The religious cosmology of the Mizo’s can be divided into two tiers - an upper tier consisting of a high God called Pathian who rules the macrocosm or the world beyond the community, and a lower tier microcosm consisting of the numerous spirits (good and bad) which watch and rule the natural and social worlds and with which the community has more frequent and intense interactions.

God of the Mizo traditional religion is known as ‘Pathian’. Superficial perception of the religion has led a number of scholars to label this religion as mere ‘animism’. However a deep and sincere research shows that Mizo traditional religion had a definite concept of God named ‘Pathian’. ‘Pathian’ is the ‘sa’ that they worshipped (already discussed in the definition of ‘sakhua’).

Several terms have been used to refer to Pathian but each has been used with distinctive reasons. Based on the manifestation of his nature and characteristics the following terms have been used while referring to Pathian-
1. Pathian-

Literally ‘Pa’ means ‘father’ and ‘thian’ means clear. But ‘thian’ used here implies more the quality of purity or holiness. Therefore, Pathian may also be translated as “Holy Father” and was believed to be a male person.

2. Chunga Mi or Chung Pathian-

The literal translation of ‘chung’ is ‘above’ and ‘Chunga Mi’ thus means ‘one who is above’. The terms indicate his place of dwelling i.e. high above the earth, a heavenly dwelling, therefore called him “Heavenly Father”.

3. Khuanu –

Khuanu is again a female deity identified with Pathian. The term Khuanu means “mother of village”. “Khua” means village and “nu” means mother, so nu indicates a feminine gender, a female goddess. Besides this, ‘khua’ also means nature, which is a more common translated version. It is from this that the term khuanu arises meaning Mother Nature. This khuanu was regarded as the protector of the village.

58 Lalhuaka, Zoram pg 31
From here also arises the saying “Khuanu in min veng rawh se” meaning “May Khuanu protect us”. Khuanu protects not only the villagers but also the village animals and especially the mithun, a sacrificial animal to ‘khua’ (God). Khuanu as a female deity shows the anthropomorphic idea of Pathian as having a family and of khuanu as his wife. Khuanu was ascribed to be the source from where humans expected all kinds of blessings. The poetical phrase below shows us the identity of Khuanu with Pathian. It says-

\[
{\text{Engatinge Chung Pathian Khuanu lengin,}} \\
{\text{Tuanna tlang dang tura min siam le?}}
\]

It may be translated as-

Why did God Khuana residing above us? 
Create us to dwell in separate hills?

‘Chung Pathian’ means God above and here Khuanu is used as a poetical name of Pathian, therefore khuanu is one of Pathian’s manifestations.

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59 K. Vanlaltlani, Concept of Mizo high God.
60 Hminga, mizo mizia, pg 50
61 Lalhmuaka, Zoram, pg 31.
62 Challiana, Pipu nun, pg 22.
63 Own translation.
4. Pu Vana -

"Pu" means 'grandfather'; "van" means 'heaven' and 'a' is the assignment of the male gender. Thus Pu Vana maybe literally translated as "grandfather of heaven". According to this idea, Pu Vana is conceived as the grandfather in the family of Pathian and probably the father of Pathian himself. Based on this understanding, Pathian is the son of Pu Vana, the husband of Khuanu, and the female goddess. Both Pathian and Khuanu have a daughter named Vanchung nula, (maiden of heaven) who is usually considered as the goddess of rain. The popular phrase used for Vanchungnula was that- “Vanchung nula- in a tui chawi atluk buakpui a, leiah hain a lo bua ani” which means Vanchung nula has fetched water and spilled it on the earth.

5. Vanhrika-

Literally 'hrik' means 'lice' and 'van' means heaven, thus vanhrika can be translated as 'the lice of heaven'. Just as lice is a constant inhabitant of the head, so too, Vanhrika was believed to be a permanent inhabitant of heaven. He is more commonly known as the God

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64 In Mizo grammar- 'a' is assigned to male genders and 'i' to female genders.
65 K. Vanlaltlani, Concept of Mizo high God.
66 Thanga, The Mizos, pg 27.
67 Challiana, Pi pu nun, pg 22
of wisdom, science and learning.\footnote{L.B. Thanga, The Mizos, pg 27} The God from which Lalruanga learnt magic and became a famous magician of his times\footnote{Ibid, pg 67.}.\footnote{Ibid, pg 67.} In one of the mizo folktales - ‘Lalruanga and Keichala’ it says that Vanhrika used to steal the preys trapped by Lalruanga. Vanhrika was caught by Lalruanga red handed and Vanhrika pleaded to spare his life and promised to teach Lalruanga the best magic of the world if he spared his life. Lalruanga agreed and thus became the greatest magician of his day.\footnote{Ibid.} Since Vanhrika was a god of wisdom he was known to solve many problems of human beings. Another legend of Vanhrika is as follows\footnote{Ibid.} – One day the ramhuais (evil spirits) had placed a case against human beings before Vanhrika. After hearing it out he advised them to fling dust in the eyes of human beings in order to blind them from seeing the ramhuais. The ramhuais obeyed as advised and henceforth human beings were unable to see ramhuais and thus started the sacrifices to ramhuais.

6. Khuavang—

Thomas Hubert Lewin has translated the word ‘Khuavang’ as “God”\footnote{Thomas Herbert Lewin, Progress Colloquial Exercises.....} Khuavang was often regarded as the guardian of human beings
and their village by bringing comfort and peace. They believed that it was *kuavang* that protected and cared for them. But unlike the previous deities like *Pu Vana, Khuanu, Vanhrika* etc, most scholars never considered it a heavenly being. *Khuavang* was considered as one of the good spirits and a little inferior to *Pathian*. *Khuavang* is sometimes identified as *Pathian* probably because of its power to bless people and had more concern for human beings. The folk tale “Laindova te unau’ shows how *Khuavang* cares and blesses human beings. This tale is as follows.

Once upon a time lived two brothers Liandova and Tuaisiala. Liandova, the elder earned their daily bread by guarding people’s paddy fields. Once as he was in the fields a raven flew over him with a snake in its beak. The raven dropped the snake and the two brothers quickly took care of the snake by wrapping it in a big banana leaf and placed it inside the jhum house. Since then every evening they would find rice and meat cooked already. After some days they found out that it was a *kuavang* lady that had done them favour. This favour was done because the snake they had carefully kept away was a child of the *Khuavang* lady and so in return the *kuavang* had blessed them. The *kuavang* lady later had to leave but assured Liandova and Tuaisiala that she would always be

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73 Mc Call, Lushai, pg 61.  
74 P.S.Dahrawka, Mizo thawnthu, pg 49.
there whenever they called upon her, in times of help. It was perhaps of this power to bless and help the needy that it is often identified with Pathian. Another conception of *khuavang* is that it is considered as a group of spirits. *Khuavang* was known as ‘*khuavang ho’* (‘ho’ is the plural form). The myth named ‘Kungawrhi’ tells us the presence of the *khuavangs* and the place where they resided i.e., below the earth’s surface.

Confusion has always been there about khoavang’s being identified with *Pathian* and question of the superiority of *Pathian* over *khuavang*. There were phrases like – “Let khua and vang be there “ and “ Let Pathian be there” which are considered as synonymous phrases. The comfort people received from praying to *Khuavang* was the same as that of praying to *Pathian*. Perhaps, it was due to the above reason that Saiaithanga observes *Khuavang* as one who guards and blesses human beings. It was khoavang that Mizos worshipped, not out of fear but out of their own desire and free will.  

*Khuavang* is a manifestation of *Pathian*, identified with *Pathian* *Khuavang* was believed to be a spirit, which wandered around human beings to protect and care them. The *khuavang* spirit played an important

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75 Saiaithanga, Mizo sakhua, pg 17.
role in man’s fate. Shakespeare observes as – ‘A Lushai will say ‘My khuavang is good’ if things are going wrong with him, and he will also tell you that you are his khuavang meaning that his fate rests with you’ indicating Khuavang’s responsibility for natural fate. Not only this, birthmarks or moles on the body were known as “khuavang chhinchhiah” meaning “ensigned by khuavang”. The belief was that khuavang as a spirit constantly wandered around human beings closely and sometimes when people suddenly forget what they have to say and a short break a/silence is observed they’d say ‘khuavang kallai’ meaning “khuavang is passing by’. The natural divisions of hills and valleys was believed to be set by khuavang and was called “khuavang rikham sa” meaning “boundary fixed by khuavang”77. Khuavang was not only one but also believed to move in groups called “khuavang –ho” (‘ho’ being the plural form). There were phrases like “Khua leh vang a awm ang chu” meaning “Let Pathian (God) be there” where Khua and Vang are identified as Pathian. In this way Pathian is conceived as spirit.

7.Sa, Sakhua-

Sa is another term used in place of Pathian. In fact we may say that ‘sa’ is the original word used to refer to Pathian. Each clan had their own ‘sa’ and it is to this ‘sa’ that each worshipped and offered

76 Shakespear, Lushai,P!, pg 61
77 K.Vanlaltlani., Concept of Mizo high God.
sacrifices to. Sakhua is another term, which referred to Pathian. Both ‘sa’ and sakhua’ can be taken as identical terms.

He was a God who loved and cared for the life of human beings. Orphans, the despised, the poor etc especially experienced his love. This is seen in the folktale of Liandova Te unau where the Liandova brothers who were initially poor were later uplifted by Pathian. In this tale, Liandova consoles his brother Tuaisiala by saying the Pathian above looks down on orphans and makes them great. Due to their belief in a loving God, traditional Mizos often comforted orphans with the name of Pathian. There was the belief that those who were cruel to orphans, oppressed and poor never enjoyed a prosperous life on earth. God was considered as God who did not discriminate between the rich or poor. People would either say “Ka Pathian a tha a ni” or “Pathian a tha ang chu, zah a ngai ang chu 2” meaning “My God is good” or “Pathian will be good and have mercy on us”. These indicate that God was undoubtedly a good God.

Traditional Mizos believed that Pathian created the universe and everything in it. He was the creator- God. Though the traditional Mizos

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78 P.S.Dahrawka,Mizo thawnthu.
79 Dr. Sangkima, Mizo society and social change, pg 52;Challiana, Pipu Nun, pg 22;Col.V.Lunghnema,Mizo chanchin, pg 178.
do not have an elaborated myth on the process of creation, *Pathian* was believed to possess, the creative power of creating men, world the heavens and everything under it. There's also a belief that says that man was created from earth i.e. from the dust of the earth. According to Lianzika, whatever the human eyes could see is created by *Pathian* and there was no answer to the question of creator, except, *Pathian*. There is no other myth except this chant recited by the priest during the sacrificial invocation to *Pathian*. This chant indicates the creative power of *Pathian*.

It is as follows-

\[
\begin{align*}
Pi \ biakin \ lo \ chhang \ ang \ chi \\
Pu \ biakin \ lo \ chhang \ ang \ chi \\
Thingbul \ lungbul \ siamtu \ Pathianin, \\
Ka \ satluang \ lo \ chhang \ ang \ che \\
Mitin \ siamtu \ satin \ siamtu \ Pathianin \\
Ka \ satluang \ lo \ chhang \ ang \ che^{82}
\end{align*}
\]

It may be translated as -

That worshipped by grandmother, answer (me),

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80 Col.V.Lunghnema, Mizo chanchin, pg 178.
81 Quoted by K.Vanlaltlani
82 Quoted by K.Vanlaltlani.
That worshipped by grandfather, answer (me),

Pathian who created the trees and the rocks,

Answer my sacrifice

Pathian who created the men and animals

Answer my sacrifice

Pathian was believed to reside somewhere beyond human reach, above the skies. Hence, the usual appellation ‘Chung Pathian’ i.e. God above. The elders believed of His immanence and omnipresence. His presence was everywhere- above, below and around, encircling their surroundings. This is indicated by the ‘sadawt’ incantations which invoke Pathian from all the surrounding places such as - ‘above-the-grave, below-the-grave, new village site, Yam plots, street, courtyard, surface of the earth, center of the earth, place of work, brass girdle, enveloping mists, surface of the bamboo mat floor, in-between mat and beams, etc including the mountains where their ancestors were supposedly believed to have settled’. 84 Besides these places Pathian was also believed to reside in the heavens, the sun, the moon and under the earth’s surface. This can be seen in one of the chants of the priest during sacrifice, which is as follows-

Pathianin aw, ka satluang lo chhang ang che,

83 Own translation.
84 J.Shakespear. The Lushai –Kuki clans.
Van sanga lenga Pathianin,
Ka satluang lo chhang ang che,
Ni kara chenga Pathianin
Ka satluang lo chhang ang che,
Thla kara chenga Pathianin
Ka satluang lo chhang ang che

This may be translated as-

Oh Pathian answer this sacrifice of mine,
Pathian who dwells in the high heaven
Answer this sacrifice of mine
Pathian residing in the midst of the sun
Answer this sacrifice of mine
Pathian residing in the midst of the moon
Answer this sacrifice of mine

Another chant is as follows-

Hnuaiin aw, ka chhurpui lo chhang ang che
Lei thuah khata thovin ka chhurpui lo chhang ang che
Thuah ngaa thovin ka chhurpui lo chhang ang che

85 Llathangliana, Society leh sakhua, in Hnam zia, pg 5.
86 Own translation
Thuah sariha thovin ka chhurpui lo chhang ang che
Thuah Kuua thovin ka chhurpui lo chhang ang che
Thuah hraa thovin ka chhurpui lo chhang ang che

The above may be translated as-

Hnuaiin*, Answer my sacrifice
Arise from the first layer of the earth and answer my sacrifice
Arise from the third layer and answer my sacrifice
Arise from the fifth layer and answer my sacrifice
Arise from the seventh layer and answer my sacrifice
Arise from the ninth layer and answer my sacrifice
Arise from the tenth layer and answer my sacrifice.⁸⁸

Thus we see that Pathian is being addressed from every nook and corner of the earth.

Rain is again another immediate reference showing his omnipresence. Whenever it rains, the Mizos would say ‘Vanchung nula in a tui chawia, a tluk buakpui a leiah hian a lo bua ani’ meaning the goddess of rain has fetched water and spilled it on earth. This gives us the idea of God’s presence in the waters too supplying rain to mankind.

⁸⁸ Own translation.
Though Pathian is believed to be present everywhere, the chief of these is heaven or sky which forms the furthest bounds of human imagination and it is there where he is specially believed to dwell.

All incidents of life from birth to death or any failure or success were attributed to ‘Pathian’ or ‘Khuanu’ (the female gender of Pathian). Pathian was conceived of as living, moving and witnessing all human actions and behaviour. They would say, ‘Chung Pathianin min en reng alawm’ meaning God above is constantly watching us, witnessing each and every deed of each individual. People would either say, “My Pathian is bad” when they faced bad circumstances or would say “My Pathian is good” when blessed. Another common phrase used even today almost equivalent to the Christian phrase, “God’s Will” is the phrase ‘Khuarel’ which can be translated as ‘destined by khua’. We can also see their consciousness of Pathian’s immanence even in the cases of marriages. Pathian was regarded as the one who ‘even ordains the one we marry’\(^9\). Such marriages were known as ‘Pathian samsuih’ or, more poetically called ‘Khuanu samsuih’. It was due to their sense of His immanence that Liangkhaia compares ‘khua’ to the Christian’s ‘Immanuel’ meaning

\(^9\) J. Shakespear, The Lushai Kuki clans.
God with us. It was to him that men prayed when they faced difficult situations.

Though Pathian was an immanent God, we can also conceive of him as a transcendent God, the two attributes are paradoxically complementary. God is far (transcendent) and men cannot reach him, but God is also near (immanent), and he comes close to men. Many foreign writers constantly harp on the note that traditional Mizo God is "too remote and virtually excluded from human affairs". This assertion is false.

Pathian's transcendence can be considered in terms of space and distances. When the traditional Mizos call God as "Chung Pathian" i.e. "God above" or say "Van kara leng Pathian" (Pathian who dwells in the high heavens) it implies that there is nothing higher than God, thinking primarily in spatial terms. When the sky is clear it exhibits the infinite space and distance. Pathian is "above" this or higher than this boundless distance and space. They would associate God with the sky, the sun and the heavens, all of which suggest great distance and aid men in trying to comprehend and describe the transcendence of God.

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90 Liangkhaia, Mizo sakhua.
Another transcendent aspect of *Pathian* is as the Creator who has created the world and is out of contact with his creation therefore thought to be remote. God lived so high up that men would not reach him. The thunderstorm can be considered God’s manifestation since the heavenly bodies and phenomena are believed to be God’s manifestation. Traditional Mizos made contact and offered sacrifices to God only in specific moments of their lives otherwise it was considered unnecessary since he was a good God.\(^9\)

*Pathian*’s transcendence can also be considered in terms of his supreme status in relation to other beings. They believe that God is above the spirits. He is over and above the spirits who derive their own power from him. When they call upon him as ‘*Pu Vana*’ (grandfather of heaven), they are recognizing his supremacy over all other spiritual beings.

Similarly, the natural sounds of thunder shows the omnipotence of *Pathian*. When there’s thunder they would say, “*Pu Vanan a thlengpui a hnuk ri ani*” meaning “*Pu Vana* is dragging his rice platter”. This gives the idea of *Pu Vana*’s mighty power. Thunder was not just an impersonal force of nature but the mighty action of God. *Pu Vana* was

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\(^9\) Dr. Sangkima, Mizo Society and social change, pg 52.
the powerful one, which supplies power to all other objects, beings and phenomena.

Nothing was impossible for Pathian. They would ask for blessings in their jhums for longevity of life, to have success in their expeditions\textsuperscript{92} for rain etc. All these were something beyond human power but since God controlled them He must therefore be omnipotent. God had control over both people and animals. God was also the Almighty God of order. When they faced troubles miseries and difficult situations they would say, “It is up to Pathian” or “Pathian will be there”. Therefore God was ruling not only over natural but also He had the authority and strength of the moral code. God’s omnipotence is seen in terms of his being more powerful than the spirits which otherwise are generally considered to be more powerful than men. In this context, power is viewed hierarchically so that God is at the top as the omnipotent, beneath him are the spirits with lesser power; and lower still are men with comparatively little power or no power at all. So God had absolute power over the entire universe.

\textsuperscript{92} K.Vanlaltlani, Concept of Mizo high God.
We can see the omniscience of Pathian in ‘Vanhrika’, the God of wisdom, science and learning. Vanhrika is described as the one to whom complete wisdom, science and the magic belongs. It was from Vanhrika that Lalruanga (a traditional magician) too learnt magic. In times of sorrow they would say, “Chung Pathianin min en reng alawm” meaning, “god above is constantly watching over us”. Pathian was considered to know and see everything that happened. Nothing could be done in concealment. Since Pathian was believed to reside in heaven, he was the watcher of everything. They believed that he knew, everything, heard everything, and observed everything without limitation and exception. For instance, if a person suffers some kind of abnormality physically or mentally, they believed that it was the result of the past evil deeds done by the person. These deeds were known by Pathian who saw and observed everything. Even in cases of wrong and unjust judgements the innocent person constantly refers to Pathian’s omniscience. The accused person would say ‘Pathian knows’ that ‘I have not done it” or would also say, “Pathian has witnessed it “and “Pathian would deal with it”. 

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93 L.B.Thanga, The Mizos. Pg 67
94 Lalhmuaka, Zoram, pg 31.
95 K.Vanlaltlani, Concept of Mizo high God, pg 63.
Pathian was believed to be both the author and sustainer of the universe and human life. It is only because of his sustaining power that human life and other living creatures survived. Since traditional Mizos were head-hunters and constantly under the fear of evil spirits, they believed that it was only Pathian that protected and saved them from such enemies and evil circumstances. The Mizos never related Pathian with unfortunate and evil happenings. If they were to meet with any unfortunate circumstances they would say, “Pathian will watch over us and nothing will happen to us”. Belief in Pathian’s blessings and security is indicated by the following chant 96

Chem kanga thova Pathianin
Ka satluang lo chhang ang che.

Meaning:

Pathian, protector from the sharp weapons
Answer my (sacrificial) boar 97

Since Mizos were jhum cultivators, they needed Pathians protection from mishandling the sharp agricultural tools. A sacrifice called Ramar thil is offered annually for security and safety.

96 K. Vanlaltlani, Concept of Mizo high God, pg 66
97 Translation by K. Vanlaltlani.
Though there are minor deities other than Pathian and some even considered almost equivalent to Pathian their names were never taken except 'Pathian' or 'Khua' indicating the people's belief in one God. One of the chant runs as follows: -

“God, the God who is above,
And the God, who is in the sky,
God who is in between the dark and grey sky.
Accept and answer my young pig offering and solitude”

Another old Mizo chant meant for fertility shows Pathian benevolence and his role as a guardian to men. The chant is as follows: -

“Ah-h arise from the village, Aw-w,
And accept our sacrifices,
Ah-h arise from your dwelling places, Aw-w
Bless with sons, bless with daughters,
Bless while in bed; bless us round the hearth,
Guard us from our enemies, guard us from death,

98 J.Shakespear
Favour us with flesh (may we have success in the chase)

Favour us with the product of the jungle,
For ten, for a hundred years, bless us.
Bless us in killing man, bless us in killing animals.
Bless us in cultivating our jhums"99

Like in other religions sacrifice also plays a central role in Mizo religion. It is a communication and communion between a person or persons, and the deity, bringing about a transformation or a transition in the life of the individual or community or both. The gift aspect of the sacrifice implies reciprocity. This reciprocity lies more in the life of the offerer who expects a favour in return. The sacrificial victim is valuable to the one, who gets the sacrifice offered, and hence abnegation is an essential quality of sacrifice. For this reason, a game animal was usually chosen as a victim. A distinction needs to be made between the sacrifice to Pathian and the offerings to the spirits. Although ritually both appear to be the same, and both are referred to in the same way, the traditional Mizo understanding of the spirit indicates some differences. The spirits are in no way similar to the deities, neither ontologically nor

functionally. Therefore, strictly speaking, to the spirits, only offerings are made. The offerings to *Pathian* are the "sacrifice proper". The sharing of the sacrificial meal signify communion between the traditional Mizos and *Pathian*, and between the clans.

There were innumerable sacrifices offered by the traditional Mizos. Out of these, it was just the following few that were offered to *Pathian* (God) alone.

(a) Vawktea inthawi  
(b) Hnuaithe  
(c) Hnuaiipui  
(d) Vawkpa sutngahak  
(e) Intumphit.

Therefore Mizo traditional religion was not just "mere vague imaginings of superstitious and untaught minds, but the desires of a religious system, a definite philosophy" as commented by D.R J.H. Hutton on tribal religions. Situated within the basic dichotomy of existence, they view creation, birth life, health, prosperity right moral behavior etc as good. Death, misfortune, bad luck, harm and injury,

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100 Fr. M. Hermanna, S.V.D. Hinduism and tribal cultures, (K.L. Fernandes, Bombay, India)
famine, sicknesses etc were looked upon as evil. Holding supernatural agencies responsible for both good and evil, they ascribed good to their God, Pathian, the source and origin of all good, and evil to the malicious spirits.

According to the Mizos, the universe is composed of visible and invisible parts. It was believed that between God and human beings there were other beings that populated the universe, the spirits. The spirits had a status between God and men and were not identical with either. But people often spoke about them in human terms, or treat them as though they had human characteristics such as thinking, speaking, intelligence and the possession of power which they could use as they willed. These spirits were personifications of natural objects and forces, given personal characteristics to these objects and forces of the universe, regarding them as if they were living, intelligent beings of the invisible world. These spirits were mainly connected with the earth, hills, mountains, trees, forests, water in various forms (such as lakes, ponds, rivers, waterfalls), animals diseases etc. Many things of the earth were thought to be occupied or moved by intelligent and living beings which are normally invisible to people. They were spoken of in human terms as if they can be pleased, offended, informed and so on. Some of these spirits were of a higher status than others, and they may be regarded as
divinities, such as the objects and phenomena of the sky. Through these spirits, people hold a direct link with both the inanimate things and forces of nature, and the living things. All these are seen from the point of view of man. This means that people projected their own ideas on to these many things and forces of nature gave them qualities and characteristics that resembled those of human beings. These spirits did not have concrete shapes and features, since by definition they have no physical form. But it is believed that when they appear to people, they may look like human beings and animals, and they can change suddenly to a different form. In telling about the spirits in folks stories, people tend to describe them in exaggerated forms. They say, for example that they have enormous stomachs, that they can move or do other things extremely fast, some with large bosom etc.

The belief in the existence of these spirits provided people with the explanation of many mysteries, which they find in the universe. This could be considered as a major benefit to people, where no other explanations are available or satisfactory. In their view, the spirits fill up the area between God and man. This too can be beneficial contribution to peoples understanding of their own existence and that of God and the universe at large. People were deeply aware of the spirit
world and this awareness affected their outlook and experiences in life for better and for worse.

These spirits were believed to exist in different forms, shapes and things and were of two kinds - good and bad. The good spirits could bring success and fame while the bad spirits brought sickness and death. These evil spirits were given different names according to the different places they inhabited such as high mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, waterfalls etc, and some were believed to be more venomous than the others. These evil spirits were not visible entities therefore not killable. Men believed that these spirits were of varying shapes, ugly, devilish with monstrous looks, some resembling humans, and some huge and massive in stature above the ordinary human beings. Some were also believed to have massive bosom ridiculously hanging downwards but as these spirits had the power to take any shape, no constancy has been attached to their form.

Kyles says - “They do not worship any god or goddess but are keenly aware of the unseen spirit world of which they are terribly afraid
every moment of their lives" An individual was encompassed about day and night by these spirits and had to constantly watch his language and behavior lest he provoke the anger of any one of them. These evil spirits haunted the lives of the people daily, the traditional Mizos were compelled to offer costly sacrifices ‘inthawinas’ to these spirits. All kinds of physical sickness and misfortunes in their lives were believed to be the work of these evil spirits. “To Mizos all sickness and other misfortunes are caused by malignant and hostile evil spirits that people the unseen world” So in order to appease them; the spirits were bribed with these sacrifices. Each spirit had to be appeased by appropriate sacrifices. Household animals, chickens, dogs, pigs, goats and mithuns were used for each sacrifice.

There are numerous evil spirits and Shakespeare has tried to classify them into two groups according to the place they resided in. They are the tuihuai (tui-water; huai-spirit) and the ‘ramhuai’ (ram-land, huai-spirit). Even amongst the ramhuais (evil spirit) there was some considered being good too due to the blessings that they gave but this was limited. On the whole all ramhuais were considered to be evil, more powerful than ordinary men and the source of all sickness and miseries

101 Loorain of the Lushais- Rev David Kyles.
103 Zairema, God’s miracle in Mizoram- A glimpse of Christian work among the head hunters; Aizawl.
in life\textsuperscript{104}. Due to the good number of spirits and confusion between the good and bad ones different scholars have given different numbers to the number of evil spirits. Amongst the Mizos the first to make a serious attempt in this direction was K. Zawla who has listed eleven ramhuais\textsuperscript{105} whereas T. Nghakliana has listed ten evil spirits, which can be further, sub-divided according to the shape they manifested in\textsuperscript{106}.

Religious accounts of the traditional religion authored by the missionaries have been invariably tainted by the academic, cultural, moral and religious prejudices of the authors. Lewis says it as, “Their crude religious notions are what are styled Animism”\textsuperscript{107} Ryles interprets it as, “They do not worship any gods, or goddesses but are keenly aware of the unseen spirit world of which they are terribly afraid every moment of their lives”\textsuperscript{108} Kyles goes to the extent of saying - “They have no religion at all”\textsuperscript{109} Most writers characterized it as an animistic worship of

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\textsuperscript{104} Challiana, Pipu nun, pg 17.
\textsuperscript{105} Zawla, Mizo , pg 44-47
\textsuperscript{106} T. Nghakliana, Mizote ramhuai hriatdan, Lunglei, 1983.
\textsuperscript{107} Lewis, Lushai. Pg 29.
\textsuperscript{108} Rev. David Kyles, Lorrain of the Lushais- Romance and realism on the N.E. Frontiers of India, Carey Press.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, Pg 6.
\end{flushright}
evil spirit\textsuperscript{110} such as "The people were animists"\textsuperscript{111} or "Their religion is what is called Animist"\textsuperscript{112}. 

Edward. B. Tylor popularized this term animism in his 'Primitive Culture', Vols. 1 and 2, where he defines animism as 'the doctrine of souls and other spiritual beings in general'; he sees it as 'this great element of the philosophy of Religion'; it is 'this essential source... a minimum definition of Religion, the belief in spiritual beings', the key to 'the deep-lying doctrine of Spiritual Beings, which embodies the very essence of spiritualistic as opposed to Materialistic Philosophy'...the ground-work of the Philosophy of religion, from that of savages to that of civilized men'.\textsuperscript{113}

In Tylor's words;

The theory of Animism divides into two great dogmas, forming part of one consistent doctrine; first, concerning souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after the death or destruction of the body; second, concerning other spirits, upward to the rank of powerful

\textsuperscript{110} Mc Call, Lushai, pg 67; Kyles Lorrain, pg6; Ray, Mizoram, pg 62.
\textsuperscript{112} Rev. David Kyles, Lorrain of the Lushais- Romance and realism on the N.E.Frontiers of India, Carey Press
\textsuperscript{113} Edwin Smith, African Ideas of God, pg 3.
deities... Thus animism, in its full development, includes the belief in souls and in a future state, in controlling deities and subordinate spirits, these doctrines practically resulting in some kind of active worship.114

Tylor illustrated his theory of 'animism' copiously. He looked at the fact of dreams and visions and asserted that it was in consequence of dreams by which man thought that, while lying down asleep, his physical being was engaged elsewhere in normal or abnormal activities that he first conceived the idea of a separate spirit or soul.

It is especially when the body is asleep, that the soul goes out and wanders... my own view is that nothing but dreams and visions could ever put into men's minds such an idea as that of souls being ethereal images of bodies'.115

Then he gives attention to the conception of other souls; the souls of animals and of other things called inanimate objects.

The sense of an absolute psychical distinction between man and the beast, so prevalent in the civilized world, is hardly to be found among lower races. Men to whom the cries of beast and birds seem like

114 A. C. Bouquet, Comparative Religion, pg 24.
human language, and their actions guided as it were by human thought, logically enough allow the existence of souls to beast, birds and reptiles, as to men...Plants, partaking with animals the phenomena of life and death, health and sickness, not unnaturally have some kind of soul ascribed to them.\textsuperscript{116}

He maintained that it was the doctrine of souls that gave birth to the wider doctrine of spirits and thus transformed it to a complete philosophy of natural religion. He outlined the stages of the development until he comes to the point at which spirits began to be 'regarded as personal causes of phenomena of the world' for good or for evil. A world of spirits came into being- spirits of every area, aspect, or activity of life. 'To the minds of the lower races it seems that all nature is possessed, pervaded, crowded, with spiritual beings\textsuperscript{117}'. These are spiritual beings directly affecting the life and fortune of man, and spirits especially concerned in carrying on the operations of nature. The 'spirits considered directly to affect the life and fortune of man lie closest to the center of the animistic scheme'- such spirits include demons, guardian or familiar spirits and nature spirits.

\textsuperscript{116} Edward.B.Tylor, Primitive culture, Vol II.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
From these he proceeded to the higher deities of polytheism and spells out the process of either their coming into being or how man came to recognize their existence in their various categories and with their variety of functions:

...as we consider the nature of the great gods of the nations, in whom the vastest functions of the universe are vested, it will still be apparent that these mighty deities are modelled on human souls...The higher deities of polytheism have their places in the general animistic system of mankind. Among nation after nation it is still clear how, man being the type of deity, human society and government became the model on which divine society and government were shaped. Rudimentary forms of Dualism, the antagonism of a Good and Evil Deity, are well known among the lower races of mankind...Their crude though earnest speculation has already tried to solve the great mystery which still resists the efforts of moralists and theologians...Savage belief displays to us the primitive conceptions which, when developed in systematic form and attached to ethical meaning, take place in religious systems of which the Zoroastrian is the type.  

In the final stage of his survey, he states,

118 Edward.B.Tylor ,Primitive Culture, Vol II.
...those theological beliefs of the lower tribes of mankind which point more or less distinctly towards a doctrine of Monotheism...for, this purpose it is desirable to distinguish the prevalent doctrines of the uncultured world from absolute monotheism. High above the doctrine of souls, of divine manes, of local nature-spirits, of the great deities of class and element, there are to be discerned in barbaric theology shadowings, quaint or majestic, of the conception of a Supreme Deity, henceforth to be traced onward in expanding power and brightening glory among the history of religion...More frequently, it is the nature-worshipper's principle which has prevailed, giving to one of the great nature deities the precedence of the rest. Here by no recondite speculation, but by plain teaching of nature, the choice has for the most part lain between two mighty visible divinities, the all-animating sun and the all-encompassing heaven...To realize this widest idea, two especial ways are open. The first is to fuse the attributes of the great polytheistic powers, into more or less common personality, thus conceiving that, after all, it is the same Highest Being who holds up the heavens, shines in the sun, smites his foes in the thunder, stands first in the human pedigree as the divine ancestor. The second way is to remove the limit of theological speculation into the region of the indefinite and the inane. An unshaped divine entity looming vast, shadowy, and calm
beyond and over the material world, too benevolent or too exalted to need human worship, too huge, too remote, too indifferent, too supine, too merely existent, to concern himself with the pretty race of men- this is a mystic form of formlessness in which religion has not seldom pictured the Supreme. Thus, then, it appears that the theology of the lower races already reaches its climax in conceptions of a highest of the Gods, and that these conceptions in the savage and barbaric world are no copies stamped from one common type, but outlines varying among mankind\textsuperscript{119}.

From the above quotes of Tylor we can note that Tylor maintained animism as a factor in every culture, at any level of development; in every culture it reaches the conception of the gods and, almost invariably the concept of the Supreme God; and does not confine 'animism' to any particular race or culture.

With reference to Mizo traditional religion, 'animism' is applicable in the sense that it is a doctrine of Spirit and spirits. Traditional Mizos no doubt did pass through this stage of animatism, the process of thinking by which inanimate objects are thought to possess the active attributes of life. This is a stage through which man passes

\textsuperscript{119} Edward. B. Tylor, Primitive Culture, Vol II.
everywhere to different degrees, with some tribes or races generally
closer than the others. But this cannot to be considered as the absolute
monopoly of the tribe. It is a fact that the traditional Mizo world was
swarmed with spirits, distinct from material objects, although they
resided and expressed themselves through material objects. There were
sacred objects, trees, stones, rivers, spots etc, however these were only
symbols or emblems and nothing more than that. There is no doubt there
is the presence and ubiquitous ness of spirits in this traditional religion
than in the so-called world religions. But here again, as compared with
the rest of the world, it is a matter of degree.

P.A. Talbot in reference to the religion of Southern Nigeria
observed: ‘Pure animism can hardly be said to exist, or it is so combined
with anthropomorphism that it is difficult to separate the two
elements’¹²⁰. Talbot seems to be referring here to the fact that religion
has acquired a concrete definition with a definite structure. It is here
that the Western missionaries and scholars allow themselves to be led
astray. They are so concerned with trying to prove that traditional Mizos
do not know the Supreme God as known to their own cultural conception
that they apply ‘animism’ to traditional Mizo religion in the sense of the
blindness of worship which addresses itself to wood, stone, etc.

¹²⁰ S.F. Nadel, Nupe religion, pp. 1ff.
If ‘animism’ is properly defined, in Tylor’s words as, ‘conception of a Supreme Deity’ or ‘Highest Being’, then ‘animism’ may be applicable to traditional Mizo religion, but ‘animism’ popularly defined as merely in the ‘belief of spiritual beings’ used more oftenly in the derogatory sense can be negated. Therefore, ‘animism’ properly defined cannot be predicated as a monopoly of Traditional Mizo religion. The being of Christianity as of any religion is grounded on the fact that ‘God is spirit’. ‘Animism’ can, therefore, be predicated as part-definition of every religion. But it is inappropriate as the name for Mizo traditional religion and therefore the derogatory reference in relation to any religion should be discontinued.

Lorrain in his statement says - “They are unprejudiced, and having, apparently, no religion of their own and are willing to accept whatever is first brought to them”.-121 The statement implies that the Mizos easily accepted the new religion since they had no religion of their own, but this is an insufficient representation of the traditional world view. On the contrary, it is the belief in the numerous supernatural beings in sakhua that led to the natural acceptance of the divine-human relationship, of the Creator God called Pathian, of the concept of life

121 Lewis, Lushai, pg 30.
after death i.e. the existence of 'mitthi khua' and 'Pialral' for the spirit of the dead were undeniable facts that led to the easy acceptance of Christianity. Dr. Vanlalchhuanawma has pointed that there are certain theological aspects of Christian teachings found parallel in sakhua. Examples are: - the flood of Noah’s can be compared to the flood of Ngaitei’s story, great darkness at the time of creation of Christ’s’ crucifixion to the thimzing of Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi, resurrection in the implication of Thlanrawkpa’s name, virgin birth in the story of Palova (fatherless child), the disguised King in the story of Lersia and Liandova etc. Therefore it was this analogous concept that led the Mizos in accepting Christianity easily

The traditional Mizos were never worshippers of ramhuai (evil spirits) as they had often been misunderstood. Inthawinas were only deceptive means of appeasing the ramhuais. There has often been confusion between sakhua and inthawina to the ramhuais. Liangkhaia was the first to make a distinction between sakhua and inthawina by concluding as - “We, therefore, by our sakhua have not been worshippers of ramhuai, but sincere seeker of Pathian, God” Rosiama too falls in the same line and concludes traditional religion as, “Mizo sakhua is,

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122 K.Vanlalchhuanawma, Revival movement and the church in Mizoram.
123 Liangkhaia,Mizo, pg 26.
therefore, Christianity"¹²⁴ According to Rosiama, sakhua with all its priests, prophets, visions, doctrines and ethics had been the media for the self-revelation of the Christian God to the Mizos.¹²⁵ The Christianized elite hold the view that only hindrance for the Mizo progenitors was ignorance of the exact identity of God until Christianity revealed His attributes to them. If Rosiama’s argument is far fetched it nevertheless helps to establish the fact that the traditional Mizos had developed a religion whose basic object of worship and religious commitment was Pathian, God the creator, sustainer and preserver.

Many people have dealt with this religion with the main objective of fitting them into this or that theoretical scheme. Distinctions were often drawn by scientists and scholars between the literate, i.e., the mainstream and the pre-literate traditions, i.e. the tribal religions. Since the tribal religions lack scriptural writings, it is often said to be of the ‘Undeveloped’ or ‘Underdeveloped’ religion. But for anything to be stored as the written word, orality has to be its ‘precursor’ and source,” Philosophically speaking a fundamental orality is an essential characteristic of the scriptures, orality is the very nerve palpitating in

¹²⁵ Ibid, pg 92-97.
the revealed word”126 This mistake is often repeated because scholars have often absolutised the difference and thus categorized it as ‘undeveloped’. But as said earlier every religion needs to have orality before it is scripted. Therefore tribal religions cannot be ordinarily classified away as ‘underdeveloped’. “The world of tribal religions is much more large than that of the literate traditions”127 Gundry also expresses his view that culturally backward folk can have a nobler religion than culturally advanced, and vice versa. What really determines the quality of religion is the people’s degree of moral and spiritual vision128. Religion for the tribal is a way of life regulating his every action and his entire lifestyle. Religion is not merely a commitment to a set of rituals or practices or dogmas, rather it is a commitment to think and act in a certain way relation to oneself as well as to one’s fellow beings. For tribal, religion is a way of life regulating his entire actions and lifestyle, not something to participate in merely at weekends. To quote - “If to be religious means to be seen in religious gathering, in churches/temples on fixed days of the week or preaching publicly about God or praying in public to Him or sitting in sack clothes and ashes, or going in pilgrims, a Khasi/Pnar may be considered the least religious of human beings or as one having no religions at all because you do not

126 C.R.Agera, The spoken and the written, pg 1.
127 Ibid
128 Sujata Miri, Religion and society of North East India.
find him doing so. But he is in fact an intensely religious person, as he must, "Kamai ia ka hok" which he can fulfill only by means of honest work, truthfulness in thoughts and words and just-ness in all his transactions. Thus religion permeates the life of a Khasi. Pnar in all its aspects, because he must work to live and "honest work is worship". Therefore tribal religions, contain all that is required of a 'developed' or a 'true' religion. Admittedly, they may not have any written doctrine or theory and may thus said to be philosophically primitive, but for this reason it cannot be said it is religiously primitive. What is important in religion is that helps man to lead a spiritually better life, that, a man be totally committed to his religious belief or "spiritual inside" and that his life be regulated by it. For a tribal, religion did not function just in one corner but pervaded every aspect of his life, every sphere was sacred. To quote Sujata Miri, "It is religion that, in however oblique and complicatedly symbolic way, presents the picture of a world which organically relates man, society, nature and what may be called the sacred". There was no dichotomy between the sacred or the secular. On this regard, Roy Burman (1974) observed that this dichotomy was not inherent in the mind of man; it was specific to the Judaic-Christian religious thought. Saraswati (1974) feels that some sort of differentiation was inherent in Hindu religious thought also.

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129 Sujata Miri, Religion and Society of North East India.
130 Sujata Miri, Religion and tribal life.
Both Roy-Burman and Saraswati have based their arguments on a fallacious premise. To them the sacred is synonymous with religious and the secular with non-religious activities. According to this orientation the sacred consists of activities, which have to do with what are generally recognizable as religious rites and rituals, and the secular covers almost all other spheres of life. Economic, political, administrative and such other activities, thus, belong primarily to the domain of the secular. The sacred-secular distinction, thus envisaged, is philosophically confused and that any study of the religious phenomena in terms of the framework defined by this distinction, can only further intensify this confusion.

The distinction is peculiarly a modern phenomenon; it coincides with the rise of positivism as the hallmark of ‘scientific’ thinking. As a consequence of this acceptance what follows is:

i) The non-relevance of religious experiences as valid explanatory propositions; and

ii) The spread of the idea that the mode of thinking embodied in the physical sciences is the only form of thinking in which to explain things including human
activities. Thus we have what is now known as the social sciences.

The use of the word sciences is consciously motivated by the wish to model one's study on that of the mainstream of scientific thinking. These two, together, have the intent that there cannot be any essentially religious meaning in most spheres of human activities. The latter, therefore, must be rigorously separated from any vestiges of religious trappings that they might traditionally have had. The word 'secular' thus came to be used to refer to these activities.

These remained, however, at least one area of human activity to which it was difficult to deny the name of the 'religious'. These had to do allegedly, it seemed, with man's 'contact' with the other world, e.g., activities such as prayer, meditation, going on pilgrimage, rituals connected with the crises of the life-cycle, and so on. Although the word 'religious' was thus allowed to retain a restricted usage, it was in the nature of positivist thinking to deny it any significance other than that allowed by the criteria of 'correct' scientific thinking. So the apparent religious motivation behind these activities was either dismissed as something deluded or 'superstitious', or ignored on the ground that it did not really have anything to contribute to the scientific
understanding of the activities in question. The result was that although there was acknowledged to be a sphere, which was properly religious, its perception became truncated in important ways.

According to Sujata Miri, an essential component of any religion is its cosmology, i.e., a comprehensive framework which assigns meanings to different spheres of existence. Some cosmologies are simple, others extraordinarily complex. Hinduism seems to have not one cosmology, but several and the connexions between them do not appear to be always clear or coherent. The important point, however, is that a cosmology leaves nothing out- it assigns a significance to everything or every class of things in the universe. It is, therefore, of the very essence of a religion that nothing falls outside its sphere. In this, however, a religion does not conceive itself as a rival to the physical sciences. The kind of explanations of phenomena that the physical sciences seek has nothing really to do with the meaning that a religion attaches to these phenomena. It is only when scientific explanation is regarded as something, which says everything that can possibly be said about any physical phenomenon, that religion can be seen as a rival to scientific thinking. She's thus of the view- “Within the framework of a religion there can be nothing that is ‘secular’... everything must be imbued with religious significance. And for a religious person and or a religious
society, all crucial human activities must spring fundamentally from religious motivation. A religious person’s relationships to others in society, to nature, and above all, his own self-awareness can never be finally divorced from his total religious vision. Of course, many of his daily activities may bear substantial resemblance to those of a non-religious person. But the former must find their ultimate justification in his religion. Visiting temples and holy places, performing rituals and ceremonies do not exhaust the sphere of the religious for the religious person, contrary to what many anthropologists might believe. Such activities are, more than anything else, reminders to him of the religious significance of all he does and thinks.\textsuperscript{131}

The traditional idea of Hindu life consists in pursuing artha, kama and Moksa. Artha and kama have to do with ‘life in this world’, but the important point is that all these three pursuits form part of one organic concept of dharma, and they are linked together in a unitary vision of the true religious meaning of existence. The conceptual separation of Moksa as the only true religious goal is not warranted by the Hindu view of life.

\textsuperscript{131} Sujata Miri, The sacred and the secular, pg 90-91.
On the other hand, for a person who is non-religious, the concept of religious can have only a distorted application. Sujata Miri\textsuperscript{132} makes this clear in the following way. For a non-religious person allegedly religious motives for action are suspect in one of the two ways- 1) They are based on false beliefs and therefore, activities springing from them must be fundamentally misguided, or 2) it is impossible to determine the truth or falsehood of the beliefs behind religious motives, but activities allegedly springing from religious motives can be explained exhaustively in terms of motives and functions which have really nothing to do with religion at all. The modern humanists will fall under 1) and the Freudian psychoanalysts, and the Marxists and the general run of modern sociologists will fall under 2).

The important point, however is that for both these groups of people, the concept of religious will have a profoundly different use from that which it has for the religious person himself. For the latter, religious motives are unquestionably valid and it is these that give religious activities their essential meaning. For the humanists, since the so-called religious motives are based on false beliefs, the religious person is necessarily deluded, and religious activities are at best pointless. When a person sees through this delusion, he will also see that

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
there is really nothing, which can properly be called truly religious. Or consider the psychoanalyst. For him the religious motives, although they may be acknowledged consciously, cannot really be the genuine motives of any human action. The latter always essentially non-religious, so, he must also say that no human activity can have a truly religious meaning. Yet, the psychoanalyst or the sociologist claims to investigate the nature of religious phenomena. But his criteria of identity for the religious must always be external. That is to say, the object of his study is something that is supposed to be religious although it cannot have for him what is called a 'genuinely religious significance' 133.

If for the religious person the concept of the secular has no use and for non-religious person the concept of the religious has only what might be called a functional use, can the distinction between the secular and the sacred (religious) operate at all? It seems that the real controversy should be not about which bits of the world should be treated as secular and which others as sacred, but about whether everything that exists is imbued with a religious meaning or nothing is.

Therefore, if we take religion seriously we cannot escape the conclusion that there can be nothing that is non-religious and,

133 Sujata Miri in "The sacred and the secular" pg 93.
therefore, that the most comprehensive and proper study of man will consist in the study of his religion. This defines the fundamental attitudes of our ancient social and political thinkers. On the other hand, if we doubt the all-comprehensiveness of religion, we also necessarily doubt the validity of the concept of religion. And the crucial consequence of this process is really the abolition of the religious altogether.

Thus, religious motives for action cannot be dismissed either as misguided or illusory; all human activities can have a genuinely religious meaning.134

Whether the believer’s religious beliefs are or are not supported by a rich heritage or a set of sophisticated doctrines is of little consequence. If this is so, then tribal religion can be said to be equally advanced as the so called ‘developed’ or doctrinaire religions, for even the so called ‘primitive’ tribal religions teach what K.J. Shah calls ‘the truth of living’135 which is the core of religion, just as much as Hinduism, Christianity or any other religion. The tribal religion is thus simplicity go straight to the core of religion136

134 Sujata Miri, “the sacred and the secular” pg 93.
135 Ibid
136 Sujata Miri,Religion and society of North East India.
Early investigators of tribal religion concluded that tribal people even lacked a religion. But recent research showed that they not only had religion but their religious beliefs and expressions had reached a certain stage of complexity and their ideas of god were surprisingly similar in some aspects to that of the investigators themselves. For example, the Andaman Islanders were previously considered "godless" but a recent close investigation found that they not only had "a profoundly philosophical religion, by an excessively absurd mythology, like the Australian blacks, the Greeks and other people." This shows that only an intense and in-depth study by well-trained scholars can yield a clear and true picture of the religion.