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Letter from the Managing Editor

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Abstract

Letter from the managing editor on the definition of faith, the variety of barriers, and the issue's contents.

Keywords

Barriers to Faith, Elizabeth Jackson

Cover Page Footnote

Managing Editor

This issue's theme is "Barriers to Faith." This contains two parts: faith and barriers to it. Faith has four elements: belief, desire, commitment, and persistence.^{1,2} Biblically, "faith" has been used as a verb and as a noun. As a verb, it meant both confidence and trust—belief in propositions about persons (especially revelatory beliefs about and belief in the persons of the Trinity). Faith as a noun referred to the explosive branch of Judaism that claimed the messiah had come in the flesh in first century Palestine. As Judas, the brother of Jesus exhorted, "Contend for the faith entrusted to God's holy people." (Jude 1:3) All true faith is considered a theological virtue, being given by God and aimed at God. This vigorous creedal faith that invests in veridical risks is very different than the minimalist existential leap that is both blind, nominal, and unrepentant in practice.

Faith has come to be known as believing without reason and despite evidence. But even apart from semantic misconceptions of faith, barriers are innumerable. In the realm of philosophy and theology, anything that undercuts or overrides belief in God or the resurrection is a barrier. In the realm scripture and interpretation, any apparent contradictions or mishandling of the Bible is a barrier. In the realm of church and mission, anything that prevents the flourishing of the saints and their expansion is a barrier. As our contributors show, these have manifested in problems with divine hiddenness, divine atrocities, moral traumas, political affairs, and improper theological anthropology and Christology. Our guest contributor, Jana Harmon, covered contextual, socio-cultural, experiential, moral, intellectual, and integrated barriers to belief—especially among atheists—in the realm of social psychology. Similarly, we also feature a student-led study that describes how people rank objections to Christianity. This is just one of many studies to come which are pioneering what we may call the field of "psychology of apologetics" or "apologetics psychology."

David Ochabski, *Managing Editor*
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¹ Elizabeth Jackson. "Belief, Faith, and Hope: On the Rationality of Long-Term Commitment," *Mind*. Vol. 130 (2021). 40-43.

² Belief, here, is a psychological assent to a proposition under certain conditions. Desire is a conative inclination or hope in some object or outcome. Commitment is a volitional decision rooted in a moral judgment and manifested in an unyielding pattern of actions. Persistence is stability amidst counterevidence or opposing reasons—though (importantly) not countervailing evidence or reasons.