CHAPTER I

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This thesis is a study on Faith with special reference to Kierkegaard. Of all the concepts in the philosophy of religion, the concept of faith is so fundamental that often it is equated with religion itself. The equation however is not without a philosophical significance. If religion is taken to mean a fundamental intentionality of the human consciousness to the sacred, faith is what makes for a deeper self-understanding within it. Hence the characterization of faith as the depth-dimension of human existence. Philosophers of religion like Randall Tillich and others owe it to Kierkegaard’s reflections on faith, to have made the term ‘depth-dimension’ current in the literature of philosophy of religion, in ways specific to their own perceptions. Mine is a modest attempt to study the concept, as it finds the expression in the writings of Kierkegaard himself.

Søren A.Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is today acknowledged universally to be the father of modern existentialist philosophy. Whatever be its evaluation in the English speaking countries, it effectively replaced the Hegelian philosophy in the continent. It is still the most popular philosophical mood there along with phenomenology. Nineteenth century philosophy of religion is substantially Kierkegaardian: he brought the insights of philosophy to bear upon Aesthetics, Ethics, Psychology, Metaphysics and, above all, Religion, and through it, upon Reformed theology. Christian theology has not been the same since the appearance of Kierkegaard on the scene of continental philosophy. In a remarkable way he established that philosophy cannot be said to have a positive value to life, if it remained a mere speculative discipline. If it were not to be a mere arm-chair exercise, philosophy must have its deep moorings in the concrete human existence. Therefore it must involve itself in such down-to-earth human situations as care and concern, anguish and dread, decision and despair, faith and freedom, time and transcendence and so on. It is in the express service of interaction between philosophy and religion that Kierkegaard injects the religio-philosophical categories in the interpretation of human existence. In

so doing, he liberates philosophy from its cold metaphysical hold on human existence, and this makes the former both responsive and relevant to concrete life-situations. In virtue of this, he is rightly hailed as the harbinger of the existential movement, although he himself called it a 'philosophy of existence or life.' His metaphysics of human being, henceforth, an ontology of human existence, that was to have far reaching influence on the thoughts of Heidegger, Jasper, Berdyaeve, Marcel, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. Of the many concepts of Kierkegaard that were to play a pivotal role in the development of existentialist thought, faith is an important, if not the most important, concept that was elaborated both by the subsequent existentialists, both theistic and atheistic.

In my attempt at making a philosophical study of faith in Kierkegaard, I want to be more intensive than extensive. Extensive studies on faith are in plenty, not only in theological circles but also in the history of religions. Even a measure of success in making this study intensive, I tend to believe, will be of immense help to illumine our existential mode of being, as Kierkegaard understands it. I shall base my study on the three central problems of faith as depicted in Kierkegaard's masterpiece, *Fear and Trembling* 2: particularity of faith, absolute duty in faith and the concealment of the life of faith. These constitute the core of my thesis, purporting to explicate the nature of faith as a depth-dimension of human existence. It is in the above work that Kierkegaard explicates his novel interpretation of, and the insight into, the category of faith as has never been done before by religious philosophers. This is not to suggest that I do not draw from other works of Kierkegaard. As a matter of fact, I will freely visit all those other works, where his views on faith illumine the problems that I have identified. As will be shown abundantly, this constant reference to other works even becomes a necessity to get a better understanding of faith, since faith constitutes the religious sphere of existence, the highest stage of life, in the Kierkegaard scheme. The category of faith is depicted by him as the highest passion, decisive in the determination of both the content and purpose of the individual's existence. As a Christian philosopher, Kierkegaard brings out also the paradoxical aspect of faith in such a way that it at once transcends all the calculations of human understanding. And yet, faith is equally a human category, in so far as it is said to be exercised in the finite it had just transcended. This

excludes faith from being any kind of flight from the world by way of renunciation.

In his explication of a philosophy of faith as the depth-dimension of the believer, irrespective of the problems identified, a few categorical determinants of faith stand out. First of all, faith is a particular relationship to the Absolute. In virtue of the particularity, it may dispense with every form of universal intermediary which may be pressed into the service of mediating the faith-relation. Secondly, the particularity of the relation concerned may also at times involve ‘a frightful teleological suspension of the ethical’. Thirdly, it demands ‘an infinite resignation’ of all that is finite. Fourthly, having infinitely resigned the finite, the man of faith may be required to make dialectically ‘the double movement’ of the spirit, by which he comes back to live again in the finite. But now, he lives by virtue of the God-relationship, and not with any dependence upon the immediacy of matter or mind. Fifthly, precisely, on account of this conflicting traits, inherent in faith, the man of faith is said to experience an existential anguish and dread, once he is launched on to the movement of faith. Finally, he cannot mitigate his dread by speaking out his faith to others. This only makes him liable to be misunderstood. This makes his life of faith a life of silent interiority; it also makes it deeply paradoxical. These categorical determinants of faith are repeatedly met by us in respect of every problem that we have identified for our study.

In my second chapter, I provide for myself a conceptual framework for faith, into which I can later fit in the Kierkegaardian philosophy of faith. Hence I discuss here generally on faith as a category of religion. This may be said to be a prolegomena for my thesis. Since this will be a conspectus on faith as a generic category, Kierkegaardian formulation of faith is deliberately kept out of its purview. Nonetheless, there are gentle pointers, here, suggesting the areas, wherein lies Kierkegaard’s contribution to the chapters to follow. This general conspectus revolves around three points: the distinction between ‘belief-in’ and ‘belief-that’; the relation between knowledge and faith; and the essentials of faith.

It is a fact that the attempt to define faith merely in terms of dogmas has sustained lively debates among philosophers, theologians and social scientists.
interested in the study of religion. Interestingly enough, the debates are indicative of the unresolved philosophical problems associated with the category of faith. Thus, even if faith is thought of as an attitude, it seems to be including within itself not only affectivity but also cognitivity; it seems to be admitting within itself feeling and passion, on the one hand, knowledge and dogmas, on the other; it seems to be at once temporal and transcendental, human and divine. Keeping these determinants of faith in our mind, I discuss in the second chapter the relation that obtains between belief, knowledge and faith.

The usual Western epistemological mapping of 'belief and knowledge' turns out to be in the religious context, a discussion on 'belief and faith'. In the history of philosophy of religion, belief and faith are therefore intricately related. They are as often identified as sought to be kept distinctively apart. Hence a distinction is made between belief-in and belief-that. The former is equated with faith, to the extent that it is an affective attitude of trust and commitment to an absolute, conceived of as a person. The latter, on the contrary, is a cognitive attitude directed to the content and the context of faith-experience. It refers therefore to the cognitive aspect of faith: the concept is closely linked with the propositional truth, therefore with a doctrine of faith. A good deal of my discussion will therefore be on the close relation, obtaining between the two types of belief. In what sense can they be said to be interdependent? In what sense can they be said to be independent?

The cognitive content of faith also makes for the problem of the relation between knowledge and faith. Faith is said to admit a doctrine of faith, however inadequately grasped by the believer. How are we to determine the cognitive elements within faith-experience? Can we speak of a knowledge of faith? Can we speak of faith itself as a form of knowledge? Some philosophers of religion have spoken of faith as intellectual 'vision', drawing their analogy from sense experience of seeing; others have spoken of faith as an intellectual 'insight', withdrawing from the analogy of such sense perception. I have addressed myself to some of these problems, and suggested a way of integrating both the cognitive and affective attitudes in the life of the 'faithful' man.

Notwithstanding the dichotomy of cognitive and the affective attitudes within the faith-experience, one will have to face the problem of the nature of
faith: What, in the final analysis, is faith in its essentials? The question, however, is not generic but specific, in virtue of the discussion of Christian faith that Kierkegaard elaborates for us. This specification is further necessitated by my recognition that Kierkegaard's contribution, that is to follow in the next three chapters, lies primarily in the area of the determination of the essentials of faith. Faith is spiritual atmosphere in which the religious man lives, moves and has his being. It is a passionate and personal commitment of the religious man to the person of God. It is a concern of trust, surrender and commitment, on the part of man to God. In this way it is the 'ultimate concern' of the man of faith directed objectively to the Ultimate. At the same time, it is the concern subjectively exhibited by the person, who is said to have faith. Kierkegaard's reflections bear abundantly on the above determinants of faith.

Against this general background of a philosophy of faith, Kierkegaard's own conception of faith is sought to be studied in the next three chapters. Each of them focuses its attention on a specific determinant of faith and the associated philosophical problems. My treatment of them will be such that they illumine the category of faith in Kierkegaard as constituting the depth-dimension of the man of faith. It is to be particularly borne in mind that the next three chapters mark a considerable shift from the generic conception of faith to a specifically Christian conception, as given a radical expression by Kierkegaard.

Thus in the third chapter, I will focus my attention on the particularity of faith-relation. Faith is a particular relation with the Absolute. It is a requirement of the faith-relation that the individual exerts himself as the particular vis-a-vis the universal; in doing this he becomes higher than the universal. This at once raises innumerable philosophical problems. The givenness of human nature is intentional to the ethical-universal telos. Human life, as it is lived within the ambience of a host of relations, has for itself the ethical telos which is both absolute and universal. It is generally said that the goal of being human is becoming more and more open to the universal humanity, by way of relinquishing one's particular narrow individuality. But the particularity of the faith-relation to the Absolute is at once an affront to the universal telos of the ethical. Hence, first, I need to study the universal teleology of the ethical itself.
Since faith is a personal commitment to the paradox of the God-man in the Christian context, it cannot be a mere devotion to an idea or ideal. It is rather deeply personal, implying a personal relationship with God on the part of the believer. Therefore it is a particular relation, wherein the believer recovers his full individuality, instead of being etherialized in the universal humanity. This may involve at times the frightful teleological suspension of the ethical telos itself. Hence, an examination of the 'How' of this relation, the individual bears to the Absolute, becomes inevitable. The enquiry into the 'What' of faith makes for an essentialistic approach to so vital a concern as the faith-relation. It would even rob faith of its passion. The existential, rather than the essentialistic approach to faith does not apprehend faith as a doctrine, but as a movement of the human spirit in a process. But, it is the movement characterized by the paradox of the teleological suspension of the ethical. Since any study of faith to Kierkegaard should be projected, in our understanding, against the dynamic ethical rather than the static aesthetical concept, the suspension of the ethical teleology, that occasionally may be demanded in the life of faith, must be farefully understood with all the sophistication that philosophy of religion is capable of. Otherwise the determinant of the particularity in faith may be dubbed by any one as the 'mean, cramping faith of blind and fanatical particularism'. Moreover, in so far as this particularism militates against ethical universalism, particularity of faith is liable to be a form of nihilism, an inability to find the world around us significant.

Precisely in virtue of the tension exerted in the life of the man of faith by the significant suspension of the teleology of the ethical universal, the path of escape from faith may open up. Kierkegaard calls it the 'temptation', meaning thereby a trial of faith. I have therefore addressed myself to an elaborate discussion on the concept of temptation as distinct from the 'lure of the immediacy', that generally constitutes temptation. A careful analysis of the concept also makes it possible to argue for the Kierkegaardian position: the particularity of faith is such that a mediation of the tension of the life of faith is not possible. For all mediation of faith-relation nullifies faith itself. In this context, I also discuss the dialectics of the movement of an infinite resignation of the finite; but it also admits the backward movement or, what Kierkegaard calls, 'repetition' to the finite lest faith-relation ends up with asceticism, which

can only mediate the particularity of faith. In the realm of ethics, we can always think of mediation in virtue of the gradations in the ethical telos. But such gradations are not possible to the man of faith in respect of his religious telos.

Continuing the spirit of tension between ethical heroism and the passion of faith in the fourth chapter, I will examine another area where the tension holds good, namely, the relation between faith and duty. The thrust of my investigation will be on the concept of duty which is apparently an ethical category. Kierkegaard acknowledges the ethical nature of duty. Precisely because of this he makes an excursion into the Hegelian philosophy of right before he poses his problems. The problem that he poses is this: Can there be an absolute duty to God? If the concept of duty is essentially ethical, in situations of teleological suspension of the ethical all duty would stand suspended. If so, does duty to God, too, stand suspended? Obviously, this is not the purport of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's notion of absolute duty to God will have to be understood in a different way, and not in an Hegelian way. If there is an absolute duty, it can be only in the realm of faith, which is the area of inward growth and subjectivity. The concept of duty then is transformed by Kierkegaard from its ethical context to a religious context.

Is this transformation justified? The answer may be in the affirmative. Kierkegaard, the philosopher of the ‘stages of existence’, has a marvellous sensitivity to the validity and value of the ethical stage of existence. This sensitivity is poignantly perceptible even when he speaks of the suspension of the ethical telos vis-a-vis the religious telos, and contrasts the tragic hero with the knight of faith. Whereas the aesthetical stage of existence, Kierkegaard suggests without any remorse, is to be abrogated, the ethical stage is by no means cancelled; it is only ‘suspended’ for a while under the pressure of a proof of faith, occasionally demanded by God. The pathos of the knight of faith is all the greater, precisely because he has a heightened consciousness of the value and validity of the ethical. The knight of faith is therefore now transformed by Kierkegaard as the knight of absolute duty.

This only suggests that faith, lest it should become abstract and etherial, is bound to the ethical to make it existential. This is abundantly evident in Kierkegaard's writings in the use of analogies, that he draws from conjugal love
and matrimonial commitment to illumine the trust, love and abandonment, inherent in the state of religious faith. Besides, the knight of absolute duty, when he has made the reverse movement of 'repetition', comes to live in the finite. The realm of the finite revisited is not one of hedonism or intellectualism, but of ethicism informed by his faith-experience. The reverse movement to the finite ethical saves the man of faith from the mortifying asceticism and monasticism, that the first movement of 'infinite resignation' is likely to drive the man of faith into. This at once suggests that the knight of absolute duty cannot escape a life of tension, precisely because he is to live an existence, concretely characterized by a simultaneity of the relative and the absolute duty.

The simultaneity of the relative and absolute duty reflects human existence, which is at once a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, the immediate and the transcendent. Therefore Kierkegaard considers the absolute duty as a sacrifice. The life of absolute duty to God therefore has a rare expression of the pathos. But the 'initial expression', which consists in a verbal aestheticism, is not commensurable with the pathos of faith. However, an 'essential expression', which consists in suffering, may be suggested as bearing on the concrete actions of faith. Hence pathos of faith is not a pathos of passivity but of activity. In this context, I have addressed myself to two important philosophical problems. Is a man of absolute duty to God, because his faith admits an expression of suffering, a masochist? Again, since the pathos of faith, inherent in the simultaneity of relative and absolute telos, is of action, how can action, which is generally thought to be oriented outward, conduce to the growth of one's interior life that faith is? I conclude the chapter with a brief comparison of the Kierkegaardian concept of absolute duty to God with a few ethical considerations in Kant.

In the fifth chapter, I will focus my attention on yet another aspect of faith as the depth-dimension of human existence. It is the aspect of concealment and 'revelation' of faith in the life of the religious man. Can the believer communicate his faith to others? The problem is once again posed in the context of Hegelian epistemology, that seeks to overcome the concealment of belief in the revealing of knowledge. Kierkegaard strongly opposes the Hegelian language of transcending faith in knowledge. Life of faith is a hidden life that permits no revealing. Silence is the citadel that steels faith. This is because, if
the man of faith were to speak of his faith, it is liable to be misunderstood, although his silence is equally unintelligible to his fellowmen. All understanding proceeds by way of objective representation, but faith is not of the realm of objectivity. It rather belongs to the realm of subjective appropriation.

The man of faith, therefore, opts for the hardest path of concealment. The concealment employs a queer mode: The *incognito* of the man of faith consists in his appearance like all other men. The man who who has made the double movement of faith, comes back to live in the finite, and lives therein like other men so much so that his inwardness of faith is secured by concealment. There is no direct expression of his faith, because he grows only in his hidden religiosity.

The man of faith has to guard his faith assiduously against all temptations of exhibitionism and outward manifestation of his faith, lest he ends up not with faith, but only caricatures thereof. For these caricatures of faith, instead of creating that spiritual atmosphere of faith in which he breathes, may simply mediate faith. One such prodigious manifestation of a caricature of faith is a 'life form' called monasticism, wherein the monk indulges in making himself as a monastic athlete, but not a man of faith with its hidden stress and strain. Kierkegaard therefore thinks that the man of faith lives *incognito*, like the rest of mankind, putting on 'the manifold composite garment of the finite'. Such a life would open the man of faith up to a series of charges, deception being not the least of them. It would be interesting to see how Kierkegaard faces these charges. At any rate, he would not give up his central thesis that faith does not admit revelation, but is nourished by silence. In explicating this truth, he draws upon dialectics: Just like the divine omnipresence is encompassed by God's invisibility, revelation of faith is encompassed by its hiddenness, as a safeguard to all misunderstandings and caricatures.

I also propose to examine in this chapter Kierkegaard's concept of concealment in aesthetics as well as in ethics, so that I can juxtapose them with the concealment of faith in religion. Notwithstanding similarities among conceptions of concealment, Kierkegaard is particular to point out that their moorings are very different. The aesthetical concealment, the kind of which is encountered in Greek poetry and drama, is for conveying a heightened sense of
suggested, hence concealed, meaning. The success of poetry lies in transporting the 'historico-existential' to the 'imaginative-existential'. Even so, in Greek tragedies, the factor of fate produces the maximum effect of concealment. Likewise in romantic love, Kierkegaard argues, aesthetical possibility reveals itself in ethical actuality of the commitment of marriage. Again, the concealment of the ethical reveals itself in the universal. Ethical heroism consists, on the part of heroes, in the universal feats. But, when we come to faith, the man of faith is a solitary 'exister'. He stands at the pinnacle of paradox, but in silence, in the interiority of his subjectivity.

Since silence is the only response available to the man of faith, no communication of faith is ever possible to him. The type of epistemological revelation that usually takes place of objects through the medium of the category of language is not at the disposal of the man of faith. Inadequacy of language is rooted in the fact that it is a system of the universal, whereas faith is a particular relation with the Absolute. Again, as a system of the universals, language is essentialistic, faith, on the other hand, is a state of existing as individual. Again, faith, that is in the realm of the paradox, cannot be fathomed by the categories of language. Kierkegaard is not a philosopher of language, but he relentlessly fights against all the reductionistic attempts of philosophers. It is in this context that Kierkegaard also fights against the Cartesian legacy of making cogito prior to all existence. Kierkegaard tells us that for the religious man, 'to be is to believe', for all faith-existence is in the interiority of subjectivity. He draws interesting parallels between the Socratic inwardness in the pursuit of 'know thyself' and the inwardness of faith, but he is quick to point out important difference between the two. I end the chapter on a critical note: The life of faith in concealment may not be consistent with the need to witness to one's faith, but Kierkegaard often speaks of. Yet, philosophically there may be a way out of the difficulty. So, too, there are problems with the extreme form of individualism, inherent in the Kierkegaardian confession of a concealed faith. But, his is a religious individualism that makes a sense in the context of the spirit of Reformed liberalism of the age.

In my concluding chapter, I have two objectives: First, an overall view on faith as a depth-dimension of human existence. What was fragmentarily discussed in the separate chapters is here sought to be
Second, in the process of synthesizing, a few **philosophical problems** that have a direct bearing on the theme of this thesis, are also sought to be identified: (a) The notion of subjectivity, the arena of the exercise of faith. (b) The notion of transcendence, the intentionality of the movement of faith, and (c) The supposed anti-intellectualism of Kierkegaard that is liable to turn faith into an obscurantism.

The notion of subjectivity is central to the discussion on faith. All exercise of faith is made possible in the arena of the inwardness of the subject, since an encounter with God as the maximum subjectivity can take place only at the level of one’s inner freedom. Hence, faith is not a mere subjectivism characterized by feelings and sentiments. It operates at the level of one’s being; hence it is ontological rather than psychological. In objectivity one is compelled by the evidence that it musters, but in subjectivity it is a matter of free choice, a ‘leap’ and a ‘venture’. Faith also is not a solipsism, where the movement, being circular, ends up with the self both as its intent and content. It is rather a movement, where the man of faith finds himself as ontically grounded in God. Hence, the faith-movement begins with one’s own subjectivity, but it culminates in the maximum subjectivity of God.

This brings us directly to the notion of transcendence as the intentionality of human consciousness. Teleological suspension of the ethical, absolute duty to God, particularity of faith, its concealment, growth in inwardness, dying to immediacy, clinging to the paradox etc. -- all symbolize the spirit of transcendence of human life. Kierkegaard’s pseudonym Climacus reminds us that anyone, who aims at perfection in area of pursuits, has a glimpse of this transcendence. Kierkegaard believes that the orientation to transcendence constitutes our humanness. Hence, it ought not to be suppressed. While Kierkegaard was to influence a great many philosophers on this issue, he himself draws from his Greek philosophical heritage, especially Plato and Aristotle. He incorporates this pursuit of transcendence in his philosophy of the ‘stages of existence’. His conclusion here is that not even the ethical integralness fills the void of human nature, to say nothing of aesthetic telos. Thus, in giving us a philosophy of transcendent teleology, he is careful to distinguish the absolute telos of faith from all other absolutized telos of the finite.
Closely associated with transcendent teleology, are Kierkegaard's reflections on possibility and actuality. In the context of faith-existence, these correlates of human personality acquire such significance that merit the attention of students of metaphysics and philosophy of religion. Faith is an 'in-between existence' (inter-esse), in the sense that the man of faith exists between temporality and externality. Whereas, for Hegel, all actualization is in the 'ideation', for Kierkegaard, it is in the inter-esse. In aesthetics, possibility may be higher than actuality, in ethics and religion, however, actuality is the highest. For in the latter there is no flight from the existence of the individual. For all decisiveness takes places in the will of the existing individual. Moreover, faith is also an infinite 'interest' (inter-esse) in the sense that the man of faith can never indulge in a disinterested contemplation, but remain infinitely interested in the act of existing.

Finally, is the anti-intellectualism of Kierkegaard final? If so, the non-rationalistic interpretation of faith, given by Kierkegaard, would suggest only an obscurantism. In answering the above question, we have to bear in mind that Kierkegaard's call is for a radical committment to God. He wants to free faith of its propositional bondage, that traditional Christian theology had landed it into. With this purpose in mind, he attacks the religious rationalism of Hegel. In the process, he generously makes use of such anti-intellectualistic terms as paradox, absurd, existence, subjectivity, commitment, will, passion, pathos and so on. It is not suprising, therefore, if he gives us an impression of being an anti-intellectual. His is a case of a philosopher, employing new philosophical categories to purge out the deadwood in philosophy. He employs abundantly reasoning to point out the limitations of reason. This is amply evident from the free excursions, that the undertakes in his philosophical heritage, be it Greek or Hegelian philosophy. He, however, does not hesitate to change the heritage at crucial junctures. Hence there is no need either to glority his 'religious absurdity' or to condemn his existentialism as anti-intellectualistic. He is set on giving us a philosophy of life. His struggle here is to be illumined by the healthy tension obtaining between rationalism and voluntarism of the Western philosophical tradition, possibly because the Western culture is the product of a synthesis between the best of Greek mind and the Semitic heart.
Speaking of the method, my Research will be both descriptive and analytic. Such a method seems to be adopted by Kierkegaard himself. His analytical skill bears primarily in recovering the original sense, in which Greek philosophers used their philosophical categories. Even Heidegger may be said to be indebted to Kierkegaard in this hermeneutics. Yet, existential philosophers, in general, and Kierkegaard, in particular, do a kind of ontology of human existence that makes such studies descriptive as well. Hence, at every stage of the study a constant synthesis, an overall view, of the problems at discussion, becomes necessary. My study is based entirely on the translated works of Kierkegaard. Secondary materials is judiciously used, only to the extent that they support my own interpretation of Kierkegaard. However, its use is without any restriction in my second chapter, where I dwell upon faith as a general category of religion. If any self-imposed restriction can be seen here, I have drawn from the contemporary, rather than the classical, philosophers of religion in the English and German speaking world.

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