

**THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH
IN THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS**

Part I: The Meaning of *hupakoe pisteos* (Rom 1:5; 16:26)

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UNIQUE to the whole of pre-Christian Greek literature and to Paul himself, the phrase ὑπακοή πίστewς, occurring in Rom 1:5 and 16:26,¹ gives voice to the design of the apostle's missionary gospel. Within Romans itself the phrase is invested with a twofold significance. For one, against the backdrop of faith's obedience in Jewish literature, these words assume a decidedly polemical thrust: the covenant fidelity of God's ancient people (Israel) is now a possibility apart from assuming the identity of that people.² Dunn then is right that the phrase neatly summarizes Paul's apologetic in the Roman letter.³

From another point of view, Rom 1:5 can be looked upon as a programmatic statement of the main purpose of the Roman letter.⁴ For this reason Dunn again is correct in writing: "To clarify what faith is and its importance to his gospel is one of Paul's chief objectives in this letter."⁵ In order

¹ Rom 16:26, of course, is part of a well known textual crux. However, I agree with G. H. Parke-Taylor that the verse's authenticity is supported by the way in which the phrase so adequately sums up the intentions of the latter portion of the letter ("A Note on *eis hupakoen pisteos* in Romans i:5 and xvi:26," *ExpT* 55 [1943-44] 306). C. E. B. Cranfield, on the other hand, takes the doxology of vv. 25-27 to be a later editorial addition, but he ascribes its origin to an orthodox source and accounts for its presence "because its intrinsic merit commended it" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975-79] 1.808-9). More recently, L. Hurtado is open to the possibility of the text's originality ("The Doxology at the End of Romans," in *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in Honour of Bruce M. Metzger* [ed. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee; Oxford: Clarendon, 1981] 185-99), while J. D. G. Dunn is inclined to take it as a post-Pauline addition (*Romans* [WBC; 2 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1988] 2.913). I am assuming the doxology's authenticity; but although the argument below is enhanced by this assumption, it does not exclusively depend on it. Even if editorial, these words are a fitting climax to the burden of Romans 14-16.

² I have argued this at length in "The Obedience of Faith: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context" (Ph.D. thesis, Durham University, 1987), to be published with the same title (WUNT 2/38; Tübingen: Mohr, forthcoming 1990).

³ Dunn, *Romans* 1.18.

⁴ N. T. Wright, "The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans" (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1980) iii. M. Black likewise remarks that "to win obedience from the Gentiles" is "the main purpose of the Epistle to the Romans" (*Romans* [NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1973] 175).

⁵ Dunn, *Romans* 1.17.

to appreciate the point, it will be necessary briefly to relate the importance of faith to another purpose of the letter, viz., “to redraw the boundaries which marked out the people of God.”⁶ Whereas before to be a member of the covenant people was to live within the boundary set by the law, the eschatological people have assumed a new corporate identity.⁷ And since there is now “no distinction” between Jew and Gentile (1:16-17; 2:11; 10:12; etc.),⁸ Paul endeavors in Romans to expound the ethical and social expression of this new corporate entity. Pursuant to this end, the letter’s opening paragraph (1:1-7) draws upon concepts evocative of Israel’s relationship to Yahweh and applies them to *all* the Romans, the κλητοί of Jesus Christ.⁹ The pivotal point of the introduction is v. 5—the obedience of faith among all the nations for Christ’s name’s sake—“A neat and fitting summary of his complete apologetic in Romans.”¹⁰

Actually, these facets of our phrase are two sides of the same coin: Paul’s clarification of the significance of faith entails both his denial of Jewish superiority and his reshaping of the covenant community. The recognition of this is vital to our concern, because, as we shall argue in a subsequent article, the relation of faith and works in Paul is illuminated to no small degree by the way in which “the obedience of faith” serves in Paul’s hands as a tool for obliterating distinctions between Jew and Gentile.

In light of its significance for Romans, then, “the obedience of faith” is a phrase of no little importance for understanding the Pauline mission as a whole, both in its universal outreach and its ethical dimensions. Nevertheless because its precise meaning remains a debating ground for commentators on Romans, this first article will be devoted to an exegetical

⁶ J. D. G. Dunn, “Romans 13:1-7—A Charter for Political Quietism?” *Ex Auditu* 2 (1986) 61. As Dunn remarks elsewhere (*Romans* 2.580-81), when Paul in Rom 9:30b redefines righteousness (i.e., from righteousness as articulated by the Torah to that of faith in Christ), he is fully aware that in the process he is redefining the covenant. Similarly W. D. Davies contends: “Paul demands that the people of God, belonging to Abraham, be defined in a new way. The meaning of ‘descent’ from Abraham has to be radically reconsidered: it no longer has a ‘physical’ connotation” (“Paul and the People of Israel,” in *Jewish and Pauline Studies* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984] 128). Likewise Black: “The whole inspiration of Jewish life was the Law and obedience to it; the inspiration of Christian living is Christ, apprehended by faith, and obedience to the Risen Lord” (*Romans*, 38).

⁷ Dunn, “Romans 13:1-7,” 61. The recent book of R. D. Kaylor, *Paul’s Covenant Community: Jew and Gentile in Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), approaches the letter from this vantage point.

⁸ Accounting for the frequent usage of the adjectives “all” and “every” in a markedly qualitative sense, i.e., all people irrespective of ethnic identity can now be numbered among the covenant community.

⁹ In detail see Garlington, “Obedience,” 329f.

¹⁰ Dunn, *Romans* 1.18. Commenting on Rom 15:18, Dunn remarks: “The recall of a key motif from 1:5 [i.e., ‘the obedience of the Gentiles’] is no doubt deliberate since it ties together precisely a key theme of Jewish covenant self-awareness (obedience) and Paul’s outreach to the Gentiles: it is precisely Paul’s claim that the obligations of the covenant were being fulfilled in the faith response of the Gentiles” (ibid. 2.868).

exploration of the meaning of Paul's singular phrase within the setting of his most famous missionary epistle.

I. *The Function of 1:5 and 16:26 within Their Immediate Contexts*

Rom 1:5 occurs in the middle of Paul's opening greeting to the Christians in Rome. He begins by identifying himself as a servant of Christ Jesus and an apostle called and separated to the gospel of God (1:1). This succinct description of his identity and commission leads him to write somewhat more fully of this gospel, which was promised in the OT and has as its subject Jesus Christ, the Son of David and risen Son of God (1:2-4). Thereafter he speaks of his apostolic commission and more particularly of its goal, i.e., to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations for the sake of the name of Christ (1:5). Thus the totality of Paul's missionary endeavors is epitomized by the words ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πάσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ. Commenting on "all the nations," Michel rightly observes that we have to do with a comprehensive missionary expression which corresponds to faith's obedience.¹¹ Paul then relates that the Roman Christians are themselves included among the ἔθνη who fall within the scope of his apostolic activities (1:6). Finally, he greets them as God's beloved and called saints, terms evocative of Israel's peculiar relation to Yahweh in the covenant (1:7).

Rom 1:5 thus stands at the pivotal point of the letter's introductory paragraph, i.e., between Paul's statement of his calling and his depiction of the gospel (vv. 1-4), on the one side, and his address of the Roman Christians (vv. 6-7), on the other. Effectively the verse's expression of the design of Paul's apostleship is also a delineation of the eschatological purposes of God: it is through Paul's preaching that Jesus, the king of Israel, takes the nations in captive obedience to himself (cf. Gen 49:10; Ps 2:8f.). Paul therefore portrays his mission as the instrumentality by which the risen Christ in the fullness of time asserts his rule over the new people of God.¹²

Rom 16:26 forms part of the letter's concluding doxology, which ascribes glory to the only wise God for his confirmation of the Romans in the gospel preached by Paul. This gospel is further explicated by the statement beginning with the second κατά of v. 25 and extending through v. 26. Paul's depiction of his gospel takes the form of a contrast between the "silence" of

¹¹ O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (MeyerK 4; 14th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) 76.

¹² "The apostle's preaching was not merely eschatological in its subject matter; it was itself a part of the eschatological drama. The apostle was called, not just to build a group of believers, but to take part in the work of God which is to culminate in a wholly new order or existence" (W A. Beardslee, *Human Achievement and Divine Vocation in the Message of Paul* [London: SCM, 1961] 85). Among the first to call attention to the eschatological nature of Paul's mission was A. Fridrichsen, *The Apostle and His Message* (Uppsala: A. B. Lundequistska, 1947). Cf. H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 47, and P. R. Jones, "1 Corinthians 15:8: Paul the Last Apostle," *TynBul* 36 (1985) 3-34.

the “mystery” in eternity past and its “manifestation” through the “prophetic Scriptures” at the present time.

As in 1:5, the reiterated ὑπακοῇ πίστεως here in 16:26 assumes a decidedly eschatological coloring.¹³ For one thing, it stands in direct relation to the “prophetic Scriptures.”¹⁴ Such a connection between faith’s obedience and the Scriptures of Israel is to be viewed in connection with Romans 9-11 and 15:9f., where Paul argues from the OT that it was the divine purpose all along to bring the Gentiles into covenant standing with Israel. In so doing, he explains how the Scriptures have come to fulfillment in the preaching of Christ to all men without distinction. Thus the contact of ὑπακοῇ πίστεως with the “prophetic Scriptures” is significant, because Paul sees in the latter an intention of God to manifest faith’s obedience as an eschatological reality.

Second, Paul announces that the “mystery,” i.e., the eternal salvific plan, has “now”¹⁵ been realized in the preaching of the gospel.¹⁶ Without going into any real detail, we may say the term is *heilsgeschichtlich*. Ridderbos, for instance, places Paul’s usage of μυστήριον chiefly in the realm of the redemptive-historical. By the nature of the case, there is a noetic aspect to the “mystery,” which is preserved by Paul.¹⁷ But there is in addition “a plainly historical connotation: it is that which has not yet appeared, that which still exists in the counsel of God and has not been realized in history as fulfillment of that counsel.”¹⁸ Of course, it is precisely the historical realization of the μυστήριον which Paul envisages in his preaching of Christ.¹⁹ Analogous to 1:5, faith’s obedience on the part of the Gentiles is

¹³ On the eschatological character of faith in Paul, see, e.g., H. Binder, *Der Glaube bei Paulus* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1968), who repeatedly emphasizes this (e.g., pp. 43, 89); R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribners, 1952) 329-30; J. Pathra-pankal, *Metanoia, Faith, Covenant: A Study in Pauline Soteriology* (Bangalore: Dharmaram College, 1971) 168f., 200f.

¹⁴ Cf. 1:5, where the phrase is located within close proximity of 1:2, which speaks of the foretelling of the gospel “through his prophets in the holy scriptures.”

¹⁵ The “eschatological νῦν” of v. 26 is an adverb recurring in crucial Pauline passages which announce the arrival of the eschaton, e.g., Rom 3:21; 5:9; 7:6, 17; Eph 2:12-13; Col 1:26-27; 2 Tim 1:9-10.

¹⁶ See Cranfield’s remarks, *Romans* 2.812.

¹⁷ Cf. R. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term “Mystery” in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) 32f.; B. Van Elderen, “The Purpose of Parables According to Matthew 13:10-17,” in *New Dimensions in New Testament Studies* (ed. R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 184f.

¹⁸ Ridderbos, Paul, 46; cf. id., “Israël in het Nieuwe Testament, in het bijzonder volgens Rom 9-11,” in G. Ch. Aalders and H. N. Ridderbos, *Israël* (The Hague: Van Keulen, 1955) 57-58. Brown rightly concluded that μυστήριον in Paul is uniformly the (historical/eschatological) realization of God’s purpose to unite Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ (“Mystery,” 68). See further, S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (WUNT 2/4; Tübingen: Mohr, 1981) 74f.

¹⁹ As Dunn notes, the schema of a mystery previously hidden and now unveiled by means of the correct hermeneutical key was a familiar one. He cites 1QH 2:13-19; 1QpHab; 4QpPs 37; 1 Pet 1:10-12; 2 Pet 1:19-20 (*Romans* 2.915).

the goal to which the revelation of the mystery looked. Consequently faith and the obedience of faith assume a distinctively eschatological character. Seen in this light, “the obedience of faith” is to be regarded as a phrase of some significance for the understanding of Paul. It is, in other words, *his own articulation of the design and purpose of his missionary labors*: God is *now* bringing his purposes to pass in salvation history through Paul’s gospel, i.e., the preaching of Jesus Christ (v. 25). Paul’s commission then is to be viewed as nothing less than the eschatological actualization of the eternal plan to create faith’s obedience among the nations.

This then is how Rom 1:5 and 16:26 function within their respective contexts. However, the primary question is yet to be answered: what does ὑπακοὴ πίστεως mean?

II. *The Grammatical Options*

As noted above, the precise import of the phrase continues to be a matter of dispute among the commentators. Its interpretation is mainly bound up with one’s understanding of the genitive πίστεως, although to a certain degree the meaning of “faith” in these texts is involved as well. Simply put, what is the relation of “faith” to “obedience”?

A convenient summary of the options is provided by Cranfield.²⁰ The first three interpretations he lists assume the objective genitive:

- (i) ‘obedience to the faith’ (i.e., to faith in the sense of *fides quae creditur*, the body of doctrine accepted)
- (ii) ‘obedience to faith’ (i.e., to the authority of faith)
- (iii) ‘obedience to God’s faithfulness attested in the gospel’

Two interpretations assume the subjective genitive:

- (iv) ‘the obedience which faith works’
- (v) ‘the obedience required by faith’

One interpretation calls for the adjectival genitive:

- (vi) ‘believing obedience’

One interpretation assumes the genitive of apposition:

- (vii) ‘the obedience which consists in faith’

It should be noted that the terminology varies among individual writers. Black,²¹ for example, opts for the adjectival genitive, but he explains this as the obedience which springs from faith, thus combining the ideas of adjectival and subjective genitive (or genitive of source). In fact, it will be seen

²⁰ Cranfield, *Romans* 1.66.

²¹ Black, *Romans*, 38.

that some of the grammatical options differ in name only. In evaluating the possibilities before us, we shall consider in turn the strengths and weaknesses of the respective positions.

(1) We begin with those based on the objective genitive. Viewed solely in grammatical terms, these interpretations are the least attractive. H. Schlier argues with some plausibility that if the idea conveyed by the objective genitive were correct, Paul would have written something like ἵνα ὑπακούσωσιν τῇ πίστει, in a manner corresponding to ὑπακούειν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ in 10:16; 2 Thess 1:8 (cf. 3:14).²² Parke Taylor reasons as well that “if ‘the faith’ (i.e., a body of formulated doctrine) had been intended, doubtless the definite article would have been used.”²³ An additional problem is that 1:5 would be the only instance in Romans where πίστις is used in the sense of *fides quae creditur*.²⁴

It is true that this reading of the text is not entirely beyond redemption. As is clear from 2 Thess 1:8; 3:14, there is in Paul the notion that one is to obey the gospel or the word of God. According to Rom 6:17, what characterizes those who walk in newness of life is their obedience from the heart to the τύπος διδαχῆς, the apostolic tradition, to which they have been committed. The problem with Israel, on the other hand, is that she has refused to submit to God’s righteousness (Rom 10:3), i.e., she has not obeyed the gospel (Rom 10:16). The Galatians similarly were being hindered from obeying the truth (Gal 5:17). As a grammatical category, however, “objective genitive” has difficulty standing up to the criticisms brought against it, as ὑπακοῇ πίστεως would be a rather unexpected way of saying “obedience to the (authority of) faith” (or “God’s faithfulness attested in the gospel”).

(2) The two possibilities categorized by Cranfield as subjective genitive differ little, if any, in effect. The real intention of this line of thinking is that obedience finds its fountainhead in faith. As Black remarks: “The words define the purpose and sphere of Paul’s special apostleship: it was to bring the Gentile world to an obedience which springs from faith, in contradistinction to an obedience based on the external observance of the law.”²⁵ Strictly speaking, it might be more appropriate to regard *pisteos* thus interpreted as genitive of source rather than subjective genitive, since faith is viewed as the matrix of obedience. Yet “subjective genitive” is not totally without merit, as stress is placed on faith as the active agent in obedience. At any rate, Cranfield’s two variations on the subjective genitive can be merged into one, thus simplifying somewhat the options between which one must decide.

²² H. Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977) 29. Cf. E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 14.

²³ Parke Taylor, “Note,” 305.

²⁴ Gal 3:23, however, demonstrates that Paul could use “faith” in this way (but with the article).

²⁵ Black, *Romans*, 38. Cf. the commentaries of Bruce, Lenski, and Hendriksen.

(3) The interpretation which takes *πίστεως* to be genitive of apposition perhaps commands the most respect among commentators.²⁶ Michel, while taking the genitive as objective, expresses what is at stake in the genitive of apposition as applied to our phrase: “Faith for Paul is in the first instance obedience to the word, and *obedience for him is the fundamental and decisive act of faith.*”²⁷

(4) The one category which remains is “adjectival genitive,” i.e., *ὑπακοή πίστεως* is “believing obedience,” the significance of which is to be determined by Paul’s broader statements on the relation of *ὑπακοή* and *pistis*.

The possibilities before us then are subjective genitive/genitive of source (used interchangeably), genitive of apposition, and adjectival genitive. These will now be considered in more detail. It should be clarified, however, that our interest lies not in grammatical labels for their own sake but principally in the complex of ideas suggested by these categories.

III. “*The Obedience of Faith*” as the Expression of the Believer’s Total Response to the Gospel

The (exclusive) genitive of apposition interpretation represents the majority opinion among the commentators. Taking Cranfield as a representative, it is to be observed that the most common argument along these lines is that of the analogy of usage in the Roman letter: “The equivalence for Paul of faith in God and obedience to him may be illustrated again and again from this epistle. Paul’s preaching is aimed at obtaining from his hearers true obedience to God, the essence of which is a responding to His message of good news and faith.”²⁸ Murray likewise maintains: “Faith is regarded as an act of obedience, of commitment to the gospel of Christ.”²⁹ Such statements illustrate that there is accord among a class of exegetes that *ὑπακοή πίστεως* signifies an obedience which is directly identifiable with faith. Sometimes this is set over against the obedience which consists in “works of the law.”³⁰

The strength of this position resides in the parallel texts in which faith and obedience are tantamount to each other. The point should be sufficiently clear from the following table.³¹

²⁶ Including Barrett, Cranfield, Calvin, Murray, Kasemann, Ridderbos, Schlier, Sanday/Headlam, and Wilckens.

²⁷ Michel, *Römer*, 76 (“Glaube ist für Paulus zunächst Gehorsam gegenüber dem Wort, und *Gehorsam ist für ihm der grundlegende and entscheidende Glaubensakt*” [italics mine]).

²⁸ Cranfield, *Romans* 1.66.

²⁹ John Murray, *Romans* (NICNT; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 1.13-14.

³⁰ Cf. Michel, *Römer*, 76; Black, *Romans*, 38; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (2d ed; London: SCM, 1955) 148.

³¹ Modified from Cranfield, *Romans* 1.66 n. 3.

- 1:8: “your *faith* is proclaimed in all the world”
 16:19: “your *obedience* is known to all”
 10:16a: “but all have not *obeyed* the gospel”
 10:16b: “for Isaiah says, ‘Who has *believed* our report’ ”
 11:23: “if they do not remain in *unbelief*”
 11:30: “by their *disobedience*”
 11:31: “so they now have been *disobedient*”
 1:5: “the *obedience of faith* among all the nations”
 15:18: “to win *obedience* from the nations”

Schlier supplements the list by pointing to 10:21 (λαὸν ἀπειθοῦντα καὶ ἀντιλέγοντα) and 15:31 (τῶν ἀπειθούτων ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ), where unbelieving Israel is described in terms of disobedience (cf. 2 Thess 1:8). Schlier concludes that obedience is that of faith, so that unbelief can be designated as disobedience.³²

We may reply that as far as these texts are concerned—with one qualification to be established below—the point is well taken. V. P. Furnish³³ is correct that obeying the gospel can parallel believing the preached word (Rom 10:16; cf. John 3:36; Heb 3:18-19). Furthermore, the obedience character of faith is implied in Rom 10:3, where Paul maintains that Israel has not *submitted* to God’s righteousness in the gospel, choosing rather to establish her own. It would be idle then to deny that Paul regarded Israel’s unbelief as disobedience, and vice versa.

At this juncture, however, the question arises: Is the significance of ὕπ-ακοῆ πίστεως exhausted by treating it as a genitive of apposition? In answering, it must be appreciated that other factors enter into the picture. Cranfield, for example, having championed the genitive of apposition, seems compelled to add: “It is also true to say that to make the decision of faith is an act of obedience toward God and also that true faith by its very nature includes in itself the sincere desire and will to obey God in all things.”³⁴ Murray similarly has been quoted as saying that faith is an act of obedience, i.e., commitment to the gospel; but he continues: “Hence the implications of this expression ‘obedience of faith’ are far-reaching. For the faith which the apostleship was intended to promote was not an evanescent act of emotion but the commitment of *whole hearted devotion* to Christ and to the truth of his gospel. It is to such faith that all nations are called.”³⁵

In effect therefore the obedience which consists in faith cannot be abstracted from the (ethical) obedience demanded by the gospel. Hendriksen epitomizes the issue when he writes: “Such obedience is based on faith and springs from faith. In fact, so very closely are faith and obedience connected that they may be compared to inseparable identical twins. When you see

³² Schlier, *Römer*, 29.

³³ V. P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968) 185.

³⁴ Cranfield, *Romans* 1.66-67.

³⁵ Murray, *Romans* 1.13-14 (italics mine). Cf. A. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit. Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1935) 22.

the one you see the other. A person cannot have genuine faith without having obedience, nor vice versa.”³⁶

There would then appear to be some basis for maintaining that the genitive *πίστεως* is deliberately ambiguous, denoting an obedience which consists in faith and an obedience which finds its source in faith. The question is whether other data can be brought to bear which would serve to clarify matters. In my estimation, such data are at hand. Therefore while conceding that the idea of apposition is present in *πίστεως*, we come now to argue that there is a place for the genitive of source in our interpretation of Paul’s language. In so doing, we shall reason, first of all, from the broader perspective of faith and obedience in the Hebrew Scriptures and then from contextual considerations in Romans itself

(1) In the OT and later Judaism faith and obedience are virtually synonymous. As represented principally by *אמונה*, “faith” in the Hebrew Bible is two-sided: trust *and* a commitment (to the covenant) resultant from trust.³⁷ Without going into any real detail, we note with Edmund Perry:

the Old Testament does not set trust and obedience in contrast to each other as separate ways of satisfying the demands of God. *emuna* comprehends the totality of what we commonly mean in the familiar expression “faith and works.” Obedience without trust (i.e. obedience not genetically generated from trust) is not the obedience God requires. Only the obedience of trust is reckoned to man as righteousness and everything else is exposed for the sham that it is, “lying wind words,” “false lips” and “deceitful ways.” Conversely, trust inevitably expresses itself in action. “Trust in the Lord and do good” are two aspects of the same act of will by which man is declared righteous.³⁸

Along similar lines, Bultmann can say that faithfulness is obedience; hence the law and the commandments are among the objects of faith.³⁹ D. Hill likewise remarks that “Judaism has really no place for a rigid distinction between faith and works: faith can only fully exist when it is embodied

³⁶ W. Hendriksen, *Romans* (New Testament Commentary; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 1.45.

³⁷ The same is characteristic of pre-Christian Judaism. In detail, see Garlington, “Obedience,” 18f. To cite one example, E. Haag rightly speaks of *Glaubensgehorsam* in the book of Judith. See Haag’s *Studien zum Buch Judith* (Trier: Paulinus, 1963) 82; id., “Die besondere Art des Buches Judith and seine theologische Bedeutung,” *TTZ* 17 (1962) 300.

³⁸ E. Perry, “The Meaning of *emuna* in the Old Testament,” *JBR* 21 (1953) 255-56. Among the many works devoted to faith in the OT which support Perry, see, e.g., A. Weiser, *TDNT* 6.174f.; A. Jepsen, *TDOT* 1.292-93; E. Pfeiffer, “Glaube im Alten Testament: Eine grammatikalisch-lexikalische Nachprüfung gegenwärtiger Theorien,” *ZAW* 71 (1959) 151-64; G. Ebeling, *Word and Faith* (London: SCM, 1963) 206f.; D. Lührmann, “Pistis im Judentum,” *ZNW* 64 (1973) 20f.; id., *Glaube im frühen Christentum* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1976) 31f.; E. Gräßer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief* (Marburg: Elwell, 1965) 79f.; G. Wenham, *Faith in the Old Testament* (Leicester: TSF, 1976).

³⁹ R. Bultmann, *TDNT* 6.199-200.

in works.”⁴⁰ J. Pathrapankal adds: “The obligation of the people to have faith in Yahweh was precisely an undertaking to remain faithful to the covenant.”⁴¹ G. Fohrer, then, is able to remark that a systematic exposition of faith in Judaism is unnecessary, impossible and even foreign to its idea of faith, because “Faith is action—this holds true for biblical faith as well as for post-biblical Judaism.”⁴²

In a real sense, then, to speak of faith is to speak of obedience. “Faith and obedience are one action. Faith has to be proven by obedience.”⁴³ Further confirmation is provided by the OT’s main terminology for obedience, viz., hearing (normally **שמע** as rendered by **ἀκούειν**, **ὑπακούειν**, and **εἰσακούειν**).⁴⁴ F. W. Young is worth quoting at length.

To really hear God’s word inevitably involves one in an obedient response in action prompted by faithfulness to and faith in the God who is revealing himself in and through particular historical events. Not to respond in obedient action is tantamount to unbelief—and so the prophet chastises his people for their blind eyes and deaf ears (Isa 6:9-10), which betray their faithlessness. This inevitable consequence of failing to hear is rebellion or disobedience. But rebellion is not just the willful disobedience of one who has heard. Rebellion is the sign that one has not really heard, since to *hear implies a faith-obedience response*.⁴⁵

Of course, it is possible to argue that Paul’s ideology of faith represents a radical break with his Jewish heritage. Nevertheless one of the most striking phenomena of Paul’s letters is that he nowhere debates the definition of faith with his opponents. Faith as such was never a point of controversy; Paul simply assumes the OT conception as common ground between himself and those with whom he disagrees.⁴⁶ Furnish therefore is

⁴⁰ D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings* (SNTSMS 5; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 145 n. 1.

⁴¹ Pathrapankal, *Metanoia*, 77.

⁴² G. Fohrer, *Glauben and Leben in Judentum* (2d ed.; Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1985) 159.

⁴³ H.W. Bartsch, “The Concept of Faith in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” *BR* 13 (1968) 51. See further Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 182f.

⁴⁴ A linguistic study of “obedience,” with the various Hebrew and Greek synonyms, has been provided by G. Friedrich, “Μὴ ὑπακοὴ πίστεως Röm 1:5 mit ‘Glaubensgehorsam’ übersetzt werden?” *ZNW* 72 (1981) 118-23 (although Friedrich’s conclusion that **ὑπακοὴ πίστεως** means “die Verkündigung des Evangeliums” and not “the obedience of faith” does not follow from his data); R. Deichgräber, “Gehorsam and Gehorchen in der Verkündigung Jesu,” *ZNW* 52 (1961) 119-22.

⁴⁵ F W. Young, “Obedience,” *IDB* 3.580 (italics mine). According to E. Käsemann, “faith is right hearing” (“‘The Righteousness of God’ in Paul,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967] 177). On obedience and disobedience in the OT (and NT), see, among others, A. Büchler, *Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1928) 1-118; G. Kittel, *TDNT* 1.216f.; W. Mundle, “Hear, Obey,” *NIDNTT* 2.172f.; Garlington, “Obedience,” 6f.

⁴⁶ Cf. U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKKNT 6; 3 vols.; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978) 1.89.

justified in speaking of *faith as obedience* in Paul.⁴⁷ What is radical about Paul, however, is *faith's object*—Christ.⁴⁸ Apart from the scandal of a crucified Messiah, the deciding factor, to coin a phrase, was Paul's "Christological eschatology."⁴⁹

(2) In every other occurrence of obedience language in Paul the reference is to Christian behavior.⁵⁰ In particular, it must be appreciated that the obedience character of faith in Paul entails transfer from one realm into another. As Furnish points out, faith's reference is in the first instance to the God who raised Christ from the dead and is co-ordinate with the confession that Jesus is Lord. Furthermore, "It is precisely the obedience character of faith which makes it the means of the believer's participation in Christ's death and resurrection and which discloses how this is at the same time a 'walking in newness of life.'" Consequently, "The acknowledgment of Jesus as 'Lord' is not possible apart from the acknowledgment that one resides in the sphere of his sovereign power and is bound over to his service. Faith, therefore, is the acknowledgment that one 'belongs' to Christ, and as such it is an act of commitment to him."⁵¹ In short, any idea of faith as obedience and obedience as faith must reckon with the broader eschatological/ethical dimensions of Paul's thought, in particular transfer of lordship, which lies at the heart of the Pauline "obedience of faith."⁵²

(3) The sequence of thought in Romans 1-8 has something to say. Although interpreters differ as to the chapter and verse divisions of this portion of the letter, it is nonetheless true that Paul's discussion of justification by faith is followed by his demand that the justified live the life of the new creation. Therefore the eschatological revelation of the righteousness of God (1:17; 3:21) can hardly be divorced from the formation of a righteous community modeled on the obedience of Jesus Christ, the Last Adam (5:12f.).⁵³ One might say that the latter-day realization of the *δικαιοσύνη*

⁴⁷ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 182f.

⁴⁸ This most naturally accounts for Paul's unusual phrase *pistis Iesou Christou*. A. J. Hultgren, "The *Pistis Christou* Formulation in Paul," *NovT* 22 (1980) 257, then, appropriately paraphrases it as "christic faith." (On pp. 259-60 Hultgren shows that the formulation occurs in Rom 3:22, 26, in contexts employing the "eschatological *νῦν*" of the revelation of the righteousness of God.)

⁴⁹ Cf. Ridderbos, *Paul*, 49; C. F. D. Moule, "Jesus, Judaism and Paul," in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earl Ellis for his 60th Birthday* (eds. G. F. Hawthorne and O. Betz; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 50.

⁵⁰ Rom 2:8; 5:19; 6:12, 16, 17; 1 Cor 14:34; 2 Cor 2:9; 7:15; 10:5, 6; Eph 6:1, 5; Col 3:18, 20, 22; Phil 2:12; Phlm 21; Tit 2:5, 9; 3:1.

⁵¹ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 185.

⁵² Cf. P. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith* (London: SCM, 1971) 65; R. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967) 9. Paul's "transfer terminology" has been examined in more detail by E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 463f.

⁵³ Contra Käsemann's claim that "the characteristic linking of faith and obedience in Paul has a meaning which is not primarily ethical, but as is especially clear in 2 Cor 10:4-6, eschatological" (*Romans*, 15). This is a false dichotomy. Furthermore, Käsemann would be

θεοῦ has as its ultimate intention a covenant-keeping community in the truest sense. In the language of Isa 61:10, the eschatological Israel is to be clothed in a garment of righteousness. Significantly it is within the cadre of the new creation theology of Romans 5-8 that Paul can depict Christians as those who have become obedient from the heart to the τύπος διδαχῆς to which they have been committed.⁵⁴ Paul is therefore very much concerned to maintain the organic relationship between a faith which justifies and a faith which works (cf. Jas 2:21f.).

(4) There is the connection between ὑπακοῇ πίστεως and Paul's greeting to the Roman Christians in 1:6, in which he includes them within the scope of the apostolic commission to promote faith's obedience *en tois ethnesin*. Were obedience confined solely to the initial act of faith, Paul could not have written as he does, simply because the Roman church was founded by another (15:20). Yet he includes even them within the purview of his labors: it is their obedience of faith which he is eager to secure, along with that of the ἄλλα ἔθνη.

(5) Within the immediate context of 1:5 further confirmation is to be had. In 1:10f. Paul relates his frequent prayers on behalf of the Romans. In particular, he prayed that he might be allowed to visit them for the purpose of imparting some spiritual gift, specifically the mutual encouragement of his and their *faith*. Thereafter he states that his intentions in coming to Rome were with a view to reaping some harvest among the *believers* there. It is in this connection that he voices his obligation and eagerness to preach the gospel in Rome, an especially significant consideration, as it alerts us to the fact that gospel proclamation has a more comprehensive design than the conversion of non-Christians to the faith. Paul, in other words, proposes to preach the gospel in Rome *for the express goal of contributing to the advancement of those who are already committed to Christ*.⁵⁵ Thus his "harvest" among the Romans and the other *evils* (1:13) bears a striking resemblance to the "obedience of faith," which he seeks to engender not only among the nations but also on the part of the Romans (1:5-6). In short, this conjunction of 1:5-6 with 1:10f. informs us that there is more at stake in faith's obedience than the initial act of credence/trust which responds to (obeys) the gospel as preached by Paul.

In addition to these arguments in favor of a more inclusive reading of ὑπακοῇ πίστεως, the parallels between faith and obedience cited by var-

hard pressed to establish anything other than a primarily ethical focus in 2 Cor 10:6: *every thought* is to be subjected to the obedience of Christ.

⁵⁴ L. Goppelt (*TDNT* 8.250) remarks that τύπος διδαχῆς is "the impress which makes an impression, so that in context the teaching can be described as the mould and norm which shapes the whole personal conduct of the one who is delivered up to it and has become obedient thereto."

⁵⁵ The fact that Paul's gift is conveyed by gospel preaching implies that when, in 1:16-17, he envisages the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as being revealed in the gospel, the righteousness in question transcends the forensic category of a "righteous status" and is inclusive of the totality of God's requirements for righteous living in the "eschatological now" (Rom 3:21, etc.).

ious commentators could stand some re-examination. It has been conceded that Rom 10:16; 11:23, 30; cf. 10:21; 15:31 are to be understood in terms of an equivalence between disobedience and unbelief (cf. again John 3:36; Heb 3:18-19). In this regard Cranfield is justified in writing: “The obedience which God requires is faith. To obey the gospel is to believe it and to believe in Him who is its content; and to believe the gospel and believe in Christ involves obeying it, obeying him.”⁵⁶ Israel’s disobedience then is her unbelief, and vice versa.

However, apart from an overly narrow reading of these verses (as we shall see below), it is too readily assumed that Paul’s negative statements concerning Israel are a sufficient elucidation of the positive ones, which speak of the design of Paul’s missionary preaching. In other words, it is possible to see in these pronouncements a dimension of thought which is more preponderant than in their negative counterparts, i.e., a comprehensive conception of obedience which entails not only one’s acceptance of Jesus as the Christ but also one’s compliance with the (covenant) demands of this Christ. It is not to be denied that the obedience which consists in faith is primary (both logically and chronologically): cause and effect must be kept in proper sequence. Nevertheless the parallels of phraseology exhibited by 1:5/15:18 and 1:8/16:19 can be read in another light, so as to suggest that more is involved than the bare equation of obedience and faith.

We begin with 1:8 as compared with 16:19, since the similarity of language is so conspicuous. In the former Paul gives thanks for the faith of the Romans, which is proclaimed in all the world, and in the latter he rejoices that their obedience is a matter of public record. The principal question is whether obedience in 16:19 is strictly tantamount to faith in 1:8 or is to be distinguished from it in some sense.

It will be advantageous to look first at 16:19: “For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I would have you wise as to what is good and guileless as to what is evil.” As might be expected, there is no real uniformity among the commentators respecting the precise import of “obedience” in this verse. On the one side are scholars who take 16:19 to be a repetition of 1:8. For instance, Käsemann maintains that “if its [the Roman church’s] faith is characterized as ὑπακοή, this means subjection to the received doctrine, which corresponds again to 6:17.”⁵⁷ Michel believes that Paul here repeats 1:8. He further compares “obedience” in our verse with its occurrence in 1:5 and interprets it along the lines of his understanding of ὑπακοή πίστεως, i.e., as objective genitive. For Michel the gospel has become a “new law” requiring faith as the fulfillment of its stipulations, as over against the Torah, which required “works” for the satisfaction of its demands.⁵⁸ These writers represent the consensus view

⁵⁶ Cranfield, *Romans* 2.536.

⁵⁷ Kasemann, *Romans*, 418.

⁵⁸ Michel, *Römer*, 481.

that 16:19's commendation of the Romans' obedience is *ipso facto* a commendation of their reception of the gospel.⁵⁹ Rom 16:19 then is little more than a repetition of 1:8.

However, we proceed to what might be called the "minority report" on "obedience" in 16:19. Black takes it to be "Christian obedience, i.e., the obedience of faith (defined at 1:5)."⁶⁰ Murray sees "a term characteristic of this epistle and adapted to the subject of which he now speaks."⁶¹ Hodge relates that the language of 16:19 can bear two interpretations: "The word *obedience* may express either their *obedience to the gospel*, their faith . . . or their *obedient disposition*, their readiness to follow the instructions of their religious teachers." He opts for the latter view, citing as parallels 2 Cor 10:6; Phlm 21.⁶²

For the sake of clarification, it should be said that these two assessments of our text are not necessarily antithetical to each other, at least not directly so. It is, rather, a matter of a more limited as opposed to a more expansive range of meaning for "obedience." Those who take the term in its more comprehensive sense of Christian obedience would include within the scope of ὑπακοή the primary factor of believing reception of the gospel. The question is then how expansive is Paul's vision when he speaks of the obedience of the Romans?

In attempting to resolve the issue, due weight should be given to the flow of thought in which 16:19 occurs, i.e., in the middle of Paul's admonition to his readers to avoid those who create dissensions and stumbling blocks, which run counter to the teaching received by them (16:17f.).⁶³ In view of τὴν διδαχὴν in 16:17, it would be tempting to conclude that the obedience of the Romans consisted solely in their acceptance of a body of truth. Yet even a cursory reading of 16:17-20 informs us that ethical matters are very much on the apostle's mind. There is, in other words, more implied in the text than merely the loyalty of the Roman Christians to a set of beliefs, as important as that was for Paul. A thoughtful reading of the paragraph indicates that there is an inseparability of doctrine and ethics in Paul's exhortations at this stage of the letter. At least three factors point in this direction.

First, the presence of αἱ διχοστασίαι and τὰ σκάνδαλα, which were at variance with the received teaching (παρὰ τὴν διδαχὴν ἣν ὑμεῖς ἐμάθετε)

⁵⁹ See as well the comments of Dodd, Godet, Leenhardt, Cranfield, Schlatter, and Liddon.

⁶⁰ Black, *Romans*, 184 (cf. p. 38).

⁶¹ Murray, *Romans* 2.236.

⁶² Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1972) 450-51.

⁶³ Contra W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895) 430, 16:17 does imply that dissensions and erroneous teachings had begun to be a feature within the Roman church. Assuming, as he does, the inseparable connection between teaching and practice, Paul makes a special point of exhorting his readers in this regard.

(v. 17), suggests that behavioral matters had some bearing on Paul's controversy with the deceivers in Rome (v. 18). There is here at least an implicit contrast to the earlier portrait of the readers, who became "obedient from the heart" to the *τύπος διδαχῆς* to which they had been committed (6:17). In the present context *σκάνδαλον* is best taken as "temptation to sin" or "enticement to apostasy."⁶⁴ Furthermore, Gal 5:20 reckons *διχοστασίαι* among the "works of the flesh." In particular, the peace and harmony of the church were being endangered, which for Paul was especially heinous (cf. 1 Cor 1:10f.).⁶⁵ To be sure, theological error was beginning to take a toehold in Rome, but Paul's concern was equally the jeopardy in which practical living was being placed.⁶⁶

Second, the obedience of the Romans was to be supplemented with wisdom and guilelessness (v. 19b). Paul rejoices over the well-known obedience of his readers, but he desires that they be *σοφούς εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀκεραίους δὲ εἰς τὸ κακόν*. Most likely v. 19b stands in an adversative relation to v. 19a, i.e., the Romans are far-famed in their consistency of Christian behavior, yet Paul desires that such obedience be shored up by discernment of good and avoidance of evil. Even if one understands "obedience" in 16:19 as commitment to the truth, it follows nevertheless that the verse as a whole articulates an inseparable connection between obedience and ethics, which in itself argues for a more comprehensive understanding of *ὑπακοή πίστεως*, since obedience as faith is never to be wrenched from its moral effects. "Obedience," to recall Murray's comment,⁶⁷ is to be taken in the sense which it characteristically bears in Romans, as it is now adapted to the subject at hand.

Third, throughout this paragraph Paul makes several allusions to Genesis 3, which in themselves are most suggestive. In v. 18 he almost certainly classifies the false teachers in Rome as the serpent in the Garden of Eden, who deceived Eve.⁶⁸ In v. 20a he alludes to Gen 3:15 and virtually identifies the Romans with the seed of the woman, who was to be the instrument of Satan's undoing. Accordingly it is not stretching the point to see in 19b Paul

⁶⁴ BAGD 753. In the NT *σκάνδαλον* also means "that which gives offense or "causes revulsion" (applied by Paul to men's rejection of the cross of Christ, Gal 5:11) (ibid). The other sense, however, is more appropriate for this context, because "temptation to sin" and "enticement to apostasy" are precisely what Paul wishes to avoid.

⁶⁵ Cf. F. Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1981) 382.

⁶⁶ See the important statement of E. E. Ellis on theology and ethics in Paul, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 75.

⁶⁷ Murray, *Romans* 2.236.

⁶⁸ The same deception motif occurs in Rom 7:11, where likewise the deceitful tactics of the serpent are in view. See J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM, 1980) 103-4. The reference is even more pertinent when one considers that one of the meanings of *σκάνδαλον* is "temptation to sin," or "enticement to apostasy." Thus what the serpent began to do to the human race (through Eve) is continued by the deceivers in the Roman church, who sought to seduce the unsuspecting. The same identification is made in 2 Cor 11:3, 14-15, where the "super-apostles" are depicted in similar terms.

placing his readers in the position of Adam and Eve, who in paradise were tempted to transgress the will of God. Thus Paul wants them to be able to discern the good while avoiding involvement in evil. Such a mode of expression is not surprising in view of Rom 5:12f., according to which the obedient Last Adam has created a new humanity characterized by obedience. Hence the “obedience” of the Romans is colored by the creation ideal of commitment to the Creator rather than Satan, and therefore belongs very much within the sphere of covenant commitment.

Having considered 16:19 in some detail, it will be necessary only to look briefly at 1:8, in which Paul thanks God for the Romans because their *faith* is proclaimed in all the world. It is incontestable that this verse is in some sense akin to 16:19. The question is, though, how are we to understand the particular relationship of the two? Is an identical thought expressed in both places, only with a variation in terminology, or is the latter an outgrowth and development of the former?

In answering the question, we must first pause to inquire into the denotation of πίστις in 1:8. One group of commentators is insistent that the reference is not to the act of faith but the state of faith, i.e., “Christianity,” thus placing πίστις entirely within the realm of the objective. Michel⁶⁹ and Kasemann,⁷⁰ for example, maintain that πίστις does not mean coming to faith (*Gläubigwerdens*) but the state of faith (*Glaubensstand*). Käsemann in particular views 16:19 as a repetition of 1:8.⁷¹

On the other side, Schlier concedes that πίστις could mean the state of being a Christian (*Christenstand*) or Christianity (*Christentum*). “But,” he says, “such a translation considerably weakens what is meant here, namely, that which Paul in 1:5 has called ὑπακοή πίστεως.”⁷² This, I think, carries more conviction than the other interpretation, because, apart from 1:5, πιστεύω and πίστις in 1:16-17 clearly denote the act of trust whereby one encounters the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ. It is highly unlikely then that “faith” in 1:8 would bear a meaning other than its obvious one in the verses which bracket it.

Assuming then that πίστις in 1:8 is to be understood in its most common Pauline sense of the act of belief/trust in Christ (God or the gospel), we return to the original question, viz., how does 1:8 (“your faith”) relate to 16:19 (“your obedience”)? Over against those who understand the latter to be a virtual reiteration of the former, the contention here is that the relationship is to be understood otherwise, i.e., the “obedience” of the Romans praised by Paul in 16:19 is the inseparable complement of their “faith” (for

⁶⁹ Michel, *Römer*, 80 n. 8.

⁷⁰ Kasemann, *Romans*, 17.

⁷¹ Cf. Sanday/Headlam, who see “faith” as a merger of ideas with stress on πίστις as the state or condition of faith—but with an important qualification: “Here it is practically equivalent to ‘your Christianity’, the distinctive act which makes a man a Christian carrying with it the direct consequences of that act upon the character” (Romans, 19).

⁷² Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 36.

which he gives thanks in 1:8) simply because of the strongly ethical character of ὑπακοή in 16:19 (in context). Indeed, this phenomenon of faith giving rise to obedience is exactly what one would expect when ὑπακοή πίστewς is given its pregnant force of an obedience which springs from faith. Consequently the similarity of language between 1:8 and 16:19 is accounted for not because Paul says the same thing over again, but rather because in his thinking obedience is the inevitable and indispensable accompaniment of the faith which accepts Jesus Christ in the gospel.

The conclusion to be drawn from 1:8 and 16:19 is that they do not establish the interpretation which wishes to view ὑπακοή πίστewς as only the obedience which consists in faith. On the contrary, this conjunction of faith and obedience in 1:8 and 16:19 respectively argues strongly for giving Paul's phrase a more inclusive reading.

It remains now to give some consideration to the similar-sounding statements of 1:5 ("the obedience of faith among all the nations") and 15:18 ("the obedience of the nations"). Since it is precisely the meaning of 1:5 which is in dispute, our attention will be focused on 15:18 in its context in order to determine what light can be shed by the one passage on the other.

In turning to the commentators, we are not surprised to find them divided along the same lines as previously indicated. On the one side, Michel can say that εἰς ὑπακοήν ἔθνων in 15:18 means "to obey, i.e., to come to faith." He cites as parallels 1:5; 6:17; 16:26 and concludes that "the entire Roman letter is occupied with this 'obedience' of faith."⁷³ Käsemann likewise views the "obedience" of this verse as "identical with acceptance of the gospel."⁷⁴ C. K. Barrett also sees here a reference to the conversion of the Gentiles.⁷⁵

Others call attention to the obvious parallel between 15:18 and 1:5 but assume a different position as to the actual sense of ὑπακοή ἔθνων. Interpreted against the backdrop of 1:5, where πίστewς is taken to be subjective genitive, Lenski takes ἔθνων as subjective genitive, thus making the obedience in question that rendered by the Gentiles. Hence the obedience of the Gentiles is broader than their believing reception of the gospel.⁷⁶ Black sees Paul's language as the expression of the "main purpose of the Epistle to the Romans."⁷⁷ As with Lenski, this statement of the matter is to be

⁷³ Michel, *Römer*, 459.

⁷⁴ Käsemann, *Romans*, 393-94.

⁷⁵ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: A. & C. Black, 1957) 276. Cf. Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, 387; F. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Cleveland: World, 1961) 369; H. Ridderbos, *Commentar op het Nieuwe Testament: Aan de Romeinen* (Kampen: Kok, 1959) 331; A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1949) 453; Cranfield, "Romans 2.758 (see n. 2 for the variant ἀκοήν in 15:18).

⁷⁶ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961) 883.

⁷⁷ Black, *Romans*, 175.

understood by way of analogy with Black's previous comments on 1:5, viz., that "the obedience of faith" is the obedience which proceeds from faith.⁷⁸

The context of 15:18 speaks decisively in favor of this latter group of commentators. The first contextual factor is that 15:7 is a summary of the entire paraenetic section commencing at 14:1: "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." It almost goes without saying that the burden of 14:1-15:7 is for a quality of life to be displayed among the Romans corresponding to what earlier was called the "living sacrifice" of themselves (12:1). Paul is particularly concerned with harmony in the church, as expressed by the mutual reception of the members of Christ's body, the gist of which is voiced by 15:5-6: "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Jesus Christ, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Therefore the train of thought begun in 14:1 and climaxing at 15:7 provides the background for our interest in 15:18. Accordingly we are pointed in the direction of an ethical obedience highly desired by the apostle. The paraenetic goal of Paul is seen all the more clearly in the light of two data which precede the summary (15:7) of his exhortations to the Romans. The first is the servanthood of Christ (15:3 as it quotes Ps 69:9); the second is the life of harmony in accord with Christ Jesus to be lived by all Christians (15:5). Christ then, particularly in his role as (the) Servant, is the model for the Romans in their everyday relations with one another. Therefore the obedience of Christ and his people emerging from these verses creates a strong presumption in favor of "the obedience of the nations" in 15:18 being taken in ethical categories.

A second contextual factor supporting the subjective genitive interpretation is that 15:8-13 grow out of 15:7, i.e., the Romans are to welcome one another because of the mutual position occupied by Jew and Gentile in the purposes of God. In a more explicit statement of the servanthood of Christ (v. 8), Paul indicates that Christ acted on behalf of the "Circumcised," in order to confirm God's promises to the patriarchs and thereby to bring about the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God.⁷⁹ Having supported this contention with biblical proof (vv. 9b-12), he prays that the Romans' faith may be attended with joy, peace, and hope (empowered by the Holy Spirit). The effect of vv. 8-13 is to ground the mutual reception of the Romans (v. 7) in *Heilsgeschichte*, i.e., the purpose of God as achieved by Christ is that the nations now have come to share in the promises made to Israel's patriarchs. In this respect Schlatter is justified in his reference to

⁷⁸ Hodge concurs: "The obedience of which Paul speaks is the sincere obedience of heart and life" (*Romans*, 440). But note that Hodge does retain the notion of the "word" and "power" of Christ converting men to himself.

⁷⁹ "The recall of a key motif from 1:5 is no doubt deliberate since it ties together precisely a key theme of Jewish covenant self-awareness (obedience) and Paul's outreach to the Gentiles: it is precisely Paul's claim that the obligations of the covenant were being fulfilled in the faith response of the Gentiles" (Dunn, *Romans* 2.868).

the Gentiles' former disobedience and their present obedience of believing in Christ.⁸⁰ Yet, according to v. 13, Paul's concern goes beyond their reception of the gospel. This statement sufficiently corresponds to v. 5, both in form and content, that the latter is virtually recapitulated by the former. Thus the work of Christ (v. 8), as anticipated by the OT (vv. 9b-12), is meant to attain its ultimate goal in the harmonious coexistence of the various factions within the Roman congregation(s) (v. 13)⁸¹ (as opposed to διχοστασίαι and σκάνδαλα).

As the thought progresses, the intensity of Paul's paraenesis is not lessened. Therefore the third contextual datum is that, having wished for joy, peace, and hope to be enjoyed by his readers, he confirms his optimism for them by stating that he is convinced that they are "full of goodness," along with knowledge and the ability to instruct one another (v. 14). Nevertheless he is aware that in certain regards they need reminding about their duty as Christians (v. 15a), which Paul is bold enough to do because of his office as an apostle of Christ (vv. 15b-16). Two points in this connection are noteworthy.

(1) It is again to be observed that Paul includes the Romans within the scope of his mission, even though their church had not been founded by him. Therefore his promotion of their obedience assumes wider dimensions than the conversion experience. Hence when 15:18 speaks of Paul's aim to win obedience from the Gentiles, such obedience, by the nature of the case, must be subsequent to their initial response to his gospel.

(2) The language of vv. 15b-16 is directly reminiscent of 12:1-2.⁸² 15:16 draws on the language of the OT cultus. Paul is a λειτουργός Χριστοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, who likens the Gentiles to a προσφορά offered by himself in priestly service of the gospel (ἱερουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θεοῦ).⁸³ Earlier, in 12:1, he called on the Romans to present themselves as a "living sacrifice," "acceptable" (εὐάρεστος) to God. Coordinate with this is his appeal to them to be transformed by the renewal of their minds so that they may approve God's will (12:2), the ethical force of which is beyond dispute. When therefore in 15:18 Paul articulates the goal of his mission as the ὑπακοή ἔθνων, a statement made on the heels of his intention that the

⁸⁰ Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, 387.

⁸¹ Cf. Bultmann, *Theology* 1.320.

⁸² If we bring 12:3 into play, the correspondence with 15:15 is enlarged; both speak of the "grace" given to Paul to be an apostle. It is in 1:5 that he speaks for the first time of this "grace" and does so in direct connection with "the obedience of faith."

⁸³ As over against R. Jewett ("Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter," *Int* 36 [1982] 16) and Käsemann (*Romans*, 392-93), Paul's conception of himself as a λειτουργός is sacerdotal in connotation; not literally so but as he saw his mission as the fulfillment of the symbolico-typological ministry of the Levitical priesthood. In this regard Käsemann is right that cultic terms and motifs are here used in a "transferred eschatological sense" (*ibid.*, 393). See further A. J. Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 134f.

προσφορᾶ ἔθνῶν be “acceptable” (εὐπρόσδεκτος), “*sanctified by the Holy Spirit*,” one cannot help but see a decidedly moral dimension to the outcome of his ministry.⁸⁴

In vv. 17-21 a fourth matter of relevance emerges. Paul here reflects on the “sanctified” character of his offering and concludes that he has reason to be proud of his work for God (v. 17), although he qualifies by ascribing the winning of the Gentiles, by word and deed, to Christ (v. 18; cf. 1 Cor 15:10). In addition to word and deed, the power of the Holy Spirit in producing signs and wonders enabled Paul to preach the gospel of Christ “from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum” (v. 19). A cursory reading of vv. 18c-19 might leave the impression that the obedience of the Gentiles consisted solely in their belief in the gospel. Without, however, denying the primary importance of the Gentiles’ reception of Christ, it is possible to read Paul’s *whole* train of thought in another way.

The ethical categories of 15:14-16 can be seen to flow into Paul’s reflection on the success of his missionary work (vv. 17-21). In this light the obedience of the Gentiles by word, deed, signs and wonders, and the power of the Holy Spirit is traced to its fountainhead in Paul’s labor of bringing the gospel to those who have never heard. Hence in 15:14-21 we encounter the twin ideas of an obedience consisting in faith and an obedience proceeding from faith, only in reverse order.⁸⁵ V. 18 then, which speaks of the obedience of the Gentiles, comes at the pivotal point between the moral effects of Paul’s preaching and his account of the preaching itself.

One final contextual consideration emerges from the verses which constitute the remainder of chap. 15, viz., vv. 22-33. For the sake of convenience, this part of the text can be divided into two subsections. The first is vv. 22-29. Here Paul reiterates his desire to visit Rome en route to Spain. In this connection he mentions the offering by the Gentile churches on behalf of the poor in Jerusalem; it is they who have come to share in the spiritual blessings of Israel and ought therefore to share with Jewish Christians in material things as a part of their priestly service (λειτουργῆσαι αὐτοῖς). Two matters are particularly noteworthy.

(1) The participation of the Gentiles in Israel’s spiritual blessings (“riches,” according to 11:12) at least implies that they have come to partake of God’s total salvation in Christ. 15:8 spoke of the confirmation of God’s promises to the patriarchs; and by way of analogy with the broader Pauline teaching, these promises are inclusive of such items as sonship to

⁸⁴ Käsemann is correct that in the phrase ἡ προσφορὰ τῶν ἔθνῶν the genitive is epexegetical: “the Gentile world itself is the offering.” However, he is wrong in denying a connection between this and “the self-offering of Christians which the apostle brings about” (*Romans*, 393): surely the one is the immediate effect of the other. Moreover, in both instances, the sacrifice in question is meant to be “acceptable,” an OT cultic term signifying the unblemished character of what is offered to Yahweh.

⁸⁵ It is possible to see a chiasmic pattern in the construction of 15:7-21 as a whole: vv. 14-21 correspond inversely to vv. 7-13.

God and the gift of the Spirit. If then Paul envisages a complex state of affairs into which the Gentiles have been incorporated, his concern is as much for their welfare after conversion as for the conversion itself.

(2) The Gentiles, who are Paul's offering to God, have become priests in their own right; they are now privileged and obliged to serve (as priests) their Jewish brothers in Jerusalem. It is then natural enough to regard this service as integral to their obedience.

Within this same subsection v. 29 has some bearing on the issue. Paul is confident that when he comes to Rome he will do so in the "blessing" of Christ. Assuming the reading *εὐλογίας*⁸⁶ we are taken back to Paul's previously stated desire to impart some spiritual gift to the Romans (1:11),⁸⁷ i.e., the strengthening of their faith (1:12). The obedience of Paul's readers, in other words, will be promoted by the impartation of Christ's blessing. Hence the blessing of Christ and the obedience of the Romans can be seen in terms of cause and effect.

The second subsection of the remainder of chap. 15 is vv. 30-33. Of particular concern to us is Paul's request for prayer for himself that he may be delivered from "the disobedient [*τῶν ἀπειθούντων*] in Judea," who are most naturally Jews who oppose the gospel.⁸⁸ However, many commentators make a simple cross-reference to 10:16, 21; 11:30-31 in their delineation of these "disobedient."⁸⁹ While in basic accord with this procedure, Michel calls attention to two points of interest, although he apparently does not take note of their significance for v. 18 of this chapter. For one thing, he cites 2:8 as a parallel to 15:31, according to which Paul speaks of *τοῖς ἀπειθοῦσι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ*. This reference is appropriate because, as W. Mundle reminds us, Paul has in view the totality of non-Christian humanity as disobedient to the truth.⁹⁰ In addition, Michel maintains that the antithesis of *ἀπειθοῦντες* is self-evidently *ὑπακοῇ πίστεως*.⁹¹

The impact of Michel's observations is that the "disobedient" of 15:31, i.e., unbelieving Jews, are not to be identified solely in terms of their rejection of the gospel. Such, of course, was for Paul a momentous issue. Nevertheless disobedience to the truth (2:8) entails more than the repudiation of a set of propositions. As the context of 2:8 suggests most plainly,

⁸⁶ See *TCGNT*, 537.

⁸⁷ Jewett wishes to restrict the blessing of Christ to the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in Rome ("Romans," 18). No doubt, this was much on the apostle's mind; but the blessing in question is certainly more comprehensive. In 1:11-12 Paul spoke of his desire to visit the Romans for the purpose of strengthening their faith. Thus the blessing of Christ is the totality of what he would do through Paul to further the obedience of faith among the Romans.

⁸⁸ E.g., Käsemann, *Romans*, 407.

⁸⁹ E.g., Cranfield, *Romans* 2.778; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 438.

⁹⁰ W. Mundle, *Der Glaubensbegriff des Paulus. Eine Untersuchung zur Dogmengeschichte des ältesten Christentums* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977) 30.

⁹¹ Michel, *Römer*, 468 n. 19.

behavioral patterns hinge on one's acceptance or rejection of the truth.⁹² It is, according to 2:13, only the doers of the law who will be justified (in eschatological judgment). More pointedly, in 2:17f. Paul charges that his *Jewish* contemporaries have been guilty of ethical infractions, thus nullifying the value of their circumcision (vv. 25f.); and it is surely striking that Paul's question (about Israel) in 3:3, "What if some were *disobedient*," is paralleled in the second clause by "does their *unfaithfulness* [ἀπιστία]⁹³ nullify the faithfulness of God?" Therefore by the term "*disobedient*" Paul reduces his *Jewish* contemporaries to the level of paganism. Without then downplaying the significance of Israel's unbelief, which is doubtless primal in Paul's thinking, the disobedient in Judea form the antithesis of the obedient Gentiles (15:18), in the pregnant sense of ὑπακοή.⁹⁴ It is fitting then that we take the disobedience of the Jews as precisely the opposite of "the obedience of faith."

We deduce then from 15:18 and its context that "the obedience of the Gentiles" does indeed form a genuine parallel to "the obedience of faith" in 1:5, but in such a way that the latter is further explicated by the former (in its setting). That is to say, Paul envisages not only the believing reception of his gospel by the nations but also their constancy of Christian conduct. Their obedience (of faith), in other words, stands in contrast to the disobedience (of unbelief) of Israel in her rejection of the same gospel.

If we may anticipate our next study, ὑπακοή πίστεως thus understood marries faith and Christian obedience. As Mundle has seen:

Since . . . acceptance of the gospel is an act of faith, the apostle in this sense can also speak of the obedience of faith . . . and all the more as recognition of the gospel contains within itself the resolution to be baptized and become a member of the Christian church. It is therefore not a matter of a change of mind which has no effect on the rest of one's life, but a decision which entails the weightiest practical consequences.⁹⁵

We have consequently in the phrase the key link between present justification by faith alone, on the one hand, and future judgment according to works, on the other. While it is faith which justifies here and now, it is the

⁹² To be sure, in Gal 5:7 "obeying the truth" has to do with the acceptance of Paul's gospel as over against that of the Judaizers. Yet, as the context clarifies, only those who adhere to this gospel can produce the "fruit of the Spirit" as opposed to the "works of the flesh" (5:19, 22). Cf. J. M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988) esp. pp. liOf., 202f.

⁹³ Cf. in v. 5 ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν and in v. 7 ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ ψεύσματι, both of which carry overtones of covenant fidelity.

⁹⁴ Thus more is at stake in the statements of 10:16; 11:23, 30, 31 than is normally granted by the commentators. The nature of Israel's ethical disobedience will be considered in a subsequent article. For the moment we note with Dunn that Israel fulfilled the law on the external, nationalistic level but not on the profound level demanded by the obedience of faith. See particularly *Romans* 1.109f.; 2.582, 593.

⁹⁵ Mundle, *Glaubensbegriff* 30 (cf. p. 39).

doers of the law, according to Rom 2:13, who will be justified in eschatological judgment. We are compelled to agree with Barrett that it was important to Paul to show that “obedience has a place in the system of grace and faith.”⁹⁶ Nygren speaks to the issue when he remarks: “Obedience is always required of man in his relation with God. It was so in the Old Testament. There it was particularly obedience to God's law, obedience to the covenant. But obedience is also necessary in the new Aeon ushered in by Christ.”⁹⁷ Accordingly, for Paul the faith which justifies at the present time must inevitably result in an obedience of faith which will justify in final judgment;⁹⁸ or, phrased differently, it is by faith's obedience that the Christian becomes a “doer of the law.”⁹⁹

IV. Conclusion

In Rom 1:5; 16:26 Paul has chosen to coin an *ambiguous* phrase which expresses two ideas at the same time:¹⁰⁰ the obedience which consists in faith

⁹⁶ Barrett, *Romans*, 131 (on 6:16). Cf. again Cranfield, *Romans* 1.66, and Murray, *Romans* 1.13-14.

⁹⁷ Nygren, *Romans*, 55. The biblical notion of “righteousness,” which, for all intents and purposes, is synonymous with obedience, likewise entails a comprehensive assessment of one's place in God's covenant (note how ὑπακοή in 1:5 is paralleled by δικαιοσύνη in 1:17). Neither the OT nor Paul knows of a righteousness which is only forensic, i.e., one divorced from a quality of life concomitant with a righteous status. Among the plethora of works devoted to “righteousness,” most of which affirm this basic outlook, see K. Kertelge, “*Rechtfertigung*” bei Paulus (2d ed.; Munster: Aschendorf, 1971); J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (SNTSMS 20; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); J. Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel*, 34f.

⁹⁸ We may add that “faith alone” in Paul characteristically has reference to the way in which one enters the covenant people of God, as opposed to the Jewish demand for circumcision and commitment to an unmodified Torah. Hence faith is not antithetical to “good works” as such but to Jewish distinctives. See further E. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (SNTSMS 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 119; Garlington, “Obedience,” 356f.; Dunn, *Romans* 1.lxiiiif.; id., “The New Perspective on Paul,” *BJRL* 65 (1983) esp. 110f.; id., “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10-14),” *NTS* 31 (1985) esp. 532f.; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 17f.

⁹⁹ Taking a clue from Cranfield, Reumann rightly comments that in Rom 6:16 the phrase “slaves of righteousness” underscores obedience, which, he says, is “a Pauline definition of faith (1:5), thus stressing that in the Christian life ‘faith-obedience’ must be its characteristic mark until the work of God's justifying righteousness is complete, at the final judgment” (*Righteousness*, 83).

¹⁰⁰ As an interesting analogy, B. Przybylski (*Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* [SNTSMS 41; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980] 17-20) discusses the possible translations of the title *moreh sedeq* in CD. He notes that the Hebrew could be rendered either “teacher of righteousness” (objective genitive) or “righteous or right teacher” (explicative genitive). He opts for the former yet concedes, “The problem with which we have been dealing may in actual fact be a pseudo-problem arising solely out of difficulties inherent in the process of translating from Hebrew into English.” Thus, “It should not be taken for granted that these two ideas are mutually exclusive” (p. 20). This is suggestive because it reminds us that Paul's

and the obedience which is the product of faith.¹⁰¹ Therefore although grammatical tags can be applied to πίστewς only with some reservation, the category which best serves the intention of Paul is “adjectival genitive”;¹⁰² that is, πίστewς is descriptive of ὑπακοή in a manner to be defined by the larger context and in keeping with the most pertinent exegetical data.¹⁰³ This means that “genitive of apposition” and “genitive of source,” while not inappropriate in themselves, are to be rejected as too restrictive. Consequently the English “faith’s obedience” (or “believing obedience”) perhaps as well as any translation preserves the intention (and ambiguity) of the original.¹⁰⁴

The small phrase ὑπακοή πίστewς contains a world of thought, for in it Paul depicts God’s eschatological design for a new humanity, a new Israel. As over against unbelieving/disobedient Israel, the nations have responded in faith to the gospel of Christ and have become, in contrast to what they once were (Rom 1:18f.; 6:16; Eph 2:1f.), the faithful and obedient people of God. For Paul then there could be no higher commendation of his Christian readers than that voiced by Rom 1:8—“Your faith is proclaimed in all the world”—and Rom 16:19—“Your obedience is known to all.”

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Semitic background could easily account for a flexibility in his Greek usage, permitting more than one meaning to reside in his genitival phrases. Perhaps the most famous of such phrases is δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Dunn, *Romans* 1.17; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 237 (the two are “interchangeable ideas”).

¹⁰² Labeled, however, as “genitive of quality” by N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek. Volume III: Syntax* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) 212, and BDF §91.

¹⁰³ Cf. Barclay’s treatment of Paul’s ὁ νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (*Obeying the Truth*, 134).

¹⁰⁴ See Parke-Taylor, “Note,” 305, for the various ways in which translators have grappled with the difficulties inherent in our phrase. The German *Glaubensgehorsam* perhaps better conveys the unity of faith and obedience than most of the English renderings.

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