In the New Testament and early Christian writers, faith is a many-sided gift of God; at the same time it is a virtue; it has the sense of a human response to divine grace; it is intellectual, emotive or moral according to the context.

The early Greek writers of the Christian Church used everyday words and expressions to convey the various aspects of faith as they understood it. In the course of time the Church developed its own theological understanding, and this became attached to the vocabulary and expressions relating to faith.

It will assist in an appreciation of these various aspects of faith to examine the history of these words which had already formed part of the Greek vocabulary for a long period of time, and which were ultimately used by the early Church in relation to this central concept of faith.

The verbs πείθομαι, πέποιθα, πιστεύω, πιστόω; the noun πίστις; the adjective πιστός, together with the negative forms of these words, derive ultimately from a single Indo-European root reconstructed as *bheidh — which has the basic sense of 'confidence, faithfulness' in its most archaic usage. The use of this root in Greek is attested even in Mycenaean times. (See the entry in Chantraine P., *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots*, four volumes, 1968–1980, s.v. πείθομαι.) For the purposes of this survey it will be sufficient to begin with the Homeric usage.

In Homer, the adjective πιστός is used of persons to denote their trustiness, faithfulness or reliability; the negative ἄπιστος denotes a person who is faithless, not to be trusted. The causative verb πιστόω is found in the middle and passive in the sense of giving assurance or confidence (middle); or feeling assurance, being convinced (passive). The idea of confidence or reliance is conveyed by the middle of πείθω constructed with either a dative or infinitive; but more frequently the second perfect πέποιθα is used for this meaning. The verb πιστεύω and the noun πίστις do not occur in Homer; they are later formations.

At *Iliad* 18.234, Achilles follows the body of Patroklos as the Achaeans retrieve it —

> μετὰ δὲ σφι ποδώκης εἴπετ’ Ἄχιλλεῦς δάκρυα θερμὰ χέων, ἐπεὶ εἰςὶδε πιστὸν ἐταίρον κείμενον ἐν φέρτρῳ. . . . . . . .
'And with them Achilles followed on foot weeping warm tears, since he looked upon his faithful friend lying on a bier.'

The same phrase is used of Patroklos again at *Iliad* 18.465, and of various close relationships in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The sense is of a reliable friend who can be trusted in the battle situation; but with the nuance of affection.

The adjective can also be applied to words, and especially to oaths — ὀρκία πιστά — oaths in which one may feel confidence, that they will be carried out.

The neuter plural can be used as an abstract noun. In *Odyssey* 11.456, Agamemnon has appeared along with the other Shades and speaks to Odysseus. He warns Odysseus to approach Ithaca cautiously; his own experience on arrival home was to be murdered by his own wife, and although Odysseus’ wife Penelope is an excellent woman in every respect, care is still needed ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι πιστά γυναιξίν — ‘since women are no longer to be trusted’ (literally there are no longer trustworthy things to women).

So the adjective denotes in Homer the reliability and trustworthiness of people and their words.

Similarly the negative ἄπιστος denotes the opposite quality. In *Iliad* 3.106 Menelaus requires that Priam himself should take the oaths, ἐπεί οἱ παῖδες υπερφίαλοι καί ἄπιστοι — ‘since his sons are arrogant and unreliable’ — i.e. they cannot be trusted to honour the treaty.

Apollo too is a companion not to be trusted — αἰέν ἄπιστε -*Iliad* 24.63; and Priam is not to trust Achilles — ὀμματος καί ἄπιστος ἀνήρ δ γε — ‘a brutal and untrustworthy man he’ (*Iliad* 24.207).

Eumaeus refuses to believe the words of Odysseus (in disguise) when he seeks to convince him that Odysseus will return — *Odyssey* 14.150 and 391. In each case Eumaeus is described as ἄπιστος in respect of his θυμός — θυμός ἐνί στήθεσσι ἄπιστος — ‘there is a disbelieving heart in his breast’.

Thus in the case of the negative adjective, the sense is of disbelief in words or distrust of people; or in the passive sense of ‘not to be trusted’. In the case of πιστός only the passive senses are to be found; but with ἄπιστος both active and passive senses are exemplified.

The verb ἄπιστέω appears once, at *Odyssey* 13.339, where Athene asserts that she never doubted that Odysseus would return. The causative verb πιστόω is used only in the middle and passive. In the middle it means ‘to make oneself trustworthy’, to ‘give an assurance, give confidence’ e.g. ἐπιστῶσαντ’ ἐπέσεσιν — ‘they gave an assurance’ — of Poseidon and Athene encouraging Achilles. (*Iliad* 21.286).

In the passive, the verb can mean ‘to give an assurance, be bound with an oath’, as at *Odyssey* 15.436 — ὀρκοὶ πιστωθήναι. Alternatively the meaning can be ‘to feel assurance, be convinced’ — ὧν πιστωθήσετο — ‘that
you may be convinced’ — (Odyssey 21.218) as Odysseus draws aside his rags to show the scar made by the boar’s tusk and thus convince the cowherd of his true identity.

The idea of confidence and reliability is closely connected with that of obedience. The verb πείθω, especially in its second perfect form πέποιθα, is frequently used from Homer onwards in contexts where confidence and reliability are to be conveyed.

At Odyssey 23.230, Penelope is at last convinced by Odysseus that it is really he, and she concludes πείθεις δή μευ θυμόν — ‘you convince me’ — i.e. she believes the words of proof that Odysseus has offered.

By far the most common use is that of πέποιθα, which is found constructed with the dative of the thing or person; with the infinitive; or absolutely. The word conveys the sense of believing in or relying upon something or someone.

At the Funeral Games for Patroklos, Achilles gives an open invitation to all the Achaeans to join him in the chariot race — ὃς τις Ἀχαιῶν ἱπποισίν τε πέποιθε καὶ ἀρμασὶ κολλητοῖσιν — ‘whoever of the Achaeans has confidence in his horses and well built chariots; (Iliad 23.285) Here the word expresses confidence in things. On the other hand, Odysseus can speak of three companions, οίσι μάλιστα πεποίθεα πασαν ἐπ’ ίθύν — ‘in whom I had most confidence for every enterprise’ (Odyssey 4.434).

This personal object of confidence is exemplified also in the construction with the infinitive — The Earthshaker stirs up the Achaeans to greater efforts, and tells them ὅμως ἔγω γε μαρανμένοις πέποιθα σαωσέμεναι νέας ἀμάς — ‘on your gallantry I rely to save our ships’ (Iliad 13.95 and 96).

The participle is very common with the dative case, as at Iliad 23.319, in the context of the Funeral Games again — ἱπποισί καὶ ἀρμασίν οίσι πεποίθως — ‘having confidence in your horses and chariots’. In one instance the gods are the object of confidence or reliance — οἱ ρα θεοῖσι πεποιθότες άθανάτοισι οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσίν φυτῶν οὔτ’ ἀρόωσιν — ‘who relying on the Immortal Gods put their hands neither to planting nor to ploughing’ (Odyssey 9.107) — of the Cyclops.

There is one formula where the verb is used absolutely meaning ‘to feel confident’ in the sense of being certain that something will happen, or that something is so — e.g. Odyssey 24.329, where Laertes asks for a sign that Odysseus has truly come home, δφρα πεποίθω — ‘in order that I may be certain’.

Thus already in Homer some of the same words are used to express belief, reliance, confidence, trust within the context of the Homeric scenario, as are found in that of the New Testament and early Fathers. Trustworthiness, faithfulness, reliability are valued attributes in Homer,
and men have a need to be assured in their minds of what is true. The ex-
pressions denoting these things do not change greatly; only the context and
application changes. Both Judaism and Christianity take the expressions
and adapt them to their own use, as they seek to express their growing
understanding of the divine revelation. This growth can be traced in the
usage of these words and expressions.

In the Classical period the Homeric usage continues; there is no change
in meanings from those already noted.

In the case of the adjective πιστός there are examples of such phrases as
πιστὰ διδόναι καὶ λαμβάνειν — to give and receive guarantees — as
applied to the treaties (e.g. Xenophon Anab. 3.2.5, 4.8.7) in the historians,
and the adjective in both positive and negative forms is frequent in the
poets.

There is however some broadening in the sense, especially in Thucydides.
He is fond of the construction which uses the neuter accusative, singular
and plural, in the sense of an abstract noun. A very good example of this is
to be found in Pericles’ first speech, at Thucydides 1.141.5. Pericles is talk-
ing about the comparative resources which each side has at the beginning of
the Peloponnesian War. He suggests that the Athenians are in a better posi-
tion than the Spartans because they have control of the sea, and because the
Spartans, being small farmers, find a prolonged conflict difficult. They are
therefore unwilling to risk the large sums of money required. σώμασι τε
έτοιμότεροι οἱ αὐτούργοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἢ χρήμασι πολεμεῖν, τὸ μὲν
πιστὸν ἔχοντες ἕκ τῶν κινδύνων κἂν περιγενέσθαι, τὸ δὲ οὐ βέβαιον μὴ
οὔ προαναλώσειν. ‘Farmers are a class of men more prepared to fight in
person than with money, having in the former a possession they can rely on
to emerge safe from the dangers; but in the latter a possession in which there
is no security that it will not all be spent before the war finishes . . . .’

The adjective πιστός is also applied to describe a faithful wife or
husband; a reliable witness; or to describe matters constituted or pursued by
men. ἄπιστος describes the opposite qualities.

The causative verb πιστόω shows no significant change in the Classical
period, while πείθεσθαι continues to convey the sense of ‘rely on’, ‘have
confidence in’. An interesting example of this, with τῷ θεῷ as indirect
object, is provided by Herodotus. The context is the famous oracle
delivered to the Athenian envoys at Delphi, in which the Prophetess re-
ferred to the ‘Wooden Wall’ which would save the Athenians, and to
‘divine Salamis’. Themistokles persuaded the Athenians that the Wooden
Wall referred to the naval defences of Athens, consisting of wooden ships,
and on this basis was able to get the Assembly to agree to build two hundred
hulls. These were used to meet the Persian threat at sea ‘with full force, and
with any other Greeks who were willing to join them, τῷ θεῷ πειθομένους
— ‘relying on (the oracle of) the God’. (Herodotus 7.144.3). The nuance of obedience is present in this example as well. It is contexts such as this that provide the antecedents of the later New Testament and Patristic use.

The second pluperfect form is found in Herodotus 9.88, this time in a reference to bribery — καὶ δὴ χρήμασι ἐπεποίθεσαν διώσεσθαι — ‘and they relied on money to avoid condemnation’; or, ‘they believed that they would avoid penalty by bribery.’

Belief in words also provides an important antecedent for the verb in regard to Christian faith. At Herodotus 1.8.2 Kandaules tells Gyges that he does not think that Gyges believes him when he speaks about his wife’s appearance — ού γάρ σε δοκέω πείθεσθαί μοι λέγοντι περὶ τοῦ εἴδεος τῆς γυναικός — ‘for I do not think that you believe me when I tell you about the appearance of my wife’.

The idea of obedience is expressed by Socrates in Plato Apology 29a, when he says ἐγὼ . . . πείσομαι δέ μᾶλλον τῷ θεῷ ἢ ὑμῖν — ‘I . . . will obey God rather than you’. It is worth comparing this expression with what is said several times in 27d, where Socrates talks about believing and not believing in gods. In this case the verb used is νομίζω and in Classical Greek this is the regular verb for belief in the gods. In this regard we may compare also Plato Ap. 24 and Xenophon Mem.1.1.1 for a similar use of νομίζω.

The verb πιστεύω appears from the seventh century onwards, and has the basic meaning of ‘to trust, rely on’. Only in Hellenistic times does it come to replace νομίζω, of belief in the gods, but even in Classical times the verb can convey belief in words or persons.

Some illustrations of the general Classical Greek usage may now be considered —

In Thucydides’ famous dissertation on the effects of stasis in the Greek states, the verb is used absolutely to describe the lack of confidence and trust that widespread stasis had created — Thucydides 3.83.2 — ἀπαντες λογισμῷ ἐς τὸ ἀνέλπιστον τοῦ βεβαίου μὴ παθεῖν μᾶλλον προσκόπου ἢ πιστεύσαι ἐδύναντο — ‘all in their calculation dwelling on the hopelessness of a permanent state of affairs, were more intent on not suffering than able to have confidence’.

The object of trust or confidence is in the dative case. Xenophon Anab. 5.2.9 shows a context in which Xenophon expresses reliance on the sacrifices as the basis for a military manoeuvre — τοῖς ἱεροῖς πιστεύσας — ‘in reliance on the sacrifices’. Herodotus 2.118 uses the verb to express belief in the story of Helen and the treasure being not in Troy but in Egypt — οὕτω δὴ πιστεύσαντες τῷ λογῷ — ‘so at last believing the story . . .’ Similar contexts may be quoted with words of many different sorts as the object of belief or confidence; with luck (τύχη) or signs. It is these kinds of
expressions that form the antecedents for the New Testament usage of belief in Jesus’ words or miracles, or belief in Christian teachings. These senses also carry on into the Patristic period.

The verb in Classical Greek usage can also be followed by an internal accusative, as in Euripides Helen 710 — λόγοις ἑμοίσι πιστεύσον τάδε — ‘believe my words with respect to these things’ — where once again it is belief in words that is in question, although the construction with the internal accusative finds no parallel in the New Testament or early Christian literature.

The use of a personal recipient of trust or confidence in the dative case also has important New Testament parallels, especially where Jesus Himself becomes the recipient of trust. As far as Classical Greek is concerned, the usage is well illustrated in Thucydides 7.85.1, where the Athenian army have been all but destroyed, and Nikias gives himself up to Gylippos, the Spartan commander, πιστεύσας μᾶλλον αὐτῷ ἦ τοῖς Συρακοσίοις — ‘trusting him rather than the Syracusans’. When the object of trust is a person, the element of trust and confidence in the person is uppermost, but the element of belief must also be present. In this case quoted, Nikias thought Gylippos more trustworthy; in his own mind he believed that Gylippos was more likely to stop the slaughter than the Syracusans. It is very difficult to separate clearly the various nuances of belief, trust, reliance and confidence in the Classical period, just as the ‘faith’ contexts of the later Christian literature will be shown to contain the same nuances which are not usually clearly distinguished in the contexts. Christianity adopted in πιστεύω a verb which was well suited to express the various aspects of her faith.

In the passive, the verb means ‘to be trusted or believed’ — so Plato Laws 181b — ἄνδρες ἧξιοι πιστεύεσθαι — ‘men worthy of trust’. The phrase πιστευθῆναι ὑπὸ τινος means to enjoy someone’s confidence (Xenophon Cyr. 6.1.39). In this construction prepositions may follow the verb — πιστεύεσθαι παρά τινι — (Demosthenes 23.4) πρὸς τινας (Demosthenes 20.25), although there is no parallel to the common New Testament use of the active followed by ἐν, ἐπί, πρὸς or εἰς.

One Classical construction that does find many New Testament and other early Christian parallels is the use of the verb followed by a dependent clause of indirect speech. Thucydides 2.62.4 provides an example with the infinitive — καταφρόνησις (ἐγγίγνεται) δὲ δὲ ἐν καὶ γνώμη πιστεύῃ τῶν ἐναντίων προύχειν — ‘disdain is the property of the man who, by reflection, believes that he is superior to his enemies’. The indirect speech may also be introduced by a ὅτι clause, as in Plato Gorgias 512e — πιστεύοντα ταῖς γυναιξίν ὅτι τὴν εἰμαρμένην οὐδ’ ἐν εἰς ἐκφύγοι — ‘believing the women that no one would escape the appointed death-day’. Both these constructions have great importance for later Christian writings, and especially
for those contexts which express the content of faith and belief.

The verb may also be used transitively in the sense of 'to entrust something to someone' — πιστεύειν τινί τι — e.g. Xenophon Sym. 8.36 — τῷ . . . . παιδί . . . . ἀν τίς πιστεύειν χρήματα . . . . 'would anyone entrust money to children'. As early as Polybius (3.69.1) we find the construction with the passive and a retained accusative to mean 'to be entrusted with something'. Both forms of the construction are to be found in the New Testament and other early Christian literature in the sense of 'trust', 'entrust' or 'entrusted with something'.

The noun πίστις appears first in Hesiod in the sense of trust — Op. 372 — πίστεις γάρ τοι ὁμως καὶ ἀπιστίαι ὀλεσαν ἄνδρας — 'for trust and mistrust alike ruin men'. In this sense of trust, confidence, there are numerous examples that could be quoted from both poetry and prose throughout the Classical period, as the lexicons show. The application of the trust, confidence is to persons, relationships and things.

In philosophy the word can express the idea of certainty or conviction, as in Parmenides Fr. 1.30, where the philosopher contrasts πίστις ἀληθής with βροτών δόξαι — 'true conviction' with 'opinions of mortals'. This sense finds an extension to that of trustworthiness, honesty — as at Herodotus 8.105.2, where Eunuchs are described as τιμιώτεροί . . . . πίστιος εἶνεκα τῆς πάσης τῶν ἐνορχέων — 'more valuable than the uncastrated men on account of their trustworthiness in every respect'.

The noun also comes to apply to that which gives assurance — a pledge or guarantee of good faith, as at Antiphon 6.25 — δρκοίς καὶ πίστεσιν ἀναγκάζειν — 'to compel with oaths and pledges'. There are many examples of this meaning in both poetry and prose, but this transfer to a concrete identity is not of great significance as regards Christian usage. It is the objective belief and trust in somebody, or the subjective trustworthiness which are more closely related to the Christian trust, belief, faithfulness, assurance which the noun comes to denote in Christian contexts.

In addition to the cognates already considered, the negative verb ἀπιστέω occurs in the sense of distrusting or disbelieving, and this especially in the case of words; it may also be applied to laws in the sense of disobeying. ἀπιστία denotes unreliability or unfaithfulness, as in the quotation above from Hesiod Op. 372.

In Classical usage these words are not used in a specifically religious sense, but when applied to belief in words, or to oracles and the gods; or in connection with oaths and guarantees and trustworthiness in general, the seeds of religious use are there. Both Judaism and Christianity made use of these connections, and applied the words within the context of religious faith. There are, then, Classical Greek antecedents — and Homeric as well — but the more immediate influence on Christian usage is to be found in the
context of Hellenistic Judaism, especially in the Septuagint and in Philo. To
a lesser extent, Hellenistic philosophy made a contribution, and such
authors as Plutarch and the Corpus Hermeticum provide parallels to
Christian usage.

In the Septuagint the verbal πέποιθα is very common. It denotes con-
fidence or reliance as in the earlier periods, and this as applied to ordinary
material things or everyday relationships; but to these are added the
specifically religious senses where God or salvation is the object of con-
fidence or reliance. That on which one relies is expressed by ἐπί and dative,
or the bare accusative. This is a change from the Classical usage, and marks
a stage in the development of the wide use of prepositions to describe the

Another feature that will be noted is that in the Septuagint πέποιθα is
much more common than πιστεύω. The latter occurs some forty times only
in the Septuagint, while the former occurs some sixty times with dependent
ἐπί and dative; some twenty times with bare accusative; only six times in the
Classical construction with the dative; once each with ἐν and dative and a
cognate accusative; four times absolutely; twice with a dependent infinitive;
and twice with a ὅτι clause. This makes in all about one hundred occur-
rences of πέποιθα in the Septuagint.

It will be sufficient to quote a few examples only —

Reliance on a material object is illustrated in Isaiah 31.1 where the pro-
phet refers to οἱ ἐφ’ ἰπποίς πεποιθότες καὶ ἐφ’ ἀρμασιν — ‘those who trust
in horses and chariots’. The application to relationships is exemplified at
Isaiah 20.5 — καὶ αἰσχυνθήσονται ἠττηθέντες ἐπὶ τοῖς Αἰθίοπιν, ἐφ’ οίς
ὁσαν πεποιθότες οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι — ‘and the Egyptians will feel a sense of
shame, since they have been overcome by the Ethiopians in whom they
trusted’. The specifically ‘religious’ use comes in with the expression of
trust in God, as at 2 Samuel 22.3 — ο θεός μου φύλαξ μοι έσται μοι,
πεποιθώς ἔσομαι ἐπ’ αὐτό — ‘my God is my Guardian, in whom I shall
trust’ — although it should be remembered that in Old Testament thought
God is the God of all history and all relationships, so that whatever happens
is religious in this wider sense.

There seems to be no real difference in meaning in the one case where ἐν
and dative occurs — viz. Jeremiah 31.7 — ἐπειδή ἐπεποίθεις ἐν ὅχυρωματί
σου — ‘since you have trusted in your stronghold’.

The absolute use indicates confidence in the sense of safety or security, as
at Leviticus 25.18 — κατοικήσετε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς πεποιθότες — ‘you will
dwell securely in (your) land’. In the case of the infinitive the sense is that of
confident expectation — e.g. Isaiah 20.6 — ἡμεῖς ἦμεν πεποιθότες τοῦ
φυγεῖν εἰς αὐτοὺς εἰς βοήθειαν — ‘we confidently expected to flee to them
for protection’. The context of one’s confidence is defined by a ὅτι clause at
Job 31.21 — πεποιθῶς ὅτι πολλῆ μοι βοήθεια περίεστιν — 'being confident that my strength was great'.

We find in the Septuagint a wide range of recipients for the trust, confidence or reliance which the verbal πέποιθα expresses. But when it comes to the expression of belief, especially in an intellectual sense, the Septuagint uses the verb πιστεύω and there is quite a clear differentiation here in the use of the two verbs.

The reason for this clear division of function between πέποιθα and πιστεύω in the Septuagint derives from the usage of the Hebrew original, πιστεύω is always used to translate the Hebrew root יהוה, never πέποιθα (in accordance with T.W.N.T.¹ sv πιστεύω κτλ, note 149, page 197). Conversely πέποιθα is used for several Hebrew words, which are variously translated in different parts of the Septuagint. The consistent use of πιστεύω to represent one Hebrew root is an exception in the Septuagint. This root signifies belief, and embraces the deepest relationship between God and man. (For a detailed treatment of this, see T.W.N.T. s.v. πιστεύω κτλ p182ff, and especially note 149 on p197.)

In the Septuagint πιστεύω occurs with the following dependent constructions — the dative case; ἐν and the dative; κατὰ and the genitive (but only in Job, and 3 times); a ὅτι clause; an infinitive. It is used absolutely and in the passive. The transitive use does not occur in the Septuagint.

Belief in a person, that they are or are not telling the truth, is exemplified by Jacob’s disbelief at the news that Joseph is alive — Genesis 45.26 — οὐ γὰρ ἐπίστευσεν αὐτοῖς — 'for he did not believe them'. Belief in words is illustrated at 2 Chronicles 9.6 by the astonishment of the Queen of Sheba, who had heard reports of Solomon’s magnificence, but says οὐκ ἐπίστευσα τοῖς λόγοις — 'I did not believe the reports'.

The promises of God are the object of Abraham’s belief at Genesis 15.6 — ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ — ‘Abraham believed God’. Belief in God is expressed at Psalm 77.22 and Daniel 6.23 in the phrase ἐπίστευσεν ἐν τῷ θεῷ — ‘he believed in God’, a phrase which is very common in the New Testament. Similar quotations could be given to illustrate belief in God’s words, in the testimony of His actions, or in His commandments.

The content of belief may be defined by a ὅτι clause, as in Job 9.16 — οὐ πιστεύω ὅτι εἰσακήκοε μου τῆς φωνῆς — 'I do not believe that he heard my voice'. There is no hint in the Septuagint of the later ‘credal’ use of this construction which becomes so important in the New Testament and later, but the transition to this technical use is not a great step. (See below).

The object of belief must sometimes be supplied from the context, and later we will notice that when the verb or noun is used absolutely in a 'faith context', the object of faith can always be easily supplied from the context — in fact, faith of its nature must have an object. This is the case at Isaiah 28.16, ὁ πιστεύων οὐ μὴ καταισχυνθῇ — 'he who believes will not be put to shame', where the object of belief is the foundation stone which God is laying in Zion, and by implication also God Himself.

The content of belief may also be expressed by the infinitive — in fact both this construction and the ὅτι clause construction reflect the 'indirect speech' usage noted in the Classical Period e.g. Psalm 26.13 — πιστεύω τού ἰδεῖν τὰ ἀγαθὰ κυρίου — 'I believe that I will see the goodness of the Lord'. We may note in passing the pleonastic τοῦ with the infinitive which is very common in the Septuagint.

In the New Testament, πιστεύω takes over the meaning of πέποιθα in addition to the 'intellectual' type meanings noted in the Septuagint. This may be illustrated from a context such as Acts 27.25, where Paul is encouraging those with him on the ship and sharing in the danger — διὸ εὐθυμεῖτε, ἀνδρεῖς· πιστεύω γάρ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι οὕτως ἐσται καθ' ὑπότον λελάληται μοι — 'Therefore take heart, men; for I trust God that it will turn out in the manner I have been told'. In this example the element of trust is perhaps uppermost, but that of belief in God's words is also present, as the ὅτι clause shows. The use of the single verb πιστεύω to express all the aspects of trust and belief may very well indicate that the two ideas which were treated separately came to be recognised as two sides of the same coin, and this also marks a return to the wider Classical Greek usage noted above. We recognise in the Septuagint again with πιστεύω a broadening of the constructions used, and another step towards the richer expressions of faith that are characteristic of the New Testament and other early Christian literature.

One particular nuance that is very strong in the Old Testament is that of the obedience of faith. So to believe in God's words and commandments is also to be obedient.

The noun πίστις in the Septuagint indicates belief in something or someone. Perhaps the most famous example, because so prominently quoted by Paul at Romans 1.17 is Habakkuk 2.4 — ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως μου ζήσεται — 'The righteous shall live by his belief in me' — although Paul omits the μου. As it stands in the Septuagint meaning, this is a good example of the objective genitive on πίστις — a construction which becomes very common to denote the object of faith in the New Testament and after. This construction with πίστις is rare in Classical Greek², but becomes more

2. E.g. Euripides, Medea 414 (θεῶν . . . πίστις), Hippocrates 1037, Thucydides 5.30.3.
widespread in the Hellenistic literature. The fact that Paul omits the objective genitive at Romans 1.17 is a further illustration of the ease with which the object is to be supplied from the context as noted above.

As in the Classical period, πίστις denotes also in the Septuagint faithfulness, reliability, especially as applied to the covenant — e.g. Jeremiah 5.3. — κύριε, οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου εἰς πίστιν — ‘Lord, your eyes are towards faithfulness’ — i.e. God looks for faithfulness to the covenant. An extension of this meaning is demonstrated by contexts in which πίστις comes to mean ‘truth’ — e.g. Proverbs 12.17 — ἐπιδεικνυμένην πίστιν ἀπαγγέλλει δίκαιος — ‘the righteous man declares the open truth’. This is parallel to the Classical Greek construction with the neuter accusative of the adjective, but finds no parallel in the New Testament and later literature.

πίστις is applied to God’s faithfulness, and this meaning is extended to the use of the noun to describe the covenant itself (Nehemiah 9.35). The phrase ἐν πίστει is quite common; meaning literally ‘in accordance with the covenant’, it is used adverbially to mean ‘faithfully’.

The adjective πιστός in the Septuagint means ‘faithful, reliable, trustworthy’. Its use follows earlier applications, but to these are added, as one would expect, references to the ‘faithful God’ or to His ‘faithful servants’. The adjective is common in the Wisdom literature to denote a ‘faithful man/friend’ — an attribute much valued in this context.

The causative πιστόω is infrequent in the Septuagint, and when it does occur it is in almost every case in the passive sense of ‘being proved faithful’. The application to the covenant or to God is the only development here. Psalm 77.37 will suffice to illustrate this — ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν οὐκ εὐθεῖα μετ’ αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲ ἐπιστώθησαν ἐν τῇ διαθήκῃ αὐτοῦ — ‘Their heart was not straight with Him, neither did they prove faithful in His covenant’.

What emerges from the Septuagint usage is that the Septuagint forms the bridge-head to the later New Testament and early Christian usage. The words come to be applied in an overtly religious context, and they become associated with technical covenant language. This opens the way for the New Testament writers to apply the words in the context of the New Covenant in Jesus, and so for the development of the technical language of faith. With the Septuagint the use of dependent prepositional phrases becomes more widespread, although nothing like as much so as in the New Testament, nor in quite the same way. Thus ἐπὶ and dative is associated with πέποιθα, while ἐν and dative is nothing like so popular as later, although it is there. The objective genitive on πίστις appears more frequently, but it remains for the New Testament to make wide use of this construction in the language of faith. The division between πέποιθα and πιστεύω persists, while in the New Testament πιστεύω takes over the trust aspect as well as belief, although πέποιθα persists to some extent. Taken as a whole, we
may say that Classical and earlier Greek usage provided basic words for confidence, reliance, trust and belief; the Septuagint adapted these to a primarily religious context; but it was for the New Testament to develop them into a technical language of faith.

The Septuagint usage carries over into that of Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism, and it is often difficult to assess on which side the influence lies. Also by this time the Canon of scripture has become fixed, and so faith is related to this; there is a lack of dynamic faith in what God is doing in the contemporary situation; rather faith is a static thing and related to the past history enshrined in the Canon. In this sense, the wider Hellenistic/Jewish context offers less enlightenment as to the nature of Christian faith than the Septuagint itself.

Nevertheless the works of Philo, which are typical of Hellenistic Judaism, provide some parallels, and the historical picture would not be complete without considering these. It is also a fact that some of the Apostolic Fathers, especially Barnabas and the Didache, were strongly influenced by Hellenistic Judaism as well as by the New Testament writings.

For Philo, belief in one God and trust in His Providence is basic — *Virt.* 2.16: διὸ καὶ πιστεύσαι λέγεται τῷ θεῷ πρῶτος — 'wherefore (Abraham) is said to believe first in God. . . . ' It is trust in the permanence and immovability of God that is basic to Philo's faith; to believe in God is to believe this about Him, as the passage quoted above goes on to show. We may compare also *Leg. All.* 2.89 — πῶς ἂν τις πιστεύσαι θεῷ; ἡν μάθη ὅτι πάντα τὰ ἄλλα τρέπεται, μόνος δὲ αὐτὸς ἀτρεπτός εστὶ — 'How would anyone believe God? If he learns that everything else is moveable, but God is moveable'. The verb πιστεύειν is used again at *Leg. All.* 3.229 — ἀλήθες μὲν ἔστι δόγμα τὸ πιστεύειν θεῷ, ψεύδος δὲ τὸ πιστεύειν τοῖς κενοῖς λογισμοῖς — 'Belief in God is a true precept, belief in empty words is a falsehood' — where it is worth noting the use of the articular infinitive as an abstract noun, a construction which can be paralleled especially in the Apostolic Fathers (e.g. Ignatius, *Magnesians* 9.1).

In a more extended passage, the use of the noun πίστις can be illustrated in its Philonic sense of trust in the permanence of God as over against the world of becoming and perishing — δὴ δ' ἔξεγενετο πάντα μὲν σώματα πάντα δ' ἄσωματα ὑπεριδεῖν καὶ ὑπερκύψαι, μόνος δ' ἐπερείσασθαι καὶ στηρίσασθαι θεῷ μετ' ἰσχυρογνώμονος λογισμοῦ καὶ ἀκλινοῦς καὶ βεβαιοτάτης πίστεως, εὐδαίμων καὶ τρισμακάριος οὕτος ὡς ἀληθῶς — 'But he to whom it is given to gaze and soar beyond not only material but all immaterial things, and to take God for his whole stay and support with a reasonableness whose resolution falters not, and a faith unswerving and securely founded, will be a truly happy and thrice-blessed man' (*Praem. Poen.* 30. The translation is that of F. H. Colson in the Loeb Classical
In some respects this is a very limited kind of faith, static and restricted compared with the Septuagint, and even more when compared with the New Testament. But the idea of belief and trust in both noun and verb is clearly present. Another aspect which is paralleled in the Apostolic Fathers is that of faith as one of the virtues — to Philo it is τελειοτάτη ἀρετῶν — the most perfect of the virtues (Rev. Div. Her. 91). The virtuous aspect of faith is much developed in the post-New Testament literature. Thus Philo makes his contribution and provides his parallels, but in general his importance and influence is less. It is apparent to some extent in the Apostolic Fathers, but is negligible in respect to the New Testament.

The wider Hellenistic literature is even less helpful. Plutarch is contemporary with the later parts of the New Testament and with the Apostolic Fathers, but most of his subject matter is so different that it provides no real parallels. Belief and disbelief are illustrated in Plu. *Superstitio* 11 — οὐκ οἰςταί θεοὺς εἶναι ὁ ἄθεος, ὁ δὲ δεισιδαίμων οὐ βούλεται, πιστεύει δ’ ἄκων. φοβεῖται γὰρ ἀπιστείν — ‘The atheist thinks that the gods do not exist; the superstitious man does not want them to exist, but he believes unwillingly; for he is frightened to disbelieve’. This is only parallel to the extent that the verb expresses belief in divinities, as the New Testament does in relation to God and Christ.

A number of other contexts are quoted by T. W. N. T. (s.v. πιστεύω κτλ p179ff), but they are from second or third century A.D. authors. They provide some parallels in terms of the meaning of the cognates to signify belief, trust and confidence, but they add little to our understanding of what the New Testament and early Christian writers mean by faith. What is illustrated is that Christianity has taken words from the standard Hellenistic vocabulary, and invested them with the peculiarly Christian application to faith in relation to Christ and His acts.

This leads us to the New Testament usage. The verbal πέποιθα occurs only sixteen times, πιστεύω having virtually taken over its Septuagint function of the expression of trust and confidence. However in the sense of trust or confidence it occurs with a dependent ἐπί and dative, ἐν and dative, the bare dative, and with a cognate accusative. With a dependent noun clause it occurs twice in the infinitive construction, and there are several examples with a ὅτι clause expressing the content or cause of confidence. 2 Thessalonians 3.4 will suffice to illustrate the usage — πεποίθαμεν δὲ ἐν κυρίω ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς, ὅτι ἄ παραγγέλλομεν καὶ ποιεῖτε καὶ ποιήσετε — ‘We have confidence in the Lord with regard to you, that you are doing and will do the things which we told you’.

The verb πιστεύω occurs two hundred and thirty-eight times in the New Testament, and this reflects its importance in the Christian vocabulary. It is used transitively in the sense of entrusting something to somebody — as in the case of John 2.24, where Jesus ούκ ἐπίστευεν αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς — 'did not trust himself to them'. In the passive we find it in the Classical Greek usage with the retained accusative, as in the phrase of Paul — οἰκονομίαν πεπίστευμαι — 'I am entrusted with a stewardship' (1 Corinthians 9.17). This transitive use does not occur in the Septuagint, but appears also in the Apostolic Fathers.

The commonest New Testament use of πιστεύω is absolutely, with the object of belief to be implied from the context — as at Romans 1.16 — δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι — 'for (the Gospel) is the power of God for salvation to all who believe' — and the object of belief is the Gospel, to be supplied from the previous clause.

The verb is found, as in Classical Greek, construed with a plain dative — Luke 1.20 — ἀνθ’ ὃν οὐκ ἐπίστευσας τοῖς λόγοις μου — 'because you did not believe my words', of the Angel Gabriel to Zecharia. This construction can also take the dative of a person, in which case it indicates belief in the truth of what they say — as Acts 8.12 — ἐπίστευσαν τῷ Φιλίππῳ εὐαγγελιζομένῳ — 'they believed Philip preaching the Gospel'. An internal accusative also sometimes occurs, as at 1 Corinthians 13.7 — πάντα πιστεύει — 'believes all things'.

The object of faith can be signified, under the influence of the Septuagint usage, by επί and accusative or dative, and by εν and dative e.g. — Romans 4.24 — τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐπί τὸν ἔγειραντα Ἰησοῦν . . . . — 'those who believe in the one who raised Jesus . . .' ; 1 Timothy 1.16 — μελλόντων πιστεύειν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ — 'those about to believe in Him'; Mark 1.15 — πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ — 'believe in the Gospel'. It is very difficult to distinguish any real difference between these constructions, and they are probably to be regarded as equivalents.

A real change in emphasis is apparent with the introduction of the peculiarly Christian usage of a dependent εἰς and accusative. T. W. N. T. s.v. πιστεύω κτλ p203f suggests that this was a usage developed in the language of mission, and indicates the faith that comes with conversion. So πιστεύσαι εἰς Χριστὸν means to believe in Christ, or more accurately to come to belief in Him.

T. W. N. T. associates this with the development of the construction with a dependent ὅτι clause (s.v. πιστεύω κτλ p203ff). This has been noted in both Classical and Hellenistic use, but in the New Testament it is greatly expanded, and forms the basis of the 'credal' type statements which give the content of faith, and which form the basis of the later church creeds.

A very clear example of this is given at John 20.31, where the purpose of
the Gospel is given — ἵνα πιστεύητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός ὁ Υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ — ‘in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God’. In St. John especially, it may be seen that πιστεύειν εἰς Χριστόν is equivalent to πιστεύειν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός — that to believe in Christ is equivalent to believing that Jesus is the Christ e.g. at John 7.5 we are told that Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him — οὐδὲ . . . ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν. This would be equivalent to saying that they did not believe that he was the Christ. If we put this alongside such statements as I.Mag. 10.3 it becomes clear that the construction with εἰς is a standard way of expressing belief, developed in the context of the Church’s missionary task — πιστεύσαι (= to come to believe) εἰς Ἰουδαϊσμόν . . . εἰς Χριστιανισμόν is a phrase that expresses conversion.

The content of faith becomes very important to the preaching of the early Church, as does conversion to this faith, and this seems the best explanation of the growth of these two constructions with εἰς and accusative, and a δτι clause.

The verb is constructed with the infinitive and with the accusative and infinitive in the manner already noted for earlier periods. It is also found in the passive sense of ‘to be believed’.

The noun πίστις occurs only once in the Johannine writings — at I John 5.4. This is because the noun tends to express in the New Testament the emotive aspects of faith — trust and faithfulness — while the verb expresses the more intellectual aspect of belief. This has already been illustrated above in the account of πιστεύειν δτι, and εἰς and accusative.

πίστις may take a subjective genitive, denoting whose faith is in question, as Romans 4.5 — λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην — ‘his faith is reckoned for righteousness’.

Very frequently the object of faith is expressed by an objective genitive on πίστις, as Mark 11.22 — ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ — ‘have faith in God’. This objective genitive occurs more frequently than the prepositional phrases — εἰς and accusative, ἐν and dative, πρός and accusative, and ἐπί and accusative — and it is difficult to detect any significant difference between the usages.

The phrase ἐκ πίστεως occurs several times in Romans and Galatians to express the source from which righteousness springs. It is dependent on δίκαιος and its cognates and arises from the quotation of Habakkuk 2.4 in both epistles. e.g. Romans 10.6 illustrates the point — ἡ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη — ‘the righteousness that springs from faith’.

In the New Testament, the article is used with πίστις when there is a dependent possessive genitive or as in Romans 11.20 when this is implied; when πίστις is qualified by an adjectival expression — ἡ πίστις ἡ δι’ αὐτοῦ — ‘the faith which is through Him (Acts 3.16); when πίστις stands in the
genitive case, governed by a noun with the article, as τὸ δῆμα τῆς πίστεως — 'the word of faith' (Romans 10.8). The omission of the article makes the phrase general instead of specific, as Matthew 8.10 — οὐδὲ . . . τοσαύτην πίστιν εὕρον — ‘neither . . . have I found such faith’. It is to be noted that 'the Faith' in the sense of a formally defined body of doctrine is not a New Testament concept.

In addition to these words, the causative πιστόω is found only in its passive use in the New Testament. The adjective πιστός denotes 'Faithful' and 'trusting', and is applied to the loyalty of faith, especially in the context of witness. It applies also to the faithfulness of God. It denotes in some contexts that a person is a Christian believer (e.g. Acts 16.1). Similarly ἀπιστός denotes an unbeliever, or something unworthy of credence (Acts 26.8). The verb ἀπιστέω occurs a few times in the sense of 'to be unfaithful or unbelieving'. ἀπιστία denotes unfaithfulness, with the nuance of disobedience (Hebrews 3.19), or lack of trust. ὀλιγόπιστος and ὀλιγοπιστία are new words derived from Judaism.

Thus the New Testament develops the usage of πίστις and its cognates into a full-blown technical vocabulary of faith as it applies to the Christian religion in its sense of belief, trust, confidence, assurance, commitment and conviction.

The meaning of faith depends on the context in which it is to be practised. The Christian context is different from that of Judaism, and the development of the usage illustrates this. The sub-apostolic context is different again in some respects, and new emphases emerge which affect the language and constructions.

The wide variety of words and expressions illustrated in this survey demonstrates the richness of the concept of faith as the early Church perceived it.