

PISTIS IN ACTS AS BACKGROUND OF PAUL'S FAITH TERMINOLOGY

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The Greek word πίστις used in the absolute state in Galatians 1:23, 3:23-26 and other places (3:2, 5, 7-9, 11-12, 14; 5:5, 6; 6:10) is a *term* or even a *proper name* to refer to God's eschatological economy to save human beings that has now been made up in the coming and redemptive work of Jesus Christ.¹ This economy, holistic in nature, involves God the Father; Christ Jesus, the Son of God; the Holy Spirit; the gospel of Christ and preachers of it; and human beings who hear the gospel and come to believe. In view of Galatians 1:23 it is highly probable that Paul learned his faith terminology, including the name *Pistis*, from his predecessors. In this paper I will inquire into the ways πίστις, πιστεύω and πιστός are used in the Acts of the Apostles, centering on Acts 3:16, a particularly important text in connection with Paul's idiom πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and his use of πίστις in the absolute state.

I. *Peter's Speeches in Acts*

In Galatians 1:23-24 Paul writes with a direct quotation: μόνον δὲ ἀκούοντες ἦσαν ὅτι ὁ διώκων ἡμᾶς ποτε νῦν εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν ἣν ποτε ἐπόρθει, καὶ ἐδόξαζον ἐν ἐμοὶ τὸν θεόν (they only heard it said, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching *the faith* he once tried to destroy," and they glorified God because of me). This use of πίστις in the absolute state (τὴν πίστιν) evidently goes back to the religious vocabulary of "the churches of Judea that are in Christ" (v. 22, ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Ἰουδαίας ταῖς ἐν Χριστῷ). In my view, the Judean churches were using the noun πίστις as a *term* or *proper name* to refer to God's eschatological, holistic economy to save human beings through Jesus Christ.

It is no easy task to trace the line of πίστις tradition from Paul back to his predecessors in the primitive church(es). However, we do have Paul's verbal evidence in Galatians 1:23, which contains a key to our inquiry. We can reasonably associate this interesting use of πίστις with "the churches of Judea." Hence, it must have originated in Jerusalem, not in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26; 15:1-4; Gal 2:11), among the leaders of the Hebrews (Ἑβραῖοι. cf. Act 6:1). Soon, however, it must have been shared by the Hellenists (Ἑλληνισταί. Act 6:1; 9:29; 11:20) in Jerusalem and then in Antioch. Otherwise it would not have come down to Paul.

The first fifteen chapters of Acts contain nine speeches (in the form of addresses, sermons, or reports) delivered by Apostle Peter: (1) 1:16-22 (to his brethren at a house); (2) 2:14-36, 38-39, 40 (to the Jews and proselytes at a house in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost); (3) 3:12-26 (to the Jews at Solomon's Portico in the Jerusalem Temple); (4) 4:8-12 (to the rulers of the people and the elders before the council); (5) 4:19-20 (to the rulers of the people and the elders); (6) 5:29-32 (to the high priest before the council); (7) 10:34-43 (to Cornelius, a proselyte, and his friends at his residence in Caesarea); (8) 11:5-17 (to the apostles and the

¹ Shuji Ota, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: Christ's Faithfulness to Whom?," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Arts and Sciences* 55 (2014) 15-26. Here 18-21.

fellow Jews at Jerusalem); and (9) 15:7-11 (to the apostles, elders, and other people at the Jerusalem Council). Five of the nine (Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7) have the nature of a missionary speech, announcing the fundamental truths of Jesus (crucifixion, resurrection, the Holy Spirit poured out through him, authority and power, etc.) to the people outside the church. These are widely recognized to be based on the Jerusalem *kerygma* going back to the earliest days of the Jerusalem church.² We consider their contents together.

II. *πίστις* of Jesus's Name

Luke relates an impressive healing episode in Acts 3, which is followed by Peter's third speech (3:12-26). Here Peter explains what happened to "a man lame from birth" in terms of *πίστις*. Especially important for our exegesis are these three verses:

3:6 ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου [ἔγειρε καὶ] περιπάτει.
 "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk."

3:12 ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλίται, τί θαυμάζετε ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἢ ἡμῖν τί ἀτενίζετε ὡς ἰδίᾳ δυνάμει ἢ εὐσεβείᾳ πεπονηκόσιν τοῦ περιπατεῖν αὐτόν;
 "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as if (at) ones who by their own power or piety had made him walk?"

3:16 καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ τοῦτον ὃν θεωρεῖτε καὶ οἶδατε, ἐστερέωσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἡ πίστις ἣ δι' αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ τὴν ὀλοκληριαν ταύτην ἀπέναντι πάντων ὑμῶν.
 "And because of the trustworthiness of his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through him (or, it [= his name]) has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you."

Peter, denying outright his and John's own power or piety, emphatically ascribes the cause of the healing to Jesus's name itself. The phrase ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ in 3:16 is traditionally translated "by faith in his name" (RSV), but this interpretation is questionable. First of all, this man does not seem to have had faith in Jesus's name until he was healed (see vv. 3-6). Certainly he "entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God" (3:8-9). His joy and praise may be taken as a sign of "faith," but it occurred only *after* he was healed. It is more logical, therefore, to conclude that he had no faith in Jesus's name at first, just healing followed by his faith³. Therefore, ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ cannot reasonably be translated "by faith in his name" (compare with Mk 5:34, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε). Furthermore, when referring to someone's faith in Jesus the author of Acts uses the preposition εἰς, *not a genitive construction*:

20:21 διαμαρτυρόμενος Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἑλλήσιν τὴν εἰς θεὸν μετάνοιαν καὶ πίστιν εἰς τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν.
 "testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus." (In Paul's speech addressed to Ephesian presbyters)

² C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), Chapter 1.

³ In Acts 3:16 no human faith is thought as the precondition of healing, just as the Holy Spirit was poured out without any faith on the side of human beings (2:4, 17-18, 33).

- 24:24 ὁ Φήλιξ ... μετεπέμψατο τὸν Παῦλον καὶ ἤκουσεν αὐτοῦ περὶ τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν πίστεως.
Felix ... sent for Paul and heard him speak concerning *faith in Christ Jesus*. (In Luke's narration)
- 26:18 τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτοῦς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ κληρὸν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις *πίστει τῇ εἰς ἐμέ*.
'that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified *by faith in me*.' (In Jesus's words quoted by Paul)

It is evident from a comparison of these texts with Acts 3:16 that Luke used the two wordings quite deliberately and differently. The Greek phraseology in the opening part of Acts 3:16a might have been affected by its Aramaic original Luke used as his source, but no such material is known to us anyway. Torrey's conjecture (הַשֵּׁם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ)⁴ is of no help, because he was convinced that the *πίστις* in Luke's Greek means "faith." Whatever Aramaic word lay behind, we have to accept and interpret the Greek text as it is.

The "name of Jesus" is considered to be a metonym of Jesus Christ that embraces all that belongs to him: his identity, authority and power, and working at the right hand of God (including his messiahship, resurrection from the dead, pouring-out of the Holy Spirit, provision of human agents and missionaries, healing, exorcism, miracles, and salvation above all). This phrase is not characteristically Lucan, because τὸ ὄνομά μου ("my name") to refer to Jesus himself is found in all of the four canonical Gospels. We should maintain, therefore, that ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ was probably picked up by Luke from his source going back to the primitive church in Jerusalem. Comparisons with other texts in Acts that are connected with Peter and that refer to the "name of Jesus" are informative (see also 2:38; 9:14, 15-16, 21).

- 4:7 ἐν ποίᾳ δυνάμει ἢ ἐν ποίῳ ὀνόματι ἐποιήσατε τοῦτο ὑμεῖς;
"By what *power* or by what *name* did you do this?"
- 4:10 ὅτι ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε, ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐν τούτῳ οὗτος παρέστηκεν ἐνώπιον ὑμῶν ὑγιής.
"that *by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *by it* (= his name) this man is standing before you well."
- 4:12 καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἢ σωτηρία, οὐδὲ γὰρ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἕτερον ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν τὸ δεδομένον ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐν ᾧ δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς.
"And *salvation* is in no one else, for there is *no other name* under heaven given among people by which we must be *saved*."
- 4:30 ἐν τῷ τὴν χειρᾶ [σου] ἐκτείνειν σε εἰς ἴασιν καὶ σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα γίνεσθαι διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ ἁγίου παιδός σου Ἰησοῦ.
"while *you stretch out* your hand for healing, and for signs and wonders to occur, *through the name of your holy servant Jesus*."
- 10:43 τούτῳ πάντες οἱ προφῆται μαρτυροῦσιν ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν λαβεῖν διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ πάντα τὸν πιστεύοντα εἰς αὐτόν.
"Of *him* (= Jesus) all the prophets bear witness that everyone *who believes in him* receives *forgiveness of sins through his name*."

⁴ C. C. Torrey, *The Composition and Date of Acts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916) 16.

The “name of Jesus” is of course not identical to “Jesus,” which is a proper name. However, the juxtaposition of “him” and “his name” in Acts 3:16, 4:12, and 10:43 suggests that the “name of Jesus” refers to Jesus himself in his identity, power and working (healing, salvation, and forgiveness of sins in these case). As a metonym it functions as a *quasiproper name* in these texts. If this observation is correct, the genitive case τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ in 3:16 can be taken subjectively and τῇ πίστει preceding it in the sense of “trustworthiness,” “truthfulness” or “faithfulness.” In short, πίστις τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ in Acts 3:16 means that *Jesus’s name is trustworthy, truthful, and even faithful for human beings*. This sense of πίστις corresponds to the usual lexical meaning of the adjective πιστός, “trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust or faith” (Gingrich), and the construction of πίστις followed by the genitive case of a quasiproper name seems to harmonize well with the results of George Howard’s survey to the Septuagint and the literature of Hellenistic Judaism in general.⁵

Acts 3:16 might have been translated (by Luke or others) from an Aramaic source in some form or other that is unknown to us. That translation, however, would have been done in the “Hellenistic Jewish mentality,” which finds inappropriateness “expressing the object of faith by means of the objective genitive.” In this case, however, πίστις cannot mean “faith” in the sense of believing in, or being faithful to, God. How can one think of Jesus’s name believing in God or being faithful to him? The whole range of this metonym has nothing to do with such an idea. To express it in simpler form, καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει αὐτοῦ, would suffice. Moreover, that Jesus is faithful to God is axiomatic for both Peter and Luke and need not be mentioned (see 2: 27; 3:13-14, 26; 4:27, 30; 13:35-37).

The meaning of this πίστις, that is, “trustworthiness,” “truthfulness” or “faithfulness,” is akin to that of the same word contained in the Pauline idiom πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Gal 2:16a, 16b, 20; 3:22; Rom 3:22, 26; Phil 3:9). As discussed previously, I believe that the genitive case in Paul’s πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation does not so much denote Christ’s own faith or faithfulness to God as *Christ’s faithfulness toward humanity* in the sense of Christ’s being steadfast, truthful, and trustworthy as God’s Christ.⁶ Let me call this “subjective interpretation B” over against the “subjective interpretation A” gaining force among scholars in the English-speaking world. In my view the subjective interpretation B is much superior in exegetic applicability to the interpretation A, though they naturally have much in common. One of the best examples showing such applicability is seen precisely in the interpretation of Acts 3:16. The “awkwardness of this sentence as it stands”⁷ can be thoroughly eliminated by the subjective interpretation B. What is even more important, this interpretation provides a bridge between Paul’s πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation and the πίστις terminology of the primitive churches witnessed in Acts. Thus it gives us a hint to probe into the whole “tradition history” of πίστις from the Jerusalem apostles down to Paul. Such a result can never be expected of the

⁵ G. Howard, “The ‘Faith of Christ,’” *Expository Times* 85 (1974) 212-215. As he writes, “it was inappropriate to the Hellenistic Jewish mentality to express the object of faith by means of the objective genitive. Though a textbook case can be made for it, in actual practice it does not appear. Characteristically the writers use the preposition when they wish to express the object” (p. 213).

⁶ Ota, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” 24f.; idem, “Absolute Use of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ and ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ in Paul” *AJBI* 23 (1997) 64-82. Here 79f. (<http://www2.rikkyo.ac.jp/web/sota/>).

⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: the Greek Text with an Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 142. R. I. Pervo goes so far as to write, “the text is probably corrupt.” See his *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 106.

subjective interpretation A because it takes the meaning of πίστις in terms of (human) attitude to God, that is “faith” or “faithfulness.”

What Peter asserted about the healing of the lame man in Acts 3:12-16 and 4:8-12, and more generally for Jesus’s name in 4:30 and 10:39-43 can be summarized: Of all the names existing in the world (those of persons with power, gods, angels, Satan, etc.) only the name of Jesus Christ, who is God’s “holy servant,” is trustworthy because of his uniquely true relation with life-giving God and therefore we can be, and must be, saved only through his name. The fundamental force of the “trustworthiness of his name” lies in its worth to assure the salvation of human beings, with healing, signs and wonders accompanying sometimes. As the name of Jesus Christ is trustworthy in this sense, his name gave this man perfect health.

III. πίστις Used in the Absolute State in Acts

In Acts 3:16b, καὶ ἡ πίστις ἢ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ τὴν ὀλοκληρίαν ταύτην ἀπέναντι πάντων ὑμῶν, we find another interesting use of πίστις. This is equally important in relation to the tradition history of the New Testament πίστις and to Paul’s πίστις terminology in particular. The expression ἡ πίστις ἢ δι’ αὐτοῦ is by no means to be equated with ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ. The phrase δι’ αὐτοῦ (“through him”) denotes the manner in which ἡ πίστις works. Unlike the genitive case αὐτοῦ, it does not specify whose, or in whom, the faith is. As Peter declares in 4:27-30, Jesus is God’s “holy servant” and his healing, signs and wonders are ultimately dependent on God’s will and act (“while *you* stretch out your hand”). In other words, however Jesus’s name is trustworthy in the above-mentioned sense, he cannot perform healing or salvation apart from God (cf. 10:38, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἦν μετ’ αὐτοῦ). It is therefore reasonable to think that the πίστις in 3:16b has implications of God’s authority that surpass that of Jesus. Moreover, this πίστις is used *absolutely*. Suppose a sentence lacking the second ἢ: ἡ πίστις δι’ αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ τὴν ὀλοκληρίαν ταύτην ... Since this sentence makes perfect sense (“the faith has given him this perfect health through him ...”), it is evident that the article signifies nothing but the uniqueness of the working channel of the πίστις, which is Jesus or his name.

Another πίστις having implications of God’s authority is found in Acts 6:7 (see also Peter’s word in 15:9 with my interpretation below).

6:7 Καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἠϋξάνετο καὶ ἐπληθύνετο ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν μαθητῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ σφόδρα, πολὺς τε ὄχλος τῶν ἱερέων ὑπήκουον τῇ πίστει.

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were *obedient to the faith*.

Firstly, this πίστις is used absolutely (cf. 13:8; 14:22, 27; 15:9; 16:5, on which see below). Secondly, linked closely by a frame structure to the “word of God” it obviously has an overtone of God’s authority. But then, thirdly, the frame structure formed by ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ at the head and τῇ πίστει at the end does not necessarily mean that this πίστις is synonymous with the “word of God.” We can only conclude that it has much to do with the word of God (though it may be possible to regard the latter as a metonym of the former). Finally, by “obedient to the faith” Luke appears to have stressed that the priests listened to the preached word of God and came to believe, admitting God’s authority. Theirs was far from a mere outward conversion.

Since Acts 6:7 is Luke's summary of what happened in the earliest days of Jerusalem after the Pentecost, this usage of πίστις might be thought to be his own. This is not likely, however, in light of other wordings apparently available to him. Apart from the somewhat later term "Χριστιανός" (11:26; 26:28; 1Pet 4:16), he could certainly use the verb πιστεύω (as in 13:12, 48; 14:1; 17:12, 34; 19:2) and the noun ὁδός (as in 9:2; 13:10; 16:17; 18:25, 26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). The wording ὑπήκουον τῇ πίστει, which is not so straightforward, should therefore be considered to go back to Luke's sources, not his own terminology.

Thus the πίστις in Acts 3:16 and 6:7 in the absolute state can be best construed as a *term* or *proper name* to refer to God's holistic economy to save human beings through Christ, which has been prepared "in the last days" (2:17). It involves as its constituents: God himself (2:17, 22-24, 32, 36, 39; 3:13, 15, 18, 26; 4:10, 24; 5:30-32; 6:7; 8:14; 10:28, 36, 38, 40-42; 11:1, 18; 12:24; 13:23, 30, 33, 37; 15:4, 8; etc.); Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead (2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10, 33; 5:30; 10:40-41; 13:30-37; 17:18, 31; 26:23), was exalted to the right hand of God (2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56), and continues to work through his servants (2:43; 3:6-8; 4:29-30; 5:12, 15-16, 41-42; 6:8; 8:6-7, 14-17; 9:15, 40-41; 10:44; 14:8-10; 16:18; 19:6; etc.); the Holy Spirit (2:4, 33, 38; 4:8, 31; 5:32; 6:3, 5, 10; 7:55; 8:15-17, 29; 9:17, 31; 10:19, 38, 44-47; 11:15, 24; etc.); the word of God (2:14, 41; 4:4, 29, 31; 5:20; 6:2, 4, 7; 8:14, 25; 10:36, 44; 11:1, 14, 19; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 26, 44, 46, 48; 15:7; etc.); and those who believe (2:44; 4:4, 32, 34; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31, 42; 10:43, 45; 11:17, 21; etc.).

God's saving economy connected solely with the name of Jesus (2:38; 3:6, 16; 4:10, 12, 30; 10:43) certainly covers the expected resurrection of believers⁸ and the gift of the Holy Spirit given to them (esp. 2:33, 38; 8:17; 10:44-45; 11:17; 15:8; 19:6). It is Jesus who plays a central role in this economy. Yet, since all the power of healing, signs and wonders come from God, who raised Jesus from the dead, the healing of the lame man in his name (3:6-9) was actually done by God. Peter declared in Acts 3:16a that the saving economy of God called *Pistis* is connected exclusively with (the name of) Jesus, and in 3:16b that the ultimate cause of healing is not the magical effect of Jesus's name but the power of God working in this economy through him (note the preposition διά in 3:16b).

Apart from those texts pertaining to Peter and the Hebrews in Jerusalem, we should also interpret five other absolute uses of πίστις in Acts, four of which are connected by Luke with the ministry of Paul. If his reports have some reliability, we may count them as a link in faith terminology between Peter and Paul.

13:8 ἀνθίστατο δὲ αὐτοῖς Ἐλύμας ὁ μάγος ... ζητῶν διαστρέψαι τὸν ἀνθύπατον ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως.

But Elymas the magician ... withstood them, seeking to *turn away* the proconsul *from the faith*.

14:22 ἐπιστηρίζοντες τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν μαθητῶν, παρακαλοῦντες ἐμμένειν τῇ πίστει καὶ ὅτι διὰ πολλῶν θλίψεων δεῖ ἡμᾶς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to *continue in the faith*, and (saying,) "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

14:27 παραγενόμενοι δὲ καὶ συναγαγόντες τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἀνήγγελλον ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς

⁸ See Acts 4:2, καὶ καταγγέλλειν ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν. Jesus is taken here as the first instance of the resurrection which is to occur to the dead generally. Cf. 24:15, 21; 26:8, 23.

μετ' αὐτῶν καὶ ὅτι ἤνοιξεν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν θύραν πίστεως.

And when they arrived, they gathered the church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how he had *opened the door of the faith* to the Gentiles.

15:9 καὶ οὐθὲν διέκρινεν μεταξὺ ἡμῶν τε καὶ αὐτῶν τῇ πίστει καθάρισας τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν.

“and he (= God) made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts *by the faith*.”

16:5 Αἱ μὲν οὖν ἐκκλησῖαι ἐστερεοῦντο τῇ πίστει καὶ ἐπερίσσευον τῷ ἀριθμῷ καθ' ἡμέραν.

So the churches were strengthened *by the faith* and increased in number daily.

The meaning of πίστις in these texts is somewhat ambiguous. However, if we take it as a name referring to God's saving economy, then we can make more sense of these texts. By prohibiting the proconsul Sergius Paulus from hearing the word of God, Elymas tried to hinder his joining this economy (13:7, 8, 12). But the proconsul, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord (ἐπὶ τῇ διδασκίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου), believed and joined it (v. 12; for the use of this ἐπίστευσεν see below). Note that “the straight paths of the Lord” (τὰς ὁδοὺς [τοῦ] κυρίου τὰς εὐθείας) in Paul's reproach (13:10) correspond to τῆς πίστεως in 13:8. Although Elymas's attempt cannot be compared with Paul's persecution stemming from “zeal” (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6), he rebelled, like Paul, against God's will to save people by this economy.⁹ To “continue in the faith” in Acts 14:22 also demands a similar interpretation. This expression does not so much mean continuing to have faith as abiding in God's saving economy through faith. According to this text, the Christians certainly live within this economy, seeking to enter the kingdom of God even through many tribulations. The expression “open the door of the faith” (14:27) does not exactly correspond to Paul's metaphor (1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3)¹⁰. Here Luke says that God has now made his saving economy accessible to the Gentiles, not that he has opened a way for Paul's missionary work.

The πίστις in 15:9 and 16:5 should also be taken in the sense of God's saving economy. Human faith as such cannot have any power of cleansing or strengthening. It is God working, in the name of Christ, through the Spirit that cleanses the hearts of the believers and strengthens the church. In such cases the believers would have a strong awareness of their own faith, but they would also notice that it is not their faith but God that brought out the results. It is only natural that God's saving economy is accompanied by such an awareness because it is so holistic as to involve human faith.

IV. *Participationist Use of πιστεύω in Acts*

In addition to the noun πίστις, some uses of the verb πιστεύω in this book should also be considered. Here let me concentrate on the “participationist” uses of πιστεύω in the finite form, in the form of infinitive, and of the adverbial participle¹¹.

⁹ For the meaning of Paul's persecution of the *Pistis* see Ota, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” 18f.

¹⁰ Pace Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 327.

¹¹ All the uses listed here except for those in 4:4; 8:13 and 15:7 are connected with Paul's mission.

- 4:4 πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν ἀκουσάντων τὸν λόγον ἐπίστευσαν καὶ ἐγενήθη [ὁ] ἀριθμὸς τῶν ἀνδρῶν [ὡς] χιλιάδες πέντε.
But many of those who heard the word *believed*; and the number of the men came to about five thousand.
- 8:13 ὁ δὲ Σίμων καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπίστευσεν καὶ βαπτισθεὶς ἦν προσκαρτερῶν τῷ Φιλίππῳ.
Even Simon himself *believed*, and after being baptized he continued with Philip.
- 13:12 τότε ἰδὼν ὁ ἀνθύπατος τὸ γεγονός ἐπίστευσεν ἐκπλησσομένου ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ κυρίου.
Then the proconsul, looking at what had occurred, *believed*, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.
- 13:48 Ἀκούοντα δὲ τὰ ἔθνη ἔχαιρον καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἐπίστευσαν ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.
And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as had been appointed for eternal life *believed*.
- 14:1 Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν Ἰκονίῳ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ εἰσελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ λαλήσαι οὕτως ὥστε πιστεῦσαι Ἰουδαίων τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων πολὺ πλῆθος.
Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue, and so spoke that a great multitude *believed*, both of Jews and of Greeks.
- 15:7 ἀναστὰς Πέτρος εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, ὑμεῖς ἐπίστασθε ὅτι ἀφ' ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων ἐν ὑμῖν ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ στόματός μου ἀκοῦσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὸν λόγον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου καὶ πιστεῦσαι.
Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and *believe*.”
- 17:12 πολλοὶ μὲν οὖν ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐπίστευσαν καὶ τῶν Ἑλληνίδων γυναικῶν τῶν εὐσχημόνων καὶ ἀνδρῶν οὐκ ὀλίγοι.
As a result many of them *believed*, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.
- 17:34 τινὲς δὲ ἄνδρες κολληθέντες αὐτῷ ἐπίστευσαν, ἐν οἷς καὶ Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀρεοπαγίτης καὶ γυνὴ ὀνόματι Δάμαρις καὶ ἕτεροι σὺν αὐτοῖς.
But some men joined him and *believed*, among them Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.
- 19:2 εἶπέν τε πρὸς αὐτούς· εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες;
And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when you believed*?”

These texts, with πιστεύω used without any complement, are silent on the object of believing; what exactly the person(s) concerned believed or should believe is vague. The same is true of the absolute uses of the participle as substantive, which include:

- 2: 44 (οἱ πιστεύοντες); 4: 32 (τῶν πιστευσάντων); 11: 21 (ὁ πιστεύσας)¹²; 13: 39 (ὁ πιστεύων); 15: 5 (τινες τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς αἰρέσεως ... πεπιστευκότες); 18: 27 (τοῖς πεπιστευκόσιν)¹³; 19: 18 (Πολλοὶ τε τῶν πεπιστευκότων); 21: 20 (τῶν πεπιστευκότων), 25

¹² That they turned to the Lord (ἐπέστρεψεν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον) is by no means a step after their believing. When they believed, they did turn to the Lord.

(περὶ τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἔθνῶν);

How should we consider these sorts of wordings? Should we supply an appropriate object in each case? Certainly, the other uses of πιστεύω in Acts seem to support such a recipe. Apart from the texts enumerated above, πιστεύω is used with a complement of some sort or another in five ways, either in the finite form or in the form of participle.

- (1) With a noun phrase¹⁴ in the dative case: 5:14 (“the Lord”)¹⁵; 8:12 (“Philip”); 16:34 (“God”); 18:8 (“the Lord”); 24:14 (“everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets”); 26:27 (“the prophets”); 27:25 (“God”).
- (2) With the preposition ἐπί followed by a noun phrase or pronoun in the accusative case: 9:42 (“the Lord”); 11:17 (“the Lord Jesus Christ”); 16:31 (“the Lord Jesus”); 22:19 (“you” = Jesus)
- (3) With the preposition εἰς followed by a noun phrase or (relative) pronoun in the accusative case: 10:43 (“him” = Jesus); 14:23 (“whom” = the Lord); 19:4 (“Jesus”).
- (4) With a relative pronoun in the accusative case: 13:41 (“which” = deed)
- (5) With an infinitive clause: 15:11 (“that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus”).

In light of these data it might seem reasonable to supply some appropriate complement for the instances of πιστεύω used singly. However, since there are five ways in which πιστεύω is used with a dative or accusative object, as shown above, which of them is really suitable cannot be declared so easily. Even if the context is clear, it would be almost impossible to supply the best complement uniquely. Moreover, we should ponder whether such a way of reading is really suitable for this book or whether it was expected by the author.

I guess that the absence of complements in these sentences is intentional, demanding a way of reading that radically differs from supplying an object. If this absence is not an omission, a different semantic acquisition should be expected for these uses of πιστεύω. I believe they correspond to the absolute use of the noun πίστις, which is a name to refer to God’s saving economy, the *Pistis*, as mentioned above. The absolute use of πιστεύω, then, is likely to mean joining or participating in this economy, or rather being put in it by God. Needless to say, the proconsul’s conversion was accompanied by a change in his mentality (13:12). He certainly came to believe the “teaching of the Lord.” However, it is only the subjective side of the phenomenon. More fundamentally, by believing he joined God’s saving economy or being put in it by God. Obviously the uses of πιστεύω in this manner presuppose the meaning of πίστις which refers to this economy.

If we recognize this participationist use of πιστεύω we can grasp what the texts listed above say more accurately. For example, Acts 13:48 (καὶ ἐπίστευσαν ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον) can be paraphrased: “And as many as had been appointed for eternal life joined the *Pistis*, that is, God’s saving economy (by believing the word of the Lord).” NRSV’s translation of this verb, “became believers,” indicates accurately, and yet ambiguously, the

¹³ The prepositional phrase διὰ τῆς χάριτος in this sentence should be construed with συνεβάλετο. See Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 404.

¹⁴ Here a noun with a definite article is regarded as a noun phrase.

¹⁵ For the connection of τῷ κυρίῳ with πιστεύοντες rather than with προσετίθεντο, see Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 168.

nuance of the original Greek. Becoming a believer means joining this economy through believing. (Of course joining does not mean any perfection. Cf. 8:13; 14:22). Another interesting example is Acts 13:38-39. By reading it from a participationist point of view we can grasp the exact content of the text.

13:38f. γνωστὸν οὖν ἔστω ὑμῖν, ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, ὅτι διὰ τούτου ὑμῖν ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν καταγγέλλεται, [καὶ] ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν οὐκ ἠδυνήθητε ἐν νόμῳ Μωϋσέως δικαιωθῆναι, ἐν τούτῳ πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων δικαιούται.

Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that *through this man* (= Jesus) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and (that) *in him* everyone *who believes* is justified from all things from which you could not be justified *in the Law of Moses*.

The verb δικαιῶ, appearing twice in this sentence, is to be linked with the preposition ἀπό, but it need not be translated “freed from” as in some versions (RSV, NRSV, ESV, NASB).¹⁶ Even if it is taken in its usual sense, “justify,” this sentence makes perfect sense.

Maintaining the participationist meaning of the participle πιστεύων (that is, to join God’s saving economy), we should pay due attention to the subtle overtones of the three prepositional phrases in this sentence. “*Through this man* forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.” This means that since Jesus is the sole agent of God who forgives sins in this holistic economy (2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 22:16; 26:18), forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through him.¹⁷ “And *in him* everyone *who believes* is justified from all things from which you could not be justified *in the Law of Moses*.” The “Law of Moses” here does not so much refer to the Pentateuch itself or its body of regulations as to the traditional dispensation provided through Moses for Israel (note “in”). The “all things from which you could not be justified” possibly concerns the means of expiation set forth in the Law of Moses including sin offerings. It is obvious that “in him” is to be detached from “everyone who believes” (πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων). This expression indicates the believer’s relation with Jesus within the holistic economy that involves God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the word of God, and those who believe. It probably shows that Christian believers are bracketed under his name (2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16) as the forgiven or justified people of Jesus who is their Lord, the Messiah, and the Savior (cf. 2:36; 4:33; 5:31, etc.). It is a different question, however, whether it has the same meaning as Apostle Paul’s phrase “in Christ” in his letters.

Paul, even in Luke’s narrative, seems to be a criticizer of the Mosaic Law, unlike the other leaders including Stephen (cf. 7:38). They certainly recognized the decisive nature of the new economy, but did not go so far as to criticize it. If this text preserves some of Apostle Paul’s notion of the Law, we may infer that despite his learning, from his predecessors, of the term πίστις with its especially Christian meaning, he understood it somewhat differently. It seems that he considered the value of the new economy to surpass that of the traditional dispensation beyond all comparison.

¹⁶ This connection should be distinguished from the construction in Romans 6:7, ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας. See Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 311f.

¹⁷ It would be natural to think the “through him” is substantially identical to “in his name.”

V. *Participationist Uses of the Adjective πιστός*

Two uses of the adjective πιστός without any complement in this book can also be construed from a participationist point of view. Since, according to this interpretation, the meaning of the adjective in each case consists in belonging to God's saving economy, it must be distinguished from those of εὐλαβής ("devout." 2:5; 8:2; 22:12), εὐσεβής ("pious." 10:2. 7 [cf. 3:12]) and δεισιδαίμων ("religious." 17:22), which merely denote the religious or spiritual disposition of the person in question in general terms, i.e., without any reference to what he or she believes.

10:45 καὶ ἐξέστησαν οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς πιστοὶ ὅσοι συνῆλθαν τῷ Πέτρῳ, ὅτι καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐκκέχεται.

And the *believers* from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.

16:1 καὶ ἰδοὺ μαθητῆς τις ἦν ἐκεῖ ὀνόματι Τιμόθεος, υἱὸς γυναικὸς Ἰουδαίας πιστῆς, πατὴρ δὲ Ἕλληνας,

And, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a *believer*, but his father was a Greek.

The πιστοὶ (used substantively) in 10:45 means not only that they are believers but also that they have joined God's saving economy by their believing. The same is true with πιστῆς in 16:1. In contrast to this, πιστὴν in 16:15, which is to be construed with the following τῷ κυρίῳ (εἰ κεκρίκατέ με πιστὴν τῷ κυρίῳ εἶναι ... "If you have judged me to be *faithful to the Lord* [or to be a *believer in the Lord*] ..."), is not participationist. Rather, it denotes her relation with the Lord established in the holistic saving economy into which she has been led. The usage of πιστός in 10:45 and 16:1 apparently corresponds to the absolute uses of πιστεύω as substantive participles, and above all to those of the present perfect participle (15:5; 18:27; 19:18; 21:20, 25)

VI. *The Meaning of πίστις in Acts 6:5*

Finally let me discuss an interesting use of πίστις that differs from any use of the noun mentioned above.

In Acts 6:5 Luke reports that the Hellenists (οἱ Ἑλληνισταὶ) chose "Stephen, a man full of *faith and the Holy Spirit*" (Στέφανον, ἄνδρα πλήρης πίστεως καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου) as one of their seven leaders. What does this πίστις mean exactly? It need not be denied that it has an implication of "his faith in Christ,"¹⁸ but whether it is the core meaning of the word here is doubtful. Decisive for our interpretation is the context in which it appears. Luke makes special mention of the spiritual excellence of Stephen and the other leaders: "seven men of good repute, full of *the Spirit* and of *wisdom*" (6:3, μαρτυρουμένους ἐπτά, πλήρεις πνεύματος καὶ σοφίας); "And Stephen, full of grace and *power*, did *great wonders and signs* among the people" (6:8, Στέφανος δὲ πλήρης χάριτος καὶ δυνάμεως ἐποίει τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα μεγάλα ἐν τῷ

¹⁸ Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 183.

λαῶ); “But they could not withstand *the wisdom* and *the Spirit* with which he (= Stephen) spoke” (6:10, καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυον ἀντιστηναὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι ᾧ ἐλάλει).

Although there is no explicit mention of the Holy Spirit in 6:8, it is obvious that the “great wonders and signs” that were done by Stephen came from the Spirit (cf. 1:8; 6:5; 10:38)¹⁹. We should note that exactly in this context the word πίστις appears. This fact leads us to ponder the possibility that its meaning is akin to that of “faith” counted by Paul as one of the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. Indeed, three of the gifts listed by Paul also appear in Luke’s description in Acts 6:3-10.

	σοφία	πίστις	δύναμις
Acts	6:3, 10 (wisdom)	6:5 (faith)	6:8 (power)
1 Cor	12:8 (word of wisdom)	12:9 (faith); 13:2 (all faith, so as to remove mountains)	12:10 (working of powers), 28 (deeds of power), 29 (deeds of power)

In my view this affinity cannot be explained as a mere accidental coincidence. It is likely that both Luke and Paul referred, from their respective standpoints, to spiritual gifts enjoyed by the people of the earliest churches. The πίστις in Acts 6:5, then, should be understood within the same meaning as that of the same word in 1 Corinthians 12:9 and 13:2, that is, “wonder-working faith.”²⁰

This “faith” of Stephen appears to be a special kind of spiritual gift to be made full use of in God’s saving economy, that is the *Faith*. Given this spiritual gift abundantly (πλήρης πίστεως καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου), Stephen “did great wonders and signs among the people” (6:8). If so, it denotes his role in the holistic economy rather than his personal spirituality (“faith in Jesus Christ”). If he did not belong to the *Faith*, he would not have been called a “man full of faith.”

There are strong resemblances seen between the uses of πίστις in Acts (3:16; 6:7; 13:8, etc.) and those in Galatians (1:23; 3:23-25). This fact can be best explained by the theory that πίστις in the absolute state in these texts is used as one and the same *term* or *name* to refer to God’s saving economy and that Paul learned its meaning and usage from his predecessors.

¹⁹ In Acts 11:24 Barnabas is introduced with the expression πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ πίστεως (note the change in word order). Despite the absence of any explicit report of Barnabas’ wonder-working in Acts, we may be allowed to guess that he also did some sort of wonders (cf. 14:11-12).

²⁰ A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC (New York: Scribner’s, 1911) 266, 290. Cf. Matt 17:20; 21:21. More specifically, Paul’s parallel wordings in 12:8-9 urge us to understand it in association with “gifts of healing.” See also R. F. Collins and D. J. Harrington, *First Corinthians*, SP (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999) 454; A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGCT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 947. The “corporate dimension” of this gift (Thiselton) is also seen in Luke’s report.