

FAITH AND BELIEF
SOME CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE ISLAMIC INSTANCE

It is virtually a standard formality for a lecturer to begin by saying that it is an honour, and a pleasure, for him to have been asked to give that lecture. I wish that this were not so. For I wish none of you to imagine that in my case this is a mere formality; or anything remotely "standard". On the contrary : when the invitation was received, I was deeply moved. Far from its being a formal matter, it was for me something personal and gripping.

For one thing, it has provided the opportunity for me to return to this city, in which my wife and I spent what were in many ways the very best years of our lives; and to renew old friendships which have been for me of major importance and delight. My affection for Lahore has been intense : I owe to this exciting city and to its inhabitants who befriended me here years ago a large part of both my heart and my mind. Moreover, apart from the lively pleasure that this return visit to my old home brings me, there is the signal honour that is involved in my being allowed to participate in this distinguished series of the University of the Panjab's most prestigious lectures, the Iqbal Memorial. I understand that I am the first foreigner on whom this extraordinary honour has been conferred. When I lived here 30 years ago, no one ever made me feel "a foreigner". This was my home; and I was certainly made to feel at home here—and at that time I fully expected to spend my life in these parts. In the end, this was not to be : destiny was otherwise, and my life has gone forward in other parts of the world. I have, then, left you, and have lived and developed elsewhere—always, it is true, with a piece of my heart left here behind in your keeping: in trust, or perhaps you may say, as a hostage. That being so, your having searched me out and invited me to return, not merely as a visitor but in the altogether special role of Iqbal Memorial Lecturer, have touched me profoundly. Of course, it is an honour that I do not deserve, but that I certainly cherish. Allow me, then, in all humility and sincerity, to thank your Vice Chancellor and all those who have had anything to do with the conferring of this momentous dignity. You can little guess how much this has meant to me.

This and the article that follows are a series of Iqbal Memorial Lectures delivered by the author at the Punjab University Lahore (30th April and 2nd May 1974)

Formidable though the assignment be, therefore, I could not say "no" to the invitation when it came. Nonetheless, neither did I feel competent to rise to the task of delivering a lecture to a company such as this *about* Iqbal. There are, however, two ways in which honour can be done to the memory of a great figure. One is to analyse and to interpret his life, his writings, his thought. The other is to receive his inspiration, to apply our minds to those issues and topics with which he was himself concerned : to look not towards him, but towards those things at which he looked before us, acknowledging our debt. The Vice Chancellor's invitation specified that the lecture might be about Iqbal, or "on any theme in which [he] evinced direct or indirect interest". I have chosen the latter : have chosen to invite you to consider with me these two days a matter in which I feel sure that Iqbal would have been interested—namely, faith and belief, the relation between them and the distinction between them, as a generic human issue but particularly as illustrated in Islamic and in Christian instances.

This is a matter on which I have been working explicitly for the past few years and implicitly for the past many decades : in a sense, ever since I became seriously engaged with Islamic life and the attempt to appreciate and to understand it, and in the light of it to understand also my own Christian heritage. The connection with Iqbal is close. For it was in no small part his thought and work that contributed to enabling me to apprehend, in so far as I could apprehend them, the Islamic vision and the faith of Muslims underlying the beliefs and patterns of the overt Islamic tradition.

Iqbal had died two years before I reached Lahore. I do not exactly remember when I first read his Six Lectures, probably before I arrived in these parts, although it was here that I learned to take them very seriously. I do remember clearly, vividly, when I was in process of learning Urdu here, my first introduction to his poetry. I began with *Bang-i-Darā*. My heart and my mind were stirred, my imagination was enriched, my vision of the world and certainly of Muslim culture was deepened and enlarged, by the encounter with Iqbal then begun. For 30 years that vivifying experience has developed in my thought and feeling; and any understanding of life and of faith—not only of Muslim life and faith, but of human life and faith—that I may have since attained, owes something indelible to him. Besides, as I have said, the questions to which I have addressed myself, and to which I address myself in these talks, are questions with which his own concern was deep.

Accordingly, I have deemed it not inappropriate to proffer before you, for your consideration, two lectures on Faith and Belief, as my small tribute to the memory of that great figure whose work has inspired us all. I have, of course, no pretension that what I have to say will be adequate to the occasion; nor to the topic. Both are beyond my capacity. Yet you may be sure that my views on these mighty matters would be still less adequate than they are, had it not been for the inspiration and stimulation of Iqbal.

There is still a further reason why I have thought to use this occasion to lay before you, for criticism, some ideas on the issue of faith and belief, Islamic and Christian. It is this. As I have indicated, for some while now I have been working on the problem of the relation of religious faith to intellectual belief, to conceptual formulation, to theology: in the Christian case and throughout the world, investigating Buddhist and Hindu and other areas as well as Western. I am hoping soon to complete this study and to submit it for publication. It is my custom never to publish anything having to do with Islam without first submitting it for critique and comment to Muslim friends, so as to have their reaction. The particular matters of faith and belief are so central, so deep, so ultimate, that it is especially important that I have the advantage of your response before I make final, in printed form, the ideas that I have tentatively put together.

Some might think it unduly bold of me to come to Lahore and to propose to lecture on so delicate and personal and yet so mighty a matter as faith and religious belief, even though the point of my presentation be comparative: an attempt to speak not simply on Islamic faith and Islamic belief, which would indeed be presumptuous of me, but of the similarities and differences as I see them that may be suggested, as an hypothesis, between the Islamic and the Christian. The interrelation between these two is a matter on which, as such, no one is an authority; and therefore my groping endeavour to propose a possible understanding of it may perhaps be allowed. In any case, however, you may be sure that I am grateful for this opportunity to discover your reaction to the ideas that I shall put forth. Although it would be awkward for me actually to write the entire lecture in this form, nonetheless, especially this evening with the Islamic material, I am quite genuinely, and firmly, in effect prefacing every sentence of my talk, and certainly the total presentation of it, with the question: "Is it the case that?" I hope that each of you will accept this question as directed to him; and will be kind enough to let me know your answer.

I sincerely hope that you will tell me how far I have understood, and how far I have misunderstood, Islamic positions.

As I have said, under the very special circumstances pertaining to me personally and to my own life and involvements, it was altogether unthinkable for me to decline the honour of the invitation to deliver these lectures. Nonetheless, fundamentally I have come to Lahore not to speak but to listen; not to affirm but to question; certainly, not to teach but to learn.

Let us turn, then, to the substance of my presentation.

My topic, as you have heard, is "faith and belief". Now you might imagine that if I am to speak on those two matters, I might begin by indicating what I mean by the two terms. This is not quite so straightforward as it might seem, however. Maybe, if my presentation be at all persuasive, we may end up by being better able to clarify the two notions. At the beginning, on the other hand, I wish to stress ambiguities rather than clear definitions. I shall argue against the view that the two are the same : that to have faith is to believe, although this is often said. I shall argue that, however similar the two may appear to be, if we think about them carefully we shall realize that they are quite different. Believing, I shall contend, is not what religious people basically do; in either the Islamic, or the Christian, instance.

If faith is *not* belief, however, what is it? That is a tricky question, I hold. It is easier to say what believing is; although it is much more important to know what faith is. Both, anyway, are worth exploring. This much I may say at the outset : by "faith", the English word, I mean *iman*. For "belief", as an English word, what the proper Arabic or Urdu equivalence may be, will emerge as we proceed. Part of my argument will be that it is a mis-translation (it has become a mis-translation) to render *iman* in English as "believing". Let us see whether you will be persuaded to agree.

Believing, I shall suggest, is not of ultimate significance. Faith, on the other hand, is.

According to both the Islamic and the Christian traditions, faith is man's most decisive quality. The Day of Judgement, that mighty metaphor to which both groups have resorted, is envisaged primarily as a determining of who has had faith and who not. Heaven and Hell are felt to be not too stupendous characterizations of the cosmic significance for

man of the question involved. It is, indeed, many have averred both within and without these two communities, the ultimate human question.

Small wonder, then, that the subordinate question, "What is faith?" has itself been a matter both of importance and of debate. It is a question of great fascination : one on which I hope perhaps to write a book before I die. These days I have in press two separate articles on particular parts of the answer that was given in the Islamic case by the classical and mediaeval *mutakallimin*. One is a long article on the meaning of the term *tasdiq* in the important formula *al-iman huwa al-tasdiq*. The other is an equally long one on the meaning of *arkan* in the supplementary phrase, *al-'amal bi-l-arkan*. As a Christian and as a Comparativist, as well as as a student of Islamics, I find the *kalam* definitions of faith exciting ; and of universal, not simply Islamic, significance. At the moment, however, I wish to answer the question "What is faith (*iman*)?" only in the negative manner of arguing that it is not belief. In my second lecture, on Thursday May 2, I will demonstrate that there was a time when the English word "believe" *did* mean "to have faith" ; but that was a long time ago, and the confusion has arisen because of an historical change in meaning of the English concept. There are a few Western Christians who still use "believe" in its older sense ; but they are a dwindling group. This evening, in my case, I shall deal not with the classical conception of believing, but with the modern. Let me begin with a few observations on this, in an attempt to clarify what it involves.

To elucidate the notion of belief one turns first, I suppose, to the counterpart concept of knowledge. Others among you will be more sophisticated than I in the matter of an analysis of knowledge as a concept. Notoriously it is tricky. Yet for our purposes here, of clarification, it is ordinary language that concerns us, not philosophical or technical analysis. For the man in the street, may we not say that knowledge involves two things : (i) certitude, and (ii) correctness, in what one knows. To use very unsophisticated terms indeed, in ordinary parlance one knows whatever one knows when there is a close positive relation of that knowledge both to inner conviction and to outward, objective facts.

At this same level of casual yet prevalent usage, uncritical and unanalytic yet by the same token both widely and deeply held, there is the common-sense notion of believing. This differs from knowing precisely in that it involves one or both of two things : (i) a lack of certitude ; or (ii) an openness as to the correctness or otherwise of what is believed.

Thus one may say that so-and-so knows that Ankara is the capital of Turkey ; alternatively, one may say that someone else believes that Istanbul is the capital of Turkey. Further, one may say that a third person believes that Ankara is the capital of Turkey; in this case we happen to know that he is right, yet by our phrasing the point that he believes it, we communicate the notion that he himself is not sure. His opinion happens to be right, yet it is not knowledge because he himself holds it with a certain tentativeness. On the other hand, the view of our second man, who is under the impression that Istanbul is the capital, is also not knowledge, no matter how strongly he may hold it. The intensity of his own assurance may rise however high, but it will not turn his belief into knowledge so long as his view is mistaken (or in a different case, even *might* be mistaken). Similarly in his neighbour's case : the actual accuracy of his position may be total, yet this will not turn his belief into knowledge so long as he himself harbours misgivings.

Accordingly, the overtones of our use of "believing" may be striking, or subtle. When we say "they believe", this may be disdainful; when we say "I believe", this may be modest.

In ordinary parlance, then, 'believing' is the concept by which we convey the fact that a view is held, without a decision as to its validity—explicitly without that decision.

This being so, small wonder that believing has become the characterization *par excellence* for religious positions, in the modern world. For when we turn from ordinary (secular) usage to the specifically religious domain, the situation is nowadays not strikingly different.

On the one hand, so far as inner conviction is concerned this notion of believing correlates beautifully with the lack of confidence that in our day characterizes a large, and growing, number of believers. They believe something, perhaps hesitantly, or perhaps deliberately, even to the point of being willing to stake their life upon it; yet in either case, they are not quite sure. Not quietly sure, with that unruffled awareness of intellectual perspicuity. Secondly, with regard to the question of objective validity, of some kind of external factual correctness of the positions held, the very notion of "believing" makes room nicely, and indeed necessarily, for the wide variety of religious positions with which modern men are inescapably familiar. Both the believer and the non-believer have come to recognize that any position that they may or may not hold is one among many. Jews believe X, Muslims believe Y, Christians

believe Z—even among Christians, Seventh Day Adventists believe one thing, Roman Catholics another, Presbyterians still another. And all of them recognize that this is so. This makes for a very different sort of situation from what obtained in an earlier day, or may obtain in less pluralistic societies, where a particular stand is not recognized as a *particular* stand, but is “the” religious position. There, one may take it or leave it, but one does not choose it as one from among many. Do you believe X, or don’t you, is a different question from, do you believe X, or Y.

“True or False” may serve formally for a test of knowledge; but belief is more complicated than that, and the modern pluralistic world confronts the religious man more subtly with an essay-type examination question.

Before I go on, then, to challenge the currently accepted assumption about believing as a finally adequate religious category, let me first of all stress my recognition of its appropriateness to the modern scene. My emphasis on this point is, in fact, part of my argument. Having affirmed that what modern men in the modern world do religiously is “of course” interpreted in terms of believing, I will not then go on to suggest that “nonetheless” at other times and places things have been different. On the contrary, my thesis comes closer to being rather that believing has become an appropriate category for the modern world and *therefore* is not appropriate for other times and places.

Let me emphasize, then, the very simple point that I make first : namely, that ‘believing’ is the straightforward and almost innocent interpretation of what religious people do in the modern world when they take a position. For they are seen, rather naturally, as taking it as some sort of venture; and, as one possible venture among others. Some believe one thing, others another; neither they nor the rest of us are quite sure that they are right (nor, anymore, even that they are wrong); even though many be confident that even so, the venture is well worth taking.

Both the participant and the observer seem able to agree that in taking the stance, they are doing something to which ‘believe’ happily applies. Where one cannot know, let’s believe, say some; where one cannot know, let’s not believe, say others; where no one knows, many believe, say several. What do they believe, has become a standard question about other religious people; what do we, or what shall I, believe, a standard question about oneself.

At least, this was the case, at an unsophisticated level, until fairly recently. On more careful scrutiny, it turns out that the concept has been serviceable at a critical level only with reservations. The popular notion, though understandable as rough-and-ready conceptualization, has had to be interpreted, sometimes uneasily, by more reflective thinkers. Both the philosopher, in attempting precise formulations for religious statements and English-language theologians, from the inside, and the anthropologist, in attempting to describe the believing of primitive tribes, have found themselves having to operate with more refined notions of belief than the man-in-the-street has been content to use. This, too, is significant; both in itself and for the course of our argument here. Believing, as a religious category, has for the modern world been an easy, and natural, and apparently cogent, over-simplification.

Some try to wriggle out of the difficulties that arise by taking refuge in the more refined, more precious, more traditional notions that can be and usually are smuggled into the concept of believing by believers when they are pressed. At these we shall look in our next lecture.

Meanwhile, when I speak of believing as a religious category, I intend believing in the modern prevalent sense of that term, as signifying that an opinion is held about which the person who holds it, or the society that gives or receives information about his holding it, or both, leave theoretically unresolved the question of its objective intellectual validity.

Believing so conceived is the religious category *par excellence* of the modern world, I submit. Let us now turn to the second part of my paper, and allow me to submit further that such a category is altogether foreign to the Qur'an. At least, I propose this, and look forward to receiving your comments on the thesis, once I have developed it. As you will hear in my second lecture, I also hold that it is foreign also to the Bible, and to classical Christian thought; as we shall see on Thursday.

The general position to which I am in process of coming is that believing as a religious category is inept, illegitimate, and even for the modern world has become unserviceable. I mention that general position, however, only to leave it aside. For the moment, my thesis is much more limited; and for it my evidence, I aspire to show you, much more complete and compelling. The thesis is simple: that in the Qur'ān, the concept 'believe' (as a religious activity) does not occur (and does not occur for very good reasons).

Now the facts are that any English translation of the Qur'ān that you may pick up, whether by Muslim or by Westerner, is replete with the terms "belief", "believing", "believer", "non-believer", and the like, and that these are pivotal. Yet I am suggesting that to render in this way any word in the Qur'ān, or in the classical Islamic world-view based upon it, is a mistranslation. My thesis, then, has at least the perhaps dubious virtue of novelty, and might seem to be a rather absurdly bold. It is not quite so radical as this might make it seem, however ; for the reasons for these translations, or mistranslations, are complex, although in some cases fairly obvious. For one thing, the renderings have been made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; for another, the influences of earlier Biblical language have been immediate, and strong. It is not difficult to see why the notion of believing has got into the renderings, even if the contention be valid that I now put forward. Let me endeavour to expound to you my interpretation.

To show that a religious concept 'believe' does not occur in the Qur'ān, then, I begin by calling attention to the fact that words for 'knowing' are frequent and emphatic : 'arafa, and especially 'alima. The notion of knowledge is re-iterated and vivid. In fact, in my Royal Egyptian edition of the Qur'ān text, now standard, I calculate that the more frequent of these two terms for knowing (let alone both together) occurs on the average more than once per page.

Secondly, the standard word for 'believing' in later Islamic theology (*i'taqada* & c) does not occur in the Qur'ān. The root 'aqada, originally "to tie a knot", either literally or in the figurative sense of binding a person by a legal or moral commitment, to make a binding engagement, occurs seven times in the Qur'ān : twice as a verb—

'aqadat aymānukum

عَقَدْتُمْ أَيْمَانَكُمْ

'aqadtumu-l-aymāna

عَقَدْتُمْ الْإِيمَانَ

and five times as a noun :

an-naffāthāt bi-l-u'qad

النَّفَّاثَاتُ بِالْعَقَدِ

'uqdata-n-nikāḥ

عَقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ

awfa bi-l-'uqud.

أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ

Furthermore, the work that I have done on mediaeval *kalām* texts shows, I have found, that the VIIIth form *i'taqada*, which does not occur in the Qur'an but is introduced later along with 'aqidah and 'aqā'id in the sense

of “creed”, begins by meaning not “to believe” something but rather to bind oneself, to commit or pledge oneself to, to take on the engagement of living in accord with a given position; and that only gradually across the centuries does it take on the more neutral meaning of “to believe” something intellectually. We shall return to this idea on Thursday, in our second lecture.

Of the various terms that do occur in the Qur’ān and that might be and indeed have been translated as ‘believe’, there are two that constitute the crux of our inquiry. They are drastically different from each other; the fact that nonetheless in relatively modern times both have regularly been translated, or I would say mistranslated, into English as ‘believing’ illuminates our whole matter. They are, first, *āmmaa*, (with *īmān* ‘faith’ as the verbal noun), and secondly, *ẓanna*, *yazunnu*—in modern Arabic ‘to think’, ‘to opine’, ‘to hold an opinion’.

Without any question, I feel sure that you will allow me to say, the fundamental concept in the Qur’an, overwhelmingly vivid, is that of God, presented as Creator, Sovereign, and Judge, powerful, demanding, succouring, majestic, laying upon mankind inescapable imperatives and offering us inexhaustible rewards. The fundamental category on the manward side is that of faith: the positive acceptance of the divine summons, the committing of oneself to the demands, and thus being led to the ultimate succour. The term for faith, *īmān*, is itself a verbal noun, *maṣḍar*; and it is of some significance that the more strictly verbal forms quite predominate; so that it is more just to speak not of faith, simply, but rather of the act of faith. Faith is something that people do more than it is something that people have; although one may also say that it pertains to something that people are, or become. The Qur’ān presents, in reverberatingly engaging fashion, a dramatic challenge wherein God’s terror and mercy, simultaneously, are proclaimed to mankind, whereby we are offered the option of accepting or rejecting His self-disclosure of the terms on which He, as Creator and Ruler of the world and of us, has set our lives. “What the Qur’an presents is a great drama of decision: God has spoken His command, and men thereupon are divided, or rather divide themselves, into two groups—those who accept and those who spurn; those who obey and those who rebel”. This, it is suggested, is the way the universe was originally set up, and man’s life within it: that this is so is now made known, with resonant clarity and force; and men, now that they have this knowledge, must act accordingly.

Two or three terms used for the act of rejecting the invitation. One is *jaḥāda* ; the most strident is k-f-r, from which *kāfir* (usually translated "infidel") is derived, with its radically pejorative sense of 'sputner'. Even in modern Arabic, let alone medieval, classical, and Qur'anic, and in Persian, Urdu and Turkish, this word never comes to mean simply not to believe (it would be ludicrous, would it not, to translate with any form of this root the notion that so-and-so does not believe that Istanbul is the capital of Turkey or that Nixon will be impeached). Indeed, there are verses that explicitly indicate that the mind accepts but the will repudiates. A clear example is *sūrah* 27 verse 14 : "They rejected them [the signs of God] although they knew very well in their hearts that they were true" (*Wa jāḥadū bi-hā wa-stayqanāt-hā anfusuhum*). These various verbs, moreover, are regularly found embellished with adverbs indicating that man's rejection of God's bounty and authority is out of haughtiness, arrogance, stubborn will-fulness, *zulman wa-'ulūwan* (27 : 14). Similarly with *kafara, kufr*. It is a choice, actively made, To speak at a mundane level, an outsider might be tempted to say that the whole matter was to the Prophet himself so vivid, so overwhelmingly convincing, so startlingly clear, *mubīn*, so divinely authentic, that it never really crossed his mind that one would not believe it. How could anyone not believe God? *Kufr* (so-called "infidelity") the heinous sin, the incomprehensibly stupid and perverse obduracy, is not unbelief but 'refusal', it is almost a spitting in God's face when He speaks out of His infinite authority and vast compassion. It is man's dramatic negative response to this spectacular divine initiative.

The positive response, equally dynamic, is called 'faith', *īmān*. The *kāfir*, the ingrate, is he who says 'no' to God; and the *mu'min*, 'the man of faith', is he who accepts, who says 'yes'. As the theologians subsequently explain, *īmān*, faith, is self-commitment : it means, and is said to mean, almost precisely, *s'engager*.

I was very interested to discover Najmu-d-Din at-Taftāzānī, perhaps my favourite *mutakallim*, while writing in Arabic resorting to the Persian word *giravīdan* to explain faith, just as modern existentialists writing in English resort to the French words *s'engager, engagement*. And the French word *gage* is exactly equivalent with the Persian word *girav* گرو.

Another interpretation that I have heard is that just as the word "amen" in English, from this same root via Hebrew, or *āmīn* in Arabic, is used at the end of a congregational prayer or worship service

as an act whereby the congregation participates, in its turn, in what the leader has done or said, accepting it then for themselves or incorporating themselves into his act, saying 'yes' to it, so the *mu'min*, the man of faith, the yes-sayer, the amen-sayer, is he who volunteers, who says "Me, too." By it, he identifies himself with the communal and cosmic activity. *Amana*, the act of faith, names the positive response to the divine and dramatic challenge.

I do not wish to overstress the component of the will in the act of faith; for Muslim writers have differed on this point, and the analysis is tricky. The element of intellectual recognition should not be excluded. Yet here also the concept is to be accurately rendered by "recognize" rather than "believe". We shall be returning to this point in our next lecture.

Meanwhile, the Qur'an provides another example from which we may illustrate the orientation quite sharply. Let us consider the concept *mushrik* مشرك. This term is usually translated "polytheist". It is taken as designating what would be rendered in our modern terminology as a man who, if you like, believes in many gods. Now in a sense the term does indeed mean polytheist, but with a difference that, though at first it may seem subtle, is in fact radical. The root sh-r-k means "to associate"; and the concept *shirk*, which again is basically a verbal noun, a *maṣḍar* مصدر, and again is translated "polytheism", means, more literally, associating other beings with God—which in the Islamic scheme is the unforgivable sin. It means, one soon enough realizes on reflection, treating as divine what is in fact not so. God is seen as being one, alone; He only is to be worshipped. This overwhelming affirmation is, of course, fundamental to the Qur'an's whole presentation; so that to associate any second being with Him [I hope that you can hear the capital H there] is stupid, wicked, and wrong. The *mushrik*, accordingly, is not that man who simply believes in many gods; but, if one is to use the term "believe" at all, it is the man who *perversely* believes in many gods. Or, more precisely, one may note that at this level the Arabic means, more or less literally, 'to believe in more gods than there are'. Built into the term as a term, and into the concept as a concept, is the fallacy of what it names. It is, therefore, a vehement pejorative, an inherently derogatory term. The repellent quality is not merely connotation, but denotation.

Therefore, no man could use the term *mushrik* of himself—except that penitent Muslim who was repudiating his former sin and blindness, or later

that mystic Muslim who confessed in tears imperfection in his sincerity, pleading that his intellectual recognition of God's oneness is not matched in full purity by a total singleness of heart in his devotion. Otherwise the phrase *أنا مشرك* "I am a *mushrik*" is at the intellectual level a logical self-contradiction; since if one actually did believe that there are more gods than one, then this term would not describe that belief. It describes and analyses such a belief from the point of view of those who reject it. It is a monotheist concept for a polytheist.

Indeed, once again a notion of "believe" is not quite appropriate anyway; since in a sense the Prophet or any convinced Muslim did not doubt that the idols of the pagans existed, but simply affirmed that they were not gods, were merely sticks and stones. It was not their existence that was in question, but the absurdity of worshiping them, of treating them as if they were divine. Similarly today: the man who worships money, or devotes himself to the advancement of his own career, or panders to self-gratification, is a *mushrik* not in the sense that he recognizes the existence of these distractions—we all know that they exist—but in that he is associating them with God in, we might phrase it, his scheme of values, is consecrating his life in part to them rather than consecrating it solely to the only reality that is worthwhile, worshipful, worthy our pursuit: namely, God.

The atheist, the monotheist, the polytheist, then, to use our modern neutralist terms, form a series that in the Qur'ān and in classical Islamic consciousness is seen, and felt, and designated, as all within the monotheistic framework. All three are conceptualized from the point of view of *al-Ḥaqq*, the truth. Accordingly, the series is set forth as, respectively, the *kāfir* ("infidel"), the cantankerous ingrate who rejects, the *mu'min* ("man of faith"), that blessed one who, by divine grace, recognizes the situation as it is and commits himself to acting accordingly, and the *mushrik* ("the associator"), who distorts the situation by elevating, in his perverse imagination or perverse behaviour, to the level where only God the Creator sits, some of God's creatures, treating *them* as if they too were divine.

In much the same fashion the so-called "creed" of you Muslims is not a creed at all, if by creed one means an affirmation of belief. It is, rather, explicitly a *shahādah*, a bearing witness. The Muslim does *not* say, I believe that there is no god but God, and I believe that Muḥammad is the apostle of God. Rather, he asserts: "I bear witness to"

these facts. His regarding them as facts, not theories, as realities in the universe not beliefs in his mind, is, as I have elsewhere suggested (especially in my book, *The Faith of Other Men*) of more basic significance than is usually recognized. The witness formula affirms that he is relating himself in a certain way—of obedience, recognition, service—to a situation that already, and independently, and objectively exists. He is corroborating it, not postulating it. Monotheism, for him, is the ‘status quo’ cosmically; in the formula it is not in process of being believed but is assumed, is presupposed, and is in process only of being proclaimed.

The concept of witnessing in Islamic life is a profound one. It, indeed, is a major category. It is a religious category worthy of the name.

Now you may protest that this is all very well, but does it not presuppose that there is, indeed, a God, that He has indeed spoken, and all the rest? My answer is that this is precisely the point : that these notions are not believed, they are presupposed. Indeed, one may note, and even, one must insist, that they are presupposed equally in both the ‘yes’ and the ‘no’ cases : the concepts not only of faith but of infidelity, *iman* and *kufr*, both presuppose the whole outlook. The one does not imply belief, the other lack of it; rather, both equally imply a preceding conceptual framework within which the one designates active acceptance, the other, active rejection. We have already seen that the concept translated “polytheism” presupposes monotheism.

The difference between believing something, and presupposing something, is crucial. The concept ‘belief’ does not occur in the Qur’an: and it would be self-contradictory to ask that what is presupposed should be explicated.

Perhaps the following illustration will seem too homely; although I trust, not too irreverent. I hope that you will forgive me if it seem too utterly petty. I should perhaps also explain that I myself do not own a car, although almost everyone in America seems to, including the students, . Anyway, I have sometimes told my students that the case of a Muslim, on a radically higher plane, may perhaps be *formally* compared, on a radically lower plane (but of course not substantially), to the driver of a car who is looking for a place to park, and who is confronted with a “NO PARKING” sign. In such a situation, there are various possible reactions. He may, for instance, on the one hand, simply obey the sign and go off to look elsewhere. Or, may he may park anyway, thinking “Oh, well, the police are not very vigilant in these parts, and I will try my luck—

maybe I will get away with it". Or, he may feel that even if caught, he can trust the lenience or friendly indulgence of the authorities. Or he may think that it is worth paying the fine, even if it does eventuate, so urgently does he wish to park. Or he may simply lack the self-discipline to submit to regulations, even though he have some sort of haunting sense that he ought to do so. On the other side of the matter, if he does obey the regulation, he may do so out of fear of punishment, or out of respect for the law, out of a sense of good citizenship, or whatever. Now all these reactions, whether positive or negative, all presuppose his acceptance of the validity of the sign. A new situation arises when some sceptic comes along and suggests that the sign is in fact not authentic, that it has been put up not by the police, but by some teen-ager pranksters who are simply making mock of strangers.

A quite new dimension is introduced into the whole situation if our driver is now asked, or asks himself, whether he believes the sign. Previously he took it for granted that it was authoritative; the only problem was whether or not he should obey it. Former questions about his character, about his relation to the law, to the community, to his own self-discipline, about his being able or willing to afford a fine, and the like—these become transformed once one makes possible for him, and especially once one makes necessary or central for him, the new question of whether he *believes* it. On the tacit assumption that the "No Parking" sign was authoritative, a whole spectrum of possible actions was involved, a whole series of questions, a whole range of significance; and—I tell my students—if an entire community made this tacit assumption, a whole community life (with every degree within a full gamut of loyalty and disobedience, cohesion and dissent). Once that prior assumption is called into question, however, the matter assumes a radically new aspect. The issue of its authenticity raises a quite new series of questions, and shifts the range of significance—for both the individual and the community—on to quite new, and different, ground. I am not yet saying that whether he believes the sign's authenticity is an illegitimate question: I am merely saying that it is a different question.

I then go on to make the same sort of point about the Christian use. The Muslims among you may more easily understand the point that I am making if you think about it in the Christian instance, to which we shall turn in the second lecture—or in relation to any cultural theory that you do not believe, but of which you see the historical results and within which

you can observe that there are some persons who are faithful and some who are not. No doubt it is important to believe what is right. Yet the Qur'ān itself affirms that such theoretical believing, even recognizing, is not enough—as when it refers to those who

عرفوه كما يعرفون أبناءهم

—those who recognize the truth intellectually as clearly as they recognize their own children, and yet still do not respond with faith.

This whole matter is further illuminated if we turn, finally, to the other Qur'ān concept that has been translated in modern times into modern English as 'believe': namely, *ẓanna*, *yazunnu*, *ẓannan*. So far as the mundane world is concerned, this is pretty much what this term does, indeed, signify. It means to think something, to form in the imagination an idea or opinion or assessment, to adjudge, to conceive. And for immediate day-to-day matters, it leaves fairly well open the question of the validity or correctness of the conception: or is used in cases both good and bad. It occurs here and there in the Qur'ān in this relatively neutral sense. It occurs also, however, and more often, in another sense, functioning more closely as a specifically religious category, and here it takes on a different and rather special meaning; and to look at this can, I suggest, be educative.

This root occurs in various forms 70 times in the Qur'ān. Thus it is reasonably common; although *āmana*, to have faith or to make the act of faith, and *'alima*, to know, each occur more than ten times that often. I must not overstate my case: of the 70 occurrences, perhaps as many as 20, certainly some 15, have various other connotations than the one to which I wish to draw attention. Many of you will think right away of these. They include half-a-dozen or so where the usage implies a pondering, reflecting upon, entertaining in the mind, even occasionally of religious realities (falling into The Fire; the Resurrection; the encounter with the Lord), as well as a few that are ambiguous, and some casually neutral, plus three or four where the judgement being reported is clearly seen as correct. I have here references for the chief verses for this group; but will not enumerate them—as I say, several of you will have them in mind.

In the great majority of cases, however—some forty-nine or fifty (roughly seventy percent)—the term is used for men's having an opinion about God or His doings, but one that is woefully and manifestly awry. It designates in these instances a religious belief, no doubt; but a belief of a particular kind; namely, a wrong one. Far from being neutral as to the validity of the position held, the term is used in contexts where

the idea is to convey the absurdity or perversity of that view. It is the full, clear opposite of 'knowledge', and designates human whimsy and foolish fancy—in a clear polarity. I find it interesting that similarly certain traditional Christian thinkers, such as the Protestant Reformer John Calvin later set up a dichotomy between God's revelation, on the one hand, and the arrant absurdities of depraved human imagination on the other. If this be religious belief, it is yet radically different from faith. Indeed, between what is designated by this *ẓanna*, to conjure up imaginative fancies, and *āmāna*, to respond positively to God's clear summons, the contrast is stark. It is not, however, always direct: it comes out in the differing relation of each to knowledge. Faith in the Qur'ān is closely correlated with knowledge: the two refer to the same matters, so that man accepts that which he knows. *Ẓanna*, on the other hand, so far as this religious level is concerned, comes into sharp collision with it; the connotations of *ẓanna* as a religious category are fixed in terms of its clear opposition to knowledge.

(Both relationships, one might remark in passing, diverge from the classical Greek distinction between *doxa* and *gnosis* or *epistēmē*, where opinion is a first step on the path to eventual knowledge. In the Qur'ān case, rather, knowledge comes first—given by God; faith is the positive response to it, *ẓanna* is the pitiful and puny alternative to it.)

In the Qur'ān, then, in these half-a-hundred usages *ẓanna* is roundly derided. The form of the statements is usually something like this: they *ẓanna* x, but in fact y. You may see that 'believe' here does make a possible translation; yet one misses the flavour of the presentations if one omits from the rendering the recognition that *ẓanna* is in fact a derogatory term, a pejorative. Let us recall some illustrative verses :

(آل عمران)

"They *ẓanna* about God other than the Truth, the *ẓann* of the times of ignorance" (3 : 154 : and 'Truth' here deserves a capital T).

Yazunnūna bi-Hāhi ghayra-l-ḥaqqi-
ẓanna-l-jāhiliyyah

يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

"About it they have no knowledge; rather, a following of *ẓann*."

Mā lahum bi-hi min 'ilmīn
'illā'ttibā'a'ẓ-ẓanni (4 : 157)

مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ

(النساء)

“The majority of them do not follow anything but *ẓann*. Verily, *ẓann* is no substitute for Truth!” (10 : 36). This last phrase is repeated more than once; as usual, the English translation seems sadly feeble in comparison with the forceful and pungent rhetoric of the original.

(سورة يونس)

Inna-ẓ-ẓanna lā yughnī mina-l-ḥaqqi shay’an إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا

“You *ẓanna* that God was not aware of much of what you were doing” (41 : 22).

wa-lākin ẓanantum’anna-llāha وَلَا يَكُنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ
lā ya’lamu kathīran mim mā ta’malūna

(سورة فصلت)

Again, I tell my students that the ridicule implicit in this denunciation will be appreciated only by those who have some sense of the vividness of the Qur’anic imagery and the almost devastating presentation of God’s awareness of all that men do. “His eyes see everywhere”

هُوَ بِصِيرٍ عَلِيمٌ

“Verily they *ẓanna*, as you *ẓanna*, that God would not resurrect anyone” (72 : 7). (سورة جن)

wa ’annahum ẓannū, kamā وَأَنْتُمْ ظَنُّوْا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَنْ يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا
ẓanantum, ’an lan yab’atha-llāhu ’aḥadan

Again, the total and almost vehement assurance that God will resurrect, that the Day of Judgement is indeed coming, in explosive fury, is to be remembered here.

“That is your *ẓann* which you *ẓanna* about your Lord—and it has ruined you” (41 : 23). ardākum

Often, the word appears in verses along with radically pejorative terms (*al-sū’*, *kādhīb*, *kāfir*, etc.). There are, it is true, some cases where the *ẓann* of men about God is simply wring, though there is little or no disdain: for example, in 12 : 110, *sūrat Yūsuf* where “they *ẓanna* that all is lost, but We (God) rescued them”. And there is actually one verse (34 : 20) where this root converges with ṣ-d-q, truth—but it is Iblīs here, the Devil, about whom the Qur’ān is speaking. The passage might be taken in different ways; one could suggest “And Satan verily made come true against them his *ẓann* (we might almost translate it here ‘his machinations’) for

they follow him, all but a few of those who have faith"—one may note again the polarity here over against *mu'minīn*.

Most of these instances, then, refer to man's *ẓann* as wicked or pitiable or ridiculous; and in any case wrong. The term is used to characterize with disdain the opinions of men that lead them astray.

In the Qur'ān, then, my submission is, *ẓanna* does not mean simply to believe, but to believe wrongly. Insofar as *āmana* means 'to believe' at all, it means, even those who would like to press that interpretation would have to admit, to believe rightly. All this is because, of course, implicit in the Qur'ān, and also explicit in it, is the view that the truth is given, is clear, is known. If the truth is known, than men's beliefs may be categorized in terms of it—but this is precisely, as we have seen, what the modern concept of believing explicitly does *not* mean. On the contrary, modern 'believing' as a concept inherently postulates that truth, in the religious field, is not known.

The difference, of course, is that modern 'believing' is an anthropocentric or man-centred concept; whereas the whole Qur'anic world-view is theocentric, God-centred. It is theocentric not only as a whole, but in all its parts : the concepts with which it operates are concepts whose meaning, implication, and presupposition are saturatedly theocentric. And of course, I insist with my students that as soon as they reflect upon it they must recognize that this is all very natural, very much to be expected. You will not have failed to notice, I am sure, that I remarked above that an outsider might be found saying that to the Prophet Muḥammad the whole vision was so vivid and it became so vivid to his community, that in a sense some might be tempted to say that it never occurred to him or them that men would not believe it, unless somehow their hearts had been hardened and their capacities sealed by God Himself. At least, the question that it might or might not be true was not an intellectual issue for them. Yet even to speak of Muhammad here, or of the community, is to betray one's own anthropocentric skepticism. It is the way of speaking of the outsider who thinks of the Qur'ān in relation to Muḥammad, or to the Muslims. Within its own terms, however, and as it is read by Muslims, of course, the Qur'ān is the word not of Muḥammad but of God. It is not your scripture, but His. And since it is God who is speaking, after all He knows what is true and what is false. It is entirely logical, and indeed natural, entirely legitimate and indeed inescapable, that when God is speaking, men's opinions are assessed and interpreted in the light

of His truth. Since God knows what is right and what is wrong, the terms in which He addresses mankind leave no room for our human epistemological bawilderments. It was in order to salvage us from these that He mercifully came to our rescue.

The Qur'ān view is theocentric, then, in sharp contrast to the anthropocentrism of the modern liberal view. "Believing" as a religious category has become an anthropocentric concept. No wonder, then, that it characterizes our modern age; but no wonder, also, that within it faith is feeble. To believe is not only different from faith; one may wonder whether the two are not alternatives.

At least, conceding the point, as you will remember I earlier was quite willing to do, that presuppositions are indeed inescapably important, might we not toss out the aphorism that if faith, classically, presupposed belief, then belief, modernly, presupposes scepticism.

With this we conclude. Presuppositions are indeed of massive importance. The history of religion is primarily the history of faith. And so far as the intellectual or conceptual level is concerned, the history of religion is the history of presuppositions as much as it is of the ideas that men and women have explicitly held. It is only in terms of the presuppositions that the overt ideas reveal their true import. Moreover, in addition to the tacit context within which expressed ideas have been held, there is also an important history of the mode in which they were held. Classical Muslims were hardly conscious of believing anything, in the modern sense. In my next lecture I shall argue that the same holds true also for classical Christians—although it be the modern West, and the English language, that have generated our modern problem. Next time we not only shall consider Western developments, which I find fairly parallel, but also shall try a little to see what inferences perhaps may be drawn, for the modern intellect, and what some implications may be, for the modern religious crisis—and also for Muslim-Christian relations, which in a sense are my fundamental interest in these lectures.

For both of us, I am suggesting, faith and belief, far from being one and the same thing, are in fact two quite disparate matters. In belief, we differ: from each other; and—given the condition of the modern world and the modern intellect—both of us from our forefathers. In faith, on the other hand, conceivably we differ less than one might imagine.