

revelation. FAITH IS A BELIEVING RESPONSE TO A WORD FROM GOD. Biblical faith believes (accepts as true) only what it knows (apprehends via revelation) on the basis of divine authority. Faith (belief) grasps truth; thus faith (belief) includes knowledge.

The second element of faith is assent, persuasion, conviction, assurance. It is a persuasion of truth. This appears to be the sense in Hebrews 11:1, where we read, "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, conviction of things not seen." It is a conviction that is wrought in me by the Holy Spirit by means of the truth. It is an assurance so great that it becomes the dominant influence in my life.

The third element of faith is trust, or confidence. It is a resting, a reposing in the truth. This appears to be the meaning in a number of Old Testament references to faith, as well as the leading element of PISTIS and PISTEUO in the New Testament.

2. The Object of Faith

Although the object of faith usually mentioned in theology texts is twofold -- general faith, by which is meant faith in the written Word (Scripture), and special faith, by which is meant faith in the incarnate Word (Christ) in His character as Redeemer -- it would seem more comprehensive and accurate to discern a threefold object of faith.

- a. The first object of faith is general revelation; and thus this faith should probably be called general faith. External general revelation (Psalm 19:1-4; Acts 14:8-18; Romans 1:18-21) discloses God's attributes of glory, wisdom, goodness, and power, and God's work of creation and general benevolence. Internal general revelation (Romans 1:32; 2:11-15) discloses God's attributes of holiness, justice, and truth, and God's works of providence and judgment. Since general revelation can properly be called God's Word (i.e., general revelation is divine self-disclosure in mediate, natural, significant mode), therefore we can properly speak of general faith, since faith is a believing response to a word from God. In general revelation God tells us something of His nature and works; the human response to this Word is either faith in and worship of the Creator, or rejection and displacement of the Creator in favor of humanly constructed idols. Thus the reality of external general revelation as expressive of truth concerning God as Creator establishes a mandate for the study of the material world as the theater of God's physical and biological activity; and the reality of general revelation as expressive of truth concerning God as righteous Law-giver and just Judge establishes a mandate for the study of man as the theater of God's intellectual, moral, and spiritual activity. A believing study (via the response of general faith) of these two large categories of truth provides a rationale for Christian disciplines in such areas as astronomy, astrophysics, physics, geology, chemistry, biochemistry, biophysics, and biology on the one hand; and in such areas as mathematics, philosophy, ethics, psychology, and anthropology on the other.