

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 Punjab'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.

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

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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. May be, 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 *imān* 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 *mutakallimīn*. One is a long article on the meaning of the term *tasdiq* in the important formula *al-īmān 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 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 (*īmān*)?" only in the negative manner of arguing that it is not belief. In my second lecture, on Thursday May 2, I will demonstrate 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 misgiving.

According, 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 position 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 they may 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'an, 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'an 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'an, 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'an, 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'an 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 (*l'taqada & c*) does not occur in the Qur'an. 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'an : twice as a verb—

'aqadat aymānukum

عَمَدْتُمْ أَيْمَانَكُمْ

'aqqadtumu-l-aymāna

عَمَدْتُمْ الْإِيمَانَ

and five times as a noun :

an-naffāthāt bi-l-u'qad

النَّفَاثَاتِ بِالْعَقَدِ

'uqdata-n-nikāh

عَمَدَةَ النِّكَاحِ

awfū bi-l-'uqūd.

أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ

Furthermore, the work that I have done on mediaeval *kalām* texts shows, I have found, that the VIIth form *i'taqada*, which does not occur in the Qur'an but is introduced later along with *'aqīdah* 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'an 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, *ẓannan*, *yaẓunnu*—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'an 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 *jahāda*; the most strident is k-f-r, from which *kāfir* (usually translated "infidel") is derived, with its radically pejorative sense of 'spurner'. 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 jahādū 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*, *kufir*. 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 *girādan* to explain faith, just as modern existentialists writing in English resort to the French words *s'engager*, *engagement*. And the French word *gager* 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 *āmin* 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. *Āmana*, 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 *انا 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 worshipping 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'an and in classical Islamic consciousness is seen, and felt, and designated, as all within the monotheistic framework. All three are conceptualized from 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*, 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 pre-suppose 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*, *yoẓunnu*, a *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 away. 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 grant absur-

dities 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 *āmana*, 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. *Zanna*, 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-llāhi ghayra-l-ḥaqqi-ẓanna-l-jāhiliyah يظنون بالله غير الحق ظن الجاهلية

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

Mā lahum bi-hi min 'ilmin 'illā ttiba'a'ẓ-ẓanni (4:157) ما لهم به من علم إلا اتباع الظن
(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 yughni minā-l-ḥaqqi shay'un إن الظن لا يغني من الحق شيئا

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

wa-lākin zanantum'anna-llāha ولكن ظننتم أن الله لا يعلم شيئا مما تعملون
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 بَصِيرٌ عَلِيمٌ

"Verily they *ẓanna*, as you *ẓanna*, that God would not resurrect any-one" (72:7).

(سورة جن)

wa 'annahum *ẓannū*, kamā
ẓanantum, 'an lan yab'atha-llāhu 'aḥadan

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا

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, when 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 Muhammad the whole vision as 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 Muhammad, 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 Muhammad 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 a 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.

FAITH AND BELIEF II

SOME CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE CHRISTIAN INSTANCE

It is modern Western civilization that has conspicuously held belief to be a basic religious category: has held that it is believing that religious people characteristically do. In challenging this notion, therefore—in contending that the significant issue is decidedly *not* belief, but faith, which is drastically different—I am criticizing my own culture, which I feel in this matter as in some others has misled itself and misled others. In suggesting two days back that the concept “believing” does not occur in the Qur’an, and that it is a mis-translation in modern English to render any Qur’an term so, I admitted that most English versions of the Qur’an do in fact use the word. The reason is that it has become deeply embedded in modern English thought, in the religious field; and it is certainly going to be extremely difficult to extricate ourselves from the resultant confusion. I personally am hoping that the Qur’an case and the Islamic instance generally may help us in the West to recognize the true situation in these matters more clearly. I trust that you will agree with me that the spiritual crisis of the modern world is such that we must learn from each other, and help each other, in attempting to cope with it.

Not that Christians should need to look outside their own tradition to realize their recent aberration. For them also, faith has been the crucial issue. This was true originally; sad it was true for the classical and the mediaeval Church and for the Reformation. It is only in modern times that Christendom has tended to lose sight of this; as we shall see.

I discern three reasons why “believing” has come to be thought of—in my view, wrongly—as central to religious faith in modern Western thought. One, you Muslims share with us: namely, the contemporary situation of the world; including especially religious pluralism, but including also the powerful thrust of scientific thought and the powerful array of competing ideologies. The second matter is the special, and indeed rather peculiar, position of theology in Christian life. In the Islamic complex, it is the *shari’ah* that holds pride of place: I think that you have never given *kalam* the same prominence that you have given to *fiqh*, nor that Christians have given to theology. This has to do in part with the massive influence of Greek thought on the Christian Church, for good or ill.

These two issues have received much notice from Western thinkers. My third matter is one to which little attention has been paid: namely, the history of the word “believe” in the English language. (There is a comparable, although perhaps less decisive, history of counterpart concepts in other Western languages; but I shall leave them aside.) I intend to concentrate on this language matter in this present lecture. So far as I know, I am the first person to give this issue the importance and attention and interpretation that I believe it must have, and to which my recent studies have astonishingly led me. It is my conviction

that the word and concept "believe" have radically changed their meaning over the centuries; to the enormous confusion of modern religious thought.

No one language in Christian life has played the role that Arabic has in Islamic life; and a history of Christian concepts of faith would involve a whole series of languages, notably Hebrew, Greek, Latin, plus at the very least German, French, and English. Obviously, in this lecture it would be neither appropriate nor feasible even to touch on these. Personally I have become convinced that it is possible, and requisite, to do with the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, the kind of thing that I attempted before you this week with the Qur'an. Some day I plan to publish an argument that it is a mistranslation to render anything in the Bible by the modern words "belief" or "believe"—although the suggestion will certainly stir up controversy. This would not directly interest most of you, however. What I have chosen to do instead, and what I hope may prove of interest, is to show how the classical situation has shifted in modern times so that the notion of faith has become watered down and distorted into the notion of believing.

I begin, then, where two other presentations, if I were to give them, would leave off: namely, with the position that the Bible, like the Qur'an, and the early Christian Church, like the classical Muslim community, set forth a particular view of the world and then designated within it the decisive quality of faith—as an orientation and commitment of the person, conceived and articulated in terms of that over-all view. I am not here concerned with whether their total understanding and interpretation of the universe were right or wrong; all that I am saying is that, given that particular vision, they defined within it, and in terms of it, both faith and infidelity, both acceptance and non-acceptance.

By the way, I may remark in passing that it is no small achievement to generate a world-view, a comprehensive conceptual system, which gives order to man's perception of the universe and within which man's destiny may be discerned and discussed. Nonetheless it is that destiny, and not that world-view, that is and always has been crucial.

It can be shown, for instance—I think, beyond question—that the Latin term *credo* did not mean "I believe" until at least the 18th century, and probably even the 19th. Spokesmen for the Christian Church held that God is, that he has acted in Christ, and so on, and they then expounded the act of faith, as they called it, in terms of a personal engagement, a recognition or encounter, a pledging of allegiance, in relation to these matters. There was a time when the declaration of faith in God, *credo*, meant, and was heard as meaning: given the reality of God, as a fact of the universe, I hereby proclaim that I align my life accordingly; I hereby give to him my heart and soul. It has come to mean, with belief as now the issue, rather something of this sort: given the uncertainty about God, as a fact of modern life, a particular person proclaims that the idea of God is part of the furniture of his mind.

The difference is drastic.

It could be illustrated, I suppose, if you will allow me this liberty, by returning to our material of the last lecture. Would the difference not be dramatic, even shocking,

between the classical *shahādah* on the one hand, and on the other hand a modern formula that instead might run something like:

أَظُنُّ أَن
aẓunnu an lā ilāha 'illā-llāh, wa-aẓunnu anna Muḥammadan rasūlu-llāh

Or in Urdū: the difference between

Khudā par Īmān lātā hūn
and : Sochtā hūn ki khudā hay.

خدا پر ایمان لاتا ہوں
میں سوچتا ہوں کہ خدا ہے

Let us look then, at the process by which “believe”, in English, has come to mean *ẓanna*, *sochnā*.

Things Change.

By now, most of us have become accustomed to the fact that all here on earth is in transition. The continents drift back and forth across the oceans, their mountain ranges—which look so solid and firm—in fact rising and falling. The Great Bear did not point to a Pole Star in the northern sky for the classical Greeks as it does for us. Social institutions, although not always in such rapid flux as at present, have, we now know, constantly been being transformed.

Languages, too, have histories; and words change their meanings with the centuries, some more than others. “Manufactured” used to mean “made by hand”; and “villain” was once simply “rustic”. And so on. Most such changes are merely quaint and of passing interest: they matter little. A major shift in the meaning of the English word “believe”, however, not only has, I find, occurred over the centuries, as can be demonstrated but also has proven of massive consequence and fateful significance, I shall argue—so deeply imbedded is the term in Christian usage, and so central has it remained, until to-day.

Let us begin with etymology.

Literally, and originally, “to believe” means “to hold dear”; virtually, to love. This fact—and it is a hard, brute, fact—provides the force and substance of my entire thesis. Let me emphasize it, re-iterate it. Let me ask you to remember it, throughout the remainder of this lecture and even, if you will allow me to plead, throughout the remainder of your life. Literally, and originally, “to believe” means “to hold dear”.

This is what its German equivalent *belieben*, still means to-day. *Die beliebteste zigarette* in an advertisement signifies quite simply the favourite among cigarettes; the most popular cigarette; the most prized. Similarly the adjective *lieb* is “dear, beloved”. (*Mein lieber Freund* is “my dear friend”). *Die Liebe* is the ordinary German noun “love”; and *lieben* is the verb “to love” (*Ich liebe dich*: “I love you”). *Belieben*, then, is to treat as *lieb*, to consider lovely, to like, to wish for, to choose. This root survives in English in the modern-archaic “lief” as in Tennyson’s poem *Morte d’ Arthur*: “As thou art lief and dear”—that is: beloved. One finds it, too, in quaint phrases such as: “I would as lief die as betray my honour”.

This same root shows in Latin, as in *libet*, "it pleases"; in the Latin phrase used in English, *ad lib*, (for *ad libitum*); "as one likes; at pleasure"; and in the noun *libido*, "pleasure", projected into modern usage by the Freudians. *Libet* and *libido* are also found, although less commonly, in the forms *hubet* and *lubido*.

Modern English "lief" (=dear, beloved) goes back to Old English *leof*, of the same meaning, with which there was a cognate and more-or-less parallel form *lufu*, "affection, love." The latter is the form that has come down into modern English in our word "love", noun and verb. This pair of related words, [lif, luf] with what the linguists call different grades of vowel but the same consonants, is widespread. Forms from a reconstructed pair of roots **libh*, **lubh* in proto-Indo-European are found widely in the Indo-European language family—Sanskrit, *lubh*, *lubhyati*, "to desire strongly, to be lustful", is the same root. I mention this in order to make the point, as with the Latin *libet*, *libido*, (or *lubet*, *lubido*), that the notion of passionate longing or attachment is also somewhere in the background. For the Teutonic languages, however, it is admittedly a matter usually of cherishing, rather.

In Old English, from *leof*, "dear, beloved", was constructed the verb *gelefan*, "to hold dear, to love, to consider valuable or lovely", later reduced to *ilefen*, *ileven*, with the same meaning. In Old High German it is the form with the 'oo' sound, as in the English [loof], love: namely, *gilouben*, again with the same meaning, that has developed into Modern German *glauben*, first "to hold dear, to regard as lovable, to attach oneself to" and now "to have faith in". Along with this is the noun *der Glaube*: the act of, if you will, endearing; nowadays, the standard German word for "faith". In Middle English it was rather the lighter of the two forms that prevailed, namely *be-lēve(n)*, with the meaning "to hold dear, to consider lovely, to value, to love". This gave the early Modern English "believe" (which equals "to cherish"; later, "to have faith"; we shall explore its meaning in a moment). A verb "to belove" has not survived with us, except in the past participle: "beloved". محبوب

The word "believe", then, began its career in early Modern English meaning "to believe", "to regard as lief", to hold dear, to cherish. The object of the verb was for many centuries primarily, and often only, a person, as with the cognate term "love". All other meanings are derived. To believe a person, or to believe "in", or "on", or for a time "to" or "of", a person, was to orient oneself towards him with a particular attitude or relationship, of esteem and affection, also trust; and more earnestly, of self-giving endearment. The noun "belief", whose development accompanied that of the verb, similarly meant literally endearment, holding as beloved, and specifically then a giving of oneself to, clinging to, committing oneself, placing—or staking—one's confidence in.

If one looks at specific usages from past centuries illustrating these developments, one must remember that we of course approach any given passage or quotation in which the words "believe" or "belief" occur, by bringing to it the connotations and clusters of meanings from our own century, our minds influenced by all the intervening evolution from the Enlightenment, the nineteenth century, and the modern world. The first hearers of the

passage in question, on the other hand, of course approached it out of their own cultural inheritance, bringing to it the then *past* history of the terms, as we have just sketched this.

In other words, we tend to read, let us say, a thirteenth- or a sixteenth-century sentence in the light of the subsequent history of the words, while its contemporaries read it or heard it in the light of their preceding history. Especially when the believing is in or on or of a person, the passage may ambiguously lend itself to either interpretation. By quoting such a passage, therefore, one often cannot prove that this or that is the correct rendering. One can merely discover the possible illumination afforded by construing it in terms of its older meaning, instead of, or as well as, its newer.

Thus when we read from the mid-fifteenth century a sentence like this [and I quote]: "It is a grete merveile that ye have so grete bileve to this man", we are inclined to think of credence being given to his statements, whereas a fifteenth-century person hearing the words would more likely think in terms of his being treated with affection, trusted and esteemed as a person, his lead being followed. And indeed on scrutiny it turns out from the context that this latter seems in fact to be what the author had in mind. The sentence is from "*Merlin or The Early History of King Arthur: a prose romance (about 1450-1460 A.D.)*" No *statement* of Merlin ("this man") is adduced here; and the implication is that if any verbal matter at all is at issue, it is a question rather of advice than of propositions. It seems more probable, however, without being incontrovertible, that the speaker of the sentence, who is "one of the Barons" in Arthur's circle, was envious of the king's high regard for Merlin generally and his according him a major role at court and in royal policy decisions. The king's *bileve* here is his giving place of honour; it is a question of whose counsel he heeds, in the light of whose judgement he orders his behaviour, whom he operationally esteems. The other courtiers were jealous of Merlin's being the king's favourite (his most cherished).

Again, to take a formulation two centuries later and indeed more explicitly proposition-linked: the poet Milton in *Paradise Lost* (X: 42-43) writes of man's "believing lies against his Maker". Now at first blush one could interpret this in either of two ways. It could be seen as meaning in the modern fashion his imagining those lies to be true: that is, his gullibly but in good faith regarding as accurate statements that in fact are false (although this would underplay the moral quality of the term "lies"). Or, one may read it as suggesting, in more mediaeval mood (and more in keeping with the rest of the passage, and with Milton's voluntarism generally), that man here is depicted as opting for lies, and taking pleasure in them, clinging to them; deliberately choosing what is known to be false: a moral act, *not* an intellectual error. It is difficult, admittedly, for a twentieth-century reader not to feel perhaps that this latter interpretation is far-fetched and forced, so powerfully does the recent history of the word operate on our minds. Yet a study of the context bears it out; and I have put this to one of Canada's leading Milton scholars and he assures me that this second interpretation is unquestionably right. This flavour is, indeed, discernible enough once the passage is read carefully in full.

Let me choose one more instance of this sort of manifest ambiguity. When John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on May 10, 1509, the funeral sermon for Henry VII, he more or less admits that the king was pretty much of a sinner but hopes to prove that nonetheless he ended his life "in the Lord", and adduces in evidence four chief points, one of which includes Henry's "byleue of God". There is no way of showing indisputably whether this means that for all his sins Henry believed that God exists, in a modern fashion, or in the mediaeval fashion—it being taken for granted all round that God exists—that Henry directed to God a certain ultimate loyalty and allegiance, set his heart on Him, and put his trust and confidence there. In favour of the latter interpretation, however, is virtually the entire context. For one thing, Bishop Fisher characterizes this "byleue" as "steadfast" (not that this clinches the argument by any means: in modern times there can be wilful, stubborn intellectual belief against evidence; we shall return to this). There is the further point, however, that this "steadfast belief" is not simply "of God" but "of God and of the Sacraments of the Church" (there is the story of the twentieth-century Oxford Don who was asked if he believed in Christian baptism, and replied: "Believe in it? Why, I have actually seen it happen!") More telling is the surrounding material of our statement. This steadfast belief is, as I have said, one of our points that Bishop Fisher enumerates. "The first is a true turning of his soul from this wretched world unto the love of a Mighty God." We shall find subsequently that the notion of a turning of the soul away from one thing and towards another runs rather persistently through these early discussions: it is very much the question of where one focuses one's attention; to what one directs one's concern; what one depreciates or values. Notice also the use of "true" ("a true turning of the soul") in the Platonic, rather than the propositional, sense of truth, comparable to our speaking of a true note in music, a true university, a man's being true to his word; not logically true, as a statement. The second of Bishop Fuller's four points is a "fast hope and confidence" ("fast" meaning firm, [stable—"steadfast" as in the next item) in prayer. The third, already mentioned, was the steadfast belief of God and of the Sacraments of the Church); and the fourth, a diligent (again, that adjective is revealing) asking of mercy. Later on in the sermon, the Bishop elaborates these points, and remarks, for instance, that the cause of his hope was "the true *byleue* that he had in God, in his church, and in the Sacraments thereof", and speaks of his receiving these "with meruaylous devotion". The nineteenth century editor of the sermon (John E.B. Mayor) glosses "byleue" here as trust, and the Sacraments as "the Sacraments of penance". However that may be, the cluster of surrounding terms—diligence, devotion, steadfastness, confidence,—all make good sense along with an interpretation of *byleue* in the mediaeval connotation, of holding in high esteem, cherishing. There is the further point that if 'believe, were being used in the modern sense, it would necessarily come first, not third.

Now I have deliberately chosen these rather ambivalent passages, which continue on for many centuries, and indeed in some sense almost until yesterday, and which are not in themselves convincing, in order to make the point that this ambivalence or potential ambiguity in various passages has played an important role in what would be otherwise an almost

ambiguity in various passages has played an important role in what would be otherwise an almost incredible situation: namely that modern people can have failed to notice the radical difference of meaning that once underlay these terms. To misread into such writing as we have noted a twentieth-century notion of believing, although I personally think that it is wrong, nonetheless admittedly does not disrupt the sense so starkly or vividly as to make one consciously and conspicuously stumble. Let me turn now, however, to other early passages where the notion is quite inescapable that believing is a deliberate adherence: the idea is of committing oneself; of ordering one's behaviour in obedience, either to an authority deliberately accepted, or to a value personally recognized and deliberately pursued. The fact that *live* and 'love', believe and *belove*, were once varieties of the same word, as Latin *libet* and *lubet*, German *liebe* and *lube*, *belieben* and *glauben*, then becomes transparent; as does the validity of the translation into English of the Latin *credo* in the sense of "I hold dear, I place my heart."

Indeed I have found reason to suppose that this ambiguity probably continues within certain Church circles even until to-day, in a way that I myself have found quite surprising. We shall be returning to this. I have chatted about some of these ideas of mine to various friends in the United States and Canada, have discovered that when they speak of believing religiously, it turns out that they mean something quite different, they say, from their use of the word in all other contexts. I find this astonishing. What is happening is that they are preserving an older usage. Let use continue to look at that former sense.

I have only begun to explore this area, and much work clearly remains to be done. As some of you know, Middle English is by no means my special field of study. Yet what I have begun to find, after preliminary investigation, has proven momentous, and altogether entrancing; and indeed I am left amazed that so little attention, so far as I know, seems to have been paid to these matters. A few years ago, having ascertained that faith in other religious traditions around the world was perceived as much less a matter of believing than I as a modern Christian had been brought up to imagine, I began to develop the thesis, that the primary form of expression of faith tended in other instances to be something else—a dance pattern (tribal Africa), a moral-legal system (the Islamic, Jewish) and the like—whereas in the Christian instance the primary form of expression of faith, although not faith itself, has tended to be a belief system. I began to say that doctrine formulated and crystallized and symbolized for Christians what other communities formulated and symbolized in other ways. I was misled into this notion by the extraordinary prominence that Christians have given to the "I believe" formulae. Once I began to test this thesis, however, I discovered that I seemed to be wrong in thinking that Christians had made belief so central, except in quite modern times; and the problem was precisely that the word "believe" has changed its meaning so dramatically. It is this change of meaning that had misled me, and still, so far as I can see, misleads many. For once I began to test my hypothesis, as my investigations of the Hebrew, and especially the Greek and Latin, have made evident, I discovered that in earlier times Christians had not been talking about what we to-day mean by belief. They used comparable words but by them they not merely connoted, but denoted, something else.

So far as English is concerned, let me illustrate this from some of the passages that my inquiries quickly led me into.

Here are some where there is no ambiguity, I think you will agree, so soon as one approaches them with the background, etymological and the like, to which I have alluded.

I have hit upon a whole series of examples in a work a hundred years earlier: called "Lagamon's Brut or Chronicle of Britain, a poetical semi-Saxon paraphrase of the Brut of Wace", edited in 1847 from two surviving manuscripts, one from "the early part of the thirteenth century" and the other a little later, in Henry III's reign. The texts of the two manuscripts are quite close, but not identical. Interesting for our purposes is the apparent interchangeability still of "belove" and "believe"; or I should say, of their then counterparts. A certain King Bladud, for instance, has built a temple, perhaps at Bath, with fountains and the like, dedicated to Minerva. One of the manuscripts reads: "To hire he hefde love", while the other has "in hire he bi-lefde", which proves smartly, does it not, my contention that *bi-lefde* here means "he held dear"—virtually, he loved. In a later passage another king is being urged to honour his pledge; to uphold an oath that he has sworn; not to hold cheap a pledge that he has given. The wording is

"Bi-lef thene

aedh

(Second manuscript: "bi-lef thane oth

Nobody can believe his own oath, in the modern sense; but it makes good sense, and is indeed unavoidable, to translate "believe" here as "to value highly; to hold fast to, be loyal to, keep allegiance to". The modern phrase would be: honour thine oath. Just as the king honoured Merlin, to the irritation of his rivals at court, so here a man is being asked to hold his own oath in honour.

We may note in passing, also, that the English word "to honour" in such phrases means not merely to consider honourable, to hold in high esteem, at the theoretical level, but to add to this an active, operational thrust. In present-day English, "to honour one's word", "to honour one's bond", "to honour one's pledge", signify not merely an attitude, mental or emotional or both, but a following through in practice. "To believe" in mediæval English meant almost exactly what "to honour" means in these usages in modern English.

At another point in this poem the following lines occur:

Cnihtes ye beod me leafue;

ah thas tidende me beod lade.

... ah ye ileoued a thene wurse

These are the first, second, fifth lines of a five-line passage.

(I have omitted two lines between the second and the last here), Literally, this is: "Knights, ye be to me lief / But these tidings to me be loathe / But ye ileved the worse."

Note the contrast, in the first and second lines, between *lief* (“dear, beloved, cherished”) and loathesome, repellent; and the parallel between the first and the last line: you are dear to me, and you have held dear—chosen, opted for, have elected to pursue—the worse. Let me fill in now the missing spaces. The second line above is followed by the following:

eower ileuen beod vnwraste

“your choices (what you cherish; your commitments; your loves; or we might say in the modern jargon: your values) are not good” (the nineteenth-century editor translated this as: “your creeds”); and this line was in turn succeeded by the following:

ye ne ileoued noht an cristie

“Ye did not esteem—did not love, hold dear, give high regard to—Christ” but, as the fifth line goes on them to say: “rather you opted for, gave your allegiance to, something less good”.

To summarize, and paraphrase, the whole:

“Knights, you are lovable to me,
But what you proclaim is unlovely;
Your supreme values are bad,
You have not loved Christ,
But hold beloved what is of lower value”.

The only difference in manuscripts here is that the second has in the second line *bilefues* for *tidende*, which transfers the third line to the second. This makes it a bit more pithy: “You are loved, but what you belove is loathe.”

We have, however, shifted here to only partly secular, partly Christian, contexts. (The double usage of *leof* here is itself interesting: for the speaker’s cherishing of the knights, and the knights’ cherishing of Christ). Let us turn, then, to more strictly religious usage.

The earliest recorded use, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, of the word “belief” is in a homily from the late twelfth century, where it is averred that Christian men should not set their hearts, we might say, on worldly goods. The phrasing is “. . . should not set their belief” on them. There is no suggestion here that Christians should regard the material world as unreal, illusory; should not believe in it, in that modern sense. On the contrary, it is implied that the mundane is concrete enough, but is not worth esteeming, should not become beloved. One is certainly expected to give it intellectual recognition, but should not give it one’s allegiance, nor award to it one’s reliance—and thus, one’s soul. The question is not about what exists: rather, what is to be one’s attitude and orientation to what exists. (This is exactly as we saw in the Qur’an case.)

It is assumed here that both God and the world exist. At issue is, which gets one’s allegiance.

Two contrasts are set up in this passage. First, one should set one’s heart, one’s *bileafe*, not on temporal possessions “but on God alone”. Secondly, Christians, who hold

not the world dear but God, are contrasted in the next sentence, in fact the next word, with *the zitsere*, which means: the covetous, the greedy, and this is followed by the phrase: "who sets his mind on his goods". The person who does this is said to be the devil's child. Thus the opposite of "believing in God" here is not not believing; it is thinking about, thinking highly of, material possessions and therefore being the child of the devil.

Now this is illuminating, if we consider it carefully. The preacher says that a Christian should set his heart on God, and that the person who sets his heart on things of this world is a child of the devil. Since this is so, we to-day would say that that preacher believed in the devil. In our modern sense of the world, undoubtedly he did believe in the devil; but in his sense of the word it would be an insult and a libel to say this of him. He recognized the existence of the devil, right enough; but the whole point of his homily was that one should, partly for that very reason, "belieb"—that is: hold dear, love, give one's heart to—God alone. If he heard you speak of believing in both God and the devil simultaneously, he would think that you were mad—schizophrenic. To him, God and the devil were obviously both there; but you have to choose between them in your behaviour. The question of interest was: to which do you give your allegiance.

The situation here is once again like the Islamic instance at which we looked last time. What we would call believing in God, and what we would call believing in the devil, are *both* pre-supposed both in the case of a good Christian whose commitment is to the Divine, *and* in that of the covetous man whose heart is set on this world. Belief in the modern sense of the term is simply not at issue. In this sermon the word *bileve* serves to designate what we call faith, and what he in effect called loving, cherishing, holding dear.

Now a further refinement is instructive. When that mediaeval preacher says that the covetous or greedy man is a child of the devil, we can understand him perfectly well, and even be said to agree with him—even if we ourselves do not believe in a devil. Now this is quite curious, if you reflect upon it. In this instance we readily enough, and cheerfully enough, recognize his intellectual framework, his theoretical pre-suppositions; and we are ready enough cheerfully to move quickly beyond them, and in a sense to dismiss them, in order to deal with the substantive point that he was making. We do not allow the fact that our conceptual system is different from his, to stand in the way of our sensing and coping with his position. On the other side of these matters, on the other hand, most moderns are unwilling or unable to do as much with the mediaeval notion of positive faith. They can see that faith went beyond, and still goes beyond, belief; but insist that nonetheless it included it, and somehow must include it.

A belief in the devil is not necessary to a recognition of greed as devilish. Yet a belief in God is thought to be required for a recognition of faith as Divine.

I trust that that is not too poetic for you.

Another twelfth-century homily makes more or less explicit my point that the theoretical pre-suppositions of the theological system were indeed pre-suppositions underlying,

as in the Islamic case two days ago, *both* faith *and* infidelity. In this case the anonymous preacher is holding forth on the Latin term *credo*; which, he says in the learned fashion of the day, may be understood in three ways (*credo Deum, Deo* and *in Deum*). To have faith in God, to God, towards God, we might say. The first two of these he explicitly says, and I quote: "all heathen men do: the third, only good Christians do, and the God-fearing and men of faith." *يعنى، المتقين و المؤمنين* The first two, which are common both sides, include, he says, the recognition that God exists. What only the man of faith does is *credere in Deum*, which he renders both as *bileved in god* and as *to luene ine god*. This involves, he says, five things: to acknowledge God as Lord over all things, to love Him over all things, to have awe of Him over all things, to value Him over all things, to obey Him over all things. In other words, belief in our modern sense characterizes, he is saying both Christians and non-Christians; both men of faith, and infidels. What distinguishes the latter is what he sometimes calls *ileve*, once or twice *bileve*, and sometimes *luve*. Explicitly, what He is saying is that faith is loving God, holding God dear. To believe in God, or to believe that he exists, he says in so many words, is neither here nor there. All men do that—faith is holding God more dear than anything else. "To hold God dear", he affirms, "means to hold Him dearer than everything else"; or, since he uses *leve* and *luve* more or less interchangeably, a more precise rendering is, "To love God is. . . to love Him over all things".

I could go on piling up the evidence for English usage in the Middle Ages, which in the end is overwhelmingly conclusive that words such as *bilefe*, *bileve*, and the like designated allegiance, commitment, the placing of one's heart, choice; and not propositional constructs. In Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman*, for instance, there is many a passage where in quite bitter irony or blunt invective the poet denounces clerical learning as a substitute for charity (in the old sense). He has little use for clerics who talk about God much, but are mean men in their hearts—intellectuals, we might say, whose beliefs are fine but whose devotion, whose love, is wanting. None is so readily ravished, he says, from what a modern editor reads as "right doctrine", as "these cunning clerks who construe many volumes". "Doctrine", here is an absurd rendition, I would submit, for the original *righte byleue*. I am sure that these many-tomed cunning intellectuals were at their best in doctrine. Their trouble was by no means that, but rather their faith, in the sense of their dedication to carry out in practice what they talked about so glibly. It is this that the poem is all about.

Similarly the other poet, anonymous, who not many decades later wrote a work called *Piers Plowman's Crede*, a tale of a seeker who goes around asking about instruction in true faith, and meets with clerics who fleece him and live lives of hypocrisy, extravagance, and haughtiness, and embroider it all with refinement of theory rather than righteous living and meekness. Finally he meets a humble and poorly dressed peasant, Piers Plowman (a fictitious character recently made famous by the earlier poem), who answers his request. Now it would be a ludicrous anti-climax if after all this morally oriented prelude

the poem were to culminate in a plea to *believe* anything at all, in doctrinal theory. He has all this time been denouncing that sort of thing. The poem emerges as a significant work of art, however, as well as of genuine spirituality, if *leve* is recognized as German *Liebe*, English love, or perhaps more technically German *belieben*: “give your allegiance to” “attach yourself to sincerely”. That is, the climax to which the poem rises at the end must surely be recognized as a kind of crescendo on *love*. The word *leve* occurs three times at this climax, as the opening word of each of five lines:

“Leue Peres,” quath y (791)

“Leue brother” quath he (792)

“Leue thou on ourre Louerd God that all the werlde wroughte” (795)

and it goes on a little later: “.and on genty l Jesu Crist”, and so on; and ends with a disparagement of those masters of divinity who do not fully practice what they preach.

Now it is quite clear that the first two of these three *lif*'s mean “dear”: “Dear Piers”, quoth (the enquirer). “Dear Brother”, quoth Piers.

“Leue thou our Lord . . .”

Obviously the third *leve* here, the verb, also means *belieben*, to hold dear, and in fact simply to love. (In this case the actual form is *leve*, not *bileve*; though modern translators, with modern notions of creeds in their minds, mistranslate it as “believe”.) The poet avers: “This is thy holy *beleue*”—that is, creed not in the modern sense of statement of belief but in the classical sense of *credo* as : this is where one's heart is to be put (*credo* literally means “I give my heart”); this is the sacred reality to which one's allegiance is to be actively given.

This sort of thing is the thrust also of the preaching of the mediaeval Church reformer Wycliffe. I have unearthed many a passage in his sermons where the word *bileve* designates that dedication by which one follows through on what one affirms. Explicating Christ's saying: “By their fruits ye shall know them”, he preaches that false prophets—and Wycliffe adds: false priests, false friars—false mullas, you would say—are distinguished from true *by their fruits* : by their actions and lives, not by their words. “Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of briars”, he quotes from the Injil; and these false ecclesiastics, whatever their theoretical preaching, live evil lives. They evince neither the grapes of devotion—that is: of devoting themselves to what they preach—nor the figs of what he calls *bileve*, which he might translate here as dedication to the Gospel that they profess. “And it *sufficib* (sufficith?) *not to seie*, Lord, Lord”, he goes on, “but it redith to lyve wele to a mannes lyve ende”; “. . .preestis. . .mut (glossary: “must”) seie wele. . .and lyve wele, for ellis a man shall not be saved.”. . . In other words, he is saying—he is preaching a sermon on the point—that what we to-day call “belief” is in Christian matters not enough. A true Christian, he proclaims, is known by his works; one of these works Wycliffe called *bileve* or consecration.

Again, from Wycliffe, here is a passage where the notion is clearly one of obedience, along with what in modern terms would be called disbelief at the theoretical level. It describes a situation where one follows, and patterns one's behaviour upon, here under force, what one explicitly rejects with one's mind. "They made us *beleue*", he writes, "a false law". Obviously no one can compel us to believe, in the twentieth-century sense of the word, what we deem to be a false proposition; this would be meaningless. We can be compelled to serve, however, to act in terms of, what we regard as a wrong inju ction.

In the same fashion Wycliffe used "belief" for "obeying" when in his translation of the New Testament into English he rendered Acts 26: 19 ("I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" as; "I was not unbileefful to heuenly visioun"—that is; I did not fail to act out in practice what I saw to be God's will for me.

The two versions of Wycliffe's translation into English of the Bible illustrate, however, a shift that was beginning to take place. In the earlier one he uses *bilefe*, but in the later this is replaced at many points by the new word "faith", which was then just beginning to come into use as the English form of Latin *fides*, through the French. The transition is described in the Oxford English Dictionary as follows :

"Belief was the earlier word for what is now commonly called faith. The latter originally meant in Eng. (as in O. French) 'loyalty to a person to whom one is bound by promise or duty, or to one's promise or duty itself', as in 'to keep faith, to break faith', and the derivatives faithful, faithless, in which there is no reference to 'belief' ; that is, 'faith' was equal to fidelity, fealty. But the word faith being, through. Old French *fei*. *feith*, the etymological representative of the L. *fides*, it began in the 14th c. to be used to translate the latter, and in course of time almost superseded 'belief', esp. in theological language, leaving 'belief' in great measure to the merely intellectual process or state in sense 2 (below). Thus 'belief in God' no longer means as much as 'faith in God' (and there then follows a reference to a 19th century quotation). (Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.).

These developments can continue to be traced ; we do not have the time to follow much further. Let me simply say that by 1611 this transition was virtually complete, so that in the King James version, of the Bible, the word "faith" occurs 233 times, the word "belief", once.

That is, for the noun. There is, however, no verb in English connected with faith, as there is in Greek or Arabic ; and therefore the translator kept *believe* as a verb, meaning what it had meant before : to love, to hold dear, to cherish ; and conceptually, to recognize. In a sense, my thesis to-day is simply that the time has come to complete the transition also with the verb. In the three and a half centuries since the Authorized Version, the word "faith" has not altogether lost its original religious meaning, but the words "believe" and "belief" have. I am therefore suggesting that we drop "belief/believe" as religious terms since they no longer refer to anything of spiritual importance. We have to rediscover what "faith" means, and then to begin

to talk about that : and as a verb, to discover what to have faith (to be faithful) means, and what to commit oneself means ; to rediscover that “believe” *used to mean*, in the Middle Ages, and as recently as 1611, in the English Bible.

It is fascinating to trace the further developments of the meaning of this verb, and to watch it making the transition from the older sense of having faith to the present-day sense of holding an opinion : from *imān lānā* to *sochnā*. To trace this, however, would require a book, on which I am working, and not simply one lecture. In very brief summary let me say that the changes can be seen to have taken place most significantly, I find, in the 17th and early 18th centuries, with shifts in meaning of religious writing on the whole following a century or so behind the shifts in extra-ecclesiastical usage (the distinction between religious and secular is not so clear early on as it later became). Hobbes, Locke, and Hume are among the illuminating representatives of usage, and for the 19th century John Stuart Mill and John Henry Newman ; though I have more work to do on all this.

There are at least three transitions that can be observed as gradually occurring : one towards the impersonal, and two towards the non-committal. The first has had to do with the object of the verb. That object begins by almost always being a person ; it ends by almost always being a proposition. This signifies a shift from an interpersonal relation to a theoretical judgement : from an action of the self, in relation to other selves, to a condition of the mind. In between the two came an intermediate stage : between believing a person (in the sense of trusting him, having faith in him) (I-Thou), and believing a proposition (in the sense of agreeing with its ideas intellectually) (18th and 19th centuries) came a phase of believing a particular person’s statement (in the sense of trusting that person to be honest and telling the truth) (17th and 18th centuries). This still persists among some Roman Catholics.

The distinction between believing a person, and believing a proposition (the former in the sense of entrusting oneself to him, little or much) survived into the early years of this present century, in a differentiation between “believing in” and “believing that”. Indeed there are to be found a few apologists among whom this still, but rather ineffectively, survives.

The second transition that can be documented has been one in the form of the verb. It signifies a shift from existential to descriptive : from “I believe” to “he believes” or “they believe”—the first involving self-engagement, commitment, the last simply reporting a fact. In Shakespeare, for instance, “believe” can be shown to be one of his favourite verbs—the incidence of occurrence is statistically very high ; and yet I find that the great majority of these are in the first person singular. Less common is the second person imperative : “believe me”, in the sense of “trust me” ; while it turns out that third-person usage is surprisingly rare.

The third transition that can be detected has been from believing what is true (like the Arabic word *tasdiq* تصديق, which involves adding something to a true statement,

by way of recognizing and acting upon it), towards utter neutrality, so that one may believe equally what is true, what is false, and what is uncertain. (*Āmana* آمن is seldom used in relation to what is *bāṭil* باطل and there was a time when “believe” was not, also). On this last point I have even come up with evidence strongly suggesting that this transition has continued in motion right into our own day, with momentum, so that in the middle and latter part of the 20th century there is material to indicate that the words “belief” “believe” now carry for many speakers and writers, and probably for all in certain contexts, an implicit though perhaps unconscious preference for designating the holding of an opinion that is in fact false ; or at the very least, dubious.

Let us consider the three propositions :

- (i) he recognizes that A is B ;
- (ii) he is of the opinion that A is B ;
- (iii) he imagines that A is B.

In the first case, the wording shows that he is right; in the last, that he is wrong; in the middle case, no stand is taken. Now I have discovered a tendency in English usage over the centuries for the word “believe” to shift from number (i), where it began (once it got diverted from persons to propositions), through number (ii), before, during, and after the 18th century, towards number (iii), incipiently at the present time.

One of the differences between secular and religious people nowadays in the English-speaking world is that the word “believe” means different things to each. Religious persons have participated in all these developments undoubtedly less than have secular persons. Yet unquestionably they have participated; and certainly have been influenced by them. Let me re-iterate the three trends. The object of faith used to be a person (God and Christ in the Christian case : Muslims must remember that in Christian understanding God is personal) ; the object of believing has come to be an idea, a theory. Secondly, the *act* of faith used to be a decision, the taking of a step, of cosmic-self commitment; the state of believing has come to be a descriptive, if not passive, condition. Thirdly, the mood of faith used to involve one’s relation to absolutes, to realities of surpassing grandeur and surety; the mood of believing involves one’s relation to uncertainties, to matters of explicitly questionable validity.

The statement, “I believe in God”, used to mean : “God is there; and I hereby give my heart and soul to him. He gave me existence; and I offer my life to be judged by him, trusting his mercy”. To-day the statement, “I believe in God”, can be understood as meaning: “Since there is a serious question as to whether God is there or not, I hereby declare that my opinion is in favour. I judge him existent”. And in so far as a moral commitment or life behaviour is involved, it would add “And I trust my judgement”.

It is sometimes said these days that faith in God, in the sense of surrender, trust, engagement, requites a prior belief in God. Might we not be inclined to turn this upside-down: without faith, it is impious to believe? Might one almost wonder whether someone

would be willing to go beyond this and to say dramatically: if one does not have faith, belief is blasphemous; if one does have faith, belief is unimportant?

Actually, I myself would not be willing. It is dramatic, and suggestive; but I fear that it is not quite true. Beliefs *are* important; especially for those of us who are intellectuals, whose commitment is to the life of the mind, to the use of reason, to intellectual understanding of the world, including its religious life, including even faith.

Where, then, have we arrived, in the course of these two evenings? I have suggested three things: that for the classical Islamic outlook, and for the classical Christian outlook, the crucial question was that of faith; and that in modern Western culture, attention has been shifting from that to the quite different question of belief. I personally hold that the ultimate, and urgent, and decisive, human question still is faith, in the sense of a total, personal, positive relationship to al-Ḥaqq الحق; and that in comparison with this all other issues are secondary. Nonetheless, the recent Western emphasis on belief, although it may be misplaced, and dislocative, yet is hardly either fortuitous or silly. We have traced the shift of attention from faith to belief (in English, from “believing” in the classical sense to believing in the modern sense); but we have not yet explained it. I suggest, in conclusion that an explanation emerges from the very matter that we have uncovered: namely, that classically, religious beliefs used to be not emphasized but presupposed.

The religious crisis of the modern world has arisen in that presuppositions, which had been virtually unconscious, or at least had been accepted as manifest and stable, were raised to the level of consciousness. Or perhaps we should speak not of levels, up or down, but of horizontal distance from the perceiving self; should speak not of raising ideas or patterns of patterns of ideas to consciousness, nor even, maybe better, of lowering them to such a level, but rather of objectifying them and removing them to a distance: the transforming transition in the realm of religion from consciousness to self-consciousness.

The Islamic and the Christian world views used to be the conceptual frame-works, the intellectual systems, patterns, within which thinking was carried on, and within which faith and infidelity were conceived and articulated. These coherent systems of ideas had been not something at which men looked, but through which they looked—at the world, at themselves, at their neighbours. Or, changing the metaphor, and speaking of Western Christendom, may we not assert the following: that what had been taken for granted, and had formed the basis for the superstructure on which our particular drama was mounted, was brought out into the open, for critical intellectual scrutiny, and therefore could no longer serve as presuppositional base on which our faith, and our whole religious and indeed social life, could rest. When that happened, we unwittingly shifted our categories. (And that “unwittingly” is crucial). We diverted our attention from the meaningful question of faith (the question of what one does, given the symbol system) to the modern question of belief (the question of whether to have that particular symbol system or not).

For a time we took the two questions to be synonymous. This meant that many ostensibly religious men urged that it was important to say “yes” to the belief question; and many critically thinking men, that it was important to say “no” to the faith question. Both were wrong. The confusing of the two questions was our undoing—substantially before, but conspicuously since, even religious men have been finding that when it comes down to it they do not, in fact, believe the erstwhile presuppositions. Fortunately, however—though it may prove painful—the synonymity can no longer be maintained. I would suggest that rather, a sophisticated modern position is to recognize the presuppositions as, classically, presuppositions, now seen to have been obtaining on earth in a great variety of forms, and to recognize, modernly, the symbol systems as symbol systems—with the significant question having always been, as it is still today, what one does within the symbol system of one’s choice, what response one makes in terms of it.

It has always been significant, what symbol system one chose; and will continue to be. Yet the central religious question has always been not that, but another; the final religious category, as the Qur’ān well illustrates, and as the Church once proclaimed, is the category of faith, of response.

From this angle, might one not conclude by suggesting that the significant question for today, or at least for tomorrow, has become new. Not, for others, what do men believe; but rather, with what symbol system do they choose to operate, and, given it, what does each do within it. And for ourselves: not what do we, or shall we, believe; but rather, with what symbol system shall we operate, and now that we self-consciously know that it is that, so that we cannot naively presuppose it nor perhaps for some *believe* it, what does it mean to have faith in terms of a symbol system that qua system is anthropogenetic, and historical, although the life lived in terms of it may be, as it was designed that it should be, theocentric, and eternal.

Many of you may not wish to go so far; especially, for one’s own beliefs. At the least, I suggest that this offers a significant key for an interpretation of *other* men’s faith: the faith of those whose beliefs may differ from one’s own. Let me close on that note, developing for a brief moment, for your criticism, a proposal concerning the faith of Muslims and Christians—whose beliefs, we know well, diverge, but whose faith, I suggest, may nonetheless be seen to converge more than one might imagine if one focussed on beliefs rather than on faith.

But first, let me return to the point where we began: with a reference to Iqbal. It would be presumptuous of me to claim that he would have been interested in these considerations; although his concept of مؤمن *mu’min* in his poetry has encouraged me along these lines. This much, however, I can affirm: that he did much to introduce me to جلال الدين رومی Jalalu-d-Din Rumi, by whom and by other Persian Sufis I have been profoundly influenced. The mystics, including Iqbal though he was chary of the name, have taught me that all mundane forms can be pointers to the divine, and despite their diversity

have served men as the channel through which their own encounter with the divine is mediated; that there are diverse forms for faith. Alas, I am no poet, but a plodding intellectual; yet perhaps the poet and the Sufi would tolerate, even if not applaud, an intellectual's attempt to see beliefs also, conceptual systems, not as faith but as mediators of faith, forms and systems in terms of which our forefathers found their way to God—and indeed, more boldly, as forms and systems in terms of which God, Truth, الحق al-Ḥaqq, found His way into the lives of men in divers communities. Belief has not been faith. But God has been able, and willing, to use beliefs—of more than one sort; but reasonable, sincere—as a matrix for men's faith, men's life in Himself.

I close, then, on a theological note, if you will allow me. In classical *kalam* كلام the question was discussed as to whether one should say,

Ana mu'min, in sha' Allah

أنا مؤمن ان شاء الله

or whether it is proper to affirm, rather : *Ana mu'min, haqqan*

أنا مؤمن حقا

—“I am a man of faith, if God will”, or : “I am a man of faith, in truth.”

On the one hand, the person who hopes that he has faith, but knows only that it is God who decides, and it is his grace, with human presumption ruled out. On the other hand, the one who proclaims in joy that he has indeed made his commitments, and he knows that God's mercy has received him. Like most theological problems, this one fascinates me. Not being an “either/or” sort of Person, I prefer to try to appreciate the issue; and I tell my students that their understanding of Islamic religious life will be rich only if they can feel the force, can feel deeply the mighty force, of both positions. May be you will wonder if I am taking too great advantage of my not having to choose.

However that may be, I have a novel solution to the problem (and its close Christian counterpart) to propose to this gathering, as my final conclusion to these lectures. It is this : that I choose to affirm :

Ana mu'min, in sha' Allah

أنا مؤمن ان شاء الله

Nahnu mu'minun, haqqan.

نحن مؤمنون حقا

So far as concerns my own personal case, I prefer diffidence and leave the issue in God's hands ; but so far as concerns our two communities, Muslim and Christian, I affirm with conviction that corporately we both have faith. The systems in which we conceptualize our relation to God, formalize it, moralize it, differ ; but that relation itself, I make bold to say, obtains in both cases, and is sure.

Our beliefs differ, and that is important. But it is not ultimately important ; it is not what God Himself is finally interested in. The cosmic issue is faith. And faith, I submit, we both have. *Ana mu'minun in sha' allahu*

أنا مؤمن ان شاء الله

Nahnu mu'minuna haqqan

نحن مؤمنون حقا

I am a man of faith, I hope that God will grant ; we are people of faith, in very truth.