

CHAPTER 2

BELIEVERS AS LOYALISTS: THE ANATOMY OF PAUL'S LANGUAGE OF *PISTIS*

We are accustomed to thinking of early “Christians” simply as “believers,” and this usage perpetuates the notion that the Christian faith is primarily about assenting to certain doctrines. But the translation “believers” significantly miscommunicates what Paul usually means when he uses the participle *pisteuontes*, a word that requires quite a number of words to properly render: “those who are convinced, submit in trust, and declare loyalty.”¹ English simply does not have a good one-word equivalent that captures the breadth of *pisteuontes* in a number of texts. To anticipate our conclusions, if one were to select a better one-word equivalent—as we must, since it is far too cumbersome to say “those who are convinced, submit in trust, and declare loyalty”—it would be “loyalists.”

In Paul's theology, “conviction, trust, and loyalty” are integral—that is, both central and interrelated. They cohere not only linguistically in the one word *pistis* (and its corresponding verb *pisteuein*), but they also cohere when we consider Paul's overall theological expression. Just as the Greek language has one word *dikaiosynē* that embraces both (personal) “righteousness” and (social and judicial) “justice,” so also the one word *pistis* incorporates a broad field of meaning, including “trust” and “trustworthiness,” “faith” and “faithfulness,” “conviction” and “loyalty,” “belief” and “fidelity,” “relying upon” and “allegiance.” Extending the notion of “fidelity” in an objective sense, it can even have the nuance of “credit,” “proof,” or “guarantee.” But when the word is regularly rendered

merely as either “belief” or “faith,” as in most English versions of the Bible, something of its broader significance is seriously lost in translation.

THE LEXICAL SENSES OF THE *PISTIS* WORD GROUP

To recover the significance that Paul attaches to the *pistis* word group, it is first necessary to summarize the range of meanings, uses, and resonances of *pistis* and its cognates that were broadly current in Paul’s world. We begin with a lexical summary of our key words of interest:²

- (A) the adjective *pistos*:
- (1) faithful, loyal;
 - (2) trusting, believing.
- (B) the noun *pistis*:
- Subjective senses:
- (1) trustworthiness, faithfulness, reliance, loyalty;
 - (2) trust, faith, reliance upon;
- Objective senses:
- (3), further to (1), that which is entrusted: pledge, guarantee, assurance, credit, ground of reliability, means of persuasion (the confidence one gives);
 - (4), further to (2), that which gives confidence, the content of the confidence: firm conviction, dependable truth (the confidence one has, as a result of the pledge of another, or of assurance provided).
- (C) the verb *pisteuein* (which can be transitive or intransitive):
- Active voice:
- Subjective sense:
- (1) trust, put faith (in), rely (on), have/place confidence (in someone or something);
 - (2) be faithful/loyal (to); act loyally (to); show loyalty (to); obey; show loyal trust;
- Objective sense:
- (3) entrust (something to another);
 - (4) further to (1), consider as true, trustworthy; believe; give credit (to); be confident (that);
- Passive voice:
- (1) be trusted/believed;
 - (2) be entrusted.

But beyond the mere lexical meaning of the words, more crucial are the domains of use within which these words function. It is to this that we now turn. What we immediately see is that *pistis* is not a narrowly “religious” word in Greek-speaking contexts.

PISTIS AND PISTOS IN THE DOMAIN OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS: PERSONAL LOYALTY AND TRUST

Specialists in Indo-European languages have shown that the original and primary realm for the abiding meaning of the Greek *pistis* (and its equivalent in Latin, *fides*) was that of interpersonal relations, especially the dynamics within the “institution of personal loyalty.”³ Prior to the establishment of formal legal institutions and meanings, *pistis* operated within the sphere of “binding obligations,” often in connection with oath formulas, even used synonymously for the word “oath” (Greek, *horkos*). An *horkos* is that which is *pistos* (faithful) *par excellence*. Conduct or a person that honored an agreement or bond is what is *pistos*.

Within the processes of interpersonal loyalty in horizontal, friendship relations, the word *pistis* covers two sets of symmetrical (or reciprocal) meanings. In terms of the subjective dynamics, there is, on the one hand, fidelity, trustworthiness, faithfulness, reliance, loyalty; and on the other hand, there is trust, faith, reliance upon. And mediating this subjective symmetry is a kind of objective sense to *pistis*: on the one hand it is “a (provided) guarantee” (thus, a pledge, credit, trust, or assurance) stemming from loyalty and fidelity [the trust we *grant* someone]; but on the other hand it is also an “inspired confidence” (thus, assurance, conviction, basis of confidence, belief, with an emphasis on its content) characteristic of faith and trust [the faith or the credit we *possess*].⁴ Giorgio Agamben summarizes it this way: “Faith’ (or trust) is the credit that one enjoys in another, the result of placing our trust in him, having consigned something like a pledge to him that links us in a relation of loyalty.”⁵ All dimensions of this, aspects that we are used to distinguishing lexically by using different words (faith vs. faithfulness, trust vs. trustworthiness, etc.), are expressed by the single word *pistis*.

In the case of vertical (suzerain) relations, however, where there is some power differential, the complete reciprocity begins to break down: the suzerain may offer authority and protection for someone who submits to it, in exchange for (and to the extent of) his submission. The weaker party will thus display the subjective posture of both trust and trustworthiness (faith and loyalty), whereas the stronger party will simply display trustworthiness (not needing to trust in the same way in return). The stronger party will offer pledges and promises (guarantees) of protection and security, whereas the weaker party will both offer pledges (guarantees) of fidelity and loyalty appropriate to the submission, and be able to trust the protection of the stronger party based on her perceived reliability, good faith (*bona fides*), of the promises, pledges, or assurances.

Trust in the sense of dependency or reliance, then, is not reciprocal in vertical relations: it is the weaker party who trusts in that sense. Accordingly, in the Greek lexicon, the verb *pisteuein* expresses the act of rendering loyal trust to a suzerain, but not the protective loyalty rendered to the weaker party. While both the weaker and stronger parties will display *pistis* (although in different ways), the actions of suzerain toward the dependent will generally not be expressed with *pisteuein* (but more commonly with the adjective *pistos*, faithful), although the dependent's actions toward the suzerain will be expressed with *pisteuein*.⁶

Anticipating our discussion of Paul, it is noteworthy that whether in horizontal or vertical (power-imbalanced) relations, *pistis* embraces both the soteriological dimension (receiving assurances of loyalty toward protection, and trusting those assurances) and the ethical aspect (demonstrating promised loyalty).

So important was this basic institution of Greek culture that *pistis* also came to life as a goddess (*daimōn*, guardian spirit) in Greek mythology. As the personification of good faith, trust and reliability, the goddess *Pistis* is closely associated with *Elpis* (Hope), *Sōphrosynē* (Prudence), and the *Charitai* (Graces), and is the guarantor of honesty and loyalty among people.⁷

***PISTIS* IN SOCIAL, POLITICAL RELATIONS**

In the domain of social and political relations, this usage of *pistis* and *pistos* carries over in analogous ways.⁸ Here *pistis* entails “loyalty” or “allegiance” to a ruler, military general, or empire, and also “loyalty” to treaties, oaths, and covenants, founded on the symmetrical reciprocity of trusting and being trustworthy (thus, both giving and enjoying trust). *Pistis* is especially tied to oath formulations or demonstrations of allegiance to a suzerain (from local landlord to Emperor), in response to promises of protection or in light of demonstrations of power.

Both the Greek *pistis* and the Latin *fides* were also used regularly in the conventional practice of submitting to a conquering power: “a weaker city could take recourse to the institution of the *deditio in fidem*, meaning that they could unconditionally surrender themselves to the hands of the enemy, making the victor hold to a more benevolent conduct.”⁹ Those who took this course of action (so as to avoid death and destruction) are described as *dediticii*, those “who have given themselves over.”¹⁰ In Greek, this practice was described as “giving oneself over in loyalty [*pistis*]” (and thus “trusting” the “good faith” of the victor, and simultaneously showing “loyalty”). This submission is also expressed with the verb *peithesthai*, literally “to be prevailed upon/won over/persuaded” and by extension “to

obey.” The classic example of this is in the self-promoting last will and testament of Caesar Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* [Mighty Deeds of the Divine Augustus], etched in inscriptions across the empire in the time of Paul. Referring to nations that submitted to Rome without experiencing outright conquest, Caesar remarks: “a large number of other nations [also] experienced the good faith [loyalty, pledge of suzerainty: *pistis* in the Greek versions, *fides* in the Latin versions] of the Roman people during my principate.”¹¹

In Roman political propaganda, *fides* (*pistis* in Greek-speaking environments) figured prominently as a cardinal Roman value and essential concept. As Neil Elliott summarizes: “*Fides* was routinely illustrated on coins, for example, by the portrait of the Roman conqueror extending one hand in alliance, holding a spear in the other—to be wielded in protection of Rome’s allies, of course.”¹² As “the quintessential expression for the reciprocal responsibility between conqueror and conquered,” *fides* signified both the “good faith” that protects the whole world, but also the “loyalty” that the world gives to Caesar. In Roman political propaganda, therefore, the emperor is celebrated as the model of fidelity, along with other virtues,¹³ the basis on which his rule is secure and legitimate.¹⁴ And on the other hand, *fides* (and *pistis*) is prominent in the standard ritual of requiring personal oaths of allegiance (loyalty) to the Roman Emperor, especially among annexed (conquered) populations.¹⁵

Accordingly, the goddess *Fides*, the counterpart of the Greek goddess *Pistis*, occupied a much more prominent political role in Roman culture compared to that of Greece. *Fides* was honored with a temple on the Capitol Hill, and in that temple, for instance, the Roman Senate kept state treaties with foreign countries, under the watchful eye and protection of the goddess.

Judean-Jewish¹⁶ writers in Greek, during the first century, also use *pistis* in the same manner when it comes to describing political dynamics. The historian Josephus, for instance, uses *pistis* most frequently to describe the “allegiance” or “fidelity” of an individual, community, or nation to a king, military general, or the Roman *imperium*.¹⁷ It is used synonymously with *dexia*, literally, the “right hand,” but signifying a “pledge” of allegiance.¹⁸ Josephus refers to his ploy, when serving as military commander of Galilee, to retain local powerful brokers under the pretext of friendliness, though ultimately “to have hostages of loyalty (*homēra pisteōs*).”¹⁹ And he also uses *pistis* to refer to the “credit” (trust) that one obtains with a superior power, by taking a non-hostile stance.²⁰

Similarly illustrating the practice of *deditio in fidem*, 1 Maccabees has the Syrian ruler Demetrius advising the Judean nation to keep “loyalty” (*pistis*) with him, in exchange for their immunity from punishment (1

Macc 10:27), and he promises that some Judeans would be given positions in his kingdom “into trust” (or, “for trust,” that is, as quasi hostages and treated in good faith) should the nation acquiesce (1 Macc 10:37). On the other side of this practice, 3 Maccabees has stronger individuals “giving pledges [*pisteis*] of protection” to those in danger (3 Macc 3:10). Meanwhile, the propaganda of the Maccabees themselves is that Simon is the legitimate ruler of Judea, precisely because of “his fidelity,” not just because of his military success (1 Macc 14:35).

***PISTIS* IN THE JURIDICAL-LEGAL AND COMMERCIAL SPHERES**

As Roman and Greek societies developed more elaborate legal systems, *pistis* (and *fides*) came to be used especially in its objective sense. In law, *pistis* (and *fides*, especially *bona fides*) referred to “credit” and “trust,” along with “obligations,” deriving from contractual legal bonds. In family law, *pistis* could be used of a “position of trust or trusteeship,” and as a guardian, one might leave something “in *pistis*” (in trust). In the area of commerce, *pistis* could similarly refer to “credit” or “trust.” One could thus “give *pistis*” in the sense of giving credit, or one could hold something “in *pistis*” (in trust, to have a credit). Even the verb *pisteuein* is used for “depositing” (literally, “trusting”) money in a treasury (e.g. 4 Macc 4:7).²¹ And to this day, *pistis* continues to be used in a commercial sense, as in the designation *trapeza emporikēs pisteōs*, “Bank of Commercial Credit.” It was coming across this last example that caused David Flusser to step away from Martin Buber’s neat distinction between two antithetical types of faith—that the Greek (and thus Pauline) meaning of *pistis* is “recognizing something is true” while the Hebrew sense of the counterpart *emunah* is “exhibiting loyalty,” or “having confidence.” He concluded: “The Greek *pistis* means precisely the same thing as the Hebrew *emunah*.”²²

***PISTIS* AND *PISTEUEIN* IN PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY, HISTORY, AND RHETORIC**

In the discourse of philosophy, theology, history and rhetoric, the usage of *pistis* expands even further. For instance, Plato uses *pistis* to define a particular faculty or aptitude of the (rational) soul, but also to designate a particular domain of knowledge. In the former case, *pistis* (as popular or conventional “conviction,” not personal faith) along with *eikasia* (picture-thinking, conjecture, modeling), which deal with comprehending semblances (*doxa*), are lesser faculties in comparison to *noēsis* (intellect, reasoning) and *dianoia* (understanding), which deal with

apprehending “things of being” (*ta onta*). As for divisions of knowledge, *pistis* (conviction, belief) along with *eikasia* (picture-thinking, conjecture) are together classified as *doxa* (convention, opinion) as lower divisions of knowledge, in comparison to *epistēmē* (knowledge) and *dianoia* (understanding), which are together classified as *noēsis* (intellection). The former two deal with matters of change and generation (*genesis*), while the latter two concern matters of unchanging essence (*ousia*).²³

In the field of ancient rhetoric, which in effect brings ordinary speech and vocabulary to a new level of precision, Aristotle uses *pistis* in the sense of “proof,” though more precisely as the “basis/means of trustworthiness/believability.”²⁴ Similarly, in historiography, *pistis* is used for “evidence” and “assurance” that adjudicates the truthfulness of historical accounts.²⁵

In Stoicism, by contrast, *pistis* is not used primarily in the domain of intellectual inquiry. Rather, it is mainly treated as a virtue or an attitude, signifying “reliability” and “faithfulness,” to oneself and to others. It never refers to a relation or obligation to a deity (*theos*) or divinity (*daimōn*).

***PISTIS* AND *PISTEUEIN* IN “DEVOTION” (GREEK, *EUSEBLIA*; LATIN, *RELIGIO*)**

In the Greek tradition, *pistis* and *pisteuein* do not have their primary home in the realm of personal “devotion” to the gods, and have even less to do with civic obligations to patron deities. When these words are used in this context, they are modeled on the use of these terms in other domains of life. In the classical period, for instance, regard for the gods was not expressed with the verb *pisteuein* (to trust in, to believe), but with *nomizein* (to have regard for), and *pistis* was not used in the sense of belief or trust in the gods. *Pistis* was used, rather, to refer to the “trustworthiness” of an oracle, or to whether or not the power of the gods (not their existence) could be “trusted” to save in the face of danger. *Pistis* could, however, be used to imply “obedience” to an oracle, or refer to “loyal” conduct enjoined by the gods.

By the time of the New Testament, however, *pistis* and *pisteuein* had come to be used also of devotion to particular divinities. In the mystery religions, for instance, *pistis* and *pisteuein* designated the abandonment to a deity, putting oneself in trust under the protection of a god (not first to “believing” in the god’s existence).

In Greek-speaking Jewish-Judean contexts, and thus in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the “Septuagint,” abbreviated “LXX”), beginning around 200 BCE, *pistis* was simply used as an equivalent to the Hebrew *’emunah*, which means “firmness, reliability, faithfulness, certainty, dependability.”²⁶ The LXX and later Greek-

speaking Jewish writings rarely use *pistis* in the sense of “faith” or “trust.”²⁷ But toward the time of Paul and beyond, *pistis* comes to refer both to “trust” or “faith” in God alongside “fidelity” to God,²⁸ especially in response to God bestowing “trust” and “fidelity” via promises expressed in oath.²⁹

In Josephus’s *Against Apion*, his defense of Judaism for Greco-Roman readers, which clearly betrays his Pharisaic sympathies, *pistis* is used to designate God’s “pledge” or “fidelity” (2.218), and in turn to signify both active “trust” toward and “conviction/belief” about God (2.163, 169). These uses occur in the context of discussing proper devotion [*eusebia*] or doctrine/conviction [*doxa*] about God, both of which have a strongly ethical flavor (2.179-18, 224, 254-58). Quite notably, Josephus remarks about Plato’s preoccupation with “correct doctrine” (*orthē doxa*; 2.256), but refers to Moses’s superiority in offering “the most righteous conviction” (*dikaioatē pistis*; 2.163). Judaic fidelity is firstly ethical, not intellectual. When it comes to the realm of “devotion,” Josephus sets God theo-politically as “the ruler of the universe,” inventing the very word “theocracy” (*theokratia*; 2.165, 185).³⁰ In that context, Josephus uses the verb *pisteuein* to designate both relational and submissive “trusting” and cognitive “believing” (becoming firmly persuaded, convinced), arguing that Moses prompted this “unmovable fidelity/conviction” (*pistis ametakinētos*) in adherents by both intellectual precept and practical exercise of the character (2.171-74). At the same time, Josephus also uses *pistis* to designate the crucial virtue of “fidelity/loyalty” in human relations (*Jewish War* 2.134, 137).

As we shall see, Paul’s use of *pisteuein* and *pistis* is closely aligned with that of Josephus, both theologically and politically (even as their social location differs markedly). This should not be surprising when their shared Pharisaic heritage is considered (*The Life* 7-12; Phil 3:5-6). Josephus claims that at the age of 19, in the year 56-57 CE, he began to “practice citizenship” (*politeuesthai*, engage in politics) according to the framework of the Pharisees (*The Life* 12), which for his Greco-Roman readers he likens to the philosophy of the Stoics. Like Paul, he also claims to have advanced far beyond most of his compatriots (*The Life* 7-10; Gal 1:14).³¹ And as with Paul, central to his Pharisaic conviction is hope for a transformed world and a renewed blessed existence in “the revolution of the ages” (*peritropē aiōnōn*; *Jewish War* 3.374; *Against Apion* 2.217-19; Acts 23:6-7; 28:20). Radically different in Paul, however, is Paul’s more thorough-going apocalyptic framework, and in particular the Messianic element, such that Paul advises his readers to “practice citizenship” (*politeuesthai*) in a manner worthy of Messiah’s gospel” (Phil 1:27).

***PISTIS*, *PISTEUEIN*, AND *PISTOS* IN PAUL'S VOCABULARY AND THEOLOGY**

The terms *pistis* and *pisteuein* are plainly crucial for Paul, especially to define “the fundamental option,” “the appropriate human response to the gospel of God, the word of the cross.”³² *Pistis* even seems to function more fundamentally than the love of God.³³ As a result of this, Paul can refer to adherents of Messiah Jesus simply as “the trusting/loyal ones” (“believers”); he can summarize the content and goal of his preaching simply as *pistis* (Gal 1:23: “the faith, the loyalty”); and he can describe the Messianic community as “the household of *pistis* (faith/fidelity)” (Gal 6:10).

As elsewhere in Greek discourse, *pistis* and cognate words in Paul's letters have a remarkable polyvalence and range. Sometimes a specific use of *pistis* incorporates a broad range of senses that cannot be easily rendered in English, and sometimes a use highlights a particular sense of *pistis*. There are two key problems, however, in properly rendering Paul's language of *pistis* and *pisteuein* into English. (a) English lexically separates faith from faithfulness, and trust from trustworthiness. To truly render the full sense of *pistis* in many instances, one should really use a hyphenated neologism like “loyalty-faith,” or “faith/fidelity,” or a phrase such as “loyal faith,” or “faithful trust.” (b) English has no corresponding verb for the nouns “faith” or “loyalty,” in the same way that “believe” is a counterpart to “belief.” Nor does the verb “trust” have a corresponding participle “truster,” in the way that “believe” has the rendering “believer.” But we do have a word for people who are loyal, “loyalists,” and in most instances, that is a far better rendering of Paul's meaning than the translation “believers.”

While Paul does sometimes use *pistis* and *pisteuein* with the primary connotations of “belief” and “believe,” these are minority examples, and not at the core of his proclamation. But in accordance with long-standing tradition, English translations still regularly supply “believe” when the meaning is actually “to trust,” or a combination of “to trust and be loyal,” or a blend of “to believe, trust, and be loyal.”³⁴ Or, English translations supply “believers,” when the meaning is “those who trust and are faithful,” “those who trust and obey,” or “those who declare allegiance.” In a recent study, Michael Gorman summarizes proposals by recent scholars for the fundamental sense of *pistis* in Paul. These include: “obedience” (R. Bultmann; L. T. Johnson), “fidelity/faithfulness” along with “trust” and “obedience” (R. Hays), “submission/commitment” (J. A. Fitzmyer), or a “total surrender of the self” involving trust and loyalty (J. Fuchs).³⁵ Gorman himself encapsulates *pistis* in Paul as the “narrative posture

of faithfulness or obedience toward God,” whose prototype is Christ himself, thus essentially “cruciformity.” Faith has a “narrative” character because it is both initial and ongoing, “a dynamic posture. . . that involves movement and action.” It has a cognitive aspect [affirmation, conviction], and an emotive, spiritual, experiential dimension, but still is fundamentally “devotion, total commitment, faithfulness.”³⁶ All this goes in the direction of emphasizing the theo-political sense of *pistis* as “submission in loyalty.”

In a good number of instances, the specific argumentative or hortatory context shapes Paul’s use of *pistis* and *pisteuein* considerably. Three of these settings are noteworthy.

(1) The first is in Paul’s polemic in relation to the Law (Torah), whether in regard to the revelation of God’s righteousness (covenant loyalty), the ground of “justification” (not just “declaring right,” but also “making right,” as in “justifying” a margin), the means of salvation, or a framework for ethical conduct. In the specific texts dealing in some way with this question (Rom 1:16-5:1; 9:30-11:24; 14:1-23; Gal 2:1-5:6; Phil 3:9) we find nearly half of the total occurrences of the *pistis* word group in the undisputed letters of Paul.³⁷ *Pistis* (and its cognates) functions as a core “antithesis word” in Romans and Galatians, closely correlated with the themes of Jew-Gentile, circumcision-uncircumcision, righteousness of God, justification, salvation, no distinction, all, works of Law, Law, promise, Abraham, Messiah, hearing, preaching, and eating.³⁸ Paul’s central agenda in these texts concerns the means and framework by which all peoples can be absorbed into the community of God, not just those of Abrahamic birthright, or those who strictly follow Torah.

It is these passages that have become most definitive for Protestant theological thinking, where the polemical character of Paul’s rhetoric has been taken to an extreme, through the Reformation slogan of *sola fidei*, “by faith/belief alone” (even though Paul nowhere uses the phrase “faith alone”), with *fides* thought of especially as belief, cognitive assent. The resulting main contrast of “faith” versus “works” has been magnified, elevating “belief” over “practice.” What Paul actually contrasts, however, is “fidelity” versus “works.” He does not diminish “works” nor “practice” in general (nor even specific rules), but stresses a more fundamental “bond of loyalty,” or “framework of conviction,” not primarily defined or constrained by an analysis of particular behavioural rules themselves. Indeed, the central antithesis pits “the fidelity of Messiah,” the prototype and ground of all reciprocal human “fidelity toward Messiah and God,” versus mere “works of Law.” This fidelity is both faith and faithfulness, both salvific and ethical. Indeed, Paul asserts that the problem with the Judeans-Jews in general is not so much that they remain largely “non-loyal” to Messiah (“unbelieving”), but in fact that their pursuit of the

Law itself was not from the standpoint of a deeper “fidelity,” but from the perspective of mere “works” (Rom 9:30-10:8). It is this fundamental stance that made them unable to recognize Messiah as the “goal of the Law.”

(2) A second crucial setting in which Paul’s language of *pistis* comes to focused expression is in the polemic against Corinthian wisdom, arrogance, claims to knowledge, and even claims to spectacular “faith.” Here, *pistis* takes on more of the sense of “loyal conviction,” grounded in God’s power, not words of wisdom. At the same time, however, this faith takes second place to the primacy of “love.”³⁹

(3) A final setting, in which the rhetoric of *pistis* is more hortatory than polemical, is in letters to the persecuted assemblies of Thessalonica and Philippi, whose harassment stems especially from those allied with the Roman *imperium*. In these letters, *pistis* takes on the particular sense of “allegiance” and “loyalty” to Messiah, specifically to Messiah’s alternative “kingdom” (1 Thessalonians) or “city-state” (Philippians). Even Acts, written at least 25 years later, recognizes that the primary issues in the struggles of these communities with the prevailing Roman order were the proclamation of a rival Emperor (Thessalonica; Acts 17:6-9) and the practice of a subversive polity (Philippi; Acts 16:20-21).

While the language of *pistis* and *pisteuein* takes on a particular hue in each of these three rhetorical settings, one must also note that these are not exclusive of each other but instead that they resonate with each other. Thus, while Romans uses *pistis* especially in the polemic against certain approaches to the Law, this is not the whole story of Romans. Romans is as much an assault on the “arrogance of the nations” (11:13-32)⁴⁰ as it is a confrontation with the “boasting of the Judeans” (2:17, 23; 3:27). As we shall see, *pistis* in Romans also has a sharply theo-political edge, especially in the opening and closing of Romans.

We turn, then, to sample some crucial texts and themes in Paul’s letters.

GOD’S FIDELITY AND HUMAN INFIDELITY: FIDELITY AROUSED BY GRACE

The argument of Romans has sometimes been described as a defense of God’s righteousness, understood in the sense of God’s covenant loyalty (Rom 1:17; 3:21-22, 26), as suzerain lord, to both Israel and the nations.⁴¹ At stake is the abiding validity of “promises” made to both Israel and the nations (15:7), especially the promise made to Abraham that in him all the nations would be blessed (Rom 4:1-25; 11:25-32; 15:7-12; cf. Gen 12:3; Gal 3:8). Vigorously defended, then, is the abiding “faithfulness

(*pistis*) of God” (Rom 3:2-6), despite the *apistia* (non-trusting, non-loyalty, unbelief) of those to whom God “entrusted (*pisteuesthai*) the oracles of God” (Rom 3:3),⁴² and despite the continuing injustice of the nations (1:18-2:16), whose culpability God continues to pass over, but especially now through Messiah, insofar as he himself is the propitiation for all human infidelity (3:22-26; 9:22-29). “God’s fidelity” is the same as “God’s righteousness,” “God’s mercy,” and “God’s truth,”⁴³ which now through “Messiah’s fidelity” is pre-eminently demonstrated (1:17; 3:1-26; 15:8), prompting a reciprocal “fidelity” among all human beings, and putting everyone⁴⁴ at the same level of disadvantage *and* advantage. In no way can the “gifts and calling” of God become irrevocable (11:29). Indeed, eventually “God’s mercy” (as another dimension of God’s fidelity) will ultimately conquer all human infidelity, whether that of the nations or that of Israel, bringing the cosmos to its appointed destiny (11:25-36; 15:8-9). This reminds us, moreover, that God’s fidelity is a manifestation of God’s grace, and that it is divine grace itself that generates human fidelity (e.g. Phil 1:29). Understandably, then, four of the eight occurrences of the word *pistos* (faithful, loyal) in the undisputed letters are emphatic predicates of the character of God (1 Cor 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor 1:18; 1 Thess 5:24).⁴⁵ For Paul, then, God’s fidelity is foundational.

THE FIDELITY (LOYAL TRUST) OF CHRIST AS PROTOTYPE FOR HUMAN FIDELITY

The solution to the crisis confronting humanity, Paul avers, is a new means of loyal submission to God (and thus deliverance), made possible by the loyal fidelity of Christ himself, who is thus both agent of salvation, but also prototype of subsequent human loyalty.⁴⁶ Developed especially in the context of his struggle to understand the Law, Paul’s stress on the prototypical and salvific fidelity of Messiah is patently clear, though minimized in Protestant theology, and covered up in most recent English translations.⁴⁷

For we know that a person is justified (made right) not on the basis of the works of the Law, except through *the faithfulness (pistis) of Jesus Christ*, and (so) we have submitted in loyal trust (*pisteuein*) to Christ Jesus, in order that we might be justified on the basis of *the faithfulness (pistis) of Christ* and not on the basis of works of the Law, for on the basis of works of the Law not any person will be justified. (Gal 2:16)

I died to the Law through the Law, so that I could live for God. I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faithfulness

(*pistis*) of the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:19-20)

If a Law was given that was able to give life, then righteousness would in fact be on the basis of the Law. But the Scripture has locked up all human beings under (the power of) sin, so that the promise might be given, on the basis of *the faithfulness (pistis) of Jesus Christ*, to those who submit in loyal trust (*pisteuein*). (Gal 3:22)

Through Christ I have lost everything, and I have come to regard everything as rubbish, in order that I might gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own on the basis of the Law, but a righteousness on the basis of *the faithfulness (pistis) of Christ*, the righteousness of God based on fidelity (*pistis*). (Phil 3:8-9)

But now, apart from the Law, God's righteousness has been revealed, though confirmed by the Law and the Prophets: God's righteousness through *the faithfulness (pistis) of Jesus Christ* for all who respond in faithful trust (*pisteuein*). There is no distinction. (Rom 3:21-22)

God put forward Christ, through fidelity (*pistis*),⁴⁸ by his blood [sacrificial death], as the place of sacrifice, for the purpose of demonstrating God's righteousness, on account of the passing over of previously committed sins, in the forbearance of God, for the purpose of demonstrating his righteousness in the present time, so that he might be [shown to be] just/righteous and one who justifies a person on the basis of *the faithfulness (pistis) of Jesus*. (Rom 3:25-26)

In accordance with this understanding of Messiah's foundational fidelity, Paul pens the opening thesis statement of Romans:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power unto salvation, for everyone who submits in faithful trust (*pisteuein*), to the Judean first and also to the Greek. For in it [the gospel], God's righteousness is being revealed, on the basis of [God's, Christ's] fidelity (*pistis*), toward the realization of [human] fidelity (*pistis*), just as it is written, "The righteous one will live on the basis of fidelity (*pistis*)." (Rom 1:16-17)

In the last quotation, Paul refers both to Messiah as prototype of fidelity as God's "righteous one," a Messianic title, but also to all those who follow in that same pattern, on the basis of Messiah's unique, salvific, and paradigmatic fidelity.⁴⁹

While Romans 3:25 (cited above) likely refers to Christ's fidelity as manifested most supremely in his sacrificial death, expressing his self-giving love, other texts make it clear that this is indeed the case.⁵⁰ For instance, Romans 5:12-21 stresses that the efficacy of Christ toward salvation and righteousness, as an outcome of God's grace, is precisely in his "obedience," his own "righteous act" (5:18-19). The encomium to Messiah in Philippians 2:6-11 similarly proclaims that Messiah "lowered himself, becoming obedient all the way to death" (2:8), as the supreme expression of his salvific and paradigmatic "regard for the other" (2:3-5). This virtue of ultimate, submissive loyalty (*pistis*), then, becomes the foundation and the fulcrum that caused God to act on his behalf and on behalf of all humanity (2:9-11). Accordingly, Paul has Christ (through the mouth of David) make his own oath of allegiance to God alone among (and for the benefit of) all the nations (Rom 15:9).

OBEDIENCE OF FIDELITY: *PISTIS* AS SUBMISSION IN LOYALTY

At the beginning and close of Paul's argument in Romans, we find some of Paul's most forceful claims to Christ's lordship, and the response that that cosmic, theo-political supremacy should generate. The opening credo highlights Messiah's enthronement as lord (1:3-4) and the closing declaration announces Christ's universal reign among (over) all the nations (15:9-12). Together, these bracket Paul's entire main argument (1:1-15:13).⁵¹ Not surprisingly, these two texts correlate precisely with the contents of Paul's highly charged encomium to Messiah's enthronement and universal lordship in Phil 2:6-11: the first restates the acclamation of cosmic enthronement in Phil 2:9, and the second reaffirms the realization of universal lordship in Phil 2:10-11.⁵² Crucial for the present discussion, both passages in Romans are closely followed by a reference to the "faith/fidelity" (*pistis*) expected among all human beings as a consequence:

We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith/fidelity (*hypakoē pisteōs*; CEB: faithful obedience) among all the nations for the sake of his name. (1:5)
 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in rendering submissive trust (*en tō pisteuein*), so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (15:13)

Read in light of prevailing conventions in Paul's world, *pistis* and *pisteuein* here can only be understood in the sense of "submitting in trust, and giving fidelity and allegiance" to the only true ruler of the universe.

Paul is not referring merely to “belief” and “believing,” at least in the way that they have come to be understood. As Giorgi Agamben observes: “In Paul, *pistis* retains something of the *editio*, the unconditional self abandon [in loyalty] to the power of another, which obliges the receiver [in loyalty] as well.”⁵³

In the closing doxology of Romans, Paul reiterates God’s ultimate mission “to all nations. . .to bring about the obedience of faith/fidelity” (16:26). And other texts confirm that “obedience” (*hypakoē*) and “faith/fidelity” (*pistis*) are closely correlated in Paul’s rhetoric, even synonymous.⁵⁴ At the opening of Romans Paul congratulates the “beloved in Rome” that their “*pistis* (faith/fidelity) is proclaimed in all the world” (1:8), while at the end he eulogizes that their “obedience is known to all” (16:19). Similarly, in Romans 10:14-16 Paul uses the verb “to obey” synonymously with the verb *pisteuein* (“to trust, be faithful, believe”). And thus he can describe his own mission simply as geared toward bringing about “the obedience of the nations,” without the added element of faith/fidelity (*pistis*) that one might normally expect (15:18). Similarly, Philippians 2:12 makes reference to the readers’ “obedience” in a way that parallels their “faith-fidelity” (1:27, 29).

***PISTIS* AS CONFESSION: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, VOW OF LOYALTY**

In two key texts in Romans, “submitting in loyalty, trusting, believing” (*pisteuein*) is closely aligned with “swearing allegiance” (*homologein*), though misleadingly translated as “confessing.”⁵⁵ The Greek verb *homologein* regularly refers to “expressing openly one’s allegiance to a proposition or person,” and is closely tied to oath formulations.⁵⁶ In explaining how “the word of *pistis* (fidelity, conviction, trust) that we are proclaiming” is “near to you, both in your mouth and in your heart” (10:8, quoting Deut 30:14), Paul continues:

if you openly swear (*homologein*) with your mouth, “Lord Jesus [or, Jesus is Lord],”

and come to loyal conviction (*pisteuein*) in your heart, that “God raised him from the dead,”

you will be saved-delivered.

For it is with the heart that it [the word] is received in loyal conviction (*pisteuesthai*) toward the goal of justice-righteousness, and it is with the mouth that it is sworn in allegiance (*homologeisthai*) toward the goal of salvation-deliverance.

As the Scripture says, “Everyone who comes to loyal confidence (*pisteuein*) in him will never be put to shame.” (Isa 52:7)

In the correlation of fidelity with an oath formulation, *pisteuein* here clearly has convictional content, but also relational fidelity, including submission in trust. Significantly, the convictional aspect is not simply a verbal declaration that focuses merely on predicative, denotative content, as in assenting to dogma. Rather, as Agamben shows, the text assumes the harmony of mouth and heart, and illustrates “the performative experience of veridiction,” by precisely overcoming the duality of “recognizing as true” and “having confidence.”⁵⁷

“Swearing allegiance” and “coming to loyal conviction/confidence” are also correlated in the resounding conclusion of Romans 15:7-13, a text already noted above. In a litany of Scriptural promises pertaining to the nations (Gentiles), Paul includes: (a) a vow by David, here the Messianic prefigure,⁵⁸ “I will openly swear allegiance (*exomologeisthai*) to you [God] among the nations, and I will sing songs [in homage] to your name” (Ps 18:49); (b) the final line of the song of Moses, “let the nations exult, with his people [Israel]” (Deut 32:43); (c) a psalm of universal acclamation, “panegyryze the Lord, all the nations, publicly applaud him, all the peoples” (Ps 117:1, implicitly on the basis of God’s “mercy” and “fidelity,” 117:2); and finally (d) an oracle of Paul’s favourite prophet Isaiah, “the root of Jesse [Messiah] will come, and he will arise⁵⁹ to rule the nations, in him the nations will hope” (Isa 11:10). Modern English translations make these oracles sound like merely “religious” liturgies. But Paul is referring to songs and praises of homage and loyalty. And the theo-political dimension of the liturgy is clear, not unlike the way Caesar Augustus celebrated his inclusion in the hymnic liturgies of Rome alongside hymns to the gods, receiving honours “equal to the gods.”⁶⁰ Immediately following this litany, then, in a way that partly recapitulates their contents, Paul offers his concluding wish: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in rendering submissive trust (*en tō pisteuein*), so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (15:13).

Paul uses the language of “swearing allegiance” theo-politically also in Phil 2:10-11 (quoting Isa 45:3), where the outcome similarly entails an act of universal submission in recognition of Messiah’s supremacy. In effect, at the imminent *parousia* of Messiah we have the final *deditio in fidem* of all the nations.⁶¹ And in the one place where Paul uses the noun *homologia* (oath, pledge, agreement, confession), Paul highlights its appropriate obedience, literally its “submission” (*hypotagē*, 2 Cor 9:13).⁶²

PISTIS AS ALLEGIANCE: BELIEVERS AS LOYALISTS

In the letters to the persecuted assemblies of Thessalonica and Philippi, *pistis* takes on the particular sense of “allegiance” and “loyalty” to Messiah, specifically to Messiah’s alternative “kingdom” (1 Thessalonians) or “city-state” (Philippians). Both letters are addressed to communities experiencing some form of harassment from those allied with Roman rule, and both present the claims of Lord Jesus as directly counter to that of Caesar. In 1 Thessalonians, *pistis* is framed especially in relation to God’s alternative kingdom: “you who show loyal trust” (usually “you believers”) are described as those “who walk worthily of the God who called you into his own kingdom and [its] honour/glory” (2:10-12). Their exemplary “decision of loyalty [pledge] toward God” (*pistis pros ton theon*) is demonstrated in their commitment “to turn to (*pros*) the living God from idols, to offer slave service (*douleuein*) to the living and true God, and to await his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus the one who delivers us from the coming wrath” (1:8-10). *Pistis* is specified as a “pledge” that involves a complete turn around (*epistrephein*) of life and loyalty, and oriented to the coming victory of God’s son over all earthly and heavenly powers (as in Phil 3:20-21; Rom 15:7-13; 1 Cor 15:24-28).

As a form of *deditio in fidem*, then, the new loyalty will assure the necessary protection so as to avoid any future divine wrath against injustice and non-loyalty. The reality of Christ’s future victory is highlighted later in the letter (4:13-5:11), with imagery of (angelic) military intervention (4:16), the overthrow of the present world system (using a thinly veiled reference to Roman rule; 5:3),⁶³ and the participation of all “loyalists” in the final, cosmic battle, using only their virtues, not any weapons of warfare (5:5-8). Paul’s overriding concern in the letter is for their continued “loyalty” (3:2-10; esp. 3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10), which he hopes to “establish, ground firmly” (*stērizēin*; 3:2), summarized in the exhortation to “stand firm (*stēkein*) in the Lord” (3:8).⁶⁴ Given the persistent usage of *pistis* in the sense of loyalty, the participle *pisteuontes* should be more properly rendered “loyalists” than simply “believers” (1:7; 2:10, 13). There is certainly a cognitive, convictional aspect to *pistis* in 1 Thessalonians (e.g. 1:5-6; 4:14), but this is oriented precisely to ground the readers’ abiding loyalty in the context of competing claims for loyalty (to Caesar), not to establish precise doctrinal norms in themselves.

Pistis has a similar shape in Philippians,⁶⁵ where the context and hortatory aims are similar to those of 1 Thessalonians. Whereas loyalty in 1 Thessalonians is presented in terms of God’s alternative kingdom, in Philippians loyalty is specified in terms of “being a citizen body and

practicing citizenship (*politeuesthai*) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Messiah” (1:27), and the struggle associated with that commitment, a struggle “for the loyalty (*pistis*) of the gospel.” Loyalty is framed in terms of Christ’s alternative city-state and citizenship, and (again) in recognition of the world deliverer who will ultimately bring the whole universe under his dominion (2:9-11; 3:20-21). Here too, then, Paul’s main hope is that his readers will “stand firm in the Lord” (1:27; 4:1).⁶⁶

***PISTIS* AS CONVICTION: AROUSED BY PROCLAMATION AND HEARING, AND THE DEMONSTRATION OF POWER**

Paul also uses the *pistis* word group when referring to “conviction” or “belief” more specifically, in reference for instance to (variable, personal) ethical “conviction,”⁶⁷ variable personal “faith,”⁶⁸ or “giving credence” to an oral report.⁶⁹ The convictional dimension or content aspect of the gospel itself and its “loyalty” can also be emphasized in a number of texts.⁷⁰ *Pistis* and *pisteuein* are accordingly closely associated with preaching, hearing, understanding, or seeing, and with the word, or the gospel.⁷¹ Indeed, *pistis* can be used as a synonym of the gospel itself, as the content and goal of preaching (Gal 1:23). “Coming to loyal faith” (*pisteuein*, “believing”) is thus described as “receiving the word that was heard” (1 Thess 2:13), and is closely tied to “becoming confident/ convinced” or “becoming persuaded” (*peithesthai*).

Paul stresses, however, that this preaching or hearing is not simply something that convinces at the cognitive level, but something that challenges at a deeper level of power. The “word” itself is described as “doing its work in/among you” (1 Thess 2:13), even as the gospel “comes not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit, and in full assurance” (1 Thess 1:5). Paul’s preaching has been accomplished, toward the goal of loyalty and obedience, “by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:18-20). But in Corinth, where Paul confronts the arrogance of learned rhetoric and wisdom, Paul further undermines the exclusive primacy of reasoned argument. Paul asserts: “God was well-pleased to save those who come to loyal conviction (*pisteuontes*, “the believers”) through the foolishness of the message (*kerygma*)” (1 Cor 1:21), and again:

My rhetoric (argument; Gk. *logos*) and my message (*kerygma*) were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your loyal conviction (*pistis*) should not be founded on human wisdom but on God’s power. (1 Cor 2:4-6)⁷²

I will come to you soon. . .and I will ascertain not the argument/rhetoric (*logos*) of the arrogant ones, but their power. For the kingdom of God is not founded on argument/rhetoric (*logos*) but on power. (1 Cor 4:19-20)

Later, Paul comes at the issues through another path, arguing that he is indeed engaged in a warfare for the hearts and minds (loyalty) of people. But he reminds his Corinthian readers that it is precisely not worldly weapons of the flesh that he wields, but the weaponry of the “powerful forces of God” that can undermine even the loftiest of mental and ideological fortresses lined up against the knowledge of God (2 Cor 10:3-6). Accordingly, the gospel itself is the greatest power that now exists for the ultimate goal of salvation, made available to and for “all those who come to loyal faith” (Rom 1:16-17), a movement that will one day embrace all humanity (Rom 11:25-32).

The importance of the cognitive dimension to *pistis* and *pisteuein* (in the sense of conviction in response to persuasion) does not mean that *pistis* is ultimately or first about assenting to doctrines. Quite the contrary, persuasion has as its aim loyal trust, faithful obedience.⁷³ Paul uses *pistis* in a way that directly counters both the theo-political claims of Rome and the intellectual claims of the educated elite. On the one hand, the gospel of Jesus Christ is about engendering “loyalty” by means of the word of the cross (signifying both its content, and its apparent weakness; 1 Cor 1-2). The loyalty that ensures deliverance is prompted, in other words, not by the standard means of military conquest or superior military display (the weapons of the flesh), but through the word of persuasion and preaching.⁷⁴ The apparently weak, and yet ironically powerful “word of the cross” will finally gain supremacy throughout the universe. It is the gospel itself, then, that holds ultimate power for salvation-deliverance (Rom 1:16-17).⁷⁵ And on the other hand, the deliverance that is assured through loyalty comes indeed through an act of power, though an alternative form of power, the power made manifest in the cross-resurrection of Messiah, not merely through intellectual persuasion narrowly understood. *Pistis* as “submission in loyalty” is not achieved at the level of mental persuasion alone, the level of “the word” alone. Rather, just as loyalty in the earthly arena (of the present age) is typically stimulated especially in response to worldly demonstrations of power (as seen pre-eminently in the Roman empire), so also loyalty in the realm of God’s spiritual-cosmic regime (appropriate to the age to come, now reserved in heaven), requires a demonstration of power, the kind of power operating in the very resurrection of Jesus (Phil 2:9-11; 3:20-21). We see once again how the logic of *pistis* as *deditio in fidem*

operates within Paul's thinking. In sum: loyalty is stimulated, on the one hand, through the word of persuasion over against worldly forms of persuasion that require recourse to fleshly power, and on the other hand, it is enlivened through divine power itself, a power that will ultimately prevail over all worldly power, both intellectual and political.

***PISTIS* AS CARDINAL SOCIAL VIRTUE**

Finally, *pistis* is used by Paul to signify the social virtue of faithfulness (fidelity, loyalty, trustworthiness) in human relationships. This is most clearly evident in the fruit of the Spirit, where *pistis* follows "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness," and precedes "gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:23). "Against these," Paul says, "there is no Law," and they presumably express, or conform to, "the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2; cf. 1 Cor 9:21; Rom 13:8-10). In many other texts, Paul's language is ambiguous enough that it is not entirely clear whether a given reference to *pistis* indicates fidelity toward God or Christ, or fidelity toward one's neighbors or partners. Indeed, in one text, Paul refers precisely to "love and fidelity *both* toward the Lord Jesus *and* toward all the saints" (Phlm 5).⁷⁶ Here Paul does not make a sharp distinction between fidelity oriented to God/Christ and fidelity to fellow human beings; these are of one piece. This suggests that in quite a number of other cases, when Paul refers to *pistis*, he speaks of fidelity in general, understanding it to be both toward God/Christ and toward humans. This is likely the case, for instance, when he congratulates the Thessalonians for their "practice of fidelity (*pistis*), work of love, and persistence of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 1:3).⁷⁷ Similarly, the virtues of fidelity and love worn as a breastplate (1 Thess 5:8), appear oriented both to God and to fellow humans (especially in light of the litany of recommended virtues that immediately follow this image; 5:11-23), even as based foundationally on the God who is "faithful" (5:24).

Using a similar ambiguity, Paul often refers to salvation or justification "on the basis of *pistis*" (*ek pisteōs*) in general, not specifying (even contextually) whether the emphasis is on God's fidelity, Messiah's fidelity, or the response of human fidelity.⁷⁸ Presumably, the answer is, all of the above.

CONCLUSION

In current English usage, "belief" and "believe" primarily denote conviction and considering something to be true, and only secondarily trust or confidence in someone or something. Entirely absent from the

connotation of these words is the notion of loyalty and fidelity. Paul's *pistis* and *pisteuein*, on the other hand, have *primarily* to do with loyalty and fidelity, but are inclusive of trust, confidence, and conviction. In those places where modern translations refer to "believers," Paul actually refers to "those who show or come to loyal conviction and confidence." In the absence of a better one-word equivalent, the term "loyalists" would be the best approximation.

Indeed, Paul's expression of *pistis* and *pisteuein* is often framed over against competing claims to one's loyalty, including the competing theological claims of the Roman empire. Paul's rhetoric of loyalty to God's Messiah alone posed a powerful, even if sometimes implicit challenge, to the imperial claims on the allegiance of individuals.⁷⁹

One of the advantages of the notion of "loyalty" is that it puts *pistis* into the broader sphere of one's social and political loyalties, not simply relegating it to the domain of private religious beliefs. Christians, in other words, are "Christ-loyalists," "Jesus-loyalists." Having become accustomed to life in a liberal-democratic state, we have been seduced by the notion of the autonomy and self-determination of the individual, and have forgotten that states as "sovereign" entities are still keenly interested in the loyalty (allegiance) of its citizens. Meanwhile, we live as if the obligations of "loyalty" to country, and convictions of "belief" in God operate in separate domains of life. But in the context of various stress points in global dynamics, liberal-democratic states are making an increasing claim on our allegiance, our loyalty. Paul's perspective invites us to discern continually what will be the limits of loyalty offered to any other polity other than that of God's inclusive reign of justice, peace, and the renewal of creation.

The notion of "loyalty" also has the potential to cut between the extremes of those who self-identify as "followers of Jesus," and those who stress "believing in Jesus," or between those who claim to base their Christian faith on the Gospels over against those who claim the supposedly "doctrinal texts" of Paul.⁸⁰ On the one hand, loyal trust stresses the performative sense of *pistis* as "loyal conviction," not the merely denotative sense as assent to doctrine. On the other hand, loyalty conjures up an even more fundamental (and still flexible) posture than that of "following," and it implies an honourific dimension, or exalted status of the one to whom loyalty is given, something not always apparent among those who seek simply to "follow" an ethical model bereft of a foundational claim on us.

In this new post-Christendom context, having reclaimed Paul's conceptuality of *pistis*, we may need to self-identify more regularly as "Jesus-loyalists," instead of as "Christians" or "believers."

22. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," 173.

23. I have now come to understand 3:2 as a coded attack on Roman society and authority, and 3:3 as a positive appropriation and clarification of the central symbol of Judaic citizenship. See Chapter 10, and my forthcoming *Philippians* (Believers Church Bible Commentary; Herald Press).

24. For a discussion of Nietzsche's view of Paul and Rome, see Taubes, *Political Theology*, 76-88.

25. J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 135-81, 303-49.

Chapter 2

1. For *pisteuontes* as a general label, without other modifiers, see 1 Cor 1:21; 14:22; 1 Thess 1:7; 2:10, 13; the term *apistoi* (those without faith/loyalty) is used as a general term for non-adherents, 1 Cor 6:6; 7:12-15; 10:27; 14:22-24; 2 Cor 4:4.

2. See LSJ. Note also the corresponding opposite terms: *apistia* (infidelity, unbelief), *apistos* (unfaithful, non-trusting), *apisteō* (be unfaithful, disobey, disbelieve, be non-trusting).

3. Émile Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. E. Palmer (Coral Gables: University of Florida Press, 1973), 95-99, as discussed in Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. P. Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 113-15. For what follows, see also LSJ, s.v. "*pistis*"; R. Bultmann, "*pisteuō*," TDNT, VI, 174-228; O. Michel, "Faith, Persuade, Belief, Unbelief," NIDNTT, I, 593-606.

4. For this reciprocal aspect to *pistis*, see Philo's comment (*On the Life of Abraham* 273) on the mutual *pistis* expressed between God and Abraham, making them equals of a sort ("as one friend with another"); below, n. 29.

5. Agamben, *Time That Remains*, 114-15.

6. Thus, in Paul's texts, we find "*pistis tou theou*" (fidelity of God), "*pistos theos*" (faithful God, or God is faithful); but God is not the subject of *pisteuein* (to trust, be loyal). God does, however, "entrust" (using the passive voice *pisteuesthai*) things or responsibilities to humans.

7. Theognis (sixth century BCE), *Fragment* 1.1135. *Pistis* was one of the good "*daimona*" that escaped from Pandora's box. For *pistis* as Latin *fides*, Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5.43-45; Statius, *Thebaid* 11.98-100.

8. Agamben, *Time That Remains*, 115-19.

9. Agamben, *Time That Remains*, 115, referencing Salvatore Calderone, *Pistis-Fides: Ricerche di storia e diritto internazionale nell'antichità* (Messina: Università degli Studi), 38-41. On *fides* in Roman political culture, see also N. Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 29, 38.

10. See below for *pistis* toward the deliverer who will save from wrath (1 Thess 1:8-10).

11. *Res Gestae* 32, likening these nations to a king "not conquered in war, but seeking our friendship by means of his own children as pledges." Cf. *Res Gestae*

25, referring to the various nations that “voluntarily took an oath of allegiance to me.” Available at http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Augustus/Res_Gestae/home.html, accessed May 29, 2012.

12. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 38.

13. *Res Gestae* 34: Augustus promotes his *arētē* (*virtutis*, valour), *epieikeia* (*clementiae*, clemency), *dikaiosynē* (*iustitiae*, justice-righteousness), *eusebia* (*pietatis*, piety).

14. J. Rufus Fears, “The Cult of Virtues and Roman Imperial Ideology,” *ANRW* 17.2: 827-948.

15. See Naphtali Lewis and Meyer Reinhold, *Roman Civilization, Sourcebook II: The Empire* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955), 35, 85-88, 108, 232; Barbara Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2000), chapter 7, “Loyalty: The Role of the Emperor,” 125-146; Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

16. To avoid an anachronism and conceptual misapplication, it is better to translate first-century *ioudaioi* as “Judaens.” The term references an ethnicity, national polity, geographical homeland, and “religious” practices or beliefs. See Shaye Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 15-16.

17. Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.616, oath of fidelity to Vespasian; using the expression “fidelity/allegiance toward” (*pistis pros*), see *The Life* 26, 30, 34, 39, 43, 46, 61, 84, 87, 93, 104, 123, 160, 167, 293, 333, 346, 349, 370.

18. *The Life* 30, 370: *proteinein pistin kai dexian*, to offer loyalty and the right hand (in allegiance/pledge). Similarly, Paul refers to “giving the right hand” as a pledge of partnership (Gal 2:9).

19. *The Life* 79; cf. *Jewish War* 6.356: hostages for a country’s “fidelity” to the Romans.

20. *The Life* 22, where he advises the revolutionaries to hold back, “to gain the trust (or “credit” in the eyes of their possible victors) of resorting to arms only in justifiable self-defense.”

21. The thing deposited (trusted) is expressed in the accusative; and the institution in which the deposit is placed is rendered in the dative: thus, to trust something (accusative) into something (dative).

22. D. Flusser, “Afterword,” in M. Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, trans. N. P. Goldhawk (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1973), 211. Cited in Agamben, *Time That Remains*, 113.

23. Plato, *Republic* 505e, 511d, 533e-534a, 601e.

24. E.g. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.1.3, 9, 11, 12; 1.2.2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 19.

25. E.g. Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.72; 2:18.

26. In the Hebrew Bible, the notion of a suzerain being loyal and proving trust is not expressed, as in Greek, with the verb *mn* (stand firm; trust, believe, usually translated with *pisteuein* in the LXX), but with an adjectival descriptor, such as *emet/emunah* (fidelity) or *khesed* (loyalty).

27. John E. Toews, *Romans* (Scottsdale/Waterloo: Herald Press, 2004), 375.

28. E.g. 4 Maccabees 15:24; 16:22; 17:2; Wisdom of Solomon 1:2; 2:1; 3:1, 9.

29. E.g., Philo, *On the Life of Abraham* 268-76, referring to “the faith (*pistis*) of Abraham in the living God, which faith is the queen of all the virtues. . . .” (270). And God, admiring this man for his faith (*pistis*) in him, giving him a pledge (*pistis*) in return, namely, a confirmation by an oath (*borkos*) of the gifts which he had promised him; no longer conversing with him as God might with man, but as one friend with another. For he says, “By myself have I sworn,” (Gen 15:6) by him that is whose word is an oath (*borkos*), in order that Abraham’s mind may be established still more firmly and immovably than before (273; Yonge translation).

30. At the least, this is the first recorded use of the term.

31. Josephus must have known about Paul, though he nowhere refers to him. Josephus refers to Jesus, the group of “Christians” that still exist in his day, and James the Just, the leader of the Jerusalem church until his execution by the High Priest in the year 62 CE; *Jewish Antiquities* 18.63-64; 20.197-203.

32. Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 96.

33. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 101.

34. For instance, hardly any English translations break with the traditional rendering of Romans 1:16, following Wycliffe (1382-1395), Tyndale (1525-1526), and the KJV (1611), as “all who believe.” The RSV and CEV have “those who have faith,” and the Message has “those who trust in him.”

35. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 96-98. Also emphasizing the dimension of loyalty-fidelity is D. Campbell, “The Meaning of ‘Faith’ in Paul,” in *The Quest for Paul’s Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 178-207.

36. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 101-2, 120, 125.

37. In these passages we find 76 of the 159 occurrences of the words *pisteuein*, *pistis*, *pistos*, *apistein*, *apistia*, and *apistos*.

38. Toews, “Faith in Romans,” in *Romans*, 375-79.

39. For *pisteuein*: 1 Cor 1:21; 3:5; 13:7; 15:2, 11; 2 Cor 4:13. For *pistis*: 1 Cor 2:5; 13:2, 13, 14; 2 Cor 5:7; 8:7.

40. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 15, 20, 25-53, 151-52, 158.

41. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God’s Righteousness* (Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

42. The counterpart to Paul’s defense of God’s faithfulness, then, is an analysis of the infidelity (for the present moment) of the Judean community for whom salvation in Messiah was first intended (using various words, 10:16, 21; 11:20, 23, 30-32; 15:31; for Judaic priority: 1:17; 2:9; 3:1). Using *apeithō*, 10:21; 11:30, 32; *apeitheia* [non-compliance], 11:32, 32; *apeisthai*, 15:32; also *apistia*, 3:3; 11:20, 23; not obeying, not believing, 10:16.

43. Both “truth” (*alētheia*) and “fidelity” (*pistis*) are regular translations of the Hebrew *’emet/’emunah* in the LXX.

44. The phrase “all those who show loyal trust” (*pantes pisteuontes*) for humans in general is unique to Romans, and is argumentatively polemical (Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:11; 10:4, 11).

45. Of the remaining four, two refer to apostles as “faithful” stewards of what was entrusted to them (1 Cor 4:2; 7:25), one refers to Timothy as “faithful” co-worker (1 Cor 4:17), and the last refers to “faithful” Abraham as prototype (Gal 3:9).

46. In Roman theo-political propaganda, Caesar is also agent of deliverance, and model of virtue.

47. Finally, the 2011 Common English Bible has rendered Paul's meaning "faithfully," breaking with a hundred years of tradition, and elevating to the text what the NRSV and TNIV had kept in footnotes. In a few crucial texts, where English translations have commonly translated "faith in Christ," what Paul meant was something like the "fidelity/faithfulness of Christ."

48. It is unclear as to whether this refers to God's or Christ's fidelity, or both.

49. Toews, *Romans*, 54-62.

50. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 107-20.

51. Toews, *Romans*, 39-41; R. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 107-8.

52. For the obvious theo-political overtones of this encomium, see John E. Toews, "The Politics of Confession," *Direction* 38/1 (2009): 5-16; and my forthcoming *Philippians* (Believers Church Bible Commentary; Herald Press).

53. Agamben, *Time That Remains*, 116.

54. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 45.

55. The word "confession" has lost its original setting in the context of oath-taking, becoming narrowly tied (1) to its creedal context, stressing the dogmatic, not the loyal performative, and (2) to the practice of penance.

56. The quote is from L&N, s.v. *homologeō*; cf. LSJ; Agamben, *Time That Remains*, 113-19, 126-37; Giorgio Agamben, *The Sacrament of Language: An Archaeology of the Oath*, trans. A. Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 25, 58.

57. Agamben, *Time That Remains*, 124-37; *Sacrament of Language*, 25, 58.

58. Toews, *Romans*, 342.

59. Using a participle that is cognate to the Greek word "resurrection." The allusion here could be to Messiah's resurrection (cf. 1:3-4), but more likely to his future realization of lordship over the cosmos (1 Cor 15:24-28; Phil 2:9-11; 3:20-21; Rom 11:25).

60. *Res Gestae* 4; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 51.20.

61. For a further discussion of this act of submission, see Chapter 7.

62. In Romans 14:11, the same word (and Isaianic quotation) is applied to the appearance of even "convinced loyalists" to give personal account, at the final realization of Messiah's reign.

63. H. Koester, "Imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. R. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 158-166.

64. Cf. "stand firm in *pistis* (loyalty-faith)," Rom 11:20; 1 Cor 16:13; 2 Cor 1:24; similarly 2 Cor 13:5, "examine whether you are in *pistis*." For "standing firm in the Lord," Phil 1:27; 4:1.

65. *pisteuein*: Phil 1:29; *pistis*: Phil 1:25, 27; 2:17.

66. For this verb, also Rom 14:4; Gal 5:1.

67. Rom 14:1-23. *pisteuein*, 14:2; *pistis*, Rom 14:1, 22, 23. The opposite is internal "self-criticism" and "doubt" (14:22-23). These texts should not be translated with "faith," but with "conviction": e.g. "whatever does not proceed from personal conviction is sin" (14:23).

Citizenship

68. Rom 12:3, 6; 1 Cor 12:9; 13:2, “faith to move mountains”; 2 Cor 8:7.

69. See 1 Cor 11:18.

70. Regarding Abraham, see Rom 4:18-20. Further, “believing, being confident, being convinced” (*pisteuein*): that we shall live with him (Rom 6:8); that God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9); what we have heard (Rom 10:19); that Jesus died and was raised” (1 Thess 4:14); the word [of Christ’s death and resurrection] (1 Cor 15:2). Cf. 2 Cor 4:23: “Having the same spirit of conviction (*pistis*), according to what is written, ‘I believed, therefore I spoke’, we also believe, therefore also we speak, knowing that He who raised Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.” (1 Cor 4:13-15).

71. E.g. Rom 10:8-21; 15:21; Gal 1:23; 3:2, 5; 1 Cor 1:21; 3:5; 15:1-2, 11; 1 Thess 1:5-8; 2:10-13; Phil 1:27.

72. On the subordination of both “knowledge” and even of *pistis* to love, see 1 Cor 13:8-13; for the elevation of *pistis* over “seeing,” see 2 Cor 5:7: for we walk by *pistis*, not by seeing.

73. See 1 Cor 16:13; 2 Cor 1:24; 13:5.

74. Similarly, Revelation pictures the sword of Christ as coming out of Messiah’s mouth; Rev 1:16; 2:12; 19:15, 21.

75. On how issues of “power” are overlooked by conventional rhetorical studies of Paul, see Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 18.

76. It is unclear whether the clarifying clause, “both toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,” is meant to modify only fidelity, or love and fidelity in combination as a hendiadys (“two-in-one”).

77. Cf. Gal 5:6, “For in Messiah Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is something significant, but fidelity (*pistis*) working through love.”

78. See Rom 1:17; 3:30; 4:16; 5:1; 9:30, 32; 10:6; Gal 3:8, 9, 11, 12, 24; 5:5. Similarly *epi pisteōs*, “upon fidelity,” Phil 3:9; *dia pisteōs*, “through fidelity,” Rom 3:25, 30, 31; Gal 3:14; simply the dative *pistei*, “in/by fidelity,” Rom 3:28.

79. See esp. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 4, 12.

80. See, for instance, the discussion in Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Scottsdale/Waterloo: Herald Press, 2010), 51-70. Privileging the Gospels (presumably the Synoptic Gospel), he proposes that Anabaptists should perhaps call themselves “followers of Jesus,” and not Christians, although he stresses that the Anabaptist Network of the UK is committed to “following Jesus as well as worshipping him.”

Chapter 3

1. The meaning is either “in (the sphere/modality of) the Spirit,” or “in (the power of) the Spirit.”

2. For helpful discussions of various aspects of early Christian worship, see D. E. Aune, “Worship, Early Christian,” *ABD* VI, 973-89; R. Banks, “Gifts and Ministry,” chapter 9 in *Paul’s Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Cultural Setting*, rev. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); A. A. Bichsel, “Hymns, Early Christian,” in *ABD*, III, 350-51; G. Borchert, *Worship in the New Testament: Divine Mystery and Human Response* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008); P. F. Bradshaw,