CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER – IV

"RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS"

AN ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS – RELATION BETWEEN 
GOD AND MAN, GOD AND WORLD, GOD AND THE ABSOLUTE 
IN SANKARADEVA’S PHILOSOPHY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Religion is a universal human phenomenon which has appeared in diverse forms in different societies and has assumed varied meanings with different individuals. Though we may accept George Santayana's remarks that 'what religion a man shall have is historical accident, quite as much as what language he shall speak' or Walter Kaufmann's remark that "One inherits religion like a house and makes slight changes to make it more comfortable" Yet at the same time we find that whenever any religious thinker begins reflecting upon his conception of religion, he comes out with an account of religion cast in a mould distinctive of the thinker's own personality.

As the result has varied, so it is difficult to give any one commonly accepted definition or description of religion. Religion liberates man from the ignorance of his true selfhood and is revealed in man's mind as the consciousness of a transcendent spiritual unity. In man's religious consciousness, there is an awareness of a unity whose nature is spiritual and which opens before him a vision of the truth beyond the fact of his immediate existence.

The religious consciousness, according to Tagore, invests man with a vision of the beyond. The religious soul 'feels in its' core the call of the beyond.' The inherent truth within us constantly pushes us beyond the present, and makes us aware of our claim to express the eternal in us.
The description of religious consciousness on the basis of 'religious mood' does not fully do justice to the meaning of religious consciousness. It depends on what the term religious mood itself stands for. Prima facie, this may involve us in a vicious circle that religious consciousness is the state of mind when we are in a religious mood. Religious mood is a state of mind when we have religious consciousness. If knowledge in the fullest sense requires experience, then an all knowing God should be able to participate in many of the physical and psychological experiences which characterise human life. In other words, in order to be omniscient, God must know what it is like to think, feel and exist in the ways that human does. Since each specific human experience is part of the world, and as God is omniscient, He should know human experience as it is. Similar arguments have been postulated by Charles, H. Hartshorne and Marcel Sarot that, in order for God to be omniscient, God must possess experiential knowledge, perhaps by incorporating all or portions of human experience within the divine being itself.87

Christianity says that God feels all feelings and has unlimited hospitality towards all. This is another way of saying that God has no negative apprehension (including feelings) He not only feels all the feelings of actual occasion, but also feels all feelings fully.

The sense of the term religious consciousness is more appropriate because it avoids arguing in a circle and says something positive. This consciousness is different from moral and aesthetic consciousness, though they are closely related. Religious consciousness, in Otto's words, is primarily the 'numinous' state of mind. Religious consciousness in this sense, is the kind of consciousness which is central in the apprehension of a transcendental reality. In his religious consciousness Otto follows the foot steps of Kant. The starting point of Kant's philosophy is the analysis of experience to find out the elements involved in it and
to explain each one. While Kant ignores the feeling element in experience on the ground that it is a subject matter for psychologists, Otto gives importance to the feeling element in religious consciousness. As a matter of fact, that is the central concern of the Idea of Holy. By analysing religious consciousness we get all three aspects of our mental life viz. thinking, feeling and willing. These three are constituents state of mind in which all three exist together.

The religious consciousness of man was not fully manifested at the earlier levels of human progress. Our universe is, however, marching towards the actualization of the underlying truth and man's religious consciousness is gradually revealing the true nature of our religion. Man is marching towards the fullest realization of his soul from epoch to epoch. Through various stages of progress the human self realizes its truth and religion unfolds its true centre. Civilization gives expression to this consciousness through all its manifestations in the valuable contributions of science, philosophy, art and social ethics. The primitive level of religious consciousness was the beginning of a great evolution in the moral and spiritual direction.

Today man's religious consciousness has made a significant advance by putting emphasis on the cultivation of moral and spiritual ideals instead of indulging in blind ritualism. Such a kind of purification of faith took place in India through the message of the Bhāgavañ Gītā. The vedic seers understood that the goodness of man was to be measured by the degree of moral and spiritual realization and not by mere performance of deeds devoid of moral contest. Sankaradeva, the Vaiṣṇava Saint, says that people who find joy in the name of Lord which is as sweet as nectar, experience a feeling of devotion which increases day by day till it attains a state of pure happiness. Sankaradeva did not advocate worship of
the attributeless Brahman because people in general require a divinity which can be meditated upon and mentally visualised. Therefore, his adorable God, Nārāyaṇa, who is considered identical with Viśṇu and Krṣṇa, possesses not only the metaphysical qualities like omniscience, omnipresence etc, but also moral virtues such as mercy, grace, love and compassion. Therefore, he says that the impersonal and attributeless Brahman can be attained only through devotion to a Personal God, who is endowed with the best of attributes. Love or devotion for the Supreme Being may awake in anybody's heart. This is what all the religious sects giving importance to devotion, promulgate. To the seers, the Divine Truth is revealed as a universal message. In Christianity, God is revealed through Jesus Christ to redeem mankind from suffering. The Christian revelation is viewed as occurring primarily in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. All is interpreted by the apostolic witnesses under the illumination of the Holy spirit. In the humanistic point of view, religious consciousness achieves its full maturity when it reveals the true dignity of man and proclaims that human truth is the truth of reality.

Man is the supreme achievement of the evolutionary process. Man is not a passive creature but an active participant in the act of creation. In our religious consciousness, the idea of Divinity finds culmination by revealing its humanity. Man shares with God His divinity and God shares with man his humanity.
Relation between God and Man in Sankaradeva’s Philosophy and in the New Testament:

According to Sankaradeva, God is the Supreme Soul – Paramātman and is eternal and changeless. The individual self is a aspect of the Paramātman like the rays are parts of the Sun. It is indestructible, unchangeable and eternal. The monistic philosophy can be read in many passages of his writings. Sankaradeva like Rāmānuja, Nimbāraka and Vallabha holds that jīvas and the world are parts of the Supreme. Even the manas (mind), buddhi (intellect) ahaṅkāra (ego) and indriyās (senses) are parts of Brahma, Brahma or paramātman is not under the influence of māyā; however, the world and the jīvas are shrouded by māyā. Ātman (soul) is immutable and immortal. As it is associated with the body, the mind and the senses by the name of jīva, it experiences weal and woe. But ultimately it merges with Brahman after the destruction of the body. Jīva is not essentially different from Īśvara, But because of its association with māyā and consequent ignorance, it is not conscious of its real nature and origin and thus suffers misery. Only when it attains knowledge through love of God, it is released. Sankaradeva makes no essential distinction between jīva and Īśvara. But in some places, he admits that God has created jīva. Jīva is to some extent separate from, as well as, dependent on Īśvara.

In the twenty-second chapter of the 'Bhakti Ratnākara', the difference between the highest self and the individual self is categorically brought out. Śridhara holds that Īśvara is the controller of māyā. Man can be released only when he attains knowledge through love of God. Taking into account the relation between man and Īśvara as that between the created and the creator, and the limitations under which man operates and the indivisible control of the Lord. Sankaradeva is of the opinion that Dāsyabhava, the attitude of a selfless and faithful servant towards his master is the proper attitude with which God should be
approached. In the ultimate analysis, man may partake of the nature of God, but as long as it forms a part of creation, it has to be preserved and sustained by God. Sankaradeva reminds the people that after innumerable births and deaths, they are blessed to be born as human beings. The Jīva undergoes a long chain of births and deaths before it attains the most desired human state.

Sankaradeva accepts as ultimate three kinds of substances—matter (acit), soul (cit) and God (Īśvara). According to him, the subtle jīvas and the subtle material powers of the universe emanate from the Paramātman. He says that the ātman is immutable and immortal. Birth and death are the characteristic features of the body and out of the body a fresh body emerges. Though associated with the body, ātman is distinct from the body as fire is from the fuel. Just as the sky limited within a jar merges with the unlimited sky, with the breakage of the jar, the embodied self in a similar way merges with the unlimited Brahman after the destruction of the body. Manas (mind) which determines the quality and activity of the body is a product of māya.

A lamp is supposed to give light so long there is contact between the wick, the oil and the fire; similarly the noumenal self goes by the name jīva and suffers pain and misery as long as it is associated with the body, mind and senses.

In the cosmic pattern of Saṅkaradeva, though man emanates from Param Brahman yet both are not identical. "He is the Lord" (Īśa) under whose control is māyā. It is the individual jīva that is under the suppression of māyā... Īśvara is the embrace of delight giving intelligence is eternal consciousness and blissful, and the individual is crushed under the dire nescience (avidyā) and is the repository of mass of affliction."
In spite of their apparent independent existence, jīvatman and Paramātman are interrelated. Jīvatman is nothing but Paramātman. The only difference being that the former is shrouded by māyā and the latter is above the influence of māyā. "Though associated with body yet I am not identical with it. I am verily Paramātma. I am Brahman and Brahman is I." 

A glimpse of the noumenal nature of the self is furnished by Sankaradeva in his 'Nīmi Nava siddha Samvāda'. Here he states that in deep sleep the senses along with the ego (ahaṅkāra) get merged in Ātman. In that state, Ātman remains as the witnessing consciousness. The individual self feels its presence alone and no other consciousness regarding the world is felt. Though man has been created by God, and God resides in all, yet man remains under the illusion of unreality. Hence, man is in need of enlightenment and dedication to truth. The search for the ultimate truth is the prime concern of the bhaktās. Like the metaphysical views of the Pre-Buddhistic Upaniṣads Sankaradeva's philosophy is rampant with both monotheistic and monistic views which cannot be logically bridged. Sometimes it leans towards the vivartavāda of Sankarāchārya. In fact, a mixture of both vivartavāda and parināmavāda which come under satkāryavāda of the Sāṅkhya system may be detected in Sankaradeva's Vaiṣṇavism.

The difference between the Absolute self and the individual self is brought out by him in his 'Bhakti Ratnakāra'. In enjoying worldly pleasure and in doing all karmas, the human being gets tied up with the world and enjoys pleasure and pain accordingly. Through his works, Sankaradeva lays emphasis on the removal of māyā through sole devotion to Hari. Hari is to be realized through bhakti as is evident in the philosophies of Rāmānuja and Śrīdhara. In the Kali age, bhakti is the best way to attain salvation. Sankaradeva says that
jnāna and karma cannot release the individual unless these are accompanied by nāma oriented bhakti. God has infinite power while man's power is limited. God is, therefore, able to afford shelter and man is apt to seek it. Bhakti is this seeking of shelter. In order to explain 'Mukti' in brief he says that through devotion liberation is attained which needs no other help. Man attains higher or lower births in accordance with the thoughts which influenced him at the time of death. Sankaradeva repeatedly reminds people that after innumerable births and deaths they are blessed to be born as human beings. In theistic religions, the concept of man is understood in relation to the concept of God. Man and God are the two poles of such religious activity. Though God and man are essentially involved in theistic religion, there are different views regarding the exact nature of man and his relation to God. In Semitic religion, man is taken as a creature of God. The Bible opens with the story of creation, of which man is the crown. It shows man at peace with himself, with the world, with God. The picture that is given is not necessarily that of a fully developed man, but of man in the best conditions to develop into all that God proposed.

Since God and man do not share the same nature or substance, they cannot be said to be a unity. The union between Father and Son cannot be described in terms of communion or agreement. Further, through in Christ we see that God's nature is essentially love. Man's essential nature is revealed in a better way in love. It is only as we learn to love, that we realise our true selves.

God chooses man to be His fellow partner in the fulfilment of the kingdom of God all over the world. The first principle of Christian anthropology is that men, like animals, are God's creatures. He is God's last and highest earthly creature. Unlike animals man is a
rational creature. He is lifted above all other earthly creatures in being made in the image of God.

"Then Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."\(^91\)

To say that God made man out of the dust of the ground means, that God made man out of the fundamental elements of the universe. Christians are officially committed to a very high belief in the potential greatness of man. He is little lower than God (PS VIII). He is made in the image of God (Gen. 1). By the grace of God we may become partakers of divine nature. But our closeness to God can never reach identification. There is a radical discontinuity between God and man, creator and creature. They are not of the same stuff, nor of one piece. The contrast between God and man is final in Christianity. Otto adheres to this doctrine of contrast. In every possible way, man is not what God is. An akinness to Rabindra Nath Tagore's views may be recalled here. Tagore says that the infinite and finite are one as song and singing are one. He also says that in this union between God and man the soul never totally merges into God or Brahman. 'I like eating sugar, but I do not wish to become sugar'. This relation between God and man is not of identity. We realise our true selves where we perfectly learn to love, worship and obey God.\(^92\)

Before Christian dispensation God was far off from man. But the incarnation of God brought man in touch with God. God revealed Himself to man in the incarnation of Christ. The Christian idea of incarnation is man's dream to become God, and this can be realized only by loving one's fellowmen. All over thoughts and actions are directed towards the personal God. Man's religious aspiration fulfils itself in his communion with a personal God. Without a touch of personal relationship or personal relation to man, God is a bare
abstraction of thought. Knowing God is not like being aware of a table, a true or thunder storm. To test God we cannot conduct experiments in a scientific manner. It is our duty to only accept God's grace. But in short, we find that God's purpose for us has been spoiled by the fact of sin. St. John tells us that sin is lownessness. Sin thus becomes a personal act of our will opposing God's purpose. In both Judaism and Christianity, Adam defied God's will and committed the original sin. Through him sin was transmitted to the whole human society. Whereas Judaism gives immense importance to the original sin, Christianity does not. For Christianity, sin consists in dishonouring God and turning away from his love and grace. According to Christianity, every man is committing sin and is becoming an Adam to himself by misusing his free will as Adam did. God comes to the world in the person of Christ in order to atone sinners and to draw all men unto Him. After redemption, man lives in communion and fellowship with God. He shares the glory and fullness of God's grace and love. In Christianity, man cannot be redeemed of sin without the intervention of Christ. Man must have faith in Christ. His work, crucifixion and resurrection are meant for the redemption of mankind.

In Christianity, man is neither the product of natural forces, nor a mere illusion, nor is he a pawn in the hands of the maker. Christianity is a theistic religion. According to the 'Genesis', God created man in His own image. It signifies God's special preference for man. Man's creation on the final day makes Him the final fruit of creation. In the Genesis 2. God commanded 'Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life, domestic and wild, large and small'..... God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female. By the seventh day God finished what he had been doing and stopped
working. He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day because by that day He had completed his creation.

In the Biblical account, God made man free. Judaism and Christianity also grant freedom to man in their own ways. Man can use his freedom in any way he likes. But in philosophy, it is questioned, if man can be free in the face of God's omnipotence. If man is not free then his actions cannot be judged as good or bad. Freedom is a necessary condition for any action which we can call morally right or wrong. Obeying the will of God while the work is performed, it is cognized as good and disobeying Him in committing sin. Adam the first man was in a beautiful garden along with Eve, the first woman. They were told to eat all the fruits except one. But they disobeyed the rules. Adam committed sin by disobeying God. As God is a righteous judge. He punished them. As a result, they were turned out to the world of misery. The story of Adam and Eve describes the condition of the human race as a whole. The sin of Adam is the sin of all mankind.

According to Christianity, man comes to earth stained with original sin. According to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, he takes birth with the blurring cloud of ignorance and the burden of past karmas.

According to Sankaradeva, rebirth is possible only for the non-destructable linga sarira. The theory of rebirth is intimately connected with the law of karma. It is in reality a theory of evolution of the soul from the prison of matter to spirit, from ignorance to knowledge, from sorrow to delight.

Karma and rebirth are closely connected to each other. They are recognized as the basic concepts of Buddhism and Hinduism. In Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, man comes to earth with certain limitations and therefore, in one sense he can neither be taken as
completely free nor can assume full responsibility for his work. We have seen that our will is not yet fully free. Though we have good desires and good will, we find evil mixed with it. Then there arises a conflict in ourselves. The sin which wrecks our lives becomes part of ourselves. Otto observes that man is not sinful only but essentially as holy as God Himself. He is the Numinous as the Numen itself. Dr. Radhakrishan also says that we should not ignore the Upaniṣadic exhortation of 'I am Brahmam'. Rabindra Nath Tagore adds that we have to the born to this great idea of the Father. That is the end and object of man, the fulfilment of his life.

In the 'New Testament', Jesus is the redeemer of man, who works as a mediator between man and God. We have seen that God by his own will has limited Himself. His power shown by creating a being who has free will. Contrary to this view, Heidegger claims that man is not a thing but a being in the world. And being in the world means that he is not something to be taken fragmented. If religion tends to place God at a high pedestal and make man completely subordinate, such a God is of no consequence to Heidegger. He like Neitzsche almost feels that in a sense man almost created the concept of God, and therefore he could one day even kill God. As man becomes aware of his being and as he becomes conscious of the essential feeling of nothingness, he clearly becomes aware of the superficiality of the God – Concept.

God and the world

The concept of God is the most important, universal and central concept of theistic religion. God is the highest reality, the highest value and the highest end. The relation between God and the world has been discussed since time immemorial. God manifests Himself in the universe in order to find Himself through His creation.
Just as the eye cannot see the face and in order to see it requires a mirror, so God in order to realise his own nature creates this universe.  

Though the world has its own existence, yet it is not independent of God. God is the creator of the universe. God is not, as the nineteenth century theists say, first God and then creator of the world, but as God, He is the creator and only as creator of the world is He God.

As a creator, God created the universe and all things there in, both visible and invisible. In the first verse, of the Bible we read "In the beginning when God created the universe, the earth was formless and desolate. The raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness and the power of God was moving over the water. Then God commanded let there be light and light appeared. God was pleased with what he saw. Then he separated the light from the darkness, and he named the light 'Day' and the darkness 'Night', evening passed and morning came. That was the first day."

Creation is a theological doctrine, not a scientific hypothesis. The scientists look for a cause, a previous state of affairs which accounts for the world as we know it. Finite effect has finite cause. David Hume expresses the scientific consciousness of the modern world. As for the concept of God we do not depend on scientific hypothesis, so the scientific ramification of creation may not be appreciated by the theologians. In the 'New Testament' it has been said that through faith we can understand that the world was framed by the word of God. Everything else was gradually created in six days and on the seventh day He signalized the end of the process of creation and retired to rest. The world is not only created by God but is also sustained and maintained by Him. In Christianity, the immanent aspect of God is clearly accepted and emphasised. The immanence of God is only a symbolic way of
expressing God's connection with the world. Naturally when the world was not there, then the question of his immanence did not arise. Theists hold that God is personal and Holy. He is loving Father. God works with his power in this world. Many Jews and Christians believe that through prayer God's power and will can be brought to bear events in nature and in human affairs. In contrast, Aristotle held that the existence of the world did not require any reference to a transcendent or ultimate power. God is the transcendent unmoved mover who causes change and also stimulates the world. According to the Vedānta, God is the sole reality whereas the world of sense experience is mere appearance.

In the 'Bhāgavata', one of the main resorts of Vaiṣṇavism, God is the ultimate essence, called Parama Brahma the cause of the world. Nārāyana the eternal reality is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. Māyā vāda is very prominent in Sankaradeva's philosophy. The world has been described as asanta and māyāmaya. In innumerable passages, the analogy of the mirage and the rope and snake have been drawn to show the nature of the world.

If the phenomenal world is merely an appearance, then why does it appear to be real?

It is so because of māyā, the magical power with which God conjures up the world show. By using the jugglery of māyā, the Almighty, assumes various forms and shapes. Sankaradeva speaks of the influence of māyā, the nature of God and the world in the following way. Brahman alone is real; the world is merely a projection of māyā on Him; God manifests Himself in the world by pervading it, but He is not destroyed with the destruction of the world.
As regards the evolution of the world of nature, Sankaradeva and other vaisnavite thinkers have accepted the process of creation with only slight modification. The world of nature has evolved out of prakṛti or māyā produced by God.

Before creation, the eternal Brahman existed alone. Prakriti or māyā was lying merged in Him. Brahman, feeling the loneliness of His existence, thought of creating the world through Prakriti in a sportive spirit. In the cosmology of Sankaradeva God is the Absolute Reality. He is the material as well as efficient cause of the universe.

Hinduism believes in creation, but it does not seem to believe that the world was created at a definite moment of time. It agrees with Buddhism and Jainism which hold that the world has somehow come from eternity. Regarding the creation and destruction of the world, the view of zoroastrianism seems to be closer to the views of the Semitic religions, although it is not clear whether Zoroastrianism takes the world as created out of nothing. Zoroastrianism and Islam do not have any mythical stories regarding the exact process of creation. The Judaic saying is that God created man in His own likeness and therefore, there are physical illustrations which aid in our understanding.

The world is phenomenal appearance of God. The world without God is like a lamp without its light, a violin without its music. Without God the world would be chaotic.

God and the Absolute:

God is a self-determining principle and manifests Himself in a temporal development with wisdom, love and goodness as His attributes. From this point of view, God is a Personal Being with whom we can enter into a personal relationship. Practical religion pre-supposes a God who looks into our hearts, and helps us in our needs. The life of the Personal Being is not possible except in relation to an environment. If God has no
environment on which He can act He cannot be Personal. If God is Personal, He cannot be Absolute, a term which means that it has nothing which is not included in it in every possible sense of the world.

The God of the Hebrews is of a different type. He is personal and active. Most of the theistic religions, partly inspired by the Biblical conception of personality of God and partly by common sense, have conceived of God as identical with the Absolute.

The Christian theologians are equally conscious of the philosophical concept of the Absolute and the religious concept of the Personal God. The personal category is transcended in the highest experience of the Christian mystics. While emphasising upon the personality of God, it will be wrong to ascribe His important to the Absolute which is the cause and goal of the world. There need not be any discrepancy between these two concepts. God is an infinite spirit possessed of personality in a sense that can be predicated only to the infinite.

Sankaradeva in his doctrinal work 'Bhakti-Ratnākara', laid more stress on the Saguna aspect without denying the indeterminate aspect of God; because loving devotion demands God. Since the indeterminate God is not comprehensible, so devotees worship His beatific from in the person of Nārāyaṇa. The description of Nārāyaṇa incorporates both Saguna and Nirguna aspects of God. Nārāyaṇa has been spoken as a loving as well as lovable God. He is not only possesses metaphysical qualities like non-duality, omnipotence etc. but also possesses such moral virtues as mercy and love as manifested in the forms of various incarnations.

Though Nārāyaṇa has been described as the Supreme Being, yet for practical devotion, sport (līlā), activities (karma) attributes (guṇā) and names (nāma) of Vāsudeva
Kṛṣṇa have been specially recommended. The God is Saguna when attributes are given, but in reality He is Nirguna.

Sankaradeva's Nirguna Brahman then, though beyond one's intellectual grasp is not denied of gunās (spiritual attributes). Nirguna Brahman is Madhava, the controller of Puruṣa and Prakriti. The Absolute is a non-dual Reality which is beyond space and time. He is the highest, the Parama Brahman, the essence of all incarnations.

The Nirguna and Saguna are eternally co-existent. Nārāyaṇa is the leela tanu (sportive body). Viṣṇu is equated with Nārāyaṇa, the personified Supreme Reality in the epithet Viṣṇu- Nārāyaṇa. Viṣṇu is Nārāyaṇa or the Nirguna Brahman is the God of religion. The one and the same Deity is transcendent and immanent at the same time. The Absolute is Saguna while appearing as the son of Devaki, Sri Kṛṣṇa is the Deva in Sankaradeva's bhakti path.

The supreme Deity is loving and Sankaradeva emphasises the love of Viṣṇu which is more central than either His wisdom or sovereignty. Against the Advaita view that the Absolute has no need for expressions in history, Sankaradeva like Rāmānuja contends that God's blissful nature exhibits itself in history by making love. God's descent is an expression of His dynamic love distinguished from Nityabibhuti. We find the doctrine of changeless perfection of the Absolute along with the conviction that God is also responsible for this changing world. The kind of which relation shown here between the Absolute and God is not the same as that shown by either Sankara or Bradley. Here the Absolute is the transcendental divine and God is the cosmic divine; the Absolute is the total reality, God is the Absolute form of cosmic end that informs and sustains the world. The Absolute is joy and joy is self-existent reality. The Absolute does not depend on objects but only on Itself. If
God is Personal, He cannot be the Absolute which has nothing, which is not included in it in every possible sense of the world. Rashdall makes a distinction between God and the Absolute by saying that from the metaphysical and moral points of view, we conclude that God as the unity of consciousness must exist, but that does not prove that God is identical with the Absolute. The Absolute may include God and the finite self but need not be a unity of self-consciousness itself. Logically, it is difficult to equate the Personal God with the impersonal Absolute; both of them do not appear to be simultaneously true.

Otto has declared that the personality of God and impersonality of the Absolute would not be the problem of Christianity. Otto has reached his concept of God as God the Father in Heaven and this manifestation on earth as Jesus of Nazareth. To accept the impersonal Absolute is to accept the pantheism which is inconsistent with the fundamental principle of Christianity.

With the advent of Christianity, the philosophical conception of Absolute came to be influenced by religious faith. The existence of God became more a matter of faith than of reason. God came to be regarded as 'truth' revealed through mystic intuition. Some mystic religious philosophers like St. Augustine, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas claimed personal knowledge of God in their experience. According to them, God is revealed truth which they could directly intuit due to their intense faith.

Some philosophers object to theism on the ground that it is too anthropomorphic in its portrait of God as Supreme Reality. God is immanent in this cosmos. In Judaism and Islam, God is pictured as transcendent. But the central conviction of Christianity is that God incarnates in human form. There are also Christian advocates of God's transcendency.
God is called Absolute because human language fails to capture Him. According to this view, the divine is ineffable, incapable of being described or referred to in human language. A view of the Absolute can dramatically check the whole enterprise of philosophy of religion. God's inner being is, therefore, changeless or immutable, not subject to alteration and flux. God may have a temporal dimension by being at all times or as Christian believes, in His incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Christian philosophers and theologians have some times capitalized on the apparent absurdity of believing that God becomes incarnate. To believe that God becomes a human being, a Jesus Christ, appears to involve believing in something which is logically contradictory. His life becomes a vehicle or channel through which other people may come to have fellowship with God. Christian's Trinity is like the Saccidananda of Hinduism and the Godhead is the Nirguna Brahman.

References
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91. Jack Finegan, Christian Theology, p. 36.
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