CHAPTER II

FAITH, A CATEGORY OF RELIGION

1. THE CATEGORY OF BELIEF
2. KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH
3. FAITH IN ITS ESSENTIALS
4. CRITICAL APPRAISAL
There possibly is no other category in religion than 'faith' which is so central to any religion that the latter cannot even be spoken of without the former. Not even the concept of God is as crucial as that of faith. But when we come to determine philosophically the concept of faith, nothing seems to be more elusive. We look in vain in philosophers and theologians, who otherwise speak exhaustively on the concept. Since the concern of my thesis is faith with special reference to Kierkegaard, I need to address myself first to the concept of faith as a category of philosophy of religion. It is only then I would be in a position to speak of Kierkegaard's contribution to the philosophy of faith.

In philosophy of religion the triadic concepts of knowledge, belief and faith are generally clubbed together. This, not without reasons. The relation between belief and knowledge is sufficiently highlighted in Western philosophy. Faith at times is equated with belief. This equation needs be studied carefully. Hence in the first part of this chapter, I shall examine the category of 'belief in' its two dimensions, namely, 'belief-in' and 'belief-that'. The latter opens up immediately to the propositional content of faith, and therefore to problems of religious epistemology. Since belief-that implies a cognitive character, I shall attempt, in the second part, an investigation into the interrelationship between knowledge and faith. In the third part, I shall reflect on what faith essentially is. I tend to believe that Kierkegaard's contribution lies primarily in the area of illuminining the characteristics of faith in ways specific to the spirit of his existentialist philosophy.

I. THE CATEGORY OF BELIEF

There is a general tendency in the Western tradition to posit belief as the predicate of faith, as it appears in such definitive expressions, 'Faith is the act of believing'. Is it the case that belief is definitive of faith, or that belief is faith's equivalent? In the area of philosophy of religion, both the answers are entertained. Belief, as a category of religion, seems to be admitting two possible
interpretations, depending on what we affix to it, either the proposition 'in' or the relative pronoun 'that'. The religious claim, 'Faith is the act of believing', makes believing the content of faith, in so far as faith and belief become equivalent. This is 'belief-in', which could readily be identified with 'faith-in'. But the claim, 'Faith is the act of believing . . .', is open-ended in so far as it is 'belief-that'. The connective of a relative pronoun to it adds a propositional content to faith. Thus belief-in and belief-that make for the distinctive religio-philosophical perspectives, not to be confused. They belong in a sense, to different spheres, though convergence may at times be effected.

1) Belief-in :

It has been generally admitted that belief-in implies a confidence, or trust, in God. This trust in God is essentially an effective attitude, which may or may not be supported by a cognitive attitude. Since belief-in is an affective attitude, it commits the speaker to a certain policy of action with regard to the object believed in. An act of trust is built into it. Belief-in designates the surrender of the believer to God without any precondition. The believer may be an intellectual or a simple man, who may not have the intellectual grasp of the truth about God. They both believe in God. This is an act of faith.

2) Belief-that :

Belief-that, or simply 'belief', as is customarily held in philosophical quarters, inheres in the propositions assented to. Belief is here primarily a mental assent to propositions. It is an intellectual exercise engaged in 'translating' the transcendence into ostensible categories. In this sense, belief can be interpreted as a cognitive attitude to propositional truths, as distinct from the affective attitude. Hence the belief-that is the activity of the mind. The objects of belief here differ from one person to another, from one tradition to another, in the sense that the content introduced by the relative pronoun is diverse. In so far as belief is an assent to propositions, the latter is the basis of faith, rather than identical with faith.

But propositions are our mental constructs. The objectivity of these constructs, in matters of religious belief, is opened to serious question. Even though the object of belief is the transcendent being, in the belief-that, it is
reduced conceptually to a subjective proposition. But the propositional truths are only representational of that transcendent object, rather than the transcendent object itself. In this way belief-that reduces the transcendent being to our mental constructs. Thus, it may be stated that a belief that, ‘God exists’, has a cognitive status rather than a religious value. If belief-that is a cognitive activity, it is not an affective attitude. It is rather a propositional, or cognitive, attitude to the objects of belief. Therefore knowledge must be prior to belief, otherwise belief would be irrational. The subject must readily have a cognizance of the propositions before belief would emerge in his mind. Needless to say, in the context of religion, in either of the religious sense, knowledge may be a prior condition for the emergence of belief-that. This position is diametrically opposed to the views in Platonic theory of knowledge. Plato, in viewing belief as a mere opinion, distinct from knowledge, makes it prior to knowledge. Belief is a mere evidence of the sense, lacking truth in it. It is to be discarded in favour of the knowledge of pure forms, which bear their absolute truth on our knowledge.

Lastly, belief culminates in the acceptance of, or an assent to, the truth of the propositions. The answer to the question, ‘Does assent entail belief ?’, cannot be in the negative. We would then invite inconsistency and contradiction in ourselves. For, to say, ‘It will rain tomorrow, but I believe that it won’t rain’, would be tantamount to saying what is internally inconsistent. For someone to sincerely assert, ‘It will rain tomorrow’, implies that he believes that it will rain tomorrow: he believes the truth he is asserting. Similarly, if another says to me, ‘It will rain tomorrow’, and I assent to his statement, but ‘I do not believe it will’, then I would have produced once again the same kind of inconsistency. What I had assented to I cannot but believe. Again, suppose I know how to read the computed meteorological data relating to a weather forecast that it will rain tomorrow, and still assert, ‘I do not believe it will rain tomorrow’, then I would have equally produced a stubborn self-contradiction. Here I acknowledge that I know, but do not assent to my knowledge.

(3) Their Interdependence:

Religious belief is obviously not a mere propositional belief, or a mere cognitive attitude to the truth of a religious assertion. Beyond this
epistemological dimension, it may also be said to have a 'noumenal' dimension, if I were permitted to use Otto's term. Hick writes that belief is, by and large, a 'dispositional word'. This implies those tendencies and dispositions to behave, react, respond to given circumstances in appropriate or certain ways, or range of ways. It is cogent and reasonable to hold that, to be in a state of believing, a proposition, that 'God exists and he is loving', is also at the same time to possess such a tendency or disposition to worship him and to adore him. Here the believing subject acts in ways appropriate to the truth of the proposition, and this constitutes his religious belief. It follows then that to say of someone that he believes 'p', but always behaves on the assumption that 'not-p', would be a misuse and abuse of the word, 'belief'. 'Our actions alone reveal infallibly what we believe'. Thus, there is a close relation between belief-in and belief-that. Both converge in the realm of religious action.

A sincere and sane believer would not say he believes that God exists without saying that he believes in God. Belief-that is more than an assent to propositions, since the content of religious proposition is more than a mere object of intellect. When the believer, for example, says, 'God who exists in heaven is our loving Father', what he purports to do is not merely to state a putative fact but to express an affective attitude. In the above assertion, the believer not only cognitively believes that God exists, but characteristically commits himself to God whom he believes to be the loving heavenly Father. This becomes even more apparent, if we consider how odd it would be for a believer to say, 'God exists in heaven as our loving heavenly Father, but I do not trust in him'. We should then assume that either he was not sincere or he did not know the meaning of the English words he was using. Thus is brought out the interdependence between belief-that and belief-in. A belief that God exists would have no religious value in itself, if the person, who makes this claim, is also not touched by an awe and affection towards God. A belief that God exists, shorn of an affective attitude, would not be a religious belief.

On the other hand, belief-in implies belief-that, however rudimentary the latter be. Whereas belief-in is a necessary condition of belief-that, the latter, too, may be in some sense present in the former. It would make no sense at all to affirm a belief-that and deny at the same time a belief-in. It is inconceivable religiously how one could believe that God exists, but at the same time have no

2. Ibid., p. 248.
affective attitude towards God. H.H. Price extends the argument even to an empirical situation: 'I cannot trust my doctor unless I at least believe that there is a person to whom the prescription "being my doctor" applies'.\(^3\) When we come to the Judaeo-Christian tradition, propositional attitude and dispositional attitude, or the cognitive attitude and the affective attitude, are so reciprocal that it sees them synthetically as a single category of belief. Exponents of this unitary conception of belief therefore may not envisage such a distinction of belief as belief-in and belief-that. However, to a student of philosophy of religion, the distinction may not be without its own philosophical rewards.

(4) Their Independence:

However, it can as well be argued that belief-in and belief-that are conceptually distinct. It is possible to speak of their independence in such a way that we are in a better position to identify the cognitive and the affective content of belief, as belonging to two different spheres of life.

Speaking philosophically, one could believe that God exists, and at the same time display no affective attitude towards God. One can still sustain one's propositional, or cognitive, attitude to the truth of God's existence without being touched by an awe, fear, or reverence towards God. The deist may be said to exhibit such an attitude. The belief that God exists would, in this case, come first, but the affective attitude may not follow subsequently. The belief that God exists would not logically imply any affective attitude towards God. In so far as a belief, that God exists, is a cognitive assent to propositional truth about God, it is an epistemological issue; it is of no religious value. Nonetheless, it invites us to the task of making a purely rational investigation, which pursuit is philosophically disinterested. There is no religious commitment involved in the belief concerned. A philosophical inquiry into this proposition is neither non-religious nor irreligious, but only a-religious. If this is the case, we can safely hold that one could believe that God exists without believing in God; and it would make sense to affirm a belief-that without affectively moved by a belief-in.

On the other hand, a belief-in can subsist, and substantiate itself, without any implied involvement of the belief-that. It seems equally true that religious belief is so essentially a matter of trusting in God that doubts, as to whether it is really the case that God exists, are irrelevant. As a matter of fact, the majority

of believers do not seem to raise the question of the existence of God, neither
do they feel the need to do so; yet, that has not diminished an iota of their
religious belief. The existence of God is assumed by them as a manifest fact
without further ado. Doctrinal or theological formulae and propositions may be
the ostensible expressions of their inner trust in God, but this is not absolutely
ture. For example, the belief-that, that a theology is, may be indispensable for
communicating the religious belief of the Christian, but an African tribe may
have no need for such a dogmatic corpus or propositional formulations. It may
even prove fatal to the belief-system of that tribe, that seeks to communicate its
faith by way of ritual dance. Simpler and humbler folks have been, and remained,
strong believers committing their life to God and still are ignorant of any
propositional truths about God. If this were not the case, pre-literate societies
would be without a belief-in God, therefore without a religion. This manifestly
is not the case.

However, the independence of belief-in from belief-that seems rather
tenuous. A believer, lettered, or unlettered, who puts his faith and trust in God,
does entertain, however obscurely, in his mind a few basic truths about God.
Irrespective of their expressed or unexpressed formulations, he gives assent to
these truths. If this were not the case, we would be compelled to say that a deaf,
dumb and blind person, cannot have a belief in God. This again is manifestly not
ture, because his life may have the belief that his God is powerful and loving,
and that he can heal him if he so wills.

Thus, there is a sense in which it could philosophically be argued that
religious belief, seen either as belief-in or belief-that, is a complex phenomenon.
The two orientations of belief are interdependent: but, in a sense, they are also
independent. Philosophers have focussed their attention on one or the other.
Aquinas may have highlighted on their interdependence, thereby laying the
rational foundation for Christian theologies, or theodicies for any religion.
Kierkegaard, as we shall see, on the contrary, may have highlighted the
independence of the two, often vociferously that he snacks of an
anti-rationalistic bias. But, he has thereby laid a Biblical foundation for types of
Reformed theologies. There then is a tension between knowledge and religious
belief, which we call faith. But the tension is, if anything, philosophically
creative. It now becomes imperative for us to examine the relation between knowledge and faith.

II. KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH

Religious belief is an awareness of God in faith; it is a faith-awareness, expressed often in the language that is cognitive in character. Such cognitive pronouncements, as 'God created the earth', 'God loves mankind', are undoubtedly matters of interest to an epistemologist, who would seek to analyse this faith-awareness. Is this awareness, like any other awareness, a form of knowledge? Can we speak of a religious epistemology? Hence, epistemological investigation engages itself in the task of examining, 'whether the kind of cognition claimed is such as might reasonably be expected to occur, if there is a God to be known'. But the investigation has its own background. For the problematic question here is: What is the kind of knowledge, that we are concerned with, here? If faith is held out to be crucial and decisive in life and living, which as a matter of fact is, the knowledge in and of faith cannot be either discursive or directly given to the senses. If faith is to be authentic, knowledge in faith has to admit a kind of 'infallibility', not usually associated with sensation and conception. If we are still to retain in the idea of knowledge the analogy from our dominant sense of vision, this religio-epistemological vision may be interpreted with Hick as intellectual 'vision'. Or with Smith as intellectual 'insight'.

(1) A priori Knowledge and Faith:

A religious man thinks of faith, if it is ever thought of in terms of knowledge, as absolutely true. It would then appear that, relating to faith, we would have to do with a kind of knowledge that is both self-authenticating and indubitable. So, when we are in the state of mind called 'religious knowing', what we know must be true. That X knows P entails that P is true. Unless we actually possess knowledge in this sense, there can be no certainty of anything, no fixed point upon which to build our experience we call 'faith'. Unless there are at least some items of indubitable knowledge, we are condemned to an endless relativity of shifting and differing opinions, - and this would be fatal for faith that is held to

4. Hick, op. cit. p. 2
5. Ibid., p. 200.
be absolutely true. This is a traditional approach to the relation between
knowledge and faith.

But this mode of knowing, though ideal, may not be philosophically
rewarding. It represents "a misleading approach to our field of enquiry." We are
having to do with faith as a cognitive experience, a belief also with a cognitive
attitude. The enquiry into it demands that we study the data, facts situation and
also the expression of this experience. But the infallibilist mode of knowing
implies an \textit{a priori} concept of knowledge. The infallibilist philosophers and
theologians, in a spirit of \textit{a-priorism}, view human knowledge from the vantage
point outside human nature and its existential situation.

The traditional idealization of the concept of knowledge seeks, in effect, to
elevate knowledge to a "metaphysical peerage in which it loses contact with
common human experience." It does not occur to use that there is such
knowledge in the sense of an infallible acquaintance with truth or reality. There
is no state or activity of mind, called knowing, which carries with it an absolute
guarantee of freedom from error as long as we are humans. This is conceded, in
principle, by the inevitable admission that we sometimes erroneously think that
we know; and to allow, that we can mistakenly think that we know, is to abandon
the claim that knowledge is infallible and indubitable. This is affirming the
skeptic's stance, whose claim is not 'to know' in the ideal sense, but that there
is no such occurrence as knowledge in the ideal sense. In this way all our
cognitions are dubitable and fallible. If faith then has a cognitive dimension, it
cannot be true \textit{a priori}.

(2) \textit{A posteriori} knowledge and faith:

If faith is not an \textit{a priori} knowledge, can it be suggested then, that "we are
in the last resort thrown back upon the criterion of coherence with our mass of
experience." Briefly, is faith an \textit{a posteriori} knowledge?

Men of faith have made their religious claim that they know that God is real.
They also claim for this knowledge a certainty based on an adequate ground of
their religious experience. The position is advocated by John Hick and Terence
Penelhum. Recently, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, too, has emphasized on
religious experience. According to him, faith is an experience of "personal

\begin{enumerate}
\item\text{Hick, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 202.}
\item\text{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 203}
\item\text{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 205}
Ltd. 1971, p. 123 ff}
\item\text{Smith, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 6.}
\end{enumerate}
involvement’ of the believer with God. Therefore to have an authentic knowledge and understanding of what faith is, one is to become oneself involved in, and to commit oneself personally to, God. In essence, Smith is pointing to the individual’s experience of faith.

It is this experience of God in a dialogue, or communion with God, which is the believer’s primary ground for being sure that God is real, and that faith in him is true. In an epistemological testing of such a ground, we must be careful to ask the right question. The question is not: Do accounts of the believer’s experience of the divine presence and power provide an adequate reason for an unbeliever to reject the claim that God is real? Again, the question is not: Can one validly infer the existence of God from the reports of religious experiences? The answer to both questions is a ready No. But, the proper question is: Does the religious man’s awareness of being in the unseen presence of God constitute a sufficient and valid ground for the religious man himself to be sure of the reality of God? The man of faith considers himself to know certain things which the skeptic holds that he mistakenly believes. We do not readily have any agreed standards in sight, by which the disagreement between the believer and the skeptic can be resolved. This is not to state that they do not each have a set of standards for their respective claims. It only suggests that neither side will accept the sovereignty of the standards accepted by the other.

However, we need to take note of caveat here. We are not inquiring, here, whether there is any such thing as ‘knowledge of God’. For an agreement on the question pre-supposes that there be first logically an agreement as to whether there is a God to be the object of such knowledge. These are ontological issues. But, what we are focussing on is the question, whether it is proper for the man of faith, who reports a compelling awareness of God, to claim to know that God exists. The question, being epistemological, calls for the explication of the circumstances in which it is reasonable for the man of faith to claim to have a ‘rational certainty that there is a God’. It is not the question whether there is a God. We must then keep the ontological and epistemological questions separated in the concerns of religious epistemology.

It seems that a sufficiently vivid religious experience would entitle a man of faith to claim to know God, and also that God is real. If his sense of the divine

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presence is sufficiently powerful, he can hardly fail to make this knowledge-claim. He is certain that God exists, so certain that he does not feel the need for the proof for the existence of God. What is more, the believer would even go to such an extent, as Kierkegaard indeed does, that the demand for proofs for the existence of God would be tantamount to the denial of the existence of God. But, as philosophers, we probably cannot say that religious believers either know or do not know, what they consider themselves to know. But, if God exists, and the 'religious facts', they appeal to in support of their claims about him, are indeed what they say they are, then we do not have any reason to say that their situation does not amount to knowledge. But this is a hypothetical argument. One could deny this a priori, only if one could show that no knowledge-claim could be correct, especially in religious matters, unless it was supported by sufficient evidence, which all men, both believers and skeptics alike, could accept. However, the debate between them is not one that can be settled in this way. But this is not enough to show that the believer's knowledge-claims are erroneous. It can only suggest that it cannot be proved correct from the skeptic's premises. Conversely, the negative fact, that a skeptic does not himself have the experience of God, does not authorise him to deny that others do have this experience; or, for that matter, deny that a person, whose life is determined by this faith-awareness, can properly claim to know that God is real.

However, all said and done, any knowledge that appeals to and builds on, experience does not command unquestioned certainty. This is so not because such a knowledge is not possible, but because our sense experience is, in principle, fallible. We lack the means for establishing the necessary truth of any knowledge acquired by sense experience. In order to be absolutely certain, we would have to be able, at least, to show that it is impossible to be false. But the very fact, that our sense experience deals with changing things, and that we ourselves are equally subject to it, suggests that what we believe we know to be true, could be false. How then do we establish an authentic knowledge of faith on the basis of experience?.

(3) Synthesis of Conceptual and Intuitive Knowledge:

Following Trethowan, I shall suggest here a way out of the difficulty of the knowledge of faith in a synthesis between the a priori and a posteriori.

knowledge. I do grant that the solution may have problems, nonetheless, it is philosophically significant, although Trethowan himself proposes it in a different context. The starting point within this scheme is that the knowledge of faith involves a synthesis of the natural and supernatural knowledge. All supernatural knowledge depends upon natural knowledge to the extent that it can arise only on the basis of natural knowledge. If this were not the case, we could not even know it to be knowledge for us. All human knowledge is rooted in natural knowledge. The difference however lies in the fact that it is not an enlargement of the natural knowledge. Supernatural knowledge is a direct intuitive awareness of God. Such knowledge is attested most obviously by the experience of the mystics. Natural knowledge arises from the power of knowing God. The power properly belongs to man, in virtue of his being created in God's image.  

Our knowledge of faith is a priori, in the sense that the very capacity for knowledge, on the part of man, is rooted in his being created in God's image. God being the ultimate principle of intelligibility, man's intellectual life is derivative. Granting the existence of this power, man is capable of knowing, not only his environment but also the basis of his being, however, imperfectly the latter be. I am aware, the solution has its own problems. It presupposes a good deal of what it wants to establish. Nonetheless, every epistemology has its own metaphysical matrix, within which it operates. If so, it can be said that the tension observed earlier between the a priori and a posteriori mode of knowing seems to have been, to some extent, settled in this synthesis of intuitive and conceptual knowledge.

It should now be possible to press for an a priori mode of reasoning into the service of making faith reasonable, intelligible and authentic, by using concepts in the building of doctrinal formulations. These formulations, built out of human concepts, legitimately refer to the relation in which we stand to God. The minimum that can be expected here is that 'the concepts are genuine pointers'. The conceptual structures of the doctrine of faith play a positive role: Firstly, they are designed to preserve the faith against such interpretation of faith that do violence to the concerned ontology. Secondly, we stand on need of dynamic conceptual structures, since it is through these we express the faith we profess.

15. Ibid., p. 146.
The advantage of this synthetic approach is that it accommodates both belief-in and belief-that in the single act of faith.

Human mind craves naturally for knowledge. The mind, in quest of a union with God, functions at two interconnecting planes, that of symbols and ideas; The first is the existential, the second, the conceptual plane. Knowledge by means of concepts is a natural process of the human mind. It is in this light that all discursive knowledge, be it in philosophy or theology, is a pointer to the knowledge of faith. It may make use of the ordinary powers of human reasoning in espousing the cause of faith. Moreover, it is the business of philosophical and theological conceptions to organise the truths of faith into a coherent system. Philosophy, in particular, does this by following the laws of human reasoning. Knowledge of faith by means of symbols too is yet another approach to reality. However, it operates on the plane of not so much the concepts as symbols. Symbols are not at the cognitive level, but at the affective level, although the power of symbols may be archetypically immanent to the mind. But it is a depth-level of the mind, hence, they may be said to lie at the existential rather than the essential plane.

More important, however, for our analysis of faith-knowledge, is the direct intuitive awareness of God. This is the supernatural knowledge referred to earlier. This awareness of God's transcendence may be constitutive of the human mind. The awareness concerned is not only authenticated but also enriched in the mystical experience of the believer. In the knowledge of faith, the element of intuition is prior to conceptual knowledge, though it may be said to depend on the latter for its crystallization. The latter is important because the intuitive knowledge is both evaluated, and not allowed to degenerate, by it. For, if intuition and conceptual knowledge both reflect the two aspects of the selfsame divine intelligibility, they ought not to contradict each other. Hence, it may be said that the intuitive knowledge is articulated in universal concepts in the form of doctrinal formulations of faith. This is the significance of the statement that supernatural knowledge depends upon natural knowledge, though it does not grow out of it: 'faith illuminates the intelligence to know the incomprehensible,' Faith, in terms of this intuitive experience, is prior to the concepts and formulations of faith. But faith in the first sense needs the latter...

16. Ibid., p. 84.
for its expression. The advantage of this synthesis, again, is the incorporation of the cognitive and affective attitudes to faith.

In the light of what has been said above, it should now be possible for us to equate Hick’s intellectual ‘vision’ and Smith’s intellectual ‘insight’ and Penelhum’s ‘immediate knowledge’ with Trethowan’s supernatural knowledge or intuitive knowledge. They all refer to the immediate element of the knowledge of faith. Again, the ‘experiential’ knowledge, advocated both by Hick and Penelhum, as the proper mode of the knowledge of faith, is not to be indentified with the ‘empirical knowledge’, the datum of which is indeterminate and dubious.

A crucial element within the intuitive knowledge in Trethowan’s solution of the problem of knowledge must also be taken note of: This is the gratuitousness of faith. The cognitive content of faith, it may be granted, does not make faith an arbitrary human decision. If faith is totally arbitrary, then, there is no knowledge of faith at all. But, on the other side of the coin, it is equally true that faith is gratuitous, this at least is the case in the Christian context. The supernatural dimension of faith suggests that it is facilitated by the initial movement of God to man, rather than the movement of man to God. It is given by God to man, enabling him to have a communion with God. Man, as the believer, participates in that givenness, involves and engages himself in it, and in this way develops a ‘faith-knowledge’. It is the knowledge of faith by involvement. All knowledge of faith therefore is built, not out of the materials at man’s disposal, conceptual or symbolic, but of the givenness of faith; and the intuitive awareness, that faith is, crystallizes itself in the act of involvement and engagement. This brings me directly to the essentials of faith, as the divine givenness of self-communication to man.

III. FAITH IN ITS ESSENTIALS

Since my study of faith with special reference to Kierkegaard dwells primarily on the problem of what faith essentially is, I shall be brief, here in this chapter. My three chapters address themselves to one or the other aspect of faith, with a view to highlight the specific contribution of Kierkegaard.

\[17. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 104.\]
Nevertheless, fidelity to the discussion of faith, as a category of religion, demands, to say the least, a passing mention of the essentials of faith.

One may believe all the propositional truths about God. Likewise one may secure and authenticate that belief by direct, indubitable and infallible certainty, both by conceptual and intuitive knowledge to call it now faith. But what is faith? The simple answer is: Faith is, firstly, an ultimate concern; and secondly, faith is a voluntary act of trust in God. Both the characterizations are explicated in the context of Christian faith.

(1) Faith as Ultimate Concern:

Influenced by Kierkegaard, Tillich defines faith as the ultimate concern: ‘Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned’. It may be useful to begin with this definition, since it has within itself the generic characteristic of faith in any religion or, for that matter, even in what Tillich calls, ‘pseudo-religions’. Faith then is a concern characterized by an ultimacy. When one is concerned with God as the ultimate telos of one’s life, one may be said to have faith. It is the ultimate, in the sense that one has the strong conviction in the object of his faith, one has arrived at the stage in one’s life beyond which it is logically impossible to go. Since the object of the religious faith is the transcendent God, the Beyond, it is logically meaningless to speak of going beyond the Beyond. As the ultimate concern, faith invariably demands an absolute devotion to its object. The individual has a host of human concerns, some of them are vital and urgent, but, when faith claims its ultimacy, all the other concerns are subjugated to it. Tillich thinks that ‘the dynamics of faith are the dynamics of ultimate concern’.

The characterization given is generic, because Tillich is willing to apply it to human concerns that are passionately adhered to with a religious devotion, even when they are purely mundane concerns. Hence, his concept, ‘pseudo-religion’, to nationalism, communism etc. Faith in them implies a doctrine in the form of ideology, often a prophet and a ‘god’ and, above all, a millennium in the concept of ideal nation, society etc. The passionate nationalisms of our century in a way qualify to the nomenclature of ultimate concern, therefore, of faith in a generic sense. For everything is centred in that one and only ‘god’, the nation, - that clearly shows the unconditional character of ultimate concern. Personal and familial concerns, if any, however urgent and

19. Ibid.
vital, are subjected to the 'nation-god'. But this is an ultimate concern that, while sharing certain generic character of faith, is in reality an usurpation of the rights of religious faith.

At the mundane level, all ultimate concern is of finite significance. But the ultimate concern of faith is of infinite significance, because the content of this concern is the transcendent. Other forms of faith however have put on the garb of the transcendent, while in reality they are mere 'idols'. In the Semitic religions, the ultimate concern, in so far as it is determined by God, can have only God as its object. Hence the element of ultimacy properly belongs to the Absolute, that is constitutive of religious faith.

(2) Faith as a Voluntary Act of Trust:

While religious faith is objectively constituted by the transcendent God as its object, it is subjectively constituted by a voluntary act of trust and surrender, on the part of the man of faith. Here it is a surrender of one's total personality, an act of trust and personal commitment to God. Trust then is recognised as the quintessence of faith. Both in the theological and philosophical writings, the Latin fiducia is used definitely of faith as trust and personal commitment, as distinct from fides, which is a mere assent to propositions. Faith as fiducia therefore is not so much an assent to the truth about God, but an ascent to the God of all truths. The believer looks up vertically, as it were, to God, and commits his life to Him, and trusts Him unconditionally for his life here and hereafter. If we are to relate faith to belief, it is more a belief-in than a belief-that.

But, when faith is said to be an act of trust, it is legitimate to ask, what is the character of this act? A ready answer is that it is a voluntary act. I would like to dwell more on this voluntary affirmation, since it marvellously synthesizes belief, knowledge and faith, as a fitting conclusion to this chapter. Theological and philosophical treatises on faith have got to take into consideration such a synthesis, if they are not to make faith either pure cognitive contemplation or a mere affective sentimentalism. Hence, Hick refuses to view faith as 'a completely theoretic affair,' inspite of the fact that it may have a cognitive content. Rather, 'faith is a "yes" of self-commitment', a 'volitional response' which takes us out of the theoretic attitude. 20

20. Hick, op. cit., p. 32
For all his rationalistic indebtedness to Aristotle, Aquinas had a strong sense of realism in matters of religion. Hence he described faith as an act of the intellect moved by the will, and, shorn of this volitional commitment, there would be no faith. Here is the distinctive trait of faith, in contrast with mere belief: Faith belongs to the realm of will and action, however, not totally devoid of intellectual apprehension. Faith is not merely an assent that something is true, it is rather our readiness to act on what we believe to be true. Kierkegaard may shift the ground in making an act of will itself, at times even devoid of intellection. If he has been wiser on this account is yet to be seen. Nonetheless, the dynamism of faith is to be grasped in the dialectical play between intellect and will, between the ‘being’ and the ‘good’, and, at a particular stage in the history of Western philosophy, between ‘essence’ and ‘existence’.

Christian philosophers, in general, today, take the will ‘as the faculty which is primarily operative in the act of faith’.

If they are neo-scholastics, they would also add that the will must always follow the intellect, in the sense that we can will nothing unless we have some knowledge of it. But committed voluntarists are ready to abandon this principle, because for them the freedom of the will is sovereign and superior to reason. Kierkegaard’s existentialist philosophy of faith must be located at this juncture. Trust and personal commitment are not conceptual, but volitional, in their implication, and these are constitutive of faith as *fiducia*. It is significant that, in the Bible faith appears frequently as *fiducia* rather than *fides*. When faith is posted as trust and commitment, the reality of the divine Being is assumed throughout as the manifest Good. Perhaps, it is only when the religious believer comes to reflect upon his religion and faith, in the capacity of a philosopher, that he is obliged to concern himself with the neotic status of faith.

IV. CRITICAL APPRAISAL

In conclusion, faith is not belief, if belief is understood as cognition based on the evidence of the senses. Here, Plato is right in distinguishing it even from knowledge. But, if religious belief is equated with faith, we need clearly to make the distinction between belief-in and belief-that. Whereas belief-in comes closest to faith, in so far as it is a trust in God conceived as the ultimate concern of one’s life, belief-that makes for the cognitive content of faith. But, faith as

such resides in the innermost being of man. Belief, generally stated, refers to the belief-that. It constitutes intellectual positions, that appear historically in different forms, that are the theologies of a religion at a given time. Contrasted with it, faith is a spiritual phenomenon. It is possible to believe without having faith, for men may recognise intellectually God's existence, yet not surrender themselves to God in an act of trust and commitment. We can formulate propositions necessary for belief, but we cannot formulate a religious faith, since faith precedes, pervades, and often evades all its formulations. Belief however can be a legitimate overt expression of faith, even as a system of symbols can also be an expression.

Belief, then, is closer to knowledge than is knowledge to faith. Yet, when philosophers of religion have said that faith is an 'intuitive knowledge', it is not the knowledge of the order of cognitive propositions, the kind of which one meets in the belief-that. Nonetheless, faith is characterized by an inner certitude that in-forms every sphere of human life, cognitive, affective and conative alike.

Lastly, while faith is not identical with knowledge, we can still speak of a knowledge of faith. It should be possible to employ concepts readily available in our culture and philosophy to explore the possible meanings of religious faith. Conceptual structures, in respect of faith-experience, are necessary for knowing and understanding faith, to the extent that it is a human experience. But, to the extent that it is a human experience of transcendent realities, the understanding may not be exhaustive. But this should not inhibit the philosophical venture of the human mind. The little that we know here does indeed contribute to the apprehension, if not the comprehension, of these realities. Thus a philosophy of religion makes for a genuine and legitimate knowledge of faith, inspite of Kierkegaard's invectives here.

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