THE PISTIS CHRISTOU FORMULATION IN PAUL

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On seven occasions the apostle Paul uses the term πίστις followed by the genitive form of "Jesus" or a Christological title ("Christ" or "Son of God"), or both. In Rom. iii 26 the word in genitive form after πίστις is Ιησοῦ; in Gal. ii 16b and Phil. iii 9 it is Χριστοῦ; in Rom. iii 22 and Gal. iii 22 it is Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ 1); in Gal. ii 16a it is Χριστοῦ Ιησοῦ; and in Gal. ii 20 it is τοῦ ισός τοῦ θεοῦ. Besides these seven occurrences, Paul has πίστις followed by τοῦ εὐαγγελίου at Phil. i 27 2).

This Pauline formulation provides a problem for both translation and exegesis. At the most elementary level it can be translated "faith of Christ" ("faith of Jesus," etc.). But this translation is precisely what raises a problem. Is "faith of Christ" to be taken as "faith in Christ"—the faith of the believer which is "of Christ"? Or is it to be taken as "Christ's faith"—the faith, faithfulness, or fidelity of Christ to the Father's will, which has made redemption possible? It is our intention here to review debate on this issue and then move on to suggest a solution.

1. The Formulation in the Exegetical Tradition and Current Debate

The weight of the exegetical tradition is to treat the πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation in terms of the alternatives of Greek syntax. The question which has been posed is whether these instances are

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1) There is a text critical problem whether Rom. iii 22 is to be read as 'Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ or simply Χριστοῦ. The external evidence favors the inclusion of 'Ιησοῦ. Nevertheless, the results of our study would not be affected one way or the other by inclusion or exclusion.

2) We shall consider in our discussion only the undisputed letters of Paul (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon). Nevertheless, the use of πίστις followed by the genitive appears elsewhere in the larger Pauline corpus. The terms in genitive are τῆς ἐνεργίας τοῦ θεοῦ (Col. ii 12); αὐτοῦ (= Χριστοῦ Ιησοῦ, Eph. iii 11); and ἀληθείας (2 Thes. ii 13). Outside the Pauline corpus, cf. Mark xi 22 (θεοῦ); Acts iii 16 (τοῦ ονόματος αὐτοῦ); xix 20 Bezae (τοῦ θεοῦ); Rev. xiv 12 ('Ιησοῦ).
to be understood as Paul's making use of the "objective genitive" ("faith in Christ") or the "subjective genitive" ("Christ's faith"). Here the handbooks on grammar speak with one voice, opting for the former 3). Nevertheless, caveats are issued. Robertson adds that Paul "transcends all rules about subjective and objective" 4). Blass and Debrunner write that the distinction between objective and subjective cannot be pressed too far; the genitive implies a relationship "not exactly defined" 5). Turner writes that in regard to Paul's rich usage "the attempt to define too narrowly the various types of genitive is vain" 6), although he thinks finally that the genitive governed by πίστις is objective 7). And Moulton asserts that the matter "is entirely one of exegesis, not of grammar" 8).

Not all commentaries on Romans, Galatians and Philippians take up the question (subjective or objective genitive?) explicitly. Many do, however, and the majority conclude that Paul makes use of the objective genitive 9), although at least two dissent in


4) A. T. Robertson, Grammar, 501.

5) F. Blass and A. Debrunner, Grammar, 90.


7) N. Turner, Insights, 110.
