

Semantics of Faith in Hebrews 11:1

Eugene Eung-Chun Park

- The author of Hebrews: unknown (cf. the masculine singular pronoun and participle in ἐπιλείπει **με** γὰρ διηγούμενον ὁ χρόνος . . . in Heb 11:32)
 - Origen of Alexandria, “Only God knows who wrote Hebrews.”
- The addressees of Hebrews: a Jewish-Christian community in crisis?
- In Hebrews 13:22, the author calls the text he wrote “*a word of exhortation* (ὁ λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως).
- The overarching theme of Hebrews: **πίστις** / faith
 - The noun **πίστις** appears 243 times in NT and 32 of them are in Hebrews.
- Hebrews 11:1 provides not a connotative but a *functional* definition of **πίστις**.
- The “definition formula” in Classical Greek: ἔστιν + an anarthrous noun as the subject (to be defined) + an anarthrous noun as the predicate (as the definition)
 - Ἔστιν + **πίστις** (subject) + **ὑπόστασις** (predicate 1) ---, & **ἔλεγχος** (predicate 2) --- (Heb 11:1)
- The noun **ὑπόστασις** (ὑπο + ἵστημι): that which stands underneath, foundation, substance
- The noun **ἔλεγχος** (< ἐλέγχω): cross-examination, proof/disproof, evidence
- My translation of Heb 11:1: **Faith is what sustains things that are hoped for, what provides proof for things that cannot be seen.**
- In Hebrews, the Logos invites its hearers to the way of hope (ἐλπίς, 3:6, 6:11, 18, 7:19, 10:23), endurance (μακροθυμία, 6:12), and perseverance (ὑπομονή, 10:36, 12:1), which is built on and sustained by faith (**πίστις**).
- In Hebrews, the followers of Jesus yearn for the will of God (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, 10:36) to be done on earth. --- invisible (πραγμάτων οὐ βλεπομένων) as of now; no proof *except faith* (i.e. faith is the only proof)
- Augustine of Hippo
 - *fides quae creditur* (faith which is believed) --- creeds, confessions, doctrines
 - *fides qua creditur* (faith by which it is believed) --- trust in God