Even though we have no knowledge at all of the truth of religious truth-claims, can it possibly be the case that it is reasonable to accept the central claims of Christianity even without a shred of adequate evidence for their truth? In his important but unfortunately largely overlooked, *The Reasonableness of Faith*, Diogenes Allen argues that this indeed is the case. His enterprise is no less than to present “a case for the reasonableness of adherence to God... by enlarging our notion of ‘reasonableness’ or ‘rationality’”, though it is indeed part of his case here to establish that this enlargement is a thoroughly non-arbitrary one.¹ His central claim “is that the satisfaction of some needs is a sound ground for the affirmation of religious beliefs.” (p. XII) Allen is well aware that this has a puzzling ring, for usually the satisfaction gained from a belief is not a sound ground for the affirmation of that belief, but he wants to show that there are a class of exceptions to this generalization and that belief in the Judeo-Christian God is a member of this class.

Allen makes this claim against the background of a specific stage in the development of the argument between belief and unbelief. The religious and theological atmosphere is such that (certain Catholic circles apart) it is almost universally believed that there is no sound argument for the existence of God and that appeals to revelation, religious experience and faith are all at best inconclusive. Given such intellectual convictions, religious belief appears to be irrational: an absurd leap in the dark. But if that is what the situation actually is, such knightsmanship is certainly in various ways unsatisfactory.² Faith is surely in need of a better defense than that. Allen attempts to provide one.

It is his belief that the usual defense of the reasonableness of faith moves in the wrong direction. He argues that even if we cannot know or have good grounds for believing that our central religious affirmations are true, we still can have good reasons for believing in God and Christian doctrine on "the basis of the needs which they satisfy." He claims that "reason does have its uses in religion. . . but its role need not be that of seeking to establish the truth of religious beliefs." (p. XV) His aim is the demanding and crucial one of establishing the reasonableness of Christian belief "without the need to argue for God's existence, to show that Christian theism is the best metaphysical position, or to purge it of all metaphysical elements." (p. XVI) His central claim is that "as long as there are no reasons which count decisively against the truth of his religious beliefs, the fulfillment of his needs – which lead him to respond with faith and to retain his faith – can be a reasonable ground or basis for him to adhere to religious belief and to assert them as true." (p. XVII)

It should be noted that he is claiming that "faith is a sound ground for religious truth-claims independent of reasons which count toward establishing their truth." (p. XVIII) Faith is what Allen calls the intrinsic ground for adherence to religious truth-claims. When Christian belief is reasonably criticized or the believer himself comes to suffer doubts, he should seek answers to those criticisms and to those doubts. Those reasons which are brought forward to rebut specific challenges to religion and which establish the truth or count toward establishing the truth of religious truth-claims are called by Allen "rationales". Rationales may be a basis for an adherence to religious truth-claims, but they do not supply a deeper or firmer foundation than faith. Rather their role is that of rebutting the various challenges that, from time to time, arise concerning faith.

Allen's strategy is, in reality, an application in the domain of religion of Peirce's and Wittgenstein's attack on Cartesian doubt. Most of us, in Western cultures at any rate, naturally, in the course of growing up and in the course of trying to make sense of our fragmented lives, come to believe in God. Such belief answers to distinctive human needs. With these beliefs come a set of practices and indeed a way of life. Concerning the beliefs and practices, etc. many questions could be raised but they need not all be raised