

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

When you pick up this issue of *A&C* and glance at its title “Eternal Life,” what is the first thing that comes to mind? We suspect that you, like most of us, think of life in eternity, a life of bliss with God in the hereafter. Religion and culture have predisposed us to that notion. Of course, it is not completely wrong, because our Christian hope is indeed to dwell and even reign with God in eternity future. The Bible tells us so (Rev. 22:4-5). It is comforting to think about. But there is much more to eternal life according to the revelation in the Bible. In this issue of *A&C* we dive into the “much more” of eternal life in the Bible (Rom. 5:10).

Eternal life, according to the New Testament, is something that the believers possess from the moment of their initial regeneration, and in the first article we consider what eternal life is—it is nothing less than God Himself in Christ as the Spirit. In the second article we go on a breathtaking journey through the Bible to see what is perhaps its most intrinsic line of development, the line of eternal life from Genesis to Revelation. In the next two articles, both sharing Paul’s striking phrase *saved in His life* in their titles, we focus on the eternal life first in God’s full and complete salvation (not just from perdition but “much more...in His life”) and then on eternal life for our personal experience of that salvation as revealed in Romans 5—8. In the fifth article we turn our attention to the church, which,

according to the New Testament, is not at all an organization but an organic entity constituted with, growing by, and functioning through the eternal life in the believers as the members of Christ’s Body. In the last major article we consider death, the antithesis of life, which has plagued humankind since the very fall of Adam and each of us personally from our birth and which has its only antidote in the eternal life of God. We conclude this issue with three of our frequently recurring departments, offering topics allied to eternal life. In “Milestones” we show the history of the words *adoptio* and *adoption* in most Latin and English Bible versions and show what tragic mistakes these have been in translation according to the full revelation of the Scriptures. Then, in “Clarifications” we look at the meaning and significance of the notion of inheriting eternal life as distinct from possessing it. Finally, lest anyone think that our understanding of eternal life is ours alone, we offer a bibliographic essay featuring four books from different Christian traditions that acknowledge and extol the eternal life as our present and abiding possession. In presenting all the articles of this issue, our hope is that all our readers would not only acknowledge what eternal life is but “much more” would be saved personally and corporately in that eternal life, which is God in Christ as the Spirit, who dwells within all who believe.

“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.