



Faith and Inquiry

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Abstract

Research Article



Contemporary philosophers of religion have predominantly focused on understanding the nature of faith, yet there has been a lack of attention towards a particular type of faith that we can call inquiry-based faith. This paper aims to address this gap by exploring some challenges associated with inquiry-based faith. I argue, in particular, that while this is a widespread kind of faith, we face a dilemma in showing how it is possible and plausible. On the one hand, faith that P requires acceptance of P, and on the other, if someone is inquiring into whether P is the case, she must not already accept that P is the case. Borrowing a conceptual framework from recent literature on inquiry, I propose a solution to this dilemma by appealing to parts of the story of Abraham in the Quran. I suggest, specifically, that one can have faith that a partial answer to a question is the case, and at the same time, seek further inquiry into the question for a more complete answer. As such, I support the idea that inquiry-based faith is a possible and plausible option for both faithful people and inquirers.

Keywords

Faith, Inquiry, Acceptance, Friedman, Abraham.

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Introduction

Throughout history, numerous significant theoretical advancements have emerged as a result of religious faith.¹ Take a look at this list: Ibn Sina, Augustine, Mulla Sadra, Aquinas, Descartes, Newton, and Leibniz. These individuals exemplify the extensive list of scholars who have been both good inquirers and good persons of faith, whose inquiries, moreover, have been at least partly relevant to and sometimes are conducted by their faith.² It is safe, therefore, to say that there is a kind of faith that motivates and results in inquiry. This inquiry-based faith, however, has not received enough attention from philosophers who work on the nature of faith. As an example, consider reformed epistemology, one of the leading accounts in the contemporary philosophy of religion. According to this view, the religious belief and faith that, for example, God exists can be non-inferentially justified and warranted in a basic way because it is produced by a reliable religious faculty known as “sensus divinitatis” (Plantinga, 2000). Yet, it remains unclear how this basic, non-inferential faith can yield a good inquiry that is typically based on debates and inferences. That the inquiry-based version of faith has not been the focus of the recent literature is also evident when we turn our attention to a novel and widely-discussed account called non-doxasticism. Proponents of this view suggest when you face counter-evidence regarding a religious claim, say P, you can still have faith that P without keeping your belief that P. However, it is once again unclear how this passive reactionary strategy can inspire a person of faith to engage in an inquiry into the object of her faith. These observations highlight a gap in the recent literature on faith, which raises several underexplored questions: how can religious faith motivate a person of faith to an inquiry regarding her faith? What is the nature of this inquiry-based faith? Is it a plausible option, and if so, how is it made possible? My discussion in this paper is devoted to taking initial steps to fill this gap, providing answers to some of the unsettled questions regarding the relationship between religious faith and inquiry.

When we intend to investigate the relationship between faith and inquiry, it would be helpful if we have a conception of inquiry on the table. Fortunately,

1. Philosophers who work on the nature of faith typically distinguish between several ascriptions of faith (Audi, 2019). Two notable kinds of the ascription of faith are faith that P and faith in someone or something. In the present paper, my focus is on the first kind.

2. For numerous instances of inquiry-based faith, see, for example, Barbour (1966), Torrance (1969), Harrison (2001), Guessoum (2010), and De Cruz (2022).

recent years have witnessed substantial work on the nature of inquiry in epistemology. Following the pioneering work of Jane Friedman, many philosophers have focused on inquiry, discussing various questions about it, including these: What mental states constitute inquiry? (Friedman, 2013, 2017), (Palmira, 2020), (McGrath, 2021). Can inquiry be compatible with belief? (Friedman, 2019), (Archer, 2018) (Masny, 2020). What is the norm or aim of an inquiry? (Kelp, 2014), (Smith, 2020), (Willard-Kyle, 2023), (Thorstad, 2022), (Friedman, 2023). What roles does inquiry play in epistemology? (Friedman, 2020), (Kelp, 2021), (Falbo, 2023b). How should we understand a collective version of inquiry? (Habgood-Coote, 2022). And so on. Drawing from this recent literature, I incorporate certain ideas to support my case for inquiry-based faith.

I don't intend, in the present paper, to undertake an ambitious task of developing a comprehensive account of the inquiry-based faith. Rather, my aim is to discuss and seek to resolve a specific puzzle concerning the feasibility of this type of faith. In Section 1, I will present this puzzle, followed by my proposed solution in Section 2.

A puzzle

Consider the following ordinary ascriptions of faith:

- Mohsen has faith that God exists, however, he does not accept that God exists.
- Mohsen has faith that God exists, but he is opposed to the claim that God exists.
- Mohsen has faith that God exists whereas he does not adopt that God exists.
- Mohsen has faith that God exists, and at the same time, he disagrees that God exists.

Our immediate reaction to hearing the above sentences, I think, is that they are contradictory. I take this intuition as *prima facie* evidence bearing the claim that faith that P requires acceptance of P.¹ Another initial motivation for this claim is that the root meaning of the synonyms of the term 'faith' in various languages contains something like acceptance. Consider, for example,

1. In contemporary analytic philosophy, the term 'acceptance' is sometimes used as a technical term (see, for example, Stalnaker (1984, pp. 79-81) and Van Fraassen (1980, p. 12)). In this paper, however, I rely on the ordinary, pre-theoretical conception of this term.

the term ‘Iman’ that is used in Arabic as the synonym of ‘faith’. Ibn Manzur (1984, vol. 13, p. 21) and other Arabic lexicographers tell us that the lexical meaning of ‘iman’ is assent and acceptance. Interestingly, the same goes for ‘emunah’, the Hebrew term for faith, and ‘pistis’, the Greek word for ‘faith’ which is the root of the concept of faith in Christianity, both can be interpreted as acceptance (McKaughan and Howard-Snyder, 2022, p. 641). These pre-theoretical observations provide evidence in favor of the claim that faith that P requires acceptance of P.

Moving to the theoretical realm, we observe that most philosophical theories of faith accommodate this intuition that faith requires acceptance. The received view on faith, endorsed by great theologians and philosophers like Augustine (1999), Aquinas (1948), Locke (1924), and Berkeley (1950), and contemporary philosophers of religion such as Plantinga (2000), Swinburne (2005), Malcolm and Scott (2017), Mugg (2021), and Rettler (2018) is doxasticism. According to doxasticism, faith that P requires belief that P. Since belief that P clearly entails acceptance of P, it follows on this view that faith that P necessitates acceptance of P. Furthermore, even the most leading proponents of non-doxasticism, the view that makes room for faith without belief, concedes that faith implies acceptance or something like it. For example, William Alston (1996), the most influential figure among non-doxasticists, strongly defends the idea that acceptance, instead of belief, can play the role of the cognitive aspect of faith. Another prominent proponent of non-doxasticism, Daniel Howard-Snyder (2013) argues that faith requires something like acceptance, that is, assuming. Hence, most non-doxasticists agree with doxasticists on the point that faith requires acceptance.

I hope the above discussion is enough to show that there are good theoretical and pre-theoretical reasons supporting the claim that faith that P requires acceptance of P. This forms the basis of the first horn of our dilemma:

First Horn (FH):

Faith that P requires acceptance of P

Let’s turn to the second horn of the dilemma. Consider the following ordinary ascriptions of inquiry:

- Hassan claims that he inquires whether God exists or not, however, he has already accepted that God exists.

- Hassan claims that he inquires whether God exists or not, however, he has assumed what the answer to the question is in advance.

There appears to be a problem with Hassan's claims of inquiring in the sentences above. It seems that he is not genuinely engaging in inquiry when he

has already accepted and assumed what the final answer is. This intuition, I suggest, can be seen as *prima facie* evidence for the claim that conducting an inquiry about a question is not compatible with accepting the answer to that question in advance. Put schematically, inquiring into whether P is the case is not consistent with having already accepted P. Another pre-theoretical reason for this claim of inconsistency can be derived from the lexical meaning of the term ‘inquiry’. Cambridge English Dictionary and Oxford English Dictionary define the noun ‘inquiry’ and the verb ‘inquire’, in turn, ‘(the process of asking) a question’ and ‘to ask somebody for some information.’ It is not clear how we can inquire about a question if we have already assumed or accepted what the answer to the question is. Accepting or assuming an answer to a question seems to hinder the process of inquiry into that question rather than support it.

In addition to the above pre-theoretical reasons, the leading account in the literature on inquiry supports the rationale behind the second horn of the dilemma. As said above, the recent literature on inquiry was begun by the pioneering work of Jane Friedman and has been developed in response to it. Friedman discusses various cases to demonstrate that inquiry is not merely a set of acts; rather, there is a special kind of mental state that constitutes an inquiry. What is the nature of this “inquiring state of mind”, however? Friedman (2017, p. 302) answers in the following way:

The general thought is that suspension of judgment is closely tied to inquiry. In fact, I want to argue that one is inquiring into some matter if and only if one is suspended on the matter.

Employing a linguistic analysis of ascriptions of inquiring, Friedman suggests that attitudes like inquiring, wondering, investigating, and deliberating, which she calls interrogative attitudes (IAs) have *wh*-questions as their contents or objects. For example, inquiring whether God exists, wondering how God created the world, investigating what the purpose of life is, and so on. Friedman (2017, p. 311) believes that being in such attitudes requires an epistemic openness:

A subject with an IA towards [question] Q is a subject who is treating Q as open or unanswered or unresolved. When we are curious or wondering or inquiring into Q, we are in some important sense taking it that we do not already have the answer to Q; it is in this sense that we are “treating Q as open.”

Based on this analysis, Friedman recommends that inquiry entails

suspension of judgment. However, if this suggestion is right, the idea behind the second horn of the dilemma also holds true. It is clear that suspension of a judgment is not compatible with acceptance of the judgment. If we genuinely inquire into question Q, as Friedman argued, “we do not already have the answer to Q.” Thus if we have already accepted an answer to Q, we cannot truly engage in inquiry regarding it. As such, good theoretical and pre-theoretical reasons support the rationale behind the second horn of the dilemma:

Second Horn (SH):

If S is inquiring into whether P is the case, S should not already accept that P is the case.

FH and SH together lead to the dilemma. On the one hand, if one has faith that P, she must accept that P; and, on the other hand, if one is inquiring into whether P, she must not accept that P is the case in advance. If there is no solution to the dilemma, it follows that the inquiry-based faith is impossible. I call this puzzle *the dilemma for inquiry-based faith*, or D-IBF, and will attempt to resolve it in the next section.¹

A solution

In order to resolve D-IBF, philosophers who believe in the possibility and plausibility of inquiry-based faith have two general options: the first is to deny FH, and the second is to reject SH. If we pursue the first strategy, we should need to embrace the concept of faith without acceptance. As seen above, most theories of the nature of faith are reluctant to go along with this option. Nevertheless, there are a few versions of non-doxasticism that allow for faith without acceptance, considering it a reasonable option. For example, authors like Pojman (1986) and Audi (2019) propose that simply hoping that P is sufficient to fulfill the epistemic component of having faith that P. Other

1. In the recent literature on inquiry, the only paper I am aware of that discusses faith is “Kierkegaard on Belief and Credence” by Quanbeck (2023). Inspired by Kierkegaard, Quanbeck thinks that faith requires belief, on the one hand. In their terms, “faith is a species of belief” (2). And, on the other hand, Quanbeck (2023, p. 8), following Friedman, suggests that belief is the end of inquiry. “By closing inquiry and thereby settling the question of whether p, one forms a belief.” In which case, according to Quanbeck (2023, p. 13), Kierkegaard “takes Christian faith to require an unconditional commitment to preserve one’s belief by not reopening inquiry.” In this view, therefore, there is no room for inquiry-based faith and no response to D-IBF.

philosophers like Kvanvig (2013) think that wishing P can play this role.¹ It seems that someone can hope or wish that P without accepting the truth of P. In this way, proponents of this version of non-doxasticism have a way out of the dilemma by adopting the first strategy and denying FH. To tell you the truth, I am sympathetic to this weaker version of non-doxasticism. However, it does not sound plausible to suggest that inquiry-based faith is a reasonable option only if this controversial and non-standard version of non-doxasticism is on the right track. A more appealing option is to find a strategy for solving D-IBF that is acceptable to a broader range of philosophers working on the nature of faith. Hence, I turn to the second strategy and aim to find an alternative way out of D-IBF by challenging SH and showing how an inquiry into a question can be reasonable even if we have already accepted an answer to this question.

Before making my case for the solution to D-IBF, I need to prepare some conceptual tools. There are certain ideas in the recent literature on inquiry that are helpful in providing my solution. Specifically, I borrow the distinction between complete and partial answers to a question from Friedman (2019), as well as the distinction between the three stages of an inquiry from Palmira (2020).

Complete versus Partial answer

Friedman has used the distinction between complete and partial answers in several parts of her work. For instance, in support of the claim known as DBI (Do Not Believe and Inquire), Friedman (2019, p. 304) highlights the following crucial point:

Crucially, DBI makes a claim about inquiring while believing complete answers to focal questions; it makes no similar claim about incomplete or merely partial answers. ... If we believe a complete answer, then there's nothing further to inquire about, but this is not the case if the only answer we believe is merely partial.

To solve D-IBF, I intend to argue that faith only requires the acceptance of a partial answer, and there is nothing inherently wrong with engaging in inquiry while accepting a partial answer. But what exactly is a partial answer, and how can we differentiate it from a complete one? Friedman, unfortunately,

1. Vahid (2023) has recently advocated a version of non-doxasticism, defining religious faith as an intention to form theistic beliefs. His view, seemingly, is of the kind of non-doxasticism that allows faith without acceptance.

does not provide us with a detailed account of partial-complete answers. It is also beyond the scope of this paper to develop such an account. For the purpose of this paper, it will suffice, I think, to proceed with the following rough criteria:

- 1) A complete answer has no deficiency in its epistemic status while a partial answer may have some.
- 2) A complete answer involves the answer under every relevant guise while a partial answer may not.

To illustrate the *first* criterion, consider the example of Sarah who thinks, on the basis of some reasonable (but not conclusive) arguments, that God exists. Sarah acknowledges that she lacks sufficient evidence to fully support this belief, making her answer to the question of God's existence partial. Although she thinks that God exists, it would be reasonable if she performs further inquiry into this question. It is appropriate for her to engage in the inquiry to provide further evidence.

As an instance of a partial answer according to the *second* criterion, consider, for example, Detective Hossein who is interested in a complex crime. Detective Reza, an expert officer, who has carefully worked on this case tells Hossein that, for example, the neighbor of the murdered committed the crime. Based on this testimony, therefore, Hossein has a good answer to the question of who has committed the crime. It would be plausible to think, however, that he still wants to inquire into the question since he intends to check the evidence personally. In this way, while Hossein has a partial answer to the question, he seeks further inquiry into it to possess the answer from a new guise, that is, a first-person mode of presentation.¹ Thus, even with a partial answer, it remains reasonable to inquire further for additional evidence or understanding the answer from a new guise.

Three stages of an inquiry

Palmira (2020, p. 4948) suggests that we should make a distinction between

1. It should be noted that cases like Sarah and Detective Hossein have been discussed in the literature to challenge parts of the standard account of inquiry suggested by Friedman. See, for instance, Archer (2018). On the basis of this line of reasoning, for example, some authors argue against Friedman that inquiries can sometimes take propositions instead of questions as their contents (Falbo, 2023a, p. 308). While these arguments are in accordance with what I argue in what follows, however, to my knowledge, neither of the critics of Friedman puts the idea in the context of the distinction between the partial and complete answer.

three general stages of an inquiry:

The three-stage model of inquiry:

1. One is open-minded about how to answer the question Q.
2. One is inclined to answer Q in a given way while taking the question to be still open.
3. One closes Q.

In the first stage, the inquirer is open to every answer equally. She is suspending judgment in response to the question and does not presuppose any answer to it in advance. In Palmira's terms: "at the first stage the inquirer starts collecting evidence and information while being completely open to the possibility that various candidate answers are equally good answers to the question," (Palmira, 2020, p. 4950). The situation, however, changes when the inquirer goes ahead and enters into the next stage of the inquiry. At this point, she develops a predisposition towards one specific answer based on the evidence amassed in the preceding stage. In this middle stage, the inquirer is still inquiring, however, she no longer suspends judgment; rather, she now singles out an answer and has an inclination to it. As an inquirer in this intermediate stage, for instance, she endeavors to gather additional evidence in support of the chosen answer, or "she makes sure that the answer she is cognitively inclined towards coheres with other relevant well-established truths and general principles" (Palmira, 2020, p. 4950). Put differently, while, in the first stage, the inquirer has no answer to the question, in the second stage, she acquires a partial answer to it, and the end of inquiry comes when, in the third stage, the inquirer attains the complete answer.

With this conceptual framework in mind, we can now proceed to formulate and defend our proposed solution to D-IBF. To make my case, I rely on parts of the story of Abraham, the father of faith, in the Quran, thinking of him as the model of an inquiry-based faith. I pick out, particularly, two episodes of his story.¹ The first episode involves Abraham engaging in a dialogue with his father, Azar, concerning the question of who is the God:

When Abraham said to Azar, his father, 'Do you take idols for gods?

1. There are other salient parts of the story of Abraham in the Quran, such as the story of sacrificing Ismail, that I don't discuss in this paper. It does not pose a problem for my suggestion if Abraham does not manifest inquiry-based faith in those parts of the story. Notice that, in this paper, I advocate a modest view; inquiry-based faith is just one plausible version of faith among other plausible versions.

Indeed I see you and your people in manifest error.’ ... When night darkened over him, he saw a star and said, ‘This is my Lord!’ But when it set, he said, ‘I do not like those who set.’ Then, when he saw the moon rising, he said, ‘This is my Lord!’ But when it set, he said, ‘Had my Lord not guided me, I would surely have been among the astray lot.’ Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said, ‘This is my Lord! This is bigger!’ But when it set, he said, ‘O my people, indeed I disown what you take as [His] partners.’ (Qur’an, 6: 74-78)

There are several controversies about the right interpretation of these verses, which I cannot discuss here. Nonetheless, one plausible interpretation, in my opinion, is to perceive Abraham as being in an inquiring state of mind regarding the question of who is the Lord.¹ If this is the case, then, a question immediately arises. At which stage of inquiry Abraham is situated? He refutes quickly several simple answers to the question of who is the God on the basis of some pieces of evidence. In so far as he is steadfast in acceptance of neither of the answers he gives to the question, I am inclined to think that he has not really and seriously accepted an answer so far, meaning, in this part of the story, he is at the first stage of his inquiry into the question of who is the God; he neither possesses a partial answer nor a complete one.

Now let’s turn to another part of the story of Abraham. In the following verses, Abraham has a conversation with God regarding the afterlife:

When Abraham said: “Show me, Lord, how You will raise the dead,” He replied: “Have you no faith?” He said “Yes, but just to reassure my heart.” Allah said, “Take four birds, draw them to you, and cut their bodies to pieces. Scatter them over the mountain-tops, then call them back.” (Quran 2:60)

It is clear that here Abraham engages in an inquiry into the question of how is afterlife possible. It is also evident, as Abraham himself asserts, that he guides the present inquiry while simultaneously having faith that God will raise the dead. At which stage of inquiry is Abraham now? He has already

1. It is worth noting that some great exegetes, like Tabataba’i (1996, vol. 7), are reluctant to this interpretation of these verses. According to them, Abraham has already faith that Allah is the lord, and here he engages in a dialectical conversation with polytheists and unbelievers. However, other great exegetes, like al-Tabari, al-Razi, and Tabarsi, admit that, in this part of his story, Abraham is genuinely inquiring into the question of who is the lord, without accepting in advance that Allah is the lord. For a discussion on the latter point, see Aghahosseini and Zeraati (2010).

accepted an answer to the question of the afterlife, but, he does not possess a complete answer and, therefore, seeks further inquiry. Recall the cases of Sarah and Detective Hossein who performed further inquiry while they had already accepted answers to the intended questions. I suggest that the case of Abraham is similar to both cases in relevant respects. Detective Hossein has a good partial answer to the question of who committed the crime based on testimony. However, he initiates an inquiry to check the answer from a new mode of presentation, namely, a first-person guise. Likewise, Abraham has a good partial answer to the question of the afterlife based on the testimony of God, however, he seeks further inquiry to check the answer from a new guise, namely, a first-person mode of presentation.

Moreover, we observed that Sarah has a good partial answer to the question of whether God exists. Yet, she persisted in her inquiry to gather enough evidence for the chosen answer. In a similar vein, Abraham has a good partial answer to the question of the afterlife, however, he inquires to gather further evidence. In his own words, while maintaining faith, he requests God to provide further evidence to *reassure* his heart. As such, it would be plausible to say that, in this part of the story, Abraham is present at the second stage of the inquiry into the question of the afterlife; although he has already accepted a good partial answer, he seeks further inquiry to provide new evidence for the answer and check it from a new guise.

It should now be evident what my proposed solution to D-IBF is. As mentioned earlier, my suggestion is to refute the second horn of the dilemma, SH, which states that if S is inquiring about the truth of P, S should not already accept that P is true. In light of the preceding discussion, it becomes clear that SH is true only for the first stage of an inquiry. To illustrate how we can challenge SH and establish the plausibility of an inquiry-based faith, let us once again differentiate between the three stages of an inquiry and rephrase them using our conceptual tools:

The first stage- the inquirer has accepted no answer to the question.

The second stage- the inquirer has accepted a partial answer to the question.

The third stage- the inquirer has accepted a complete answer to the question.

In the first stage, there is an inquiry without acceptance; in the third stage, there is an acceptance without inquiry; but, in the second stage, there is both an inquiry and acceptance. Similarly, in the first stage, there is an inquiry without faith; in the third stage, there is faith without an inquiry but, in the

second stage, there is both an inquiry and faith. When Abraham investigates whether stars are gods, he does not have faith that they are gods. He is merely inquiring into the question. However, when Abraham asks God to show him how can He raise the dead, Abraham has faith that God can raise the dead. Although he has faith that his (partial) answer is the case, he is rational in initiating further inquiry to seek a more complete answer. As demonstrated above, by relying on this inquiry-based faith, Abraham is able to provide further evidence for his answer and check it from a new mode of presentation. Consequently, inquiry-based faith emerges as a reasonable option that can be present during the second stage of an inquiry. We observe that this kind of faith is manifested by not only many faithful people and inquirers in history but also by Abraham, the father of faith in the Abrahamic traditions.^{1 2}

Before concluding, let us address a crucial objection. Our solution is based on the idea suggested by Palmira (2020) that a typical inquiry contains three stages. In light of this, we have argued that at the second stage of an inquiry, there are both inquiring into a question and accepting a partial answer to it. Palmira, however, suggests that the mental attitude that constitutes the inquiring mind at the second stage is “hypothesis”. The key point is that, according to Palmira (2020, p. 21), the attitude of hypothesis is crucially different from acceptance:

One might think that the attitude of hypothesis reduces to what many philosophers call “acceptance”. Yet, different philosophers mean different things by “acceptance”. I will now consider three prominent accounts of acceptance and show that hypothesis crucially differs from each of them.

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1. In the present paper, I have focused on the relationship between inquiry and *propositional* faith. As mentioned earlier, another notable type of faith is relational faith, that is, faith in someone or something. Is having relational faith relevant to inquiring in any sense? Answering this question would undoubtedly require a separate paper. Here is, however, my preliminary take on this issue. Relational faith can, I think, play a significant role in the explanation of some instances of relationships with experts. For instance, let's consider a scenario where a professor leads a long-term and challenging collective inquiry. Other researchers who participated in this project need to trust the professor, which can be properly described as faith in her. This relational faith in the present expert can contribute to the collective inquiry. Assuming prophets as experts of a certain kind, religious faith in them can contribute to a collective inquiry of some kind. Of course, this line of tentative reasoning needs to be independently examined in another essay.
 2. How does this inquiry-based faith constitute? One answer is to say that there should be some inquiry-based skills that constitute this version of faith. This is in accordance with the idea that faith is partly explained in terms of cognitive skills, which I developed elsewhere (Khalaj, Forthcoming).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the three accounts of acceptance addressed by Palmira, which employ the term ‘acceptance’ in a technical sense. Instead, I provide a more straightforward response to the objection. Although I draw inspiration from Palmira’s idea of the three stages of inquiry in the above discussion, it is not the case that I have fully adopted his model in my solution to D-IBF. I borrowed an abstract conception of the three stages from Palmira and, then, gave more flesh to it by adopting the distinction between partial and complete answers from Friedman (2019). Therefore, insofar as I don’t presuppose that the constitutive attitude of an inquiring mind at the second stage is the hypothesis, there is no contradiction in my claim that both inquiry and acceptance are present at this stage of inquiry.

That being said, I believe that, independently of what Palmira recommends, there are good reasons for the claim that faith can, at least on occasion, play a significant role in the hypothesis of a theory in an inquiry, even if we, like Palmira, are concerned with a scientific inquiry. I have in mind the ideas put forth by prominent contemporary philosophers of science such as Kuhn and Lakatos regarding the hard core of a research program or a paradigm. According to them, researchers should not easily abandon the hard core of their research programs, even in the face of counter-evidence.¹ Inquirers, understood in this way, require a state of mind, particularly when engaged in long-term research programs, that enables them to remain resilient when confronted with counter-evidence. The mental profile of faith is best fitted to play this role in so far as “faith that *p* is a complex propositional attitude consisting of ... resilience to new counter-evidence to *p*” (Howard-Snyder, 2013, p. 370). Therefore, there are independent motivations for adopting the claim that faith can be compatible with inquiring minds. This brief discussion, I hope, is enough to respond to the above worry.

Conclusion

Although inquiry has been the focus of epistemologists in recent years, inquiry-based faith has not been paid sufficient attention in the contemporary philosophy of religion. In section 1, I argued that the claim of possibility and plausibility of the inquiry-based faith faces a dilemma; on the one hand, faith that *P* requires acceptance of *P*, and, on the other, it seems that if someone inquires whether *P*, one should not already accept that *P* is the case. Equipped

1. For more on this point, see, for example, see Musgrave and Pigden (2016).

with some conceptual tools borrowed from the literature on inquiry, I sought to resolve the dilemma in section 2. Appealing to parts of the story of Abraham, as a model of faith in the Quran, I recommended that, although faith and inquiry are not compatible at the first and the third stages of an inquiry, both can coexist in the second stage. Put differently, when someone has a partial answer to a question, she can have faith that the answer is on the right track and, at the same time, seeks further inquiry to find a more complete answer.

With regard to the model of the three stages of inquiry, I have suggested that at the third stage, when an inquirer discovers the complete answer to her question, the inquiry comes to an end. However, it remains questionable whether there can ever be a complete answer to questions concerning God as an infinite being. If knowledge about God has no end, then it follows that inquiry-based faith would also be endless.

Ethics declarations

Conflict of interests

The author has no competing interests.

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