

Faith in Dialogue

Teresa Morgan, University of Oxford

Abstract: This brief response takes up some of the most significant points made in the previous essays and those which look likely to be most productive of future research, including the relationship between πίστις and ἀγάπη, the role of loyalty in trust, the importance of faith in the risen or ascended Christ, the connections between πίστις and Paul's domestic, political and military language, and the roles of narrative and mythology in John's Gospel. It also discusses briefly how πίστις is treated in early non-testamental texts, and how, in some respects, meanings and practices of πίστις evolve between the second century and the fifth.

Keywords: faith, love, Christ, loyalty, relationality, evolution, non-testamental, Paul, John, narrative, mythology

I am grateful to the Editor for making this discussion possible, and to all four contributors for their engagement with *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, the insights they have drawn from it, and the stimulating questions they have raised. All five are scholars who have transcended disciplinary boundaries to illuminate early Christianity and its relationship with neighbouring cultures and mentalities. Over the years I have learned much from all of them: in conversation, from their published work, and from the paper on πιστεύειν in John which Professor Lieu gave to a seminar I convened in Oxford in 2006 on belief in classical antiquity. It is always exciting to see a book creating discussion and generating new ideas and trajectories of research, and I look forward to ongoing dialogues with the colleagues who have written here and others.¹ Limitations of space forbid us to pursue all the questions and lines of argument which have been raised, but I have tried to respond to some of the most significant and those which look likely to be productive of future research.

No one has done more than David Konstan to elucidate the mentality and emotions of Greeks and Romans: in fundamental studies, among others, of friendship, love, pity, forgiveness, envy and beauty. Among the themes he

Corresponding Author: Teresa Morgan, Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford, 66 St. Giles', Oxford, OX1 3LU. Email: teresa.morgan@classics.ox.ac.uk

¹ See, e.g., Driediger-Murphy, Howard-Snyder, McKaughan and Morgan 2018; Horrell 2016; Seifrid, Watson, Wolter and Morgan 2018.

pursues here is the connection throughout the New Testament between πίστις and ἀγαπή. He suggests (p. 5) that πίστις may be classified as a disposition, as opposed to the emotion of love, but that πίστις and ἀγαπή are coextensive in application, both relating to the faithful, and in some sense complementary.

Πίστις and ἀγαπή often occur in close proximity and surely are often coextensive (though not quite always, since Christians are told to practise πίστις only towards one another, but are occasionally exhorted to love their enemies).² The idea that dispositions and emotions are sometimes systematically linked and complementary is a significant possibility. One could hypothesize further, similar connections – for example, between πίστις and ἐλπίς or χαρά – which would raise further questions about whether and how these connections might interact to form a cognitive-affective network. One might then examine the interactions of these with other attitudes and practices with a lower emotional temperature, such as χάρις, ὑπομονή or πραΰτης. *Roman Faith and Christian Faith* scarcely begins to explore such interactions and networks (the book was long enough as it was), but it would be a valuable exercise.

One obvious starting point for exploring the links between πίστις and ἀγαπή would be Paul's account of salvation. *Roman Faith* showed how, in Paul's earliest letters, πίστις characterizes a binary relationship between God and humanity.³ In Galatians, Romans and Philippians, however, it is used to develop Paul's understanding of the tripartite relationship between God, Christ and human beings which enables human beings to become δίκαιός (Morgan 2015: ch. 7). In these letters, *Roman Faith* argued, Christ stands between God and humanity, mediating between them, and, by his relationship of πίστις with each, enabling their reconciliation. Paul uses a number of other terms to describe

² On intra-community πίστις, see Morgan 2015: 215-20, 278, 299-301. On love, e.g., Mt. 5.44 = Lk. 6.27-35; cf. Lk. 10.29-37; 1 Cor. 13.4-6 (extending beyond the community?). On the boundaries of love in early Christian communities, see McCormick 2013. I also agree with Konstan that the emotional aspect of πίστις is relatively weak in the New Testament: e.g., Morgan 2015: 447-55, 463-72.

³ Morgan 2015: 212-24, which also argues that πίστις is not normally described by Paul as a relationship between members of the human community of the faithful.

divine and human relationships, attitudes and practices, the most significant of which, based on the frequency, distribution and prominence of their occurrence, are *ἀγάπη*, *δικαιοσύνη*, *χαρίς*, *εἰρήνη*, *ἀληθεία*, *ἐλευθερία* and *ἀγιότης*.⁴ Most of these (with the exception of truth and freedom) are marked by Paul as gifts from God and Christ to the faithful which are also returned by the faithful to God. Where these qualities are mentioned in connection with Christ, Christ is typically linked closely with God: for instance, in greetings such as ‘Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Rom. 1.7). In Galatians, Romans and Philippians, however, *ἀγάπη* is sometimes used to describe a tripartite relationship in which Christ stands between God and human beings, enabling their reconciliation through his loving relationship with each. In such passages, *ἀγάπη* plays a role analogous to that of *πίστις* in the same letters: in Konstan’s terms, they are coextensive and complementary.

At Gal. 2.20, for example, Paul affirms that Christ loves him. Since *ἀγαπᾶν* only appears once in Gal. 2.15-21 we cannot be certain that the action of *ἀγάπη* between God, Christ and human beings mirrors all the directions in which *πίστις* acts in this passage, but Paul’s use of *ἀγάπη* elsewhere in the letter strongly suggests that it does. At 5.6 we hear that *ἀγάπη*, together with *πίστις*, is an appropriate response to grace: the focus in this passage is on Christ as the source of grace (5.1, 2, 4, 6), so this is primarily love towards Christ. Love towards God, as the first commandment, can be assumed to be ingrained in Paul’s thinking,⁵ while God’s love for humanity is implicit in Galatians’ language of fatherhood, grace and salvation (and explicit in other letters).⁶ If the movements of love in all these directions are implicit in 2.20, then they form a close parallel to what I have argued are the movements of *πίστις* in 2.15-21.

⁴ These occur, of course, in different contexts, and some are common partly because they are formulaic (appearing, e.g., in greetings), while some (like *δικαιοσύνη* in Gal. 2-4 and Rom. 1-8) are important in particular arguments. But all occur in all or virtually all Paul’s letters, and in a range of contexts.

⁵ Love of neighbour also appears at 5.13-14, 22.

⁶ E.g., Gal. 1.4, 15; 3.26; this is explicit at Rom. 9.25; 1 Thess. 1.4, cf. 2 Cor. 9.7.

Romans 8.28-39, in which *πίστις* does not occur, also connects God, Christ and salvation, using *ἀγαπή* in a manner which is notably similar to Paul's use of *πίστις* in Gal. 2 and Rom. 3.⁷ Those who are called to do so love God (8.28), while God's love for them is affirmed at 8.31, where God is 'for us'. The love between God and Christ is implicit in the Father-Son relationship (8.33) and in Paul's affirmation that God raised Christ from the dead (8.34). Christ's love for humanity (and also perhaps his love of God) is indicated by his willingness to die on humanity's behalf, nullifying the transgression of Adam (cf. 5.15-21), and at 8.35 Paul asks, 'Who will separate us from the [subjective] *ἀγαπῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ*?' Finally, in this passage, Paul affirms that nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* (8.39). This may mean that God's love for us is mediated through Christ (and presumably Christ's love for us), or that our love for God is mediated through Christ (and presumably Christ's love for God) – or both. *Roman Faith* argued that in Rom. 3 and Gal. 2 Paul uses *πίστις* in a deliberately multivalent sense to describe how *δικαιοσύνη* is gained through the mutual *πίστις* between God and Christ, Christ and the faithful and hence God and the faithful. The train of thought in Rom. 8.28-30 emerges as very similar, with *ἀγαπή* taking the part taken by *πίστις* in Gal. 2.

Later in his essay (pp. 9-10), Konstan notes that *πίστις* and *fides* are not precisely equivalent to the modern notion of 'loyalty'. He is doubtless right: one can identify aspects of loyalty in *πίστις* language in some New Testament passages (and in other authors), but *πίστις* is never a blind or unconsidered attachment.⁸ This is important not least in shaping our understanding of the complexities of the relationship between God, Christ and humanity. The faithfulness of God to God's people over time is much more than the simple persistence of loyalty: trust, truth, justice and love are all always integral to it (to say nothing of grace, peace, mercy and many other affective and relational qualities). The faithfulness of Christ to God involves not just loyalty but also trust, love and much else. The relationship of the faithful to God and Christ is a powerful fusion of trust, obedience, hope, love, fear, gratitude and joy along with

⁷ Morgan 2015: 272-74, 289-91, 302-4.

⁸ Morgan 2015: 5-6, 31-131 and *passim*, 152, 160, 220, 257, 293, 316-17, 446, 453, 479-81.

loyalty and more. To affirm this is not to begin to re-entangle or re-ambiguate the attitudes, emotions, relationships and actions which *Roman Faith* often sought to distinguish in different passages, but to recognize the complexity with which πίστις and other terms are used in New Testament (and other) texts.

For Peter Oakes, too, loyalty forms part, but only part of the complex relationship between God, Christ, and the faithful (p. 1).⁹ His focus, however, is on distinguishing between πίστις as a relationship (as *Roman Faith* often describes it) and as a 'relational way of life' (p. 1 and *passim*), the formulation he prefers. Oakes's aim (p. 3) of taking the argument of *Roman Faith* further in order further to break up what he describes as the 'log jam' of interpretation of πίστις Χριστοῦ is to be welcomed (and is paralleled by Loveday Alexander (p. 7) who also argues that the complexity of πίστις Χριστοῦ is deeper than what can be expressed by the much invoked subjective/objective polarity).

Oakes argues that rather than describing πίστις as a relationship, we should do better to describe it as 'the mode of action in a relationship', and over time as a 'relational way of life' (pp. 11-13), on the basis that 'πίστις was not a term that denoted the state of being related' and the relationality of πίστις is expressed and measured in visible actions. I am doubtful, though, that either scholarship on πίστις/*fides* or that on trust would find this persuasive as a general claim. Trust and πίστις/*fides* are relationship-forming and can constitute the whole of a relationship; they need not be something that happens within another relationship. Πίστις is indeed often visible in actions, as *Roman Faith* regularly observes. But to shift our focus entirely to the actions of πίστις weakens what, for Greek speakers, including New Testament writers, are some of its key aspects. Although sources of the early principate are not very interested in the nature of the interiority of πίστις (unlike later Christian writers, who become deeply interested in it), they do recognize it (Morgan 2015: ch. 11, *passim*). Πίστις is regularly said to reside in the mind, the soul, the heart or the breast. It is associated with both the rational and irrational parts of the soul by different

⁹ Oakes observes rightly (p. 20) that all possible πίστις relations between God, Christ and humanity are not necessarily present in every passage; *Roman Faith* does not suggest that they are.

writers in different contexts. It is closely associated with (other) emotions, many of which are said to be closely related to it and all of which are also understood as residing in the body, mind and/or soul. When *πίστις* (or *fides*) is not described as an emotion, it can be described as an act of cognition, taking place in the mind or memory. Equally significantly, *πίστις* is regularly described by Greek and Latin writers as a virtue, and discourse about virtues throughout this period takes for granted that they have interior aspects – indeed, that they are primarily states of mind and heart, which may be expressed in actions (Morgan 2015: 463-72). *Roman Faith* shows that, although the texts of the New Testament make less of the interior aspects of *πίστις* than some other writings, *πίστις* is linked, in these texts too, with the heart and soul, with a range of (other) emotions, and with the language of goodness and virtue.¹⁰ There is no reason to think that New Testament writers are out of line with wider Greek (or Hellenistic Jewish) thinking in their understanding of the interior as well as the exterior working of *πίστις*.¹¹

Relationships, and the elements of which relationships are built, including trust, are universally recognized by ancient writers as having both interior and exterior aspects: as being matters of the heart, mind and soul as well as of action. To characterize *πίστις* solely as a relational way of life in the New Testament is also problematic on other grounds. Oakes takes Galatians as his example, and rightly observes that in some passages of Galatians (e.g., 1.23; cf. 6.10) there is no difficulty in understanding *πίστις* as a relational way of life. At 2.16-21, however, Paul talks of the *πίστις* that caused him (using aorists at 2.16, 19) to put his trust in Christ, die to the law, be crucified with Christ, be made *δικαίος*, and live a new life. This is the *πίστις* of conversion: the point at which a person embraces a new relationship with God and Christ. It constitutes a transformative act of *πίστις* at a particular moment, to which the gospels also refer in the proclamation ‘Repent and put your trust in the good news’ (Mk 1.15), and when those who come to

¹⁰Morgan 2015: 463-72; the same is true in the Septuagint: cf. Morgan 2015: 461-6.

¹¹ One would, of course, expect many texts, including inscriptions, which celebrate *πίστις/fides* to focus on the actions that express it.

Jesus for healing are commended for their πίστις or exhorted to πιστεύειν (e.g., Mk 5.34, 36).¹²

Oakes is right, however, that πίστις can describe an (aspect of a) way of life, and that this sense may be worth giving more weight than recent scholarship, including *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, has given it. As *Roman Faith* notes, Paul and other New Testament writers not infrequently use πίστις language to refer to the ongoing relationship of the faithful with God and Christ, in community, as they wait for Christ's return.¹³ In this sense, πίστις is indeed a relational way of life. What is more, as Oakes points out, it is a way of life in relationship not only with the crucified, but with the risen or ascended Christ. The importance in some passages of the ongoing relationship between the faithful and the risen or ascended Christ is also being explored currently by David J. Downs and Benjamin J. Lappenga, in part reviving and developing a neglected argument by Paul Vallotton (1960). Their emphasis (and Oakes's) on the importance of this aspect of the divine-human relationship is a point well taken and constitutes a fruitful addition to the interpretation of New Testament πίστις.

Much of Loveday Alexander's essay also focuses on Paul's letters. One question she raises is whether the πίστις of the apostles is essentially in relationship to God rather than to congregations. This seems to me unnecessarily one-sided. From 1 Thess. 2.4 (cf. 2.2), where Paul is 'judged worthy by God to be entrusted with the gospel' to the Thessalonians; to 1 Cor. 4.17, where Paul sends Timothy, his 'beloved and faithful son in the Lord' to remind the Corinthians of his own teaching and 'ways in Christ Jesus'; to Philemon 4-6 where Paul commends Philemon for the ἀγαπή and πίστις he has both 'in the Lord Jesus' and 'for all the holy ones' (ἀγαπή and πίστις which put him in partnership with Paul), the πίστις of church leaders is regularly referenced in connection with their relationship with congregations as well as their relationship with God or Christ. Πίστις towards God (and towards himself), in Paul's view, can and should be enacted in πίστις towards communities and in the πίστις which communities

¹² Cf. Morgan 2015: 117-18.

¹³ E.g., Morgan 2015: 220-22, 248, cf. 305.

place in their leaders, and he commends that relationship both to communities and to church leaders.¹⁴

Alexander also suggests (p. 8) that Paul's *πίστις* language operates within a domestic concept of churches. It is not clear to me that the evidence supports this view, nor what interpretative advantage it offers. As *Roman Faith* shows, *πίστις* is one of the very few relational attitudes and practices which are described as operating equally in the domestic and the public sphere.¹⁵ As such, *πίστις* language is particularly adaptable to the flexible, exploratory thinking about the nature of the new communities of followers of Christ that characterizes New Testament writers. Given the wide distribution of *πίστις* language and the wide range of descriptions for Christian communities which early texts offer, we should expect the political, social, military and domestic dimensions of *πίστις* (if not its economic and communicative dimensions too) all to be in play in Christian thinking, and visibly they are.¹⁶

Πίστις language, for example, is closely and explicitly connected with political and military imagery at Phil. 1.27 (Μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε ... μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθροῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου) and 1 Thess. 5.8 (ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας). At Gal. 1.13, 1.23 and 3.23 *πίστις* is characterized by means of military or legal language (πορθεῖν, φρουρεῖν), while the building language of Gal. 2.18 looks back to it (εἰ γὰρ ἂν κατέλυσα ταῦτα πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ, παράβατην ἑμαυτὸν συνιστάνω; cf. Gal. 1.13, 23). Many other passages connect *πίστις* more loosely or implicitly with these and other terms of public or political life.¹⁷

¹⁴ Cf. 1 Cor. 12.9; Gal. 5.5: Morgan 2015: 253-54, 257-58, 277-78.

¹⁵ E.g., Morgan 2015: 117-120 (the other relational quality, practice and virtue which similarly spans the domestic and public spheres and is also central to the New Testament is *φιλία/ἀγάπη*).

¹⁶ Alexander suggests (p. 8) that churches are first likened to an army in 1 Clement, but cf., e.g., explicitly military imagery at Rom. 13.12, 1 Cor. 9.7, Phil. 1.27, 2.25, 1 Thess. 5.8, Philemon 2, and see below.

¹⁷ Cf., e.g., Danker 1982, showing how much of Paul's language parallels the terminology of contemporary inscriptions honouring those who undertake political office or patronize their communities. It is worth noting that Paul's use of *οἰκοδομεῖν* and related terms to describe metaphorically his activities and communities is highly unusual. In Greek and Latin in general,

Both Loveday Alexander and Judith Lieu suggest that *Roman Faith* assumes a first-century date for New Testament texts, and Lieu rightly observes that one could, in a study of early churches, include non-testamental material too (p. 3). As it happens, *Roman Faith* does not assume that all New Testament texts are first century, only that most, if not all are likely to belong to the first or early second century. It focuses on New Testament texts on the Christian side because they are early and interesting and one must stop somewhere, but it also discusses several apostolic letters under the heading ‘Looking sideways’ (2015: 509-14). It is, though, an important question how our picture of early Christian πίστις/*fides* might change or develop if we included a wider range of texts. This is one of the first questions explored in *Roman Faith*’s forthcoming ‘sequel’, which investigates the evolution of Christian πίστις/*fides* from the late first to the early fifth century and the impact of evolved Christian ideas and practices of πίστις/*fides* on the later Roman Empire. This project is in its early stages, but a few brief observations can already be made.

Setting non-testamental texts alongside texts of the New Testament as evidence for early Christian thinking is never simple, since most are extremely difficult to date and many are so fragmentary that firm conclusions about their use of a particular idea or lexicon are impossible. But a good deal of πίστις/*fides* and equivalent language appears in non-canonical texts, widely distributed across texts and genres, and this in itself is significant, confirming that New Testament writers’ use of πίστις/*fides* language is not unrepresentative of the language of early Christian communities in general. All the Christians of whom we have any evidence in the early generations (and indeed centuries) seem to have understood their relationship with God, Christ, and their community authorities in terms of πίστις/*fides*.

Many fragments of what have been identified as early non-canonical texts show them invoking πίστις and related terms, or their equivalents in other languages, in ways well in line with New Testament usage. In the *Kerygma*

describing communities with building language is rare; the metaphor of people as temple occurs occasionally in the Hebrew Bible and in the Dead Sea Scrolls; but it is much more widespread in the New Testament in general and especially in Paul.

Petrou, for example, as quoted by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 6.5.43), Jesus says, ‘If now any one of Israel wishes to repent and to trust/believe (πιστεύειν) in God through my name, his sins will be forgiven.’¹⁸ The Coptic Gospel of Thomas (21.1-4) affirms that Jesus’ disciples are ‘entrusted’ with a ‘field’ (the world in or to which they preach) and which they must hand over to the owner when he arrives.¹⁹ In Egerton Papyrus 1, fr. 1.19-20 Jesus criticizes a group of lawyers for their ἀπιστία.²⁰ We cannot multiply examples here, but they run into several scores.

It also emerges, even at an early stage of analysis, that when early Christian individuals and communities which regard themselves as orthodox distinguish themselves from, or engage in disputes with, other self-identified Christian individuals or communities, their disputes are not over understandings of the nature (as opposed to the doctrinal content) of πίστις. Even communities labelled ‘gnostic’, which one might have expected to use, or at least to be suspected of using πίστις language in distinctive ways – perhaps in their cosmologies, or in counterpoint with γνώσις language – are not attacked on this basis. And, indeed, ‘orthodox’ communities would have had no good basis on which to attack, for instance, gnostic uses of πίστις, because gnostic texts use πίστις language well within the parameters that *Roman Faith* mapped out in relation to New Testament writings and apostolic letters.

Even in the cosmology which has become known as *Pistis Sophia* (where, if anywhere, we might expect to find a distinctive way of thinking about πίστις), the emanation *Pistis* has a notably conventional πίστις relationship, by New Testament standards, with the Light of Lights. She cries out, with πίστις, to be saved by the Light in which she has trusted (πιστεύειν) (1.30-35, 39). After Jesus Christ affirms that the Light forgives her sins (1.44), she continues to affirm her πίστις (1.52), which continues throughout the period of her banishment, repeated repentance, and gradual rehabilitation. As in the Septuagint and the

¹⁸ Fr. 3a, cf. 3b (discussing this verse in John, see Morgan 2015: 411-12, 424 n. 36).

¹⁹ Though Gathercole (2014: 303 n. 12) argues, against earlier commentators, that the alternative meaning ‘sojourning’ is more likely here.

²⁰ *P. London Christ.* 1 (c. 150/200): Bell and Skeat 1935.

New Testament, God in *Pistis Sophia* is faithful (1.54); Jesus is capable of criticizing the defective faith (ἀπιστία) of his disciples (3.111); and Jesus also affirms several times that as his followers go out to preach and share the ‘mysteries of the light’ with others, people will have πίστις towards them and their words as a step towards placing πίστις in the ‘God of the universe’ (e.g., 3.111, 120, 142). The most distinctive aspect of *Pistis Sophia* is not its understanding of πίστις but faith’s personification, and even this is paralleled in texts from *The Shepherd of Hermas* and the tombstone of Abercius of Hierapolis to the hymns of Ephrem.²¹

How Christians understood πίστις did evolve: not consistently across communities, and not in all contexts, but in some ways dramatically between the second and fifth centuries. In particular, some writers come to focus strongly on πίστις/*fides* as an attitude of belief in doctrine, and/or as an orientation of the mind or heart.²² That evolution took place within what claimed to be, and have since tended to be seen as, mainstream or orthodox Christian communities: above all among a relatively small group of influential theologians and apologists from Justin, Clement and Tertullian, through Origen, Cyprian and Eusebius, to Cyril of Jerusalem, the Cappadocians and Augustine. These writers’ understanding of πίστις or *fides* gradually developed, by New Testament standards, some striking new aspects, which powerfully influenced self-defining ‘orthodox’ groups in both east and west. What came to be seen as unorthodox or

²¹ The widespread personification of πίστις/*fides* in Christian texts will be discussed in my forthcoming study; its personification in Greek and Roman cult is well discussed: e.g., Clark 2007: 47-48, 118-19; Freyburger 2009: 229-317; Morgan 2015: 127-28, Stafford 2000: ch. 4.

²² *Roman Faith* argues *passim* that although ‘belief that’ certain things are true is embedded in trust (and *vice versa*), in general and in early Christian thinking, trust rather than belief dominates New Testament πίστις; cf. Seifrid, Watson, Wolter and Morgan 2018. *Roman Faith* does not suggest that belief is anywhere absent from *pistis* but, exploring this possibility, see the contributions of Howard-Snyder and Morgan in Driediger-Murphy, Howard-Snyder, McKaughan and Morgan 2018. I might now highlight even more strongly than does *Roman Faith* (pp. 142-45) Greek interest in ‘belief that’ as part of the context in which Christian *pistis* evolved. In a recent paper (‘“Moses’ faith” in Josephus and the New Testament’, SBL/AAR 2017), Prof. Dennis Lindsay has argued that Josephus too sometimes uses *pisteuein* propositionally, perhaps also in dialogue with Greek thinking, of the faith of Moses.

marginal Christian texts and groups, meanwhile, seem to have tended to hold to more traditional understandings and practices of πίστις.

It is worth noting in this context that the preservation and canonization of a group of texts which articulate, in some ways, an understanding of such a central concept and practice that is very different from what later mainstream or orthodox understandings become, offers some evidence for a relatively early dating of the New Testament gospels and other non-Pauline texts. If the gospels, for example, had not been composed, in self-identified orthodox communities, until the mid-second century, we might expect them to show more evidence than they do of the character of mid-second century thinking about πίστις in those communities. That the nature of their thinking is well in line with that of Paul and much less well in line with that of the most influential mid- and late-second century writers, suggests at least that much of their material took shape, if not that the texts were put together in their current form, in the first century.

Where some early Christians were much concerned to define doctrinal orthodoxy, some modern scholars are much concerned to define disciplinary orthodoxy. Even those who pride themselves on crossing disciplinary boundaries do so, which perhaps is less ironic than it seems (where is the prestige in interdisciplinarity unless one maximises the disciplinary fences one has leapt?). Judith Lieu sets the author and herself firmly on opposite sides of a fence between classics and theology, and suspects on occasion that she has caught the author trespassing. In fact, *Roman Faith* does not aim to transgress any boundaries between ancient history and theology as approaches to the material. It uses early Christian sources (which are also ancient Mediterranean sources) for what is marked throughout as a history of mentality, and it is as historiography that it aims to make a contribution to the study of early Christianity.²³

Discussing *Roman Faith's* approach to John's Gospel, Lieu is concerned that the argument does not pay enough attention to the 'literary form of a narrative gospel', and to what she sees as the distinctively Johannine

²³ Lieu p. 2. Lieu also fairly questions the grouping of Revelation with John's Gospel and the Johannine letters in *Roman Faith* ch. 10. The grouping was a matter of convenience, as Revelation did not justify a chapter of its own.

phenomenon that the gospel constitutes ‘the retrojection on to the ministry of Jesus of the convictions and insights of a later time, a time which is characterized by the absence of Jesus’ (pp. 5, 6). These two themes are worth distinguishing and, inevitably briefly, treating separately.

Roman Faith spends relatively little time discussing John’s Gospel or any other source as a narrative. One could undoubtedly take that approach; it might prove interesting and productive, and as I wrote the book I became, in some contexts (including when writing about John) increasingly aware of its attractions. As an approach it would serve more than the explicitly narrative books of the New Testament (or the Septuagint or other Greek and Latin writings).²⁴ But analysing any text through its literary form is only one approach among many and John’s Gospel, like any text, allows of more than one approach and has benefited from many. Lieu’s implication that one can only approach John’s Gospel through its literary form is counterintuitive. The question for any approach to a text must be whether it is internally cogent, whether it yields new, defensible and interesting insights, and, if it forms part of a larger study, whether it is coherent with the rest of the project and contributes to the whole. *Roman Faith* aims to set John’s Gospel’s use of πιστεύειν and πιστός alongside those of other early Christian and contemporary texts using a coherent and productive set of reading techniques, and to capture what is distinctive about John’s and others’ thinking by that means.

Much of Lieu’s response focuses on the fact that *Roman Faith*’s Johannine chapter does not do justice to the many aspects of the gospel beyond its use of πιστεύειν, from its treatment of signs to its eschatology. She is right that a book-length study of πιστεύειν in John would treat many more aspects of the text and connect them more fully with πιστεύειν than *Roman Faith* was able to do. Would such a study decisively change *Roman Faith*’s view of the gospel’s understanding of πιστεύειν? In a short review essay Lieu cannot be expected to demonstrate that it would, but perhaps a future study will do so.

²⁴ Since *Roman Faith* emerged, I have published an essay on Paul which begins to explore how a narrative analysis of his soteriology might add something to *Roman Faith*’s understanding of πίστις (Morgan 2017).

Lieu's observation that John's Gospel constitutes 'the retrojection on to the ministry of Jesus of the convictions and insights of a later time, a time which is characterized by the absence of Jesus', applies to some extent to all the gospels, and to every book that refers to Jesus' ministry. It is not a reason to treat John as unique, even if John's retrospection takes some unique forms. Lieu's view, moreover, that 'It is not possible to separate the myth and the person within the "human" narrative who is the subject of that myth' (p. 10) is surely an exaggeration. Whoever created the version of the gospel that became canonical drew on traditions of a historical person that he presumably knew (and Lieu acknowledges) had already been treated in various ways. He sometimes made choices to treat the traditions in new ways, but not to an extent that suggests that mythologizing has wholly overtaken life writing. Comparing John's narrative with that of the synoptic and non-canonical gospel stories shows that John has much in common with them, and sometimes suggests that John preserves details about Jesus' life and contemporary Israel more accurately than do other accounts.²⁵ The myth shows respect for its sources, including in its use of *πιστεύειν*. *Roman Faith* underlines that *πίστις* language is endemic in early Christian writings. John inherited the importance of *πιστεύειν*, and though he treated it distinctively, its omnipresence in Christian discourse makes it less likely that his treatment was unparalleled.

J. H. Charlesworth has made this point in a recent essay on John's Gospel as evidence for the historical Jesus.²⁶ 'Evidence of editing (redaction)', he observes (p. 14), 'is also evidence of something to edit ... No-one should assume that because the Gospels interpret history that they cannot contain history...'. He argues that John had access to a wealth of historical data about Jesus' ministry, some of it independent from the sources of the synoptic gospel writers, and that there are good reasons to think many of the data he preserves reliable. He points out that although John is theologically shaped, so are all the evangelists: if we regard the synoptic gospels as viable sources for the historical Jesus, then we should not dismiss John's Gospel out of hand. He draws together a range of

²⁵ E.g., on parallels with John's trial narrative, see Chapman and Schnabel 2015: 142-51.

²⁶ Charlesworth 2010 (pushing the argument, however, further than some would accept).

recent scholarship that takes this view and concludes that it can now be regarded as mainstream.

All narratives of Jesus mythologize him; all retroject onto his ministry the convictions of later times, and reading or hearing any of them will have involved an element for listeners of 'buying into' a myth (though Lieu perhaps overestimates the extent to which any community can have regulated how even its own listeners heard any text or oral tradition. The evidence of early Christian and other reading/listening communities suggests that there was a good deal of scope for hearing in very diverse ways). It may also be relevant that John's Gospel, like all early Christian texts, is, among other things, a teaching and moralizing text, and such texts, across multiple genres in the contemporary Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds, are always fluid: capable of being cut down into exemplary stories, mined for gnomic sayings, condensed into hypotheses or expanded with commentary or paraphrase. Even as the final redactor shaped his narrative in accordance with his convictions, he must have recognized that it would be dismembered, re-membered and rearticulated in parts of diverse shapes and sizes for diverse purposes. Any narrative framing or mythologizing can only have been part of the expected meaning and use of the text.²⁷

Since *Roman Faith* was published in 2015, it has stimulated much illuminating discussion. New ideas and avenues for exploration are opening up, and one can look forward to the expansion of the field and the progress of debates in the coming years. Meanwhile, I am grateful to all the contributors to this discussion for their careful readings, thoughtful responses and new arguments. Their contributions will inform and frame the debate for a long time to come.²⁸

²⁷ *Roman Faith* had little to say about how oral traditions or early writings may have been used in primitive communities but the next volume, with the benefit of much richer evidence, will explore this theme further.

²⁸ Alexander (p. 1) mentions the uses of digital search technology. A caveat: in the historiography of mentality digital searches should be used with caution. One can only understand the use of a term in the context of the work and the mindset of the author and the culture in which it appears. One must therefore read whole works and authors in order to understand one's subject, including works and authors in which it appears rarely or never. Besides, the sources are interesting! Why study texts if one doesn't want to read them?

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