

Faith and Beliefs

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~~faith and beliefs~~ religious faith and religious beliefs.
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not by their faith but by their beliefs

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My aim is to construct a distinction between religious faith and religious beliefs. The distinction will not imply that religious faith is viable without any religious beliefs. It will not imply that it makes no difference what religious beliefs one accepts provided one accepts some. But it will imply that religions may differ very widely in their beliefs without differing in their faith.

Some such distinction has been advocated by Wilfred Cantwell Smith both in his book, The Meaning and End of Religion, and in a public lecture delivered at the University of Toronto on January 9th, 1968 and entitled, Faith and Belief. On the importance of the distinction for the student of ^{comparative} religion, it would be quite out of place for me to attempt to add to what Prof. Smith has said.

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Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith has distinguished faith and tradition in his book, The Meaning and End of Religion, and in similar vein he has distinguished faith and belief in a public lecture delivered at the University of Toronto in January 1968.

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In a public lecture at the University of Toronto on January the ninth, ~~1967~~ 1968, Prof. Wilfred Cantwell Smith remarked that much fruitful energy has been devoted to exploring the religious traditions not only of the West but also of Asia and Africa and to reconstructing the history of the overt data of mankind's religious life. In detail and in wide compass the observable forms have been observed and the observations recorded. But Prof. Smith was concerned with something more. Beyond the overt data there is the faith that inspired them or is inspired by them. To live religiously is not merely to live in the presence of certain symbols but to ^{be} involved with them or through them in a quite special way -- a way that may lead far beyond the symbols, that may demand the totality of a person's response, and may affect his relation not only to them but to everything else: to himself, to his neighbor, and to the stars. It is that special involvement that pleads to be elucidated.

~~to that special involvement Prof.~~

It is that special involvement that Prof. Smith meant by faith, and it was from the viewpoint of the study of comparative religion that Prof. Smith elucidated it. ~~I wish to work out, to construct, a notion of faith in the same broad sense, a notion of faith relevant to an understanding not only of this or that Christian church but of all genuine Christians, not only of Christians but of all the world religions, not only of the world religions but also of the more elementary forms of religious living.~~

Moreover, its relevance is of the highest order: unless one understands what personal involvement in religion is, it is difficult to conceive how one can think or speak intelligently of persons with religious commitment.

Now I have been using Prof. Smith to introduce a topic that also is my own. What he treated from the viewpoint of a student of comparative religion, I wish to treat from the philosophy of religion. ~~viewpoint of a systematic theologian~~ I shall raise four questions. First, what is man's capacity for religious involvement? Secondly, in what does religious involvement consist? Thirdly, is faith identical with religious involvement or, perhaps, rather a consequence of such involvement. Fourthly, how is faith related to beliefs.

It is a faith, then, that is not merely ecumenical but universalist, relevant to all religions. It is a faith of the greatest interest to students of comparative religion that wish to understand, to penetrate to the meaning and value, of the religions they study. But it also is a faith of great importance to all of us that wish to deal sympathetically and intelligently with those ~~of~~ with creeds other than our own, that wish to go beyond evident differences to underlying bonds of unity.

Of such faith and of its relations to belief I wish to speak to you tonight. My purpose will be to offer you no more than a construct, a model, an ideal type, something that does not claim to be a ^{description} ~~description~~ of reality or even an hypothesis about reality but only an organization of concepts and terms that may prove quite useful when it comes to forming hypotheses or describing realities.

a description of reality nor a hypothesis about reality but just a related set of notions that may prove quite useful when the time does come for framing hypotheses or for describing realities.

1. Man's Capacity for Religious Involvement

In an essay entitled Traum und Existenz Ludwig Binswanger distinguished between dreams of the night and dreams of the morning. Dreams of the night, he believed, tended to be somatically conditioned, to be influenced by digestive and similar processes. But dreams of the morning tend to be personal; in them the subject is coming to himself and taking his stance in his symbolically pr apprehended world

rather something that may turn out to be very useful when the time comes for describing or for framing hypotheses.

1. Man's Capacity for Religious Involvement

Man's capacity for religious involvement is, I suggest, his capacity for self-transcendence.

fragmentary
intended object. But there is the ^{recollection} or ~~the~~ anticipation
of both. Both a self and a self's relation to the other have
appeared. From that slight beginning we have to mount through
four further stages or levels of human consciousness and
intentionality if we are to apprehend the self and its capacities.

In our waking states most easily identified are our sensations,
our memories, anticipations, and projects.
our movements, our feelings, There is an endless variety of
sights to be seen, sounds to be heard, odors to be ~~n~~ sniffed,
tastes to be palated, shapes and textures to be touched.
We move about in various ways, take now this now that posture,
and reveal or betray our ^{emotions} ~~feelings~~ by ^{the} ~~those~~ fleeting movements
of our facial muscles. ~~Finally, we~~ ^{We} feel pleasure and ~~action~~,
pain, desire and fear, joy and sorrow, and in such feelings
seem to reside the ^{mass and} ~~massive~~ momentum of our lives. Finally,
we live in time: our accumulated experience becomes available
in memory, shapes our anticipations of the future, underpins
our grasp of possible courses of action.

Still what is most conspicuous in our waking states --
sensations, movements, feelings, memories, anticipations, projects --
is not what is most important.

Still, what is most conspicuous in our waking states,
is not what is most important. Sensations, feelings, movements,
time consciousness

that is what appears, or what we imagine, or what we think, or what seems to us, or what we are inclined to say. Often enough, no doubt, we have to be content with such lesser statements. But the greater statement is not reducible to the lesser. When we affirm that something really really and truly is so, we mean that we somehow have got beyond ourselves, somehow got hold of what is independent of ourselves, somehow have transcended ourselves.

So far I have been speaking of the self and of self-transcendence in cognitional terms. Such was the flickering emergence of the self and the other in the dream state. ~~For~~ Vastly more massive and continuous was the empirical self, the center of sensations and feelings and movements, by which there is revealed the world of immediacy.

consciousness deliberates, evaluates, decides, controls, acts. It is both practical and existential; practical in so far as it is concerned with concrete courses of action; existential in so far as the decisions it makes cumulate into the kind of man

respond with all our being. On the topmost level of human consciousness the subject deliberates, evaluates, decides, controls, acts. He is at once practical and existential: practical inasmuch as he is concerned with concrete courses of action; existential inasmuch as control is also self-control. Sooner or later we find out for ourselves that we have to decide for ourselves just what we have been and will be making of ourselves. For we can be unauthentic, motivated simply by the desire for pleasure and the fear of pain. Or we can be authentic, motivated principally by the values one can realize in oneself and help realize in others.

There is then a knowledge that is born of being in love. It is a knowledge of values and disvalues, of good and evil. It is a knowledge that consists in one's response to the values and disvalues and in the development, strength, fulness, refinement of one's responding.

By a universalist faith, then, I would understand the transvaluation of values that results from God's gift of his love. Just as the gift of that love, so too the consequent transvaluation of values is not tied down to any particular set of historical conditions, and so it can be distinguished from the rituals, imperatives, traditions, beliefs of the various religions of mankind.

4. Religious Beliefs

~~there are three possible sources for religious beliefs~~
~~at least~~

I shall consider three sources of religious beliefs: first, the experience of the holy, of the mystery of love and awe; secondly, the dialectical character of the experience; thirdly, the revealed or inspired ~~word of God~~ word of God.

~~in love~~

love upon us. He also speaks to us to recall us from our failings, to direct our way, to avow to us his love. The word of the prophet, the priest, the Christ, the apostle, ~~in~~ ~~nonce~~ ~~med~~ ~~vas~~ ~~m~~ ~~the~~ ~~word~~ ~~of~~ ~~and~~ the evangelist is conceived as the word of God

I have been deriving religious beliefs from the experience of the mystery of love and awe and, as well, deriving religious aberrations or disy from misinterpretations or distortions of same experience. But I may be asked whether all religious belief is to be explained in this fashion, whether religious beliefs are simply objectifications of religious experience. From an empirical viewpoint the answer must be negative: there have been many Christian beliefs that are not any religion that appeals to a divine revelation does so because it holds beliefs that cannot be reduced to objectifications of religious experience

I have been deriving religious beliefs from the experience of the mystery of love and awe and, as well, deriving religious ^{misinterpretations and} aberrations from ^{distortions} of the same experience. However, religious beliefs usually are not exclusively objectifications of religious experience. They also play a major role in one's Weltanschauung, one's total outlook, one's already mentioned real world constructed by imagination and intelligence, mediated by words and meaning, based -- by and large -- on belief, and -- hopefully -- regulated by values. For in the first place, ^{the} experience of mystery gives rise to inquiries and investigations that otherwise would not be undertaken. Secondly, being in love opens one's eyes to values and disvalues that otherwise would not be acknowledged or, if acknowledged, not realized; there results a transvaluation of values and, consequently, a transformation of the dynamics of one's world

I have been deriving religious beliefs from the experience of the mystery of love and awe and, as well, deriving religious aberrations from misinterpretations and distortions of the same experience. I must now move on to a further aspect of the matter. For I have conceived God's ~~gift~~ gift of his love as a source of knowledge, as grounding a transvaluation of values, as a universalist faith. Such faith will influence Weltanschauung, one's total outlook, one's real world constructed by imagination and intelligence, mediated by words and meaning, based by and large ^{on} ~~on~~ belief, and hopefully regulated by values. It follows that religious beliefs will be not only objectifications of ~~an~~ individual religious experience but also now is the time for all good men hopefully regulated by values. But as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann have assured us, such a construction of reality is not individual but social. As such a theorist of history and historicity as Hans-Georg Gadamer would insist, the social construction of reality is the work not of one generation but of the ages.

love upon us in the secrecy of our hearts. They would y urge that he also speaks publicly to us to recall us from our failings, to direct our steps, to avow and manifest to k us his love. The charism of priest and prophet, of apostle and evangelist, the life and death and resurrection of Christ, they would point out, have not been reduced traditionally to the kind of grace God offers to every man. Finally, they might argue that the term, faith, as they understand it, even as the New Testament at times understands it, so far from being the cause of the word of God, is conceived as its result. In the translation of the New English Bible one may read that "... faith is awakened by the message, and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ" (Rom 10, 17).

Now I think this objection well taken. But two points should be kept separate. First, there is the semantic issue. It was not my purpose tonight to investigate biblical or patristic or theological usage of the word, faith. Still less did I desire to dispute or displace such usage. My concern was with the reality behind religious phenomena

love upon us in the secrecy of our hearts. He also speaks publicly to us to recall us from our failings, to direct our steps, to avow and manifest to us his love. The charism of priest and prophet, of apostle and evangelist, the life and death and resurrection of Christ, are not ^{traditionally} reducible conceived as reducible to the kind of grace God offers to every man, yet they constitute an integral part of certain religious traditions and religious beliefs.

~~love upon us. He also speaks to us~~

love upon us in the secrecy of our hearts. He also speaks publicly to us to recall us from our failings, to direct our steps, to avow and manifest to us his love. The charism of priest and prophet, of apostle and evangelist, the life and death and resurrection of Christ, are not conceived as reducible to the kind of grace God offers to every man, yet they constitute an integral part of certain religious traditions and religious beliefs.

~~Moreover, if the term, faith, faith, is employed not, not in the universalist sense which I have described, but in accord with New Testament usage, then there is at least one passage that demands~~

Finally, while I have endeavored to show that there is a universalist and truly religious faith that outflanks the priority of knowledge over love, I must also note that this does not seem to entirely accord with St. Paul's use of the term, *pistis*. As is clear from Rom 10, 17, "... faith is awakened by the message, and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ." *ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἡ δὲ ἀκοὴ διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ.*

I am aware, of course, that the message can be a source of division and opposition, that it has been interpreted in many ways even to the point of demythologization. But you will perhaps permit me to remark that the excellence of a universalist account of faith is that it generates respect and appreciation for all religions, not that it provides concrete men and women with a religion that is viable. What is lived is never universal; it is always concrete. If you find some plausibility in my suggestion that religious

experience is experience of the mystery of love and awe, that it consists in an ultimate self-transcending being-in-love, there is a further plausibility in the suggestion that God not only floods our hearts with his love but also speaks to his people as a people. Love that does not avow itself is holding back from the total self-donation that is more than ready to risk a rebuff.

Let me stop here. There are further questions that could be raised about the genesis of religious beliefs. ^{ultimately} Are they due solely to the religious experience I have described, or are they also due to prophecy, revelation, inspiration, charisma? Are these to be found in all religions or only in some and, if only in some, then why not in the others?

Let me stop here. There are further questions that could be raised about the genesis of religious beliefs, questions about prophecy, revelation, inspiration, charisma,

I have been offering a x construct, a model, an ideal type that sketches the possibility of a systematic distinction between a faith that is common to all religions and, on the other hand, the many diverse beliefs professed by the many religions. I wish to conclude with two remarks that may preclude misapprehensions.

First, I am not offering an interpretation of New Testament usage of the word, faith, pistis, pisteuein. Indeed I doubt any exegete would arrive at the precise construct I have presented. At the same time, I think that construct is as relevant to understanding Christianity as it is to understanding any other religion.

Secondly, I have said nothing about revelation, inspiration, prophecy, charisma. Besides the graces given for our personal sanctification, there also are the graces given for the good of the religious community. Now I do not doubt that such graces are relevant to an account of ~~the~~ religious beliefs now is the time for are there not also the graces given for the good of the religious community, and are they not relevant for an understanding of religious beliefs?

I have been offering a construct, a model, an ideal type that ~~amggammm~~ sketches the possibility of drawing a firm distinction between a faith that is universalist and the particular beliefs of the many religions of mankind. I must conclude with two remarks.

First, to preclude any misapprehension, I am not offering an interpretation of ~~the~~ New Testament usage of the word, faith, pistis, pisteuein. In fact, I doubt that any exegete would arrive at the precise construct I have presented. I do believe, however, that that construct is relevant to an understanding not only of other religions but also of Christian religion.

Secondly,