

Why is it so important to gain
an understanding about faith?

Aristotle

When things are observed from their origins and followed through in their development, they can be perceived and elucidated more clearly. *Politics* I,1252a,3



* *bheidh* (PIE)

- The Greek *pisteuein* (to trust) and *peithein* (to persuade) survive in the noun root form *pistis*
- The Latin *Fidelia*, *fides* and *fiscus* (faithfulness, trust, confidence)
- All connote the binding influences of knowledge, persuasion, faithfulness, and trust as reciprocal aspects of relationships with things or individuals

Pistis/Fides

From the Latin writings of Cicero of the first century BC to Saint Isidorus in late Roman times, *fides* was defined as *fit quod dicitur* which literally meant “whatever is said, happens” in the active, vertical, patron/client relationship.

Cic. Ep. 16.10.2; Rep. 4.7; Off. 1.23; St.

Aug. Serm. 492; Ep. 82.22; Cassiodorus in psalm. 72.39; St. Isidorus orig. Ethym. 8.2.4; diff. 1.486

Social Sciences Theories About Pistis (Trust)

- Trust assists religious devotees to meet the costly demands of religious groups that differ from the easier norms of the surrounding **society**. Rodney Stark *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 176.
- These costly demands increase participation within the religious group and occur in a system of “total services” that include giving, receiving, and obligatory reciprocating. Mauss *The Gift* 3, 13, 25, 41, 82.

Cicero

Pistis and *fides* are
foundational for
any state.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus

1.58.4; Cicero *Off.* 1.23



Old Testament *'āman* and *pistis*

- The covenant relationship is central to understanding the *'āman* lexicon translated in the LXX as *pistis* . The *'āman* lexicon was almost always rendered into Greek using *pist-* forms.
- When Israel obeys, the Lord confirms this covenant (Leviticus 26:9).
- However, if the covenant is broken by Israel, “God will avenge the quarrel of His covenant” (Leviticus 26:15, 25).
- *'emunah* was used in Nehemiah 10:1 to denote documented committal to renewal of the covenant in the religious reformation of Nehemiah and used in the temple in 1 Chronicles 9:22, 26, 31.

'Emunah and pistis

- Psalm 89 came to be interpreted messianically in Christian and Jewish thought because it speaks of God's *'emunah* in terms of establishing a covenant with David.
- The righteous person would live by faithfulness in the covenant (Habakkuk 2:4)

Homeric Pistis

- *Pistis* denoted proper conduct in the Homeric world
- Nobles honored agreements when pledging fidelity to obtain a pause in battle
- Pistis Covenantal marriage agreements were generally respected Hom. *Il.* 5, 124 (*horkia pista*); Hom. *Od.* 11, 456

Classical Pistis

- *Pistis* refers to trusting both gods and men.
- Sophocles discussed the active consulting of the gods to learn desirable courses of action. Once a god revealed the proper course of action, *pistis* was described as the ability to “put faith in the god.” Oed. Tyr., 1445
- Xenophon linked *pistis* with fidelity within friendship. An. 1.6.3
- Aristotle commented that there “is no stable friendship without fidelity (*aneu pisteōs*), and fidelity (*pistis*) comes with time.” Eud. Eth. 7.2.39 1237b 12-13

Hellenistic Pistis

- Philo asserted that *pistis* blessings included “consolation of life, fulfillment of bright hopes, dearth of ills, harvest of goods, rejection of misery, knowledge of piety, inheritance of happiness” *Abr.* 268.
- Plutarch commended *pistis* as a way to forge new relationships to create social bonds that benefit all members of society. He also associated *pistis* as proceeding from justice *Precepts of Statecraft* 805b
- Fides is a covenant ritual of surrendering peoples: *deditio in fidem*. *Livy* 1.38.1-2

Classical, Philosophical Pistis

- Hellenistic Greek philosophers often used *pistis* to refer to rhetorical persuasion with differing levels of certitude.
- Isocrates remarked that good rhetoricians usually use the same arguments (*pisteis*) to think through issues and to persuade others. Isocrates 3.8
- Anaximenes defined supplemental *pisteis* as those that consist not only of the words, actions, and people of a particular case “but of what supplements what was said and done.” Furthermore, he defined the technical *pisteis* as “probabilities, examples, evidences, enthymemes, maxims, signs and refutations.” Anaximenes 7.2
- Aristotle synthesized much earlier philosophical thinking and then popularized a theory about persuasive rhetoric based on proofs. Aristotle defined the non-technical proofs (*pisteis*) as those that are already available for the orator and not those that only come about through his agency. Aristotle

Pistis as a pledge or covenant

- In the third-century BC Septuagint rendition, *pistis* was used to describe the Jewish leaders' commitment
(2 Esdr. 20:1; Neh. 10:1)
- Of the 195 occurrences of *pistis* in Josephus, 58 have the sense of "pledge"
- For Gentile Christians, *pistis* would have avoided the traditionally strong Jewish associations of the Old Covenant (*hē diathēkē*)

Pistis in the Gospels

- The phrase “for my sake” frequently emphasizes faithfulness to Jesus as a broker (Matt. 10:18, 39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; 10:29; 13:9; Luke 9:24)
- The new trustworthy in-group of fictive kin receives Jesus’ total allegiance as his own family once did (Mark 3:31-35; Matt. 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21)
- Now members of this in-group owe similar allegiance to Jesus because one cannot serve both God’s goals and anything or anyone else (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:11)
- To demonstrate faith one should keep commandments, give money to the poor, and follow him, “keeping commandments and good works of selling and giving” (Mark 10:20-21)

Pistis, covenantal relationships in the NT

- Old Testament patriarchs were faithful models of the centrality of the covenant in Hebrews
- Likewise Paul demonstrated *pistis* in preaching Christ's gospel throughout Macedonia and Achaëa (1 Thessalonians 1:8).
- *Pistis* was characterized as a three-way relationship between God the Father and the faithful and also Christ and the faithful in 1 and 2 Timothy

Pistis leads to commitments and baptism

During a baptismal service in the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions*, the baptizand solemnly testified “I align myself with Christ, I pledge commitment (*pisteuō*), and I am baptized”

Constitutiones Apostolorum 7:41:2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8.



Pistis/Fides Coins 1st-3rd Centuries AD



Commodus. AD 177-192.
Silver Denarius.

Rome mint. Struck AD 192.

Obverse: Laureate head right.

Reverse: Fides standing left, holding standard and cornucopia; star to right.

RIC III 233; MIR 18, 840-4/30; RSC 583a



Probus AE Antoninianus.
Rome Mint, 276 AD.

Obverse: IMP C M AVR PROBVVS AVG, radiate, cuirassed bust right.

Reverse: FIDES MILIT, Fides standing, holding sceptre and transverse ensign. Mint-mark XXIE.

Cohen 248. RIC 151.



Commodus Denarius. 192 AD

Obverse: M COMM ANT P FEL AVG BRIT P P, laureate head right.

Reverse: FIDEI COH P M TR P XVI COS VI, Fides standing left with grain ears & standard.

RIC 220, Cohen 127, BMC 298



Gallienus AE Antoninianus. Asian mint.
266 AD.

Obverse: GALLIENVS AVG, radiate draped bust right.

Reverse: FIDES LEG, emperor standing left, holding two ensigns.

RIC 635, Cohen 225.



NERVA. 96-98 AD. AR Denarius

Obverse: IMP NERVA CAES AVG P M TR P COS II P P, laureate head right

Reverse: CONCORDIA EXERCITVVM, clasped hands.

RIC II 2; RSC 16.



Hadrian. AD 117-138.

Silver Denarius.

Rome mint. Struck circa AD 134-138.

Obverse: Laureate head right.

Reverse: Fides standing right, holding grain ears and plate of fruit.

RIC II 241A; RSC 717

Pistis/Fides Seals Marriages and Fidelity



*The dextrarum junctio illustrating the concord of Antoninus Pius and Faustina the Elder and a sacramentum or oath of allegiance alluding to the fidelity of the army towards Trajan.
Schematically drawn from contemporary sestertii.*



Constantine as a charioteer is welcomed to heaven by the hand of God. Bronze coin minted at Alexandria, two times enlarged. Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks.

Obverse: DV CONSTANT-NUS PT AUGG

Reverse: SMALA

Clasped Right Hands = Faith

- The Roman historian Tacitus used the phrase “renew right hands” (*renovare dextras*) as a synonym for renewing a treaty *Annales* II.58
- Romans sometimes sent clasped right hands (*dextras*) in effigy before entering into a contract
- This ritual invited another to a renewed handclasp signifying a renewal of an alliance relationship.

Historiae I, 54, II, 8



Right Hand of Faith in the New Testament

- Galatians 2:9 “right hands of fellowship” to lead the Gentile mission
- People sitting at his right hand as they endure (Mark 10:37-41)
- There are 166 different Bible uses of the right hand that demonstrate fidelity, strength, and power in the Hellenistic Jewish world

Pistis Christou “The Faithfulness of Christ”

- *Pistis* describes God’s faithfully done work when the Psalmist writes that “the word of the Lord is upright and all His work is done in faithfulness” (Ps. 33:4)
- God promises that he will restore Israel to himself in faithfulness (Hos. 2:20; cf. Jer. 32:41).
- The synoptic gospel writers of the New Testament use *pistis* predominantly in an active sense of trust, often in the context of Jesus’ performance of miracles.
- In Matt. 23:23, *pistis* (faithfulness) refers to a proper characteristic of disciples.

Galatians 2:15-16 Proof Text

KJV: We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Probable First-century meaning: **“We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, knowing that a person is not put in a right relationship with God by works of the law, except by Jesus Christ’s faithfulness, we trust in Christ Jesus, in order that we might be put in a right relationship on the basis of Christ’s faithfulness and not on the basis of works of the Mosaic law; because no one will be put in a right relationship on the basis of works of the Mosaic law.”** See Ian G. Wallis’ translation in *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 103. Wallis notes that these verses can be either translated “justifies” or “put in a right relationship.” Because “put in a right relationship” expresses better the first-century nuances of *pistis*, this variation is used here.

Jude 3 Proof Text

- KJV: “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”
- Probable first-century meaning: “**contend for the new covenant which was once delivered to the saints.**”
- Rendering *pistis* as covenant denotes a patron/client relationship and faithfulness that were associated with first-century *pistis*.

Galatians 1:23 Proof Text

KJV: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

Probable first-century meaning: **Only they were listeners, because he who once persecuted us now is preaching the new covenant which he once was trying to destroy.**

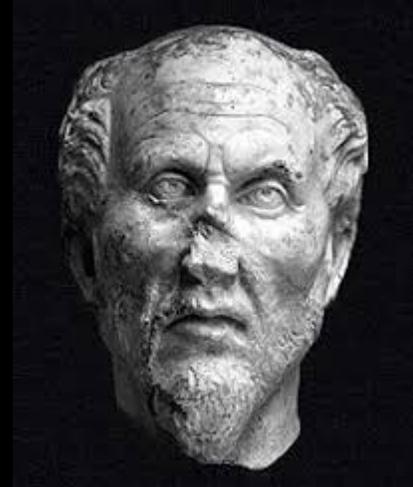
Popular 2nd Century Sentences of Sextus: Lines 1-8

A faithful person is a chosen person. A chosen person is a person of God; A person of God is one who is worthy of God. One who is worthy of God does nothing which is unworthy of God. As a person striving to be faithful, you should do nothing which is unworthy of God. One having little faith is unfaithful in a covenant. A person becoming trustworthy by the test of faith is a god in a living human body. An unfaithful man in a covenant is a dead man in a living body. One who is truly faithful does not sin. Trust (*pistis*) is a guide of all good actions. *(translated by Brent Schmidt)*

Henry Chadwick *The Sentences of Sextus: A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 32-33; Line 166.

Pistis in Neo-Platonic Philosophy

Plotinus (AD 204-270), a neo-Platonic philosopher, taught: “Part of faith in the invisible, is one’s faith in the immortality of the soul and in one’s own membership in the divine world.”



*Plot. Enn., IV.7.10; 8.1; quoted in Richard Bultmann “Pistis” in Gerhard Kittel
Theological Dictionary of the New Testament 1968, 174-228, 181.*

The Rule of Faith by Tertullian (AD 155-240)



“Let our seeking, therefore be in that which is our own, and from those who are our own, and concerning that which is our own, – that, and only that, which can become an object of inquiry without impairing the rule of faith.”

Tertullian, On Prescription Against Heretics, 12

Tertullian

It is the rule of faith, moreover, that we now profess what we henceforth defend; that rule by which it is believed that there is one God only and no other beside him, Creator of the world, who brought forth everything from nothing through his Word, which was sent out before everything.”

Tertullian *De praescriptione haereticorum* 13.1-2

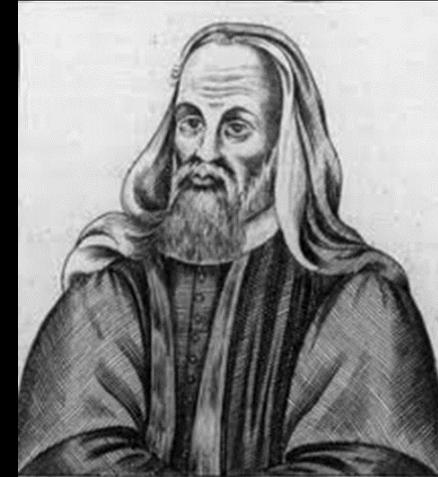


Augustine (AD 356-430)

- Faith is given to young Christians with few words in a creed”
De Fide 10.25
- The church should always be open and available to everyone since faith was an easy, free, inner feeling from a mysterious, omnipotent God
- The “right faith,” has an ordinary moral standard *C. duas Epist. Iii. S. 14*
- *Fides quae creditur* and *fides qua creditur*, “the faith which is believed” (the propositional content of faith) and “the faith by which it is believed” define what faith is until modern times

Pelagius Argues For Classical Pistis

- Faith leads to obedience, righteousness, and good works, resulting in eternal life *De divina lege* (PL 30, 105-16) 2
- Baptism justifies one by faith since sins were then forgiven by God through the agency and will of the faithful
- Those who seek baptism possess “trust from the whole heart and faith in the promises of God” *On Bad Teachers* 5.5



Pelagians Argue For Classical Pictis

- In 416, Vitalis argued that Christians could choose to say “yes” or “no” to God’s gift of faith
- Vitalis was condemned for advocating agency regarding faith
- John Cassian (c. 360-435) argued mankind’s intelligence and free will survived the fall and mankind. Individuals could choose to have faith and take advantage of grace that led to salvation Augustine Ep. 217. 2,4,

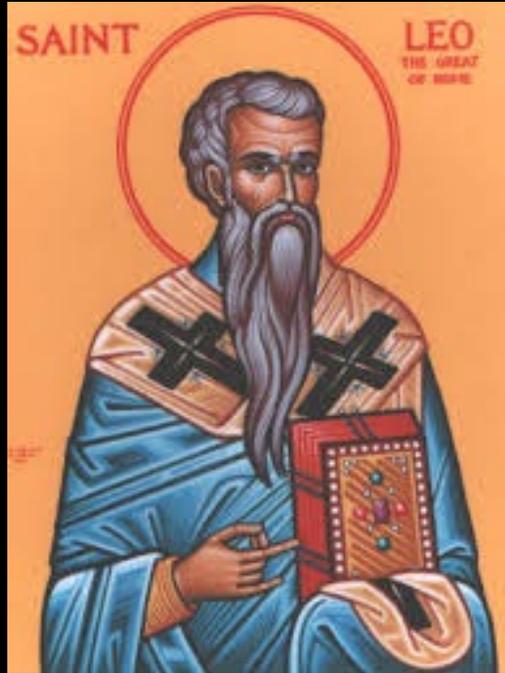
Ambrose of Milan (337-397)

The Nicene Creed became the *fides ecclesiae* or “faith of the church” for both East and West

Ambrose Exameron 3.1.4



Pope Leo I (died 461)



Promoted the “integrity of the faith,” a “completely sound faith,” through an orthodox idea of the trinity

Leo I *The Tome of Leo* 1, 11, 113; 449

Hugh of St. Victor (1098-1141)

Three stages of faith:

1. We accept the teachings of the church without ever thinking about them
2. We reason upon our beliefs
3. We go beyond reason to mystical union with him in whom we believe resulting in “ecstasy”

William Ragsdale Cannon

History of Christianity in the Middle Ages (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), 216.

Faith for St. Thomas Aquinas

- Faith was that habit of mind whereby eternal life begins in us, causing the intellect to assent to things that are not manifest *Summa Th. 2a, 2ae, 2.2*
- Belief” was “faith’s inner act” which transformed the intellect and its public confession was the outer act of it
- The first grace cannot be merited so humanity is justified by the movement of faith, produced in us by **grace** *Summa Th. 2-2.4.1*

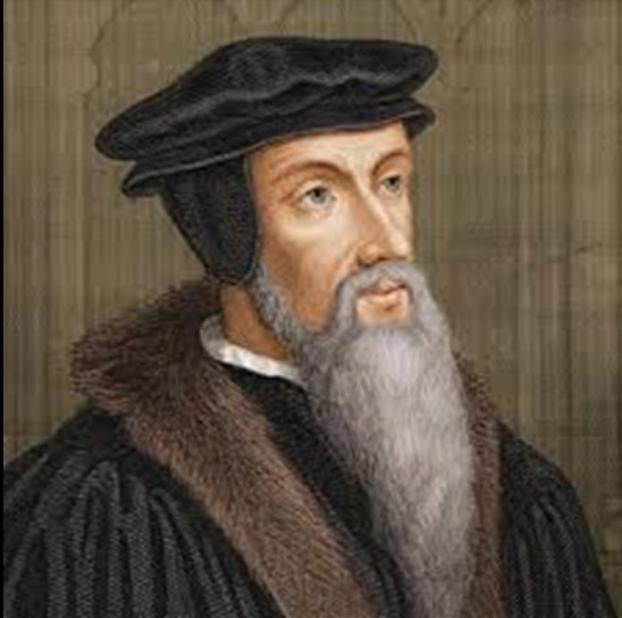
Martin Luther (1483-1546)

- Luther innovated an interpretation of Romans 1:17 as “he who through faith is righteous shall live.”
- Faith became a passive righteousness with which a merciful God justifies us because “He who through faith is righteous shall live”

Sola Fide

- “Justification by faith alone” became a central slogan
- *Sola Fide* distinguished correct theology and spirituality for the Protestant movement
- God set aside his judgmental wrath for his elect who received an inner gift of faith
- Justifying faith (*fides apprehensiva*) meant that faith seized Christ and mystically held him so that his righteousness might be ours, and our sin his WA 5.608.16

Calvinistic Faith



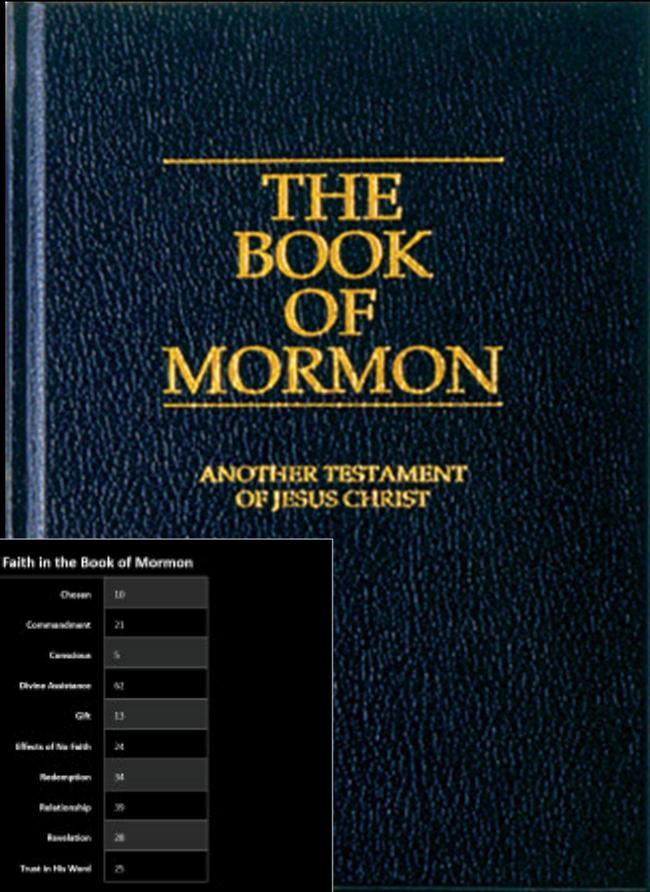
Calvin's faith was restricted to the elect because "faith is something merely passive, bringing nothing of ours to the recovering of God's favor but receiving from Christ that which we lack"

Institutes, Bk. III, chap. 2, no. 12; Bk. III, chap. 13, no. 5

Very Diverse Modern Views About Faith

- Protestant: Rule of Faith, *sola fide*, range from agnostic, mystical, to Lutheran and Calvinistic to abstract
- Catholic: Mystical, Rule of Faith
- New Perspective on Paul: We need to return to original, first-century context of the Bible: James R. Harrison, E.P. Sanders, N.T. Wright, James Dunn etc.
- Some in the church today write about grace and faith in ways that approach orthodox traditional Protestant thinking

Uses of Faith in the Book of Mormon



Chosen	10
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Faith in the D&C

