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Book Review: The Faith of Jesus Christ

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Throughout his work Twelftree encourages readers to listen to other voices as we seek to understand the church, but there is barely a whisper from other Lukan scholars in his book. His remarkably thorough treatment of Luke's writings (including a multitude of cross-references in the footnotes, as well as the helpful bibliographies provided for each chapter) would be enhanced by interaction with other scholars, in particular on his less traditional points of interpretation. For example, Twelftree maintains that the expression "breaking of bread" does not refer to the Lord's Supper, though for Witherington, Barrett, Bock, Larkin, Fitzmyer, Schnabel, and Bruce the Lord's Supper is at least included. Another weakness is that Twelftree appears to overstate the evidence along the way. For example, "Luke's key characters are, time and again, not only commanded to perform miracles or signs and wonders, but are described as doing so" (p. 174). Where is the "command" to perform signs and wonders in Acts?

By way of summary, Twelftree's *People of the Spirit* is a practical, extremely thorough study directed to the church. Its chief benefit is that it challenges many assumptions and forces readers to wrestle with significant Lukan issues.

David Gentino and Kevin McWilliams
Columbia International University, Columbia, SC

The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies. Edited by Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009, xix + 350 pp., \$19.95 paper.

Few exegetical debates are more theologically loaded than the recent academic discussion of the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ. Whether the genitive Χριστοῦ is objective, resulting in the translation "faith in Christ," or subjective, resulting in "the faithfulness of Christ," has been discussed from multiple angles in the last twenty years. While much debate has gone into both the grammar and the theological implications of the phrase, until quite recently it was difficult to find a single volume that the student could turn to for a summary of the discussion. That lacuna has been admirably filled by this recent volume edited by Michael Bird and Preston Sprinkle.

At the outset, the editors make it clear that the book does not take any particular slant on the debate. Rather, they want to give a fair hearing to both the translation and theological issues that the phrase raises. The book begins with a foreword from James Dunn, who, while advocating for a certain level of tolerance on both sides, continues to support the objective reading. After an introductory essay from Bird that summarizes what is to come, the first section contains two chapters on the background of the debate. The first is a survey of twentieth-century discussions on πίστις Χριστοῦ by Debbie Hunn. After noting that the phrase was almost exclusively understood as an objective genitive construction until the twentieth century, Hunn provides a helpful survey, noting how theology and exegesis are particularly difficult to separate in this discussion. Following this, Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts discuss the lexical and grammatical issues surrounding πίστις with a genitive modifier. They conclude that, while grammar is not decisive, a careful grammatical analysis favors the objective reading more than most realize.

The second section of the book treats specific Pauline texts that use the phrase. Douglas A. Campbell begins this section with a chapter on Rom 3:22, arguing that a proper interpretation of Rom 1:17 sets up an understanding of faith from Hab 2:4 that inevitably leads to a subjective reading. Next, Barry Matlock argues the opposite case. He contends that Phil 3:9, Rom 3:22, Gal 3:22, and Gal 2:16 support an objective

reading. An attractive part of Matlock's case is an emphasis on the parallel between πίστις Χριστοῦ and ἔργων νόμου in Galatians 2. In the third chapter in this section, Paul Foster considers Phil 3:9 and Eph 3:12, concluding that a cumulative case built on "lexical, grammatical, and exegetical considerations" favors the subjective reading (p. 108). In the final chapter, Richard Bell reaches a different conclusion in his discussion of Philippians and Ephesians. Bell argues that exegetical considerations, coupled with Paul's emphasis on human faith, make the objective reading more likely.

In the third section of this volume, four authors treat the intersection of exegesis, hermeneutics, and theology with respect to πίστις Χριστοῦ. In the first essay, Mark Seifrid presents a case for what he calls a third option, that is, "Christ as the author and source of faith" (p. 129). Seifrid makes an attractive argument for retaining the human belief aspect of the equation without neglecting the necessity of beginning and ending with Christ. Next, Francis Watson, like Campbell, sees Paul's reading of Hab 2:4 in Rom 1:17 as determinative for the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate. For Watson, the phrase "by faith" in Rom 1:17 modifies "righteous" rather than "will live." Therefore, the emphasis is on righteousness through belief. Consequently, unlike Campbell, Watson prefers an objective reading. In the third chapter of this section, Preston Sprinkle argues for another "third option," contending that the phrase is a somewhat-difficult-to-translate reference to the eschatological event that God accomplished through Christ (i.e. the gospel). In the fourth essay here, Ardel Caneday argues for a subjective reading, but he contends that the faithfulness of Christ must be read as an answer to the inability of the Torah. Thus, his argument is in part an attempt to bolster the subjective reading with a new layer of theological support.

The πίστις Χριστοῦ discussion is usually focused on the Pauline epistles, and rightly so. However, the fourth section of this volume is a helpful attempt, if we can borrow G. B. Caird's imagery, to bring some other voices from the "apostolic conference" to this discussion. First, Peter Bolt discusses the contribution of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts. He contends, in large part on the basis of the Isaianic servant image, that a strong theological case can be made for the subjective reading in these books. Next, in his discussion of the Fourth Gospel, Willis Salier also makes a case for the theological concept of Christ's faithfulness. The next chapter contains a third "third option." Bruce Lowe contends that a rhetorical analysis of the key word "glory" in James 2:1 leads to the conclusion that the faith of Christ is a reference to eschatological confidence in the midst of suffering. Finally, David deSilva examines the use of adjectives and nouns in the πίστις word group in Revelation. He concludes, "Revelation never uses the language of πίστις or πιστεύω to speak about believing in Jesus or even trusting in Jesus. . . . Rather, this word group is used primarily to express the value of loyalty, dependability, trustworthiness" (pp. 273–74).

The final section of the book is devoted to historical and theological reflections. First, in a summary discussion of πίστις Χριστοῦ in church history, Mark W. Elliott concludes that the recent emphasis on Jesus' faithfulness is linked to an emphasis on recapturing Jesus' humanity. This section—and the book—concludes with Benjamin Myers' essay on Karl Barth's contribution to the debate. In short, Barth's emphasis was on God's faithfulness revealed in Christ and human faith as participation in Christ's faith.

It is always a challenge to summarize a collection of essays. Given the diverse viewpoints and the volume of data to consider, evaluating this collection is particularly challenging. As noted in the introduction, the book is an ideal source for any student (or scholar for that matter) who wants to gain a better understanding of the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate. While it is certainly not decisive, the observation made by Hunn and others about the *lack* of debate surrounding this issue for so much of church history should probably be given more consideration by advocates of the subjective reading.

On the other hand, advocates of the objective reading—especially those who argue for the lexical or exegetical improbability of the subjective interpretation—should probably pay more attention to the theological arguments behind the subjective reading. Furthermore, some of the rhetoric on both sides of the issue should probably be toned down a bit. For example, Campbell's characterization of the objective view as "anthropocentric" (presumably opposed to the subjective "theocentric" view) probably improperly stacks the deck.

While supporters of both the objective and subjective positions will find much to cheer for in this volume, those who advocate one of several "third options" might also find particular hope in Seifrid's and Sprinkle's essays. Seifrid's interpretation in particular may offer the best of both worlds from a *theological* perspective. With Christ as the source of faith, any anthropocentric notions of the phrase are overturned. Unlike an emphasis solely on the faithfulness of Christ, however, he manages to retain the importance of human faith in the phrase itself. The question of whether it is exegetically supportable, however, is one that I am not yet prepared to answer.

Lexicography, exegesis, theology, and history all contribute to the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate. Even if Porter and Pitts are correct in seeing the grammatical evidence favoring the objective view, this is not finally decisive (as they themselves admit). Other issues could push the debate the other way. With so many contributing factors in the discussion, it is difficult to determine what should be the decisive argument for any interpretation. Moreover, while lines of interpretation can be somewhat blurry, if one were keeping score, the final tally for interpretive points would be seven votes for the subjective, six votes for the objective, and three votes for a "third option." If we add Dunn's vote from the foreword, we find ourselves with an even seven-to-seven tie for the two major options. For these reasons, this book is unlikely to persuade a hardened advocate of either the objective or subjective interpretation to change sides. However, for those who are still wrestling through the issue, several of the exegetical and theological essays might lead to new insights and perhaps even some measure of clarity on this difficult issue. The only problem is, such a result might lead to a whole new generation of scholars who will debate the construction.

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Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters.
By Philip B. Payne. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009, 511 pp., \$29.99 paper.

After thirty-six years of research (pp. 29, 463), NT scholar Philip Payne, founder and president of Linguist's Software, has released his exhaustive study of Paul's writings on women. His goal is to "bring about a consensus on the primary exegetical issues that have divided the church on women's equal status and freedom to minister . . . that one day soon the church with substantial unanimity will affirm that woman and man are not separate in status or privilege from one another in the Lord, but are, indeed, one in Christ" (p. 463). Payne's study is distinguished by his detailed work. He begins with three introductory chapters (pp. 31–76). Chapter 1 surveys the ancient Hellenistic and Judaistic backgrounds. Chapter 2 summarizes Paul's female leaders and colleagues in ministry. Chapter 3 summarizes twelve theological axioms that are the framework for Paul's teachings on men and women. After this three-chapter overview, Payne moves to detailed exegesis of individual passages. Chapter 4 is a microcosm of the whole book