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Homeric and Hesiodic Origins of Πίστις: An Other-Rhetorical Inquiry

*Rhetoric, in the general sense of the use of language in such a manner as to impress the hearers and influence them for or against a certain course of action, is as old as language itself and the beginnings of social and political life. It was practised and highly esteemed among the Greeks from the earliest times. [The characters of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, for example,] bear witness to this, and justify the opinion of the ancient Greeks that Homer was the real father of oratory. After the age of Homer and Hesiod . . . Athens compelled statesmen to become orators.*

John Henry Freese, "Introduction" to Aristotle's The "Art" of Rhetoric (vii-viii)

*According to the eighth-century B.C. epic poet Hesiod (*Erga* 90-105), man lost his divine inspiration for eloquence when Pandora lifted the lid of the jar containing the gods' gifts to men . . . For Pietro Pucci, author of *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry*, "Pandora introduces the exclusivity of human language and, therefore, is the first human who can no longer speak the language of the gods, of which Homer knows some words and to which Hesiod alludes in *Th* 837" (91) To say that Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are paradigms in the history of literature is to utter a commonplace, but their contributions to the history and development of writing and rhetorical theory have received far less attention. . . . [And] we may [be able to] consider the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the first important steps in the history of writing and rhetoric.*

Richard Leo Enos, Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle (1-2)

James L. Kinneavy's study, Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith: An Inquiry, (A) observes that "no scholar . . . has seriously viewed rhetoric as a possible origin, source, or analogue of the Christian concept of faith"; (B) questions "the old thesis" of "most authorities . . . that it is difficult to posit any definitive source for some of the major features of the Christian notion of faith (3);¹ and (C) purports a "new hypothesis."² The hypothesis is (i) "that many of the major features of the concept of persuasion, as embodied in Greek rhetoric of the Hellenistic period, are semantically quite close to the Christian notion of faith"; (ii) "that the writers of the New Testament were, in all probability, aware of these rapprochements"; and (iii) "that a majority of the texts in the New Testament that mention *pistis* as faith can be read with a rhetorical interpretation" (4). Indeed, such conceptualizations, rapprochements, and interpretations are *from one direction*, out of "the classical period and then into the Hellenistic period," even if Kinneavy must insist "it is out of the Hellenistic period that the Christian view of *pistis* was derived" (33, 34).³

But, in fact, the Greek *starting point* of πίστις is to be found much earlier, not only historically but also linguistically. In Hesiod and in Homer the word is spoken, and out of their archaic period of orality,

is written down for the very first time. Initially and decidedly, then, it denotes “trust,” “belief,” and “faith.” And yet, if that uttered or inscribed word does at all in any way connote “proof” or “persuasion,” it does so merely by its association with other phrases that, in co-locative contrast with πίστις, more demonstratively suggest “proof” or “persuasion.” (Please see pages 4 and 5, and the Appendix, below).

The Evolution of Πίστις: Suggesting An Other-Rhetorical Hypothesis

The archaic πίστις, it is also important to note, is one of the first Greek words to undergo the process of what George A. Kennedy has identified as *letteraturizzazione*, or the trend in linguistic “history to move from primary to secondary forms, occasionally then reversing the pattern” and the zig-and-zag *direction* in “rhetoric to shift focus from persuasion to narration, from civic to personal contexts, and from speech to literature, including poetry.” Kennedy suggests this “slippage can be [originally] observed in Greece in the Hellenistic period” *after* classical rhetoric has been fairly formed (3). Nevertheless, in the orality *and* literacy of the archaic period, πίστις is transformed *from* its primarily-performed *to* its secondarily-literalized shapes. The πίστις concept of “belief,” as *heard* in contrast to and in co-occurrence with the concept of “persuasion” through public oral narration, is now more “literally” *seen* contextualized in writing; but it is also subject more to *personal*-reader, “figure-al” interpretations.

By the Hellenic period, πίστις has become a literalized, technically conceptualized term. It has shifted from the cultural to the civic, from literature to speech, from mere narration to argued-over abstraction. And it is now a word not only interpretable semantically in argument but is also an expression that Georgias, Isocrates, Plato, and Aristotle can and do argue over, even in the new literatures of rhetoric.⁴

With reference to archaic literature, hence, Aristotle alone seems liberal enough to re-interpret πίστις as “proof” or “persuasion”; and this new meaning persists, ostensibly, through the Hellenistic period and beyond. Kinneavy, of course, might argue otherwise, that Aristotle does nothing novel: that “both meanings [i.e., “belief” and “persuasion”] persisted from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. through the times of classical and Hellenistic Greek and into the period of the church fathers” (3).⁵

Kinneavy would also claim that early Christian writers, following the various Hellenistic Greek rhetoricians, favored one meaning—the one he calls “rhetorical”:

Judged by the contemporary criteria of persuasive discourse, as seen in Greek rhetoric, the *pistis* of the New Testament can almost always be interpreted as persuasion. . . . Indeed, in many cases, the word “faith” translating *pistis* could just as well be translated “persuasion,” and the word “believed” translating the verb could just as easily be translated “was persuaded.” Very few of the 491 occurrences resist a rhetorical analysis. (147)

However, every single occurrence of πίστις in the archaic period suggests the clearest interpretation of the word as “belief,” “trust,” and “faith,” not as “persuasion” or “proof.” And πίστις of Hesiod and Homer is “rhetorical” as profound belief in contexts beyond or apart from persuasion.

Implications of Πίστις as “Belief” in the Rhetoric and the Septuagint: Outlining Further Study

Furthermore, though beyond the scope of this short paper, three additional demonstrations should be made in light of this other-rhetorical reading of the archaic-Greek πίστις as “belief,” “trust,” and “faith.” First, Aristotle certainly would have understood, in his extensive reading of Hesiod and Homer, that πίστις in their works does not ever mean “persuasion” or “proof.”⁶ Thus, to un-mire Kinneavy’s “contemporary criteria of persuasive discourse” from the “almost always” interpretation of *pistis* as “persuasion,” one might consider a different reading of πίστις. One may view Aristotle in the Rhetoric as using the term variously to mean even “belief” or “types of beliefs.” *Belief, trust, and faith* can be understood as beyond mere “persuasion,” as burdening the notion of “proof,” and therefore always as teleologically “rhetorical.”⁷ And such a reading of Aristotle would be critical, for πίστις is a keyword in his Rhetoric as several scholars have noted.⁸

Second, the translators of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek during the Hellenistic period would likely have had as much access to Homer’s and Hesiod’s works as they would have had to Aristotle’s writings. They would not have read πίστις as “proof” or “persuasion” in the Iliad, in the Odyssey, in Work and Days, in Theogony, or the Homeric Hymns (regardless of how they might have read πίστις in the Rhetoric). And so, the Old Testament πίστις as it is a vehicle of translation in the Septuagint normatively means “belief,” “trust,” and “faith.”⁹

Third, the New Testament writers, if forming their conception of πίστις out of the Hellenistic period as Kinneavy claims, would have still looked first to the Septuagint. Therefore, their interpretation of πίστις (not only as “rhetorical” but also as “belief,” “trust,” and “faith”) would have semantically and substantially overlapped with Homer’s and Hesiod’s meanings (and with Georgias’s, Isocrates’s, and Plato’s, and even arguably with Aristotle’s).¹⁰

Πίστις as “Belief” in the Archaic Period: Demonstrating the Origin, Source, and Analogue of the Meanings of the Term into the Hellenic, Hellenistic, and Early Christian Periods

Of the forty-five instances of πίστις in the primary extant sources of the archaic period, not even a single one conveys the sense of “persuasion.” And for all of the reading and quoting of Homer and Hesiod that Aristotle does in the Rhetoric, he absolutely does not get from them the concept of “proof” in their uses of πίστις. (Please see the Appendix below for a table of the various uses and several English translations).

Unquestionably, Aristotle and his contemporaries would have been quite familiar with the not infrequent term πίστις as it is used in the narratives and poetry and music of the Greek archaic era. Given their conversations and arguments on πίστις, Aristotle would have been considerably attentive to how Homer employs the word in the Iliad thirty-one times in fifteen of the epic’s twenty-four books. Likewise, the nine instances of πίστις in seven of the twenty-four books of the Odyssey were certainly of interest to Aristotle. Moreover, he would have been attuned to how the word figures in Hesiod’s much shorter works: in Work and Days twice and in Theogony twice. And that single use of πίστις in the Homeric Hymns, in Hymn 4 to Hermes, must have stood out to Aristotle.

To be sure, Hesiod’s and Homer’s semantic contexts in which they use the term vary dramatically. The most common context of the word, in eighteen different instances in the Iliad and Odyssey and in the one occurrence in the Homeric Hymns, is in the situation of agreements between the different human or divine characters. Notably, the context of an agreement is post-“persuasion” and post-“proof” context. It is also a context that absolutely calls for “belief” and “trust” between the two agreeing parties. Greek scholars, in this context of “an agreement accompanied by πίστις,” have rendered such into English as

“oaths of faith”; “faithful oaths”; “oaths of fidelity”; “sworn faith”; “holy oaths of the gods”; “god’s oaths”; “solemn covenant”; “ratify the oath”; “pledged faith”; “plighted friendship”; and the like. And in three of these particular contexts of “faithful oaths,” Homer also mentions the “hand clasping” or “handshakes” of the oath makers as signs or confirmations of the oaths.¹¹

In addition, πίστις occurs in the two epics some eight times to convey “faithfulness” in friendship, and once in the Odyssey to signify “trust” in one’s father and brothers, and once again in the same epic to connote no longer having “faith” in women. To get these ideas across in the Greek archaic period writings, English translators have used such phrases as “faith and friendship”; “trusty comrade”; “noble comrade”; “true companion” “staunch companion” “trusted companion”; “trusting in my father and brothers” or “confident that my father and my brothers would”; and “no longer is there faith in women” or “after all this there is no trusting women.”

Beyond his thrice telling of hand-clasping with “faithful oaths,” noted above, Homer uses πίστις six other times in conjunction with literal or metaphorical body parts: three times with the eyes and thrice again with the heart or mind. English versions of the Greek epics have put this as one’s “own eyes and trust” or “assured in heart” or—in the two cases of ἀπίστις (the negative, *apistis*) in the Odyssey—“unbelieving mind” or “a heart that is slow to believe.” The Greek negative form, ἀπίστις, is also used adjectivally by Homer in three other contexts to show what English translators have brought across to mean “faithless”; “false”; and “cruel.”

The most remarkable use of ἀπίστις is Hesiod’s in Work and Days (370-374). There ἀπίστις and πίστις together are shown to be irrelevant to “proofs.” And this pair of words is actually used in the context of efforts at “persuasion.” The Greek lines, with two different Englishings below (respectively, Daryl Hine’s and Hugh G. Evelyn-White’s), follow:

μισθὸς δ' ἀνδρὶ φίλῳ εἰρημένος ἄρκιος ἔστω:

See that the wages you promise a faithful retainer are paid soon.

Let the wage promised to a friend be fixed;

καί τε κασιγνήτῳ γελάσας ἐπὶ μάρτυρα θέσθαι:

And with a brother be sure to smile, and in front of a witness,
even with your brother smile--and get a witness;

πίστεις δ' ἄρα ὁμῶς καὶ ἀπιστίαι ὤλεσαν ἄνδρας.

Certainly **trust** and **distrust** prove equally fatal to mankind.
for **trust** and **mistrust** alike ruin men.

μηδὲ γυνή σε νόον πυγσοστόλος ἔξαπατάτω

Don't let a wily, wheedling woman who wiggles her bottom
Do not let a flaunting woman coax and cozen

αἰμύλα κωτίλλουσα, τεῖν διφῶσα καλιήν:

Wholly befuddle your wits: her purpose is rifling your pantry.
and deceive you: she is after your barn.

The English translators make it clear that the contrastive *and* conjoined phrase, “πίστεις. . . καὶ ἀπιστίαι,” suggests “trust and distrust” or “trust and mistrust.” But the other Greek phrases in this context convey acts of persuasion such as smiling at a brother to persuade a witness or coaxing by a flaunting woman to deceive or to befuddle. Until *certain* readings of Aristotle’s Rhetoric, πίστις in this context is post-persuasive (or at least non-persuasive) and necessarily rhetorical nonetheless.

A final use of πίστις by both Hesiod and Homer is with reference to the deities. For example, Zeus has faith and is trusted. Zeus is “τοῖς πίσυνοσ θνητοῖσι” or is “trusting in the dread weapons” in Theogony (506) as Lykaon’s son has had πίσυνοσ or trust in his bow in the Iliad (5.205). Then, in the Iliad (9.238), Hector is “ἐκπάγλως πίσυνοσ Διῖ,” or is “confident that Zeus is with him” or is “trusting in Zeus” or is “reliant on Zeus.” Furthermore, in the Iliad (21.286), Poseidon and Pallas Athene shake hands to confirm an “oath of faith.”: “χειρὶ δὲ χεῖρα λαβόντες ἐπιστώσαντ' ἐπέεσσι.”¹²

In conclusion, the Greek concept of πίστις is to be found historically and linguistically in Hesiod and in Homer. As they spoke and wrote down the word for the first time in the archaic period of orality, it invariably denotes “trust,” “belief,” and “faith.” Very likely, then, this concept of πίστις is better explains the “origin, source, or analogue of the Christian concept of faith” than can either Kinneavy’s “new hypothesis” of the theologians “old thesis.” And Homer, with Hesiod, would be the originator of even Aristotle’s concept of πίστις; thus, he may indeed be “the real father of oratory,” as the ancients believed.

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Notes

¹ IS KINNEAVY'S REJECTION OF "THE OLD THESIS" SOMETHING NEW?

St. Augustine, as early as 426AD when he wrote "Book IV" of his On Christian Learning, discusses "faith" in the context of "persuasion" and "rhetoric." For instance, Augustine notes how "the Apostle [Paul]" does not explicitly follow "the rules of rhetoric"; however, in Christian faith and practice, there is "still . . . here the figure" recognized "in Greek" and "in Latin": notably, "eloquence, [wisdom's] inseparable handmaid . . . followed close upon [St. Paul's] wisdom" (460).

Moreover, Augustine suggests that examining the wisdom of the Apostle Paul *together with* the rules of eloquence of the Romans and Greeks actually reveals the origin and source of Christian faith *and* Greek rhetoric. It is God himself, he says, who *both* epitomizes (i.e., *modus inueniendi*) *and* authors in mankind (i.e., *modus proferendi*) a rhetoric ultimately prior and profound to mortal Christians, Romans, and Greeks. Augustine puts it this way: "And indeed many more things which pertain to the rules of eloquence can be discovered . . . which we have taken as an example . . . For these words were *not written by human industry, but were poured forth by Divine Intelligence*, with wisdom and eloquence—wisdom not being intent on eloquence, but eloquence not deserting wisdom" (emphasis added 464).

In addition, some five years before Kinneavy's work, George A. Kennedy, in his 1984 New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism, reveals a connection between argumentative "proofs" and "faith." He notes, for example, that "[i]n judicial the basic argument involves the question of truth or justice; in deliberative, the question of self-interest and future benefits; in epideictic, a change of attitude or deepening of values such as the honorable and the good, *or in a Christian context, belief and faith*" (emphasis added, 20).

Furthermore, Kennedy's work complements Kinneavy's 1987 study of Greek rhetorical origins of faith in Christianity. As Richard Leo Enos and Janice M. Lauer suggest, these two twentieth century rhetoricians, along with two first century historians, show the ancient proofs of Greek *pistis* not to be unlike the novel arguments of Christian faith:

James L. Kinneavy's detailed account of *pistis* in the New Testament reveals that Christian faith itself, rooted in the notion of rhetorical *pistis*, constituted a set of new proofs by which to live. So new were the arguments that both Matthew (7.28) and Luke (4.22) record that the multitude were sometimes baffled and perplexed. George A. Kennedy asserts that Christ's efforts at articulating new faith-proofs occasionally left listeners "astonished" (69). These proofs were not existing *topoi* but were invented within a faith community. (206)

Hence, Kinneavy's approach is not completely novel.

² ARE KINNEAVY'S "NEW HYPOTHESIS" INFLUENCES FROM RHETORIC OR FROM EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMAN THOUGHT?

Kinneavy claims originality in his thinking ostensibly because he is specifically focused on a rhetorical solution to "what [early twentieth-century theologian Adolf von] Harnack 'rightly called the great historical riddle of the beginnings of Christianity'" (4). Nevertheless, Kinneavy ignores both Augustine and Kennedy in their consideration of faith and rhetoric. (Please see note 1 above). He refers to Augustine only through the works of theologian Karl Barth and of religious historian G. L. Keys; and he quotes from and cites Kennedy's 1972 The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World (41, 43-44, 158-59) but, most surprisingly, not his 1984 New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism.

Likewise, Kinneavy confines his own 1987 survey of the past to early twenty-first century German theological historians when he explains, "we [only] now possess much more knowledge of the cultural and educational background of the Jews in Palestine than we did 60 or 70 years ago, when the first serious attempts were made to look for historical origins of the notion of faith." Furthermore, Kinneavy limits his

acknowledgement of the contribution of other rhetoricians to what “Chaim Perelman tells us in The Realm of Rhetoric (1982),” when he adds, “we now have a much more favorable attitude toward rhetorical analysis than the scholars, either secular or religious, had even 30 years ago. At the beginning of the century, rhetoric was almost totally in academic eclipse” (24-25). Moreover, Kinneavy restricts his reliance on the philological works of philosophical historian W.K.C. Guthrie and of rhetorical historian William M.A. S. J. Grimaldi to a couple of footnotes each. And yet, as shown in note 5 below, Kinneavy disagrees strongly with Grimaldi’s analysis of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and ignores his positing of multiple meanings of *pistis*.

Kinneavy concludes by revealing that his “new hypothesis” derives from “that of [Werner] Jaeger in Early Christianity and Greek Paideia.” Jaeger sees “early Christianity . . . as a continuation of the old education (*paideia*) of the Greeks [. . . , whose] term chosen for those who belong to this assembly—the *ekklēsia* [the Christian word for “church”]—meant also the gathering of the citizens of the Greek *polis*.” Kinneavy, by analogy, claims “[t]he persuasion (*pistis*) of the new (*polis*) can, therefore, be viewed as derived legitimately from the persuasion (political) of the old city. My hypothesis is simply a corollary of Jaeger’s thesis” (149).

³ WHAT MOTIVATES KINNEAVY’S TIMETABLE CONCEPTUALLY?

Kinneavy needs to argue, “it is out of the Hellenistic period that the Christian view of *pistis* was derived” (34). For, on the one hand, he is perplexed that the Hellenistic period is one most “neglected by theologians” (33), and he is able to pinpoint in that historical time span his answer to their “old thesis” (building his case in a chapter entitled, “III. The Historical Argument: A Probability” [56-100]).

On the other hand, to counter the exclusively theological language about the New Testament and its “Christian notion of faith,” Kinneavy is eager to purport “the rhetorical concept of *pistis*” (44). Thus, he frames his historical chapter with before-and-after linguistic/rhetorical chapters: respectively, “II. The Semantic Argument: A Possibility” and “IV. The Analytic Argument: A Verification” [26-55, 101-142]). Semantically, then, Kinneavy would find the “most complete presentation” of the *pistis* “rhetorical concept” in Aristotle, in the earlier Hellenic period, with “the full schema of *types* of *pistis* given by Aristotle in Book II of the *Rhetoric*” (44-48). Analytically, and subsequently, he reviews “Aristotle’s [*pistis*] categories for classical rhetoric”—even through four later Hellenistic schools—and “relates them to the corresponding [*faith*] appeals of the New Testament” (106-120).

Kinneavy’s book opens with contrasts that he wants to overcome and distinctions he attempts to dissolve. His first four sentences establish the kind of theological, philological, and historical commonplaces he writes the book against:

The juxtaposition of “Greek rhetoric” and “Christian faith” may seem a trifle bizarre, maybe even irreverent—the two notions appear somewhat distant. Yet if we remember that rhetoric is the art of persuasion and that the Greek word for persuasion was *pistis* and that the Christian word for faith was also *pistis*, the embodiment of both meanings in the same word suggests that the two notions may not be too far apart. Indeed, in Liddell and Scott, the first meaning of *pistis* conjoins the two concepts: “trust in others, *faith* . . . generally persuasion of a thing, confidence, assurance.” And both meanings persisted from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. through the times of classical and Hellenistic Greek and into the period of the church fathers. (3)

Thus, in Kinneavy’s study, rhetoric is brought to bear on faith; “persuasion” as the primary meaning of *pistis* is brought to bear on “trust in others, *faith*”; and the Hellenistic period is brought to bear on “the period of the church fathers” likewise reducing any ostensible impacts that earlier periods of Greek history might have had on New Testament interpretations of *pistis*.

⁴ WHAT ARE SOME OF THE EARLY AND ARGUED MEANINGS OF ΠΙΣΤΙΣ IN CLASSICAL RHETORIC?

John Poulakis shows that the “Sophists conceived of rhetoric primarily as a *techné* (art) whose medium is *logos* and whose double aim is *terpsis* (aesthetic pleasure) and *pistis* (belief).” (56) And Charles P. Segal specifies that, for Gorgias, *pistis* is “the state of conviction which results from successful persuasion” (113). Notice the *pistis* meanings of “belief” and “conviction” with decided distinction from “persuasion.”

Furthermore, Edwin Black suggests that “To Plato, belief or conviction (*pistis*) was one of four possible states of mind in an hierarchy of mental states. . . [as in the *Republic*, 6.509 ff.]. (97)” In addition, Charles Kauffman shows how “According to Plato, there are two broad types of knowledge: *doxa* . . . and *episteme* . . . Two types of cognition are characteristic of *doxa*: *eikasia* . . . and *pistis*, belief, . . . (Republic 510a). Taken together, *eikasia* and *pistis* form *doxa*, or what Cornford calls, “the many conventional notions of the multitude about morality.” (104).” Note that in Plato—if Poulakis, Segal, and Black are correct here—how *pistis* combines or collocates literally with other phrases to suggest “belief” and belief with particular respect to social ethics and moral norms.

⁵ WAS THERE A SHIFT FROM THE SOPHIST’S ΠΙΣΤΙΣ CONCEPT OF “BELIEF” TO A CONCEPT OF ΠΙΣΤΙΣ AS “PERSUASION” IN ARISTOTLE’S RHETORIC?

If the Sophist’s concept of *pistis* was “conviction” resulting *from persuasion* and “belief” with respect to social morality, then Aristotle’s conception of the term is much different, according to several analyses. In Aristotle, *pistis* ostensibly has come to mean “proof” or “persuasion.” At least subsequent rhetoricians and historians of rhetoric interpret Aristotle’s *pistis* this way.

William M.A. Grimaldi, S.J., for example, writes that “Aristotle takes up the question of rhetorical proof, *pistis*” (53). Grimaldi, on the other hand, is quite astute to observe that rhetoricians have perhaps imposed meanings on Aristotle’s *pistis*. Grimaldi, then, is much more careful to discriminate the various conceptual shades of the term:

In actual fact the word πίστις in Aristotle’s text will not sustain the univocal interpretation (i. e. proof, way of proving) which has been imposed upon it. The assumption of such a univocal meaning has generated some of the difficulties about the coherence and unity of the text. In reality the word *pistis* has a number of meanings in the text, and it is necessary to discriminate among them for an understanding of the text and the meaning of enthymeme. . . . First of all the word *pistis* occurs within the text 41 times (22 times in A, 7 in B, 12 in Γ) and offers sufficient evidence within the text for its exegesis. (69)

When we discriminate among Aristotle’s various uses of *pistis* his understanding of the nature of language in discourse reveals itself. Basically there are five meanings of the word in the work. Two of them can be put aside fairly quickly. Both are technical expressions. One . . . means “pledge” or “word of honor”. The other . . . [occurs when] Aristotle uses *pistis* . . . for that part of speech wherein one formally demonstrates one’s thesis or proposition. . . . This leaves us with the three critical meanings of *pistis* which are first met in the opening chapters of the work. These meanings are: (1) *pistis* as a state of mind, i.e. belief or conviction, which results when a person accepts a proof or demonstration; (2) *pistis* as the logical instrument of the reasoning process in deduction or induction; (3) *pistis* as source material, material which comes from the *logical analysis* of the subject, from the study of the *character* of the speaker or audience, and from the study of the *emotional context* potentially present for this audience in this subject and situation. (70)

(I am especially interested here in Aristotle’s first use of *pistis* that Grimaldi notes and then “put[s] aside fairly quickly”: the use that he claims “means ‘pledge’ or ‘word of honor’.” I believe

Aristotle is following Homer and Hesiod, who use pistis in the context of other words and phrases meaning “pledge,” “oath,” or “word of honor,”; but their pistis is in complement to these words and maintains its meanings of “faith,” “belief,” and “trust.” Please see page 4 above.)

Kinneavy in his article, “William Grimaldi--Reinterpreting Aristotle,” takes exception to Grimaldi’s claims: “It is the thesis of this paper that such an [extensive] interpretation of Aristotelian rhetoric [as Grimaldi’s purports to be] is too expansive. (162). Kinneavy explains that it is Grimaldi’s general conclusions that he objects to:

To equate all serious discourse to rhetoric [as Grimaldi’s apparently does] is to conflate nearly all of Aristotle’s intellectual virtues, with their careful distinctions of intuitive thought from discursive thought, of both thinking which eventuates in doing in morality, and of all of these from thinking which eventuates in making in rhetoric and poetic. These distinctions continued on into the tradition—all the way through the Middle Ages into Islamic and Christian thought (see La Driere, 1948). (164)

However, Kinneavy ironically refuses to acknowledge how discriminating Grimaldi has been with the explication of Aristotle’s five uses of *pistis* in their various contexts within the Rhetoric. And, although Kinneavy in his critical article cites his own book Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith: An Inquiry as “forthcoming,” he fails to take up the question of *pistis* at all in his generalization about Grimaldi’s over-general conclusions. Kinneavy’s view of *pistis* in Greek Rhetorical Origins is general: it reduces *pistis* merely to two meanings: “[*pistis*] means both belief and persuasion, that is, the mental conviction and the technique that evokes such a conviction” (17). But in Aristotle, for Kinneavy, *pistis* has *only* the latter meaning; and in fact even New Testament *pistis* can be read by Kinneavy as univocally! At best, he tries to conflate these reduced meanings into the Christian conception. Below is his diagram from page 24:

Greek Concept of Persuasion

Christian Concept of Faith

Product: Pistis

(a mental conviction of some certainty, freely chosen)]-----→

Product: Pistis

(a mental conviction of some certainty, freely chosen, incorporating trust, assent, knowledge)

Process: Pistis

Ethical appeals] ^
 Pathetic appeals] /
 Logical appeals]-----/
 Extrinsic appeals]

Grimaldi actually shows what Richard Leo Enos and Janice M. Lauer, and Kathleen E. Welch, illustrate of Aristotle: that the Rhetoric (and classical rhetoric generally) is widely applicable.

Enos and Lauer put it this way (seeing “translation” in negative contrast with “invention”):

Students of classical theory learn about such concepts as *topoi*, *stasis*, *pistis*, *example* and *enthymeme*. The problem comes with conceptions of their purpose. Do the heuristic processes of classical rhetoric actually help “invent” discourse and generate probable knowledge, or do they only “translate” meaning to others through forms

compatible with rhetor and audience? For Aristotle, rhetoric was concerned with conceptualizing through discourse. . .

Aristotle himself gives us insight into heuristic as creating meaning within the rhetor and cocreating meaning within the audience in the beginning of the *Rhetoric* when he discusses *pisteis* (πίστεις), or “proofs.” . . . These heuristic procedures, *pisteis*, or proofs are at the surface socially shared instruments. (204-06)

Pistis, then, as “rhetorical” in Aristotle’s sense would allow for invention of discourse, generation of probable knowledge, and co-creation of meanings. An Aristotelian “rhetorical” *pistis* could resist an ossified “translation” of a single meaning.

Ironically, Enos and Lauer give a single English translation of *pisteis* (πίστεις) [as] “proofs.” But their understanding of Aristotle’s *heuristic* shows they would be open to a re-reading of this convenient English gloss as a variety of meanings. They can and do appreciate how Grimaldi (and Aristotle) shades and invents the meanings of *pisteis* (πίστεις).

Welch argues for the wider applicability of classical rhetoric in this way (seeing good and possible “translation” as rhetorical “invention” itself:

TRANSLATION AS THE CREATION OF NEW KNOWLEDGE

A language is only as dead as its decoder. When moving from one language to any other language, the new realization (the translation) should maintain complexity rather than kill it. . . . The area of keywords provides a crucial location where Saussure’s translation/substitution problem exists for writers working with classical rhetoric. As the classicist W. K. C. Guthrie has pointed out especially effectively, keywords represent complexities of thought that cannot adequately be translated into other languages. The keyword problem is made worse by the predominance of many English translations—particularly of Aristotle and Cicero—that are so old that they do not speak to many users of contemporary English.

Sensitivity to the fluidity that necessarily exists within one language and to the semantic problems inevitably raised by translation should be recognized as an underlying premise of the study of classical rhetoric. Anything less than this attention to language fluidity will lead to the familiar flattening of concepts and, finally, to boredom. The boredom for contemporary readers derives from the trivializing of language. Maintaining keyword complexity is not particularly difficult. [Richard Leo] Enos points out in Winifred Bryan Horner’s *The Present State of Scholarship in Historical and Contemporary Rhetoric* that “A minimum knowledge of the Greek alphabet makes these early works uniquely valuable, since critical terms in Greek can be isolated easily and discussed in class” (p.11). This kind of treatment of keywords leads to an engagement of reader and classical text that cannot come about through single-level translations that depend on the erroneous concept of one-to-one correspondence of meaning.

The study of keywords that Guthrie and Enos suggest helps offset another interpretive problem troubling the study of classical rhetoric: the common dependence on translations that are two or three generations old. . . . Look, for example, at the treatment of Aristotle’s three “artistic proofs” in Book I of the *Rhetoric*. . . . The word “proof” poses even more difficulties in the post-empirical universe of discourse and must surely invite more interpretations of Aristotle as a “logic-chopping automaton” (Lunsford & Ede, p. 43). Would it not be more meaningful to late twentieth-century readers to translate *pistis* as “persuasion,” given the meaning “proof” has acquired in the last two hundred years of empirical use? . . . Rhetoric and composition specialists who are accustomed to the translation of *pistis* as proof may have interiorized this English translation, so that the word

resonates well for them. However, people who are coming across the concept of *pistis* for the first time may cling to the empirical meanings of “proof.” In the cases of both students and critics in related fields, the conveying of classical rhetoric concepts is unnecessarily hampered. (11-14)

Welch resists translation of *pistis* as “proof” and insists the better translation is “persuasion.” Ironically, even Welch squelches an other-rhetorical way of reading *pistis*: as “belief,” “trust,” and “faith.”

And even more ironically, Welch disparages “Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike in the 1970 Rhetoric: Discovery and Change.” Welch claims incorrectly that Young, Becker, and Pike “[historicize] classical rhetoric [so that it] appears to be valorized according to the interpretive bases of Comte’s positivism and Descartes’s rationalism: a definite world “out there” exists and is readily available for retrieval.” She argues wrongly that Rhetoric: Discovery and Change:

[1] disregards the inevitable translation problems from Homeric and Attic Greek . . . [2] depends on the use of formulas, usually numerical ones, as a structure for presenting classical rhetoric . . . [and (3) engages in] the consistent removal of contexts of classical rhetoricians and their ideas that have come down to us either in their writing (for example, Plato’s writing) or in versions of their ideas presented by other writers (for example, versions of many Sophists’ ideas in the writing of Plato and Aristotle [sic] or Plato’s version of Socrates). (10-11).

The sentences that begin page 1 of Rhetoric: Discovery and Change, not to mention the entire book and the respective life works of Young, Becker, and Pike, fly in the face of Welch’s overgeneralized denigration of them. It is worth quoting them more fully here also to demonstrate the impact of Aristotle’s inventive rhetoric on this “new rhetoric”:

The word *rhetoric* can be traced back ultimately to the simple assertion I say (*eirō* in Greek). Almost anything related to the act of saying something to someone—in speech or in writing—can conceivably fall within the domain of rhetoric as a field of study: phonetics, grammar, the process of cognition, language acquisition, perception, penmanship, social relations, persuasive strategies, stylistics, logic, and so on. Obviously no one book can discuss adequately every aspect of rhetoric. From the time of the Greek rhetoricians who developed the art over two thousand years ago, men have successively defined and redefined rhetoric, at times narrowing it to little more than the art of dazzling an opponent in an argument by verbal elaboration (hence the pejorative phrase “mere rhetoric”), at times broadening it to include discovering truth through the art of dialectic, that is, through the exchange of rigorously logical arguments. This chapter is the beginning of an attempt to define this domain of study once again, first by examining some earlier conceptions of rhetoric and then by suggesting how the conditions and insights of our own times seem to demand a new rhetoric. (1-2)

. . . . But men disagree—and none more so than those who argue questions of philosophy and rhetoric. Aristotle insisted in his *Rhetoric* that even though, ideally, rational discourse alone should suffice to persuade men [and women], experience shows us that it often fails: “It is not sufficient to know what one ought to say, but one must also know how to say it.” For Aristotle, rhetoric was “the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever.”

The rhetorical tradition has a moral as well as a theoretical dimension. Plato’s insistence that genuine eloquence derives its force from truth and spontaneity was in part a

reaction to the use of rhetorical artifice by the Sophists as a means of deceiving and manipulating people. Aristotle, on the other hand, considered rhetoric a tool, like a knife, morally neutral and capable of being used for good or ill. He would have agreed with Ralph Waldo Emerson's remark, "All things have two handles: beware of the wrong one." What made someone a Sophist was not his mastery of the arts of persuasion but his lack of moral purpose.

Thus Greek rhetoric was not a single, homogeneous theory. Aristotle's formulation of the art, however, became the nucleus of the theory that dominated the tradition of rhetoric. The influence of his theory is no doubt attributable, at least in part, to its being the most fully developed of all theories in rhetoric; but its influence may also be the result of its ability to reconcile the apparently rival claims of truth and eloquence. (emphasis added 3)

I conclude this long footnote by saying that Grimaldi, Enos and Lauer, Welch, and Young, Becker, and Pike have it right: Aristotle's rhetoric is rhetorical because of its inventiveness. If there is a shift in Aristotle's *pistis* to mean "proof" or "persuasion," then the shift extends back as well. Aristotle's rhetorical heuristic extends even to the re-reading of his *πίστις* as other-rhetorical: also to mean "faith," "trust," "belief" and "conviction" as in Homer, Hesiod, Gorgias, and Plato.

⁶ WOULD ARISTOTLE HAVE BEEN FAMILIAR WITH HOMER'S AND HESIOD'S USE OF ΠΙΣΤΙΣ?

Aristotle is a reader of the epics and the poetry of the archaic period. As a matter of fact, in the *Rhetoric* alone, Aristotle refers frequently to both Hesiod and Homer. The former's *Work and Days* is quoted twice in Book II. And the latter's epics and poems are noted thirty-five times; including twenty-two quotations of the *Iliad* and ten of the *Odyssey* (Freese, "Index" 484).

⁷ WHAT DOES *BELIEF* CONNOTE AND DENOTE IN ENGLISH FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE LATE TWENTIETH AND EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURES?

College professors of various disciplines seem to work towards, and even just long for, belief from their students. Belief is the teleos of many educators. Quotations from some are provided below as evidence that belief (and not necessarily proof or persuasion) is the "end" for higher education:

Physics Professor Anatol Rapoport:

[W]hen teaching elementary physics, I was impressed with the resistance of mature intelligent students to some fundamental facts and concepts....Proof by appeal to the fundamental equation...is of little avail. They "**believe**" the equation, but [in contradiction] they **believe** their preconceptions. (qtd. in Young, Becker, and Pike 239)

Philosophy Professor Dallas Willard:

Sometimes I will half jokingly say to [my students] as they hand me their tests after an exam, "Did you **believe** what you wrote?" And they all smile. Because they know that the important thing is **not to believe** what you write but [in contradiction] to write the right answers (12).

Rhetoric Professor Richard Young:

[Our co-taught advanced course in rhetorical argument] did not achieve its principal objective: That is, it did not appear to help students develop considered judgments on ethical problems...This was surprising since most of us, I think, would predict that the **thinking [i.e., beliefs]** of at least a few students would have changed to some significant degree. But, to my dismay, their pretests were the best predictors of their posttests. (161).

Composition Professor Kurt Spellmeyer:

The mere exposure of impressionable young minds to John Berger and Gloria Anzaldúa does **not** guarantee that students will leave the course **ideologically reborn**, whatever they might tell us in order to exit with a passing grade. To **believe** them when they start to talk our talk strikes me as the height of naivety. (81).

Literary Criticism Professor Gerald Graff:

[We must be] willing to take seriously the **culture gap** between Litspeak [or the language of literary people] and Layspeak [as distinct from Intellectspeak or Litspeak] . . . Teachers, however, tend to be ambivalent about teaching Litspeak. They fear that students are already prone to a[n]...approach . . . that is all too common . . . The trouble is, these fears prove to be misplaced when students come from homes that did not have such ornaments, students who haven't had enough experience with literature to acquire **a conventionally mistaken way** of reading it. (22)

Feminism/Composition/Rhetoric/Literacy Theory Professor Joy Ritchie:

[D]uring the time we [professor and two students] were writing our essay, after our proposal had been accepted by the editors, [co-writer student] BeeTin **became** increasingly **committed to a Christian perspective** and was, **therefore, uncomfortable [?!]** with the **feminist theoretical framework** the other two of us [co-writers] favored. (29)

⁸ IS ΠΙΣΤΙΣ A KEYWORD IN THE RHETORIC?

Friedrich Solmsen confirms that the word "πίστεις . . . may be called the core of Aristotle's Rhetoric" (qtd in Erickson, *Aristotle* 280). Please see footnote 5 for other scholars who view *pistis* as a keyword. Grimaldi's readings of Aristotle's *πίστεις* is most insightful.

⁹ DOES THE OLD TESTAMENT CONTAIN THE NEW TESTAMENT OR CHRISTIAN "NOTION OF FAITH"?

Dismissively, Kinneavy claims: (1) "*pistis* and *pisteuein* in the Old Testament are not religious terms and do not correspond to the New Testament *faith* and *to believe* in any full sense at all" and (2) "*pistis* in the Septuagint is not related to the Christian concept."

Unfortunately, to come to these quick conclusions, Kinneavy 1) relies completely on his own "quick look at" a single concordance of the Septuagint and 2) trusts only the exclusive arguments of two German theologians.

However, Kinneavy's sources ignore two key issues that reverse his conclusions. First, most theologians and historians of the Bible know that the Septuagint, the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek, was produced in Alexandria, Egypt around 280B.C. *during the Hellenistic Period*. This is, ironically, the very period "out of" which Kinneavy insists that "the Christian view of *pistis* was derived" (34). Jewish readers of Greek in Palestine and in the Diaspora studying around the time of Jesus Christ should have been much more familiar with the Judaic-religious Septuagint than with the goyim (or Gentile) texts from the Greek Second and Third Academies; the Stoics; the Epicurians; and the Aristotelians. If there were Greek Hellenistic-Period origins to the Christian notion of *πίστις*, they would have been more directly from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures than from the texts of various Greek schools.

Second, the Greek New Testament writers quoting the Old Testament relied not on the Hebrew texts but on the Septuagint. One passage from the Septuagint, substantially referenced in the New Testament, proves both 1) that *πίστις* in the Old Testament is a religious term corresponding precisely with the New Testament in its various senses, and 2) that *πίστις* in the Septuagint is the word from which the Christian concept of belief is directly derived. R. Grant Jones provides side-by-side comparisons of

the Old Testament and New Testament (with added boldings of πίστις and English translations):

Septuagint	New Testament
Genesis 15.6 και επιστευσεν Αβραμ τω θεω, και ελογισθη αυτω εις δικαιοσυνην	Romans 4.3 τι γαρ η γραφη λεγει; επιστευσεν δε Αβρααμ τω θεω και ελογισθη αυτω εις δικαιοσυνην
	Romans 4.9: ο μακαρισμος ουν ουτος επι την περιτομην η και επι την ακροβυστιαν; λεγομεν γαρ: ελογισθη τω Αβρααμ η πιστις εις δικαιοσυνην
	Romans 4.22: διο και ελογισθη αυτω εις δικαιοσυνην
	Galatians 3.6: καθως Αβρααμ επιστευσεν τω θεω, και ελογισθη αυτω εις δικαιοσυνην
	James 2.23: και επληρωθη η γραφη η λεγουσα: επιστευσεν δε Αβρααμ τω θεω, και ελογισθη αυτω εις δικαιοσυνην και φιλος θεου εκληθη
Septuagint [English translation]	New Testament [English translation]
Genesis 15.6 And Abram believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness	Romans 4.3: For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness
	Romans 4.9: Is this blessing then pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say, To Abraham his faith was reckoned for righteousness
	Romans 4.22: Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness
	Galatians 3.6: Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness
	James 2.23: and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God

The charts above show two different New Testament writers in five separate sentences of three different epistles referencing an Old Testament, Septuagint, use of πίστις that conveys the religious notions of believing and faith. Such is in stark contrast to the claims of Kinneavy and his two theological sources. A full quotation is provided below:

. . . In the [Old Testament] trust references, [A.] Weiser focuses on those having to do with hope ([the Hebrew term] *emunah*). This is the word that is translated as [the Greek term] *pisteuein* (in different forms) in the Septuagint. It means “to say Amen . . .” It means taking cognizance of a matter and accepting it as true and being aware of a relation to the matter. Thus, it can come to mean the individual’s total relation to God. As such, it can emphasize knowledge or feeling or will, depending on the situation.

Rudolf Bultmann’s article on *pistis* . . . concludes that *pisteuō* itself is not a religious term in the Septuagint. . . (9)

In particular, *pistis* and *pisteuein* in the Old Testament are not religious terms and do not correspond to the New Testament *faith* and *to believe* in any full sense at all. *Pistis* in the Old Testament is not usually even analyzed because a quick look at any concordance of the Septuagint shows that there are only 29 instances in it translated from the Hebrew (the others are in books of Greek language origin written by Hebrews but not incorporated into the Hebrew Old Testament canon). Of the 29, 21 relate to the sense of loyalty, truth, and honesty, and of these only 3 have any religious connection at all, and these 3 have nothing to do with faith. It is noteworthy, for instance, that none of these occurrences is translated “faith” in the Oxford translation, The New English Bible with the Apocrypha. . . Six others come from the same root in Hebrew, one meaning “faithful, true, secure.” Only one of these is translated “faith” in the Oxford translation (Prov. 3:3): “Let your good faith and loyalty never fail.” The others all come from separate Hebrew originals and have nothing to do with faith. It is clear that *pistis* in the Septuagint is not related to the Christian concept.

In contrast to *pistis*, the verb *pisteuein* has been thoroughly analyzed by both Wieser and Bultmann. We have already seen the results of their analysis. Bultmann’s conclusion is that “*pistuein* . . . was not felt to be a religious term” in the Septuagint. Weiser’s analysis focuses, as we have seen, on the centrality of the verbs of hope. These are relevant to, but not at all equivalent to, the New Testament notion of faith. (11)

Had Kinneavy relied on a closer reading of the primary sources, he would not have come to his conclusion so quickly.

¹⁰ WAS IT REALLY ARISTOTLE WHO MEANT “PERSUASION” IN HIS USE OF ΠΙΣΤΙΣ IN THE RHETORIC?

An additional research question is whether others after Aristotle began to read his *pistis* variously as “belief” and as “persuasion” and in which contexts. Did the different Hellenistic Greek schools prefer “persuasion” as the concept of *pistis*? Did the Romans read *pistis* any particular ways that the Latin of say, Cicero and Quintilian, suggest definitively?

¹¹ SHOULD MORE IMPORTANCE BE ATTACHED TO “PLEDGE” OR “WORD OF HONOR” IN THE RHETORIC?

As discussed in note 5 above, Grimaldi in Aristotle’s Rhetoric “put[s] aside fairly quickly [. . . as not at all a central interpretation of *pistis*, but rather as] technical [. . . the] mean[ing as] ‘pledge’ or ‘word of honor.’ In Homer and Hesiod, however, *pistis* in the context of such oaths seems key.

¹² IS ΠΙΣΤΙΣ A NEGATIVE, HUMAN TERM WITH NO DIVINE USE, OR IS ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ALSO A GODLY CHARACTERISTIC?

Homer and Hesiod both use πίστις in ways that the New Testament writers appear to use it: to express trust of humans in objects and trust relations between humans and humans, humans and gods, and gods and humans. It should be clear from Homeric and Hesiodic writings that even the gods have πίστις in the archaic period of Greece.

This is much in contrast to Kinneavy's claims as warranted by his theological sources. A full quotation is provided below to show how Kinneavy also considers the notion of pistis as "faith" to be a negative view:

THE NEGATIVE VIEW OF PISTIS IN GREEK THOUGHT

Pistis, it may be recalled, means both belief and persuasion, that is, the mental conviction and the technique that evokes such a conviction. . . From the point of view of the notion of belief or faith, the earliest statements, going back to Homer and Hesiod in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., set a negative framework. From the beginning of recorded view on the matter there existed a notion that persisted from Homer to the Gnostics contemporary to Christianity that the gods possessed knowledge about truth that was certain whereas humans at best possessed beliefs about opinions. Bruno Snell, in *The Discovery of the Mind*, has traced the development of this contrast in a brilliant chapter called "Human Knowledge and Divine Knowledge Among the Early Greeks." As he says at the outset of his chapter,

"Human nature has no knowledge, but divine nature has." Statements similar to this saying of Heraclitus (fr. 78 Diels) are made by a number of pre-Socratic philosophers, also by Socrates, Plato, and at the opposite end of the historical development the Christians may be cited to the same effect.

And the contrasting words that were used by most of these writers were knowledge (*epistēmē*) of truth (*alētheia*) for the gods and belief (*pistis*) about opinion (*doxa*) for humans. Homer, typically ways in the prelude to the Catalog of Ships in the *iliad* [sic]:

Tell me now, Muses that dwell in the palace of Olympus—for you are goddesses, you are at hand and know all things, But we hear only a rumor and know nothing—Who were the captains and lords of the Danaans? (17)

Kinneavy is only correct here in saying that Homer and Hesiod have the "notion of belief or faith." But Kinneavy and Snell are wrong in their overgeneralization that, for the archaic Greeks, "knowledge (*epistēmē*) of truth (*alētheia*) [is only] for the gods and belief (*pistis*) about opinion (*doxa*) [is exclusively] for humans. The examples from the Iliad and Theogony on page 6 above are counterexamples to Kinneavy's and Snell's quotations here.