FAITH AND OBEDIENCE IN PAUL*

ABSTRACT

The traditional position of viewing obedience, not as an integral part of the faith event, but rather as a secondary and often less crucial aspect of becoming a Christian, is questioned in the light of the Pauline evidence, and especially the use of the phrase ὑπακοὴ πίστεως in Romans 1:5. The Pauline documents indicate that, for Paul, faith and obedience, while not fully identical, overlap to an important degree, making it impossible to divorce obedience from the faith event.

It was the soteriological controversy of the sixteenth century and its aftermath which engraved the contrast between faith and works deeply into the minds of believers and theologians of the Protestant tradition and which gave rise to the perception of an unbridgeable difference between Paul and James in this regard.

Of course the doing of God's will, whether we call it obedience or the performing of 'good deeds' out of gratitude, has always been part and parcel of Protestant tradition. In the ordo salutis it found its place in the loci of sanctification and perseverance. Obedience was thus seen as a most important, but chronologically secondary phase in the event of becoming a Christian, at any rate not as an integral part of the faith event as such. The event of becoming a Christian was restricted to the cognitive and fiducial aspects, underplaying the obediential one. Consequently there was an inclination to view obedience as less central to the Christian message than salvation through faith.

It was the scholarly work, particularly of people such as Bultmann (1967b:470-475), Käsemann (1964:181-193; 1974:164-177), Kertelge (1967:251-263) and Furnish (1968:211f,224ff), which in spite of not unimportant individual differences, showed that in Pauline thinking the indic-

* This paper was originally presented at the 1989 International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Copenhagen and concluded before the publication of D B Garlington's book 'The obedience of faith', Tübin-gen: J C B Mohr (Paul Siebeck) (WNUNT 2. Reihe 38.) and his article 'The obedience of faith in the letter to the Romans. Part I: The meaning of ὑπακοὴ πίστεως (Rom 1:5; 16:26)' WThJ 52 (1990), 201-224 (which is to be continued by a second article). At the time only the article referred to was available to me. I am encouraged by the fact that our conclusions, though reached independently and along different lines of argument, overlap to such an important degree.
ative and the imperative of the gospel belong integrally together. They are two sides of the same coin. I wish to carry this insight somewhat further by focusing on the relationship between faith and obedience in Paul.

We deal first with those passages where a definite relationship between πίστις/πιστεύω and ὑπακοή/ὑπακούω is apparent, namely Romans 1:5; 10:16; 15:18; 16:19(26); 2 Corinthians 10:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

Certainly the most conspicuous instance is the phrase εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως in Romans 1:5 which is repeated in the non-Pauline conclusion in 16:26. It appears within a missionary or evangelistic context where Paul is defining his apostolic commission. The phrase consists of two nomina actionis linked together in a genitive construction. Linguistically the two nouns can be transformed into two kernel sentences: 'they obey' and 'they believe'. As a linguistic rule of thumb it is accepted that the event in the genitive precedes the one it qualifies (Nida 1972:82). For this reason the Good News Bible translates: 'in order to lead people of all nations to believe and obey.' But there is much more at stake here than chronological sequence. As a matter of fact Paul's statement here hardly indicates chronological sequence. It postulates a much closer relationship between faith and obedience. The nature of this relationship depends on the connotation we give to ὑπακοή and πίστις, and especially on how we understand the genitive πίστεως. If we leave aside the large variety of different shades of meaning which have been proposed (cf e.g Cranfield 1977:66), the most important possibilities are the following:

1 Πίστεως is a subjective genitive, in which case our phrase would mean: the obedience that faith works or: the obedience which is required by faith.

2 Πίστεως is an objective genitive, in which case our phrase would mean: obedience to faith (cf Ac 6:7).

3 Πίστεως is an epexegetical genitive (or a genitive of apposition). In this case our phrase could mean: obedience which consists in faith.

4 Πίστεως is a genitive of quality. In this case it would mean that obedience is qualified by faith and that πίστεως has what can be called an adjectival function. The German for this would be 'Glaubensgehorsam'. A satisfactory English equivalent would be hard to find. It might be something like 'the obedience which belongs to faith' or 'which is characterised by faith'.

In attempting to make a decision, we must remember that language is so subtle and dynamic that often it cannot be neatly squeezed into our reductionary schemes (cf Gyllenberg 1936:555). But we should at least try to decide which of the options comes the nearest to what is intended within the given context.

The second possibility has found more proponents than the first (e.g Lietzmann 1933:5; Blass-Debrunner-Rehkopf 1976:135). But it is the third
which has gained overwhelming support (e.g. Zahn 1910:45; Kittel 1933:225; Käsemann 1974:12; Schlier 1977:29; Cranfield 1977:66; Wilckens 1978:67; cf. also Bultmann 1958:315f.; 1959:206,219). The problem is that the understanding of an epexegetical or appositional genitive can vary from indicating identity to signifying some descriptive function, which can hardly be distinguished from a genitive of quality. Blass-Debrunner-Rehkopf (1976:par 167) for instance describes the phrase ἄλαβαστρον μῦρον (Mk:14:13) as a genitive of apposition.

To postulate a full-fledged equivalence between faith and obedience in Paul would certainly be going too far (cf. infra). It seems better to opt for a genitive of quality, which in fact can overlap with an epexegetical genitive provided that it has a descriptive rather than an identifying function: the obedience which belongs to, is characterised by and goes together with faith. This in turn comes close to a genitive of origin: the obedience which stems from faith (Parke-Taylor 1943-44:305), though here the false notion of a chronological sequence reappears.

Understood as a genitive of quality, the phrase ὑπακοὴ πίστεως indicates the closest relationship between faith and obedience, while at the same time signifying that it is primarily faith which qualifies obedience and not vice versa. This agrees with the conclusion reached by Michel: 'Der neue Gehorsam wird also durch den Glauben, der als eschatologisches Ereignis in die Welt kam (Gl 3:25), bestimmt' (1978:76). In the absence of positive textual indications it is, however, difficult to decide whether, as Michel contends, this expression has a polemical undertone regarding obedience as fulfillment of the law or not.

What is also important for our theme is that in this context the focus falls on obedience in the sense of submission to the gospel proclaimed, that is in the sense of surrender to the power of the gospel.

We summarise as follows: (a) There exists in this passage a strong mutuality between faith and obedience; (b) faith qualifies obedience; (c) obedience, at least primarily, refers to the event of becoming a Christian and therefore the act of submission to the gospel is highlighted (cf. Käsemann 1974:12). For the moment, then, we can identify the diagnostic features of ὑπακοὴ in this passage as:

cognisance (of the gospel): positive reaction: submission.

Later on we shall have to ask whether or not the notion of ὑπακοὴ as denoting a certain quality of life is also contained or at least implied in this passage.

Coming back to Romans 1:5 it would be too bold to assert that the phrase ὑπακοὴ πίστεως is programmatic for the whole of Romans as such, even though it is repeated in the non-Pauline conclusion of this letter. This is much rather the case with 1:16f. What should be said, however, is that, due perhaps to the Protestant inheritance of many exegetes, the role of obedience as an integral part of the faith-event has often been underestimated. If we do not confine ourselves to the bare words, but also give attention to the broad concept of obedience, the latter plays a most important role
in Romans, especially in chapters 6 and 12-15 (cf also Cranfield 1977:166f; Dunn 1988:17f).

The same close relationship between πίστις/πιστεύω and ὑπακοή/ὑπακοόω is evident in all the other passages:

Of special interest is Romans 10:16a, where we would have expected the verb πιστεύω, to link up with the same verb in the Isaiah quotation. Instead the formulation ὑπῆκουσαν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ is used. And this also happens elsewhere. As a matter of fact, Paul never combines πίστις/πιστεύω in the sense of acceptance of the gospel with τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. The closest he comes to it is in the genitive combination τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (Phlp 1:27). The same applies to a negative reaction to the gospel. He never combines ἀπιστία/ἀπιστεά/ἀπίστος or οὐ πιστεύω with εὐαγγέλιον or its substitutes (λόγος, ἀλήθεια), but he does combine ἀπείθεω/ἀπειθέω in this way in Romans 2:8, while more than once substituting ἀπείθεω/ἀπειθέω for the ἀπιστία word-group (Rm 10:21; 11:30-32 cf Eph 2:2; 5:6; Col 3:6 and especially 1 Peter where, probably under Pauline influence, in 1:2 ὑπακοή is used instead of πίστις and in 2:8; 3:1 and 4:17 ἀπειθέω instead of ἀπιστεά).

The question we must ask here is why Paul so often preferred to use ὑπακοή/ὑπακοόω instead of πίστις/πιστεύω in connection with the christianizing event. The answer may lie in the following reasons:

1 Paul indeed wanted to stress obedience as part of the faith-event. ὑπακοή and ὑπακοόω certainly highlight human commitment and responsibility more directly than πίστις and πιστεύω.

2 The notion of submission would fit in better with Paul’s vision of the gospel as a divine power (cf Rm 1:16; 1 Th 1:5) by means of which God Himself, as the source of this gospel (cf Rm 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Th 2:2,8,9), is acting, thus (also) claiming our obedience (Schniewind 1935:729 and especially Käsemann 1964; 1974:19: ‘Das Evangelium ist...die Epiphanie der Gottesmacht schlechthin’).

3 Thirdly, it is important to note that in Old Testament thinking faith and obedience belong integrally together (Gyllenberg 1936:558; Bultmann 1959:198f) and that obedience has a strong covenantal background. As distinct to faith in the sense of believing acceptance, which is not typical, listening to Jahwe played a most important role within the covenant relationship (cf Gyllenberg 1936:556-558; Schult 1976:979-982; Frank 1976:399-402). This would fit very well into the covenantal framework of Paul’s soteriological thinking.

4 In Romans the stress on obedience in the faith-event could also have been motivated by the fact that Paul wished to incorporate the churches of Rome into the sphere of his apostolic authority. Due to the specific situation he could not force this. But at the same time he had to suggest it by means of different rhetorical strategies (cf Du Toit 1989).
We can now continue our survey of the remaining passages where a relationship between πίστις and ὑπακοή is apparent. In Romans 15:18 εἰς ὑπακοήν ἑθῶν occurs within a context which shows many resemblances to 1:1-17 (cf Du Toit 1989). Although εὐάγγελον is not directly referred to in this passage, the notion of a powerful evangelistic onslaught on the nations by Christ Himself through his apostle, by means of which the nations are brought to submission, is quite explicit: κατειργάσατο Χριστός δὲ ἐμοὶ εἰς ὑπακοήν ἑθῶν, λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ, ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος θεοῦ. The same applies to 2 Corinthians 10:5 where the phrase εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ appears within the well-known topos of Christian warfare (cf especially the preceding participial phrase αἰχμαλωτὶς ζοντες πᾶν νόμιμον). Here again we find the idea of a powerful confrontation. As a matter of fact this is not a missionary situation. But in the sense that Paul is fighting to regain the loyalty of the Corinthians, not only towards himself, but first and foremost towards the gospel he preaches, the missionary situation is to a certain extent paralleled.

Romans 16:19 (ἡ γὰρ ὑμῶν ὑπακοὴ εἰς πάντας αφίκετο) echoes 1:8b (διὶ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καταγγέλλεται ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ) indicating how easily Paul can switch from belief to obedience. For our later discussion, however, it is important to note that we do not, in this instance, have a missionary situation. In Romans 16:19 the loyalty of people who are already Christians vis-à-vis the threat of false teachers is at stake. Here ὑπακοὴ refers to the loyal behaviour of Christians.

Finally, the reciprocity between faith and obedience is illustrated vividly in 2 Thessalonians where the expression πάνταν τοῖς πιστεύσαν (1:10) is used antithetically to τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούσωσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ in 1:8.

As we have seen, all but two of the six passages discussed refer to a missionary situation, i.e. to the threshold stage of Christian life. And in all six passages a very close relationship between πίστις/πιστεύω and ὑπακοή/ὑπακούω can be discerned. Michel characterises this neatly: ‘Glaube ist für Paulus zunächst Gehorsam gegenüber dem Wort, und Gehorsam ist für ihn der entscheidende Glaubensakt’ (1978:76). Bultmann formulates it even more strongly: ‘Vor allem hat Paulus den Charakter des Glaubens als des Gehorsams betont. Ihm ist πίστις geradezu gleich ὑπακοή’ (1959:206, cf 119). In this sense it is not only πίστις which qualifies ὑπακοή: ὑπακοή in turn also qualifies πίστις.

In drawing the theological consequence of this, we must conclude that the collation of faith and obedience, as well as the ready substitution of the latter for the former, points unequivocally to the fact that, for Paul, the indicative and imperative belong together from the very beginning of Christian life. The promise of the gospel and its demand coincide. In the gospel God gives us everything while at the same time, through this gift, He claims everything. The submission referred to by the use of the ὑπακοή word-group clearly implies much more than a mere mental concession. It demands the surrender of one’s total existence.

The next question to be posed is whether there exists any connection between the use of ὑπακοή/ὑπακούω in the contexts we have discussed, that is between the use of this word-group in the sense of submission to the
gospel, and its use with regard to obedience in one's normal Christian life, where obedience denotes Christian behaviour or life-style (Rm 5:19; 6:12,16,17; 2 Cor 7:15; 10:6, Phlp 2:12; Phlm 21; 2 Th 3:14 cf Eph 6:1,5; Col 3:20,22).

In my opinion this question should be answered in the affirmative for the following reasons:

1 As stated earlier, ὑπακοὴ is a covenant term with strong roots in the Old Testament. Within the framework of the covenant to listen to Jahwe's voice would mean both submitting to his will and obeying his precepts. Studies of obedience in the Old Testament have established this beyond any doubt (cf Gyllenberg 1936:556-558; Schult 1976:c980-982, e.g 981: 'Auf Jahwe oder seine Repräsentanten ... 'hören' heisst tun, was Jahwe sagt und will'; Frank 1976:399-402). It is indeed difficult to see how in Paul submission to the gospel, and therefore to God Himself, can be severed from obeying his will. Such a possibility could only be one of those artificial fabrications we theologians are so fond of producing in our studies. When Käsemann insists that the Pauline combination of faith and obedience 'hat primär nicht ethischen, sondern ...eschatologischen Sinn' (1974:12), we can agree in the sense that the primary focus falls on the act of decision. But we must hasten to add that the imperative of a life of obedience, which flows from this decision, is included in the same way as, also in Käsemann's opinion, the imperative is included in the indicative of δικαιοσύνη (vide infra). This would also concur with Käsemann's apt remark elsewhere (1974:177) that Christian ethics is in reality 'gelebte Eschatologie'.

2 It has been argued, from various approaches, that there must be a continuity between the δικαιοσύνη of Romans 1-5 and that of Romans 6 (cf e.g Käsemann 1964:184; 1974:164ff; Kertelge 1967:271; Du Toit 1979:289ff). In Romans 1-5 righteousness functions mainly as an indicative, while in Romans 6 the same δικαιοσύνη acts primarily as an imperative. In the same way, and even more so, we could hardly question that there exists not only a strong continuity, but in fact an essential identity between the ὑπακοὴ of Romans 1:5 and 6:16f. We would therefore go somewhat further than Kertelge who states: 'Der Gehorsam, von dem in Rö 6 die Rede ist, entwickelt sich folgerichtig aus dem Glaubensgehorsam dem die Rechtfertigung zuteil wird' (1967:271). A structured linguistic statement is a closely-knit network of signs which activate and highlight certain semantic possibilities, while they co-activate closely related possibilities without necessarily highlighting them, and simultaneously inhibit or actually exclude still other possibilities. According to this principle, obedience as submission is highlighted in missionary contexts, while the concomitant component of obedience as a behavioural pattern is co-activated, and therefore definitely present, but not equally highlighted. In contexts where the imperative aspects of Christian behaviour are at stake, the process is reversed.

That this interpretation is correct is confirmed by two interesting formula-
tions in Romans 6:16,17 (where ὑπακοή/ὑπακοῶ occurs four times), namely δοῦλοι ἐστε...ὑπακοῆς εἰς δικαιοσύνην (v16) and ὑπηκοόσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὑπακοῆν τῷ παρεδόθεται τῷ πατρὶ δικαίωμα (v17b). Contrary to my earlier conviction (Du Toit 1979:286), it became clear to me that the word δικαιοσύνη in the expression ὑπακοῆ εἰς δικαιοσύνην is not used in the primary sense of righteousness as the content of Christian life, but in the same way as everywhere else in Romans 6, viz in the sense of the gift of God through faith (cf Kertelge 1967:269; Käsemann 1974:172) which also becomes a norm for Christian behaviour. As soon as we realise that here (as in so many other places) ὑπακοή is substituting for πίστις, we are relieved of the problematic expedient of relating δικαιοσύνη to righteous living or to the final judgment (Cranfield 1977:322). The very fact that ὑπακοή in the sense of obedient submission to the gospel can be used in such a strongly ethical context and especially in close proximity to ὑπακοόσατε (which certainly refers to an obedient Christian life, as the present tense of the verb confirms), shows that obedience as an act of total surrender and as a life attitude simply cannot be divorced. Kertelge understands this correctly when he recognises that ὑπακοή here includes both the element of faith, and, as a result of that, the ethical obedience (1967:269f). In the context of Romans the phrase ὑπακοῆ εἰς δικαιοσύνην does not run the risk of being interpreted as suggesting salvation by good works, since Paul has already amply safeguarded himself against any such possibility (cf also Dunn 1988:342).

The second phrase is the somewhat awkward statement in verse 17b, which stands within the same ethical context and also refers to the beginning of the readers’ Christian life as confirmed by the two aorists ὑπηκοόσατε and παρεδόθητε, as well as by the reference to the ‘pattern of teaching’, which could hardly mean anything else than the specific Pauline presentation of the gospel. Here again it is clear that there is no essential gap between obedience as submission and the life of obedience which stems directly from it. Unfortunately, however, there exists some uncertainty as to the original wording of verse 17. We would certainly not go as far as Bultmann, who maintains that verse 17b is a stupid gloss and despairs of anyone who would dare to defend its authenticity (1967a:283). (Indeed Bultmann’s own emendation smacks somewhat of ‘triviality’ and does not reflect one of his most brilliant moments!) But the phrase ἐκ καρδίας (which occurs nowhere else in Paul), the un-Pauline expression τῷ πατρὶ δικαίωμα, inelegantly combined with the second person plural of παραδίδομαι, as well as the strenuous efforts required to make some sense of the relationship between the different contrasting statements within the initial thanksgiving context — all these do give rise to some uncertainty regarding the present wording. On the other hand, the fact that respected scholars such as Käsemann (1974:172f), Cranfield (1977:323f) and Dunn (1988:343f) find reason to defend the text as it stands, cannot simply be brushed aside. In the end the least we can say is that the possible interpolator, if not Paul himself, experienced no problem in referring within this context to the act of obedient submission to the gospel teaching as an act with important ethical implications for the Christian life (cf ἀγιασμός in vv19,22).
The same phenomenon can be observed in Romans 16:19 where the ὑπακοή of the readers clearly echoes their πίστις in 1:8. Here again it is clear that ὑπακοή, in the sense of having surrendered to the gospel message, includes the notion of a life-style of obedience. Within the context of 16:19 it indicates a loyalty which started with the acceptance of the gospel and which is to be continued in their negative response to the trouble-makers.

In the light of our argument we must therefore accept that in Paul obedience should be seen as a unitary concept within which certain diagnostic components can be distinguished and even highlighted, but they can never be divorced from one another. We can visualise this as follows:

(a) Obedience in missionary contexts:

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<tr>
<th>focus:</th>
<th>cognisance</th>
<th>positive reaction</th>
<th>submission</th>
<th>obedient behaviour</th>
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<td>(of the gospel)</td>
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(b) Obedience in behavioural contexts:

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<th>submission</th>
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From the foregoing it is clear that faith and obedience, not only as submission to the gospel but in its comprehensive sense, belong inalienably together. Cranfield no doubt is correct in stating: 'It is ...true to say that to make the decision of faith is an act of obedience towards God and also that true faith by its very nature includes in itself the sincere desire and will to obey God in all things' (1977:66f).

In conclusion we now have to ask whether we can determine the nature of the relationship between faith and obedience somewhat more precisely. Determining word semantics is an extremely hazardous undertaking, but we may at least risk a conjecture in the light of the evidence we have collected.

In doing so, it would be expedient to differentiate between the two words under discussion, with their different clusters of semantic possibilities, and the broader event of becoming a Christian which we may call the faith-event.

Due to their occurrence in the same linguistic slots and the way they function within those slots, we must accept that some of the semantic possibilities of faith and obedience are shared while others are closely associated. Due to these shared or associated features functioning within the broader framework of the faith-event, they can be used together, interact, qualify one another. Obedience can even substitute for faith (for reasons we have discussed already). But this does not imply that πίστις has drawn obedience into its range of semantic potentialities. If
it had, it would not be clear why Paul should bother to use πίστις and ὑπακοή in Romans 1:5 alongside each other and why he would replace faith by obedience in so many instances. We must therefore accept that the two words ran strongly parallel within the parameters of the faith-event; that they shared, within those parameters, certain diagnostic features while influencing and qualifying each other by means of other features, without absorbing the latter, and that still other semantic features remained exclusive to each lexical unit. We can visualise this as follows (for the diagnostic features of πίστις κτλ cf also Louw and Nida 1988 s v):

FAITH-EVENT

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<tr>
<th>SHARED FEATURES</th>
<th>PARALLEL FEATURES</th>
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<tr>
<td>πίστις</td>
<td>cognisance &amp;</td>
<td>christian faith</td>
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<td>word- group</td>
<td>acceptance</td>
<td>faith content</td>
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<td>positive reaction</td>
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<td>ὑπακοή</td>
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<td>positive reaction</td>
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I hope that this schematisation, though tentative, may do some measure of justice to the different phenomena we have identified. But this is not the crucially important point. What is of decisive importance is that it has become clear, I hope, that faith and obedience (in their comprehensive sense) belong integrally together and qualify each other reciprocally. For this reason, according to Paul, there can never be faith without full-fledged obedience. Or stated the Jacobean way: authentic faith can never be 'idle'. At the same time, since faith is its primary and decisive qualifier, real Christian obedience can never become our own achievement. It is only possible within the framework of grace. It can never provide us with one inch of standing-room before God, let alone be a cause for καυχάσθαι.

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