

## WHOSE FAITH/LOYALTY IN REVELATION 2.13 AND 14.12?

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In Revelation 2.13 the phrase τὴν πίστιν μου contains the genitive of the personal pronoun, μου, which can be used to express the object. In that case it is called an objective genitive. However, some translations of this verse interpret the genitive as a subjective genitive, that is as expressing the subject. This is the case with the classic versions in English, French and African languages. All of these versions have “**my** faith”.

Many translations in these same languages however, follow the interpretation of μου as an objective genitive that is found in Bauer’s lexicon s.v. πίστις 2.β: “The faith is clearly designated as faith in Christ by the addition of . . . the obj. gen. . . ἡ πίστις μου=‘faith in me’, the Son of Man . . .” This is the case with, among others, Moffatt, Goodspeed, the *New English Bible*, the *Jerusalem Bible*, the *New International Version*, the *Translator’s New Testament*, the *Good News Bible*, and Turner, in *Peake’s Commentary on the Bible*: “your faith **in me**”; Barclay: “your loyalty **to me**”; and the *New American Bible*: “the faith you have **in me**”, in English; the *Bible en français courant*: “la foi **en moi**”, in French; and the newer translations in French Kikongo (1977), Kituba (1973) and Lingala (1977).

A special case is Pierre Prigent, in his two commentaries in French on the book of Revelation, which came out in 1980 (“*Et le ciel s’ouvrit*”) and 1981 (*Commentaire du Nouveau Testament XIV—L’Apocalypse de saint Jean*). In the translation section of each of these commentaries he translates “**ma** foi” (‘my faith’), but in his commentary he says “évidemment La foi **en moi** (‘obviously faith **in me**’), which is confusing at best. In their commentaries Charles (*International Critical Commentary*) and Ford (*Anchor Bible*) both interpret the phrase in Revelation 2.13 as “faith **in me**” (an objective genitive).

When we turn to Revelation 14.12, we find less reluctance to interpret the genitive, Ἰησοῦ, in the phrase τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ, as an objective genitive. To be sure, there are some who think it refers to “the faith/of Jesus”: all the classic versions and the older versions in French, Kikongo, Kituba, and Lingala.

But all others follow Bauer’s lexicon, (see above): “The faith is clearly designated as faith in Christ by the addition of . . . the obj. gen.” This is variously translated in English: “their faith **in Jesus**” (Goodspeed, Phillips, *New American Bible*), “are loyal **to Jesus**” (Schonfield, in the *Authentic New Testament*), “remaining loyal **to Jesus**” (*New English Bible*), “trusting **in Jesus**” (Beck), “faith **in Jesus**” (*Jerusalem Bible*, and Turner, in *Peake’s Commentary on the Bible*), “their loyalty **to Jesus**” (Barclay), “remain faithful **to Jesus**” (*New International Version*), and “are faithful **to Jesus**” (*Good News Bible*). A similar variety is to be found in the newer versions in French and some African languages.

It will be noted that it is where the name of Jesus is explicitly given as the complement of (ἡ) πίστις ‘faith’ (as in Revelation 14.12) that there is less reluctance to interpret the genitive as objective. Is it because it would seem strange in the context of the book of Revelation to talk about Jesus’ faith?

But then why not hesitate to talk about the faith of the one who has the “sharp

two-edged sword” in Revelation 2.12-13? This description identifies this individual with the author of the vision of Revelation 1.10 ff, where the one speaking had a “sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth” (1.16). The speaker is “someone like the/a son of man” or “what looked like a human being” (1.13), which suggests that he is Jesus/the Messiah. The problem in Revelation 2.13, then, is the same as in Revelation 14.12. It would seem more appropriate to talk about faith **in** Jesus than about the faith **of** Jesus (Jesus’ faith) in 2.13 as well as in 14.12. Incidentally, proof that the *Jerusalem Bible* in English is not a simple translation of the *Bible de Jérusalem* in French is that the English version takes *both* genitives as objective genitives, whereas the French version does not (it takes 2.13 as subjective and 14.12 as objective).

These two verses in Revelation are not the only ones in the New Testament where (ἡ) πίστις is followed by a genitive having “his name”, “Jesus Christ”, “Jesus”, “the Son of God”, “Christ”, or “our Lord Jesus Christ” expressed or implied as the complement in the genitive and where it would therefore seem necessary to interpret the genitive as an objective genitive. We find other instances in

Acts 3.16a . . . τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ “faith **in** his name”

(Tyndale, *Great Bible*, *Rheims* have “the faith **of** his name”.)

Romans 3.22 . . . Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “faith **in** Jesus Christ”

(Tyndale to *King James*: “(the) faith **of** Jesus Christ”)

Romans 3.26 . . . Ἰησοῦ “belief/faith **in** Jesus”

(*Geneva Bible* and *Rheims*: “the faith of Jesus [Christ].”)

Galatians 2.16a . . . Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “faith **in** Jesus Christ”

(Tyndale to *King James*: “the faith **of** [Jesus] Christ”)

Galatians 2.20 . . . τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ “faith **in** the Son of God”

(Tyndale, *Great Bible*, *Bishops’ Bible*, *Rheims*, *King James*: “the faith **of** the Son of God”)

Galatians 3.22 . . . Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “faith **in** Jesus Christ”

(Tyndale to *King James*: “(the) faith **of** Jesus Christ”)

Ephesians 3.12 . . . αὐτοῦ “faith **in** him (Christ)”

(*Great Bible* and *Bishops’ Bible*: “(the) faith **of** him”)

Philippians 3.9a . . . Χριστοῦ “faith **in** Christ”

(*Great Bible* to *King James*: “the faith **of** Christ”)

James 2.1 . . . τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “(the) faith/ belief **in** our Lord Jesus Christ”

(Tyndale to *Revised Standard Version*: “the faith **of** our Lord Jesus Christ”)

We might also—though it is much less certain that in the preceding cases—translate ἡ πίστις τοῦ εὐαγγελίου in Philippians 1.28 as an objective genitive, “(the) faith **in** the good news” (Goodspeed, Beck), rather than “the faith **of** the gospel” (*Good News Bible*), just as we translate πίστει ἀληθείας in 2 Thessalonians 2.13 as “(your) (own) belief/faith **in** the truth/Truth” (*Revised Standard Version*, Moffatt, Goodspeed, *Jerusalem Bible*, *Good News Bible* and *New International Version*), rather than “(the) faith/belief **of** (the) truth” (*Geneva Bible* to (*English*) *Revised Version*).

The clearest case in point ought to be Mark 11.23, where Jesus exhorts his followers to “Have faith **in** God” (Ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ), but even here *Rheims* translated “Have faith **of** God”!

It would seem that what is needed most is a combination of consistency and common sense, two rules that are ever difficult for all translators to remember.

This review of these examples leads us therefore to conclude that Revelation 2.13 and 14.12 are *both* cases where we have an objective genitive, so that:

- (1) Revelation 2.13 should be translated “your faith/loyalty **in/to** me” and
- (2) Revelation 14.12 as “(their) faith/loyalty **in/to** Jesus”.

These suggestions are made not only for the sake of consistency and common-sense, but also in the interest of accuracy and communication of meaning.

## MORE ABOUT FAITH: SYNOPSIS OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN DANIEL D. ARICHEA AND EUGENE BOTHA

A welcome development in recent years has been the increasing flow of comment from readers on articles published in both series of *The Bible Translator*. Sometimes, a simple article in *Practical Papers* stimulates some highly technical comment; sometimes, too, such comment is too long to publish in full. The editors have to keep a balance between new materials and the exploration of fresh themes. We ask for your understanding as we try to do this; and above all, we ask you to keep your comments flowing.

The series of articles on faith by Daniel D. Arichea, jr., published in *Practical Papers* as long ago as 1978-79, is a case in point. It has recently been subjected to careful analysis by Eugene Botha, a lecturer in the Department of New Testament, University of South Africa in Pretoria, on the basis of research into the lexicographical treatment of the meanings of *pisteuō* in the Greek New Testament. Mr Botha's comments in turn aroused a reaction from Dr Arichea, who felt that in many respects the disagreement between them was smaller than might at first appear. What follows is a selection from this discussion for which the editor is solely responsible, although both Dr Arichea and Mr Botha have had an opportunity of reading it before publication.

1. The discussion concerns, not the English words ‘believe’ and ‘faith’, but the Greek words *pisteuo* and *pistis*. This may seem to go without saying; but in fact it makes a difference. Almost always, the English word ‘faith’ is used in a religious or quasi-theological sense; but this is not necessarily so in other languages, or in English with the verb ‘believe’. This is true even in the Bible. ‘I did not believe the reports’, says the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, ‘until I came and my own eyes had seen it’ (2 Chr. 9.6 RSV). The meaning of a word is drawn largely from its context: in one sentence, the English word ‘believe’ may convey deep personal trust; in another, it may convey nothing more than an option. So in other