faith a psychological attitude commonly expressed by either of two locutions: ‘faith that’, e.g. ‘Shelly has faith that her sons will flourish’; and ‘faith-in’, e.g. ‘Mallory has faith in his new ice-ax’. Faith-in is always relative to some things and not others; e.g., Mallory has faith in his ice-ax as a rescue tool, not as a kitchen implement. To have faith in x is to entrust one’s well-being to x in some way. One can have faith that without faith in, as when I have faith that Emily will survive breast cancer, but I do not entrust my well-being to her survival. Nor should we identify faith that with hope that. Lost at dusk in the North Cascades, you might yet hope for rescue, but faith requires a more positive cognitive stance than hope. Moreover, I can have faith that the mechanic will fix the 1200cc engine of my beloved 1963 Volkswagen Bug, but I cannot hope that he will fix it since I am certain he will succeed; hope requires a less positive cognitive stance than that. Faith that p requires caring (with positive valence) that p, although such care may be weak and conflicted. Faith that p further requires resilience in the face of contrary evidence, as well as being prepared to act as if p is true. But, as argued by Robert Audi and others, faith that p does not require belief that p; other items can stand in for the positive cognitive stance faith requires, e.g. acceptance of p, assent to p, trust that p, and belief-less-ly assuming that p. Since each of these items is compatible with having doubts about whether p and since some are even compatible with being in doubt about whether p, faith is compatible with doubt. Indifference, hostility, and faintheartedness are the enemies of faith, not doubt.

When someone is described as a “person of faith” what is usually intended is having religious faith, for instance faith in God and associated instances of faith that, say faith that God loves human beings. A different notion is designated by the expression “a faith” or “the faith,” as in St. Jude’s admonition to Christians to “earnestly contend for the faith”; in this case, it is used for something non-psychological: a connected set of tenets such that holding them (especially as objects of propositional faith) implies being of that faith.

See also acceptance, hope, philosophy of religion