–57: 157). Moule assumes that a wilful human response is something that must necessarily be referenced, and since the wilful human response is necessary, then *pistis Christou* should allow for that human response. This assumption, however, is not sufficient proof for one reading of *pistis Christou* over the other. Harrisville makes a similar argument:

> If the subjective rendering is accepted and becomes the translation of choice in our modern English versions of scripture, the reader will be left wondering as to what personal connection should exist between herself and Christ other than the ritual of baptism and a vague notion of 'participation'. For when the phrase is translated 'faith of Christ' there is removed from St. Paul's letters virtually all of his speech about the direct connection by means of faith that the believer has with Christ. If a vague 'participation,' à la participation in a character in a book, is to be the Christian's connection to Christ, then it falls far short of the total transformation of the self, which the Apostle calls for in Romans 12:2. Only a connection of faith 'in' Christ can affect the kind of transformation the human being requires. For only then will one's entire life be oriented to and driven by Jesus. Mere 'participation' or identification with a character in a story will not do (2006: 357).

Not only has Harrisville relied on his wider understanding of Paul to determine his reading, but he has also disregarded the transformative power of a participatory soteriology. Indeed, the Eastern Church with a robust understanding of theosis may offer quite a different account of the transformative power of participation.

A final example comes from Schreiner: 'The preceding arguments [for the subjective genitive] are appealing, but they do not contain enough persuasive force to overturn the objective genitive interpretation' (1998: 182). Here Schreiner grants the anthropological reading a priority of position so that it does not have to be defended on its own right, while forcing the christological reading to gather up a heretofore undefined amount of indisputable evidence before the prior position can be reconsidered. While it is fair enough that Schreiner finds convincing the larger interpretive model in place, it is not fair to use this model—if not defended—to write off a challenge to the very model in place.

These examples of predicating the argument on an already-determined interpretive model are, in this essay's perspective, not necessarily avoidable. Instead, these examples illustrate what the actual debate is: a debate over the larger reading of Paul's theology. As the survey of the arguments has shown, attempts at reading Paul grammatically and syntactically without a wider theological lens have fallen flat. This presses the debate beyond the immediate context of the *pistis Christou* passages to the whole of Paul's theology. If supporters of the anthropological position can offer a holistic account of Paul's texts and gospel in such a way that demands an objective genitive reading of *pistis Christou*, while at the same time answering the growing tide of questions from the other side, then the debate can move forward on those grounds. Likewise, if supporters of the christological position can offer a holistic reading of Paul that does more than simply overturn the objective genitive reading of *pistis Christou* but makes the subjective genitive an instrumental part of their account of Paul's theology, then the debate can progress on those grounds.

Conclusion

Both interpretations have their challenges, and neither can win the day on the basis of grammatical or immediate contextual arguments. The locus of the debate, therefore, is not on whether 'faith *in* Christ' or the 'faith(fulness) *of* Christ' is a viable translation. The present state of the debate suggests that both translations are viable. Nevertheless, interpreters must make a decision between the two or intentionally argue for some combination thereof. Matlock is correct that a both/and or combined reading 'does not prevail simply by virtue of our finding it difficult or loathsome to choose' (2009: 88). So the debate goes on. Moving forward, interpreters must come to grips with the much larger hermeneutical and theological assumptions at play for both sides and engage them in that arena.

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