CHAPTER-VII
CONCLUSION

In order to reach at the general conclusion of this thesis, it will be helpful if I give a brief summary of the chapters.

In the first chapter, ‘Justification as Proof’, I have discussed the conditions which are necessary for a proof, and I have shown that the conclusive proof or deductive proof is not possible in the subject under discussion. There are no proofs in philosophy and I concluded that there are only arguments which justify the points of views in subjects where scientific conclusiveness cannot be achieved. And in these subjects justification is taken as a proof. Justification consists in reasons that one believes are relevant to the validation of a claim and these reasons normally do not entail the truth of a claim.

In the second chapter, ‘Arguments for the Existence of God’, I have discussed two major arguments, namely, ‘Ontological Argument’ and ‘Cosmological Argument’ for the existence of God. In the course of discussion I have tried to highlight the implausibility of these arguments. For example, in the Cartesian version of Ontological proof, the main focus is on ‘Existence as predicate’ and ‘Existence as an analytical fact’. These points are conclusively refuted by Kant. Norman Malcolm has tried to restore the fact that these are existential propositions which are analytical in nature. But, I think his idea is misconceived. For
example, he says, ‘there is a prime number between 30 and 33. This could be proved a priori only’. But to this I think, what he does not realise is that this is not an existential proposition in the sense, in which God exists is existential. Kant agrees that the idea of existence belongs to the concept of God analytically in the same way as three angles belong to the concept of a triangle. If we posit a triangle and reject its three angles, it results into a contradiction, but if we reject the triangle itself along with its three angles, there is no contradiction. Same way, if we reject the concept of God along with predicate (existence), there is no contradiction. The basic assumption of Decartes that ‘Existence is a predicate’ is conclusively refuted, for Existence is not a predicate in the same way as omnipotence is a predicate.

On the other hand, Cosmological argument, which rests on the assumption ‘Either there is a necessary being or the universe is ultimately unintelligible’. This assumption is also refuted. The Cosmological argument works only if we reject the option of Universe’s being unintelligible. In modern debates, however, the concept of ‘necessary being’ is being questioned. For example, in a debate between Russell and Copleston, Russell highlights that there is no point in calling some beings as necessary and other as contingent. The idea of necessity, if at all, is applicable to propositions only and not to beings. Having seen that the proofs for the existence of God fail to establish the Existence of God beyond doubt, I raise the question in Chapter three,
whether reason can guide us to establish the existence of God. In this connection, I have discussed three leading thinkers in the history of philosophy, namely, Hume, Kant and Kierkegaard.

Hume concludes that Christian religion is founded on faith and not on reason. He says that ‘mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity; and whoever is moved by faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe that what is most contrary to custom and experience.’ He strongly questions the credibility of miracles. He says that no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to probability, much less to a proof: and that even supposing it amounted to a proof: it would be opposed by another proof: derived from the very nature of the fact, which it would endeavour to establish. It is experience only which gives authority to human testimony; and it is experience only, which assures us of the laws of nature. Since, the belief in God rests on the belief in miracles, and the belief in miracles rests on questionable grounds, the point is clear, i.e. miracles do not provide us with evidence so as to prove the existence of God.

In dialogues, Hume discusses the various problems and arguments which are traditionally supposed to be the proofs for the existence of God. A thorough reading of Hume’s works establishes that
Hume does not subscribe to the traditional theistic grounds of religion and is of the opinion that these theistic proofs have no place in theology as such. All attempts to rationally justify religion in general and the existence of God in particular are misplaced.

Kant in his ‘Critique of Pure Reason’ discusses the limits of Reason at length. He subscribes to the empiricists’ view that all knowledge begins with experience but at the same time he also says that knowledge does not necessarily arise out of experience. Kant makes a distinction between ‘Phenomenon and Noumena’. In phenomena, the objects are given to concepts as sensible intuitions but, for noumena, we do not have a separate category of understanding. The concepts have no application apart from the sensibility and therefore the concepts cannot be employed beyond empirical sphere. Hence, our concepts of understanding are merely the categories of thought for our sensible intuitions and thus cannot be applied to noumena. The concept of noumena is simply a limiting concept to phenomena. Kant says that concepts in understanding become meaningful from the possibility of experience, but pure reason is not confined to the field of experience only. The field of pure reason is so vast that empirical knowledge forms only a part of it. Actual experience can never reach to the boundaries of the pure reason. Reason makes its own concepts which may or may not have empirical validity. If the concepts of reason have empirical validity, they are called ‘rightly inferred concepts’ and if they lack
pure reason are named by Kant as ‘Transcendental ideas.’ Reason aims to reach at a synthetic unity which is possible empirically in approximation and never in reality. The ideas lead to ideal. Reason functions to guide our inquiries to reach the ideal which is never fully realised. The concept of ideal which is also a concept of complete determination is called by Kant ‘ens realissimum’. All existence derive the material of its existence from the ‘ens realissimum’ which is the supreme condition of all that exists. The ‘ens realissimum’ is also called the ‘primordial being’. Though all things derive their meaning from this primordial being, they do not constitute it. This primordial being is called ‘God’ in Transcendental sense and is the ideal of pure reason and object of Transcendental theology.

At the same time, while using this Transcendental ideal we are transgressing the limits of validity. Reason employs here the concept of all reality without basing it on the fact that all reality should be objectively given. This is a mere fiction and we have no right to do this. Reason simply tends to complete the series of conditions. Reason starts with experience and leads to necessary existence. For the contingent existence leads to necessary existence. This way reason reaches to the supreme condition which itself is unconditioned i.e. ens realissimum or primordial being or God. Here, though reason establishes the fact of ens realissimum its application is lacking in reality. At this point, Kant proceeds to establish the existence of God with the help of speculative
proceeds to establish the existence of God with the help of speculative reason but as we have seen in the chapter of ‘Arguments for the Existence of God,’ Kant concludes that it is not possible to establish the existence of God with the help of reason. And consequently, Kant finds it necessary to deny knowledge to make room for faith.

Kierkegaard believed that the religious belief, far from being an intellectual asset, is only a non-rational decision possible only through divine grace. He avers to that to justify religious belief rationally is a mistake. The gist of Kierkegaard’s thought is contained in his famous dictum, ‘Religious Truth is subjectivity’. Kierkegaard discards the objective truth as mistaken for the objective pursuit of truth, subjectivity is fully eliminated as the object of this enquiry is knowledge which is valid for every inquirer. He argues that the truth is the unity of thought and being but being which in the object of objective contemplation is a conceptual being. The objective contemplation can never reach the empirical reality as the empirical reality is irreducibly particular, The being with which objective pursuit deals in a conceptual being, But the fact that thought is general and reality particular does not mean that thought cannot be related to concrete existence. The problem is that if the content involved in thought is not a conceptual being but an empirical being, a conformity of thought is possible only as an ideal towards which one strives. Because when we talk of an empirical being, it must be understood as becoming. Thus, the truth which is a
unity of thought and being becomes an approximation as the being is always becoming. The unity can be reached only when the process of becoming had stopped. This means that truth can be achieved when the empirical being has ceased to be what it is. Kierkegaard feels that in objective pursuit, this important aspect of empirical reality, i.e. 'becoming' is lost and hence we cannot say that we have reached the truth of object, which we are examining.

The unity of thought and being in human self can never be attained. It is an impossibility as the being is always in a state of becoming. Unity of thought and being is a task posed to an existing self, and not an accomplished fact. Kierkegaard defines this religious truth as an 'objective uncertainty held fast in an approximation- process of the most passionate inwardness in truth, the highest attainable for an existing individual. Subjectivity suggests the process by which an individual appropriates what he thinks, or constitutes his actuality by realising his possibility. Striving to attain the very being of truth, is life, as the truth was in Christ for he was the Truth. And hence, Christianity understood, the truth consists not in knowing the truth but in being the truth. Hence, truth is understood not as some logical truth but identified with the life of an individual being. Kierkegaard says, an individual does not reach the truth by an intellectual assent to propositions but by volitional commitment to the ideal. Intellect helps only in choosing the goals and specifying the possibilities. But, realisation of these goals is the commitment of the will. In Kierkegaard's way of thinking, there is
no looking back in faith, there is no room for rational understanding and certainty. The leap of faith is a daring, personal, non-rational commitment to the paradoxical and unintelligible. Faith begins where thought leaves off. According to Kierkegaard, Incarnation is the absolute Paradox. This paradox brings together which is otherwise opposite- creator and creature. This absolute paradox is absurd by all standards of human reasoning. He says, Godman is an ‘offence’ to reason, the ‘ship wreck’ of reason and the ‘crucifixion’ of understanding.

Having seen that reason does not establish religious truths and it is faith which is the basis of all that religion stands for, I moved on to discuss some important positions on the meaningfulness of religious belief in the chapter named ‘Belief, language and Religion’. The main debate in contemporary philosophy has been between the positivist thinkers, who believes that meaningfulness is connected with verifiability on the one hand, and the thinkers who believe that verifiability is not a criterion of meaningfulness in case of Philosophy of religion, morality and other subjects of the same nature. The verifiability criterion can hold good only in case of sciences and mathematics whose results can be demonstrated and conclusively proved. In this chapter, I have discussed few important positions on this subject namely, Falsification debate among Antony Flew, RM Hare and Basil Mitchell, and the positions of C.S Lewis and H.H. Price. The
falsification debate discusses the criterion of meaningfulness. RM Hare, who thinks that the criterion which holds good in case of science in wrongly applied to religious utterances. Religious utterances are not amenable to this criterion. RM Hare explains the position of Religious utterances in terms of 'Bliks' and says that the attack of positivism (The position which Flew holds) on religious utterances is mistaken. Bliks are not a sort of explanation as scientists are accustomed to use the word. As such, we no longer believe in God as an atlas.

Basil Mitchell differs from Hare and says that religious utterances are assertions and do explain certain facts about religion. He takes religious utterances as significant articles of faith and there always is a danger of these utterances becoming vacuous formulae. These positions, I have shown, as not tenable due to in built problems. Then I have discussed the position of C.S Lewis who agrees that religious utterances taken in the sense of a 'significant articles of faith' is a defensible attitude. Lewis makes an important distinction between the 'logic of speculative thought' and the 'logic of personal relations'. While the former is used on scientific lines, the latter is what makes faith. Lewis holds that our relation to God is more like the relation of a drowning man to a rescuer. And the question of trust arises only when the situation calls for the trust is ambiguous. If the situation is clear and involves a demonstrative certainty, the question of faith does not arise. Ambiguity only makes the faith possible. According to Lewis, a
Christian regards it praise worthy to believe without evidence or in excess of evidence.

HH Price makes a distinction between ‘believe-in’ and ‘believe-that’. He talks of mutual transferability of ‘belief-in’ and ‘believe-that’ to each other in most of the cases. To tide over this problem, he brings in a distinction between two senses of ‘believe-in’ - ‘evaluative sense’ and ‘factual sense’. In the factual sense, believe-in can be converted into ‘believe-that’. On the other hand the evaluative ‘belief-in’ involves trust. And in this sense of ‘belief-in’ when talk of God, this is called faith. There is a very close relation between ‘believe-in’ and ‘believe-that’ (the factual sense of believe-in). The former presupposes the latter. For example, when I say that I believe-in my doctor, it is presupposed that there exists an individual whom the description ‘my doctor’ refers to. Similarly, belief-in God presupposes the existence of God.

Lastly in this chapter, I have discussed the explanation as propounded by RB Braithwaite. He tries to amalgamate religious statements with moral statements - as being primarily declarations of adherence to a way of life. It is the intention to behave which constituted religious convictions. In the end of this chapter, I have shown that these positions do not thoroughly explain the position of a believer satisfactorily. In the last chapter titled ‘Wittgenstein on Religious Language’, I have made an endeavour to evaluate Wittgenstein’s position and tried to show that Wittgenstein’s position
on subject is most convincing. Starting with a brief discussion of Logical Positivism as advocated by AJ Ayer, I have discussed at length Wittgenstein’s theory of ‘Language games’ and ‘forms of life’. I have shown that religious beliefs constitute a different language game which does not call for any criterion of justification from outside the religious form of life. Wittgenstein says that the confusion about the understanding is created by the ‘bewitchment’ of our intelligence by means of our language. The language used in religion is simple, day to day language. There is no place for private language as Wittgenstein would say that any believer who claimed to have his own private idea, that is, for example, the idea of the game played with the word ‘death’ which has nothing in common with the public idea of death, which we all know and understand, must be told that it is of no interest. This must conform to the rules of public game.

The confusion has arisen from the point that religious beliefs, a distinct language game having the criterion of intelligibility with in them makes them (religious beliefs) self contained and esoteric. D Z Phillips cites an example from Rhees Paper ‘Wittgenstein’s Builders’ and makes it follow that this leads to esotericity of religious language. But, I have shown that his is not the right conclusion. Wittgenstein, to my understanding is clear on the point as I have shown in the example above about the game played with the idea of death, that there is no place for private language. I do agree with Phillips that the true meaning
of religious beliefs is only possible when we understand religious beliefs in relation to other forms of life. What I have shown in the end of this chapter is that every individual (believer and non-believer both) has a basic training in religious form of life at home. The question of a believer and non-believer arises in later stage, when some people turn non-believers due to certain incidents in life or adhere to the original faith. The whole idea of religious form of life and its meaningfulness is culture based. It is culture at home which teaches the meaningfulness of different religious utterances to the child. This repudiates the charge of religious language being esoteric. I have named, for convenience sake, this understanding as 'The Cultural Theory of Meaning of Religious Form of Life'. The important aspect of this view, I feel, is that it covers the multitude of world views which different religions hold. The difference between a believer and a non-believer is then, a matter of commitment to a view which both of them understand. And, this commitment makes all the difference.