

The Concept of Unity as the Basis  
of Religious Experiences



A Doctoral Dissertation

Presented by

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ABSTRACT

In the present Thesis an attempt has been made to discover the fundamental basis of the principal world-religions. We have tried to make a close study of the great religions (Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam) and found that basically they all believe in the Unity of God. It has, however, been found that Divine Unity has reached an uncompromising attitude in Islam, the last of the revealed religions.

Attempts have also been made to show that philosophy and contemporary science have a close connection with the religion of universal monotheism. The Absolute of idealist philosophy and the Supreme Intelligence or Great Designer of nature in contemporary science have, we think, great similarity with the Divine Unity of religion.

We have further tried to show that from God's Unity follow the unity of man, life and universe. Our final aim has been to reiterate the establishment of universal love and amity, the moral counterpart of Divine Unity.

C O N T E N T S

	Page
Chapter 1 : The Prelude ...	1 - 14
Chapter 2 : Nature of Religion and Religious Experience ...	15 - 39
Chapter 3 : A Historical Survey of Religion ...	40 - 56
Chapter 4 : Development of the Idea of Divine Unity till the Advent of Islam ...	57 - 94
Chapter 5 : The Concept of Tawhid ...	95 - 126
Chapter 6 : Science and Religion; Notion of God and Unity from the standpoint of Science ...	127 - 147
Chapter 7 : The Idea of God; Its Philosophical Implication ...	148 - 169
Chapter 8 : Intuition of Truth ...	170 - 184
Chapter 9 : The Idea of Unity; Its Pragmatic Import ...	185 - 199
<u>Bibliography</u> :	i - vii

## The Concept of Unity As The Basis of Religious Experiences

### Chapter I : The Prelude

Since the dawn of his intellectual development man has been aspiring after the discovery of a single reality or Principle or Ideal to explain events and phenomena and life and universe in a satisfactory way. Right from Thales in the sixth century B.C. down to the present age by and large philosophers of the world sought refuge in a single Principle or Ideal with a view to explaining things in a logical way. Different philosophers have however ascribed different names to this Ideal or reality. Plato's Idea of Good differs little from that of Hegel's Absolute in their quiddity. The same can be said of 'The Unknowable' of Spencer and the unknown 'Thing-in-itself' of Kant, the great advocate of criticism as a method of philosophy.

It may however be added that though in his 'Critique of Pure Reason' Kant failed to decipher the nature of the 'Thing-in-itself,' in his 'Critique of Practical Reason' he seems to have substituted it by God to explain moral and other relevant higher values of life and Spencer also has almost always been looked upon as a worshipper of 'The Unknowable' which he later categorised as the "mysterious absolute."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Magill, world philosophy, p. 654.

The scientist who is apparently opposed to a philosophy of unity also maintains — the more events and phenomena a Theory or Principle can explain the more acceptable it is. Newton's Law of Gravitation has a universal appeal because it explains not only the falling of the apples on the ground but also because it can interpret the relative movement of all material bodies in the heavens and earth. In the present age of rockets and space-ships the thoughtful scientist speaks of a Supreme Intelligence behind all material bodies and their constituent electrons, ions and other elements. In other words, beyond the atomic world the scientist now senses the presence of a Fundamental Reality which alone can answer the 'Unanswered Questions' of science.

Science is ordinarily understood to be atheistic and a great majority of Scientists believe in what is called scientific atheism. However some sober scientists like Sir James Jeans and J.C. Haldane initiated a liberal movement in the contemporary scientific world and a good number of scientists to-day believe in a Universal Spirit. Some of them regard it as the unity behind plurality of the world of atoms and even categorise it, after the Genesis, as God.

Among the spiritual leaders of mankind who are often enough called prophets as well we notice a similar tendency. They all call the people to one Ideal. The principal motto of their life has been to proclaim the reality of one and only one Ideal, the Divine. Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus, Krishna and Muhammad all called their people to one God and explained everything with the help of one Universal Ideal.

In all sober quarters we thus find an inner tendency to explain all life and universe in terms of one Ideal or Reality.

The monistic philosophers, no doubt, speak of one reality or the Absolute but their Absolute is more or less a subtle reality. While speaking of the Idea of Good, Plato takes us to a world quite different from the one we experience and live in. Hegel's Absolute which resolves all these and anti-theses into syntheses and finally becomes the highest synthesis appears to rank in status with Plato's Idea of Good. Both Plato and Hegel propound such ontological doctrines in which reality is made something abstract. Plato's Idea of Good and Hegel's Absolute are hard metaphysical entities and very few can comprehend them. Not only Plato and Hegel but also other great Philosophers like Aristotle, Kant and Spinoza place before us equally abstract realities like the 'Pure Form,' the 'Thing-in-Itself' and the 'Substance'. The mortal soul had therefore to choose and select a different path to search out and meet a perfect being capable of explaining things and events in a more satisfactory way. And in a journey different from that of the abstract rational thinker truth was revealed to the minds of many and Moses, Abraham, Zoroaster, Jesus, Muhammad and others brought for their peoples better explanations of life and universe.

Man's full awakening to the recognition of a Supreme Power and the troubles through which individuals and races passed before they reached the idea of a Universal Ideal or Reality which regulates, guides and pervades all existence provide matters of great significance. The way

- 4 -

through which men made spiritual progress and the track they followed to say good-bye to their idol-gods for the adoration of one Divine God have often been blocked. Now and then many of them broke away from the stream of progress and listened to the whispering of their senses and desires. Masses of mankind fell victims to the cravings of their mind and turned back to worship idols, the symbols of their passions. On the other hand, the messengers of truth had sounded call to the Divine and always taught men their duties to God and themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Truth wins the goal and although it takes time to reach the heart of man, the divine penetrates into the soul of the human being sooner or later. And this is why the divine flames kindled by Moses, Abraham, Zoroaster, Jesus and those preceding them had found ways to the heart of man.

Faiths which Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster and Jesus preached and acted upon underwent terrible changes in subsequent periods of history. The cults of duality, trinity and plurality came into existence and their votaries divided into contending groups only to add to human miseries. Men's notions of God and morality debased to such extents that even in the 'House of God' they erected images of tribal, local, regional and of many other types of gods and goddesses whom they worshipped mainly to create group rivalries and exploit others. Pressed under distorted faiths the children of Adam then cried out for deliverance from the miseries and

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2. Ameer Ali, Spirit of Islam, p. xvii.

cruelty of such religions. It was in these circumstances, that a desert-born son of the earth appeared before man with the message of deliverance.

The circumstances in which Muhammad appeared with the message of deliverance have few parallels in man's religious and moral history. Dissatisfied with the prevailing terrifying idolatry which departed greatly from truth and encouraged exploitation and moral debasement, Muhammad absorbed himself in meditation in the cave of Hira for light and guidance and one sacred night truth was revealed to him. He came back home trembling, and frightened he fell into swoon at the house of Khadija as did Moses on the Mount of Sinai. The last Divine Book (al-Quran) was revealed to the Seal of the prophets for calling and guiding man to one God and universal love and brotherhood so as to end all torture and exploitation in the name of religion. The fundamental principle in which his faith is grounded is: There is no deity but Allah.

Muhammad's notion of unqualified unity of God was subsequently taken up by Muslim theologians and metaphysicians among whom the Mutazilites occupy a unique place. In order to uphold God's unity some Mutazilites propounded an extreme view of divine unity and to safeguard that they stripped God off all attributes. For, according to them, attribution of a quality to God, leads to plurality of reality and as such weakens divine unity.

The Grand Apostle of Tawhid or unity of god, Muhammad ibn-Abdullah played a very heroic role in history to fight a great war against the



retrogressive disposition of the children of Adam, whose tendency had been to associate partners with the Lord of the universe. With unparalleled boldness Muhammad proclaimed the oneness of God and discarded every sort of polytheism outright, and sterilized all its germs in the Shahadat --- No God but Allah. His historic call was to heal the cavities and to remove the accompanying ills which the germs of polytheism had made in popular and distorted Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Hinduism.

Truth is eternal. The message brought by the Seal of the Prophets was not something new. It was delivered before Muhammad and, according to tradition, made perfect with him. "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as a religion,"<sup>3</sup> the Quran says accordingly for the devout and the pious.

About the eternal character of religion and prophethood a very beautiful expression we come across in the famous Gulshan-i-Raj of the Persian Sufi poet Mahmud Sabistari. The poet writes: Nabuw-stra Zuhur aj Adam amad Kamaleh dar wajue khatem amad;<sup>4</sup> rendered into English the verse means --- Prophethood began with Adam and reached its perfection in the Seal of the Prophets, i.e., the last of them, Muhammad.

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3. The Quran, 5:4.

4. Lahiji Muhammad, Mafatehul Asjaz fi Sharhe Gulshane Raj, p. 313.

- 7 -

The light and truth which was revealed before Muhammad was soon forgotten by men. For it did not well reach their hearts. The voice of the Grand Prophet was to quicken the dead into life and to make the pulse of the humanity beat with unprecedented force. Under the mighty impulse of this new philosophy of Muhammad the desert born Arabs soon united into a strong force and within a short period of about thirty years the Muslims swept the nations from the Hindu Kush in the east to the shores of the Atlantic at the west. Imbued with the philosophy of Islam, the unity of God, the Arabs built up in a very short span of time an empire greater than that of the Romans which they took centuries to accomplish. History is a living evidence of how the wave of this new faith rolled onward fertilizing every soil it passed over and assimilating on its way all that it considered good.

We have already mentioned that truth was not confined to a particular age or nation or country. A peep into the history of the religious philosophy of man discloses that in different ages different prophets came to different peoples with the messages of one God. With the passage of time and changes of circumstances brought about by men themselves the Divine Unity was, however, distorted often enough. Like Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism proclaimed in their purity and simplicity the same Divine Unity. The God of Christianity, the Jehovah of Judaism and the Brahma of Vedanta in Hinduism all stand for the Unity of the Divine Being. But this Unity of God was subsequently distorted at the hands of interested people. To serve their own ends they preached to their

followers the cult of many gods and goddesses. Curiously enough, in the name of God and religion tribes and races became enemies against one another and disfigured the very face of the earth. It was therefore the need of age and history that a great universal teacher came to teach the distracted humanity about one God, one Creator and about universal love and brotherhood. So came Muhammad to teach men : There is no god but Allah; all men are equal before God; and they are brethren to one another: This was his great mission and by profession and practice, he spared no efforts to fulfil it.

An insight into the philosophy of Unity provides man with that Universal Ideal or Reality which he desired long for a satisfactory explanation of life and universe. A question may arise; why should there be only one Ideal or Principle in the universe? To this question we would like to answer that two equal ultimate beings cannot exist side by side. For if they do so, they must either be similar or dissimilar in nature. The existence of two similar beings alike in all respects does not make satisfactory explanation because they speak of the same reality in their quiddity. On the other hand, two dissimilar beings or principles cannot claim independence and perfection. For either must be then lacking something only to become dependent upon the other. And as such they cannot be regarded as ultimate beings.

In addition to the above mentioned arguments in favour of the unity of God we may also speak of two other arguments, instinctive or psychological and historical. The former springs out from the very nature of

human mind which feels inclined to be satisfied with only one Ultimate principle in its quest for an adequate explanation of life and creation. In other words, human mind proceeds from particular facts of experience to general laws of thought and then to a universal being of inner experience, i.e., man's mind passes from the scientific stage to the philosophical stage which in turn finds its fullest development in man's religious consciousness.

The historical argument in favour of one God is that all great seers of truth speak of only one Being. We come to learn from the history of religion and philosophy as well that great messengers like Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Krishna, Christ and Muhammad brought message of one God and they all taught about one Divine Truth. Again, great philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Al-Farabi, Ibn-Arabi, Iqbal and many others expounded the theory of one Ultimate Truth.

Divine Unity stands for complete oneness of the Divine Being. It implies that God is fundamentally one and that all plurality is alien to His essence. One may however speak of His plurality by way of attributes. The varieties in creation usually calls for such a nature of the Ultimate Being from which all things and beings derive their existence. Yet God is one and only one in essence. For His attributes are not outside of His essence.

God the Creator is one and from His unity follow as necessary consequences the unity of creation, the unity of man and the unity of life. God is the only creator of the universe; He is the sole Master and Lord

of all. All human beings, irrespective of caste, colour and creed, are but creations of one God, the Lord of the universe. Thus all human beings belong to a common universal brotherhood. Finally life is a unity and it admits of no fast and hard distinction between the so-called traditional views of the materialist and the spiritualist. It consists of both the flesh and the spirit. A negligence of the either baffles the goal; an imbalance between the two mars every attempt for success. And that is why after a long-time torture of the body the greatly emaciated Buddha had to satisfy the normal needs of his flesh in order to achieve the perfection of his spirit.

A close study of religions reveals that the great prophets transcended all prejudice and fanaticism and they all taught man the philosophy of one God and universal love and brotherhood.\* They taught us the unity of God and of life and world. The messengers of God preached to Adam's children love and brotherhood instead of hatred and rivalry. They also warned us not to involve in mad race for the acquisition of material riches at the cost of moral and spiritual values. They advised all human beings to develop in them the qualities and disposition of simplicity, humility, love, sympathy and fear of God for the realization of the goal : the fusion of the human with the Divine.

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\* Buddhism however appears to be different from other great religions. Like other world-prophets we donot hear Buddha speak directly about God. But his teachings of universal love and unity, the ethical counterparts of his religion, suggest the fundamental unity of the creation. Moreover, the concept of 'Dharmakaya' in Mahayana Buddhism (a later development in Buddhist thought) seems to imply the existence of a universal being or reality.

Unity and love, and not division and rivalry can assure the establishment of a better society, a happier world. The basic principle of life and society is unity for greater happiness of all mankind and this is the philosophy that has given birth to the establishment of international organizations like the United Nations. The UNO appears to be influenced by the impact of the philosophy of unity and as such it stands for peace, co-operation and co-existence of the member states. Following its ideals other regional and inter-regional organizations have also been established in the present world. All these imply that the philosophy of unity has great impact on man's life and society.

Proud of his rapidly progressing advancement in science and technology the modern man who is out to make flight to the moon very often forgets and even violates precepts of the Books and teachings of the messengers of God. In the past the scientist used to think of divine values as 'beautiful but impractical.' Many maintain the same view even today.

This attitude has however taken a different shape in others and many leading scientists — physicists, chemists, biologists, botanists, psychologists, mathematicians and anthropologists — now speak about the unity, interdependence and interrelatedness of life and living organisms. They also characterize matter as plastic and mind as dominating and believe in the creative power of man over everything of the material world. Further they admit of man's ability to rise to a god-like state

wherein man is capable of controlling and bettering the conditions under which he is living now.<sup>5</sup>

Not only scientists but also experts in other practical affairs reiterate these truths. Today the International Chamber of Commerce tells its members that no material advancement is possible for any individual member unless all members recognize complete dependence upon one another and that the realization of the union alone can save them. Some two hundred merchants, industrialists, farmers and statisticians representing about fifty countries expressed in a recent economic conference the view that the basis of economy must be founded upon a 'broad philosophy of the unity of mankind.' They also pressed for the realization of the fact that 'we are all members of one community toiling and suffering together and directing our efforts to a common end.'<sup>6</sup>

Again a group of bankers reporting recently on the financial situation of the world spoke of 'growing consciousness of the community of interests in financial affairs,' and that the degeneration of finances in one country affects significantly the well-being and security of all. Similarly in an industrial labour Conference the experts referred emphatically to the 'fact of economic and industrial unity of interests.'<sup>7</sup>

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5. Cranston, *World Faith*, pp. 174-175.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-178.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

We have spoken above of the union of nations. The term 'union' is however associated with another term 'self-restraint,' and unless the two fuse together none can expect good results from the union. Members of the union must have sympathy and fellow-feeling for each other and must restrain their individual greed so as to bring about the well-being of the union and of themselves. If we analyse why most of the international, intercontinental and regional organisations fail to produce good results, we will find that the members of the organisations almost invariably do not work upon the twin principles of union and self-restraint. No doubt we assemble and talk about unity and cooperation but very little we do regard for the interests of others. We scarcely practise the principle of self-restraint. On the other hand we want to enjoy the greater benefits of the union and 'run our lives on power-politics and cut-throat competition.' We talk of brotherhood and good neighbourly relation but in practice we exploit our brothers and neighbours.

Today the world is full of tension and unrest and our worries tend to multiply day by day. Tension has flared up in the Vietnam, in the Kashmir, in the Middle East and in many other places. The reasons are not far to seek. We promise unity, friendship and cooperation, talk these sweet words in the conference tables and in after-dinner speeches. Curiously enough our practice tells a different story.

On many occasions we speak in a charming manner about friendship, love and brotherhood but very little we work on these principles as taught by God and His messenger. The unavoidable consequence is the



growing unrest and unhappiness. It only make us drift away from peace and happiness. Instead of sincere peace-talks our leaders encourage scientists and atomic experts to prepare and explode mega-ton-bombs to threaten others to submit to their might. Is that the remedy? Will it lessen unrest and tension? Certainly not. The real remedy is:

".. emphasise the basic unity of man...

and cry halt to the philosophy of

hatred that has been hastening doomsday."<sup>8</sup>

" Abandon old barbarities, bloodvengeance

———— and be united as one flesh."<sup>9</sup>

" Love God. Serve your neighbour. Cease

fighting and exploiting and destroying.

Give up the life of old savage

man of the jungle. Join hands together

as one family. Become the gods, the

free souls, you were meant to be.

Build the kingdom of heaven here on

earth.... This is the way; walk ye

in it."<sup>10</sup>

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8. Dev, Aspirations of The Common Man, p. 193.

9. Ameer Ali, Spirit of Islam, p. 153.

10. Cranston. World Faith, p. 185.

## Chapter 2

### Nature of religion and religious experience

#### I

Religion connotes wide meaning and as such it can be explained in a number of ways. In its widest sense religion may be defined as the philosophy which provides man "the nucleus round which his whole life crystallizes and the entire system of his thoughts and action is organized."<sup>1</sup> This broad definition might appear difficult at this initial stage particularly to those who make it a first reading in religion. It will, we hope, become clear and clearer as we proceed on with our discussions of religion and religious experience. Here we will simply add that religion provides us a comprehensive code of conduct, it gives us a broad philosophy of life. Hinduism, Christianity and Islam can be cited as examples.

A similar view about the nature of religion we find in Pringle-Pattison's "The Idea of God" in which it has been stated that "religion embraces the whole of our existence, and the history of religion resumes the entire history of human development."<sup>2</sup> In religious experience man generally recognizes dependence on a Being or Power that encompasses and sustains his life and being, and to this power man 'owes every good

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1. Haridas Bhattacharyya, *The Foundations of Living Faiths*, p. 251.

2. Pringle-Pattison, "The Idea of God" in the *Light of Recent Philosophy*, p. 137.

that he enjoys.' To him this Universal Being appears as the source and embodiment of all that is adorable in life, and he discovers in this Being and in himself a harmony of life so much so that he feels completely prone to love and worship this being of unspeakable glory.

William James, a modern exponent of religious experience from a scientific angle, also defines religion as "man's total reaction upon life."<sup>3</sup> He however maintains that such a broad definition of religion is not convenient. For there are also 'sneering' and 'trifling' attitudes towards life. Religious attitude, on the contrary, signifies a serious state of mind and "it favours gravity and says hush to all vain chatter and smart wit."<sup>4</sup>

A religious attitude is serious, solemn and tender as well. Solemnity is a very important factor in religion. No vain chatter or smart wit has any place in religious life. In religion and life religious, on the other hand, the term 'divine' plays the most important role. The divine is the primal reality to which the individual responds with solemnity and gravity tempered with a sense of submission.

Religious experience or feeling is an absolute addition to the life of the devotee and it gives him a new sphere of power. In it the outward battle is lost and an inner world redeems and vivifies.<sup>5</sup> Religious experience brings for the man of religion a sort of happiness

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3. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 35.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

which is absent everywhere else. Tranquility of mind and bliss that the soul encounters in sublime religious experience are indeed rare phenomena in life.

In religious experience one also feels a sense of surrender and sacrifice; surrender to the divine for welfare and peace, and sacrifice of gross selfish demands for the realization of higher values that ensure greater good. This feeling of submission and surrender adds to the happiness and peace of the man of religion. The submission one makes in religious life comes as an imposition of necessity and the sacrifice done in life religious makes little complaint. For without submission to the will of the divine and without sacrifice of our small joys and pleasures we cannot achieve stable peace and enjoy durable happiness.

Our feelings, our outlooks and all our experiences are effected by two kinds of objects or things - things present to our senses and objects contemplated in our thought. Reactions caused by objects of contemplation are no less strong than those effected by things presented before external senses. Rather, they are at times stronger. The reality behind our religious feelings and experiences is an object of contemplation or thought and as such it is ordinarily termed as 'the unseen.' Here the unseen does not mean that it is not visible at all. What it connotes is that it is not seen through the external organ of ordinary vision. Religious experience is effected by a spiritual being which is visible through our mind's eye.

Religion may therefore be defined to consist "of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto."<sup>6</sup> In fact, every great religion teaches that an all-perfect 'unseen order' sustains all life, all creation and that man's welfare consists in living a religious life, a life lived in harmony with principles of God, the unseen.

That an unseen order exists may appear abstract to many. But there are persons who feel and know it directly and immediately. For them this unseen order or the being divine is supremely good and from it they derive all tangible attitudes towards life and world as well. Any standard book on religion and those fortunate souls that have experienced the divine, all state these fundamental truths of religion and life divine.

The unseen order, the reality behind our religious experience is generally known as God. God is the absolute necessary Being; He is the first cause, the cause of all existence. The Divine is unlimited from within and without. For limitations imply non-being and God is the Being, the absolute necessary Being. He is infinite and perfect and 'One, and only, for the infinitely perfect can admit no peer'. God is spiritual; for if He were composed of physical parts, some other power or powers would have to combine those parts into the 'one'. But this contradicts the nature of God as a necessary Being. The Divine is one

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6. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 53.

and since it is one, all familiar distinctions of the finite material world 'fall into an absolute idea of being' in God.<sup>7</sup>

God is good, just and holy. Nothing bad, unjust or unholy has any place in the being of the Divine. We have stated earlier that a harmonious adjustment with the Divine forms an important, a very important aspect of religious life. To elaborate what is implied by this harmonious adjustment, we would like to state that a life lived in goodness, justice, truth and holiness is a life lived in harmony with the life divine.

Feeling is the deeper source of religious experience; it plays an important role in religious life. It is feeling, an inner experience that makes us apprehend God and it enables us to have direct communion with the Divine. This does not however imply that reason has no place in religion. Intellect too has its own dignified place in life religious and it determines the worth and character of a religion. 'Reason operates in religion as it does in politics, patriotism, love and other important affairs of life. It amplifies religion and dignifies our faith.'<sup>8</sup>

God, round which centre all our religious beliefs, is no creation of imagination and fancy. On the contrary, belief in God has practical bearing upon life. For, God's moral attributes determine our

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7. Op. cit., pp. 437-440.

8. Ibid., pp. 431-436.

hopes and fears, our actions and expectations and they are the foundations of a good and saintly life.

Saintliness is the ripe fruit of religious life. The saint lives in a wider life free from lust and indecent selfish desires; he lives in the ideal world of the divine. He realizes that God maintains friendly, affectionate relations with him and as such he submits his life to the control of the life divine. In such a life the saint melts down his confining selfhood and there he feels elated and free.

Saintliness overrules the ordinary demands and inhibitions of the flesh. Life religious strengthens our soul and opens before us new reaches of patience and fortitude. In it our fears and anxieties go and a blissful equanimity prevails. It cleanses us from lustful and sensual elements of life and thereby makes life sacred and holy. Again, religious and saintly life effects in us charity and tenderness for fellow creatures; it also produces in us a preponderance of loving affection for others. Further, it creates a new zest in life and acts as the source of earnestness and heroism. Finally religion generates in us an assurance of safety and a temper of peace.<sup>9</sup>

As we have indicated earlier, God is the centre of religion and of religious experience. A sublime religious experience reveals that God is the 'Absolute Unity' of the universe and that we can have direct communion with the Divine through the heart. The fundamentals of religion and religious experience are thus God and an inner experience of

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9. William James, *The Varieties of religious experience*, pp. 435-436.

the heart -- the Great Beyond and intuition. In the words of the reflective writer of the "Aspirations", the "experience of a beyond, a reality that human intellect cannot grasp and decipher, is the core of religion, its essence. With some it is a divine communion, with others, a revelation or mystical experience."<sup>10</sup>

God is the unity of the universe; in Him every differences make a harmony as do different tunes and pitches in music. And in a genuine religious experience<sup>11</sup> a sense of the whole accompanies our knowledge and our action like a sacred music; so that the theoretical and practical attitudes to the world, in themselves so different, the one receptive and the other active, are brought into harmony."<sup>11</sup>

God, the core of religion, is one. But there is in man a tendency to personify God and his ideals and out of this develops, at times, a plurality of Divinity. For instance, the Christian dogma of Trinity is but an objectification and projection of God by man. To elaborate this point we may quote Robert Frank who writes: "God is, firstly, the objectified reason. This is God the Father.\* Secondly, He is the hypostatized principle of love and friendship. This is God the son. Thirdly, He is an objectification of the religious sentiment itself, the heart's sighing after God. This is God the Holy Ghost."<sup>12</sup>

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10. G.C. Dev, Aspirations of the Common Man, p. 35.

11. Robert S. Frank, The Metaphysical Justification of Religion, p.21.

\* Cf: 'The idea of God the Father is stated to be a father substitute adopted by the adolescent with a dominant Oedipus Complex, who finds the actual father inadequate.' (vide Thouless, Psychology of Religion, p. 187).

12. Robert S. Frank, The Metaphysical Justification of Religion, p.21.



Metaphysically speaking God, the nucleus of religion, is the one transcendent ground of the universe. He is the common ground for co-existence of Truth, beauty and Goodness. Religious experience reveals that God, the Holy, is the abiding ground of the True or Real. It further reveals that the Holy is also the active principle of evolution of the True towards the Good. The Beautiful, on the otherhand, manifests in the harmony of the True and the Good.<sup>13</sup>

Religion is an active belief in an All-perfect being and those who believe in this being develop all their feelings and sentiments, actions and expectations, attitudes and outlooks, and knowledge and faith with reference to God, the All-perfect being. Religion is thus a life-process and is different from all philosophy of mere idealities. It's central gravity is God in whom lie the meaning and significance of life and universe.

Religion is not, as supposed by some, a bubble of imagination, a picture painted upon air which cannot bear the strain the world puts upon life. On the contrary, it consists of something stable and permanent. Religion is based on man's supreme knowledge, knowledge of God who sustains all life, all existence. It is never based on mere imagination, nor is it ever founded on "pictures painted upon air."<sup>14</sup>

Religion, by which we essentially mean a grave and solemn belief in God the only meaningful ultimate ground of all existence, is a broad

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13. Robert S. Frank, *The Metaphysical Justification of Religion*, pp.73-83.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-48.

philosophy of life and as such when acted upon it can dissolve all the strains the world puts upon life.

In fact, religion is a pervasive principle of life; it is a philosophy of life and universe. The genuine religion a man lives upon provides him a definite recognizable way of life. It is his policy-maker, his guide and his philosopher as well. Religion enables him to treat things and deal with matters not merely superficially and temporarily but with depth and durable insight into their meaning and significance and it makes him evaluate the significance of things with "a reflection of the ultimate."<sup>15</sup>

Religion, in its essence, is a philosophy of intrinsic values. Man experiences these values "either in solitariness or in group relations."<sup>16</sup> The intrinsic values of life are a matter of religion and these values mould our life and character in an unparalleled way. Thus one who believes in the intrinsic value of man can never treat a human being as a means to an end. A man of religion shows in all his dealings his recognition of the dignity of man as man. The ultimate intrinsic value is however God that "far exceeds in value anything we can know or imagine."<sup>17</sup>

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15. Samuel M. Thomson, A Modern Philosophy of Religion, p. 10.

16. Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, p. 131.

17. Thomson, Modern Philosophy of Religion, p. 10.

- 24 -

## II

We have seen earlier that religious attitude culminates in God and most people hardly see any meaning in religion without God. There are however some people who have attitudes which correspond in other respects to religion and yet they deny the existence of God. These atheists have well-defined attitudes to life, attitudes which carry values and still they are apathetic to God, the ultimate ground of values.

Marxism of Soviet Russia exhibits such an apathetic attitude towards God. In many respects it however shows all intensity and devotedness of a religious movement. Marxists believe in the dignity of man, in the value of science and knowledge, art and culture, and they believe in the welfare of their people. Still they dislike the idea of God. Thus their philosophy of life is, as it were, "religiously non-religious."<sup>18</sup>

Marxist communism, a great political and cultural force of the present day world, had inspired leaders who would hardly do anything wrong. It has sacred writings and rituals as well. "It has its paradise and its hell, its saved and its damned" and still it "is a religion without God."<sup>19</sup>

Marxism demands of its people unqualified allegiance and loyalty, and claims from its devotees great sacrifices. In its notion of life

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18. Thomson, *Modern Philosophy of Religion*, p. 12.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

- 25 -

communism prefers dogma to reason, it demands unconditional submission to the authority of the state. Marxism essentially believes in economic values and denies the divine ones. Thus in its outlook Marxism is plainly atheistic.

Atheist philosophy no doubt speaks of value and also does it believe in a number of values. But curiously enough it disbelieves in 'the source of good and the final reality of value.' The atheist would of course retort that between value and God there exists no connection. To us however it makes little sense in believing in values without believing in their final reality.

Marxist Russia's attitude to life is obviously motivated and influenced more by its human, material aspect than by any other else. She has no doubt a great ideal, the ideal of welfare of her people. And in achieving this ideal she has made spectacular use of modern science and technology, the almost omnipotent relievers of man's physical and material sufferings.

Modern scientific life is considerably marked by a hurry, a hurry to remove man's economic and other material wants. Today's scientifically and technologically developed Russia is no exception to this rule and in this hurried scientific and technological race for material prosperity of her people Communist Russia seems to be lost in the fast moving world of matter and has very little time to make adventures into the durable world of spirit.

Communist Russia's economic, scientific, technical and technological developments have made her proud and perhaps restless too. And that's why in the early twentieth century extreme Soviet scientists launched an anti-god movement to wipe out every religious cult from the soil of Russia. It is however controversial that how much they have been able to bring about a balanced and happy environment given to durable peace and prosperity of man.

Humanism of August Comte, a recent development in human thought and religion, although not extremely apathetic to God seems to push back the idea of God. His humanism substitutes religious saints by great figures of philosophy, science and literature and for God it substitutes humanity, 'the Great Being' whom it adores and worships devotedly. Comte was perhaps tired of the dogmatic, other-worldly religions of mosques, churches and temples. He was dejected by that dogmatic religion which cares little for man's welfare here on earth, religion which compels man to sacrifice his wishes and desires at the altar and makes him worship for the sole satisfaction of God in heaven. A product of modern scientific age, Comte does not like dogmas and the Christian 'Kingdom of Heaven' fails to attract his thought which is more concerned with man's welfare on earth. He therefore writes: "Unlike the Supreme Being of the old religions, humanity is an object of worship whose existence is patent and indubitable, whose nature and laws of whose existence we know - a being, moreover, whom we can actively serve and really benefit."

According to Comte the "Immutable omnipotence had no need of human services, but humanity ... lives and grows only through the unceasing efforts of its members".<sup>21</sup> We donot like to dispute man's place in religion. We would rather prefer to supplement the 'service of man' by the 'worship of God' because we worship God not for God's welfare but for welfare of ourselves, men on earth, and maintain that perfect religion serves man and worships God with due respect to both.

Influenced by the wide-spread materialist climate of modern science and technology some people like to treat religion merely as a phenomenon of the individual and show a tendency to confine religion in the lone private chamber of the latter. Modern age is an age of independent thought and these modern people who advocate the individual's independence in thought and action do not like to recognize the social character of religion. They maintain that religion is a matter of the individual's inner life and as such it should be left to his private life alone. But religion is generally a social phenomenon that rises and falls, that appears and disappears as the belief of a social group. we would like them to look at Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and so on and so forth to make out what religion connotes as a social phenomenon.

The essence of religious thought is the 'communion of souls' which is best realized in religion alone. A common faith brings its

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21. Pringle-Pattison, The Idea of God, p. 140.

members close to each other in such a way that "it makes them live in each other, blends them into one soul in which each of them finds itself, multiplied, as it were, by all the rest".<sup>22</sup>

Rightly viewed, in God the 'spirits blend' and in rising towards him man transcends of necessity the confines of his own individuality only to realize that the principle of his life is identical with the principle of the life of his brethren. It is because of this social character of religion that diverse souls "become related to each other, and form a real family, united by closer, stronger bonds than those of blood".<sup>23</sup>

That religion is a social phenomenon can be verified by examples from our daily life. Experience of a gathering excited by religious emotion and exalted by the ideal of their religion reveals the infallible truth that followers of a religion all live a collective life. As such religion plays a considerable role in shaping man's culture and civilization.

In fact, religion always expresses itself as the group consciousness of a people. Warning about the ills of an individualist, personal view of religion John Dewey rightly told the audience at his 'Ferry Lectures' in Yale University that if religion is made a purely private affair and confined within the individual's lone chamber as it is being

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22. August Sabatier, *Outlines of A Philosophy of Religion*, p. 91.

23. *ibid.*, p. 92.

done by some in this age of science and technology, in this age of rapid industrialization and growing international trade, it will surely multiply the already piled up tensions of the present world. To avoid tensions we must recognize the social character of religion and act in accordance with the universal principles of justice and honesty and love of religion.<sup>24</sup> Religion is social, more precisely it is universal in character. Religion brings the message of equality, justice, truth and of love for all human beings making no distinction of their caste, colour and clime.

### III

Thinkers before the English deists did not appear to take the question of origin of religion seriously. Greek thinkers seemed to be indifferent to this query and theologians - Jewish, Christian or Muslim - thought of divine revelation as an inseparable phenomenon in the rise of religion. Sceptics like Lucretius however maintained that belief in gods originated out of a 'sense of fear'. On the contrary, the deists held that religion began in reason. They maintained that fundamental doctrines like "belief in a God" and "immortality of soul" could be established through reason. They claimed that this religion of reason was natural to man and therefore known to him from the beginning, but through the mechanism of priests, interested in securing power over

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24. Abdul Jalil Mia, Darshan Parichiti, pp. 13-14.



the masses, new elements had been introduced and the religion directed into deviating path".<sup>25</sup>

Close in thought and temperament to Lucretius, Hume denies any significance to reason in the early stage of man's culture and traces the rise of religion to fear and hope. According to Hume man's fear of the forces of nature led him to seek powerful gods behind nature. He further maintains that man's fear of these gods was tempered by the hope of getting their sympathy and good-will. The entire effort of man was therefore effected to this end of securing the favour of gods and of escaping their wrath. Hume however maintained that through ages man assumed a single God who wields control over the whole universe. This tendency however receded to the back and stepped forward many times in man's history and as such his religion travelled between the lands of many gods and one god - between polytheism and monotheism.<sup>26</sup>

Since the days of the deists advocates of revelation and reason had been vigorously attempting to establish the authority of their respective philosophies. Their conflicts however ended in a milder reconciliation by the middle of the eighteenth century. Butler's "Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed" (1736) is a remarkable example of this reconciling attitude. In this book Butler maintains that reason and revelation are not two different realities. They are on the contrary, two aspects of one and the same truth. He further maintains

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25. Morris Jastrow, The study of religion, p. 174.

26. David Hume, The Natural history of Religion (1755).  
cf. 'study', pp. 174-175.

that there is a perfect correspondence between tenets of revealed religion and postulates of natural religion.

In modern times some thinkers have referred to a very important aspect of religious truth. They have spoken of a 'spiritual element' as an essential factor in the rise of man's genuine religion. Max Muller names this spiritual element as 'perception of the Infinite'. This 'perception' is the spring of all religion and in it one discovers the soul's yearning for God. This spiritual element of man widens his mental horizon and produces in him 'a sense of the infinite'.<sup>27</sup>

Muller's 'perception of the Infinite' creates some difficulty in so far as the primitive man is concerned. Tiele therefore substitutes Muller's 'perception' by his 'sense' of the Infinite. Speaking about the origin of religion Tiele refers to man's 'original, unconscious, innate sense of infinity'. This innate sense of the infinity, according to him, lies at the root of man's spiritual life, and also does it reveal in his moral, intellectual and aesthetic life.<sup>28</sup>

These thinkers further maintain that like his religious instinct man's power to acquire a perception of the Infinite is a part of his being. In the beginning a sense or faint perception of the Infinite stirs in man's soul and as he grows in intellect this perception stirs his whole being. It strikes a responsive cord in man's religious instinct and then stirs him up to fight life's battle for a higher goal.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Morris Jastrow, *The Study of Religion*, p. 192.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

From what has been stated in the foregoing paragraphs we think we may maintain that fear, hope, reason, revelation and religious instinct all play their respective role in our religious life. Life's sense of fear and awe in the vast mysterious creation of the Infinite and a sense of hope generated by the great Unseen do play their due roles in the rise of our religious feeling in this scientific modern age as they did in the far off primitive age of our ancestors. The degree of fear may however be less in our age which is characterized by a remarkable conquest of nature. There is another point of distinction between our primitive ancestors and us in so far as fear is concerned - our fear is markedly moral, theirs was mostly natural.

With modern civilized people reason indeed plays an important role in their religious life. Reason, our divine guidance, helps us understand the meaning and significance of creation, of course to the extent we cultivate reason in the right way. It makes us reflect over the vast and varied creation in and around us and in one ripe, nature moment, intellect gives rise to revelation and our heart feels the touch of the divine, the one behind many. This is intellectual revelation. Books like the Torah, the Bible, the Quran, etc. convince us of divine revelation as well. Revelation, prophetic or intellectual stands indeed atop the tower of man's religion and religious experience.

Most probably the religious sentiment is inherent in man and once it is stirred up either by fear, awe, reason or revelation it accompanies him throughout his life and takes him to the 'golden ladder of progress.'

Ascending on this ladder's top he becomes conscious of an 'infinite Power' and here he comes close to God through a dedicated worship of the head and heart. And here he realizes that God gives direction to his efforts, helps him shape his destiny and presides 'over all that pertains to his higher life.'<sup>30</sup>

#### IV

In the contemporary world, which is more characterized by a materialist culture, to many, religion appears at a discount. If we are to account for this attitude of these so-called modern people, we would like to say that religion itself is not to blame. We will rather say that the prejudiced, fanatical ministers and votaries of religions are, not to a small extent, responsible for this unhappy atmosphere. These ministers with their usual sectarian narrowness and dogmatic claims for the superiority of their respective faiths hide in most cases truths of religion and thus retard its growth as a harmonious universal faith whose precious jewel is same everywhere in every people - the Kalinis, the Christians, the Mohamadans, the Zoroastrians, the Hindus. Moreover, many of us talk of religion but hardly live the life religious. We preach religious truths and moral values but often enough we live a life devoid of most divine virtues and moral values.

Further, the very unprecedented progress and achievements of modern science and technology which have removed much human sufferings

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30. Morris Jastrow, The Study of Religion, p. 197.

have made man indifferent to God. In comparison with the devoted scientist of our atomic age, the professional minister of religion has not been able to make people taste the soothing elixir of religion, the science of sciences. It is therefore imperative that we make earnest and sincere attempts to go beyond dogmas and present before man the essential facts of religion and help him taste its soothing elixir.

The scientist-philosopher of our times appears, as it were, to have more of the religious spirit than the so-called minister of religion. With his yearning for truth the scientist-philosopher dives beneath the surface of things with a view to transcend their finite standpoint so as to understand the beyond, the Unseen, the Real. A true devotee to truth and wisdom as he is, this seeker after truth does not fight with dogmas as does a dogmatic conservative who only adds to fanaticism and sectarian narrowness simply to put coverings over the Real.

The knowledge of the real, the One, is better attained through meditation and concentration of mind on the beyond, through earnest seeking after and intense longing for Truth, through sincere devotion to the cause of knowledge and wisdom, and also through one's communion with nature than through mechanical performance of the rites of the church, the mosque and of the temple.

Faith in a Divine Existence, in a world beyond the ordinarily visible one, and belief in a Just Being at the helm of affairs of both the physical and the spiritual worlds form the nucleus of religion.

religion is essentially a system of values and ideals, feelings and attitudes which unite into a guiding philosophy of life. It is, as it were, the perfect symphony and all music of life.

Faith plays an important role in one's religious life and experience. For all religious belief is viewed, as it were, with the eye of faith. Faith in this context implies man's belief in God and divine life. An experience enriched by a faith in the divine makes religious life more meaningful and in such an experience one finds that God imparts insight and guidance to him. Religions of Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus and Muhammad are replete with such experiences.

Religious experience may be defined as one's conscious awareness of God and divine creation. It has however degrees and as such an experience of observing nature as a deed of God's creation is a religious experience and so also is the experience of prayer. But the latter being more directly concerned with one's soul and spirit has more religious and spiritual intensity than the former. And the more intense a religious experience is, the more it moves one's soul toward the divine.

Religious experience takes man beyond the region of material narrowness and dogmatic fanaticism; it lifts him beyond the region of shadows and appearances; it leads him to the world of the real where conflicts and discords reconcile. It generates in man love and hope, values and ideals but for which life would have become unbearable. It provides us power that maintains balance and equilibrium of the mind; it removes cowardice and despair and fills the soul with joy and bliss.

There are some thinkers who in matters of religion attach much importance to personal experience or special revelation than to historical revelation or a Scripture. Schleiermacher even declared: "He does not have a religion who believes in a Holy Scripture, but rather he needs no Scripture and who would make one himself".<sup>31</sup> Also wrote Emerson: "Men make their religion a historical religion. They see God in Judea and in Egypt, in Moses and in Jesus, but not around them. He want a living religion. As the faith was alive in Abraham and in Paul, so I would have it in mine. I want religion not received from a Book, but following from all things".<sup>32</sup>

Although there is an element of over emphasis on personal experience and special revelation in the above statements of Schleiermacher and Emerson, they have faithfully stated a fact of religious life. For one hardly becomes religious in nature if one does not encounter a religious experience himself inspite of the fact that he or she has considerable acquaintance with Scriptures. And it is in this light and spirit that Iqbal wrote:

"My heart shall prove a mirror bright  
reflecting all thy shade and light".<sup>33</sup>

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31. Schleiermacher, Religion, p. 122 (quoted in Philosophy of Religion, p. 419).

32. McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, P XLIV (quoted in Philosophy of Religion, p. 419.)

33. Arberry, Persian Psalms, p. 12.

Religion is founded on truth and ideals that govern man's life and world. As such religion cannot die even if some of us remain indifferent to it. In fact, religion is eternal and "religious instinct abides amidst all changes in the kaleidoscope of mankind's history. It is a permanent element in the chequered career of humanity - in a certain sense indeed, the only permanent element".<sup>34</sup>

Religion is 'grounded on the adamantine rocks of reality'; it cannot die simply because of our indifference and at times apathy to it. It is a virtue of necessity and we can't dispense with it. If however it dies, it will die at the cost of humanity itself. If religion dies, "civilization will give place to barbarity, men will be replaced by animals; the life of the human race will be extinct from our planet".<sup>35</sup>

Religion is a code of living; it is a basic philosophy of life. Through religion grow our ethics and science and art as well. Religion "disciplines the human self to rise itself above its lower nature, to purify the baser impulses and animal passions, to control the selfish instincts and to regulate the violent emotions under the guidance of reason"<sup>36</sup> and thus it gives rise to what we ordinarily call morality. Again it "teaches us to ponder over nature and to rise above it by

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34. Jestro, Study of Religion, pp. 197-198.

35. S.C. Nay, Religion & Modern India, p. 25.

36. Ibid., p. 114.



studying its laws and overcoming its forces; religion thus marks the beginning of science".<sup>37</sup>

Religion further encourages man "to transcend the region of the sensible, and to catch a glimpse of the Ideal Beauty in the supersensible Kingdom of Heaven, with a view to mould the materials of the real world after the pattern of ideal perfection which is but dimly revealed in his own heart; and it is this realisation of the Ideal Beauty in and through the materials of the sensible world that we call art".<sup>38</sup>

Religion is not concerned merely with the unseen or the supernatural as some would like us to believe; it is not related to the other-worldly alone. On the contrary, religion is a perfect code of life and from it develop all our social virtues - love, charity, sacrifice, philanthropy, justice, truthfulness, piety, so on and so forth. It inspires us to translate into action the ideals that stir the heart within. In other words, religion aims at establishing the divine reign of truth, beauty and goodness in the world we inhabit, and thus it brings about a harmony between the two worlds of matter and spirit.

In today's world there has been a tendency to create a hard and fast distinction between the material and the spiritual. Life is however a blending of the flesh and the soul; the world is an admixture of the temporal and the eternal. Life is not altogether material, nor

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37. S.C. Mby, Religion & Modern India, p. 114.

38. Ibid., p. 115.

is it completely spiritual; it consists of both the material and the spiritual. Religion tells us that there is no naive material life, nor there exists any extreme and abstract spiritual one. Of course, it wants us to rise above the gross material world to make life more spiritual, to make it worth living.

Religion teaches us that the spirit which pervades the universe is a wise, affectionate, rational spirit; it is never a blind mechanical force as some would have us believe. This spirit enters into our life, endows it with thought and reflection, and stirs the soul with the ideals of truth, beauty and goodness. Above all, this spirit fills our heart with love and holiness. This spirit is generally introduced to us as God, Brahma, Jehova or Allah whose unspeakable glories inevitably attract the thought and attention of a reflective soul.

Those possessed of wisdom and those having religious experience meditate in silence over the endless glories of God, the Infinite. And "the more the human spirit dives into the depth of the life Divine ... the more it partakes in the omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, all-goodness, all-love, and all-holiness of the Infinite spirit".<sup>39</sup> Finally, an intense religious experience opens wide a vision of the unity of truth which in turn brings us knowledge of the unity of all creation.

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<sup>39</sup>. Religion and modern India, p. 142.

### Chapter 3

#### A Historical Survey of Religion.

##### I

We may characterize religion as old as human thought even if we keep away for a while from the Bible and the Quran which tell us that man's religion began with Adam, the father of mankind. For, man reflects over life in self-conscious moments and engages himself in what we call religious thought. Rightly observed Jastro that although not in all, but definitely in certain individuals such self-conscious, reflective moments began at the early stage of man's cultural development.<sup>1</sup>

An earliest and profoundest consciousness of man's heart is an awareness of dependence upon some higher power or powers.<sup>2</sup> Religion is basically the expression of this dependence and theology endeavours to explain the nature and attributes of the supreme power that religion longs to understand. Religion began with crude beliefs of the primitive man and reached its highest manifestations in great faiths like Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

In primitive times man was found to possess a rudimentary sense or instinct of religion which made him pay homage to some higher power. This sense of religious dependence was also primitive man's differentia

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1. Morris Jastro, The Study of Religion, p. 1.

2. Alfred S. Geden, Studies in the Religions of the East, pp. 3-4.

from other brute animals. Even in far ancient time man thought he had some kind of relation with this higher power to which he owes reverence and from which he hopes for good and depreciates evil. A study of man's religious history reveals that all primitive as well as refined subtle writings in religion express man's belief in that power and his duty thereto. It also reveals that there was hardly any people "so inert and degraded as to be without some conception of God."<sup>3</sup>

Primitive man's religious character may be understood through animism, naturalism, fetishism and totemism. From the early beginning of man's consciousness of himself and the world around him he used to feel some sort of kinship between himself and his world. As in himself so in nature he felt in some vague way the presence of some animus, life or soul or spirit or power to which he felt inclined to pay homage and respect. "This vague idea, obviously based on no clear idea of life or mind or matter, is called animism."<sup>4</sup> Taylor defines animism as a "belief in souls, and in a future state, in controlling deities and subordinate spirits, the doctrines practically resulting in some kind of active worship."<sup>5</sup> This definition of animism however appears to be too broad and advanced in comparison with primitive man's cultural development.

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3. Alfred S. Geden, *Studies in the Religions of the East*, pp. 4-5.

cf: God sent revelation to every people and no section of mankind was left without divine guidance (Quran 35:25-26).

4. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion*, p. 43.

5. Taylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. 1, p. 437 (quoted by Geden in 'Studies' p. 16).

In truth, what appeared intelligible to primitive man's consciousness was not soul or spirit but lightning, flood, whirlwind, frost and other powerful phenomena of nature that were outside himself and beyond his control. To these natural forces he attributed will and determination and before these natural, blind powers he bowed himself in fear and awe to avert the evil. At a later but still early stage of his religious development the ancient man started to think of the natural forces or powers as conscious living beings who could be affected by prayers and gifts. To these powers of nature he then ascribed in a rough analogous way a kindred life but superior to his own and believed that 'a transcendently greater personality and life' was present in them. And hence began the worship of nature and natural powers.

Fetichism, an early and widely accepted form of religious belief mostly amongst the tribes of West Coast of Africa, sprang-up from Portuguese 'fatico' and Latin 'factitius'. A fetich signifies a natural object that possesses some inherent magical power and virtue. The fetich differs from an idol in this that it possesses some power or force of its own and not external as is the case with the idol. The followers of fetichism therefore worshipped the fetich with superstitious regard. For they believed that it could relieve their sufferings in a mysterious way.<sup>6</sup>

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6. Geden, Studies in the religions of the East, p.21.

Another form of primitive religion is totemism. Totemism stands for that system of man's faith which considers a totem, an object of regard, mostly a well-known animal to whom its followers pay homage and reverence. This faith is believed to have been practised widely by the 'Ojibway Indians'. It was also prevalent in North America, Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria and in a number of far eastern countries like China, Java, Sumatra, Japan, Formosa, etc. Totemism is said to be in practice till now among the savage people particularly among the Negroes of West Africa. There is also evidence that this faith formerly existed in most European countries including Britain. The speciality of the totem is that like an idol or fetich it applies not merely to a particular individual object but equally to every member of a class or species. Totems are generally of three types - the clan totem, the sex totem and the totem of an individual. Totems of different clans and tribes are hostile and dangerous to all but the members of the respective clan or tribe to which they belong. The totem is believed to provide safety and happiness to its worshipers.<sup>7</sup>

Evolution tells us that every phenomenon in nature evolves and grows from a simpler to a complex form and that it gradually advances towards perfection. Man's religious and spiritual life is not an exception to this general rule of evolution. It too advances gradually from simple forms to a highly organized one. We may therefore hold that there is hardly any religion which is absolutely new. Every faith

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7. Geden, Studies in the religions of the east, pp. 26-29.

is explicable in and through its antecedents apart from which it did not come into being. The degree of novelty of a religion however depends on how much initiative and originality its founder can make to lead the people towards advancement in their spiritual life.

Egypt, Babylonia, Judaea, Greece and India are some notable illustrations of man's religious thought in antiquity. These lands and their peoples present before us remarkable religious fertility of the ancient world.

A comparative and historical study of religion brings our attention to Egypt where man's cultural life was believed to have attained a considerable development about five millenniums before Christ. Egypt, a meeting-place of nations of the ancient world, a country geographically situated in Africa but closely related to Asia "appears to have gathered into herself elements from various religions or strata of religious belief, which acting and reacting to one another, have become welded together into a whole, the parts of which are no longer to be certainly distinguished or traced back to their respective origin."<sup>8</sup>

Egypt's first historically influential faith was nature worship mostly in the shape of a family or tribal localized cult. In many instances the local gods had totemistic associations, such as the bull at Thebes and Memphis, the goat at Mendes, the cat at Bubastis, the crocodile in the Fayyum and so on and so forth. Totemism itself was

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8. Op. cit., pp. 55-56.

also in wide-spread practice and each tribe or sub-tribe had an animal or an inhabitant of the land or sea as the object of its regard. The early Egyptians also worshipped the heavenly bodies like the sun and the moon. Later through centuries Egypt exhibited a compromising religious attitude blending together divine elements of different faiths and with the Semetic invasion of Egypt a process of adoption and amalgamation started. This process ended in an identification of the aboriginal primitive deities with the Semetic gods and here at this stage Egyptian faith rose to a higher spiritual plane. In course of time Ra, the Sun-god and Osiris, the god of vegetation and future life, who was also regarded as having solar origin and at times identified with the moon, became gods of high esteem and respect.<sup>9</sup>

Amidst polytheistic beliefs of ancient Egypt the 'priest-king' Amenhetep IV of the fourteenth century B.C. is said to have brought about a revolutionary religious reform in which all gods except the sun were ignored and denied; in this new monotheistic faith only the sun was worshipped and was regarded not as something physical or material but as the symbol of one Supreme Power to whom all were indebted for life and sustenance. However, due to vested interests of the priests of different polytheistic cults and also because of some political reason (Amenhetep had no son) this semi-spiritual, monotheistic religion which was completely free from taints of idolatry did not live long and shortly after Amenhetep's death the ancient faiths were revived.<sup>10</sup>

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9. Ueden, Studies in the Religions of the East, pp. 67-79.

10. Ibid., pp. 119-123.



II

A peep into the religious history of mankind reveals that ancient people believed in different religions and in different gods and deities accepted as it were, with same complacency as was their difference in dress and language. The Hebrew prophets with their faith in Jehova did however show an exception to this general attitude of the ancient religious world. With the appearance of Abraham and Moses they virtually denied the existence of other gods beside Jehova.

To remain indifferent to religious cults other than their own was a common feature among the ancient people and thinkers as well. There were however rare exceptions and as such Herodotus and Plutarch showed some curiosity to know what others believed. Even in Plato and Aristotle, both acquainted with other prevailing systems of religion, we find that they too "share this general indifference to the manifold manifestations of religion and their views on gods "tended to explain Greek religion only."<sup>11</sup>

Added to this indifferent attitude to others' religion, their pride and sense of superiority handicapped the heathen Romans to make a sympathetic approach towards religions. But without such an attitude it is hardly possible to understand religious faiths and their essence. Curiously enough to a polished Roman and even to famous Lucritius "the sublime monotheism of the Jews appeared merely in the light of superstition

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11. Jastro, A Study of Religion, p. 4.

12. Ibid., p. 5.

A proselytising spirit found way in some Jews during the first century before Christ. During this period heathenism came to a decay to provide opportunity to the Jews for establishing Jehova as the universal god. Jewish apostles began to cross the borders of Palestine to preach their Gospel to all men. In the early Christian era the Christian missionaries also followed the foot steps of the Jews to preach Christ's Gospel of universal love. This however brought the Jews and the Christians under cruel persecutions in different parts of the empire of the Romans who were already hostile to other religions. but gradually the Christians got the better and Christianity came forward to solve religious hostility and intolerance with Christ's magnified philosophy of love for all human beings. In its beginning Christianity held that Christ's religion would be preached to all human beings by persuasion. but when this persuasive method failed, it 'was followed by severe measures'.<sup>13</sup>

As a result hostility between religious groups did not end. Rather it intensified. In such an atmosphere the Christian theologians began to study other religions to gather what they stand for. But their temperament stood on the way to any real progress. They were hardly willing to recognize the worth of other religions.

This state of affairs prevailed throughout the middle ages and Christianity made continued attempts 'to stamp out heathenism and to

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13. Op. cit., p. 7.

crush Judaism'. Now Christianity also found itself in bitter conflicts with Islam, a more formidable foe, and in such conflicts it abandoned love and human feelings and ideals of peace and good will. Christ's followers then entered upon a prolonged period of bitter warfare to persecute all 'infidels' and 'heretics'.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately the period of renaissance and reformation too could not provide much relief to this narrow mindedness of man professed in the name of religion. Like his predecessors here also Luther was severe in his attacks upon Islam. He regarded Muhammad as an incarnation of the devil and some Christian scholars characterised the Jews as a hard 'stiff-necked' people.<sup>15</sup>

This spirit of intolerance and hostility in man's religious world brought about a natural scepticism in religion about the middle of the eighteenth century. The glaring inconsistency of religion preaching love and peace and ever brandishing the sword led many to ask and doubt if there was any logical basis for religion. In such an atmosphere a group of independent thinkers of different countries led by France boldly attacked the representatives of different religious faiths and characterized them as deceivers who were prompted only by sordid motives to subjugate the masses under their permanent clutch. But most of these thinkers and writers however failed to see the essence of religion and thereby developed a hostile attitude to it. Voltaire therefore made

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14. Jastro, A Study of Religion, p. 8.

15. Ibid., p. 8.

'Muhammad a deceiver and a monster of cruelty'. He did not spare Luther as well and placed him in the same category of "deceivers" as he did with Muhammad.<sup>16</sup>

This hostility towards religion and religious figures proved disastrous. For, instead of discovering a great and lofty destiny of mankind as taught by religion true and unbiased, it made man hopelessly weak only to be deceived for hundreds and thousands of years by the so-called deceivers.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century we come across more or less these attitudes of intolerance and hostility in man's religions that vied with each other for supremacy. Naturally in such an intolerant and hostile spirit one could not legitimately expect to understand the significance of Moses' saying, "hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord";<sup>+</sup> of Christ's teaching that his mission was "not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil them";<sup>++</sup> and of the statement of the Quran, "O people of the book, come to an agreement on a principle common between us and you, in that we worship none but Allah".<sup>+++</sup>

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16. Jastro, The Study of Religion, pp. 9-10.

+ Deuteronomy 6:4.

++ Mt. Matthew 5:17.

+++ Quran 3:64.

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III

The land of Bactria or 'Umm ul-bilad'<sup>\*</sup> is ordinarily regarded as the 'birth place of creeds and nations' and in course of time under the pressure of an increasing population the people of Bactria divided into clans, such as the Hamitic and the Japhetic. Some of these people proceeded eastward and founded the Mongolian race; another section travelled to the West and settled in Media (modern Azarbaijan, Hamadan and Ghilan). Later some of them proceeded to and settled into Babylonia and amalgamating with the earlier Hamitic colonies 'formed the Accadian nation, the Kushites of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.'<sup>17</sup>

This composite race created Babylon and gave birth to a form of religion which had two important phases. In its higher form the Babylonian religion was akin to natural pantheism; in its 'pan-dæmonic' lower phase its followers worshipped the sun-gods and the moon-gods.<sup>18</sup>

The next group from the primeval hom of Umm ul-bilad, the Semites migrated towards the West and settled in the northern part of the Mesopotamian delta. They soon overthrew the Babylonian race and founded a stronger empire to wield power over the neighbouring states. These 'Assyrians at times rose to a positive monotheistic conception. Their system of celestial hierarchy furnishes indications of a distinct recognition of one Supreme Personality.'<sup>19</sup>

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\* 'Mother of cities' - Balkh in modern Afghanistan.

17. Amser Ali, Spirit of Islam, p. XIX.

18. Ibid, p. XIX.

19. Op. cit., p. XX.

The Japhetic clan seemed to have lived longest in their old habitation in Bactria. However, due to unrest and pressure of population tribe after tribe moved towards the west. The Kelasians and the Celts were among the early tribes to leave their homes and they were followed by a number of tribes only to leave the 'Aryans proper' in their 'old haunts'. These tribes throw much light on ancient religions of men who gradually became 'alive to the sense of an Universal Ideality.'<sup>20</sup>

Judaism, the first remarkably known monotheist religion in man's history, which Moses and his predecessors and followers preached among the Israelites witnessed many disasters and distortion through ages. When Babylon became the dominating power of the civilized world, the Jews and their religion fell victim to this power. The innumerable disasters that befell the Jews after their coming out from the yolk of Babylon reached culmination in the wars of Titus and Hadrian. Their nationhood was 'stamped out in fire and blood' by pagan Rome and Christian Constantinople also persecuted with equal fury the doomed nation of Moses. "The house of Israel was a total wreck; its members were fugitives on the face of the earth, seeking shelter far and wide, but carrying everywhere their indomitable pride, their rebellious hardness of heart, denounced and reprehended by an endless succession of prophets."<sup>21</sup>

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20. Ameer Ali, Spirit of Islam, pp. XX - XXI.

21. Ibid., p. XXXVII.

With the retreats of the Jews in foreign lands people lived in hope but rigid 'uncompromising bigotry' and 'voluptuous epicureanism' made way among them and this finally necessitated the advent of Jesus. The 'redeemer' came with his message of universal love and brotherhood amongst 'a nation of furious and relentless bigots.' His message brought hope for the poor, the despised and the oppressed but it roused feelings of hatred, fear and opposition among the rich, the powerful and the rulers who soon arranged things for the crucifixion of the Redeemer.

Looking back we find Zoroaster\* to bring about a powerful religious movement among the western Aryans. This movement resulted in a sharp religious conflict between the eastern and western Aryans. In this conflict the 'western dualistic clans' won over their eastern 'half-polytheistic, half-pantheistic brethren'. The eastern Aryans finally burst into India and gave birth to the Vedic religion.

The Aryan conquest of the whole of India took centuries. The old religion the Aryans brought with them consisted mainly in the worship of manes and adoration of natural powers symbolized in images. With the passage of time their spiritual development proceeded on and we find in the Vedas the march of this progress reaching its zenith in the Upanishads which exhibit a marked yearning for spiritual monotheism.

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\* There is difference of opinion as to the time of advent of Zoroaster and also about his birth place. Some maintain that he was from Asarbairan; others maintain that he came from Balkh and still others hold that he belonged to Northern Iran. Zoroaster is believed to have lived in between 6,000 and 600 B.C.

With its belief in Avatard which means that Brahma, the Supreme Spirit, manifests in varied forms particularly in man the religion of the Vedas and Upanishads, Hinduism as it is popularly known, became with the passage of time more a matter of rituals and mechanical performances of sacrifices, and of tantric worship of gods and goddesses, than a true simple faith in Brahma. The conduct and piety of the worshipper became mostly a matter of performance of the 'god compelling rites' with appropriate incantations under the direction of the ministering priest. Moral and religious degradation flew in an ebb tide and in such environments Buddha and Mahabir revolted against the distorted religion of the Hindus. <sup>22</sup>

Both Buddhism and Jainism taught a religion of 'eventual annihilation of the individual life' for eradicating the evils of selfish, individual motives and they both dwelt on the merit of karma or action to bring about salvation or blissful consumation of the soul. Gradually however Jainism went back to Brahmanism but Buddhism remained bold and followed its new path with its new scheme for salvation. It placed karma at the forefront and taught the gospel of universal love. Buddhism however could not live long in India the land of its birth, with the zeal and vigour preached by its celebrated teacher, Gautama Buddha. Buddhism was virtually expelled out from India into East and Far Eastern countries and Hinduism re-established its supremacy there.

Turning towards the West Aryans we find they soon crossed their ancient bounds and spread over the regions of modern Persia and Afghanistan

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22. Ascer Ali, 'Spirit of Islam', pp. XXII - XXVI.



where they conquered most of the Semitic and Kushite races, that time inhabiting those regions, and gradually reached the confines of the Caspian. Here they met the Iranians and more hardy Turanians who were more inclined to worship their ancient national God, Ormuzd than the Deity (Asshur) of their Aryan conquerors. Gradually the conquerors' religion of the Asshur however left remarkable influence upon Zoroastrianism. Ormuzd was henceforth worshipped as a second Asshur. In subsequent days when Babylon became the most powerful centre of the existing civilisations the Persians came into contact with the Jews and the Israelites, and from them they got impetus to reform their religion. During the reign of Darius Hystespes the stern worshippers of Ormuzd made endeavours to purify 'the faith of Zoroaster of all its foreign excrescences.' In these endeavours they were rewarded with success and once again Zoroastrian Persia became a dominant power of the world.

But before one hundred years passed by, Zoroastrianism absorbed into Ormuzd's worship the Semitic gods of the subject states and soon it imbibed the evils of idolatry which it had combated in its beginning. And with the downfall of the Achamanian empire Zoroaster's faith lost its vitality.

Once again the Zoroastrian mobeds, priests, gathered round Ardeshir Babekan, the founder of the Sasanid dynasty, with hopes of religious renovation and succeeded in their inspiration. It was under the early Sasanid rulers that the Zoroastrians reached the zenith of their power and for centuries they fought with Rome for the Asian empire

and times without number they defeated the Romans and took the Caesars into captivity to prove their might and strength.

History repeats itself and the Zoroastrians degraded once again. Religion now became a matter of the altars of temples and died out from the heart of the people. Evils multiplied and oppression of the later Sasanid rulers and the sectarian turmoils throughout the empire hastened the extinction of the Zoroastrian nation finally to be won over by Islam in the seventh century of Christian era.

To resume Christianity we find that the Roman empire comprised more than half of Europe, the whole of North Africa and a large part of Western Asia at the time Jesus began to preach his new gospel. This vast area later on became the seed-ground of Christianity and also a fighting place for many contending sects and faiths.

In course of its expansion Christianity came into contact with Greek and Egyptian faiths in addition to those of Moses and Zoroaster. The Egyptians worshipped Osiris, Isis and Horus and the Greeks adored Zeus, Demeter and Apollo or Dionysus.<sup>23</sup> The trinitarian belief was thus common to both these faiths and this seemed to influence later Christian Trinity to which Christ himself hardly referred. In fact, the 'Redeemer' forcefully stated: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."<sup>24</sup>

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23. Ameer Ali, Spirit of Islam, p. XXXVI.

24. St. Matthew 4:10.

Let us now turn to Arabia, the birth place of Islam, the latest manifestation of divine religion. Before the advent of Muhammed Arabia became a land of heterogeneous elements and Mecca, 'The Chapel of Abraham and Moses', being a flourishing business centre attracted the Semites, the Jews, the Zoroastrians, the Christians and many others who brought with them all their traditions, myths and legends. The Arabs, particularly the Meccans, became addicted to drinking, gambling, dancing, singing and burying the female child alive. Polygamy became rampant and a widow passed into the hands of the deceased father's son for his use. Politically Arabia was divided among chieftains who were in constant fight with each other; and religiously she was a land of idol-gods, the Kaaba being the temple of some such three hundred sixty gods. \*

In such an environment came Muhammad with the uncompromising message of one God and of universal peace and brotherhood. The divine light that shone on the Sinai, † the light that brightened the Mount of Galilee, †† now got aflame on the Hill of Mecca. †††

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\* Amr ibn Luhay of the Abuzah tribe of South Arabia first brought from at-balca of Syria a few idols, erected them around the Kaaba and introduced idol-worship in Mecca where Abraham established the 'House' for the sole worship of one God (Vide: Paris, Book of Idols, pp. 4-7).

† Mount Sinai where Moses (1200-500 B.C.?) used to converse with the Lord God of Israel and where once he fell into swoon at the sight of divine light

†† A hill in Galilee from whose top Christ made his famous statement of truth that he had come not to destroy the Law and the prophets but to fulfil them.

††† The Hill of Mecca (Cave Hira) where Muhammad absorbed himself years together in meditation for truth and light which he received at the age of forty in 610 A.D.

## Chapter 4

### Development of the Idea of Divine Unity till the Advent of Islam.

#### I : Judaism.

We have stated earlier that essentially every great religion believes, in its purity and simplicity, in God's unity. Tawhid or Unity of God is the core not only of Islam, the last of the revealed religions. On the otherhand, fundamentally all great religions believe in the unity of God which has reached an uncompromising attitude in the Quran and in Muhammad.

Human mind is very complex and mysterious too. On many occasions it prefers to speak of mono-god, and at others it shows antipathy to one God. Sometimes it likes to attribute human qualities to God, the creator; sometimes it shows an intense desire to think of Him in supra-human spiritual terms. Because of this complex character of the human mind we come across diametrically opposite theistic concepts like monotheism and polytheism. Not only this, at times human mind shows antipathy to the idea of God and the atheist declares that god is only a creation of human weakness.

It is a long controversy in metaphysics and science if God exists or not. Religion, however, does not pose such questions. For it is not a science of abstract arguments; and it is not a theoretical polemic cut loose of the finer practical moorings of life. Religion is an exhaustive

code of life; it is a comprehensive analysis of the universe. Hence it believes in God, the only answer to the puzzling unanswerable questions of science and metaphysics.

A reading of the Old Testament reveals that the Hebrew people used to worship many tribal and clan gods. But as tradition has it Adam, the first messenger of divine religion, taught that God is one. And inspite of the reassertions of Adam's monothism by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Hebrews paid homage to many gods very often creating strifes and factions among the people.

To bring about unity and harmony among men, the prophet of the Mount Sinai had invited them to one God as did the prophet of the Cave of Hira in a much later time. Indeed Moses' famous saying: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: carries an import of the same kind as does Islam's: There is no deity but Allah.

Both Moses and Muhammad fought against polytheism and idolatry almost in similar circumstances of social unrest and of moral and religious degeneration. Like Muhammad, Moses had brought long ago for man a simple monothestic religion whose watch-words are: 'Yahweh is no longer the God of gods and Lord of lords' <sup>1</sup> but is 'God and besides Him there is none.' <sup>2</sup> Jehova thus becomes the universal God, the God of the Jews and of the Gentiles and the Lord God of the whole of creation. ✪

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1. Deuteronomy 10 : 17.

2. I Kinge 8 : 60, II Kings 19 : 15, Isa 37 : 16, Deut. 4 : 35, 37; 7 : 9.

The old Testament also tells us that the Hebrews not only believed in many gods but also they used to worship idols and images like the followers of Paganism and Hinduism. Warning against idolatry the Book says, "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto them: for I am the Lord your God. Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord."<sup>3</sup> The Leviticus rejects outright every idea of idol-worship and proclaims: "Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the Lord your God."<sup>4</sup>

With Moses began an uncompromising monotheistic spiritual religion out of which "grew up not only the ethical monotheism of the Jews but also the daughter creeds of Christianity and Islam."<sup>5</sup> Reasserting the faith of Abraham who believed in one sovereign god, the 'Lord God' of the universe, Moses' religion boldly discarded the Hebrew belief in many "gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites."<sup>6</sup> The prophet boldly declared: "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else."<sup>7</sup>

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3. Leviticus 26:1-2.

4. Ibid., 19:4.

5. Bhattacharyya, Foundations of Living Faiths, p. 277.

6. Joshua 24:15.

7. Deuteronomy 4:39.

Moses' universal God is not simply an otherworldly-divine-god having no relation with man in his affairs of the practical daily life. His God is rather a constant companion in life. That God lives with man and always helps him in righteous actions becomes as clear as the broad-daylight from the very life and mission of Moses himself. It was the 'Lord God' who constantly guided and helped Moses in preaching his divine gospel to mankind and in delivering the Hebrews from the oppression of the Egyptians whose Pharaohs at times claimed even godhood.

The second Book of Moses\* then gives an elaborate description how his Lord God helped him in delivering the children of Israel from the clutches of the Egyptians.<sup>8</sup>

The Exodus constantly declares that the Lord of the universe is Jehova alone and save Him there is no Lord. Warning man against idolatry and polytheism the book says: "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed."<sup>9</sup>

The religion of Moses lays further emphasis on man's moral life and maintains that God holds moral relations with human beings. Thus the Lord God of the Israel says: "When ye come to appear before me .... Bring no more vain oblations; ..... Your hands are full of blood, wash ye, make you clean; put away the evils of your doings from before

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\* Exodus which literally means exit - exit from polytheism and idolatry.

8. Exodus, 6 - 14.

9. Ibid., 22 : 20.

mine eyes, cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow ..... If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: how is the faithful city become an harlot ! it was full of judgement; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Thy princes are rebellions, and companions of thieves: everyone loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them:"<sup>10</sup> It is undoubtedly a good explanation of the moral character of God and man. It is also a warning for those who transgress God's commandments.

As to how man should respond to truth, goodness and justice, Micah writes: "wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow before the high God? shall I come before him with the burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousand of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? he hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God:"<sup>11</sup>

From what has been said above about Judaism and the role played therein by Moses, we may observe that his God was one and universal and almighty and permanent, and that he came to guide man to truth and deliver the hebrews from the oppression of polytheistic and idolatrous Egyptians.

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10. Isa 1 : 10-23.

11. Micah 6:6-8.



## II : Zoroastrianism.

because of the presence of Ahriman in the Zoroastrian theology, Zoroaster's religion has sometimes been categorised as a dualistic theism. His religion divides creation into two distinct spheres - the Good and the evil. And this brings about an apparent dualism between Ahuramazdah and Ahriman. This dualism is unavoidable from metaphysical and moral points of view. But from the theological angle it carries little difficulty and judged from this perspective there stands hardly any problem of dualism in Zoroastrianism. Because from the religious point of view Ahriman is not a god but like Iblis a rebel against God.<sup>12</sup>

A close study of the Avesta reveals that Ahuramazdah alone is omniscient and almighty. He alone is the primeval spiritual Being, the Wise Lord, the All-father, the Eternal. Ahuramazdah was ever existent before the world came into existence. Angra Mainyu is created, it is ignorant and lives ever in darkness innocent of both of its own creations and Ahuramazdah.<sup>13</sup>

Ahuramazdah is the omniscient lord. He is the creator of the physical, the moral, and the spiritual worlds together with their laws and regulations. He has dominance over the evil and the instincts of man.

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12. Cf: At first glance, Zoroaster's religion appears to give an idea contrary to the monotheistic conception of God. For the Zend Avesta often speaks of two deities - Ahuramazdah and Ahriman. Essentially Zoroastrianism is monotheistic, because it assures the victory of Ahuramazdah over Ahriman who 'seems about on the level with the Christian Satan. Ahuramazdah is one God and he alone is truly divine'; - Cunningham, Problems of Philosophy, p. 405.

13. Yasna 43:16; 19:9.

He has however granted freedom and individual responsibility in the moral world and as such there is strife between the Good and the evil, between the Better and the Bad, the Right and the Lie.

The Zoroastrian scripture conceives of "Ahuramazdah as the First and the Last, who in the beginning filled the blessed worlds with light and created light as well as men and other things and will at the end judge the actions of life, whether done in the open or in secret."<sup>14</sup>

Ahuramazdah is the supreme God. He is not a departmental deity like the Sun, the Moon, the wind or the waters. He rules over all the departments of nature and reigns supreme in the entire universe. And His is the authority over all the physical and moral worlds.

In his religious mission Zoroaster did not pay homage to "a far-off divinity fabled in ancient scriptures."<sup>15</sup> On the contrary, he believed in a God in whose presence the Good spirit led him into an ecstatic experience through which, like Moses and Muhammad, he received the divine message to call man to Ahuramazdah, the supreme God.

The mission of the Persian prophet was a message of truth. It was meant for piety and righteousness; Zoroaster's aim was to remove earthly discomfiture and agony which are the products of the Lie. His religious reformation aimed at the removal of crudities and contradictions

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14. Yasna 30:7-9.

15. Foundations, p. 428.

of the faith of his ancestors among whom "polytheism was rampant and cruel cults and nocturnal orgies passed in the name of religion."<sup>16</sup>

Zoroaster, as we come across in the Avesta, ascribed to God a spiritual character and in his religion no material form of worship could assert well. His spiritual god, the unity behind all existence, was named Mazda Ahura or Ahura Mazda by Zoroaster. This name was however transformed into Ahuramazda (Pahlavi), Ahuramazdah (Achaemenian), and into Ormuzd or Hormuzd in subsequent periods in Persian history.

The spiritual monotheism that Zoroaster preached with great zeal and vigour to remove the ills of the traditional polytheisms was, as we have already stated, however categorised as a 'ditheism with Ormuzd and Ahriman dividing the entire existence between them.' Later Zoroastrian books such as the Vendidad held that this dualistic tendency was latent in the prophet's own teachings. It also happened that Zoroaster's monotheism was not fully appreciated and the prophet's abstractions such as the Right, the Good, the Evil, the Lie were considered as subordinate gods or deities which his teaching had virtually dethroned.

At times Zoroastrianism is also accused of idolatry as its prophet continued to worship the traditional "sacred fire just as the prophet of Islam continued to adore the Sacred Stone at Mecca."<sup>17</sup> But a truly divine messenger does in no way worship an image in place of the divine.

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16. Foundations, pp. 424-429.

17. Op. cit. p. 436.

Zoroaster himself devoted all his attention to "the spiritual essence of Ahura Mazda and not on the practice of adoring Him in fire."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps he retained the adoration of the traditional fire in view of the masses whose mental make-up at times warrants the presence of some visible symbol of the divine. We may also represent here a pertinent observation of Prophecy that "the body of Oromazdes is like light and his soul like truth"<sup>19</sup> and Bhattacharyya's view that "the nature of Ahura Mazda is wholly spiritual but ..... his most appropriate visible symbol is the sacred fire".<sup>20</sup> Following a mystic we may add: To an external observer it might appear as idolatry but from the perspective of a seer of truth it will certainly signify something radically different. For the latter finds that God pervades everything and he sees the spiritual in and through the creation of the divine.

A close analysis of the religious teachings of Zoroaster reveals that his God is divine; Ahura Mazda is the first and last, and the omniscient, almighty Lord who rules over the entire universe. Ahura Mazda is basically good and will finally bring the evil to doom. Evil, according to Zoroaster, is not an illusion or maya but is something real, a relative creation of the revolting Ahriman, which can be removed through a constant and strenuous moral struggle.

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18. Op. cit., p. 436.

19. Ibid, p. 437.

20. Ibid, p. 437.

We have seen in the above paragraphs that Zoroaster's concentrated aim has been to call man to an Almighty God who rules over every aspect of life and universe. Mazda Ahura is the Supreme Being who dominates over all departments of the physical and spiritual worlds and behind all plurality, in the creation, he is the divine unity.

### III : Hinduism.

The history of Hinduism is a long, long one. It is said to have been born in ancient India long before the birth of Christ and Moses. This religion of old is commonly and apparently characterized as a polytheistic and idolatrous faith. There is reason, too, for such an attitude. The common ordinary Hindus pay homage to a number of gods and goddesses such as Indra, Vishnu, Ganesh, Kartic, Kali, Laxmi, Saraswati etc. etc., through the worship of idols and images. But behind all these outward expressions of Hinduism, a spiritually educated Hindu, like Gandhi, senses 'the unique splendor of the one true fountain.' To him the only real being is Brahma, the ground of all existence.

The early Vedic religion believes in many gods and deities. With the passage of time speculations however developed in Vedic faith to the effect that Hinduism or brahmanism culminates either in Brahma or in Ishwara; the supreme God.

Later Vedic literature developed a marked monothestic outlook. In its Prajapati-Viswakarma theory we find Prajapati as the supreme Lord

of all beings. Prajapati literally means 'Lord of beings'. He was also conceived as the highest deity who is the repository of highest moral and physical powers. Similar attributes have also been attributed to Viswakarma, the father and protector of all beings. Himself uncreated, Viswakarma has been considered in later Vedic literature as the All-Creator.<sup>21</sup>

Still later the Upanishads discarded the early Vedic concept of many gods and the Chandoyga Upanishad propounded the doctrine of the 'Primal Unitary Being'. This book maintains what existed originally is the 'Sat' or Being or existent. The Upanishads maintain clearly that "so far as reality was concerned, there was not much to choose between man and god, heaven and earth, for ultimately all were manifestations of a single impersonal spiritual principle, namely the Brahman."<sup>22</sup>

The Bhagavad Gita also holds a mono-theistic concept of God and this has clearly been manifested in its identification of the 'Samkhya Prakriti' with 'Mahat Brahma'.<sup>23</sup> The Gita exhibits a respectful attitude towards the Upanishadic Brahma and it speaks of the existence of a universal Divine Being which in philosophic terms may be expressed as the ground of all existence. The Song Celestial says:-

"They who know Me as the highest Being, the highest  
Divinity, the highest sacrifice, even in death perceive  
Me, their hearts united to Me . . . . ."

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21. Dasgupta, A History of India Philosophy, Vol. I, pp. 19-20.

22. Foundations., p. 178.

23. Gita, V. 24-26.

I am the father of this world, the mother, the guardian, the fathers' father; I am the end of knowledge, the purifier, the sacred syllable, the hymn, the chant, the sacred sentence. I am the way, the supporter, the Lord, the witness, the house, the refuge, the beloved; the forthcoming and withdrawing, the place, the treasure, the everlasting seed .....<sup>24</sup>"

The Upanishads and the Gita thus took the concept of unity in right earnest and Brahma was made the only all-pervasive spiritual essence or reality of the entire universe. Added to this outlook of the Gita and the Upanishads, the Vedic idea that the ultimate principle of existence is capable of assuming diverse forms paved the way for the 'Advaita Vedanta' which was made familiar later by Shankara. Gods and goddesses, so long believed to be the sole controllers of man's destiny, now disappeared in the background and henceforth they were reduced only to transitory manifestations of Brahma -- the Absolute.

The Rig-Veda, which uses a different terminology for God, considers Varuna as a noble lord, a king and a universal monarch. To him belongs, according to the Rig-Vedantist, all sovereignty and he possesses mysterious powers. The Rig-Veda continues to maintain that in Varuna is established the whole world and that the entire universe obeys his laws. The heavenly bodies and the terrestrial objects, all move according to the

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24. Lyon, The Great Religions, Chapter on Hinduism.

regulations of God. "Nothing is secret from him - neither the hidden depths of the earth nor hidden depths of the human mind."<sup>25</sup>

A study of the epics or the Puranas also discloses that a serious and systematic attempt was made to posit a self-sufficient unitary God. God, the creator and controller of the physical as well as moral world, has been depicted in the Puranas in three different phases - Narayan, Visnu and Arishna. The 'Visnu-Narayan-Arishna' concept of the Puranic God has been beautifully outlined by Carpenter in the following way:

"Above all gods he rises, like Brahman of old, or Siva as Maheswar, into sole Deity. Nature is the scene of his sovereignty; there he reigns as King of Kings; foremost in the universe, there is no higher Being in the three worlds. Hymn after hymn celebrates his unceasing activity. The mighty frame of earth and heaven constitutes his body; the sky is his head, the sun and the moon his eyes, the winds his breaths. Without beginning and without end, an infinite eternal energy, he pervades all worlds, the unchanging fountain of all power, so that the whole creation springs from him and disappears in him. He is the Infinite self .... Visnu is no mere metaphysical entity transcending the Three Strands (Satta, Rajas and Tamas), an abstract magnitude, an intellectual identification of cause and effect, a ritual harmony of sacrificer, priest, offering and deity. He is God with a character, source of all Morality, Revealer of all Truth."<sup>26</sup>

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25. Foundations, p. 198.

26. Carpenter, Theism in Medieval India, pp. 244-243.



Again, according to Vedanta, the only ultimate reality is Brahma from whom originates all being, every existence, the entire universe. Brahma is self-existent and eternal. He originated not from anything else and thus he alone is the pure being. Nothing except Brahma existed before him, nor will anything survive him. He is above cause, time and space and is thus the everliving, the eternal. All else is subject to space and time and causation; they all are transitory. Plurality is thus temporal, and unity alone is permanent.<sup>27</sup>

Brahma is the all-pervading being; there exists no object without Brahma as its substratum. The object, divorced from Brahma, is a non-entity. Nothing has independent existence, that is, no object exists independent of and apart from Brahma. The reality of an object or thing is relative. The only absolute being is Brahma.<sup>28</sup>

Uncompromising monists, like Shankara, maintain that Brahma has no attributes apart from his being or essence. For Brahma is eternal and changeless whereas attributes imply change. Others, Ramanuja for instance, hold the all-pervading Brahma is not in abstract reality without any attributes like justice, mercy, truth and goodness. They believe that in quiddity Brahma is one; he however, becomes many in creation by his own will. Thus from the standpoint of creation, the one is many; the many in one. The universe has originated from Brahma, it

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27. Kirticar, Studies in Vedanta, p. 1.

28. Ibid, pp. 1-2.

lives in him and also will it dissolve into him in the process of evolution. In other words, the ground of all things and beings is Brahma in whom they live and make their final rest too. In short, the universe remains always one with Brahma and is never cognised apart from him. Brahma is thus the unity behind all plurality.

The Vedantist further holds that man's spiritual development is a long process through Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Yogo. In this process he gradually proceeds towards enlightenment and giving up the cravings of his lower self he absorbs, within his self all other selves and finally discovers his identity with Brahma, the universal soul. Here in this stage of soul's development the sense of 'I' and 'Thou', 'mine' and 'thine' disappears and the soul so developed feels the unity unalloyed and enjoys the bliss divine. The Vedantist continues and maintains that until this highest spiritual perfection is attained, one cannot deny the many-fold character of the universe, the plurality of God and his creation; Plurality or multiplicity is a phenomenon before the large masses, unity is the truth intuited by the selected few.

A most modern manifestation of Vedanta's synthetic spiritualism we find in Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda, the two stalwarts of modern India's religious thought.

Ramkrishna's life was a 'veritable spiritual laboratory' where he performed all sorts of spiritual experiments. It is usually held that he did everything under inspiration from the Divine Mother and like a 'spiritual rose' he blossomed under the fond eyes of God.

The 'synthetic intellectual spirit' of Ram Mohan established the Brahma Samaj which strengthened by Debendranath's 'aesthetic intuitionism' and 'the living ecstatic faith' of Keshab Chandra became a strong movement during the early life of Ramkrishna. As a result of the Brahma-movement of Ram Mohan and others, the traditional Hindu faith was greatly shaken. With his spiritual genius Ramkrishna however established that the Religion of the Vedanta was no idolatry and that it was a fine scientific discipline which can evoke 'spiritual powers and extensive visions.'<sup>29</sup>

Beginning with the traditional method as a worshipper of the 'Divine Mother', Ramkrishna attained wisdom of the transcendental and discovered the esoteric path that leads to spiritual and esoteric wisdom. He also transcended the differences that the adherents of different faiths usually entertain. In addition to the faith in which he was born and brought up, Ramkrishna practised even Christianity and Islam to judge them by their own merits. As a result he respected the Quran and even performed said the namaz and meditated on the Madonna and the child-Christ. For he could not well accept differences in the fundamental convictions of human life. Therefore, after different forms of Sadhana (spiritual exercise) he declared: "as many doxies, so many paths: all paths lead to the same goal."<sup>30</sup>

The truth realized by Ramkrishna was handed down to Vivekananda to give it a practical shape so that humanity could realize the Vedantic

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29. Sircar, *Eastern Lights*, pp. 225-227.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

truth through life, social and individual. Initially an 'intellectual agnostic' Vivekananda finally saw in Ramkrishna a living image of truth and love and got illumination of the divine under the guidance of his master. According to Vivekananda the finest fulfilment of life is realized in the Transcendence. He does not however under-rate religious love and emotion. He maintains that spiritual fulfilment may be had through different paths, namely Jnana, Karma, Bhakti and Yogo. In different philosophical systems like Dvaita, Visista-Dvaita and Advaita, he discovered an unity behind their logical differences. He holds that in these systems we come across a "gradual working up of the human mind towards higher and higher ideals, till everything is merged in that wonderful unity which is reached in the Advaita system. Therefore these three are not contradictory, they all necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, 'Thou art That' is reached."<sup>31</sup>

Vivekananda realized truth in the majesty of the self or atman and held that salvation was not a matter of grace from a soft and kind God but had to be worked out 'through struggle, knowledge and wisdom.'

On the lofty principles of Vedanta which were embodied in Ramkrishna, Vivekananda founded a church to impart education on religion and philosophy. His aim was to train up a corps of 'soldiers of peace, refinement, knowledge and love.' The ideal of Ramkrishna was spiritual

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31. Complete works of Shree Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 396 (quoted in Eastern Lights, p. 254).

synthesis and hence Vivekananda's church embraces all men of all religious denominations. It also recognises the potentiality of every form of spiritual approach and religious worship. It accepts, with all gods and goddesses, Buddha and Christ and Shankara and Ramanuja and makes an attempt to harmonize them in the great all-embracing unity after the Catholic spirit of the Vedanta.

From what has been said above we can hold that behind all faiths and creeds of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Vedanta there is basically one God, one being — Brahma, the Unity behind all plurality.

#### IV : Buddhism.

As predicted before his birth, the thoughtful Prince Gautama finally left the palace and renounced the throne in search of truth at the age of twenty-nine, deeply moved by the sight of a decrepit old man, a diseased man, a dead man and a monk. And after long strenuous exercise of half of a decade in asceticism and discipline of the self Sidharta became the Buddha, the enlightened one.<sup>32</sup>

Buddhism is generally held as an atheistic religion. For one does not find in it a reference to a personal deity to whom traditional worship and adoration may be offered. However in its priestly form it does not leave its followers bereft of hope in some sort of power which

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32. Seal, Romantic History of Buddha, pp. 105-139.

makes for universal love and righteousness. And from this perspective "the Unity of all things in Nirvana is the burden of Buddha's message."<sup>33</sup>

Buddhism is said to have been born as a protest against metaphysical Brahmanism in India and its main aim was to attain salvation from sorrows and sufferings of common practical life. Accordingly Buddha addressed himself to find out the path of Nirvana and hardly did he talk about God about whom too much was spoken before him. Hence Buddhism in its original character appears to be 'agnostic,' if not 'atheistic.' But ethically it ranks as 'a lofty morality and philanthropy'.<sup>34</sup>

The fundamental teaching of Buddhism has been worded as: "All is impermanence, there is no ego, and Nirvana is the only calm."<sup>35</sup> An analysis of these fundamental doctrines - universal impermanence, non-ego and Nirvana - of Buddhism is indispensable if one has to discuss whether the principle of unity or ultimate reality or God has any place in Buddhist thought. I will therefore first try to make brief explanations of these doctrines.

We know that in ancient Greece Heraclitus propounded a philosophy of change and becoming, and like his 'All is in a state of flux' Buddhist universal impermanence implies that all is in a state of becoming, that everything is subject to change. In other words, this doctrine signifies

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33. Cunningham, *Problems of Philosophy*, p. 405.

34. Ueden, *Studies in the religions of the East*, p. 433.

35. Sogen, *Systems of Buddhist Thought*, p. 7.

that there is no permanent being, there is only change and becoming. In support of its contention that all is impermanent Buddhism holds, no event in this phenomenal world exists without some cause which actually means that everything in nature has been caused and this implies their destruction too. For origination implies destruction.

Whyts Davids has made a nice exposition of this tenet of Buddhist philosophy. He says: "According to the Buddhist there is no being, there is only a becoming, the state of every individual being unstable, temporary, sure to pass away. Even among things we find in each individual form and material qualities; and living organisms too possess a continually ascending series of mental qualities, the union of which makes up the individual. Everything, be it a person, a thing or a god, is, therefore, merely a putting together of component elements. Further, in each individual without exception the relation of its component parts is eternally changing and never the same for even two consecutive moments. Putting together implies becoming, becoming means becoming different, and becoming different cannot arise without a dissolution, a passing away, which must inevitably at some time or other be complete."<sup>36</sup>

As to non-entity of the self or ego, Buddhism holds that everything is without self (sarvam anatman). By the dictum - sarvam anatman - the Buddhist wants to state that there is no such thing as an eternal substance which is exempt from vicissitudes of change and decay, which

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36. Whyts Davids, *Early Buddhism*, pp. 56-57 (Quoted by Sogen in his 'Systems', p.8).

is independent in existence and capable of entering into other things. This doctrine stands, *prima facie*, for the denial of both subjective ego or personal ego and the objective or world-ego. This denial of the ego in Buddhist thought follows as a necessary logical conclusion from its premise that 'All is impermanence'. In its struggle to overcome pain and suffering (*Dukha-Klesha*) Buddhism does not, however, reject the idea of an empirical ego which like all other things is merely a transitory and provisional phenomenon.

The doctrine of Nirvana deserves special attention. For it is the very core of Buddhist religion and round it revolve various schools of Buddhist thought. 'Nirvanam Santam' - Nirvana is the only calm; in this simple sentence the Buddhists formulate their third *maatra* (goal or fundamental), the axis of Buddhism. Nirvana, they further hold, is the *sin qua non* of any attempt to understand Buddhism.

As to the exact meaning of Nirvana it is held that Nirvana is essentially inexplicable. The following conversation that took place some two thousand years ago between Milinda, a Greek King and Nagasena, a Buddhist sage, will throw light on the subject :

[ "Venerable Nagasena", said King Milinda, "the Nirvana of which you are always talking, can you explain to me by metaphors, elucidation, or argument, its form, figure, duration or measurement?"

"That I cannot, O King", replied Nagasena, "for Nirvana has nothing similar to it." "I can not bring myself to believe", continued



Milinda, "that of Nirvana which, after all, is a condition that exists, it should be impossible in any way to make us understand the form or figure, duration or measure. how do you explain this?"

"Tell me O King", said Nagasena, "is there such a thing as the great ocean?" "Yes", replied the king. "Now", continued the sage, "suppose some one were to ask your Majesty, how much water is in the ocean, and how many the creatures that dwell therein; what would you answer?" "I would say to him," replied the king, "that such a question should not be asked, and that the point should be left alone, seeing that the physicists have never examined the ocean in that way and no one can measure the water or count the creatures that it contains. Such, Sir, would be my answer."

"But why would Majesty", enquired the sage, "make such a reply? The ocean is after all a thing which really exists. You ought rather to tell the man that such and so much is the water of the ocean and such and so many are the creatures that dwell therein." "That would be impossible", said the king, "for the answer to such a question is beyond human power." "Equally impossible O King", said Nagasena, "is it to tell the measure, form, figure or duration of Nirvana, although Nirvan is a condition that after all does exist. And even if one endowed with magical powers may succeed in measuring the water and counting the creatures in the ocean, he would never be able to tell the form, figure, duration or measure of Nirvana." <sup>37</sup>

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37. The Question of King Milinda, Part II, pp. 186-187 (quoted in the 'Systems', pp. 29-30).

The above conversation of the Greek King and the Buddhist sage makes it clear that like a great ocean (of that age) Nirvana is unfathomable, immeasurable and inexplicable too. Attempts have however been made to gather some idea about Nirvana, the nucleus of Buddhist thought. In the following paragraphs we will endeavour to explain as best as we can, this central doctrine of Buddhism. For, from this doctrine of Nirvana aided by that of Dharmakaya or Dharmaloka one may form an idea of the Buddhist transcending reality or principle of unity, if at all.

Etymologically Nirvana carries a privative meaning; it stands for absence or 'cessation' of something. According to Sanskrit scholars the term 'Nirvana' is derived from 'nir' which means absence or privation, 'Va' or blowing and 'na' which implies wind; thus nirvana means 'cessation of a gust of wind'. And this with a slight elasticity of meaning has been worded as 'the extinction of a lamp.'<sup>38</sup>

It is gathered that 'Nirvana' has been used in about forty senses by Chinese translators of the Buddhist Sacred Canon. All these meanings are however 'indicative of the idea of emancipation, absolute calm, and supreme bliss'.<sup>39</sup>

In its negative sense, nirvana stands for blowing out or extinction of the fires of lust, malice and folly. We may say, in a different

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38. Systems, p. 31.

39. Op. cit., p. 32.

way, that nirvana annihilates all selfish thoughts so as to effect liberation from the texture of life and death for the attainment of salvation or bliss. The positive aspect of nirvana, on the contrary, signifies the exercise of wisdom, love and generosity, the three cardinal virtues of life. To put in a different way, we may say that nirvana stands for a vision of truth, purity of heart and above all for altruism or universal unity and friendship.

Buddhist thinkers and scholars have written copiously on Buddha's philosophy of Nirvana and have characterized it as the summum bonum of life. Nirvana, they maintain, removes ignorance and sorrows of life and acquaints man with bliss unalloyed. They further hold that through detached action's and discipline of the self, through devotion and 'cessation of cognition' one can realize salvation, 'the position of <sup>40</sup> suchness'.

In their attempt to explain the nature and being of the Buddha, the Mahayana Buddhists appear to have propounded a philosophy of idealistic and mystic character. Like the Vedantist thinkers, the Mahayana Buddhist philosophers hold that the ground of all existence, the ultimate principle of the universe is beyond rational knowledge; it lies beyond the grasp of logic and intellect. Their ultimate principle of the universe or reality is apprehended through 'spiritual intuition.' To this reality they ascribe different names, such as bodhi (intellect),

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40. Systems, pp. 33-35.

Dharma (law or virtuousness), shutatathata (suchness), Dharmakaya (body of Law) or Dharmaloka (objective world).<sup>41</sup>

According to this school of Buddhist thought, the universe is the manifestation of 'one Great Spirit', 'One Mind', 'One essential principle of purity and righteousness' which is present everywhere in the universe. It is that ultimate reality which is the animating principle behind and above all existence. It is incapable of being defined and named adequately. It may however be described as the only eternal reality that transcends all. The relation between this eternal reality and the universe may be compared to the one that holds between the moon and the ocean. The moon reflects in the ocean and yet that which reflects in the ocean is not the moon. Similarly the universe is only a 'reflection of that infinite and absolute mind.' Adherents of this school proceed on and hold that people whose hearts are 'overlaid with self-love and ignorance' cannot discern the Dharmaloka; only perfect-minded people are capable of knowing the real. They further maintain that only through a perfect knowledge of the Dharmakaya, the 'One Great Spirit' one can attain deliverance from ignorance and attain salvation or Nirvana.

In the Dharmaloka, which may also be described as the principle of 'oneness of all things', phenomenon and noumenon find absolute harmony with each other. Putting it in a different form, we may say that

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41. Studies, p. 532; Systems, p. 41.

phenomena or things and their noumenon or reality do not exist apart from each other. We may illustrate this with the help of a concrete example. The water of the sea and its waves appear as two events but in essence one forms the other, i.e. one is the essence and the other is the form. To speak in technical terms, 'noumenon is the substratum of the phenomenon' and 'the latter is the attribute of the former.'<sup>42</sup>

Unlike the principles of universal impermanence and non-ego, the first two mudras of buddhism which relate to the phenomenal world, the doctrine of Nirvana essentially relates to the world of the noumenon. And from the noumenal point of view, Dharmaloka regards all things of the universe as one. The 'Bodhi' tree and 'Nyagrodha' tree both belong to the world of vegetables and thus they are essentially one; so also are trees, man and animals, for they all belong to the kingdom of the living. In a similar way one can arrive at "the one and the same thing" which looks diverse in its apparent nature. In fact, things are many and yet one; they are one and yet many. I am not 'thou' and thou art not 'I'; and yet we are all one in essence".<sup>43</sup> Well writes the poet:

"Rain and hail and ice and snow,  
Neither like the other lo  
When they melt, however, lo  
See one stream of water flow."<sup>44</sup>

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42. Systems, p. 292.

43. U. cit. p. 292.

44. Ibid., p. 292.

Again, later Mahayanism maintains that religiously the Dharmakaya may be termed as the Buddha-kaya or God which is the gate of both 'sameness' and 'difference', or unity and diversity. It is the same unity in the world of the 'One Great Spirit' and diversity or difference in the world of individual existence. The former is one, the latter is many. Wording it in a different form we may state: "All things return to One, and the One operates in all things; many in one and one in many."

From the above account of Nirvana and Dharmaloka we may state perhaps rightly, that although in its initial stage Buddha's religion appeared agnostic and atheistic in regard to the ultimate reality or God, in its later development as a world religion and particularly in its metaphysical aspect Buddhism speaks in clear and distinct terms of one transcendental reality which alone is real and eternal and which is the unity behind all plurality.

#### V : Christianity.

The unique characteristic of every religion is that it refers to an object of worship which generally is known as God. The idea of God in both philosophy and religion is, however, associated with values and with the advancement of his civilization man becomes more and more intellectually "conscious of the coalescence of their various values, and polytheism tends toward some sort of unity."<sup>45</sup>

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45. Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, pp. 138-139.

As stated before, God is one but there is in man a propensity to personify God in His ideals and values and from this instinctive nature of man there arises a plurality of gods. Robert S. Frank is of the opinion that the Christian dogma of Trinity is such an example of the personification and objectification of God by man. He writes: "God is, first, the objectified reason. This is God the Father. Secondly, He is the hypostatized principle of love and friendship. This is God the Son. Thirdly, He is an objectification of the religious sentiment itself, the heart's sighing after God. This is God the Holy Ghost."<sup>46</sup>

A reading of the Bible reveals that Jesus Christ did not bring and preach an altogether new religion. His faith symbolizes, on the other hand, a continuity in the Abrahamic tradition of unity which began with Adam. In fact Christ and his revelation represent the esoteric aspect of the Abrahamic tradition, the internal dimension of the primordial religion of Adam; he did not bring a new law, he only brought a way based on divine love.<sup>47</sup>

That Jesus did not propagate a new religion of trigods and that he did not come to undo the law preached by the prophets of old had been eloquently and distinctly declared by the prophet of the Gospel:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

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46. Frank, *The Metaphysical Justification of Religion*, p. 34.

47. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, pp. 34-35.

for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."<sup>48</sup>

True, we come across in the Bible phrases like, 'My Father' 'Your Father' which have been spoken of God. The word 'Father' has not however been used in the literal sense but in a metaphorical sense only to signify the depth of love that exists between man and God. And that's the real meaning of the term we sense in, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of the heaven and earth."<sup>49</sup>

Asked by a scribe as to what is the first commandment Jesus said: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."<sup>50</sup> This very statement of Jesus clearly discloses his acceptance verbatim of the monotheistic 'law' of Moses. Speaking on the second commandment Jesus said: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'<sup>51</sup>

Commenting on these two commandments the prophet said: "There is none other commandment greater than these:"<sup>52</sup> These verses explain the essence of his religion of one God and love; love for God and

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48. St. Matthew, 5: 17-18.

49. Ibid., 12: 25.

50. St. Mark, 13: 28-30.

51. Ibid., 13: 31.

52. Ibid., 13: 31.



love for man. And those who live upon such a faith of devotion and love draw themselves near to the kingdom of God, the prophet taught.<sup>53</sup>

Christianity is essentially a religion of divine unity. It is however open to criticism because of the concept of Trinity. Therefore it is imperative that we explain what really is meant by the so-called doctrine of Trinity.

Both the Bible and the Quran speak of the miraculous birth of Jesus.<sup>54</sup> This unnatural birth of the prophet has provided room for the dogmatic to talk about trinity. We should however realize the significance of this miraculous birth of the prophet.

The maiden Mary became afraid when she received tidings from Gabriel about her becoming a mother and giving birth to a son. She became afraid because people would call her unchaste and blame her as a harlot when they would see her giving birth to a child without being married and having a husband: Gabriel then said: "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus."<sup>55</sup>

God the omnipotent can do miracles. His power is unlimited and his wisdom unfathomable. God's power and wisdom arouse in us

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53. St. Mark, 13: 33-34.

54. St. Matt. 1: 18-21; Quran, 3: 45-47.

55. St. Luke 1: 30-31.

wonder and that is why a mortal like us, Mary, got astonished when she received the news of her becoming a mother without the companionship of a spouse. Mary thou asked Gabriel: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"<sup>56</sup> The angel replied: "And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible."<sup>57</sup>

Similar views we come across in the Quran which is but a continuity of the Abrahamic tradition to which also is related Christ's mission: "Behold, the angels said: "O Mary: God giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him: His name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and hereafter, And of (the company of) those nearest to God."<sup>58</sup>

She said: O my Lord, how shall I have a son when no man hath touched me? He said: "Even so; God createth what he willeth, when he hath decreed a plan, He but saith 'be' and it 'is'."<sup>59</sup>

That Jesus was a servant of God and a prophet and that he came with good tidings for man have been spoken of several times in the Gospel. The Book that Muhammad brought down to earth also states: "He (Jesus) said: I am indeed a servant of God; He hath given me revelation, and made me a prophet; And He hath made me blessed wherever

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56. St. Luke 1:34.

57. Ibid., 1: 35-36.

58. Quran 3: 45..

59. Ibid. 3: 47.

I am, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and charity as long as I live." <sup>60</sup>

It is thus evident that Jesus was the 'son of Mary' and not of God. God is the sovereign power in heaven and earth; he is holy and is far above than having a filial relation with any human being. The question, therefore, is: what do the Christian and the Gospel mean by 'son of God'? To make a reply to this question let us quote from a Christian scholar: "In the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke) Jesus never speaks of himself as son of God, and rarely if ever, as son ... 'son of God' was said about Jesus by others, demoniacs, disciples, the high priest and the crowds at the cross. but Jesus himself clearly wished to avoid the misunderstandings that might be attached to this title, ideas that expressed wrong notions of the Messiah:" <sup>61</sup>

It is true that 'son' or 'son of God' occurred in the Old Testament in several meanings but in none of them any sense of physical begetting by God was suggested. The term 'son' has been used of a nation, "I have called my son out of Egypt" (Hosea 11, 1); and of the king, 'Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee' (Psalm 2, 7). Again it is used in the Old Testament apocryphal of the righteous; "So shalt thou be as a son of the Most High." <sup>62</sup>

In fact to say that God is Christ is to go against the New Testament. Paul said: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to

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60. Quran 19 : 30-31.

61. Parrinder, Jesus in the Quran, p. 128.

62. Ibid, pp. 128-129.

himself."<sup>63</sup> But this reconciliation 'through' Christ is quite different from saying that God is Christ. And having this relationship into perspective Paul again said: "You belong to Christ, and Christ to God."<sup>64</sup>

However in early Christian centuries there arose heresies, such as the heresy of Patripassianism which so identified Christ and God as to suggest that God the Father had suffered on the cross. Noetus had taught in about 200 A.D. that Christ was God the Father and that the Father himself was born and that the Father suffered and died. These views were taken to home by heretics of whom Tertullian said, "he drove out prophecy and brought in heresy, he put to flight the Comforter and crucified the Father."<sup>65</sup>

In fact, God is one in His divine essence and is not one of the three. The notion of trinity is offensive both to Christianity and Islam. The claim of real Christianity is monotheistic, it believes in one God only. As such we find Nicene Creed to begin with: 'I believe in one God'. So also do the articles of the Church of England start with: 'There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or persons; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible.'<sup>66</sup>

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63. 2 cor. 5, 19.

64. 1 cor. 3, 23.

65. Jesus in the Quran, pp. 130-132.

66. Op. cit., p. 134.

In continuation of his rejection of the dogmatic Trinity Parrinder writes. "Jesus is cleared of having suggested that he and Mary are two additional gods, or gods 'apart from God.' There is, of course, nothing in the Gospel to suggest that Jesus ever spoke in this fashion. The Quran quotes his words, 'serve God, my Lord and your Lord, 'which are in the Gospel more stronger'. "My Father and your Father, my Lord and your Lord (John 20, 17)."<sup>67</sup>

Exaltation of Mary as a god was a gradual process in Christianity. The 'Apocryphal Gospels' spoke of her perpetual virginity and this helped the growth of the cult of Mary. After the Nestorian controversy in the fifth century, the title 'God-bearer' or 'Mother of God' came to be used widely and this gave further stimulus to the devotion of Mary. But still in the Roman Church Mary is officially regarded as a creature and not as divine. Her cult (hyperdulia) is distinguished in Roman Catholic teaching from worship (latria) due to God alone.<sup>68</sup>

Viewed from its true perspective the Christian doctrine of Trinity rigidly excludes all suggestions of physical procreation and all notions of polytheism or tritheism. God is one God as said Paul: "A false god has no existence in the real world. There is no God but one."<sup>69</sup>

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67. Op. cit., p. 134.

68. Ibid., p. 134.

69. 1 cor. 8:4.

The Biblical 'son of God' implies no physical procreation by God. For the Jews were monotheists of long standing and had rooted out all divine fertility notions from their highly purified religion and it is in this highly purified sense that the New Testament speaks of 'son of God', meaning the Messiah. The phrase only implies that between God and Christ existed a great love.

Trinity officially means three persons in one God. But the Latin 'persons' means a mask. Hence one person in respect of God signifies an aspect or revelation of God. Each aspect is a "form of manifestation of the one God, seen as Creator and Father, as Saviour and Son, and as present in the Spirit."<sup>70</sup>

Metaphysically speaking, trinity does not stand opposed to unity; rather it helps the understanding of unity. Reflection shows that trinity safeguards unity. In the Quran we find that God is not a mere abstraction; there also God is in relationship with man and He uses intermediaries to convey his messages to the latter. The very Quran is thought of as the Word of God. God sends his angels and messengers to man and the Divine whispers his counsel to the human. These show God at work in the world. God is creator; He is also revealed in nature, in His messengers and in man. Islam thus bears kinship with the 'word' and 'spirit' of Christian belief.<sup>71</sup>

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70. Jesus in the Quran, p. 136.

71. Ibid, p. 137.

The Quran speaks of God as creator. It ~~also~~ speaks of the Spirit (Ruh) of God, and his word (Kalima) and command (amr). It says: "He sendeth down the angels with the spirit from his affair (command, amr) to whomsoever he willeth of his servants."<sup>72</sup> It also speaks several times of the most beautiful names of God (al-asma-al-husan). Scriptures like the Gita, the Zendavesta, and the Torah also introduce God as the Creator, the Maker, the Just, the Wise, the Sublime, the Father, the Mother, and the like. These in fact speak no plurality of God but only show the richness of the nature of the Divine.

In like manner the "Christian doctrine has tried also to expound this richness of the divine being and the divine manifestation, this diversity in unity. God as creator and provider is seen in the Father who cares for mankind. The essential nature of God as love manifesting himself in action is seen in the 'son', in the humanity of Christ, his loving actions and words, his suffering and death. The ever present nature of God is seen in the spirit, who 'spoke by the prophets', in the light of other faiths, in the church, and in his power with us still. Yet these three are one, the three-fold revelation of God to men."<sup>73</sup>

God is thus essentially one. He however reveals Himself in various ways. And therefore the Bible says :

72. Quran 16:2.

73. Jesus in the Quran, p. 138.

- 93 -

"There is one body, and one spirit ...  
One Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
One God and Father of all, who is above all,  
And through all, and in you all."<sup>74</sup>

The Book also says: "Master, thou hast said the truth: for  
there is one God; and there is none other but he:"<sup>75</sup>

From this brief account of Christianity we may aptly hold in  
agreement of Pollard that essentially the fundamental problem of the  
Bible is to avoid the worship and service of false gods and to choose  
the one true God who through Jesus Christ taught: "Mankind must follow  
only the 'Holy Spirit'."<sup>76</sup>

From a close examination and observation of these principal  
world-religions it appears that true religion is always based on the  
recognition of a supreme being or reality. Man is somewhat conscious  
of this reality or being and often enough he orientates his life in  
consonance with his consciousness and knowledge of it. This reality  
or being which is more transcendent than immanent is the fountain of  
man's religions and philosophies of all times and climates. The man  
of religion names this reality as God who 'Diffused through all ...  
doth make all one.'

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74. Ephesians 4 : 4-6.

75. St. Mark 13: 32-33.

76. Pollard, *Physicist and Christian*, pp.72-73.



There are different paths that lead to God, the one true fountain of all faiths and beliefs of man. And that is why some mortals make images of God in gold, in silver, in ivory, in clay, and in many others to pay homage to the divine and some people even offer sacrifices to these statues for solace in woes. Some others go to the mosque to worship the formless divine and still others enter the church to adore the holy spirit. We know that in the long run all rivers fall into the sea and we think, so also do unite different faiths and credos of man in God. It is therefore of little worth to turn a heretic or become an orthodox. Because heresy belongs to the heretic and dogmatic religion is a matter of the orthodox but 'the dust of the rose-petals belongs to the perfume-seller'.

## Chapter 5

### The Concept of Tawhid.

#### I : Nature of Tawhid

We have stated in the preceding chapter that in their purity Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Hinduism all entertain a belief in Divine Unity. But later dogmatic developments such as Trinity in Christianity, Duality in Zoroastrianism, Plurality and worship of physical gods in Judaism and Hinduism made these religions distorted and the Unity of God became feeble in these distorted faiths.

In the Arabian peninsula people debased themselves through idol-worship and the worship of natural powers. Minor deities, mostly goddesses, were adored and invoked in prayer. The Kaaba turned into a house of idol-gods whose votaries defiled religion and fell into contending groups.<sup>1</sup> In such a period of spiritual disorder and ruin Muhammad appeared on the scene to guide the deviated humanity to truth.

The prophet of Islam started his mission with the teaching that there is but one God in all the heavens and earth and reiterated this "in a thousand shapes as the forefront of his message."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Mohi-ud-Din, The Arabian Prophet; pp. 6-7.

2. Smith, Mohammad and Mohammedanism; p. 133.

The central theme round which all other principles of Islam revolve is the Unity of God. For, from the concept of God's unity proceeds the fundamental unity of men, life and universe. The Quran ever tries to bring about accord in man's relation to God and themselves, and to the universe at large. It begins with the statement: All praise is due to Allah, the lord of the entire universe:

The corner-stone of Islamic faith is Tawhid or Unity which implies that God is One in His *dhāt* or essence, one in His *sifat* or attributes and one in His *af'al* or activities. God's oneness in His essence or person signifies that God is one in His quiddity and being—that there is no plurality in Godhood. His oneness in attributes implies that no other being than God possesses divine attributes in perfection. Finally God's oneness in His activities means that God's works have no parallel in the heavens and earth.

The statement of Testimony or Shahadat (*La ilaha illallah Muhammad ur Rasul ullah*) is the seat-anchor of the Quranic philosophy and in it one finds the fundamentals of pure monotheism. 'There is no deity but Allah, Muhammad is His Apostle' — this simple statement declares in unequivocal terms and a voice strong, the reality and existence of one and only one God.

Islam, the religion of the Quran, got its birth in the heart of a desert and in a desert one finds no obstacle to one's vision. Standing in a desert one can look at nature without any hindrance or barrier before one's eyes and here in the desert one's vision can be

extended beyond any limit or extreme. Likewise Islam has no extreme nor end and in the universe it encounters no other existence or reality save and except the most real — Allah, the only Lord of the universe.<sup>3</sup>

An analysis of the Kalima Shahadat will show with how much purity and firmness tawhid has been enunciated in Islam. The first part of the Shahadat states — there is no deity but Allah — that is, there is only one God in the whole universe and besides Allah there exists no God. Allah, the Quranic name of the Lord of the universe, is not a common name as is the word 'god' in other faiths and beliefs. This name is a proper name and is applicable to the one God alone. It is not applicable to any other god or deity.

The second part of the Shahadat — Muhammad is His Apostle — simply affirms that Muhammad's prophetic mission is true and divine. Although the Muslims believe in the holy prophet's perfection as a man, they never attribute to his being any Divinity or Godhood. The seal of the prophets and a most beloved person to Allah, Muhammad is a man pure and simple. He was a man like all other human beings and he died also quite like an earthly being.

After the death of the holy prophet some hypocrites retorted: If Muhammad was a prophet, why did he die? : Addressing the insincere

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3. Hikmat, Islam; section on Tawhid.

hypocritical believers the first Caliph of Islam said: If anybody of you want to worship Muhammad(asm), Lo, he is dead; but one willing to worship Allah must know that he alone is permanent and everlasting: <sup>4</sup>

This famous address of Abu Bakr reveals the true spirit of the Islamic tawhid. Unlike Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism it attributes no godhood to any human being, whatever perfection he might have achieved. In the Quran there is no room for any other god than Allah. There is no peer or equal of Allah, nor does he have any partner. Islam thus destroyed all germs of duality, trinity and plurality as regards the Ultimate Reality.

The Quran insists upon the Unity of God and emphatically condemns any idea or concept which might directly or indirectly tend to associate any other being with God as partner or equal. The Book declares: "Say, He is God, the One and only; God the eternal Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is he begotten; And there is none like unto Him:" (Sura 112). This small chapter of the Quran on tawhid is the last and most emphatic one that was revealed to the holy prophet when the non-Muslims, specially the doctors of the Jewish faith demanded from him a clear explanation regarding the nature of Islamic God. Indeed, this small sura explains plainly and emphatically the nature and unity of God.

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4. Hikmat, Islam; Section on Tawhid (Cf. Abu Bakr's another statement made on the same occasion in response to Omar's emotional utterance that the prophet was not dead. "Is it then Muhammad or the God of Muhammad that we have learned to worship." (vide Smith, Mohammed and Mohammedanism, p. 131).

The word 'Allah' is the substantive for the one God of the entire universe. It does not signify a 'god' or 'ilah'. This term stands for the one God alone. The Quran certifies this special meaning of the word Allah and says: "Your God is One God." (16:22)

The primary object of the Quranic revelation, as we have already mentioned, is to emphasize this pure monotheistic concept of God: Allah is one, he has no partner or equal; all glorification and adoration, every worship and obedience are due to God alone. He is the object of man's deepest love and devotion. Everything proceeds from Allah and all things and beings are dependent upon Him. He is independent and stands in no need of help or assistance from any other thing or being. And nothing exists or subsists out of His control and authority.

Over and anon there occur passages in the Quran which speak in unequivocal terms about the Unity of God: "Your God is one God; there is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Behold! In the creation of the heaven and earth, in the alteration of night and day; In the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; In the rain which God sends from the skies, and the life which he gives therewith to an earth that is dead; In the beasts of all kinds that he scatters through the earth; In the change of the winds and the clouds between the heavens and earth, - are signs to people of understanding. Yet some men take idols besides God, and love them with the love due to God." (2: 63-65)

"God ! there is no God but he - the Living, the self-subsisting, eternal. No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there who can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeared to his creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. For He is the Most High, the Supreme."  
(2: 255)

"To God belong the East and the West. Whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of God. For God is All-pervading, All-knowing. They say: "God hath begotten a son." Glory be to Him. - Nay to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth. Everything renders worship to Him. To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and earth: when He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: "Be", and it is."  
(2:115-117)

"He (God) has created the heavens and the earth for just ends: Far is He above having the partners they ascribe to Him." (16:3)

The Divine book reinforces the concept of God's Unity by various arguments. It says: "No son did God beget, nor is there any god along with him: (if there were many gods), behold each god would have taken away what he had created and some of them would have lorded it over others. glory to God! (he is free) from things they attribute

to Him. He knows what is hidden and what is open: too high is He for the partners they attribute to Him." (23:91-92): Again the Quran states: "If there were in the heavens and the earth other gods besides God, there would have been confusion in both. But Glory to God, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they attribute to Him." (21:22)

The Quran categorically warns the Jews against their worship of false gods and idols and against their exaggerated memory of Ezra. It also warns the Christians against their adoration of Jesus and his mother. The Book says: 'Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were given a portion of the Book? They believe in false gods and idols and say to the unbelievers that they are better guided in the right way than the believers.'" (4:51)

"The Jews call Uzair a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouths; In this way they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say: God's curse be on them: how are they deluded away from the Truth! They take their priests and monks besides God. And they (take as their lord) Christ, son of Mary, but they were commanded to worship One God: There is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: Far is He above the partners they attributes to him." (9:30-31)

Islam sticks firm to its central theme of Tawhid and states in emphatic terms: "O people of the book! Commit no excess in your religion: nor say of God except the truth. Jesus Christ, son of Mary,



was verily an apostle of God, and His word which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His apostles. And say not "Trinity". It will be better for you. For God is one God: Glory be to God; He is far exalted than having a son. To him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is God as a Disposer of affairs." (4:171)

The Quran has throughout affirmed and borne witness to Allah's unity, existence, and attributes: "God bears witness that there is no God but He — and so do the angels and those possessed of knowledge standing firm on justice. There is no God but He, the Mighty, the wise." (3:18)

The Quran refutes not only every idea of any peer or equal of Allah but also it does deny any idea of His having a son except in a purely metaphorical way in which all mankind are His children and in which peace-makers have been spoken of in the Bible as the children of God. To attribute a son to God in any but a purely metaphorical way amounts to the denial of the Unity of God and in effect any such attribution amounts to the denial and refusal of God's Godhood. The Quran states in a clear voice: "Verily, God is the only one God. Far exalted is He above having a son. To him belongs whatever is in the heaven and whatever is in the earth. Sufficient is God as a Disposer of things." (4:171)

Nothing is more unpleasant to God than attributing in human sense a son to Him and nothing else than this can make Him so angry

as expressed in the Quran: "They say: (God) Most Gracious has begotten a son. Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous. At this the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin. For they invoke a son for (God) the Most Gracious. And it is not consonant with the majesty of (God) the Most Gracious that he should beget a son. Every being in the heavens and the earth but approaches the Merciful (God) as a servant." (19:88-93)

Continuing to substantiate the Unity of God and His holiness the Quran declares: "God is He than whom there is no other god; He knows everything secret and open; He is Most Gracious, Most Merciful. God is He than whom there is no other god; The Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace, the Guardian of faith, the Bestower of security, the Protector, the Mighty, the Exalted. Glory to God. He is far above than that which they associate with him." (59:22-23)

In innumerable places the Quran speaks of the oneness of God. Below we produce some relevant verses:

"There is no God but He, the Exalted in Might,  
the Wise." (3:6)

"In truth He is the One God, and I (Muhammad)  
truly am innocent of joining others with Him".  
(6:19)

"Your God is one God: submit then your wills to  
Him." (22:34)

"And He is God; there is no God but He. To Him be praise at the first and at the last." (23:70)

"The inspiration has come to me (Muhammad) that your God is One God: whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work in righteousness and in the worship of his Lord admit no one as partner." (18:110)

When prophet Noah had been preaching the mission of one God, the nobility of his people thought that Noah was in error. Many of the so-called nobility of the present-day world at times appear to echo a similar voice. The following passage from the Quran is both a teaching as well as a reminder for many of us:

"We sent Noah to his people and he said: O my people, worship God. Ye have no other God but Him. Verily I fear for you the punishment of a mighty day. The leaders of his people said: "Ah! we see thee in manifest error:" He said: "O my people! there is no error in me; on the contrary, I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds:" (7: 59-61)

The Quran consistently speaks of the Unity of Allah and His creation. The Unity of God, His majesty and spirituality form the constant and 'never-ending' theme of the 'soul-striking' Quran. The following 'light-verse' describes with rhythmical eloquence the mystical Unity of God and His whole creation:

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of his Light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp: The lamp enclosed in a glass, as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon Light,\* God doth guide unto His Light whom He will. God doth set parables for mankind. And God doth know all things." (24:35)

This mystic verse of the Quran is an attempt to introduce to man what Otto calls the 'Mysterium Tremendum.' In order to explain the nature of the most subtle being the 'Light-verse' uses metaphors and as a result it has itself become mystical in nature. For to introduce the inexplicable is not an easy task and hence one abstract is sometimes used to explain another abstract.

The 'Mysterium Tremendum' is inexplicable; it transcends all creatures and is 'wholly-other'. The Mysterium is that which is hidden

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\* Cf: (i) 'God's covering is light and if this covering is lifted up, His light reaches the entire creation' (a prophetic tradition reported by Abu Musa, vide Nadvi, Sahih Moslem Vol. 1, pp. 303-304).

(ii) 'If the light of a thousand suns should of a sudden rise in the heavens, it would be like to the light of that mighty being' (Mita's saying regarding Brahma, vide, Otto, the Idea of the Holy, p.187).

and esoteric; It is beyond ordinary conception and understanding. Again some awe, tremor or fear is associated with the Tremendum. In the old Testament this awe has been categorized as *amah* (fear) of Jehova.<sup>5</sup>

God, the 'Mysterium Tremendum', is not however wholly inexplicable or ineffable in the sense that it completely escapes apprehension in rational terms and concepts. On the contrary, a great deal of the theistic concept of God is expressed in rational language and as such we ascribe to Deity attributes like reason, power, good-will, personality, unity and the like in consonance with human reason. In spite of this fact, no complete and exhaustive account of God can be made in rational attributes alone. These attributes are, no doubt, essential determinants of the character of God whose numenal nature it is very difficult to express in conceptual language. God is therefore more a matter of some supra-rational feeling or intuition than of rational understanding. God is the reality of unfathomable depth and great majesty and hence the 'Mysterium Tremendum.'<sup>6</sup>

In the 'light-verse' God has been likened to light. But to grasp the real meaning of this light is a very difficult job. Many seekers of wisdom have tried to realize the implication of this similitude. Diving deep into the world of this light Ghazali, Rumi, Ibn Arabi, Suhrawardy, Iqbal and others apprehended some nature of divine

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5. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 12-13.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-5.

light and also realized something of the being of it.

The Divine Light is believed to be too powerful and no human being is able to bear its open presence. As such a great prophet like Moses fell senseless on Mount Sinai and even the Seal of the prophets got trembled in the Cave of Hira when his heart was made open for revelation of the Divine Light. Later, when the prophet of Islam came back from his spiritual flight in the heaven (Meraz) some one asked him whether he met God directly. In response Muhammad is reported to have said: 'God is covered in seventy thousand screens of light. Man has no power to see him.'<sup>7</sup>

The mystical 'light-verse' says that God is the Light of the heavens and earth, and the simile of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp which in turn placed in a glass shines like a star. From this parable it follows that the Divine Light in its true nature is not present in creation. Divine Light is unique in nature and reaches creations gleaming through several screens. He is the Light upon light, the incomparable and inexplicable Numenal Light.

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7. Abdur Rahman, *Quran O Jiban Darghan*, Vol. II, p. 242.

Cf: (i) Abu Zar's narration: I asked the prophet, "Have you seen your Lord?" The prophet replied, "He is (bright) Light; how could I see Him?" (vide Nadvi, *Sahih Moslem*, Vol. I, p.303).

(ii) God is incorporeal, the light, the truth; he is beyond the final comprehension of man. And like the Platonic 'Good', God is too bright for human vision - Origen, vide, Magill, *World Philosophy*, pp. 240-241.

The 'Light-verse' also states that the lamp in question is kindled by olive oil gathered from no tree that exists in any particular place or direction but from the omnipresent tree (God). In other words, God is the universal luminous light from which heavens and earth, stars and mountains, and all other created things and beings get fuel and glow forth with light - light that removes every darkness and enlightens the soul of man. To kindle this light no fire is needed because it is an automatic manifestation of the Light Divine.

Unique indeed is Allah and His alone is the light that glows forth over the east and west — the entire creation. It shines by itself without the touch of any fire; it shines by the will of Allah. Allah is the Universal Light and He guides unto His Light only those whom He pleases.

The Quran has three traditional names and these names cast light upon its nature and theme. The sacred book is called al-Quran which means recitation and from this its common name has been derived; it is called al-Furqan, that is, a discernment or discrimination; and finally it is called Umm al-Kitab, the mother of all books. Its first name signifies concentration upon truth because recitation is a sort of concentration of ideas and thoughts that lead towards the meaning and truth contained in them. Recitation of the Quran leads one to the understanding of its truth, the Greatness and Unity of God. Al-Furqan, its second name signifies that the Quran is an instrument to discriminate between Truth and falsehood, between the Real and the unreal, between the Absolute and the relative and between good and evil. Finally as Umm al-Kitab

or the 'Mother of books', the Quran is a proto type of all books, all knowledge. Islam believes that it contains in essence all knowledge of all orders of reality, the head being its Author. The Quran contains metaphysical and religious knowledge and also there is in it the knowledge of the particular fields of life and of the universe. Its inner meaning transcends multiplicity and takes the contemplative soul to the Unity of the Creator and Author of the world of variety.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the Quran, the beacon-light of the divine unity, the unlighted Bearer of the Grand Book, the Holy Prophet spoke on several occasions about the Unity of God. Below we present some of the relevant Traditions:

'Omar-b-al-Ahatab reported: We were seated once near the Apostle of Allah where lo! there appeared a person to us, a person extremely dressed in white cloths and having jet black hairs. No fatigue of journey did appear on him - till he sat down near the prophet. There he joined his knees to his knees and placed both his palms over his two thighs and said: O Muhammad, inform me about Islam. He replied: Islam is-that you attest there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad (P.H.) is the Messenger of Allah, that you keep up prayer, pay poor rate, keep fast of Ramadan and make pilgrimage of the house, provided if you have means of making journey to it. He replied: You have spoken the truth. We were

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8. Nasr, *Ideal and Realities of Islam*; pp. 49-54.



astonished to see that he asked him and corroborated him ... Then he departed. The Messenger of Allah kept silent for sometime and then addressed me: O Omar, do you know about the enquirer? "Allah and His Apostle know", I replied. The Holy Prophet said: Certainly he is Gabriel; he had come to you to teach you your religion (Muslim).'<sup>9</sup>

'Ibn Umar reported that the Holy Prophet said: Islam is built on five things - to bear witness that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad (P.M.) is His servant, to keep up prayer, to pay Zakat, to make pilgrimage and to keep fast in Ramadan (Agreed).'<sup>10</sup>

'Abu Hurairah reported that the Holy Prophet said: Faith has got seventy and odd branches of which the best is the saying - 'There is no deity but Allah', and the most insignificant is the removal of injurious things from pathway, and modesty is a branch of faith (Agreed).'<sup>11</sup>

'Abu Hurairah reported that a desert Arab came to the Holy Prophet and said: Guide me to an action which if I do, will certainly take me to Paradise. He replied: You shall serve Allah, shall not associate anything with Him, keep up the prescribed prayers, pay the obligatory Zakat and keep the fast of Ramadan. He said: By Him in

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9. Karim, *Miskat-ul-Masabih*, Vol. I; pp. 95-96.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

whose hand is my life, I shall neither do more than this, nor diminish aught therefrom. When he departed, the Holy Prophet said: whoever is pleased to see a man of the inmates of Paradise, let him look to this man (Agreed).<sup>12</sup>

'Abu Hurairah reported that the Holy Prophet said: (Allah said) The son of Adam imputed falsehood upon me which was not proper for him, and back-bitted Me which was not proper for him. As for his imputation of falsehood to Me, it is only because of his saying - He can never bring me back to life as he created me first; while the first creation was not easier to me than to bring him back to life. As for his back-biting Me, it is because of his saying - Allah adopted a son, while I am one Praised, free from wants. I did not beget nor was I begotten; and there is none equal to Me (Bukhari).<sup>13</sup>

'Anas reported that the Holy prophet was on the saddle (of a camel) with Muas by his back. He addressed O Muas! He replied "Present to thee and fortune to thee. O prophet of Allah" (thrice). He said: There is nobody bearing witness that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah<sup>1</sup> believing sincerely in his heart, but Allah has prohibited for him the Fire. He enquired: O Apostle of Allah! should I not deliver this to people that they may seek good? He said: In that case they will sit idle. Muas communicated this innocently at the time of his death (Agreed).<sup>14</sup>

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12. Karim, *Miskat-ul-Masabih*, Vol. I; p.99.

13. *Op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

'Abu Zarr reported: I came to the holy Prophet while there was white cloth on him and he was asleep. Afterwards I came to him (again) while he was awake. He said: There is no man who utters - There is no deity but Allah, and dies on that but will not enter Paradise. I enquired: And even if he committed adultery and theft? He replied: even if he might have committed adultery and theft.' I asked him: And even if he committed adultery and theft? He replied: Even though he might have committed adultery and theft, inspite of claving Abu Zarr's nose. When Abu Zarr was telling this tradition, he said: even though Abu Zarr's nose claved (Agreed)'.<sup>15</sup>

'Obadah-b-Swanst reported that the Messenger of Allah said, who-soever bears witness that there is no deity but Allah, He is One, there is partner for Him, and that Muhammad (P.H.) is his servant and Messenger and that Jesus (P.H.) is servant of Allah and His Messenger and son of his maid and His word which He breathed unto Mary' and a Spirit from Him, and that Paradise and hell are true - Allah will admit him into Paradise inspite of his deeds which he might have done (Agreed).'<sup>16</sup>

'Obadah-b-Swanst reported: I heard the messenger of Allah say: whosoever bears witness that there is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is His Apostle, Allah will make hell unlawful for him (Muslim)'.<sup>17</sup>

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15. Karim, Miskat-ul-Masabih, Vol. I; p. 102.

16. Karim, Miskat, Vol. I; pp. 102-103.

17. Ibid., p. 103.

'Jaber reported that the holy Prophet said: Two things must come to pass. A man enquired: O Prophet of Allah, what are the two sure things? He replied: whoever dies associating anything with Allah, will enter hell; and whoever dies without setting up aught with Allah, will enter Paradise (Muslim).'<sup>18</sup>

'Anas reported that the Apostle of Allah said: Three things are at the root of faith: (1) To withhold hand from one who utters - "There is no deity but Allah" don't impute sin on him and don't drive him out of Islam for any (bad) action. (2) Religious fight will continue since Allah sent me till the last of this people will fight against Dajjal; it will be abolished neither by the oppression of an oppressor nor by the justice of a judge; and (3) faith in Predeterminations (Abu Daud).'<sup>19</sup>

'Muaz-b-Jabal reported: The Holy Prophet said to me: The keys of Paradise are to bear witness that there is no deity but Allah (Ahmad).'<sup>20</sup>

'Umar said, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said: anyone who performs ablution and does it thoroughly, then say: 'I bear witness that there is no God but Allah, He is One, there is no associate with Him, and that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger; O Allah! make me of those who turn to Thee again and

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18. Karim, Miskat, Vol. 1, p. 103.

19. Ibid., p. 105.

20. Op. cit., p. 103.

again and make me of those who purify themselves' - the eight doors of Paradise are open to him; he enters it by any of them he pleases (Tirmidhi).<sup>21</sup>

'Ibn Abbas reported that the Holy Prophet (P.H.) said: To God the Grand and High, no speech than saying that 'There is no deity but Allah' can become more pleasant; and whoever recites loudly that there is no god but Allah, becomes purified and all his sins drop down from his body as the leaves of a tree do from it.'<sup>22</sup>

'Ja'ib-bin-Khaled is reported to have said: The Apostle of Allah said: I have been sent to give good tidings to people and commanded (by Allah) to let them know a pleasant message that whoever utters 'There is no deity but Allah, He is one, and He has no partner', will become an inmate of Paradise.'<sup>23</sup>

'Ali is reported to have said that the Apostle of Allah said: God the Grand, the High says - 'No deity but Allah' is My fort and whoever enters it, escapes My punishment.'<sup>24</sup>

'Ali is reported to have said the Apostle of Allah said: whosoever in an hour of the day or night utters that there is no deity but

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21. Muhammad Ali, A Manual of hadith, pp. 57-58.

22. Qami, Asrar, p. 7.

23. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

24. Ibid., p. 10.

Allah (is highly rewarded) and every bad record of his 'Amal Namah' disappears.'<sup>25</sup>

'Hamjah bin Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Jafr bin Jaid bin Ali bin Hossain bin Ali bin Abi Talib is reported to have said that the Apostle of Allah said: By him who has sent me with truth of prophethood, Allah will not put any believer in Tawhid into Hell-fire .... On the day of Judgment a group of people, whose deeds in the world were bad, will be driven towards the hell. These people will then say: O our Lord, how will you put us into fire since we were believers in Tawhid? ..... Allah will finally say: Since they were believers in My Unity, I will not burn them in the Hell-fire; make My servants enter the Paradise.'<sup>26</sup>

Unity or Tawhid becomes more clear when it is contrasted to Shirk or partnership. Shirk literally means association of partner or sharik with God, the Lord of the universe. Shirk may be of different types. The worst form of it consists in worshipping besides Allah other things or beings such as idols, stones, heavenly bodies, forces of nature, tombs, animals or human beings that are believed to be demi-gods, or incarnations of God, or sons and daughters of God. Another form of shirk is the association with God of other things or beings that are supposed to possess attributes in a similar way as the Divine Being. Dogmatic Trinity of the Christians, duality of the Zoroastrians,

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25. Jami, Asrar, p. 10.

26. Ibid., pp. 15-16.

and Pagan and Hindu polytheism comes under this category.<sup>27</sup>

The third form of shirk consists in taking other human beings for gods and lords. It is best explained in the following verse of the quran: They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah (9:31): Obedience to man's lower desires is also a form of shirk (quran 25:43). because one doing so deviates from faith which states that true obedience is due to God alone.

According to the Quran shirk is the gravest sin and it is 'a grievous iniquity' (31:13). The Book which discards shirk in all its forms states: 'God forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with God is a sin most heinous indeed' (4:48). Allah is so much strict in regard to shirk not because of jealousy but because it demoralizes man. Divine unity elevates man and makes him no subservient to any other being or power than God himself. In the Quran God speaks of man as His vicegerant on earth (2:30). The Quran further states that Allah has made the sea and all that is in the heavens and earth subservient to man (45:12-13). It also says that Allah has placed man at the top of creation, including angels who make obeisance to man (2:34); and that Allah has made man the ruler of the earth (6:166). Shirk or worshipping any created thing and being in place of God is thus derogatory to man's own elevated position which Allah has granted him to

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27. Muhammad Ali, Religion of Islam; pp. 146-147.

excel all created things and beings (7:140). The Quran therefore dis-  
cards shirk in all its varieties and urges man to abide by: "That we  
worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we  
erect not from among ourselves, Lords and Patrons other than God."  
(3:63).

According to Islam, the religion of the Quran, the primordial  
religion based on Unity began with Adam, the father of mankind. Adam  
was a monotheist from the beginning. As such Mankind did not evolve  
gradually from polytheism to monotheism. On the contrary, from time  
to time man deviated into polytheism from the original monothism of  
Adam and it took place due to man's religious decadence through ages.  
Man was originally a monotheist and gradually fell into polytheism.  
Prophets like Abraham and Christ and finally Muhammad only called him  
back to and reminded of the original doctrine of Unity.<sup>28</sup>

Adam was the first man and prophet of Unity; with him began man's  
terrestrial history. Abraham represented the reassertion of this role  
for the Semitic people. His religion symbolizes the unity of that tra-  
dition from which Judaism, Christianity and Islam issued forth.<sup>29</sup>

Christ and his revelation represent the esoteric aspect of the  
Abrahamic tradition, the internal dimension of the primordial religion  
of Adam. Christ did not bring a new shariat or revealed law; he only  
brought a tariqat or way based on the love of God. He was a 'Spirit of

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28. Nasr, Ideals and Realities of Islam, pp. 33-34.

29. Ibid., p. 34.



God' and his supernatural birth was a sign for all peoples. 'Christ Jesus the son of Mary was no more than an apostle of God, and His word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him (Quran 4:171).' Jesus is thus a prophet and not an incarnation. What Islam does not believe in Christianity is firstly the idea of filial relation and secondly the Trinity as usually understood.<sup>30</sup>

Islam believes itself to be the third great manifestation of the Abrahamic tradition, Judaism and Christianity being the first and the second respectively. It is a return to the original Unity that started with the primordial religion of Adam and Abraham. Islam is thus the latest version of the primordial religion of man and a reaffirmation of the original Unity of God. It integrated in its world-view what was ultimately in conformity with the Shahadat - 'La ilaha illa Allah'.<sup>31</sup>

In fact the Grand Scripture and its Great Messenger stand high in history in unparalleled opposition against every sort of polytheism. They strongly declare : There is no other god but Allah who has no equal, no peer, no partner. God is one; He is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth, of what is in between the two and also of what lieth beneath the earth. Allah is the Most holy and never He begets any child, nor is He begotten of any father. He is the Most High, the Most Grand.

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30. Op. cit., pp. 34-35.

31. Ibid, pp. 35-36.

## II : Significance and Manifestations of Tawhid.

In the preceding chapters we have made some stray reference to the manifestations and significance of Divine Unity. Here we will make a brief account of the significance and manifestations of the philosophy of Tawhid.

"O ye who believe believe in God and His apostle and the scripture which He hath sent to His apostle and the scripture which He sent to those before (him). Any who denieth God, His Angels, His books, His apostle, and the Last Day of Judgement hath gone far, far astray." (quran 4:136)

The above verse of the quran discloses the central tenet and significance of Islam and Tawhid — God is one, He had sent His messengers throughout ages; His messengers, the Scriptures and the Angels as well vouch the unity of truth. They also state that those who deviate from truth have to go astray.

Indeed those who disbelieve in God and His Unity tread on a wrong path and their foundation is a feeble one. Their foundation is as weak as a spider's house. The quran states: "The parable of those who take protectors other than God is that of the spider who builds (to itself) a house; but truly the frailest of houses is the spider's house — if they but knew:" (29:41)

The Book has often made reference to the past communities who had to undergo great loss and sufferings because of their acceptance of wrong gods and ideals: "Say: Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before. Most of them worshipped others besides God." (30:42)

This verse refers to the religious and spiritual conditions of the pre-Islamic people. Before the advent of the prophet of Islam most people used to select wrong ideals and worship false gods. But those who live upon wrong ideals and worship other gods besides Allah meet disastrous ends. To rectify those who believe in polytheism and worship false gods the Quran says. 'The case of Pharaoh and his nobles and courtiers was a terrible lesson for all succeeding generations.' (10:28)

As to the blessings of believing in tawhid and loving the right ideal we may again quote from the Quran: 'God will establish those who believe with the word that stands firm, in this world and in the hereafter' (14:27): Nations and individuals who believe in the right word or truth and adopt it in their life feel a tendency to act in a way which helps their internal as well as external growth. This tendency results out of their common love of the ideal and they feel enthusiastic to express and objectify in their life their love of the right ideal. They also feel zealous to adore themselves with their Lord's attributes of justice, truth, beauty and perfection. The political, cultural and religious history of the Muslims under the

leadership of the holy prophet and the pious caliphs show how a firm belief in the right ideal together with a sincere exercise into practice of the principles of that ideal brought prosperity, success and glory for them.

It is an experience from history that no culture and civilisation can endure if it is not founded on and grounded in a sound foundation or truth. The good word or truth possesses in itself inexhaustible potentialities and it is also capable of continuing the process of their actualization indefinitely. For, the parable of a good word is like a good tree whose root is firm and whose high branches yield fruits in every season by the permission of its Lord (Quran 14: 24-25).

A look into the inner meaning of tawhid makes our life significant and elevated. The philosophy of tawhid teaches us that there is no peer or equal of Allah. It also teaches us that man is the representative of God on earth (Quran 2:30). Man, Allah's vicegerent on earth, therefore bows down his head only before God and before none else. It further maintains that everything in nature and heaven, even angels, has been made subordinate to him (Quran 45:12-13). This exalted position of man in the creation of God has provided him with ample opportunities to develop and glorify himself to an extent never imaginable nor attainable by any other created being. Most of us know what became the fate of Iblis, formerly an arch angel, after he had denied to show honour to man. Tawhid has thus freed man from all clutches of nature and world.

Tawhid has freed man not only from the bondage of nature but also has it freed him from the slavery of other men. All men are equal before God, the only Creator of all, and there is no fundamental difference amongst them. Even prophet Muhammad is a man pure and simple: "Say (O Muhammad), I am but a man like yourselves" (Quran 18:110): This teaching of the Quran has made man conscious of his dignity and status and has conferred him a position really covetable not only to man himself but also to super-celestial beings and spirits. This philosophy has inspired man with a sense of self-honour and self-respect. A true devotee knows it well that no other being than his Kabb can expect and get a sincerely bent-headed salutation from him. He submits himself with humility only to his exalted Lord and erects his head high up in the world to express his dignity and honour and greatness.<sup>32</sup>

This knowledge of man's elevated position and greatness in creation has enabled him to make, pursue and execute noble and ambitious plans for the development of life and world. Man's superiority over nature and his exalted position in the entire creation have accorded him belief and courage and consequently he has been rising higher and higher up on the scale of evolution and perfection.<sup>33</sup> Tawhid also teaches him to shatter all fears save the fear of God and fosters in him a heroic resistance to any other being or power that may threaten

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32. *Mia, Uarsan Parichiti*, pp. 220-221.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

his freedom and onward march to progress and advancement. It is an effective remedy against fear, despair and cowardice which act as the fountain of most evils and slow down the tempo of life. Belief in one Sovereign God thus gives us knowledge of and faith in our own worth and dignity and shows us the direction towards a life of meaning and significance.<sup>34</sup>

Tawhid stands for a universal God who is the only Lord and Sustainer of all the heavens and earth, the Controller of all beings and existence. The Quran states that the Creator and Lord of the universe is one and all human beings are but members of one community under God (10:19). All men are equal before Him and they are all brethren to one another. Neither membership in a particular tribe nor citizenship in a specific society confers any privilege, nor are they sources of honour. The true source of honour in the sight of Allah is a righteous life (Quran 49:13):<sup>35</sup> The Messenger of the Quran is also reported to have said: Fatima, continue to be diligent in righteous action; for on the day of judgement you will not be asked whose daughter you are,

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34. Saiyidain, Iqbal's Educational Philosophy; pp. 165-166.

35. Cf: Prophet's address at Farewell Pilgrimage (vide Ibrahim Khan, Anecdotes From Islam, pp. 33-35).

you will only be asked how you have employed yourself: <sup>36</sup> what an example of teaching righteousness and equality.

The same spirit of equality and righteousness inspired caliph Omar to carry on his own shoulders a basket of wheat and dates to the starving house of a widow. We also know when an attendant requested the first citizen of the vast Islamic empire to permit him to carry the basket to the house of the widow, the caliph said: Yes, you can do it for me today. but who shall do it on the day of judgement? <sup>37</sup> It is also widely known that the great caliph used to exchange seat with the driver of his camel during journey. <sup>38</sup> Tawhid's message thus makes no distinction between a caliph and a common man, nor does it distinguish between the daughter of Muhammad, the prophet, and others on the ground of their social status.

Tawhid breaks all artificial distinctions between masters and servants, between groups and races. In his famous farewell address how excellently the holy prophet declared and explained the equality of men! The ambassador of unity and equality said in the farewell address: You are all brethren and equal. None of you can claim any privilege or superiority over others. An Arab is not to be preferred

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36. Khan, Islam, p. 145.

Cf: 'The previous generations have been destroyed as the criminals coming from the higher class were not punished while those coming from the lower class were chastised. By God! if Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad, committed theft, her hand would have been cut off' (vide Karim, Miskat Vol. IV, p.282).

37. Ibid., p. 161.

38. Ibrahim Khan, Anecdotes From Islam, pp. 63-64.

to a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab shall have any privilege over an Arab;<sup>39</sup>  
And we know how was a Habsi Belal honoured because of his righteous  
personal merit to any Qureish chieftain of unrighteous character!

Islamic tawhid stresses the establishment of a universal brother-  
hood. This universal brotherhood can be achieved only by means of man-  
kind's relation with one another through God, the one and common creator  
of all. Allah is the only creator of the universe; He is therefore  
the only Lord of all and all human beings are His servants. God is the  
Lord of the east and west and of the Muslims and non-Muslims alike.  
There may be differences in mankind's beliefs and traditions. In spite  
of these differences which are mostly due to historical and geographical  
causes they are all servants of one God. All men are but a nation or  
community (Quran 10:9). Universal brotherhood is thus a direct teach-  
ing from tawhid or unity of God. It is therefore an imperative to all  
mankind to strive for universal good and happiness. For all men irres-  
pective of cast, creed, colour or country, are the servants of Allah,  
the only Lord of the universe.

Things like common interests, common pursuits and international  
cooperation may foster unity and universal brotherhood. These will  
however work only when we submit to one God and act sincerely being  
free from any germs of jealousy and hostility.<sup>40</sup> It is the consciousness  
that all human beings are equally creatures of one God and that they  
all are required to seek the pleasure of the same Lord which alone can

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39. Ibrahim Khan, Anecdotes From Islam, pp. 33-35.

40. Khan, Islam, pp. 141-142.



establish true brotherhood and real unity among men. About unity and brotherhood God says in the Quran: "And hold fast, all together by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude God's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love so that by his grace ye became brethren; and you were on the brink of pit of Fire and He saved you from it. Thus doth God make his signs clear to you: that you may be guided (3:103)".

From the above account it follows that Tawhid is the nucleus round which revolve all other constituent elements of Islamic life. It is the guiding law of our social, political, economic and life divine. Because of this central importance of tawhid it may well be held that tawhid occupies a similar position in the body of Islam as does soul in the organism of man. We know the health of the body depends on that of the mind or soul and vice-versa the body becomes ill when the soul is ailing. Not only this, the soul predominantly rules over the organism; it shapes our life and world.<sup>41</sup> In a like manner, a sincere and active faith in the philosophy of tawhid sets life in order. For, such a faith gives birth to equality and sympathy, justice and truth, piety and righteousness, and love and universal brotherhood which in turn make life blessed and prosperous. Tawhid's message is thus a blessing, we should better say, the highest blessing for man.

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41. Cf: The soul of Islam is its declaration of the unity of God; its heart is the inculcation of an absolute resignation to his will (vide Suhrawardy, The sayings of Muhammad, p. 30).

## Chapter 6

### Science and Religion - Notion of God and Unity from the standpoint of Science.

#### I

Till recently the unmistakable hall-mark of science was to explain facts factually and to analyse every natural phenomenon with the help of a natural cause. Generally science does not prefer to speak of any spiritual reality behind the natural world and it is prone to push back every supernatural agency thereof.

There was a time when the scientist showed reluctance to talk about God. The world of matter was all with him and he was unwilling to accept anything beyond the physical and the chemical. One such typical attitude of the scientist is distinctly clear in what the famous French scientist Laplace once said to Napoleon the Great. Laplace had presented a copy of his masterpiece, the 'Mecanique Celeste', to the emperor who going through the book commented to its author: There is no mention of God anywhere in your book! To this comment of the emperor the scientist author replied: My Lord, I felt no necessity of such a hypothesis:

The Laplacian concept of science was, to say, the guiding principle of the later scientists, specially of the physicists and chemists.

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This attitude reached its zenith when the modern scientist preferred to explain every phenomenon of nature in terms of particles and chemicals. He was not willing to let go even the human mind out of the physico-chemical world. What to speak of the physicist and the chemist ! The leader of the behaviourist psychology, Watson proclaimed at the utter surprise of other psychologists that mind is nothing more than a product of the physico-chemical processes of the body.

The Universe is full of wonders and no scientist, whatever powerful his nuclear weapons might be, is able to unveil the mystery even of the world of matter. The natural world is still far beyond the comprehension of the physicist and the chemist and consequently they have approached close to the 'liquidation of materialism'<sup>2</sup> - materialism which governed the days of Haeckel and Virchow.

To-day the natural scientist realizes that the traditional causal mechanism cannot explain even the whole of the material world. In fact, the causal mechanism has failed to explain many events of the phenomenal world. This collapse of the causal-mechanical idea of the world has now led some well-known scientists to hold that the marvellous constitution of the world's structure not only permits the inference of an intelligent creator but also does it invite such an inference. It can, therefore, be said "that the line of approach from nature to God which was pursued by men of the enlightenment and nationalism, but which was

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2. Karl Heim, The Transformation of the Scientific World View; p. 15.

blocked in the age of causal mechanism, is now open again following upon the breakdown of the causal mechanical world-view."<sup>3</sup>

Researches in contemporary science have shown the inability of matter to play the role of an omnipotent reality and have also taught man that he "is guilty of self-delusion if he represses a conclusion which his intellect is bound to draw when he studies nature, and thereby heedlessly ignores a manifest and obvious reality."<sup>4</sup>

The causal-mechanical world concept rests on three hypotheses - the hypothesis that there is an objective matter of fact which has completely determinate structure independent of any other subject, the hypothesis that space and time are absolute in nature, and the hypothesis that the world-process is absolutely deterministic. But facts and experiments have shown that neither matter, nor space and time, nor the world-process is absolutely deterministic. And all these have led to a transformation in the world of science.

This transformation - 'the liquidation of materialism' as Bavinck calls it - has taken place due to the inability of modern physics to explain the secrets of the fundamental particles hidden in the womb of the atomic nucleus. Atom is no longer a rigid, inert, self-consistent mass but a system in which very smaller elements move at an incredibly fast speed in empty space. If a billionth of a drop of water is taken

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3. Karl Heim, *The Transformation of the Scientific World View*; pp.16-17.

4. *Ibid*, p. 19.

and again divided into a billion parts, the physicist meets an approximate mass of the atomic nucleus and round this nucleus the negatively charged electrons rush at an inconceivable velocity. Neutral neutrons and positively charged protons are the two elementary particles of the nucleus of the atom. This is what the physicist had understood about the atomic secret upto 1932 A.D. And since 1932 atomic research has been progressing with 'uncanny speed' and the findings of yesterdays become out of date very quickly.<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary physics tells us that matter no longer remains 'a substratum at rest.' Its investigation has rendered matter into energy which in turn has been compared with light. But light has become a puzzle for the nuclear physicist who observes in it 'a puzzling game of hide-and-seek' where two incompatible pictures - corpuscle and wave, particle and field - appear in sight. This incompatible dual nature of light seemed to shake the very foundation of all the physical method of research where man's "mind appeared to have moved into a cul-de-sac from which there was no obvious way out."<sup>6</sup>

This picture of the physical world led many scientists including Newton, 'the genial father of classical physics', to combine faith with science, to supplement the causal-mechanical explanation of the world of science by an omnipotent creator of the world of religion.

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5. Op. cit., pp. 32-34.

6. Ibid., pp. 39-62.

It is told of Newton that one day he had been observing a big new model of the heavens with a view to study the movements of the sun, the planets and the moon. In the meantime an atheist friend of Newton came and noticing the said model on his table he enquired: "Who has made this?" Newton looked straight in his eyes and said, "Nobody". What Newton meant to say was that "the miraculous structure of the solar system, in which everything moves harmoniously according to eternal laws, cannot have come into being of itself. Only a creating spirit can have thought it out, and made it, and kept it in being to this day."<sup>7</sup>

As long as natural science postulated a rigid and continuous causal nexus in the world, there was hardly any space for belief in God, the central theme of religion. Of course, there were those who, despite the categorical dictum of causal nexus of the material scientists, claimed undaunted that Almighty God could easily tear open at any moment the causal nexus of science and scientists.

However these scientific and religious attitudes 'were complementary like the positive and the negative of a photograph'. The scientific attitude tried to explain every event in terms of the causal nexus; the religious outlook was that God could at any moment break the deterministic causal mechanism. For God's action can, in a way, be compared to the work of a great rotary Press. This press is arranged in such a way that every item in the news-paper is fixed in advance and goes unaltered over the rollers provided there is no interference by the editor. If

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7. Hein, *The Transformation*, p.28.

however the editor decides at the last moment that a new urgent item of news be inserted, the machine stands for a while, the new item goes into the roller and the machine rolls on again. God the *Prima Cause*, in his sovereign power can act miracle and stop the world-machine to insert anything new he likes, anything which may not come within the perview of the traditional causal mechanism. This insertion proceeds directly from God, "the first mover who established the natural order together with all the causal secundae which maintain the world in its process."<sup>8</sup>

Turning towards the organic aspect of creation we find that a physico-chemical causal analysis cannot unveil the secret of life. Life is rather a still more mysterious phenomenon in the world of science. The controversy between the mechanistic and the vitalistic interpretations of life, particularly since Hans Driesch's neo-vitalism appeared in the scene, has finally led both the parties to suppose that the living entity biology is concerned with is "something utterly different from the 'dead' stuff of which minerals consist."<sup>9</sup>

The change that we had noticed earlier in the world of physics caused a new attitude here in the world of biology too. Although it has been shown through advanced research in physics and chemistry that all the three principal functions of the living cell, namely nourishment,

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8. Op. cit., pp. 170-171.

9. Ibid., p. 207; Cf: Pringle - Pattison, *The Idea of God*, pp.68-85.

propagation and sensitivity to stimuli are found to be present there in the elementary particles of inorganic matter though in a different form and on a much lower level, yet the mode of nourishment in the two provides evidence of a "profound difference between the dead and the living. The organism grows by incorporating or storing the nourishing substance within its interior ('intussusception')... The inorganic structure nourishes itself by storing up or depositing material in its immediate vicinity ('apposition')."<sup>10</sup>

The nature of a living organism will become clear if we compare it with a machine or an inorganic mechanical construct. A machine, a bicycle or a machine-gun for instance, is composed of several parts each of which usually does one definite function in the operation of the whole, although in some cases a particular part may perform more than one function with the help of some clever mechanism. The ball-bearing case of the bicycle is an illustration of double function of one particular part of a machine; it serves on the one hand, the smooth motion of the machine and on the other, it helps the control of brakes. However, in machines like this, the number of functions a particular part performs is strictly limited.

In the living organism though each element at times performs limited functions, yet there are instances where a particular organ does wonderful works. Uriesch performed experiments with sea-urchin's egg dividing it into two cells and four cells and cultivated them separately.

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10. Heim, The Transformation, p. 211.



The results he got were not half urchins or quarter urchins but whole urchins. This happened and happened till a complete form developed from each separate part within the limit of thirty-two. Similar regenerative power has been observed in plants like the begonia leaf which can be cut into innumerable tiny pieces, each such piece yielding the whole plant; and also in animals such as the polyp hydra which can be divided into small separate bits each of which grows into a complete polyp.<sup>11</sup>

Further, "The capacity of certain organisms to develop their wholeness from a particular part can be demonstrated even more exactly than is possible with embryonic cells by experimenting on finished organism, where the amputation of a part stimulates restitution of the missing part. It is true that all organic entities do not have this capacity for restitution. Birds and mammals hardly have it at all, and neither do men therefore. But other forms of animal life have it in very large measure. If a salamander loses a leg, another leg, with all the bones belonging to it, grows out of the wound. In the case of many worms, the head and the front part of the body can be cut off, and a new head grows out of the wound. This indeed, may be repeated many times. Such "regeneration of a regenerate" is a particularly astonishing sign of the inexhaustible life-power of nature."<sup>12</sup>

Had Driesch's experiments proved conclusively that regeneration and restitution take place throughout the whole process of development,

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11. Heim, *The Transformation*, pp. 215-217.

12. *Op. cit.*, p. 217.

the scientist could make a better reply to man's query if life could be explained in terms of causal-mechanical terms or not. Hans Spemann's experiments on the other hand, show that the capacity to bring into being the whole or part of the severed organism by way of restitution from a remaining part is not constant in the whole process of development of the organism. His researches have proved that only in the early stage before gastrulation, the point at which the embryo develops, regeneration or restitution occurs. But beyond this stage the organism faces difficulty and what happens thereafter is that not a whole embryo develops out of a half, but only half an embryo. Thus pluripotency is not inexhaustible. It is limited by certain relations and is effective only in the initial stages.

It is now evident that nature is not unequivocal in its explanation of the phenomenon of life. To explain life nature is rather equivocal. On the one hand it presents a 'life power' which can in no way be explained in mechanical terms. On the other hand it appears that the "new-form building power is localized in the way that physical and chemical energies are localized and that it has a limited energy value and radius of action."<sup>13</sup>

What is it due to that we find a double-aspect principle in nature? The scientist holds that it lies in our erroneous supposition that there is a fundamental opposition between the so-called inert

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13. Heim, *The Transformation*, p. 223.

matter and life, between a machine and a living cell. The machine consists of parts or 'rigid bodies' which, according to our present knowledge regarding the core of matter, are not rigid structures. It has been revealed to us now that these rigid bodies are but compositions of very fine particles, particles which make very very speedy internal motion.

Recent researches in natural sciences, particularly those in physics and chemistry and biology reveal that life, the wonderful 'whole' that nourishes and propagates the self, did not appear in the scene only with the beginning of the organic life. Life, rather began with the creation of matter. The scientist maintains: "In organic life-cells it has simply assumed a more highly developed form. A living cell is no more wonderful in itself than a molecule, or one of the elementary structures."<sup>14</sup>

Contemporary science thus dissolves matter into living cells which poses a similar question as does the process of life. The traditional mechanical theory does not hold good now at this new stage of the ~~current~~ development of man's knowledge. The doctrine which holds that life originated with organic life (vitalism) does not carry us further either. For outside the organic life too we come across 'mysterious wholenesses' which compose themselves on principles akin to those of life. This takes us to a new-vitalism where hard barriers between living cells and dead matter disappear and where the 'entelechy concept' of Driesch holds

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14. Heim, The Transformation, p. 227.

little good.

Recent researches show that the entire objective world is made of a hierarchy of highly developed forms. But inspite of its very developed skills in research, science has expressed inability to discover a homogeneous mass in the organic and inorganic structures even with the help of electronic microscope and as such it has failed to point to an 'ultimate fabric of reality'. As to the present position of science and scientists we may aptly refer to Karl Heim who writes: 'however deeply we may penetrate into the interior of organic and inorganic structures with the aid of electronic microscope, we shall never come upon a homogeneous mass which was once taken to be the ultimate fabric of reality. The more deeply we penetrate, the more this fundamental stuff, is seen to resolve into a "hierarchy" of wholenesses, conflicting with one another, and then including and embracing one another. An atom of hydrogen with its positively charged nucleus round which there circles a negatively charged electron, or an atom of helium with its two circling electrons each in an quantum track which seems to have been curved out for it, is such a wholeness, a system moved through itself and held together by electrical equivalence, which already confronts us with all the wonder of creation. we can destroy this wholeness by bombardment, but we cannot restore it. we cannot understand how it in fact originated. we can only accept it as a given wholeness, observe it spectroscopically and describe it mathematically.'<sup>15</sup>

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15. Op. cit., p. 228.

In the long run, science thus expresses inability to explain satisfactorily the secrets of atom and the wonder of life. Therefore many thoughtful scientists think today in a different way and express an attitude that markedly differs from that of the mid-twentieth century Russian scientists who once observed: "Every religion contradicts science .... The relics of religious faith must be wiped out by systematic scientific propaganda."<sup>16</sup>

These thoughtful scientists hold that a truly scientific investigation of the objective world "brings us within sight of a conclusion which has far reaching significance for our world view. It is not a conclusion marked by the certainty of an observation or of experimentally observed fact. For here we have to reach behind everything that can be observed objectively."<sup>17</sup>

These scientist-philosophers maintain that there is a thinking mind which inhabits nature and 'whenever there is a calamity it takes over and calculates how the damage is to be repaired with the least effort and building material.' They also believe that there is a relation between nature and God and hold that through a simple objective contemplation of nature we cannot encounter God. God, they maintain, is a matter of personal comprehension wherein God no longer remains an 'incomprehensible Fate'. On the contrary, God appears here as a 'living God who is behind all these ordinance.' God, they further believe, is an omnipresent 'Thou', 'the Father who sees in secret', as said Christ.<sup>18</sup>

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16. Heim *The Transformation*, p. 27.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

II

In nature and its wonders, in the colourful panorama of the world, and in the thought-striking varieties of the universe thoughtful scientists observe the signs of God and many of them feel, in themselves and the world around them, the presence of a Divine Being. In the following pages we will reproduce in condensed forms some illustrative views of a few scientists of this group.

To start with we may choose J.S. Haldane, the eminent British physicist. In his 'Mechanism, life and Personality' Haldane maintains: The hypothesis that the world of matter and energy is an independent world is only a temporary working hypothesis. Of course, we can explain with the help of this temporary hypothesis many of our experiences, but it does not work in the animal world. There exists a completely different reality behind what we understand by life. Neither matter nor energy has been able to reach that world closely. The natural world is, in fact, the phenomenal expression of a deeper reality which lies beyond our vision. The scientist may have only a glimpse of that mysterious reality.<sup>19</sup>

Two other colleagues of Haldane expressed similar views. Sir Oliver Lodge maintained that contrary to our general belief the universe is more spiritual than material and we are in fact, in the midst of a spiritual world whose powers and potentiality we have just started to

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19. Mia, Darshan Parichiti, p.61.

realize. He further held that in reality the spiritual dominates over  
the material.<sup>20</sup>

Also wrote Sir James Jeans that external things derive their objectivity from mind or thought which is no accidental intruder in the realm of matter. Mind is rather the creators and governor of the world of matter. This mind is no individual mind but the universal mind in which our individual minds and all atoms exist as thought.<sup>21</sup>

In Monsma's 'evidence of God in an expanding world'<sup>\*</sup> we come across some striking views of many contemporary scientists — physicists, biologists, botanists, chemists, zoologists, mathematicians and physicians — on science, nature and God. Let us peep through the views of some of these American scientists.

Science has no adequate explanation for the origin of many microscopic particles of matter known to exist. It cannot also explain solely upon the laws of chance how atoms and molecules could have come together to form life. To me the Divine existence is the only logical explanation for things as they are.<sup>22</sup>

I see order and design around me in the inorganic world and cannot believe that they have come into existence by the haphazard fortunate

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20. Das, *Essential Unity of All Religions*, pp. 19-20.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

\* Names of writers and their essays which appear in this book will be mentioned in proper places.

22. Irving William Knobloch, *Bank Materialism Will Not Do*.

coming together of atoms. Personally I have found my explanation of the marvels of nature, such as water, in relating nature's order to a Supreme Intelligence and its design to a Supreme Designer; in it all I see, is more than a cold rational planning. I see the concern of love of a Creator for his creatures.<sup>23</sup>

In seeking to find the origin of the universe science has shown us how, on the basis of the present knowledge of nuclear physics, interaction of fundamental particles can explain the build-up of all known elements. Starting with proton and its properties and some force to bring the particles together all known elements of our present universe can eventually be produced. The origin of the proton and its specific properties are not however known. Regressing far enough one must finally reach the conclusion that the existence of natural laws which describe systematics in the universe, is evidence of an Intelligence who chose to establish the operation of the universe. We can, therefore, say with the writer of Genesis that "In the beginning God."<sup>24</sup>

Throughout nature one finds order and design and there is definite pattern which follows from hydrogen to uranium and beyond. The more we learn about the laws that govern the distribution of protons and electrons to produce the various elements, the more we become aware of harmony and order that exists in nature. To emphasize

23. Thomas Davis Parke, Plain Water will Tell You The Story.

24. Edwin Fast, A Look Behind The Natural Laws.



still more the marvellous facts of design and order I would call the reader's attention to the water cycle, the carbon dioxide cycle, the ammonia cycle and the oxygen cycle. All of them indicate the existence of a planning Mind and a constructing Power.<sup>25</sup>

Whatever process of nature is considered deeply, or whatever question of origin is thoughtfully studied, as a scientist I derive satisfaction only by placing God in the leading role. God is the central figure in every picture and He alone is the answer to the unanswered questions.<sup>26</sup>

The soil is a world of wonders all by itself which scientific study alone brings out to us. The reader may not understand without further study every phrase or bit of chemical nomenclature but he should understand enough that the soil is a world of wonders and he should also come to see something of the network of design in this wonder-world, a network of design that inevitably will lead him to think of the great Designer.<sup>27</sup>

The processes of plant growth and reproduction proceed in a systematic, regular and marvellously undeviating manner. No man-made machine equals the complexity of operations that involves in the growth and reproduction of a single simple plant; the divinely artistic beauty

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25. John Adolph Buchler, Chemical Laws And God.

26. Donald Henry Porter, The Answer To The Unanswered Questions.

27. Dale Swartzendruber, Wonders Of The Soil.

of plants — stems, leaves and flowers — greatly exceeds that which the greatest genius among men has produced. Plants reproduce after their kind unfailingly — wheat produces wheat, barley barley, an olive tree an olive tree, under all sorts of environments generation after generation. To me all this indicates the existence of a Creator-God, limitless both in power and knowledge.<sup>28</sup>

Our powers of observation are limited to a relatively small portion of all reality. The hypothesis that there is a God includes certain conditions relative to the existence of God — conditions which are beyond the province of science to test. God is a spirit and as such exists in a realm of reality which is not wholly included in the physical world. The argument for the fundamental hypothesis of God is a personal and private matter, one which arises in the personal experiences of individuals. No facts have yet been wrested from the intriguing mysteries of this strange onrushing cosmos which can in any way or degree disprove the existence and intelligent activities of an unconditional personal God. On the contrary, when as careful scientists we analyze and synthesize the data of the material world, we observe only the phenomena of the operations of that unseen Being.<sup>29</sup>

Many theories have been brought forward to derive living cells from inanimate matter but all these attempts to produce living matter

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28. Van Hartog, Footsteps Of God In The Plant world.

29. Robert Morris Page, Conclusive Test.

experimentally from inanimate matter have failed utterly. I maintain that each of these single cells, each a system so intricate and so delicate that its complete functioning has so far escaped our study, and all the trillions of them on this earth definitely present a justifiable inference, an inference of Mind, Intelligence, or Thought which we call God. Science both admits and accepts this inference.<sup>30</sup>

The simplest man-made mechanism requires a planner and a maker. How a mechanism ten thousand times more involved and intricate can be conceived of as self-constructed and self-developed is completely beyond me. Definitely there exists a universal planner and maker; and faith reveals this universal Planner, Maker or God as the 'Alpha and Omega' not only of the 'plan of salvation' but also of the entire universe.<sup>31</sup>

The law of entropy states that there is a continuous flow of heat from warmer to colder bodies and that this flow cannot be reversed to pass spontaneously in the opposite direction. Entropy is the ratio from the unavailable to available energy, so that it may be said that entropy of the universe is always increasing. The universe, therefore, is headed for a time when the temperature will be universally uniform and there will be no more useful energy. Consequently there will be no more physical and chemical processes and life itself will cease to exist. But because life is still going on and chemical and physical processes are still in process, it is evident that our universe could

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30. Russell Charles Artist, Trillions Of Living Cells Speak Their Message.

31. Edmund Carl Kornfeld, God - Alpha And Omega.

not have existed for eternity, else it would have long since run out of useful energy and grounded to a halt. Therefore, quite unintentionally science proves that our universe had a beginning and in doing so it proves the reality of God — the Prime Mover, the Creator.<sup>32</sup>

The blood corpuscles of the human body are of just the right size and shape to do the work for which they are meant. The same holds true of other organs, parts and particles. In the world of insects we need only to examine the honeycomb in a beehive among thousands of other objects, to find the same perfect arrangement and simplicity. All the millions of beehives throughout the world are constructed geometrically, with the greatest precision to give the greatest efficiency. If this and a great deal more does not indicate the intelligence of the one Creator, the control and direction of one Supreme God, I surrender what little claim I may have to being a scientist.<sup>33</sup>

Last but not the least striking view is of a medical scientist who states: I have witnessed innumerable instances of recovery from diseases which have followed forthright faith in God. In a good number of cases of recognizable psychic failings, faith's appropriation of God's remedy has resulted in striking cures. Therefore I must say yes, indeed, there is a God. And I know by abundant experience that broken bones together with broken hearts, find healing through God.<sup>34</sup>

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32. Edward Luther Kessel, *Let's Look At Facts Without Bent Or Bias.*

33. Carl Chester Rex, *Universe Under Central Control.*

34. Paul Ernest Adolph, *God In Medical Science.*

III

It is not very difficult to find how strikingly these scientists have been moved by the mysterious vast universe and its colourful and orderly varieties. What is common and distinctly clear in them is that rank materialism cannot explain the real meaning of creation. In the wonders of the animal, the insect, the physical, the chemical, the soil, the plant and the medical worlds they observed the marvellously systematic and regular and precise and geometrically proportioned working of a supremely Intelligent Being. In man and animals, in birds and insects, in trees and plants, in the cycles of water and carbon and ammonia and oxygen, in stems and leaves and flowers, in broken bones and broken hearts, in millions of beehives and trillions of living cells, these scientists of insight and wisdom find and realize the existence of an Intelligent Creator and also see the control and direction of one Supreme Being. Their deep observation and thoughtful reading of nature remind me of the following well-known Quranic verse:

Verily in the change of day and night, in the rising and setting of the sun and the moon, in the transformation of the seasons, in rains and in quickening of the earth, etc. etc. there are signs for the thoughtful ones.<sup>35</sup>

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35. Quran, 2:164.

An impartial and close evaluation of man's feats and credos reveals that the centuries-long reaction of the human mind to the colourful variety of nature has resulted in the discovery of a unity among the innumerable facts and appearances of the universe. The leader of the phenomenal-material world, the physicist, now splits the atom into electrons, protons and various other elements which are but majestic creations of one Supreme Intelligence. In our opinion the Supreme Intelligence of the scientist, the Absolute Idea of the philosopher and the Divine Being of the theologian seem to have very little difference.

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## Chapter 7

### The Idea of God - Its Philosophical Implication.

#### I

Man's mind is usually laden with curiosity. Its eternal nature is to ~~know~~ the unknown; its innate tendency is to unearth the hidden. The curious enquiring mind of man makes him fly in the vast outer space and also it does make him dive deep into the great sea. Man is too eager to know today what is there in the land of the moon. So much so eager is he that even his soft and sweet companion Valentina Terriscova joins the risky flight to the moon ! Astonishing and praiseworthy, indeed, is man's quest for knowledge !

To unveil the mystery of nature is a natural propensity of the human mind. That is why we ask in our very childhood: How and wherefrom has this world come into existence, mother? Growing in age we enquire from our teacher about creation and its creator. At a further stage we begin to reflect ourselves; we start reading the great book of nature. Our mind then penetrates into nature to discover the reality behind.

What the theologian calls God the philosopher prefers to name that as the Absolute or the Ideal or the Truth. God assumes different names

in different fields. The difference between the theologian and the philosopher in naming the ultimate ground of all existence is not one of connotation; they differ only in terminology. In philosophy, the Real appears in the mantle of 'Absolute'; in theology the Absolute introduces itself as 'God'.

In his discussion about the Absolute the Philosopher often makes a distinction between appearance and reality, between the inner and the outer. In reality the earth is almost round but to us it appears as flat. The floor of the house is hard to you and me; to Berkeley it is an idea; and to the modern physicist it is but a coil of dancing electrons. The goal of the Philosopher is, however, to draw himself close to the Real so as to provide us a satisfactory explanation of the universe.

As to the number of reality, philosophers sometimes differ in their opinion. Hence exist in philosophy theories like monism, dualism and pluralism. Those who prefer the two-reality and many-reality theories invite our attention to the varieties in nature. The dualists and the pluralists hold that one reality is not sufficient and capable enough to explain all varieties in the universe. Contrary to this view the upholders of the mono-reality doctrine, the monists, draw our attention to the harp and say: If the same harp can produce different tunes, why is not then one God capable of creating varieties in nature? The reason put forward by the monist thinker appears to be more rational and it directly reaches the heart enlightened.



Most great philosophers of the world have spoken of one reality and their Absolute is quite capable of dissolving every difference and each variety of the universe. Volumes have been written on the Absolute or God by eminent philosophers of both east and west. In the following pages we will try to make only a general outline of the idea of God and its implication in man's thought:

John Burnet tells us that Plato introduced the idea of God in philosophy.<sup>1</sup> According to Plato knowledge of God is 'wisdom and manhood' and ignorance of the Spiritual is simply 'folly and vice'. As to the character of God Plato held: There is no unrighteousness in God; he is perfectly righteous, and a man who is most righteous is most like God.<sup>2</sup>

Again Plato discovered mind as a spiritual principle, distinct from matter and it was he who contributed to western thought the idea of God as spirit. Later his disciple Aristotle elaborated this concept in his theology. Aristotle held that theology is the best science for it deals with the highest of things. Both Plato and Aristotle in the ancient and Newton in the modern world realized that man cannot understand the universe without God.<sup>3</sup>

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1. John Burnet, *From Thales To Plato*; p. 336 (quoted in Boodin's 'God', p. 1).
  2. Plato, *Theatetus*; p. 176 (referred to by Boodin in his 'God', p. 1).
  3. Boodin, *God*, p. 11.

II

The three-letter term 'God' apparently sounds simple but what it really signifies is perhaps beyond the limited wisdom of man. However, inspite of our inability to comprehend God, we cannot understand life and universe without the concept of God. For though "we cannot hope to comprehend God, but without God we cannot hope to comprehend anything else."<sup>4</sup>

To know God is undoubtedly the most difficult task. However, as thoughtful man cannot do without God, with all his limitations he has tried to paint in his thought an idea of God as clearly as he could. When we peep into man's culture and civilization, we find that like a scientist who employs his thought and imagination to understand nature the philosopher endeavours, in all his piety, to make clear the idea of the ultimate ground of all existence. In his<sup>4</sup> dedicated study and devotion the philosopher finally discovers truth that appears to him as the ultimate supreme being, the being which is independent of anything else, the being on which all other things and beings depend for their existence. Philosophically God thus stands for the ultimate ground of all existence.

both man's life and his world are mysterious and they all present varieties and puzzles too. To understand himself and the world around

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4. Hoodin, God, p. 24.

him, the thoughtful man is rather compelled to think of God without whom neither science nor philosophy can proceed beyond certain limits. As such when we fail to explain the subtleties of life and world with all known laws of science and logic we are led to hold: 'God in the beginning' and God is the 'Answer to the Unanswered Questions.'

To hold that man's problem of understanding his life and world leads him to think of God does not imply that man's idea of God originates out of his theoretical pre-occupations. It rather connotes that God's idea is the most practical one so as to explain the meaning and significance of life and universe. Life itself compels us to know what the idea of God implies and what relation does God hold with his creation. Because our life and society take concrete shapes in accordance with our notions of God, his attributes and the relation we human beings have with the Divine. In fact, Plato's spiritual righteousness being and Kant's perfect moral being do obviously influence our well and woe, our conduct and character, our life and society.

In his attempt to understand himself and his world, man generally begins to explain an event in terms of another event or events. And treading on this causal nexus man finally comes to the idea that behind all natural causes there lies one fundamental cause or principle of explanation. Thus Plato comes to the idea of Good, the author of all things; Aristotle speaks of the Prime Mover; Plotinus tells us about the Nous or Intellect, the locus of all ideas; Hegel presents his idea'

of the Absolute, the highest synthesis; Ibn Arabi and Al-Farabi formulate the doctrine of the First Cause; and Shankara and Ramanuja bring in the concept of Brahma, the limitless beginning and unity behind all existence.

In philosophy this concept of unity is irresistible. For, man's thinking mind cannot let things go on and on, ad infinitum. Mind thinks in terms of some thing or being which is supreme enough to explain all other things and beings; and in variety it reaches in fine the unity. This unity is no creation of human imagination. It is on the contrary the defacto truth. It pervades all existence; it stirs up the thoughtful soul of man.

It may be mentioned in this connection that Gilson appears to be right when he holds that though theological in character, Moses' monotheism contained the germs of all subsequent monistic philosophy.<sup>5</sup> For Moses said: "Hear Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."<sup>+</sup>

### III

Acquaintance with philosophy shows that man's thought has produced a number of theories in regard to his idea of God. Let us begin with naturalism which forcefully rejects the view that God exists beyond or above nature as a transcending being. Naturalism formulates that Reality

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5. Gilson, God and Philosophy; Chapter on God in Christian Philosophy.

+ Deuteronomy 6:4.

is within nature and that the Real is identical with part or whole of nature. Naturalist thinkers hold that God is not beyond nature but is in nature. The extreme naturalist even takes nature as the Real. Comte's concept of 'God as Humanity'<sup>5</sup> is a representative example of the naturalist concept of God.

John Dewey's concept of God is another illustration of naturalism. Dewey likes to eliminate both deistic and theistic conceptions of God. He however speaks of the divine. According to Dewey the divine denotes 'the unity of all ideal ends that arouse us to desires and actions. He also holds that God stands for the ideal ends that man acknowledges as having authority over his volition and emotion i.e., God means values to which one is supremely devoted. He continues and maintains that God presents an imaginative unification of values and the idea of God is 'unified through imaginative realization and projection.' Dewey thus thinks of God as something which is product of man's natural imagination concerning ideal ends or values. And since this imagination is a natural process, God is entirely natural.<sup>6</sup>

Materialism which may well be categorised as a form of naturalism states that matter alone is the ultimate reality. According to this doctrine the entire universe evolves from matter. Democritus of ancient Greece is said to have propounded this theory for the first time. Democritus held that matter was the ultimate reality and beyond the finest particles of matter (today's elements of atom) there was no spiritual realm. Evolving through ages this materialist philosophy reached its

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<sup>5</sup> Thompson, *Modern Philosophy of Religion*, p. 229.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp. 220-221.

- 155 -

culmination in modern scientific thought in which even art, literature, philosophy and other disciplines have been explained as products of matter and motion. This school of human thought showed reluctance till recently to believe in the existence of some vital principle or spiritual reality beyond the physico-chemical world of science. However there has taken place, as we have mentioned earlier, a transition from extreme naturalism to liberal idealism and many thoughtful scientists now hold that there is some Supreme Intelligence or Mind that creates nature and fashions order and symmetry in the universe.<sup>7</sup>

Pantheism another doctrine of ultimate reality, in its traditional meaning signifies that God is world and the world is God; the two are one, and there is identity between these two. A pantheist may start with the world and if so, he tends to absorb it into God. Or, he may start with God and then absorb God into the world. In the former case he will tell us that the world has no existence of its own independent of God; in the latter, the pantheist equates God to the unity of the world and God becomes the world unified. Spinoza's analytic philosophy of the 'Substance' and Hegel's synthetic philosophy of the 'Absolute' may be treated as such forms of pantheism. However, pantheism which identifies God with world and the world with God fails to discern that "no two real beings are or can be identical".<sup>8</sup>

On the contrary, Deism rejects any idea of the unity of the world and God. The deist maintains that God created the world with its regulating

7. *Mia, Darshan Parichiti*; pp. 83-84.

8. *Thompson, Modern Philosophy of Religion*; pp. 227-237.

laws and then he left the world to itself. According to the deist, the world and God are distinctly separate; and God transcends the world completely. Deism is thus a direct polemic against pantheism. It is essentially a rational philosophy of a religious God. "It purports to infer the existence of God from nature, and it is composed of those basic doctrines: the doctrine that God is the maker of the world; the doctrine of providence, that God exercises a benevolent management of the world in which He makes specific adjustments when things go wrong; and the doctrine of immortality, in which each man receives the reward or punishment he has earned by his moral conduct on earth."<sup>9</sup>

Deism makes a sharp distinction between God and the world. This theory advocates perfect transcendence of God from the world and thereby makes it a passive act of the divine whim. Deistic complete transcendence of God from creation however fails to satisfy man's mind particularly in its spiritual aspect and hence we come across theism, man's another attempt to explain the idea of God.

Theism holds that God the Creator is both immanent and transcendent. According to the theist God is immediately present in creation; God's presence in his creation does not however mean that the world is a part of God. In one sense, the divine is beyond man and the world. If anybody enquires: How is it that God is both present and absent in the world? the theist would reply: God is immanent in the world in

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9. Thompson, Modern Philosophy of Religion; pp. 241-242.

his thought and action; he however transcends creation in his essence and being. And "There is no contradiction in this if we realize that God is immanent and transcendent in different respects. God is immanent in his activity, in his pervasiveness and control — streaming through the cosmos like ether, fragrant with meaning and value. His presence gives a unique quality to the whole of nature, as our mind gives a unique quality to every part of our body. But as our soul transcends in quality the physical levels of our organism, so God is transcendent in quality with reference to nature and evolution, for nothing rises to the quality of God."<sup>10</sup>

#### IV

The theistic concept of God seems to have taken a meaningful shape in idealist philosophy. Idealism or spiritualism is the doctrine which states that God is the universal Thought, Idea or Divinity in whose spiritual ocean the cosmic worlds float like islands. The idealist philosopher tells us that God is the Supreme Intelligence, the Universal ego or Soul or Mind or Spirit; the Active Planner and Evolver of the worlds of matter. Beginning with Plato of ancient Greece this idealist philosophy appears to have achieved an astonishing form in Hegel of the eighteenth century Germany.

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10. Boodin, God; p. 42.



In the course of his explanation of life and universe, Plato the founder of idealist philosophy, presents before us a new world — the world of ideas. Plato's world of ideas lies behind the world of nature, the cosmological world. Things and objects, according to Plato, are copies of the ideas whose abode is the eternal world — the world of truth. Ideas alone are perfect and they constitute every truth or reality of all existence. He further held that corresponding every class of objects of the cosmic world there exists one particular idea in the world of the real. As for example, 'Man' is the idea in the real world and all individual men are copies of this idea of man. Plato continues and maintains that the Idea of Good reigns high at the peak of the world of ideas where there is no unity without plurality and no plurality without unity.<sup>11</sup>

elaborating his concept of idealism and the Idea of Good, Plato wrote in his 'Republic' that the Idea of Good is the "author of all things"; it is also the source of all other ideas. The Idea of Good thus occupies the place of God or Absolute in Plato's Philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

Thus it appears that Platonic idealism saves the material world by regarding it as a copy of the ideal world where the Idea of Good reigns supreme. Plato's idealism is neither mentalism nor romantic idealism of the nineteenth century which reduced everything into mind

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11. Thilly, History of Philosophy, Section on Plato.

12. Gilson, God and Philosophy; Chapter on 'God in Greek Philosophy.'

and regarded matter, space and time as mere appearances. Plato's idealism "gives a reasonable place to both the material and mental facts. In magnifying mind, it does not deny the reality of matter. It is the only type of idealism which can supplant naturalism by absorbing it."<sup>13</sup>

Like Greece's Plato of the fourth century before Christ, Germany's Immanuel Kant of the eighteenth century Christian era seems to have exerted a great influence in modern man's thought. A thoroughly rationalist thinker in his 'Critique of Pure Reason' Kant exhibited agnosticism and even failed to prove God's existence from rationalist standpoint. In the 'Critique of Practical Reason' Kant however held. The starry heavens above and the moral laws within refer to the existence of a Perfect Being.

Expounding his idealist philosophy Kant maintained that rational psychology strives to bring all mental processes under a general head — a soul; rational cosmology demands the unification of all physical events under the idea of Nature; and rational theology prefers to bring all occurrences under the idea of God. The notion of God thus becomes the highest Idea, the highest unity, the one Absolute whole that comprehends all existence. He further held that we cannot represent the Idea of the 'Absolute Totality' in the form of an image but the totality of the

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13. hoodin, God; p. 19.

Sublime is present in thought and we find it when a formless object is represented as boundless.<sup>14</sup>

Hegel, probably the most outstanding expounder of idealist philosophy in the modern world, believes in the existence of a universal spirit which he calls the 'Absolute'. Treading on the path laid down by Kant, Fichte and Schelling, through his new method of dialecticism Hegel tells us that with all their differences the theses, anti-theses and syntheses reconcile and resolve in the Absolute ---- the highest synthesis. He further holds that the Absolute is thought, the universal thought and it is through thought, or to put it more definitely, it is by virtue of his being spirit or thought that man is man. From man as spirit proceed all developments of science, arts, philosophy and history and all the creative genius of man springs out of the spirit in him; and all the manifold forms of human activities and relations and all that has worth and dignity for man find their terminating center in the universal thought or in the feeling and consciousness of God.<sup>15</sup>

Hegel further holds that all things proceed from the Absolute and do all beings return back to God. The Absolute or God is the centre which is life and quickening to all things and beings. The Absolute animates and preserves in existence all forms of being. God is the

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14. Thilly, History of Philosophy, section on Kant.

15. In my book, Darshan Parishiti (Introduction To Philosophy), I tried to explain Hegel's idealism in details (pp.90-93).

living reason of the universe and reveals himself in nature, in history, in arts, in literature, in philosophy. In other words, the Absolute manifests itself in the world and whatever truth a finite being possesses, it owes to the Absolute. The Absolute is the unity which gives meaning to all existence in the universe.<sup>16</sup>

Long before Kant and Hegel, Moulana Jalaluddin Rumi who is regarded by some as the greatest versified spiritual thinker of the world, held a kindred view of God and world. In Arberry's 'Discourses of Rumi' we find a lucid account of the mystical and spiritual philosophy of Moulana Rumi. The substance of Rumi's spiritual philosophy runs as follows: God is the origin and goal of all existence. He is the Creative Love (Rahman) as well as Forgiving Love (Rahim). Love in man implies the urge of the individual spirit to return to its origin — the Divine Spirit. Love has always the tendency to fly towards 'the rose-garden of union with the Divine Love.'

Rumi further holds that God reveals Himself everytime everywhere; day and night every man reveals God knowingly or unknowingly. Even he who denies God, reveals God. For the very denial of a thing speaks of its existence; without denial or opposition a motion loses all its charm. If there is none to oppose the proposer of a motion saying, "I do not agree", what does the affirmation amount to? A debate lacks all its luster without opposers. Similar is in the case of God — the subject-matter of the greatest motion in man's debate. In fact God is a king,

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16. In my book, Darshan Parichiti (Introduction To Philosophy), I tried to explain Hegel's idealism in details, pp. 92-93.

a mighty king for whom one herald is not sufficient; On the other hand, if all the atoms in the universe become heralds and start proclaiming God's greatness, they will all prove incapable of the task.

A great seer of the truth divine, Iqbal tells us that the 'Man of God' is intoxicated without wine; he is full without food. His constitution is not of ordinary four elements - earth, air, water and fire; he is rather a boundless ocean of spirit in which there are innumerable pearls, and the heaven within him contains numerous suns and moons. He gains knowledge from God and not from books; and in his glory and majesty the man of God drifts away from the non-being.

A disciple of Moulana Iqbal in thought and belief, Allama Iqbal scales heights in his spiritual journey and receives revelation regarding truth from the divine. This journey makes him realize that there exists no duality of the spiritual and the temporal. He further comprehends in the flight of his soul to the world divine that matter and soul are not two different entities but they are different aspects of the same reality.<sup>17</sup> Iqbal also holds in his 'Reconstruction' that reality is one and spiritual whose life consists in the temporal activity and the Spirit finds its manifestations in the natural, material and secular worlds.

even the leader of a new philosophical school which declines to accept anything that does not work in practical life speaks of a spiritual

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17. Muhammad Ahmad, Pilgrimage to Eternity; Introduction.

- 163 -

reality from the pragmatic standpoint. Explaining his idea of the divine, William James held: Not only we have experience of a physical world but in many of our experiences we dive deep into the world of the 'Divine More' and feel the existence of a different reality. This reality does not exist within the dimensions of the phenomenal world. We may call it mystical, supernatural or unseen; but in our subconscious mind we come at times into communion with the 'Divine More' which produces in us tangible attitudes towards life and through which we form ideas of the values of life.<sup>18</sup>

God the Divine is the First Cause; He is the necessary and Absolute Being. And though Creator of the universe, God differs from all of His creations. He is unlimited from within and without; for limitation is non-being. God is one because the infinitely perfect can admit to peer. He is spiritual; for if He were composed of physical parts, some other power would have to combine those parts into the 'total.' But this contradicts God's nature as necessary being. God is one and all familiar distinctions of the finite world 'fall into an absolute identity of being' in God.<sup>19</sup>

A sincere belief in the 'Unseen' or God brings about perceptible change in our life and it creates in us an attitude of 'give and take'

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18. *Ibid*, Marshan Parichiti; p. 225.

19. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*; pp.437-440.

- 164 -

between us and God. God's moral attributes of holiness, justice and goodness determine our fear and hope, action and expectation and they are the 'foundations of a saintly life.'<sup>20</sup> Further, an inner communion with the spirit of God effects spiritual energy in the phenomenal world which in turn produces in us zeal and energy for good work. Belief in God also produces in the believers an assurance of safety and a temper of peace as well as a preponderance of loving affection in relation to others.<sup>21</sup>

In his 'will to believe' William James held that the essence of the philosophy of God is not intelligence but will, the will to believe. God is therefore an object of faith and not of hair-splitting logic. He aptly maintained that the existence of God, the Unseen, cannot either be demonstrated or refuted scientifically.<sup>22</sup>

In primitive days man's idea of God, the divine was crude and through evolution his experience of God advanced gradually. Thus from the crude animistic level God turned out to be the 'Great Unseen' with whom man has developed some sort of rapport. Our knowledge of God is

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20. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*; pp. 444-457.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 485-486.

22. Hagill, *Masterpieces of World Philosophy*; pp. 730-733.

in fact conditioned by the frame of our soul and the divine radiance "is coloured differently through the different responsiveness of our souls."<sup>23</sup>

Man's soul is however capable of development to a considerable extent and in a highly developed spirit, as if in a flash of light, one can see that "God is the spiritual field in which everything lives and moves and has its being — the field which guides the cosmic process, though the parts must adopt themselves to the structure of this field in their own way, according to their own relativity in their moving finite frames of reference. God is the soul of the whole, suffusing it with meaning, making possible the advance of nature — the emergence of new levels as matter is prepared to advance. In this enveloping, pervasive spiritual medium, worlds of matter float like islands."<sup>24</sup>

We know that the development of the individual human organism through different stages of life is realized in accordance with the guidance of a 'dynamic whole-pattern.' Man's development is in reality no matter of chance. In a similar way the birth and evolution of the universe are controlled by the creative genius of the divine. In fact, "matter runs its course within the guiding field of the spirit. The order of evolution is the genius of God. If the magnet attracts by producing an electro-magnetic field, so God attracts the world to himself by producing a spiritual field. But the capacity and willingness

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23. Scodin, God, pp. 29-30.

24. Op. cit., pp. 33-34.



of the parts vary. Hence the unequal organization or lack of organization of the parts."<sup>25</sup>

The inability of the cosmic world to respond uniformly to divine magnetism is the cause of lack of harmony and uniformity in nature. This lack of harmony and uniformity in nature's evolution is not a limitation of God and it signifies no imperfection in the divine. On the contrary, it exhibits imperfection of the temporal. Lack of harmony and uniformity in natural evolution is due to limitations 'in the finite temporal process of adjustments.' God is eternal and he is perfect; his quality, his activity, his perfection are always the same; the divine eternal perfection is very little affected by the fact whether we respond to the divine impetus or not. "The rain falls and the sun shines on the just and the unjust. The quality of rain or sunlight is the same in any case. The great symphony goes forth through the space, unspoiled in quality by the fact that there are few to appreciate it."<sup>26</sup>

If one has been able to develop the vision of truth one will then find that God surges through the whole. His presence is the same everywhere. God is present in his unique essence in all things. All things run their course within the divine creative field. But God is not the soul of things in their particularity. The essence of God is not that of finite individuals. They are not pieces of God. The pattern of the

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25. Boodin, *God*, pp. 34-35.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

finite differs qualitatively from God. In the language of St. Thomas Aquinas: "God is said to be in all things by His essence, not indeed by the essence of the things themselves, as if He were their essence; but by His own essence."<sup>27</sup>

God is order, life, beauty, intelligence, love and goodness. He is creative beauty, creative intelligence, creative love, creative goodness and the creative genius of order. The cosmic world is a theatre of God's activity and his activity is spontaneous. God is present in the world as the fashioning genius of the whole. But living in the world of relativity we cannot comprehend God, the Absolute, in his real being. we have however some intimation of this ordering genius present within us and around us.<sup>28</sup>

## VI

Man's scientific as well as philosophical studies all seem to suggest that with his limited knowledge man can not well comprehend God, the unlimited ground of all existence. Gilson seems to be right when he maintains that this somewhat agnostic attitude of the philosopher is fundamentally the same with that of Moses' theology.<sup>29</sup> Apprehending

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27. Boodin, God, pp. 41-42.

28. Ibid., pp. 46-47.

29. Gilson, God and Philosophy; Chapter on 'God in Christian Philosophy.'

that the children of Israel would ask from him the name of the Lord, Moses prayed to God to let him know the name of their Lord. In response the Lord said: 'I AM THAT I AM:' The Lord also asked Moses to say unto the children of Israel that 'I AM' had sent 'you' to them.<sup>30</sup> From this nature of God follows his Hebrew name Jehova which means 'He who is.' This implies that the 'I AM' is beyond man's comprehension and that the 'I AM' is best known only to 'He who is.'

True, man cannot comprehend the Divine Reality in its entire real being. He can, however, have at times glimpses of the real in and through himself and his world and that too in his own limited way. As such we find that many amongst us entertain doubt about the very existence of God. In their endeavour to convince the sceptics and the atheists, the theists present some logical arguments in favour of God's existence. The ontological argument, the cosmological argument, the teleological argument and the moral argument, put forward by the rationalist philosopher in favour of God's existence, are well-known to students of philosophy.

These arguments are however open to criticism. The critics maintain that neither the idea of a reality (ontology), nor the idea of a first cause (cosmology), nor the idea of design and purpose in nature (teleology), nor the idea of a perfect moral being (morality) can prove conclusively the existence of God. For, to maintain that God exists because existence is a necessary attribute of God the perfect, amounts

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30. Exodus 4: 13-14.

simply to an acceptance and not to a proof of the existence of a perfect being. Again, the notion of an ultimate cause is a matter of conviction and not of logic; for the same problem of origin may equally be applied to the first cause. Similarly, the teleological and moral arguments cannot explain satisfactorily the presence of disorder and evil in nature.

It follows, therefore, that logic or reason cannot prove God's existence conclusively. We have stated repeatedly that man's limited experience fails to reach the deep, unfathomable, mysterious nature of God. In our opinion, God's existence is not a matter of logic and reason; it is rather a matter of faith and conviction. And as such we are inclined to say that God's reality hardly requires any proof. To the soul enlightened, the presence of a small bird which flies under the blue vaults of the heaven or a tiny green blade that decorates the panorama of nature counts more than scores of logical proofs for the existence of God. It matters little if we prove God's existence or not. What is important is not God's existence but the reaction that our faith in God produces in our life. For, "one does not prove the existence of music or poetry or love to those that have the experience. The quality of the ninth symphony of Beethoven is real to those that experience its beauty, though some cannot live it and therefore deny its reality. The quality of divinity is present everywhere to him who is qualified to experience it ... We may never in all the ages comprehend God, but the quality of God's life is present everywhere. The sensitive soul responds to its influence as the plant turns to the sunlight and as the flowers open to the morning dew."<sup>31</sup>

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31. Hoodin, God, pp. 27-28.

## Chapter 8

### Intuition of Truth

#### I

How to acquire knowledge, is the question to begin with. Students of philosophy, as we are, know that the ways through which we acquire knowledge are — the empirical way, the rational way and the intuitive way. All these ways are however interrelated. Sense organs supply particular data for reason to shape them into inductive or universal knowledge. In their most developed and final stage sense and reason give rise to what the man of wisdom terms as intuition, a direct and immediate way of grasping the Greatest Truth, the Highest Unity behind plurality of the world of sense and reason.

No knowledge falls abruptly from above. The world we live in is understood through the help of sense and reason and the accumulated knowledge and experience of the phenomenal world indicate the way that leads the thoughtful and contemplative ones amongst us to the world of the real. The phenomenal is a step towards the spiritual, the world of the real. For years together a very celebrated knower of the divine gathered experiences from the world around and the experiences Muhammad gathered from the external world made him feel that truth lies beyond and hence he passed sleepless nights in the internal world of meditation at the cave of Hira where he received the divine light. And then could the

prophet say: 'I have never seen anything without seeing God in it or without seeing God nearer to me than it.'<sup>1</sup> The Quran also encourages investigation into and knowledge of the natural world. Because an understanding of the world of nature widens man's insight of the Divine.

It is true that the seer of truth prefers intuition to sense and reason as the medium of approaching God. We must however remember that the nature of the object of knowledge greatly determines which of the three ways one should prefer to understand a thing. The preference of the one way or the other does not mean that the remaining ways have no use or importance.

Objects of knowledge may be broadly divided into two classes -- physical and spiritual, or immanent and transcendent. Things or objects of the first group are better known through the two-fold way<sup>1</sup> of sense and reason; knowledge of things of the second category is realized through the direct or intuitive way. We may therefore say that an understanding of God requires all the ways of knowledge mentioned above. For God is both immanent in and transcendent from the world of nature; he comprehends matter as well as spirit. God is both ideal and concrete. For God, the Creator, manifests Himself in His creation and at the same time He transcends the created. Like an artist who absorbs himself in his art and yet lives high above it, the Great Artist of the universe is both immanent in and transcendent from His creation.

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1. Schuon, Understanding Islam, p. 89.

- 172 -

II

Knowers of Truth the Divine, who are mostly mystic in character emphasize the intuitive way of knowing God and sometimes at the cost of the other two. This outlook however originates from the transcendental nature of God and from their belief that the transcendent alone is real. Their mind, tuned to the real and divine, transcends the physical and material; their soul passes on to and enters into the spiritual where they see nothing but the divine. Let us now have a glance over what these having experience and intuition of Truth maintain about the spiritual.

Speaking on God's knowledge Blaise Pascal Holds: It is the heart that senses God; reason cannot grasp him. God is perceptible to the heart and not to reason; and this is truth what faith reveals to us.

Echoing a similar voice with Pascal, Dr. Radhakrishnan Maintains. The mystery of God's being cannot be rationally determined; it remains outside the scope of logical concepts. Its form does not lie in the field of vision; none can see it with the eye. There is no equal to it. An austere silence is more adequate to the experience of God than elaborate description.

Similarly John Arthur Thomson writes: By scientific searching we cannot find out God. Science cannot lead us from nature to nature's

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\* Except otherwise mentioned examples cited here have been gathered from : 1. 'Masterpieces of World Philosophy'; 2. 'Universal God.'

God. The pathway to God is that of religious experience, as the pathway to the vision of beauty is that of aesthetic discipline.

In the following lines of Coleridge one finds a pantheist in the poet whose inward vision sees God 'diffused through all':

" 'Tis the sublime of man,  
Our noontime majesty, to know ourselves  
Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole.'  
This fraternizes man, this constitutes  
Our charities and bearings. But 'tis God  
Diffused through all, that doth make all one whole."

A similar outlook on God and world will be found in the following lines of Coleridge's Persian colleague:

"In the tablet of the universe there is no  
letter save thy name,  
by what name, then, shall we invoke Thee?"<sup>2</sup>

Sheikh Fazlul Karim, a Bengali writer and poet writes in his 'Hajrashi Ibrahim'.<sup>\*</sup> In flowers and leaves whose is this face? With whose beauty the entire universe has become so glowing today? That face glows in the blue of the sky, in the countenance of the nature, in the drops of the dew, and in the living and the non-leaving, in all

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2. Jami.

\* Prince Ibrahim Adham of Balkh.



there reflects that face ! He looked at his heart, the heart told -  
Yea, it is He ! He turned towards the sky, the sky said --- Yea, it is  
His face ! The Devotee's meditation came to an end. He became passio-  
nate seeing his beloved inside and outside.<sup>3</sup>

About God and his knowledge Francis Bacon tells us that a little  
philosophy directs man's mind towards atheism but depth in philosophy  
brings our mind to Providence or God. In looking upon second scattered  
causes mind sometimes stops and goes no further but when it beholds them  
in a chain linked and confederate, it flies straight to God.

St. Anselm invites man to God in the following way: Little man !  
flee for a while from your tasks, hide yourself for a little from the  
turmoils of your thoughts, and cast aside your burden-some cares. Come,  
and for a little while enter into the inner chamber of your kind and  
shut out everything save God; and having barred the door of your chamber,  
seek Him in the proper temple.

Regarding his experience and knowledge of the Divine Spirit St.  
Agustine observes in this way: Thou wert with me, but I was not with  
Thee. When with all my soul I cleave to Thee, all my sorrow disappears  
and my life wholly lives as wholly full of Thee.

Long before Anselm and Agustine, Arastu, sometimes regarded as a  
prophet, sounded the same truth. He maintained: "Absolute Being, the  
Highest Reality, is not apprehended really by thinking; He is apprehended

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3. Muhammad Abdul Hai and Sayed Ali Ahsan, Bangla Shahitter Shikritta;  
p.226.

- 175 -

only in an ecstatic vision. I was often alone with my soul and divested of my body I entered as pure substance into my soul, turning back from all that is external to what is within. There I was pure knowing, at once the knowing and the known. how astonished I was to behold beauty and splendour in my proper self, and to recognize that I was a part of the sublime Divine world, endowed even with creative life ! In this assurance of the self I was lifted above the world of senses, ay, even above the world of spirits, upto the Divine state, where I beheld a light so fair that no tongue can tell it, nor ear understand."<sup>4</sup>

God reflects in man's soul, the Divine touches our heart; and in such stage of spiritual development the soul perceives no other truth greater and nobler than God. A soul illuminated the knowledge of the Divine cries out as follows:

"Eternal God ! O Thou that only art  
The sacred fountain of eternal light,  
And blessed loadstone of my better part,  
O Thou, my heart's desire, my soul's delight !  
reflect upon my soul, and touch my heart,  
And then my heart will prize no good above Thee."<sup>5</sup>

Neither in Kaaba nor on Sinai nor in abstruse philosophy is found God. God dwells in the heart, so believes Jalaluddin Rumi. In the

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4. De Boer, History of Philosophy in Islam, pp. 25-26.

5. Francis Quarles.

following passage we come across an illuminating account of his search for and knowledge of the Divine:

"I searched for God among the Christians and on the Cross and there I found Him not. I went into the ancient temples of idolatry; no trace of Him was there. I entered the mountain Cave of Hira and then went as far as Qandahar but God found I not, neither in low nor in high places. With a set purpose I fared to the summit of Mount Caucasus and found there only "an-qa's" habitation. Then I directed my search towards kaaba, the resort of old and young; God was not there even. Turning to philosophy I enquired about Him from Ibn Sina but found him not within his range. I fared then to the scene of the prophet's experience of a great divine manifestation only a "two bow-length's" distance from him, but God was not there even in the exalted court. Finally I looked into my own heart and there I saw Him; He was nowhere else."<sup>6</sup>

A similar attitude we find in Kabir, the hundi of the Sikh and Hindu world. To polarize the real, the Divine he tells man: You do not see that the real is in your own home, and you wander from forest to forest listlessly! Here is the truth, and you go where you will, to Benaras or Mathura. If you do not find God in your own soul, the world is meaningless to you.

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6. Sharif, *History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 837-838.

In his 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript' Soren Kierkegaard maintains: In the development of his thought the thinker may pass through the aesthetical and ethical stages to the religious stage. In the religious stage he comes to know himself and herein he acknowledges his sin and commits himself to God. Sin-consciousness creates in him such a stage in which the distinction between the eternal and the temporal breaks down and the transcendent becomes immanent in the believer.

One who knows God never feels himself alone. For God lives in him who 'abideth in God.' Epictetus tells us: when you have shut your doors and darkened your room, remember never to say that you are alone; for God is within you. A similar voice we hear from Maysbroeck. How nice he says: God, the measureless Love, lives in the pure deeps of our spirit like the burning brazier of coal and it throws forth brilliant and fiery sparks. These sparks stir and enkindle our heart and senses, our will and desire; and with a fire of love they stir and enkindle all the powers of our soul.

God lives everywhere but most vividly in the human heart. This is the truth that every seer of the divine maintains. As such William Law informs us: Though God is everywhere present, yet He is present to thee in the deepest and most central part of thy soul. Similarly Ramkrishna observes. The breeze of Divine Grace blows upon us all; but what one needs is to set the sail to feel this breeze of grace. A beautiful expression of the same truth we find in the following rhythmical lines:

- 178 -

"Founded in granite, wrapped in serpents,  
light of all life and heat of every storm  
Doth the uncarven image, the Divine,  
Deep in the heart of each man, wait for form."<sup>7</sup>

Though the Divine exists everywhere yet very few of us have the capability and wisdom to understand and intuit God. But those who comprehend God plunge in God and during their close meeting with the Divine they forget everything else and see nothing but the most intoxicating beloved in whose presence they feel an inexplicable delight. The following passage from Saadi throws light on this nature of God and His devotees:

A devout who had deeply plunged his head into the cowl of meditation and was immersed in the ocean of vision, when he came out of that state was asked by one of his companions: "What beautiful gift hast thou brought us from that garden in which thou hast been?" He replied: "When I reached the rose-tree I intended to fill the skirts of my robe with roses as presents for my friends but the fragrance of the flowers intoxicated me so much that I let go the hold of my skirts."<sup>8</sup>

For the true lover the beloved alone exists. The beauty and fragrance of the beloved intoxicate the lover so much that he forgets

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7. Ava Gore- Booth.

8. Mashkur, Gulistan-i-Saadi, p. 3.

everything else. The lover of God, the highest beloved of the devotees, loses himself in the Divine and God becomes the source of all his joy and inspiration. In His presence the devotee feels some strange awe as well. Dr. Madhakrishna, a lover of the Ideal, tells us. Off and on, in some rare moments of our spiritual life, the soul becomes aware of the presence of the divine. A strange awe and delight invades the life of the soul and it becomes convinced of the absoluteness of the divine which moulds and inspires every detail of our life.

When deeply immersed in the divine one can, like Louis of Blois, say. The soul is, as it were, all God-coloured because its essence is bathed in the essence of God. And also like Emily Bronte the devotee can declare. My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels — its wings are almost free, its home, its harbour found; measuring the gulf it stoops and dares the final bound and in such a sublime voyage the devotee discovers the truth. There are some who even utter. I am the Truth (ana'l haq).<sup>\*</sup>

Besides these devotees and seers of the Divine, many prophets and philosophers had experienced and intuited truth and made communion with the Spiritual. Moses saw the Light and fell drenched on the Sinai; Muhammad heard the voice and got the divine light. Under the Buchi Tree Gautama received salvation. Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Bradley, Ghazali, Ibn Arabi and many others experienced the Absolute.

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\* The name of Mansur al-Hallaj, the great mystic theologian of Islam has been associated with this statement. He was hung and executed on charge of blasphemy on March 26, 922 (vide Faris, The Book of Knowledge, p. 72).

Though we human beings live in different environments in so far as our physical existence is concerned yet in spirit we all are same and all our hearts beat in divine unity. This is what Iqbal says in the following lines:

"In different tents we dwell,  
Our hearts in concord beat. This unity  
Of vision makes the particles of sand  
Bright as the sun; shouldst thou attain it, thou  
Wilt see the Lord unveiled. Think not it small,  
It manifests the Unity of God."<sup>9</sup>

### III

Above we have seen how knowers of truth react to life and world. There is however a different camp where we will be acquainted with opposite views. Upholders of this camp sometimes appear to show apathy towards God. They maintain that God cannot be known; or, even if anybody claims any knowledge of God, that is always indistinct and vague. Some typical views of this school are being produced below.

Herbert Spencer holds: Reality is unknowable; we know only appearances. Of course, it is not merely the object of religion that is

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9. Iqbal, Javid Nama, lines 3850-3055 (Tr. K. Ahmad).

unknowable. The reality which science describes is also unknowable, if one tries to think of it absolutely. Kant's paralogisms and antinomies make it clear that concepts like space, time, motion, consciousness and personality have meaning only in the limited world of experience and tell us nothing about reality.

Like Spencer, Rene Descartes maintained long ago in his notable 'Meditations' that man is a thinker and since he thinks of God there must be such a being but the conception of God is beyond man's power. Again John Galsworthy maintains that our minds always will and think emotionally on the 'Unknowable' but we shall never find out the 'Mysterious' that conditions all our lives and things. And this is what constitutes the 'Glory and Poetry of God' just as the poetry and glory of our lives is that we do not know what is coming from moment to moment.

Tuning a similar harp Hoalehuddin Saadi writes:

"O Thou who art above all imaginations,  
conjectures, opinions and ideas;  
Above everything people have said,  
we have heard or read;  
The assembly is finished, and life  
has reached its term;  
and we are as at first, at the beginning  
in describing Thee."

Two famous bishops of the Christian world — Thomas Aquinas and



George Berkely — appear to maintain that the true nature of God is inexplicable. The former maintains that God cannot be given a name and His essence is above all that we can understand and signify in words. The latter holds. There is a Mind that effects me every moment with all the sensible impressions I perceive but it is beyond comprehension.

Philos Judaeus also subscribes to the above view and maintains. God is incomprehensible; not even the whole world much less the human mind can contain the conception of Him. We donot know what He is. We may see His manifestations in His works but it is monstrous folly to go behind His works and enquire into His essence. Similarly Dionysius holds. All that you speak about God is rather untrue than true; He is unspeakable and what you say of God is therefore always something else.

God is mysterious and hidden and we only know Him in his appearances; not in His reality. This is substantially Kraemer's view on God and the understanding of the Reality. He holds: We know God only as He has revealed and disclosed Himself. We donot know Him in His essential being. God is hidden, He sustains and gives life to all, and is a holy Mystery of adorableness.

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God cannot be seen for He is too bright to look upon nor comprehended for He is too pure to be touched, nor measured for He is fully beyond the senses; He is infinite, immense; measureable only by Himself

- 183 -

and our hearts are too small for any understanding of God. This is in short what Felix maintains about God.

A somewhat similar view we come across in Gandhi when he holds: There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I donot see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proofs because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. However since life persists through the midst of death, truth persists through the midst of untruth and since light persists through the midst of darkness I gather that God is life and truth and light.

God is mysterious and none can definitely say what He is exactly like. The mysterious nature of the Mysterious Being has been well expressed in the following lines of Iqbal.

"If He be approached in Form, He will flee by  
way of the spirit;  
If thou seek Him in the sky, He will gleam in  
the water like the moon;  
If thou go into the water, He fleeth to the sky;  
If thou seek Him in the spaceless, He beckoneth  
to the space;  
When thou seekest him in the space,  
He fleeth to the spaceless."

Criticisms and opinions apart, the knowledge of truth, the one, is attained better through an earnest seeking after truth, through one's silent communion with nature and through meditation and concentration of mind on the great beyond than through logical arguments and counter-arguments. Because well organised thought and meditation moves towards a deeper contemplation in which the devotee's mind listens to the voice of truth that throbs into his heart, the voice which is also heard in the world around. Gradually from the world of matter the devotee moves towards the realm of spirit and when absorbed into this world of the real, truth reflects in his heart - the mirror of the divine.

Those whose inward vision is closed might shrug their shoulders at what the seer of truth holds and believes. But it makes little difference for the latter. Because the soul tuned to the world of spirit grasps truth as if the duck swims in a pool and little it does care for the world of matter. Here the 'man of God' develops love for the divine and his love of God fertilises and illuminates his soul. The devotee's love then transcends the eyry of mere feelings, takes the form of a vital contemplation and finally becomes the medium of realisation of truth divine. And in such sublime moments of deep contemplation one may say - I have felt truth.

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## Chapter 9

### The Idea of Unity - Its Pragmatic Import.

During our discussion on the development of the idea of divine unity in great religions of the world we referred to the significance and manifestations of the philosophy of unity. In this concluding chapter we would like to make a brief discussion on the same under a new title from a more modern perspective. In the present evaluation of the idea of unity we will make a special reference to its pragmatic bearing upon life today.

Faith in God as the only ground of all existence plays a very important role in man's life and history. A thoughtful and reflective look into history discloses the fact that under religious veneer the philosophy of unity played in the past an important role in shaping the life and destiny of man. The present world - situation makes us think with a new orientation of outlook over the significance of unity, the 'Ark of Noah' that can, we believe, save man from great problems and turmoils of his much divided present day world.

Religion teaches us that God is one. It also discloses the fact that there is a unity<sup>1</sup> in the creation of God. The Old Testament reveals that religion of unity began with Adam. Developing through Abraham and Moses, and also through Christ of the New Testament the religion of divine unity reached a remarkable perfection in the Quran and in Islam.

and in the traditions of Muhammad. In his famous 'Varieties of Religious Experience' William James also holds that the idea of unity is the essence of religious experiences. He further maintains that unity of the world is fundamentally a mystical tradition all over the world.

In the Upanishads we come across a monotheistic view of God as well as a monistic view of the world. The Upanishads hold that Brahma is the unity behind plurality of facts of the world we live in. Unity forms the basis of the Upanishadic teachings. They do not however ignore plurality which is but a result of man's normal experiences. They further maintain that an intense religious experience or a vision of Brahma in his true unitary character removes all empirical distinctions.

In the Bhagavad Gita also a similar philosophy is present. The Book believes in the existence and reality of a universal spiritual reality as the only base of all life and creation. It then brings about a union between man's normal life of duty and his lofty spiritual aspiration. And on the basis of this synthesis the "Song Celestial lays the foundation of an equitable society that gives due weight to the rights and privileges of all classes of man in the social hierarchy and open to them all irrespective of their social status the gates of spiritual wisdom."

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1. Dev, Aspirations of the Common Man; pp. 25-26.

In course of time this idea of unity receded to the background and as a result endless metaphysical controversies on the theoretic import of unity grew up. This in turn fostered social disparities, inequities and conflicts as well. In such an environment Buddha appeared with his gospel of 'Maitri' and universal amity and friendship. His philosophy gradually became 'the elan of a new society' and brought a new message of hope for mankind. Buddha's philosophy of universal amity exercised a great influence even beyond India and thus the Upanishadic teaching of unity<sup>2</sup> stripped of its metaphysical significance was metamorphosed into an ethics of universal love and the prayer for universal happiness was sounded from the deepest recesses of the heart.<sup>2</sup>

Later in Jesus Christ we find a continuity of Buddha's ethics of universal love. Christ's philosophy of universal love has been well expressed in the Bible where-in the prophet greatly emphasised man's love of God and the love of his neighbour.<sup>3</sup> Jesus unlike Buddha, was however a confirmed theist with strong belief in God's infinite mercy and forgiveness. The prophet himself was an ideal symbol of God's infinite mercy for remission of the sins of man.

Both Buddhism and Christianity have, however, some other-worldly bias which directly or indirectly undermines the part played by man's flesh and body. Buddha's 'Nirvana' and Christ's 'Kingdom of Heaven'

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2. Dev, Aspirations of the Common Man; p. 23.

3. St. Mark, 13: 23-31.

could not successfully brake the rein of man's material needs. A compromise between the 'Kingdom of Heaven' and the world of man was as such a historical need and this happy compromise and union was brought about by Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. His philosophy of life endorsed a plan for the establishment of a just and equitable society based on Islam's uncompromising monotheism and its counter-part, i.e., the philosophy of the unity of all creation. With the introduction of the institution of public charity<sup>4</sup> and granting hereditary property right to women and declaring all men and women, masters and servants, Arabs and non-Arabs equal before Allah, Muhammad's philosophy of unity and peace got a promising start. To give to this philosophy of unity a concrete shape Islam made a sincere and invigorating attempt. Its ultimate aim was to establish a balanced and harmonious society and to introduce such a philosophy of life that would bring about harmony and unity between excessive secularism and inordinate spiritualism.

Let us explain this point a bit elaborately. Islam is not only a spiritual attitude of the soul. It is "a self-sufficing orbit of culture and a social system of clearly defined features."<sup>5</sup> Man's religious attitude is an outcome of his intellectual and biological nature. A thoughtful observation of God's creation reveals that the mysteries

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4. Zakat, tax on yearly income. It used to go to the Bait-ul-Mal for distribution to the poor and the needy.

5. Asad, Islam At The Crossroads, p. 10.

of life, birth and death, and the mystery of infinity erect walls before man's intellect. Natural sciences, whatever methodical they might be, cannot give man unified knowledge of life and world and this makes him accept a unitary explanation of life. This explanation is based on an inner and esoteric experience of a Supreme Power. There is however no inherent antagonism between the external and the internal or between scientific and spiritual perception of life. Rightly understood, these two together bring about a well-balanced and harmonious totality of knowledge and they bring a unity in life and creation.

This is a fundamental position in almost all great religions. In Islam, however, it has taken a special form. Islam teaches that life is practically a unity and this unity follows from Divine Unity to which the Arabian prophet laid the greatest emphasis.

Life's supreme goal is to attain a harmony between idea and action, between spirit and matter; its summum bonum consists in effecting a balanced unity between the soul and the flesh. To bring about this goal Islam does not teach to renounce the world, nor does it prescribe inordinate austerities for opening some secret door to man's spiritual perfection. Islam is neither a mystical doctrine left only to the incomprehensible Absolute of metaphysics or to the purely Transcendent Divine of dogmatism, nor it is a plan drawn for the satisfaction of the flesh alone. On the contrary. "It is simply a programme of life according to the rules of Nature which God has decreed upon His creation; and

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its supreme achievement is the complete co-ordination of the spiritual and the material aspects of human life."<sup>6</sup>

According to Islam the bodily and the spiritual aspects coexist in man's existence. Islam further believes that these two aspects are the natural basis of life and hence inseparable too. That the bodily and the spiritual coexist in life is clear even from the purely religious works of a Muslim. Take prayer and tawaf for examples. Prayer which is meant for spiritual concentration is accompanied by certain bodily movements. This is also observable in tawaf or the ceremonial walking round the Ka'aba. Prayer and tawaf thus signify that "not only our devotional thoughts, but also our practical life, our actions and endeavours, must have the idea of God and His oneness for their centre.

Islam further holds that man's life can be made perfect in human sense here on earth. Unlike Christianity, Islam prescribes no complete suppression of the so-called bodily desires, and like Hinduism and Buddhism it does not promise a continuous chain of rebirth on a progressively higher plane. Islam does not also agree with the Buddhist's teaching that perfection and salvation can be obtained only through an annihilation of the individual self and its emotional links with the world. Islam teaches that man's life can be made perfect on earth through a balanced use of all the worldly possibilities of life.

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6. Op. cit. pp. 14-15.

7. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

Again, unlike the secular West, Islam does not worship material life. Neither does Islam abandon life material as does dogmatic Christianity to divert the soul to God so as to be redeemed of the original sin which was handed down to man by Adam who committed evil at the instigation of 'satan, the hellish Prince of Darkness and Matter.' Islam regards material life as an organic stage on man's way to a higher plane. It believes neither in the former's material optimism that 'My Kingdom is of this world alone', nor in the latter's inordinate spiritualism that 'My Kingdom is not of this world.'<sup>8</sup>

Islam, a coordinated and unified code of life, believes in a harmonious middle-way and teaches its followers to pray. "Our Lord, give us the good of this world and the good in the hereafter."<sup>9</sup>

Because of its logical soundness and pragmatic utility in life, Islam's philosophy of unity and world-brother-hood received encouraging response during its early years and within three decades after the demise of its prophet, its impact was keenly felt over a vast region of the then civilized world. But with the end of the reign of the immediate successors of the prophet, the *aholafa-e-hashedin*, there occurred an unfortunate departure from the ideal synthesis that Muhammad brought about for man. Since then a big gap has been created in the value-consciousness of man and the lost equilibrium has not yet been restored. A

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8. Islam At The Crossroads, pp. 27-28.

9. Quran 2: 201.

departure from the philosophy of Unity and love thus logically proves detrimental to man's life and world.

Now a days there is a tendency with many not to regard religion as a sound philosophy of life. They maintain that religion has no valid and uniform basis. There are some who even maintain that religion is the product of some abnormal behaviour. The religious man does not, however, react to religion in such a way. With him religion is an exhaustive plan of life that gives him a lasting experience of a soaring universal spirit, and he then perceives through all external pluralities a spiritual unity.

Since the renaissance the secular aspect of life got terribly over the spiritual one and today in the world of science and technology there has been a tough fight between God and Mammon, between Dollar and Faith. A happy synthesis between the two, between materialism and spiritualism is an imperative need for our present world. Because without a synthesis of the two, without a unity in the material and spiritual life we have little hope for our survival.

Today many talk of secular humanism. To be fair we need it for the welfare of man. We must however guard against the extreme secularism of the materialist and also we must avoid carefully the other-worldly attitude of the inordinate spiritualism of dogmatic religion. To make life happy, we must give due weight to both our material as well as spiritual needs and values.

We know that an uneven growth of the belly caused by non-cooperation and insufficiency of other limbs of the body is an alarming sign and if not checked properly, this unbalanced growth of a part results in death and the whole body ceases to act for ever. We think we will not commit mistake if we maintain that in today's world man suffers from a disease of this sort and his hankering for material enjoyment is fast increasing. Man has failed to put a balanced check on this alarming trend. The plausible remedy lies, in our opinion, in a synthesis of and compromise between dollar and faith, between matter and spirit.

Properly understood and acted upon, divine unity brings about a synthetic attitude towards life and world with due emphasis on both matter and spirit. True religion discovers not only a spiritual unitary being behind all existence but also it does reveal a balanced unity in life and universe. It is a philosophy of life that teaches man "to spiritualize matter and also to materialize spirit."<sup>10</sup>

Today we need a new orientation of the philosophy of unity and for this orientation we require two things. The first of these two requirements is to effect in our practical dealings the religious gospel of universal love. To this moral counterpart of the philosophy of unity we have to give top most priority. For without universal love there is very little hope for our survival in this atomic nuclear age. Secondly, a liberal synthetic outlook that yields to no extremism but which harmonizes

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10. Dev, Aspirations of The Common Man, p. 34.

opposites shall have to be developed. Because such a philosophy alone can meet the conflicting demands of life - material and spiritual, individual and social, and national and international.

Religion stands for a balanced unity of life and existence. Undue importance has however been attached at times to its external aspect. The consequence of this prejudicial attitude has been the creation of "group rivalries and feuds of worst type and inhuman cruelties were perpetrated to further its cause."<sup>11</sup> This is one of the principal causes of modern man's hostility to religion. Religions are to blame for this attitude but not religion whose precious jewel behind is the same in every civilized race. An awareness of the spiritual unity of all existence and the sublime ethics of universal love are the heart-beats of a genuine religious system everywhere. Religions, on the contrary, create groups and feuds amongst people only to make them hostile to each other. It is therefore imperative that we get rid of dogmatic religions and store up in the heart of our hearts the basic religious attitude of unity and love.

What is of utmost need in our contemporary world is that the ministers of religion effect unflinchingly in their conduct the lessons of the philosophy of unity and love. They must, to play their role aright, hold up before the masses the basic unity of historic religions and help them achieve the unification of man and man, of group and group, of nation

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11. Op. cit., p. 43.

- 195 -

and nation. They must help peoples unite together on a universal platform of love and brotherhood and must refrain masses of mankind from inflicting cruelties to others in the name of religion.

Religion therefore requires a new code of conduct; it needs a new sort of morality. Its fundamentals are no doubt old but what we require is to set them in a new way in the new environment. A sense of unity and cohesion in our life and world is what is needed most in this new setting. And in this new set-up of our society the worth of an action must be judged by its capacity to contribute to human unity and universal love and brotherhood.

Man's present history is a history of crisis and to save him from this crisis a solution must be worked out. As we have already pointed out, a happy union of knowledge and faith, of science and religion can offer this solution. We must become free from prejudice and superstition and must be willing to supplement scientific relative knowledge by religion's absolute knowledge of the spiritual unity of all creation.



With his tremendous success in science and technology modern man has become very powerful and proud too and in his pride he has let loose, we should better say dreadfully loose, the wheels of the Science-Chariot, To set aright the up-set wheels of this powerful chariot a compromise between power and love, a union between science and religion has to be brought about without delay so that human race can be kept "off from division, disintegration and annihilation."<sup>12</sup>

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12. Dev, Aspirations of The Common Man, p. 97.

Modern science has turned the whole globe physically into one world. It has conquered space and time. Due to its much speedy vehicles of communication the whole world has become virtually one for modern man and practically there exists for him no distant corner of the globe. Science is also capable of providing more food, shelter and clothing to the inhabitants of this one world of our atomic age. For its brilliant ~~achievements~~ science deserves our sincere tributes. Nevertheless, in this rich physical one world of science there exists a spiritual poverty. To make up this spiritual poverty is, in our opinion, the task of religion and philosophy. A sense of spiritual unity of the creation and its accompanying universal love can put a brake to man's material insanity and it can thereby show the road to durable peace and lasting prosperity.

Due to the discovery of the physical unity of the globe modern man's social, political and economic relations have become closer. This in turn presses man to realize the spiritual unity of the universe and it appears that in modern scientific secularism there is a hidden touch of religious spiritualism. With its broadening vision of the physical world science has, as it were, given an impetus to a better understanding of the spiritual unity of the universe. "Judged from this perspective, the physical unity as it were is the body of the spiritual unity, and spiritual unity, its soul. In this soul-body union on a collective scale, in the spiritualisation of science and the materialisation of religion and philosophy lies the key to the prosperity of the common man."<sup>13</sup>

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13. Op. cit., p. 123.

- 197 -

In the primitive world man's religious notion was very narrow and as such he was unable to form any idea of unity and universal brotherhood through one God. The religion of Moses first taught with remarkable boldness that Jehova was no longer the God of the Israels alone but of the Gentiles too. He thus preached the message of one universal God and thereby emphasised man's unity and brotherhood. In China Confucius (sixth and fifth centuries B.C.) taught about universal love and unity of man through his celebrated "jen" or ideal relation among human beings. Thereafter Jesus preached the philosophy of universal brotherhood through love. In ancient India similar attempts were made by Hinduism and Buddhism which preached the message of unity and love far beyond the frontiers of their birth land. Still later in the seventh century Muhammad and his immediate successors, motivated by their lofty ideals of universal peace and brotherhood, made remarkable ventures to unite the whole world. In the early twentieth century the League of Nations came into existence with somewhat similar aims of unity and cohesion among nations. Its limitations apart, the present day United Nations Organisation has behind it the philosophy of cooperation, unity and amity among different peoples of the globe. Life's necessity is the condition 'sine qua non' of these past and present experiments of man. His future too cannot afford to be an exception. A universal brotherhood, if not a world-state, based on love and unity we believe will ensure man's prolonged existence, durable peace and lasting prosperity. Unity of man and world is thus a pragmatic need which, we hope, will materialize into fact in due course of time.



In today's world, in which nation's and races have divided much on national and regional conflicting interests, most people however hold that the idea of a universal brotherhood or of a world-state is a mere dream. But we believe that dreams at times do come true and as such we would like to be optimistic and hold that international organizations like the United Nations and the Commonwealth might work as corridors that will lead us to a big assembly where nations and races of the world may live together in peace and happiness.

Today we live in a world full of hatred and groupism. Nationalism and regionalism have grown powerful. The world has been divided into camps and blocks like the East and the West, the Capitalist Block and the Soviet block, the Arab world and the Christian World, the Black World and the white world, and so on and so forth. The world as a whole has become bitter, too bitter we should better say. This, we believe, is all due to division and hatred.

In the present much-divided and awfully tension-ridden world men have become more hostile to one another; in it life has lost its balance. And as such, inspite of the unprecedented scientific and technological developments the world has assumed a gloomy picture. All these unhappy events do warrant all human beings to unite together and to foster universal love and amity in conformity with the principle of divine unity.

In view of the gloomy picture of today's world full of hatred, groupism and tension the thoughtful writer of the 'Aspirations' holds

that "The idea of unity has become a matter of breath, next in importance only to God's Oxygen".<sup>14</sup>

The above emphatic statement on unity might raise objections in some circles. But in our opinion it contains a great truth. We believe that if not "the next in importance only to God's oxygen", unity together with its moral counterpart, universal love and brotherhood, has become a most pressing virtue of necessity for man and his world today.

In conclusion we would like to reiterate: Unity is not a mere subjective idea. On the contrary, it is an energising force. One may ascribe to this unity any name or form. but its consciousness is spiritual and religion, and philosophy so far as it has a spiritual background, is an effort to understand this truth. This Principle of unity, however, waits for fuller revelation and perfect illumination in man's life and world.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Dev, Aspirations of The Common Man, p. 189.

15. Tagore, Religion of Man, pp. 15-16.

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