

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

faith (fāth) *noun*

1. **a.** Belief in God or in a set of religious doctrines.
- b.** A set of religious doctrines; a body of dogma...
American Heritage Dictionary (5th ed.)
(<https://ahdictionary.com>)

As far as the English language is concerned, these definitions from *American Heritage Dictionary* are correct and probably accord with our own personal understandings of the word *faith*. Most English speakers recognize a subjective aspect of faith—believing in something—and an objective aspect—the something believed. The problem is, according to the New Testament, faith in its subjective aspect is not simply belief, and in its objective aspect, not at all doctrines or dogma. So much for English-language dictionaries as far as Christian truth is concerned. We should let the Bible define what *faith* means, and in this issue of *A&C* we will do that.

Faith characterizes not only God's New Testament believers (those who have faith) but also what God does in His New Testament economy ("which is

in faith"—1 Tim. 1:4). We devote one article to what subjective faith is and is not, and another to what objective faith ("the faith") is and is not. In the third article we unpack the crucial expression "God's economy, which is in faith" (1 Tim. 1:4) and show the principle of faith operating in the carrying out of God's eternal purpose. Then, we follow with an article on what living by faith means practically in our Christian experience and church life. In the next two articles we present that great benefit of faith, that is, the victory of our faith, and that great responsibility to faith, that is, our properly contending for it. In the last article, we consider the unique sin of unbelief, which not only condemns the unbelievers but also easily besets even us as believers and must be attended to soberly. At the end of the issue we consider historically that strange but unique phrase in the New Testament *believe into*, and we review two significant books regarding faith. Our sincere hope is that this issue will be a great service to the faith of all our readers (Phil. 2:17). May it be so by the Lord's mercy.

"The Words of This Life"

About This Series

This issue of *Affirmation & Critique* is part of a series called "The Words of This Life," a title taken from Acts 5:20. While we may be pressing the literal meaning of this expression, we wish to indicate that there are certain key words that signify important aspects of our Christian life and our church life and that these key words are, for the most part, common to all New Testament believers. However, we are also acutely aware that across the millennia many of the common words of this life have been understood variously by the different Christian traditions. Examples abound: *faith, eternal life, grace, oneness, glory, church, worship*. At first blush, words like these may seem to be simple and to have only one possible meaning (that is, the one in our own minds). But the facts of history make clear that many of these words mean immensely different things to Christians of different traditions, and it is worthwhile to consider whether to accept the traditional meanings or not, especially in light of a careful consideration of the Scriptures. To this end, in the issues of this series we will focus on some of the words of this life, considering their meanings from both biblical and traditional perspectives. Sometimes these perspectives will match; sometimes they will not. But our hope is that in our presentation the biblical perspective will be accurately relayed and will confirm, establish, and enrich—and perhaps even test and adjust—our readers' understanding of these crucial words that relate to our Christian life and church life. May the Lord make us sufficient for these things.