11. See, for example, 'in order to trust you, I must have "belief", or 'confidence', that you are trustworthy' (21), 'To be faithful towards one's master one must, at the very least, believe that he is one's master' (4), 'Propositional belief, of course, as has already been discussed, is always involved with trust' (31), '[W]herever relationships of trust exist, beliefs are also involved. To trust people we must, more or less explicitly or self-consciously, believe things about them, while our beliefs are themselves based on trust, and so on in an infinite regress' (227), 'Like all trust, [*pistis*] is intimately connected with belief, on which it depends and which depends on it' (261), 'Propositional belief, meanwhile, always implicit in trust relationships but not, I argued, central to Paul's understanding of *pistis*' (346), 'though beliefs are of course implicated [in *pistis*]' (352 n. 25), and 'relational trust is always intertwined with propositional beliefs' (427). Some of Morgan's uses of the phrase 'propositional belief' and the noun 'beliefs' are ambiguous and perhaps could be referring to the *content* while leaving open whether faith requires *believing* as the positive cognitive *attitude* one takes towards that content.
12. She repeatedly observes that trust can coexist with – and indeed suggests it is always inseparably intermingled with (22) – doubt, perceived risk, fear, and scepticism. She also seems to have a soft spot for Pascal, noting that one might ground a faith relationship with God in anything 'from Pascal's wager to a hunch, a hope, or a working hypothesis' (145, 170) and that trust of a sort that creates relationships and community 'at its best' is understood as a 'hopeful risk' (64). And in several she places qualifies her principle in an important way: 'To trust someone we need to believe that they are trustworthy *and/or* that it is worth the risk of trusting them' (18; see also 228 n. 74: 'and/or thought it was worth speculating on as a hope or wager').
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Pistis, *fides*, and propositional belief

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Abstract: In my contribution to the symposium on Teresa Morgan's *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, I set the stage for three questions. First, in the Graeco-Roman view, when you put/maintain faith in someone, is the cognitive aspect of your faith compatible with scepticism about the relevant propositions? Second, did some of the New Testament authors think that one could put/maintain faith in God while being sceptical about the relevant propositions? Third, in her private writings, Saint Teresa of Calcutta described herself as living by faith and yet not believing; even so, by all appearances, she was an exemplar of faith in God. Would people during the period of your study tend to see her as an exemplar of faith in God?

I want to ask three questions about just one of many strands of thought in Teresa Morgan's magnificent, thought-provoking, and timely book, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith* (2015). (Unless otherwise stated, all parenthetical page references below are to this book.) To get at that strand, I'll start with a broad question.

What is *pistis/fides*, for those in the early Roman Empire, according to Professor Morgan?

First and foremost, she says, it is a certain sort of personal relationship (*passim*), one that produces and binds social relations as diverse as those between family members and between lovers, between slaves and masters, patrons and clients, and friends; between those involved in different roles in the military, politics, law, and inter-state affairs, and between the gods and humans. Now: when a relationship of *pistis*/*fides* binds two parties, it involves mutual faith and faithfulness, the 'two ends' of a *pistis*/*fides* relationship (53). For example, when things are going well, a husband puts and maintains his faith in his wife, and she does the same to him; and each is faithful to the other. When either party ceases to have faith or ceases to be faithful, the relationship of *pistis*/*fides* between them no longer exists. Of course, even if a *relationship* of *pistis*/*fides* cannot exist without the mutual faith and faithfulness of its parties, their *faith* and *faithfulness* can exist in the absence of such a relationship. A husband might be unfaithful to his wife while retaining faith in her; and a wife might lose faith in her husband while remaining faithful to him. Although in this case their relationship of *pistis*/*fides* no longer exists, he still has faith in her and she is still faithful to him.

I want to leave aside the faithfulness that is partly constitutive of the *pistis*/*fides* relationship, and focus on the other constituent: putting and maintaining your faith in someone. What does it involve, for those in the early Roman Empire? If I understand Morgan correctly, it involves putting/maintaining your faith in another *as a thus-and-so*, e.g. as a wife, or as a soldier, or as a magistrate, and so on (*passim*); moreover, it also involves cognitive, affective, and behavioural-dispositional aspects (19, 121, chapter 11; cf. 224ff.).

Now let's zoom in on the cognitive aspect of putting/maintaining faith in another. My questions are these: What does that cognitive aspect involve, for those in the early Roman Empire? Must it consist in belief of the relevant propositions? Or might it coexist with a kind and degree of doubt that precludes belief of them?

If I understand Morgan correctly, Graeco-Roman sources repeatedly couple doubt and scepticism, on the one hand, and *pistis*/*fides* (or trust) on the other hand, and they do so in such a way that, sometimes, you might have *pistis*/*fides* (or trust) in another person even when you lack belief of the relevant propositions (although Morgan notes that *pistis/fides* precludes 'mistrust and disbelief'; 512). Here's a sampling of Morgan's findings, in her own words, ripped from their context, but accurate enough, I hope:

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- *Pistis/fides* is necessary, but risky, hopeful, and doubtful. It seesaws between trust and belief; it struggles to find a foundation, and constantly defers to something else. (45)
- [I]t comes as no surprise (particularly given the fragilities of *pistis*/*fides* between friends) that *pistis*/*fides*, or the lack of it, between patrons and clients generates constant doubt and anxiety in our sources. (63)
- The bond [of *fides*] between generals and armies is so strong that is can survive quite severe attacks of externally generated fear and doubt. (75)
- *Pistis*/*fides* is always important in this world but never absolutely reliable; it coexists inescapably with fear, doubt, hope, and risk. (121)
- Divine–human and intra-human *pistis*/*fides* are not always presented as analogous, but often they are. Not the least of their similarities is that both coexist with fear, doubt, and scepticism. (170)
- *Pistis* is always freighted with risk, fear, and doubt in ways that *'emunah* is not, so why use it of divine–human relationships at all? Why not translate the *'emunah* lexicon . . . with language more suggestive of certainty or security? . . . [Because, one might suggest,] the Greek translators of the Bible fully understood *pistis* language as encoding fear, doubt, and risk as well as trust and confidence, and use it where they find those resonances appropriate . . . Perhaps the choice of *pistis* language in many passages to translate the *'emunah* lexicon testifies to a sense that trusting even a trustworthy God, let alone trusting his creatures, always involves risk, doubt, and negotiation. (209–210)
- Even when it is presented as normatively strong, however, *pistis*/*fides* is never unproblematic; never uncut with fear, doubt, or scepticism. (502)

(See also 64, 104, 124, 180–181, and 154.) While we don't find Morgan addressing our question directly, these and other passages suggest that, from the point of view of the early Roman Empire, you can put and maintain your faith in someone as a thus-and-so, even when you are in serious doubt about whether they are holding up their end of the bargain as a thus-and-so.

It's also important to our understanding of Morgan's take on the primary sources that, in her introductory chapter, she says that contemporary sociologists offer insights on the relationship between *pistis*/*fides* – specifically, the trust one person or group places in another – and propositional belief. Notably, she says, sociologists tend to recognize that, in a wide variety of contexts, trust between parties 'involve[s] the truster's holding beliefs about the trustee'. She then adds: 'To trust someone we need to believe that they are trustworthy *and/or that it is worth the risk of trusting them*' (18, my emphasis). The suggestion here seems to be that, by her lights, you can put or maintain your *pistis*/*fides* in someone as a thus-and-so even when the cognitive aspect of your *pistis*/*fides* is mere belief that it is worth the risk to put/maintain your *pistis*/*fides* in them as a thus-and-so, which is a far cry from believing that they will deliver as a thus-and-so.

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It appears, then, that, according to Morgan, in the Graeco-Roman view of things, when you put/maintain faith in someone as a thus-and-so, there is considerable latitude in exactly what the cognitive aspect of that faith might be, and that cognitive aspect is compatible with a considerable doubt and scepticism.

My first question for Professor Morgan is this: have I understood you well enough?

Now let's move to the early Christian churches embedded in the Graeco-Roman world. According to Morgan,

> New communities forming themselves within an existing culture do not typically take a language in common use in the world around them and immediately assign to it radical new meanings . . . This is all the more likely to be the case where the new community is a missionary one. One does not communicate effectively with potential converts by using language in a way which they will not understand. (4; cf. 8, 30, 34, 36, 120, 213–214, 501)

In light of this 'basic principle of cultural historiography' and what seem to be Morgan's findings about *pistis*/*fides* in the Graeco-Roman world, we should expect that *pistis* in the NT is, first and foremost, a personal relationship of a certain sort and we should expect that the putting-and-maintaining-faith-in side of that relationship allows for considerable latitude in its cognitive aspect. As for the first expectation, Morgan finds that *pistis* is predominantly conceived of in relational terms. As for the second expectation, Morgan *seems* to find that at least some NT authors allow one to have faith in God or in Jesus while being in serious doubt about the relevant propositions. Let's look into the matter.

Morgan writes that *pistis* in the early churches 'is, first and foremost, neither a body of beliefs [propositions?] nor a function of the heart or mind, but a relationship which creates community' (14). Even so, we might well ask, as she herself does, how 'the propositional and relational aspects of *pistis* relate to one another' (227). Morgan begins to answer this question, as it pertains to First Thessalonians, by reminding us that 'wherever relationships of trust exist, beliefs are also involved. To trust people we must . . . believe things about them . . . We can therefore take it for granted that belief is involved in some way wherever *pistis* language occurs in the New Testament' (227). In First Thessalonians, the relevant propositions are that Christ died for our sins and that he was raised from the dead. Moreover, for Paul, these propositions 'are clearly matters of propositional belief'. Furthermore, the Thessalonians' response to the gospel 'was to put their trust in God'. Morgan comments on their trust as follows:

> Propositional belief, as we should expect, is implicit here – the Thessalonians *must have* believed what Paul said about God for it to have made sense to turn to God – but the Thessalonians' response to Paul's preaching is not described as belief that certain things are so, but relationally as trust in God, turning to God, serving God, and waiting for God's Son . . . Paul takes for granted that the Thessalonians share his belief that the resurrection occurred, but he does not characterize it as the focal point of their *pistis*. (228, my emphasis)

The focal point is relational: their turning to *serve* the living God.

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If this were all that Morgan had to say about the cognitive aspect of the *pistis* of the Thessalonians, we might infer that, by her lights, the Thessalonians' faith in God, although focused on a servant relationship with God, 'must have' involved *believing that* Christ died for our sins and *believing that* he was raised from the dead. However, in a footnote to the passage quoted (228 n. 74), she describes their cognitive attitude differently. Placing that note into the passage, we have this result: 'Propositional belief, as we should expect, is implicit here – the Thessalonians must have believed what Paul said about God for it to have made sense to turn to God, *and/or thought it was worth speculating on as a hope or wager*' (my emphasis). Of course, there's a huge difference between the propositional object in (i) believing that Christ died for our sins or that he was raised from the dead and the propositional object in (ii) believing that these propositions are worth speculating on as a hope or wager. The latter is compatible with being in doubt about them while the former is not.

Morgan also discusses First Corinthians 15, which many view as 'demonstrating beyond doubt the centrality, in both apostolic preaching and community *pistis*, of propositional belief' (229). Paul tells the Corinthians that their *pistis* is in vain and that they are still in their sins if Christ has not been raised from the dead. Morgan writes: 'Paul takes for granted that the Corinthians (like the Thessalonians) believe this' (229). She then argues that, even so, in context the focal point of the passage is the Corinthians' *pistis* relationship with God and not their propositional belief (231). I'm wondering whether the cognitive latitude Morgan seems to find in First Thessalonians might be found in First Corinthians (cf. 231 n. 77). Let me develop the question.

Suppose that the propositions that are relevant to the *pistis* of the Corinthians are those listed in 15.3–7. For simplicity's sake, focus on just one: that Christ was raised from the dead. A question arises: by Paul's lights, can the Corinthians put/maintain faith in Christ *only if* they believe that Christ was raised from the dead? Or might he have thought (even if just implicitly) that the cognitive aspect of putting/maintaining faith in Christ allowed for some flexibility on this score?

Imagine putting the question to him. *Might* the Corinthians still have faith in Christ even if they only believed that it is fairly likely that Christ was raised from the dead? Or what if they only believed that it is more likely than not that he was raised? Or only believed that his being raised was twice as likely as each of the contraries they found the least bit credible (e.g. that the authorities moved his body, or that the disciples stole it)? Or, to adopt Morgan's terminology, *might* the Corinthians still have faith in Christ even if they only believed that it was worth the risk to trust that Christ was raised from the dead? Or what if they only believed that his being raised was worth putting one's hope in, or what if they only believed that it was worth wagering on? For that matter, what if they simply hoped that Christ was raised from the dead, or simply trusted that he was raised, or (belieflessly) assumed that he was? What would Paul say? *Might*

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the Corinthians still have faith in Christ in such cases? Given that Paul wrote First Corinthians only about five years after he wrote First Thessalonians, I should think that it would be extremely odd for him to grant the Thessalonians faith in God while only believing that the relevant propositions are worth speculating on as a hope or wager, but to deny such cognitive flexibility to the Corinthians' faith in Christ. Interestingly, if Paul were to grant that the *pistis* he cared about allowed for such flexibility, then it would be much closer to the *pistis* in the surrounding Graeco-Roman world, a *pistis* that, in Morgan's words, was compatible with doubt and scepticism, provided that its behavioural aspects were sufficiently robust.

The Synoptics appear to be another source for the possible coexistence of faith and doubt. Summing up her discussion of them, Morgan writes:

> all the synoptic writers acknowledge to some degree that even within the *pistis* relationship there is room for fear and doubt; no relationship is perfectly secure, but all have room to develop . . . In these passages we can hear the writers addressing their communities, perhaps reassuring members that even when they already put their trust in God and Christ they may experience fear, doubt or scepticism, and that these need not exclude them from the kingdom if they keep practising *pistis*. (392)

This is hardly surprising, Morgan observes. After all, 'Since, as we've seen, trust, belief, fear, doubt, and scepticism are understood as constant companions throughout ancient literature, and across many modern disciplines, the reader is hardly surprised to find them coexisting in the disciples' (357). This is especially clear in Mark's narrative, which displays the disciples' 'ongoing struggle between *pistis*, fear, doubt and scepticism' (356). Even if 'absolute *pistis*' – as Morgan calls it, i.e. *pistis* absent fear, doubt, and scepticism – is the 'ideal', she says that 'fear, doubt, and scepticism do not cause Jesus to reject [the disciples] as followers, nor stop him helping them or those whom they have been trying to help' (357). The fact that faith can be laced with doubt and scepticism, at least in the world of Mark's narrative, is seen by the 'condition of mixed *pistis* and *apistia*' in the man with the demon-possessed son. Morgan observes: '*pistis* may not be perfect, but may be – perhaps, for most people, always is – entangled with its opposites', notably doubt and scepticism (357). This fact is also seen in the contrast between the lack of faith in Jesus' followers and the lack of faith in those who are not his followers; while the former may well be laced with fear, doubt, and scepticism, the latter is laced with something more sinister: 'a *refusal* to trust or believe at all' (357–359, my emphasis; 367).

Interestingly, Matthew omits Mark's reference to mixed *pistis* and *apistia* in his telling of the story of the father with the demon-possessed son, but, according to Morgan, adds the same idea to the story of the haemorrhaging woman.

> By telling the woman, who has already demonstrated powerful *pistis* towards him, to take heart or have confidence, even as he tells her that her *pistis* has saved her, Matthew's Jesus reminds

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> his listeners that even powerful *pistis* in ordinary human beings is always to some degree provisional and evolving, and always entangled with fear, doubt, and scepticism. (370)

It appears, then, that by Morgan's lights, at least some of the NT authors thought that one could have faith in God or Jesus while being in considerable doubt about the relevant propositions; moreover, considerable latitude was given to what positive cognitive attitude one might adopt.

My second question for Professor Morgan is like the first: have I understood you well enough?

Now to my third and final question. Consider Saint Teresa of Calcutta. In 1942, after what she took to be a calling from the Lord, she made a private vow to give herself completely to him, *no matter what*, and to serve him among the poorest of the poor. What she didn't expect at the time was that the 'no matter what' clause of her vow would include nearly five decades of relational emptiness and severe doubt (Kolodiejchuk (2007), 337). It appears from her private writings that she not only experienced the felt absence of God during that time; she also experienced doubt of a sort and degree that is incompatible with belief. '[T]here is no One to answer my prayers,' she wrote: 'So many unanswered questions live within me – I am afraid to uncover them – because of the blasphemy. – If there be God, please forgive me' (*ibid.*, 187). Later she wrote:

> In my soul I feel just that terrible pain of loss – of God not wanting me – of God not being God – of God not really existing (Jesus, please forgive my blasphemies – I have been told to write everything). That darkness that surrounds me on all sides – I can't lift my soul to God – no light or inspiration enters my soul. – I speak of love for souls – of tender love for God – words pass through my lips [sic, for 'words'] – and I long with a deep longing to believe them. – What do I labour for? If there be no God – there can be no soul. – If there is no soul then Jesus – You also are not true. (*ibid.*, 192–193; cf. 349)

This was not a one-off occurrence. Towards the end of the period during which she wrote, her confessor inquired about her interior life and she replied that it had seen no change.

How are we to understand this aspect of Teresa's life? Early on, she described herself as having lost her faith. 'Where is my Faith?,' she wrote.'Even deep down, right in, there is nothing but emptiness and darkness. – My God – how painful is this unknown pain – I have no Faith – I dare not utter the words & thoughts that crowd in my heart – & make me suffer untold agony' (*ibid.*, 187; see also 193).If our only resources for understanding faith make belief of the relevant propositions a requirement, this seems like the right thing to say. Interestingly, however, Saint Teresa later came to a different understanding of her situation. At that time, she described her adult commitment with nine short words (*ibid.*, 248): 'to live by faith and yet not to believe'. It is not difficult to see here someone experiencing severe intellectual doubt – an experience reportedly not uncommon among the Missionaries of Charity, and quite understandable given their experience with pain and disease, and death and suffering. And

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notice that the content of Saint Teresa's doubt went to the heart of the basic Christian story (BCS): the existence of God and Jesus. And yet we see someone who, you might say, acts on the (beliefless) assumption that God and Jesus do exist, and resolves to live in light of the BCS despite their doubt.

My third question for Professor Morgan is this: given your understanding of *pistis*/*fides* from the period of your study, would people tend to see Saint Teresa as (i) someone who *lacked* faith in God/Jesus/BCS, (ii) someone who *had* faith in God/Jesus/BCS, or (iii) someone who not only had faith in God/Jesus/BCS but who was an *exemplar* of such faith?[1]

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Response to my commentators

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Abstract: Responding to key questions raised by the other three, this article discusses the factors which led to the development of Christian fideism and why Christians were seen as a threat to wider society. It considers whether early Christian discourses always represent (of characters in narratives), or demand, belief alongside trust and other relational aspects of *pistis*, and argues that it is sometimes possible to have effective *pistis* without having right beliefs. It discusses the variable relationship between belief and doubt in New Testament texts, and suggests how the faith of St Teresa of Calcutta might have been viewed by early Christians.