

**Pistis as Relational Way of Life in Galatians**

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**Abstract**  
Using the Septuagint as an example, this article supports Teresa Morgan’s recent contention that πίστις is essentially relational. On the basis of the prevalence of relationality, the article offers a critique of readings of Galatians that privilege other concepts, such as Benjamin Schliesser’s emphasis on spatiality. The study then argues that, instead of Morgan’s ‘pistis is a relationship’, it would be more accurate and exegetically useful to bring out the action-reference of πίστις with an expression such as ‘πίστις is a relational way of life’. The article will argue that the most likely relational reading of πίστις in Galatians is one in which πίστις primarily represents trust, loyalty and/or trustworthiness in the relationship between the current Christ and people. This raises questions over the focus of πίστις on past events in the work of scholars such as Richard Hays and John Barclay. If πίστις Χριστοῦ is to be read as involving an ‘objective genitive’ it probably denotes people’s trust in and loyalty to Christ and also possibly to God through Christ. If it is to be read as a ‘subjective genitive’, it would probably primarily denote Christ’s current reliability and loyalty in his relationship to people, and conceivably also to God. Various directions of πίστις between people, Christ and God are possible in Galatians but the one most often clearly evidenced is between people and Christ.

**Keywords**  
Pistis, faith, trust, faithfulness, Galatians, Paul

Having mapped the development of the usage of πίστις through early Jewish literature in Greek, culminating with the focus of πίστις on the Law, seen in texts
such as Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon and 4 Maccabees, Dieter Lührmann concludes,

The horizon of understanding of the early Christian expression of ‘faith’ lies … in the internal discourse of the Jewish tradition, not in confrontation with the pagan context … It does not draw on a general religious-phenomenological category, nor on a general anthropological phenomenon. Instead, the faith which has its ground in the salvation brought through Jesus is proclaimed over against the Judaism determined by Torah.¹

At the level of detail, Teresa Morgan agrees with some of this, seeing the development of πίστις language in Galatians as being affected by the context of Paul’s struggle with a Torah-observant group who linked πίστις with the Law in a way similar to the Jewish texts noted above.² However, in more systemic terms, she would see it as very wide of the mark. For Morgan, the NT texts, and even the Jewish texts cited by Lührmann, are drawing on broader Greek usage.

Teresa Morgan’s ground-breaking study on πίστις and fides throws considerable ancient-historical weight and expertise behind the scholarly approach that begins interpretation of Jewish or Christian texts in Greek by giving extensive consideration to the linguistic and cultural context evidenced by other Greek (and, in this case, also Latin) texts. For a term such as πίστις, the starting point is the very large set of overall Greek usage, and the cultural practices encoded with that term, rather than the much smaller set in, say, one or more New Testament texts. Usage in the NT text is then seen as an instance of the wider Greek-speaking culture; there can be development and innovation in the NT usage, but it is developed from, and recognizable by people in, the Greek cultural base (Morgan 2015: 4). So, in contrast with Lührmann’s conclusion, this approach would say that, whether or not there was an Auseinandersetzung (‘confrontation’) with the Greek context, the usage of πίστις in Paul’s letters should be seen as culturally comprehensible within that context, irrespective of whether Paul brings the term in because of his law-enthusiastic opponents. To put this in terms of my own general approach to the NT: Paul’s πίστις language needed to make

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¹ ‘Der Verstehenshorizont für das frühchristliche Reden von »Glaube« liegt … in der internen Sprache der jüdischen Tradition, nicht in der Auseinandersetzung mit der heidnischen Umwelt … Es wird nicht auf eine allgemeine religionsphänomenologische Kategorie zurückgegriffen auch nicht auf ein allgemeines anthropologisches Phänomen, sondern gegenüber dem von der Tora bestimmten Judentum wird der Glaube verkündigt, der seinen Grund hat in dem durch Jesus gebrachten Heil’ (Lührmann 1973: 38). All translations of texts are mine, unless otherwise stated.

² A review article of Teresa Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See here Morgan 2015: 273, 281.
sense to the range of types of people in the Galatian house churches and, in fact, the discourse of his opponents needed to make sense to those people too (Oakes 2015: 11-16).

There is notoriously a log-jam in the study of Paul’s idea of πίστις. The log-jam coalesces around πίστις Χριστοῦ but involves a great deal of other theological matter piled up behind the phrase. While many scholars think a consensus is building for the meaning ‘faithfulness of Christ’ (e.g., Kugler 2016: 245), many others see this translation as an aberration scarcely worth discussing, with ‘faith in Christ’ clearly to be preferred (e.g., Schnelle 2003: 523). Several ‘third way’ scholars see neither position as entirely tenable. This article argues that Teresa Morgan’s conclusions on the relationality of πίστις offer a compelling way forward towards understanding the term, although I will suggest some modifications to the expression of her conclusions. The study will then seek to use the idea of relationality to ease the πίστις Χριστοῦ scholarly log-jam by refocusing discussion onto issues other than the ‘subjective’/‘objective’ genitive debate. Instead, as well as relationality, we will look at the action-reference of πίστις and the time-frame of πίστις. In each of these there is, we shall see, a valuable element of consensus among scholars even though these categories do pose sharp challenges to various scholarly expressions of position. The article will focus on Galatians, which has been a key locus of this debate since Richard Hays’s, The Faith of Jesus Christ (Hays 2002). A more complete account of πίστις in Paul’s thought would clearly also need to include Romans and other texts. It would also need to tackle more detailed grammatical issues and more issues about the argumentative and thematic structure of Galatians. Many of these were approached in my commentary on the letter (Oakes 2015: esp. 87-90).

The study will conclude, for Galatians:

- that πίστις is relational;
- that πίστις has an action reference that makes it something like ‘relational way of life’;
- that the time frame of πίστις is present: that πίστις primarily refers to a current relationship rather than to a past event;
- that most clearly attributable uses of πίστις probably include the idea of people’s trust in Christ (and/or God through Christ);
- that πίστις probably refers primarily to a way of life of current trust, loyalty and/or reliability between Christ and people (and God), whether the focus is on the attitudes and actions of Christ (in the ‘subjective’ view) or of people (in the ‘objective’ view) or both.

3. E.g., Schliesser 2016: 278; Sprinkle 2009: 182-84.
Galatians 5.22 and 3.6, 9 conceptually fit into the ideas above, but πίστις is among people and between Abraham and God, respectively. In Abraham’s case, his πίστις is a current relationship in his own time-frame, even though it is a past event as narrated in Genesis and Galatians.

I. The Relationality of πίστις in the Septuagint and Other Greek Sources

Πίστις has a considerable range of meanings. It can be an attribute of objects, ideas or sentient beings. In Galatians it is always an attribute of beings. Even in 1.23, which speaks of proclaiming or destroying τὴν πίστιν, the πίστις is probably that of people. Even if it referred to a message or a system of beliefs, the reason it would be called πίστις is probably because it was communally believed, rather than because the ideas were something such as a ‘proof’. In any case, the rest of the texts in Galatians refer to the πίστις of people or of Christ (viewed as a person) or of God.

Morgan demonstrates that, across a range of Graeco-Roman Gentile and Jewish corpora of sources, πίστις is a relational term. She previews her conclusion: ‘We shall find pistis, fides and their cognates constantly treated as simultaneously cognitive and affective, active and relational’ (2015: 19). Pushing this further, Morgan concludes that πίστις, ‘is, first and foremost, neither a body of beliefs nor a function of the heart or mind, but a relationship which creates community’ (2015: 14). More specifically,

[P]istis, in linguistic terms, is an action nominal, encompassing both active and passive meanings of its cognate verb (such that, for instance, both ‘trust’ and ‘trustworthiness’, ‘credit’ and ‘credibility’ are always implicated in it) ... too ... the multivalency of pistis/fides language is constantly exploited wherever it is used ... (2015: 273)

If we take the Septuagint, probably the mostly sharply relevant corpus, and focus specifically on the noun, πίστις (which is the lexical form mainly at issue in study of Galatians), then we can see that the argument for a focus on relationality is strong.

There are about 53 occurrences of πίστις in the singular. Of these, about 35 are clearly as an attribute of people or their actions. At least three others are of God. Several others could be of people or God, or may present πίστις as an abstract virtue. One text refers to something written (Neh. 10.1) and a few refer to offices (e.g., 1 Chron. 9.26).

4. On our preferred, relational reading, see below.
In 1 Maccabees Demetrius writes to the Judaeans urging them συντηρῆσαι πρὸς ἡμᾶς πίστιν (1 Macc. 10.27), ‘to keep πίστις towards us’. Πίστις here appears to carry mainly the sense of ‘loyalty’. A more homely example (although with a very self-interested edge) is Sir. 22.23

πίστιν κτῆσαι ἐν πτωχείᾳ μετὰ τοῦ πλησίου, ἵνα ἐν τοῖς ἁγαθoῖς αὐτοῦ ὁμοίως πλησθῇς: ἐν καιρῷ θλίψεως διάμενε αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐν τῇ κληρονομίᾳ αὐτοῦ συγκληρονομήσῃς.

Gain the πίστις of your neighbor in his poverty, so that you may rejoice with him in his prosperity. Stand by him in time of distress, so that you may share with him in his inheritance.⁵

The parallel between lines 1 and 3 indicates how the relationship is being built. In ten other texts where the sense of πίστις is reasonably clear, the degree of clarity comes from the πίστις being indicated as relational towards other people.⁶ Many of the 20 or so other texts that definitely refer to people’s πίστις are probably also relational towards other people, but that is not so clearly signalled.

The relationship can also be with God. The mother in 4 Maccabees showed fortitude διὰ τὴν πρὸς θεὸν πίστιν (4 Macc. 15.24; also 17.2) and can be imagined by the writer as having reminded her sons of Daniel and his companions, encouraging her sons to have τὴν αὐτὴν πίστιν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν (4 Macc. 16.22). This must carry some sense of ‘the same trust in God’ as the Danielic group showed in the face of lions and fire, but also appears to involve loyalty to God, since Daniel and the others are brought into the argument because they ὑπέμειναν διὰ τὸν θεόν (16.21), ‘endured on account of God’. In any case, the key point for our discussion is that πίστις is being used to denote attitudes and actions in relationship with God. Wisdom of Solomon 3.14 commends πίστις which is evidently towards the Lord. Again, several of the other πίστις texts could also indicate relationship to God. Conversely, in several texts it is God who displays πίστις. In Ps. Sol. 8.28, the psalmist says, ἡ πίστις σου μεθ᾿ ἡμῶν, ‘your πίστις is with us’. Also on God’s relationship to people is the promise to Israel in Jer. 39.41 (MT 32.41), φυτεύσω αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ ἐν πίστει καὶ ἐν πάσῃ καρδιᾷ καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ψυχῇ, ‘I shall plant them in this land with πίστις and with all heart and with all soul’. God’s actions ἐν πίστει, commended in Ps. 32.4 (MT 33.4), are probably also in relation to people since the stanza 32.4-5 ends with a reference to the earth and God’s mercies.

⁵ Translation NRSV, adapted.
⁶ People’s loyalty, reliability or trust towards other people: 4 Kgdms (2 Kgs) 12.16; 22.7; 2 Chron. 31.15; 1 Macc. 14.35 (× 2); 3 Macc. 3.3; 5.31, 44; Sir. 27.16; Hos. 2.22.
Morgan’s *histoire des mentalités* approach (2015: 3, 33) means that her study of the Septuagint is not so much a lexical study as a tracing of the cultural story of the πίστις-relationship as it develops across the set of texts, from the dynamic interaction between God and Abraham to the more distanced and static relationship between people and God via the law (2015: 211), characteristic of the texts cited by Lührmann, above. Morgan also carries her story using all forms of the πιστ- word group, showing convincingly the fairly persistent overlaps in conceptual usage. However, all this does somewhat restrict the work’s potential impact on the fraught and highly detailed current debate about πίστις in Galatians, in which the usage of πιστεύω and of πιστός are relatively uncontroversial, but there is sharp disagreement about how πίστις relates to either of them. However, the more limited and detailed brief analysis above shows that drilling down into the evidence can give strong support for a relational reading of πίστις. In the Septuagint, where πίστις is used of people or God, and when the context of use signals how the term is to be understood, it is consistently used of πίστις as an element of relationship. Some texts signal πίστις as predominantly about trust, some as about loyalty, some as about trustworthiness. Many probably combine two or all of these, although Morgan does appear to be over-stating in saying that the multivalency ‘is constantly exploited’ (2015: 273).

A limited caveat is needed here. There are some Greek texts that use πίστις of people with reference to things said or allegedly done, rather than being used of relationship with another being or beings. Dennis Lindsay gives the example from Josephus, *War* 1.485 of the effect of a large number of informers presenting themselves to Herod:

\[ \text{ὡς … εἰς πίστιν ὑπαχθῆναι τῶν λεγομένων καὶ δέος} \]

so … that he was brought to belief in and fear about the things that were being said (1993: 78, my translation).

For Lindsay, such Josephan usage is not pertinent to NT usage of πίστις in what Lindsay calls a ‘religious sense’: he sees such usage in the NT as following the Septuagint and not Josephus. The present article in effect queries Lindsay’s use of his ‘religious’/‘profane’ distinction. However, we can argue that none of the uses in Galatians of πίστις of beings falls into the kind of non-relational category above. The most arguable case would be of Abraham (Gal. 3.6) because, in Gen. 15.6, Abraham’s ἐπίστευσεν may be trust in God’s speech, rather than trust in God per se. However, Paul reads Abraham’s πίστις relationally, as can be seen in

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7. Lindsay 1993: 188-89. A Septuagintal case that could possibly resemble these Josephan ones is 3 Macc. 5.44, if the confidence of the friends and officers of Ptolemy Philopator is in the expected unfolding of events, rather than in him.
the linked characterization of him as πίστος (3.9) and in the link between his πίστις and that of Christian Gentiles (3.7-9).

2. The Relationality of πίστις in Galatians

There would be broad agreement among current Pauline scholars that πίστις is a relational term, even though, in some cases, this raises questions over where the emphasis in the scholar’s approach lies.

Karl Friedrich Ulrichs sees relationship with Christ as crucial to Paul’s concept of πίστις: ‘With πίστις Χριστοῦ Paul seeks to formulate, in justification contexts, the fellowship with Christ that is conceived of in a participatory way’. 8 Zeba Crook draws on comparison with a range of Graeco-Roman and Jewish patronage material to argue that πίστις is prominent in Paul’s thought because the issue of loyalty was a key driver of actions in his world (Crook 2004: e.g., 213). Crook, unlike Ulrichs, reads πίστις Χριστοῦ in ‘subjective genitive’ terms but still does so in relational terms: ‘Christ remained loyal to God despite having to face death’ (Crook 2004: 213-14).

Benjamin Schliesser suggests that, for the genitive in πίστις Χριστοῦ, the category of ‘relational genitive’ (genitivus relationis) should … be considered. It acknowledges both that faith relates to Christ, insofar as it only exists in relation to Christ (‘Faith came with Christ’) and it establishes a relationship with Christ (‘We come to faith’) (2016: 290).

The second of these takes Schliesser beyond just grammatical relationality to actual relationality. This is in line with his view that πίστις for Paul has a ‘social-communal (‘inter-subjective’)’ dimension (2016: 278).

However, there are limits to the prominence that many scholars give to ideas of relationality in their handling of πίστις. For instance, Schliesser’s main stress lies on the ‘apocalyptic-eschatological (‘trans-subjective’)’ dimension of faith: faith as ‘eschatological event’ (2016: 277) and faith viewed in locative terms, as a particular space.

Paul conceives of both πίστις and Χριστός in terms of spheres of influence which, for him, represent the ‘real cosmos’ created by God at the fullness of time (2016: 283).

Christian existence, that is, ‘life in faith’ signifies participation in the ‘newly created faith-place’, in the ‘space of life-giving power’ (Martyn 1997: 259) which was established by God in the sending of his son.9

8. ‘Mit πίστις Χριστοῦ versucht Paulus in Rechtfertigungskontexten die partizipatorisch gedachte Gemeinschaft mit Christus zu formulieren’ (Ulrichs 2007: 251).
9. Schliesser 2016: 286, citing Martyn 1997.
However, if relationship is central to πίστις, then ideas such as ‘spheres of influence’ become only secondary explanations. On the other hand, Schliesser draws attention to what he sees as the cosmological and eschatological characteristics of πίστις in Galatians (2016: 283). He could argue that to make relationship the central issue makes πίστις too small-scale, too individual and consequently too closely linked to the sequence of events in a person’s life, in contrast to the decisive eschatological events described especially in Gal. 3.23–4.5.

Morgan does not attempt an analysis of the above passage. However, her view of πίστις is reasonable in eschatological terms because she sees a novel three-layer πίστις relationship, between people, Christ and God, as having come about, according to Galatians (2015: 272). This works well as something seen to have arrived at the eschatological point of the Christ-event. Whether πίστις needs to be on a cosmic scale to fit the rhetoric of Galatians depends on the extent to which one sees the letter as operating in that way. My commentary takes a relatively sceptical line on that, arguing that in 6.14, the cosmos being crucified ‘to me’ (Paul) is not the same as saying that, objectively, the cosmos was killed, and that even ‘new creation’ of 6.15 might be of people rather than of the world.10 Moreover, even though 6.11-18 is extremely valuable for understanding the setting and aims of the letter, there are limits on how much those verses should determine our reading of phraseology earlier in the letter. The Galatian hearer, encountering the block of πίστις terminology in 2.16-20, appears much more likely to take it relationally rather than cosmologically, given 1.1–2.15 (pace J. Louis Martyn who reads considerable cosmological content in the early part of the letter11). In any case, Morgan could argue that the arrival of a new people–Christ–God relationship was an event on such a scale as to merit cosmological language.

An advantage that Morgan’s prioritizing of a relational sense of πίστις has over Schliesser’s prioritizing of a locative sense lies in her fundamental methodological principle, set out in her introductory critique of Bultmann. She writes that, in his radical understanding of πίστις, he violates a basic principle of cultural historiography. New communities forming themselves within an existing culture do not typically take language in common use in the world around them and immediately assign to it radical new meanings. New meanings may, and often do, evolve, but evolution takes time. This is all the more likely to be the case where the new community is a missionary one. One does not communicate effectively with potential converts by using language in a way which

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10. Oakes 2015: 190, cf. Hubbard 2002: 133-232.
11. Martyn 1997: 98-99, 152. See also de Boer 2011: 75, 81-82. For my responses, see Oakes 2015: 45, 56-57.
they will not understand. In its earliest years, therefore, we should not expect the meaning of Christian *pistis* (or *fides*) language to be wholly *sui generis*. We should expect those who use it to understand it within the range of meanings which are in play in the world around them, and our study of it should be equally culturally embedded (2015: 4).

Galatian hearers, who have seen πίστις language on epitaphs and heard it in stories and general conversation, are much more likely to think of it in terms of trust and/or loyalty in a relationship than in terms of something such as Schliesser’s ‘sphere of influence’. A further argument that we can add from the text of Galatians is that even though the ἐν Χριστῷ language of 2.17, etc., is, as Schliesser argues, more likely to be quasi-spatial than instrumental, the complementary ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός language of 2.20 should engender caution about whether spatial concepts, even in ἐν Χριστῷ language, predominate over relational ones.

Returning to Ulrichs: he launches an argument against any purely ‘subjective genitive’ view that loses the vital element of relationship between Christ and people:

A soteriology conceptualised by exponents of the ‘subjective genitive’ for πίστις Χριστοῦ runs the risk of a christological deficit, insofar as Christ is indeed thought of as the bringer of faith, but becomes unnecessary, as soon as we have attained his ‘faith’. For Paul, on the contrary, faith is thought of as a continuous in-Christ-relationship.

For Paul, whether the relationship of Christ is with people or God or both, it continues and is of continuing significance. We will return to the time reference of πίστις Χριστοῦ below.

There is, paradoxically, a question-mark that the relationality of πίστις raises over Ulrichs’s strongly relational reading. The quote with which we began the section sees Paul as using πίστις Χριστοῦ to relate together two of three soteriological models that Ulrichs considers Paul to be using, justification and participation, the third being the gift of spirit. He sees ‘in the linguistic unit πίστις Χριστοῦ an integrating factor between the various soteriological models’. In his summary he writes that with the use of it ‘Paul achieves a certain integration’ of these models (2007: 254). Paul might indeed be achieving something like this by

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12. ‘Eine von Vertretern des *genitivus subiectivus* bei πίστις Χριστοῦ entworfene Soteriologie birgt die Gefahr eines christologischen Defizits, insofar Christus zwar als Bringer des Glaubens gedacht wird, der aber entbehrlich wird, sobald wir seinen „Glauben“ erreicht haben. Bei Paulus dagegen ist Glaube als eine kontinuierliche ἐν-Χριστῶ-Beziehung gedacht’ (Ulrichs 2007: 250).

13. Ulrichs 2007: 248. The English phraseology is from his summary, p. 254.

14. ‘[I]m Syntagma πίστις Χριστοῦ ein integrierendes Moment zwischen den verschiedenen soteriologischen Modellen’ (Ulrichs 2007: 251).
the way in which he combines πίστις Χριστοῦ with other terms. However, to say that the expression itself is how this is achieved is probably to overload it and to distract from the relational nature that Ulrichs rightly sees as central. The expression itself refers to the mode of action in the relationship: to some combination of trust, loyalty and trustworthiness. It is the combination of πίστις Χριστοῦ with other terms that conveys soteriology.

3. The Action-Reference of πίστις in Galatians

Morgan repeatedly states that πίστις is a relationship. However, πίστις was not a term that denoted the state of being related, either in general or in a particular way (although Sir. 22.23 comes quite close). In another mode, Morgan writes that πίστις (when attributed to people) ‘is always … a virtue’ (2015: 76). This does almost always appear to be true of the noun. In the Septuagint the only exception is of the friends and officers of King Ptolemy Philopator, whose πίστις in 3 Macc. 5.44 is misplaced confidence. The adjective πιστός is also generally a virtue, but the verb πιστεύω is, in quite a number of cases, used of credulous belief (e.g., Prov. 14.15) or in instructions not to believe (e.g., Sir. 19.15).

We might even be safe in saying that πίστις was the fundamental virtue of relationship. Many ancient relationships lacked, for instance, love, but were viewed as proper. However, the participants in a proper relationship were expected to have πίστις. They were expected to act within the relationship faithfully (in the general sense, rather than the technical sense of monogamy, although that was often involved). Πίστις as trust, loyalty and/or trustworthiness was a virtue expected in every proper relationship. We can go further and say that πίστις was not only the basic virtue in a relationship, it was also an essential mechanism of relationship. It meant engagement in the deferral essential to relationship. A relationship is interaction over time. That is only possible with a mechanism for deferring exchanges across time: trust and reliability provide this.

Although πίστις is a virtue, texts that describe someone as having πίστις are actually describing something observable: they are effectively describing an action or series of actions. In her epitaph, Ammia is πιστή. The thought is effectively of a series of actions (or inaction such as chastity), a way of life. This brings us back round to Morgan’s original definition because, in this sense, she is right that πίστις is a relationship. It is a relationship in the sense that it refers to an event or series of events that are the processes of the functioning of a

15. Morgan 2015: e.g., 260, 282.
16. Morgan 2015: 20-21, also discusses ‘deferral’ but this is a Derridean sense of the term and is not the same as above.
17. Peek 1955: 64 nr 243; cited by Morgan 2015: 48 n. 52.
relationship. As Crook writes, ‘loyalty was an action’. It ‘could be accompanied by feelings’ but it was ‘measured … externally’ (2004: 244).

The point of this discussion is to argue for a slight but significant distinction from Morgan’s expression ‘pistis is a relationship’. In the sense that πίστις is indeed a relationship, it is the mode of action in a relationship. Over a period of time it is a relational way of life: a way of life of trust, loyalty and/or reliability. Morgan does not in the least question the idea that πίστις has an action-reference. The fact that it has such a reference, rather than being purely cognitive, is actually one of the main thrusts of her study: ‘We shall find pistis, fides, and their cognates constantly treated as simultaneously cognitive and affective, active and relational’ (Morgan 2015: 19).

However, moving from Morgan’s ‘πίστις is a relationship’ to ‘πίστις is a relational way of life’, making the action reference explicit, moves us closer to the epigraphic and literary evidence. The texts praise the person’s loyalty, etc., rather than the relationship itself. This move also builds further on the advances that Morgan’s relational approach provides in making sense of the term’s use in Galatians.

For Paul, πίστις is the relational way of life characteristic of the early house churches. It is the way of life observable in the relationship between Christ and his people. Sam Williams writes, ‘In the Jesus-movement, the way of living in relationship with the God who justifies is pistis’ (1997: 65). Schliesser approvingly quotes Francis Watson that faith includes ‘not just “belief” or “trust” in a narrow sense, but the acceptance of a new way of life, with all the beliefs, ethical norms and social reorientation which this entails’.18 Douglas Campbell sees faith, for Paul, as ‘comprehensive, ethical, and ecclesial’ (2014: 39).

For Paul, πίστις Χριστοῦ is the new way of living that has appeared in the world with the arrival of Christ (cf. Oakes 2015: 126). It is characterized by people’s trust in and loyalty to Christ. Paul may also be thinking of it as characterized by continuing acts of Christ done in loyalty to people: providing strength and inspiration, working miracles (Gal. 3.5), interceding with God on their behalf (cf. Rom. 8.34). Paul may also draw the picture wider and see God providing these things through Christ and the action of the Spirit.

An instance of how ‘relational way of life’ can work as a reading of πίστις can be seen if we consider Gal. 1.23. This is a text that causes considerable difficulty to many interpreters, who struggle to find a meaning of ἡ πίστις which fits with other uses of πίστις in the letter and which represents something that could be ‘proclaimed’ or ‘destroyed’.

Paul writes about the assemblies in Judaea:

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18. Watson 1986: 78. Quoted in Schliesser 2007: 409.
μόνον δὲ ἀκούοντες ἦσαν ὅτι ὁ διώκων ἡμᾶς ποτε νῦν εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν ἣν ποτε ἐπόρθει.

Only, they were hearing, ‘The person who was previously persecuting us is now proclaiming the πίστις he was previously destroying’.

Martin de Boer offers two linked alternatives for ἡ πίστις here. Comparison with 1.11 suggests “the faith” appears to be a virtual synonym for “the gospel” (de Boer 2011: 103). A parallel with 1.16 suggests “the faith” in 1.23 may refer to “the faith of the Son of God” (2.20) or “of [Jesus] Christ” (2.16), which would mean that Paul is using the word “faith” in 1.23 as a metonym for the Son of God or Christ, as he does in 3.23-26’ (de Boer 2011: 103).

Morgan argues that interpreting ἡ πίστις in 1.23 as ‘trust’, ‘belief’, ‘argument’ or ‘proof’ makes little sense (2015: 266). She also argues that taking it as a synonym for τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, as she sees Michael Wolter as doing, as de Boer more-or-less actually does, and as Preston Sprinkle definitely does (2009: 177-78), represents an implausibly radical development from Graeco-Roman usage. Morgan is correct that this is quite a distance from common Greek usage of πίστις, although she may slightly overstate her case, given the use of expressions such as Josephus’s praise of Moses as discoverer ‘of the most correct faith about God’, τῆς δικαιοτάτης περὶ θεοῦ πίστεως.20

Morgan particularly sees the occurrence of ἐπόρθει as supporting the relevance here of her relational reading of pistis: ‘Porthein would be an odd word to use of disputing a viewpoint or the content of a proclamation, but it could be used of destroying a relationship’ (2015: 266). Morgan translates 1.23 (with her bracketed expanding paraphrase) as ‘the one who was persecuting us is now proclaiming the relationship of trust [between God and human beings] which he once tried to destroy’.21 For Morgan, what the text does here is that it ‘reifies … the trust which the faithful practise towards God … into “the relationship of trust” or “the bond of trust” between God, Christ, and the faithful’ (2015: 267). Both of de Boer’s options do work well as something proclaimed, but neither seems to directly fit with the danger of being destroyed. De Boer’s commentary simply avoids discussing πορθεῖν, as do those of Martyn (1997: 177) and Hays (2002: 217). One could mount a defence by speaking of the gospel or Christ being in some indirect sense ‘destroyed’ through the destruction of Christian communities. However, this would be rather indirect and would only work because of πίστις being somewhat tied back into the faith of Christian communities. Πίστις

19. Morgan 2015: 266 n. 17, citing Wolter 2011: 74 = Wolter 2015: 72-73. But see further on Wolter below.

20. Josephus, Against Apion 2.163, cited by Lindsay 1993: 89, with some further examples.

21. Morgan 2015: 266. Addition in square brackets is by Morgan.
as ‘relational way of life’ works even better as a reading of 1.23 than does Morgan’s ‘relationship’, in terms of fitting with Greek usage, making sense in context and relating well to use of πίστις elsewhere in the letter. In 1.13, it was τὴν ἑκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ (‘the assembly of God’) that Paul ἐπόρθουν. The link that Paul makes to this in 1.23, by his reference to his previous destructive action, suggests that πίστις, in 1.23, is something of a metonym for the house churches of the early Jesus movement. In fact, Wolter makes this very point, using the argument about destruction (2015: 83; and actually only sees πίστις as metonymically linked to the gospel, 2015: 72-73). The parallels to the proclaiming of ‘the gospel’ and God’s son, in 1.11 and 1.16 respectively, do suggest a link between these and the proclaiming of ἡ πίστις in 1.23, a point strengthened by Paul’s message or its reception being characterized as ἀκοὴ πίστεως (‘hearing/message of faith’) in 3.2, 5. Morgan’s argument that 1.23 talks of proclaiming or destroying ‘the relationship of trust [between God and human beings]’ fits all this reasonably well. However, there is a better fit if πίστις in 1.23 is something like ‘way of life of trust and loyalty between people and Christ’. This would both be easily metonymic for ‘the assembly of God’ and could also work metonymically for proclaiming the gospel or proclaiming Christ, in that a key element of Paul’s practice in doing so was offering and calling people to the life of the house churches, as a way of life of loyalty to Christ (in which Christ also showed loyalty to them). Calling the message or its reception ἀκοὴ πίστεως would fit with this.

On Gal. 2.16, Morgan writes,

Paul uses the language of pistis here … to capture his sense of the doubly reciprocal relationship of Christ with God and humanity, his sense of the place of Christ in the overarching relationship between God and humanity, and his sense of the quality of Christ, his faithfulness, trustworthiness, and trustedness by God and human beings, which makes his saving activity possible. (2015: 272)

This is much more in tune with general Greek usage than is a reading of πίστις Χριστοῦ as purely cognitive belief in Christ. However, again, ‘relational way of life’ is a better fit to the Graeco-Roman evidence than ‘relationship’. Morgan is also drawing in so many directions of relationship (see below) that it makes the sentence conceptually more complex than it was probably meant to be. Paul’s argument reads more compellingly if we focus on one or two aspects of the relational way of life centred on Christ. For instance, ‘knowing that a person is not considered righteous on the basis of works of the Law except through trust in and loyalty to Jesus Christ’ or ‘except through the loyalty of Jesus Christ [to people]’ or ‘except through the life of reciprocal trust and loyalty between Jesus Christ and people’. Πίστις could mean ‘trust’ or ‘loyalty’ or ‘reliability’ but could also hold all of these together. Paul would effectively be saying that he and Peter know that righteousness for Jews comes only through joining the Jesus-
movement, adopting the life of loyalty to Christ and/or of depending on his loyalty to them.

To fit into Paul’s argument in a way that is in line with normal Greek usage, πίστις in Gal. 2.16 needs to be conveying something about trust, loyalty, faithfulness or reliability, or some combination of these. Even though Paul is indeed precisely arguing, in effect, that being considered righteous depends on relationship between people and Christ, or between Christ and God, or some combination of these, the πίστις part of this is not the relationship itself but the trust, loyalty or reliability characteristic of that relationship.

4. ἐν Χριστῷ and the Time-Frame of πίστις in Galatians

Again, there is broad consensus on the principle of linking πίστις to the present. There is wide agreement that δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, in 2.16, is more-or-less synonymous with δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ in 2.17. There is also agreement that all this involves relationship in the present. For instance, John Barclay writes,

As the following verses make clear, ‘to be considered righteous by faith in Christ’ (2:16) is ‘to be considered righteous in Christ’ (2:17): faith is the evidence that one’s life is incorporated into the saving, transformative dynamic of the Christ-event, which is nothing less than the death of the self (2:19) and the emergence of a new life more properly described as ‘Christ in me’ (2:20) … ‘faith in Christ’ is not just an alternative orientation or a different pattern of life: it is the mode of a new life, suspended from an event that has created what is humanly impossible, life out of death (2:19-20).

However, as with Schliesser and relationality, John Barclay and other writers such as Richard Hays, while very much acknowledging the present reality of πίστις in Galatians, in fact put what is probably a heavier weight on the past as the main focus of πίστις. Barclay paraphrases 2.16a:

But we know (through conviction and experience) that a person (whether Gentile or Jew) is not considered of worth (‘righteous’) by God through Torah-observance (‘living Jewishly’), but through faith in (what God has done in) Christ.

For Barclay, πίστις Χριστοῦ is primarily faith in the gift inherent in the past Christ-event. Hays too sees 2.16 as primarily looking backwards. He ‘understands pístis Iēsou Christou to mean “the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” as manifested in his self-sacrificial death’ (Hays 2002: 240).

22. As noted above, for Morgan it is all three levels at once (2015: 272).
23. Barclay 2015: 378-79, his emphasis.
24. Barclay 2015: 371, his parentheses.
Each writer is fully committed to seeing these past events as creating a present situation, about which Paul writes. However, for each of them, πίστις is primarily oriented towards a past event. They do this to differing degrees: for Barclay, πίστις is current faith in the effects of a past event; for Hays, πίστις is primarily a past event of faithfulness: Christ’s death on the cross. In fact, I now realize that I too gave πίστις an orientation to the past. My commentary on 2.16 includes ‘Like him [sc. Hays], I would construe 2.16 precisely as speaking about that relationship of dependence on the cross (cf. 2.16 with 2.21…’) (Oakes 2015: 88).

Morgan’s work makes such an orientation harder to maintain. Her emphasis on the present relationality of πίστις reinforces the effect of the parallel with ἐν Χριστῷ which drives πίστις in 2.16 firmly towards being an expression of current relationship. Morgan herself probably remoulds subtly Hays’s ‘subjective genitive’ approach, as well as then seeking to draw in ‘objective genitive’ readings in a manner inspired by Morna Hooker. Morgan begins by describing the ‘subjective’ reading, characterizing it as ‘the faithfulness of Christ in his self-giving’ (2015: 270). This appears to be a pointing backwards to the cross. However, by the time Morgan is summing up, her focus is on her thematic idea of πίστις as essentially a current relationship:

Christ is … at the centre of a nexus of divine-human pistis. His pistis is simultaneously his faithfulness or trustworthiness towards both God and humanity, and his trustedness by both God and humanity.

Common Greek usage and the parallel to ἐν Χριστῷ ought to push us towards seeing πίστις, in 2.16 and elsewhere in Galatians, as probably being an expression of current trust, loyalty and/or reliability, all of these being towards another being or beings. If it is Christ’s faithfulness to God or to people, it is probably primarily current faithfulness. If it is people’s trust in and/or loyalty to Christ, it is primarily expression of a relationship to the current Christ rather than trust in a past event. Galatians 2.20 does then turn towards the past event of the cross: Paul lives ἐν πίστει ‘which is of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me’. However, the πίστις in which Paul lives is the life in a current relationship with the same Christ who also currently lives ἐν Paul. The Christ of 2.20 is the present Christ, even though his love is attested by past events. Πίστις Χριστοῦ primarily expresses current relationship and is only secondarily an orientation toward a past event.

Πίστις as something currently in operation fits with its regular presentation in Galatians as a factor in current life: δικαιοῦται ... διὰ πίστεως (2.16); ἐν πίστει ζῶ (2.20); οἱ ἐκ πίστεως ... εἰσίν (3.7); ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῦνται

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25. Morgan 2015: 273, citing Hooker 1990: ch. 14. Now see also Hooker 2016.
26. Morgan 2015: 272. See also longer Morgan quote on this, above.
(3.9); ἐκ πίστεως ἢσσεται (3.11, ongoing); ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως οὐκέτι ... ἐσμεν (3.25; arrived and is now here, as a continuing entity); ἔστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως (3.26); πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ... ἀπεκδεχόμεθα (5.5); πίστις ... ἐνεργουμένη (5.6); τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως (6.10). Galatians 5.6 is particularly compelling evidence of currently operative πίστις. Galatians 6.10 is very suggestive of a community characterized by the way of life in current relationship with Christ: the way of life of trust and loyalty directed towards, and possibly also implied to be emanating from, him.27

5. Probable Relationship(s)

The quotes from Morgan, above, see πίστις Χριστοῦ in Gal. 2.16 as being oriented in six directions: God to Christ and back, Christ to people and back, God to people and back through Christ’s mediation. All these are directions in which πίστις could be oriented. We are not bound by historic theological fears that ascribing πίστις to Christ would compromise his high status. Morgan also demonstrates that both directions of divine–human πίστις are quite possible in Greek discourse, a point we have seen above in the Septuagint evidence. The question is, what is the probability of any or all of the six directions being represented in any given text in Galatians?

Many scholars have engaged this issue by use of grammatical arguments or by appeal to usage in Christian texts from late antiquity. Readers will be split on the cogency of the various arguments. Here we will focus on the extent to which some of the texts in Galatians signal the presence or absence of one or more of Morgan’s six directions of relationship.

In 1.23, the destructibility of πίστις implies that human πίστις is at least part of what is implied. The parallel with the destruction of τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ (1.13) somewhat favours the πίστις of 1.23 as being towards God. God is certainly involved in 2.7. God exercises trust towards Paul and Peter in handing them responsibilities for the gospel. In 2.16, Christ is linked to πίστις three times. At least the central one refers to human πίστις towards him, εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν. The πίστις Χριστοῦ references must also somehow involve πίστις towards him, or exercised by him, even if, as Wolter and others argue, the genitive is to be taken as a ‘genitive of quality’ (Wolter 2015: 76). In 2.20, Paul lives ἐν πίστει, which is τῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. As Schliesser argues, this is primarily locative (2016: 287). This implies involvement of Paul’s πίστις towards Christ, or his towards Paul, or both, especially given its immediate proximity to Paul asserting that Christ lives ἐν ἐμοί.

27. Cf. Morgan 2015: 267, on Gal. 6.10.
It is not obvious which relationship is involved in the ἀκοὴ πίστεως of 3.2, 5. However, the link to the giving of the Spirit (3.2) and the working of miracles (3.5) could suggest that these provisions are acts of πίστις by God (or possibly Christ) towards people. In 3.6, the ἑπίστευσεν is that of a person, Abraham, towards God. The genetic link made between him in doing this and the Gentiles who are ἐκ πίστεως (3.7, 8, 9) strongly suggests that the πίστις in those verses is theirs, presumably (although not certainly, given the similarity to 2.16) towards God, as Abraham’s was; 3.9 returns to Abraham being πιστὸς, no doubt again towards God.

In 3.11, the person in the Hab. 2.4 citation either is righteous on the basis of πίστις or lives on that basis. Usage of δῆλον ὅτι (and its compound equivalent δῆλονοτι) makes it now look highly probable that Gal. 3.11 should be read as ‘Because no one is considered righteous before God by means of law, it is clear that “the righteous one will live on the basis of trust”’ or “the one who is righteous on the basis of trust will live”. In commentating, I expressed a preference for the former, on the grounds of more common Greek word order. However, I now suspect I was wrong. Galatians 3.11 begins by effectively citing Gal. 2.16c, in which Paul reads Ps. 143.2 (142.2 LXX) as excluding the possibility of righteousness coming from works of law for ‘all flesh’. Galatians 3.11 then contrasts a ‘no one’ with the figure in Hab. 2.4. ‘No one’ can be considered righteous ‘by means of law’, so Hab. 2.4 must be correct in saying that a person who is righteous is ‘righteous on the basis of πίστις’. In any case, whichever term in the Hab. 2.4 citation is linked by Paul to the πίστις, that person appears to be contrasted to the οὐδεὶς of 3.11a. All this means that the πίστις of 3.11 probably includes that of a person towards Christ (following the link with 2.16) and possibly God (from the Habakkuk citation). If 2.16 also involves reciprocal πίστις of Christ (and possibly God) to people, that could also be involved here too. The πίστις in Gal. 3.14 is probably the same as in 3.7-9.

The five occurrences of πίστις, and one of πιστεύω, in Gal. 3.22-26, take us into the eschatological issues. In 3.22, the ‘promise’ is given to the πιστεύουσιν in connection with πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The implication is that these are not ‘believers’ in general but people whose πίστις is towards Christ or, possibly, towards God through Christ. The πίστις under consideration in 3.23-26 is something that arrives at a certain point of time, undoubtedly a time associated in some way with the arrival of Christ. Again, an implication of this is that the πίστις is specifically πίστις involving Christ: either of people towards him or of

28. Oakes 2015: 110-11, including examples of use of δῆλον ὅτι (e.g., 4 Macc. 2.7) and δῆλονοτι (e.g., Apocryphon of Ezekiel 1.14 AT). See also de Boer 2011: 202-203 and further references there.
29. Cf. Francis Watson’s argument for linking δίκαιος and πίστις in Paul’s Habakkuk citation, although with a different reading of the overall structure of Gal. 3.11: Watson 2009: esp. 159-62.
him towards people and/or God or, conceivably, of a πίστις between people and God that was newly brought about through the arrival of Christ. The passage also makes a range of links back to 2.16 and 3.6-14. In particular, 3.26 reiterates the two formulae in 3.14a, b: ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ... διὰ τῆς πίστεως. This links to the Abrahamic blessing and the Spirit coming to the Gentiles and also reinforces the links between πίστις language and being ἐν Χριστῷ that we saw in 2.16-17. One upshot of the coordination between πίστις language and participation language in 2.16-17, 3.14 and 3.26 is that they must all involve people’s relatedness to Christ.

In Gal. 5.5, the current eager waiting of the house churches is on the basis of πίστις. In 5.6, existence in Christ centres on πίστις δἰ ἀγάπης ἐνεργομένη, πίστις working through love. Both the love and hence the πίστις are probably those of people, with the πίστις presumably towards Christ, expressive of their participation in Christ. The same is probably true also of 5.5, especially since πίστις, both as trust and loyalty, is a characteristic that fits well with the concept of eager waiting. In 5.22, πίστις is presumably among people, given its apparently incidental position in the list of fruit of the Spirit. In the expression τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως (6.10), as discussed above, the reference is probably to the community whose life is characterized by trust in and loyalty to Christ, although it would also be possible for there to be an implication of a community that experienced what were seen as acts of loyalty from the living Christ. The πίστις would undoubtedly also extend to God, and that thought could be implied in the expression.

The πίστις of people towards either Christ or God or both occurs at least very probably in 1.23, 2.20, 3.7, 8, 9, 11, 14 (by link with 3.7-9), 26 (by link with 3.14), 5.5, 6 and 6.10. Πίστις that involves Christ – directed towards him or by him to others – occurs in 2.16, 20, 3.14, 22, 24, 26 and 5.6. The only texts that absolutely exclude reference to certain directions of πίστις are those using the verbal or adjec-
tival form. In 2.7 God (or conceivably Christ) entrusts roles to people. In 2.16 Christian Jews trust in Christ. In 3.6 and 3.9 Abraham exercises πίστις towards God. In 3.22 people believe in Christ (and possibly in God through Christ). Each of these texts draws attention to a single direction of πίστις and not others. In con-
trast, although many of the noun πίστις texts may prioritize certain directions of πίστις, none completely excludes the possibility of others. Morgan’s six-way nexus of relationship between Christ, people and God is possible. However, the πίστις of people towards Christ or God does have the strongest set of attestations in the letter, which suggests that being the most probable element in any mix.

Conclusions

Teresa Morgan’s work on πίστις as relationship leads her to very inclusive con-
clusions: in being relational, πίστις is both cognitive and action-oriented; in Galatians, πίστις, including πίστις Ἑρωτοῦ, relationally encompasses ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ readings. Ironically, opposition to exclusively one-sided
readings of πίστις actually means opposing most scholars currently engaged in the debate. However, there are also many scholars who favour Morna Hooker’s inclusivism in reading πίστις Χριστοῦ and will welcome Morgan’s far more fully worked out inclusivist reading of the expression.

There is a provisionality in the present article in that it considers neither Paul’s other letters nor detailed grammatical or broader thematic factors within Galatians (although many of these are considered in the commentary). However, the concept of relationality does appear to offer a significant way forward in the study of πίστις in Galatians. The present article, in exploring this, argues for a modification of Morgan’s ‘πίστις is a relationship’ to ‘πίστις is a relational way of life’. It also concludes that a relational reading of πίστις has rather more ‘bite’ to it than is seen in Morgan’s reading of Galatians. The general run of Greek evidence suggests that πίστις, whether among people or between people and deities, was seen as way of life in a current relationship between beings that were viewed as currently existing: current trust, current loyalty, current trustworthiness. This reading works well throughout Galatians but calls into question much of the past 40 years of scholarship, on both sides of the Atlantic, on πίστις in this letter.

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