

BENJAMIN SCHLIESSER

Abraham's Faith
in Romans 4

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Mohr Siebeck

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Abraham's Faith in Romans 4

Paul's Concept of Faith
in Light of the History
of Reception of Genesis 15:6

Mohr Siebeck

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To Christine
and Naemi Joy

Preface

The seeds for this study have been laid during my third semester at the University of Tübingen. At a book sale I acquired A. Schlatter's large-scale study on faith in the New Testament, *Der Glaube im Neuen Testament*, which sought to investigate historically how the concept of faith attained its powerful position in the intellectual history of humankind. This goal – together with P. Stuhlmacher's contention that with the exception of R. Bultmann no scholar's description of faith has arrived at a comparable systematic unity and historical precision – caught my interest and kindled my vision for revisiting some aspects of the New Testament concept of faith.

The first fruit of this fascination was my Master of Theology thesis on "Faith in the Synoptics" handed in at Glasgow University, on which Professors J.M.G. Barclay and J.K. Riches have made valuable comments. The debate between Tübingen and Durham on the question of "justification by faith" and in particular the vigorous defence of the "Lutheran" position by Professor P. Stuhlmacher made my attention grow towards Paul's understanding and use of πίστις in his letter to the Romans. Evidently, a "Biblical Theology" suggested itself as proper methodology and framework for working out Paul's specific concern.

The present study was written at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena (USA) under the proficient and caring supervision of my *Doktorvater* Professor R.P. Martin; it was submitted beginning this year. Professors D.A. Hagner and K. Haacker have read the work as second and external readers and have made many incisive criticisms and corrections, not least with regards to my English.

I am very grateful to all these teachers for their erudition and encouragement. Also, I express my sincere thanks to the editor of *WUNT*, Professor J. Frey, who extended to me the invitation to contribute to the series. My friends and family have been a constant source of support and have always reminded me not to lose sight of the needs of the community. Most of all, I wish to express my loving appreciation to my wife Christine and my daughter Naemi Joy, who have always been for me a pledge of the joy in Christ. To them I dedicate this book.

Lichtenstein, November 2006

Benjamin Schließer

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Chapter I

Introduction and Methods

A. Schlatter, who was the first to write an in depth historical treatment on the New Testament concept of faith, stated: A theology and a Christendom that no longer know what the New Testament calls “faith,” is dead.¹ From the perspective of a systematic theologian, P. Tillich contended that at first the word “faith” has to be healed, before the human being can be healed.² However, despite the urgency to develop an adequate understanding of faith, and furthermore despite the overwhelming flood of books in biblical studies, the brook that helps to quench this urgency remains remarkably slim. This is true for both the Old Testament³ and New Testament concept of faith in general, but also for that New Testament writer who, according to R. Bultmann, put the concept of “faith” at the very center of theology⁴: the apostle Paul. Together with “a tendency of New Testament theologians to minimize the Pauline doctrine of faith,”⁵ there is also a pre-formed understanding of faith that appears resistant to further analysis.⁶

¹ A. Schlatter 1977, 100. – Even from the perspective of statistics, which certainly is without theological value *per se*, πίστις and πιστεύειν play a central role in the New Testament language, as both terms occur 243 times each (cf. K. Aland 1978).

² P. Tillich 1961, 7. Tillich worked significantly on the concept of Christian faith. – On this, see W. Hertel, 1971; M. Korthaus 1999.

³ The monumental Old Testament theology of W. Brueggemann dedicates a mere three lines to the fundamental verses Gen 15:6 and Isa 7:9 (1997, 467).

⁴ R. Bultmann 1959, 218. On the central significance of faith for Paul, see also, e.g., H. Binder 1968, 79; G. Barth 1992, 220; B.S. Childs 1992, 606; M. Theobald 1999, 283.

⁵ G.R. Beasley-Murray 1973, 304. The recent annotated bibliography on the Pauline writings by M.A. Seifrid and R.K.J. Tan, which contains a total of 846 entries, lists only very few monographic treatments on “faith in Paul,” some of which dealing with “faith” only secondarily (2002, 180-183). – A similar diagnosis applies to the concept of faith in systematic theology (cf. M. Seils 1996, 15, who also quotes W. Härle and R. Preul: “[D]er Begriff des Glaubens [ist] noch nicht zu derjenigen Klarheit ausgearbeitet..., die angesichts seiner schlechterdings fundierenden Stellung und Funktion erforderlich ist.”).

⁶ Cf. P. Stuhlmacher 1966, 81. Conventionally, one argues for instance that “faith ... is the openness to the *gospel*” (C.E.B. Cranfield 1975, 90), that “Glaube ist die Realisierung der *Gnade* Gottes im Menschen” (G. Friedrich 1982, 112), that “faith is the only appropriate human correlate to God’s gracious *righteousness*” (J.D.G. Dunn 1998, 384n.205) or that “[f]aith ... appropriates for the believer the benefits of what *Christ* has

The focus of the present study is the history of reception⁷ of Gen 15:6.⁸ It takes this momentous verse from the Abraham-cycle and attempts to detect and describe trajectories of the faith-theme from the Old Testament through Second Temple Judaism to Paul. This *modus operandi* will allow a picture of Paul's concept of faith in its distinctiveness compared to the theological background of his time and in its dialogue with text and tradition.⁹

That our task cannot exhaust itself exclusively in the historical-exegetical work is self-evident. The attained results need to be connected systematically¹⁰ in order to receive a harmonious whole and to create the framework in which the various ancient authors' specific understanding of faith comes into view – not in terms of an enumeration of manifold different meanings of πίστις, but in terms of its theological peak(s).¹¹

With regard to the exegetical chapters, a few methodological remarks are in place. Just as the history of scholarship will require a contextual, objective, and sympathetic description of the respective authors' positions, one cannot analyze the relevant terms in the texts to be expounded without giving due consideration to the context. Only then terms like faith/believing, count/consider, righteousness, law, works, boasting, sin, salvation-history, soteriology, eschatology, etc. can be filled with meaning, and only then structural equivalents between the texts can be identified.¹² Both in the case of ancient writings and modern works, this method seeks to pay respect to the authorial intention and to allow for a relatively precise account of a term's intended meaning in a respective context¹³; it prevents

done" (S. Westerholm 2004, 91) (*italics added*). These descriptions are not incorrect, but incomplete.

⁷ See, for instance, the deliberations in H. Räisänen 1992.

⁸ The biblical quotations are normally taken from the NRSV, though occasionally altered for the sake of clarity. Other ancient sources are dealt with correspondingly.

⁹ Cf. U. Luz 1998, 333: "Die Wirkungsgeschichte biblischer Texte ist ... eine Dokumentation der Lebendigkeit der Traditionen und Texte und damit auch der Pluralität."

¹⁰ See on the relation of the exegetical and systematic work, A. Schlatter 1927, xvi-xvii; R. Gyllenberg 1936, 614; D. Lührmann 1976, 16 ("die beiden Versuchungen des Exegeten – der Rückzug in die rein historische Arbeit und die Flucht in die Systematik").

¹¹ Cf., with respect to Paul, F. Neugebauer 1961, 150; also M.-E. Boismard 1955, 65.

¹² Cf. J.D.G. Dunn 2002, 275 and his reference to F.D.E. Schleiermacher (275n.8). This principle that makes the context the criterion of meaning has certainly been formulated and employed prior to Schleiermacher. See only Cicero, *De Inventione* 2,40,117: "[E]x superiore et ex inferiore scriptura docendum id, quod quaeratur, fieri perspicuum."

¹³ Even though the notion of "the author's intention" sounds like the old, never-realized historical-critical dogma, our approach requires this method. The current emphasis on reception history is still reflected in this study – obviously, it even constitutes its core, insofar as all is concentrated on the history of interpretation of one Old Testament verse (Gen 15:6).

avoidable misunderstandings and unnecessary, one-sided polarizations, or “illegitimate totality transfer[s].”¹⁴ In short, one has to strive to understand the Genesis text, the writings quoting or alluding to it, including Paul, but also their interpreters “on their own terms”¹⁵ and thereby treat the authors *in optimam partem*. Only then comparisons and criticism are justified and valid.

A. History of Scholarship on “Faith”

A history of interpretation constitutes the first main part of this study. The survey of works dealing with the Pauline concept of faith concentrates on the major monographs and essays published on this topic.¹⁶ The stress of this presentation lies on the results of the exegetical process. Consequently the authors’ direct references to passages in Paul remain unmentioned for the most part. For the sake of objectivity, no extensive external critique of their viewpoints will be provided in the course of the presentation of their views, but rather some concluding evaluative remarks. Most sections, on the other hand, will be introduced by a brief theological-historical classification, in order to make visible the dependences, trajectories, or demarcations of the views portrayed.

B. Genesis 15:6

It is justified and important to provide a rather extensive discussion of the problems of Genesis 15, since the theological significance of this chapter as a whole can hardly be overestimated and since, furthermore, its central verse, Gen 15:6, has a history of reception, with which only very few individual texts can compete.¹⁷ Already within the Old Testament,¹⁸ this verse was attributed great theological weight, but also in later Jewish theology it enjoyed a wide influence and import. Paul and James used it in a way that

¹⁴ J.E. Botha 1987, 233. Especially J. Barr (1961) pointed to the problem that certain dictionaries tend to load the totality of meanings of a term on each of its occurrences. See also D.A. Campbell 1992a, 91-93 (referring to F. de Saussure); J.-N. Aletti 1989, 238.

¹⁵ E.P. Sanders 1977, 18f.

¹⁶ Those viewpoints expressed in works larger in scope, like New Testament theologies, theologies of Paul or commentaries receive little attention here, but will be noted in the exegetical chapters. (The exception are those older works that appear in the introductory chapter II.A.) – Some essays that do not specifically aim at offering new scholarly results, but rather gather and assess results and theses of previous scholarship, will not figure in the history of interpretation (such as F. Knoke 1922; H.H. Wernecke 1934; W.G. Kümmel 1937; M.-E. Boismard 1955; O. Kuss 1956; H.-W. Bartsch 1960; 1968; R. Schnackenburg 1962; K. Haacker 1970; 1993; G.R. Beasley-Murray 1982; J.-N. Aletti 1989; E. Schnabel 1991; H.-J. Eckstein 2000).

¹⁷ Cf. R.W.L. Moberly 1990, 103.

¹⁸ On the qualified use of the traditional phrase “Old Testament” in contrast to “clumsy neologisms,” see, e.g., W. Brueggemann 1997, 1n.1.

was foundational for Christian theology, though they referred to it with different accentuations and implications.

Diachronic questions should not be deemed superfluous,¹⁹ even if the main concentration of our study lies on Paul and his (“synchronic”) reading of Gen 15:6, which presupposes the present final text-form as canonical. The temporal background and formal structure of Israel’s literary heritage bears upon theology.²⁰ Accordingly, subsequent to a literary, source-critical, tradition-historical, and structural analysis of the chapter as a whole, we will engage in a study of the fundamental terms “consider,” “righteousness,” and “believe,” clarifying their place in the Old Testament as a whole, but also in the syntactical structure of the verse itself.²¹

C. Genesis 15:6 in Jewish Theology

The reception history of Gen 15:6 presents itself at first as an inner-biblical development and materializes in the historical Psalm 106 and the penitential prayer Nehemiah 9. Then, throughout the intertestamental period, in the most diverse geographical, historical, and theological conditions, a multifaceted and nuanced reception history could develop and comes into sight in the Septuagint, Sirach 44, *Jubilees* 14, 4QPseudo-Jubilees, 4QMMT, 1Maccabees, and Philo. Though the differences between the single interpretations of Gen 15:6 might partly appear of negligible nature, they own considerable weight and expressiveness: First, from a reception-hermeneutical perspective, they illuminate the practice of the *relecture* of a biblical text by means of its textual variations, its orientation towards a specific intention, its response to certain historical or theological situations, its combination with other scriptural or traditional ideas, etc. Second, they afford an insight into a theological process, in which one seeks to answer the question of nature, implication, and consequence of faith always anew, in discussion with the existing text, which acquired increasingly a canonized status. We become witnesses of the hermeneutical effort to adapt this text to the present time and its needs.²²

¹⁹ Against, e.g., M. Oeming 1983, 183n.9; M. Neubrand 1997, 199 with n.6; cf. A. Behrens 1997, 334n.43.

²⁰ See the foundational deliberations in G. von Rad 1962, 7f.

²¹ Especially the latter has been neglected in scholarship (cf. J.A. Soggin 1997, 252).

²² See the deliberations in M. Oeming 1998, 90. – There is still great reluctance in New Testament scholarship to use rabbinic evidence to illuminate the Jewish religion of Paul’s time, even though there are currently great efforts to accomplish the challenging task of trying to make available material from the Mishnah, Tosefta, Tannaitic Midrashim, and the Talmuds to gain a clearer picture of pre-70 B.C. Judaism (cf. the monograph of F. Avemarie 1996, but also the new multivolume project *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament* [TRENT]). For the sake of objectivity and

D. Genesis 15:6 in Paul

One modern systematic theologian who like P. Tillich has written extensively on the essence of the Christian faith is G. Ebeling.²³ He claimed that the statement: “Faith is entirely a work of God” is in no way contradictory to the other contention that faith is a wholly personal act of the human subject.²⁴ It will be argued that this claim can be corroborated through an analysis of Paul’s interpretation of Gen 15:6 and its context.

Our starting point is the formulation ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν (Rom 1:17), a formulation which is the better understood – to cite A. Schlatter – the deeper the causal dimension of ἐκ and the teleological dimension of εἰς is grasped.²⁵ Schlatter himself pointed out that God is the single causal power of faith.²⁶ Yet, as will be argued here, only if this power is perceived as his manifesting the salvation-historical reality of faith in the Christ-event (ἐκ) and as his disclosing the salvation-historical possibility for the individual to participate in that reality as part of the community of believers (εἰς), we can comprehend the whole breadth of Paul’s notion of πίστις. It shall be shown that these two basic dimensions are reflected in the argument of Rom 3:21-26(.27-31) and Romans 4.

The exegesis of the first text unit, Rom 3:21-31, oftentimes called the *locus classicus* of the Pauline doctrine of justification,²⁷ seeks to establish that Paul has in mind the salvation-historical, trans-subjective element of πίστις, an eschatologically qualified *activitas dei*. This paves the way to the subjective perspective of faith elaborated in chapter 4, in which Paul portrays Abraham, Israel’s figure of identification, as one who in an anticipatory way participated in that faith in order to become the father of the community of all believers, according to God’s plan of salvation; in the corporate figure of Abraham, Paul can include the intersubjective or ecclesiological dimension of faith, which is inseparable from both the trans-subjective and subjective. This conception of the Pauline faith could contribute to bridging the dichotomy in modern Pauline scholarship between “the ‘Lutheran Paul’ and his critics,”²⁸ i.e., between the two positions

clarity, however, we will limit ourselves to texts that are unambiguously older than or contemporaneous to Paul.

²³ See G. Ebeling 1959, where he presents in distilled form the quintessence of his studies on the nature of faith.

²⁴ Cf. G. Ebeling 1959, 104-107.

²⁵ A. Schlatter 1935, 42.

²⁶ A. Schlatter 1910, 267; 1927, xvii; cf. G. Friedrich 1982, 109.

²⁷ Cf. W. Mundle 1932, 86. See also K. Berger 1966, 64n.24 (“das eigentliche Kernstück”); O. Kuss 1963, 110 (“theologische und architektonische Mitte des Römerbriefs”).

²⁸ Thus the title of S. Westerholm 2004.

commonly labeled with catchwords such as “justification and inclusion,” or, with regard to Abraham, “faith and fatherhood.”

Chapter II

Paul's Concept of Faith: History of Interpretation

A. Setting the Stage: Some Landmark Works¹

According to F.C. Baur, faith originates formally and primarily from the proclamation and denotes therefore accepting its content and considering it true.² In a more specific sense, faith is the conviction of something transcendent, religious belief, trust in God, and finally Christian faith. The principle,³ on which the Christian faith rests, is Christ; and therefore, when Paul mentions πίστις in the context of justification, it implies faith in God's grace, in Christ's death and resurrection.⁴ Faith becomes the subjective prerequisite of justification that individually actualizes and realizes the unity with Christ and confers δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ to the believer. Adapting Hegelian ideas, Baur makes clear that the believer's identity with Christ can only be thought of in terms of an inner relationship between the human-subjective spiritual consciousness and the divine-objective spirit.⁵ Eventually, the function of faith coincides, or rather competes, with the principle of the spirit, as the bond of community and identity with Christ is either granted by πίστις or by πνεῦμα.⁶

Based on his discovery of two anthropological foundations in Paul, characteristically reflected by different concepts of σάρξ, H. Lüdemann affirms the existence of two unrelated and unconnected circles of thought: the religious or subjective-ideal ("subjektiv-ideel"), which derives from Jewish-religious categories, and the ethical or objective-real ("objektiv-real"), which is based on Hellenistic-dualistic motifs.⁷ The two poles of those circles in the Pauline thinking are signified by πίστις on the one side,

¹ On the history of older scholarship, see especially E. Wißmann 1926, 1-29 and F. Neugebauer 1961, 9-17, 150-156.

² F.C. Baur 1867, 161; cf. 1864, 154.

³ Baur is the first to use the term "principle" in the meaning of "event of salvation," which in a modified way will be taken over by E. Lohmeyer (see Baur's heading "Das Prinzip christlichen Bewußtseins," 1867, 133; cf. F. Neugebauer 1961, 156n.35).

⁴ F.C. Baur 1864, 154f.; 1867, 161f.

⁵ F.C. Baur 1867, 170-178.

⁶ F.C. Baur 1864, 143, 176; 1867, 177. E. Wißmann comments on this competition: "[S]o wird die πίστις für Baur's Logik schier zu einer überflüssigen Größe" (1926, 2).

⁷ H. Lüdemann 1872, 171-173.

and by πνεῦμα on the other.⁸ Against the common view that regards Christ's vicarious suffering and death and justification by faith as primary objects of Paul's theology, Lüdemann argues that those elements were successively pushed out of the center, so that in the most mature form of Paul's thinking they merely symbolize the preparation and premise of the access to the pneumatical gifts.⁹ Hence, the juridical-forensic line of thought appears in clear separation from the ethical-physical; and πίστις and πνεῦμα are no longer two focal points of an ellipse (thus F.C. Baur, R.A. Lipsius), but the centers of two essentially different, autonomous circles.¹⁰

In his prominent work on the Christian doctrine of justification and reconciliation, A. Ritschl carries out a distinction of those concepts with reference to their effects: Justification merely means a "synthetic" judgment, as it does not carry within itself the sign of an effective moral change of the individual,¹¹ while the effect of the καταλλαγή drives the sinners towards God.¹² On the basis of this partition, Ritschl develops his definition(s) of πίστις, arguing for the existence of two entirely different concepts of faith in Paul with equal rights, yet without relationship: In the framework of justification, faith surrenders to God's decree of grace, which is effective through Christ and warranted through his resurrection,¹³ and with regard to reconciliation, faith denotes the exertion of love, active righteousness, and interest in God's kingdom.¹⁴ Both ways, faith relates to the rational-intellectual realm of the person and does not imply a personal relationship to the exalted Christ.

Like H. Lüdemann, also O. Pfleiderer – almost simultaneously – recognized diverse, intertwined lines of thought in Paul: Paul shaped his own experiences into different forms of ideas, which the exegete has to relate to the unity of Paul's complex personality.¹⁵ As for Paul's concept of faith, Pfleiderer distinguishes between a common conviction or feeling of the truth of the divine revelation¹⁶ and a particular, affectionate relationship to Christ that creates the feeling of a moral unity between the loving savior

⁸ The first circle is marked by the ideal δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως, and the second by the real δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου (H. Lüdemann 1872, 164, 166).

⁹ H. Lüdemann 1872, 165, 215f.

¹⁰ Cf. E. Wißmann 1926, 5.

¹¹ A. Ritschl 1889, 330f., 356; 1888, 77-79.

¹² A. Ritschl 1889, 231.

¹³ A. Ritschl 1889, 325. Ritschl, like later R. Bultmann (see below pages 39-41), identifies faith and obedience: "Es ist also der Gehorsam gemeint, welcher in specie der religiöse Glaube an Christus und an Gott ist, so wie Gott durch Christus sich offenbart."

¹⁴ A. Ritschl 1889, 343.

¹⁵ O. Pfleiderer 1902, 69.

¹⁶ O. Pfleiderer 1902, 245f. ("Gefühlsweise oder Gemütsstimmung").

and the believer, a mystical Christ-communion.¹⁷ The personal and at the same time mystical-ethical relationship with Christ is the *proprium* of the Pauline faith, which overcomes a merely forensic imputation and provides an ethical foundation for justification.¹⁸ Pfleiderer's conception is obviously based on a certain view of the person, in which the human being is regarded primarily in terms of feeling; and this understanding is transferred to Christ, the loving savior, as well.¹⁹ Hence, from a formal point of view, Pfleiderer's approach can be compared to A. Ritschl's because of its bipartition of πίστις, yet on the other hand it opposes to the more rational understanding of Ritschl and introduces an experiential-emotional view.

Confronting the misunderstanding of πίστις as achievement, A. Deißmann carries out a psychologizing of the Pauline faith (even to a greater degree than Pfleiderer) and regards it not as prerequisite of justification, but as the experience of justification, as the communion with Christ.²⁰ Accordingly, Paul is not a systematic theologian, but a "religious genius,"²¹ as "classic of Christ-mysticism,"²² in whom his experience before Damascus has produced inexhaustible religious energy. Two equivalent phrases express this: "Christ in Paul" and "Paul in Christ."²³ Paul himself gives to this energy *inter alia* the religious-technical term πίστις. Accordingly, for Paul faith is not directed *to* Christ ("Glaube *an* Christus"), but faith is *in* Christ ("Glaube *in* Christus")²⁴ and takes place in the life connection with the pneumatical Christ.²⁵ Deißmann labels the genitival formula πίστις Χριστοῦ with a new grammatical category: *genitivus communionis* or *genitivus mysticus*.²⁶ God, not Christ, is the object of such faith, since the be-

¹⁷ O. Pfleiderer 1890, 174f.; 1902, 249, 247: "Diese mystische Christusgemeinschaft, dieses Sichidentifizieren mit Christo in Todes- und Lebensgenossenschaft ist das eigentümlich Neue und Bedeutsame in Paulus' Glaubensbegriff."

¹⁸ O. Pfleiderer 1890, 181f., 185.

¹⁹ Cf. F. Neugebauer 1961, 152.

²⁰ A. Deißmann 1925, 132. "[D]er Glaube ist bei ihm [*sc.* Paulus] nicht Aktion, sondern Reaktion, nicht menschliche Leistung vor Gott, sondern göttliche Wirkung auf den Menschen in Christus... Der Glaube ist nicht die Vorbedingung der Rechtfertigung, er ist das Erlebnis der Rechtfertigung."

²¹ A. Deißmann 1925, 105; cf. already 1892, 93 (Paul as "religiös-ethischer Genius").

²² A. Deißmann 1925a, 25.

²³ A. Deißmann 1925, 106. Both ideas are identical, as both express "die Gewißheit von Damaskus" (125).

²⁴ On Deißmann's interpretation of the "in Christ"-formula, see his groundbreaking work from 1892. The category of religious experience shapes his analysis of this phrase, which he considers as Pauline coinage used as *terminus technicus* (70).

²⁵ A. Deißmann 1925, 126.

²⁶ A. Deißmann 1925, 126f. N. Turner (1963, 212), but also K. Barth (1932, 240) basically accept Deißmann's terminology; but see against the introduction of this novel genitive category the reactions against the first edition of Deißmann's Paul book from

liever, mystically connected to Christ, trusts in God's grace, just as Abraham spoke his heroic "Dennoch!" through his unshakable trust.²⁷ In the end, faith and mysticism belong together.²⁸

H.J. Holtzmann affirms the existence of two streams of ideas that flow individually side by side without forming one unified course. Both, however, are of equal value for the movement of the Pauline thinking and complement each other successfully.²⁹ By means of the mystical circle,³⁰ which derives from the Hellenistic mysticism of the syncretistic age, Paul expresses his own personal experience, while the juridical circle represents his elaboration of the theme of "faith in Christ" on the basis of ideas he inherited from his Jewish background.³¹ Ultimately, though, the concept of faith integrates both circles: Faith is acceptance, acknowledgment, and affirmation of the content of the proclamation,³² but at the same time faith is the entire pneumatically exalted emotion of the one who is reconciled.³³

According to O. Schmitz, the tension between the two circles can be resolved by pointing to the general-human constitution in the face of infinity, which results in both a feeling of distance and a mystical perspective.³⁴ Consequently, faith is the person's affirmation of God's deed in Christ (feeling of distance), but at the same time it comprises the "Lebensgefühl" of the believer (mystical perspective); both, Paul's non-mystical and mystical statements describe therefore the inner disposition called "faith."³⁵ In line with J. Haußleiter and G. Kittel,³⁶ Schmitz rejects the understanding of πίστις Χριστοῦ as objective genitive, but equally discards the label "sub-

1911: W. Bousset 1911, 781; W.H.P. Hatch 1917, 46; O. Schmitz 1924, 237; also H. Lietzmann 1928, 48.

²⁷ A. Deißmann 1925, 128. "Der Glaube des Paulus ist also die in der Gemeinschaft mit Christus hergestellte Verbindung mit Gott, die ein unerschütterliches Abrahamsvertrauen auf die Gnade Gottes ist. Gott-Innigkeit in Christo Jesu, Gott-Innigkeit des Christ-Innigen, das ist der Glaube des Paulus." – Notably, in a speech on war and religion from 1915, Deißmann calls the religion of the New Testament a religion of polarities, a "Dennochsglaube" and continues: "[S]ie [sc. die Religion] verlangt ein Einsetzen der ganzen Persönlichkeit und die Bereitschaft, das eigene Leben hinzugeben, sie ist ein Kriegsdienst, sie ist Märtyrerreligion" (1915, 120).

²⁸ A. Deißmann 1925, 128.

²⁹ H.J. Holtzmann 1911, 130 ("wohltätige[.] Ergänzung").

³⁰ Appealing to W. Wrede, Holtzmann favors the designation "mystical" as being more appropriate than Lüdemann's "ethical" (H.J. Holtzmann 1911, 125).

³¹ H.J. Holtzmann 1911, 125-127.

³² H.J. Holtzmann 1911, 132f.: "[S]treng genommen [ist] der Glaube nur die erste Annahme des Evangeliums."

³³ H.J. Holtzmann 1911, 134.

³⁴ O. Schmitz 1924, 41.

³⁵ O. Schmitz 1922, 46f., 71; 1924, 249.

³⁶ See below chapters II.H.I and II.H.II.

jective genitive”; rather, the genitive belongs to the “common characterizing genitives” (“allgemein charakterisierende Genetive”), meaning simply “Christ-faith.”³⁷

W. Bousset challenges Deißmann’s purely mystical interpretation, because on the one hand it neglects the strongly juridical character of Paul’s theology and on the other deduces the mystical aspect merely from the Damascus experience, without investigating the cult of the first Christians and the wide history-of-religions background.³⁸ Generally speaking, for Bousset, faith is the basic *datum* of all religions, the simple subordination under God,³⁹ and the elevation of the heart to the godhead in love, fear, and trust.⁴⁰ As for the specific Pauline conception of faith, Bousset regards the cultic veneration of the κύριος Χριστός in the Gentile-Christian community as decisive. Paul’s personal Christ-piety emerges from this foundation.⁴¹ Moreover, the cultic mysticism represents the roots from which Paul’s Christ-mysticism, signified by the formula ἐν Χριστῷ, grew. In the phrase πίστις κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, this mysticism culminates. It is Paul, then, who places faith (“Christusglaube”) into the center of religious life⁴² and who deepens and spiritualizes what has been handed down to him⁴³; one could talk therefore of a mystical twist in Paul’s idea of faith.⁴⁴ Eventually, faith and mysticism are intertwined and interconnected.⁴⁵

Against that A. Schweitzer famously stated that all attempts to harmonize the ideas of (the juridical) “faith in Christ” and (the mystical) “being in Christ” have been and will be doomed to failure, for the mystical doctrine of redemption through the “being in Christ” outweighs everything

³⁷ O. Schmitz 1924, 108, 230. E. Wißmann criticizes Schmitz’s methodology, as he discusses the genitive-connections of πίστις prior to making clear what πίστις itself means (1926, 70f.n.3)

³⁸ W. Bousset 1911, 780f.

³⁹ W. Bousset/H. Greßmann 1966, 388.

⁴⁰ W. Bousset/H. Greßmann 1966, 193.

⁴¹ W. Bousset 1926, 102, 104.

⁴² In fact, Bousset (1916, 52f.) maintains together with Wrede that the experience of the communion with Christ is for Paul the most essential aspect of Paul’s theology and the separation from the law merely the result, which constitutes the rationale for the right of the mission among Gentiles. “Die Hauptfaktoren des paulinischen Christentums sind nicht dieselben wie die des reformatorischen” (47).

⁴³ W. Bousset 1926, 145, 149.

⁴⁴ W. Bousset 1916, 47.

⁴⁵ P. Wernle (1915, 42) sharply criticizes Bousset’s position and rejects both the derivation of Christ-mysticism from the cult of the congregation as well as the term “Christ-mysticism” in general. Paul’s “mysticism” is his faith: “An ihn glauben heißt: ihn haben, in ihm sein” (cf. E. Sommerlath 1923, 84: “Der Gläubige ist als solcher in Christo”; see in addition O. Schmitz 1924, 249, but also W. Mundle 1932, 133, 150; R. Bultmann 1958, 328-330; F. Neugebauer 1961, 171).

else.⁴⁶ The doctrine of justification by faith, so central for the Reformation, is merely a subsidiary crater.⁴⁷

Also W. Wrede reduced the weight of the doctrine of justification: It is only a "Kampfeslehre" of Paul that arose from his dispute with Judaism,⁴⁸ while the doctrine of redemption forms the heart of Paul's theology. However, since Christ is the center of both circles of thought, they continually reach beyond their respective boundaries and exhibit a close affiliation.⁴⁹ In his book on Paul Wrede discusses "faith" – against the convention of his time – in the section on the doctrine of redemption, claiming that faith is simply the obedient acceptance and affirmation of the proclamation of redemption. But the conviction of its truth establishes immediately this mystical connection to Christ, through which his death and resurrection translate themselves into the believer.⁵⁰ Justification is in the same line as the mystical dying and rising with Christ.⁵¹

W. Heitmüller confirms Wrede's and Bousset's distinction of Reformation and Pauline theology and points to the prevalence of Christ-mysticism compared to the complex of justification.⁵² Paul's Christ-mysticism broke forth in his Damascus experience and connected secondarily to the faith in Christ in the Hellenistic community.⁵³ Both aspects, though remain separate: The relationship of faith and mysticism is not that of identity or interconnection, but of coexistence, for both types of religiosity came into being successively and side by side.⁵⁴ Yet even though (biographically) faith followed on Paul's vision before Damascus as intellectual consequence, he

⁴⁶ A. Schweitzer 1930, 117. – R.B. Hays, however, claims to have found the Pauline coherence of thought by means of his subjective reading of the phrase *πίστις Χριστοῦ* (1997, 287). See below chapter II.H.V.

⁴⁷ A. Schweitzer 1930, 220. As a consequence, in Schweitzer's work the concept of faith disappears (cf. the index, which lacks the term at all; cf. R. Gyllenberg 1936, 615).

⁴⁸ W. Wrede 1907, 72. Before Wrede, H. Lüdemann and C. Weizsäcker came to similar results, but only Wrede's exposition had such far-reaching consequences.

⁴⁹ W. Wrede 1907, 52.

⁵⁰ W. Wrede 1907, 67, 70. Therefore, trust and hope recede into the background as aspects of the Pauline faith. This thought recurs in R. Bultmann (see below page 42).

⁵¹ W. Wrede 1907, 77. – A. Schweitzer, for instance, criticizes Wrede for not having clearly worked out the distinction and interconnection between the two circles (cf. 1911, 133: "Überhaupt wird der Zusammenhang zwischen der eigentlichen, in der Erlösungsmystik angelegten Theologie und der 'Kampfeslehre' nicht offenbar").

⁵² Paul's doctrine of justification is "Verteidigungs- und Kampfeslehre," a product of a later development of Paul (W. Heitmüller 1917, 152).

⁵³ W. Heitmüller 1917, 150f.

⁵⁴ W. Heitmüller 1917, 152f. For Paul's consciousness however faith and mysticism do not fall apart.

has transformed it into the precondition of Christ-mysticism upon reflection in the context of his missionary practice.⁵⁵

Amidst the modern sympathy for the mentioned critics of Reformation theology, one should also listen to a representative of contemporary counter-critique: P. Feine, for instance, seeks to re-establish the doctrine of justification into the center of Pauline theology and determines faith as subjective-human disposition that is required to receive justification.⁵⁶ Faith not only considers true the message of salvation, not only trusts in Christ, but also creates the inner connection of the believer with Christ, draws Christ into the heart, and transfers the believer ἐν Χριστῷ.⁵⁷ An ethical notion is always implied in this communion with Christ.

But before taking up the issue of two alleged circles in Paul's thought,⁵⁸ we will listen to a rather different voice, namely, that of A. Schlatter, who regarded the notion of repentance to be the central idea in Paul's concept of faith.

B. Faith and Repentance

I. A. Schlatter, *Der Glaube im Neuen Testament (1885, 41927)*

1. Introduction

A. Schlatter's groundbreaking book *Der Glaube im Neuen Testament* is the fruit of his participation in a contest organized in the year 1882 by the "Haager Gesellschaft zur Vertheidigung der christlichen Religion" on the topic "Glaube und Glauben im Neuen Testament."⁵⁹ To him implications of our understanding of faith extend not only to the exegetical-theological realm, but they also have existential consequences for the individual.⁶⁰ Compared to previous studies on this New Testament concept, Schlatter entered entirely new terrain in some respects, especially in his extensive philological studies of the Jewish sources.⁶¹ The insights that grew from his exploration of rabbinic theology form his conviction that in the New

⁵⁵ W. Heitmüller 1917, 153.

⁵⁶ P. Feine 1919, 291.

⁵⁷ P. Feine 1919, 292-294. "Der Glaube im Zusammenhang der paulinischen Rechtfertigungslehre ist also Anerkennung des gestorbenen und auferstandenen Christus als des königlichen Herrn und unlösbarer Zusammenschluß mit diesem Herrn" (284). The term "mysticism" is to be rejected due to its magic, emotional, or mystical-natural connotation.

⁵⁸ See below chapter II.C.

⁵⁹ Cf. W. Neuer 1996, 186.

⁶⁰ Cf. A. Schlatter 1927, xxii.

⁶¹ Cf. P. Stuhlmacher 1982, x.

Testament, person and work cannot be separated and are responsible that time and again the categories of deed, work, and act recur in his description of the Pauline faith.

It is the unity of Schlatter's presentation that makes the greatest impression on the reader; this unity is closely connected with his perception of the historical Jesus and his convictions regarding questions of New Testament introduction: Jesus Christ himself is the founder and giver of faith, through his pre-Easter and post-Easter work, and the apostles, who are called to be messengers of this Christ, spread the word of faith in an undistorted and faithful way. The line of tradition is continuous and unadulterated.⁶² Differences in the various expressions of the concept of faith are no contradictions; there is unity in this diversity, as the one God created individual personalities.⁶³ The common root and content of faith in God connects all believers in the history of the church, even beyond Scripture; thus, the church still grows as the continuous, living revelation of Christ and God.⁶⁴

In order to make possible the reader's undivided attention to the matter itself, Schlatter refused to discuss the opinion of his colleagues and include relevant literature⁶⁵ and to accommodate to any terminological conventions. This method, of course, complicates the theological-historical assessment and categorization of his works. But despite the lack of references to other authors and views, it is possible to determine some demarcations and differentiations that Schlatter carries out with respect to other approaches. The apostles did not reflect on the "how" of the formation of their faith, but were content with the "that."⁶⁶ This principle refutes the psychologizing method of the Schleiermacherian theology and of the History-of-Religions School, as it points out the character of faith not as "productive," but as "receptive."⁶⁷ Consequently, the theory that the contents of faith are produced by our own consciousness, which would factually make

⁶² This is certainly the junction where the ways of R. Bultmann and Schlatter part. For Bultmann faith cannot be the work of revelation of the historical Jesus; the line from Jesus' proclamation to the proclamation of the apostles is not uninterrupted (cf. R. Bultmann 1929, 195; 1958, 598-600). It goes without saying that both approaches, Bultmann's and Schlatter's, testify to the circular structure of any historical-theological enterprises. Cf., in the case of Schlatter, A. Schlatter 1977, 103: "Daß ich die neutestamentliche Geschichte als eine fest verbundene Einheit vor mir sah, fand in der Einheitlichkeit des neutestamentlichen Glaubens die Bestätigung und Erläuterung."

⁶³ A. Schlatter 1927, xvii, xxi.

⁶⁴ A. Schlatter 1927, 536.

⁶⁵ Cf. A. Schlatter 1977, 119. See on Schlatter's method O. Kuss 1956, 187f.n.1.

⁶⁶ A. Schlatter 1927, 257: "Daher wird auch nirgends das Werden des Glaubens nach seinem psychologischen Hergang beschrieben ..." Cf. 349.

⁶⁷ R. Slenczka 1984, 349.

them changeable and situational and reduce them to mere reflections of self-fashioned expressions of faith, is refuted by Schlatter.⁶⁸ The faith of the apostles did not originate in their minds, but relates to historical realities that exist alongside faith (resurrection, eternity, eschatological hope, etc.). Paul, “the strongest dogmatic theologian” among them, clearly shows the awareness of this relationship between truths of history and truths of faith.⁶⁹ The receptive nature of faith, however, is not to be equated with quietism or tranquility, that would result in the inclination to withdraw from own thinking, willing, and doing. Here, Schlatter seeks to correct a misunderstanding of Reformation theology that originated – in Schlatter’s perception – already in Luther’s own faith⁷⁰: the one-sided emphasis on the calming, salvation-giving function of faith, which does not release adequately its active component. On the other hand, Schlatter confirms a fundamental insight of the Reformers, suppressed by most Protestant theologians in the 19th century: As God justifies through faith, he also makes the unbeliever to the vessel of his wrath.⁷¹ Positively speaking, Schlatter argues that the mediation of faith happens through the Spirit: the Spirit establishes the presence of Christ in the believer.⁷²

2. *The Motive for Faith: The Acceptance of Our Incapability*

This leads us into the core of Schlatter’s treatment of the Pauline understanding of faith.⁷³ Schlatter begins with a negative statement: Faith cannot happen without renunciation in its widest sense, comprising the entire life-content (“Lebensinhalt”) of the person: One’s works, rights, and justification are all reduced to nothing.⁷⁴ This initial, unlimited abandonment, however, is factually merely the act of repentance which comprehends that we may not ignore our evil: Who has done evil, has to confess guilty.⁷⁵ It is this “simple” rule that bears the entire weight of Paul’s argument in the negative part of his letter to the Romans (Rom 1:18-3:20). The acknowl-

⁶⁸ A. Schlatter 1927, 319: “Diese Theorie entstellt aber die Geschichte.” But he can still call faith “das entscheidende *Erlebnis*, das aus dem Menschen den Christen macht” (1935, 44; italics added).

⁶⁹ A. Schlatter 1927, 319; cf. 353.

⁷⁰ A. Schlatter 1977, 174. Cf. W. Neuer 1996, 191.

⁷¹ A. Schlatter 1927, 364: “Auch die Kraft zu seinem Trotz hat er aus Gott ...” Cf. R. Slenczka 1984, 350.

⁷² A. Schlatter 1927, 365.

⁷³ A. Schlatter 1927, 323-418.

⁷⁴ A. Schlatter 1927, 344, 373f., 324: “Somit beginnt das Glauben für Paulus mit einem von jeder Beschränkung befreiten Verzicht auf das eigene Recht und das eigene Leben.” The reason for this fateful state lies in the fact that through the disobedience of Adam all have been positioned in sinfulness and mortality (cf. 355).

⁷⁵ Schlatter does not propose an abstract concept of guilt, but regards it as moral inability (cf., e.g., 1927, 356: “sittliche[s] Unvermögen”).