CHAPTER VIII


(Religion and Religions)

8.1 INTRODUCTION

"Religion is a personal encounter with the Supreme Reality".¹

"It is attaining a state of illumination, and a direct apprehension of the Supreme".²

"The root meaning of the word 'Religion' suggests that it should be a binding force".³

Eastern religions lay great emphasis on religious experience. While they follow their rituals and mythologies, the basic conception centres round the renewal of consciousness. The aim of religion is not intellectual conformity to inherited doctrines or ritualistic piety. Its purpose is spiritual and not merely metaphysical. It results in a complete renewing of one's nature. There are memorable references to religion in the writings of Radhakrishnan:

"One who has succeeded in attaining the aim of religion has an illumined mind, a changed heart and a transformed will. A new way of life vitalises and transforms his whole being."⁴ "Religion is a movement, a growth and in all true growth the new rests on the old. All religions have had a
history and none is final and perfect".\textsuperscript{5} "All religions are human attempts to reach the Ultimate Reality".\textsuperscript{6} "Religion is the perfection of the truly human".\textsuperscript{7} "It is participation in the mystery of being. It is wisdom or insight into Reality".\textsuperscript{8} "Religion is a conversion, a mental and a spiritual revolution, a change from a self-centred to God-centred life. It is a call to a new vision and understanding of life".\textsuperscript{9} "Religion is not a particular way of life, but is the way of all life".\textsuperscript{10}

If religion is to become an effective force in human affairs, if it is to serve as the basis for the New World Order, it must become more inward and more universal.

\section{8.2 Modern Challenges to the Religions}

Radhakrishnan realised that Christianity in the West and the religions in general in the 20th Century faced challenges from various idealologies that arose as a result of renaissance and reformation in Europe. The rise of Atheism, Agnosticism, Humanism, Communism, Secularism, Naturalism, and Scientific outlook has produced an indifferent attitude towards religion in general and God in particular. Radhakrishnan describes this religious situation in the West where all idealologies exist. This peculiar predicament of man in this age has left him without hope for a bright future. He also realised that the world is suffering from neurosis (a fear complex) which is the result of the accumulation of Nuclear weapons and the threat of a third world war. However he believes that the very conditions indicate a hope for the future. He thinks that man has a strong spirit in him besides body
and mind, which is divine in character which can enable him to work for the betterment of the World and his society. He wants that world religions should come together and co-operate with one another to develop a world outlook and generate the necessary infra-structure for the welfare of the societies.

8.2.1 The Formidable obstacles to Religions

There are a number of formidable obstacles coming in the way of progress in Religions. They are: (1) The spirit of Science and criticism, the awakened social conscience which protests against the iniquities which are being practiced in the world. (2) The provincialism of religions which are competing with one another and making intelligent people doubt the value and validity of religion and (3) the increasing secularization of the world which is giving way for indifference towards religion. Unfortunately, religions themselves are passing through a mood of criticism since the people in the scientific age lost faith in the incredible dogmas and doubtful events. "Man of today wants to have religious faith which commends itself to the spirit of reason". Even the religious conversions are leading to intolerance and interference with other religions.

The religion in the West has been struggling hard to come to terms with the spirit of reason. The scientific developments disturbed the faith in religions. The scientific views concerning the origin of the earth, the evolution of human life has contradicted the traditional religious views. The rationalistic philosophy had Naturalistic Science triumph over the Christian philosophy of the middle ages. The human reason became supreme and a mechanical view
of the World developed. God’s existence became incredible and he became superfluous. Religion has been considered as an opium by Marx and as an illusion by Freud. Historical research has revolutionized the earlier understanding of the Old and the New Testaments. Doubts about the conventional religion have not confined to a few sceptics but seem to have become the property of the whole generation. The Logical Positivist movement represents the scientific reaction against religion. Religions lost their universality of outlook. They became like Nation states. The whole situation appears to be moving to a state of no religion. It appeared to Radhakrishnan that the organized religions are undergoing a process of decay. Although their external forms are sound, internally they are empty. Though there is profession of faith in God, the adherents are disinclined to act on it. People have lost their old faith, but have not gained a new one as yet. Radhakrishnan diagnosed this sickly religious situation as a tendency to irreligion and indifference: "A general tendency to irreligion is in the air. Unbelief is aggressive and ubiquitous".¹²

The reasons for such a situation have been attributed to the unscientific character of beliefs and dogmas, the awakened social conscience which protested against the iniquities practiced in the world, which the religions have failed to oppose. Inspite of the great contributions, the religions, through the ages, have made for the promotion of art, culture and spiritual life, they have been vitiated by dogmatism and fanaticism, by cruelty and intolerance and by the intellectual dishonesty of their adherents.¹³ Moreover,
the development of technological civilization has also been said to be one of the major influences that fostered the spirit of skepticism.

8.2.2 Religious Conversion

Religious conversions, according to Radhakrishnan, are taking place only as a result of ignorance of the true nature of one's own religion as well as that of the others. If one does not know the true nature of religion and about the religions of others, he will think that his religion alone is true and all others are false leading to damnation.

A knowledge of religions through an unbiased study will eliminate religious conversions from the societies. Radhakrishnan wants conversion in religions to be restrained in order to encourage peaceful living and co-existence among the people of different religions in the world. This is necessary because, conversion does have an element of intolerance which develops hatred towards other religions. There are also other reasons for advocating against religious conversions. A converted individual often suffers from the loss of traditional roots and feels like an illegitimate child without any heritage. Like Swami Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan says that religious conversions should be abandoned and men of all religions should be encouraged to follow the basic principles of their religions, faithfully.
8.2.3 Need for Inter-religious Co-operation and understanding among Religions

The world has become very small through transport and communication and the activities of the U.N.O. The political concepts and the economic ideas are bringing the nations to a close neighbourhood and may even transform men of different nations into a true brotherhood. It has been the characteristic of our times that there is so much of mingling of people, races and cultures as well as religions. Never before there has been such a meeting. Therefore there is an urgent need for close co-operation among religions in accordance with the changing times in our international outlook for "one family for one earth".

8.3 MODERN APPROACHES TOWARDS THE IDEAL OF A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

To bring about better understanding and co-operation among the adherents of various religions, Radhakrishnan suggested a number of modern approaches as steps towards the attainment of an Ideal of a Universal Religion. Some of these include toleration of every form of religion, respect for every religion, equality of religions, unity and fellowship among religions and spiritual fraternity of Religions.

8.3.1 Toleration of every form of religious worship

Every religion has a structure of its own with a form of worship. This includes monotheism, polytheism, idolatry, superstition etc. Radhakrishnan
thinks that every form of worship, including the worship of image is worthy of adherence.  

A wide range of forms of religion and worship are provided for selecting one of them by an individual with a freedom of choice, the best suited to his nature. People of different temperaments would need different forms of religion. It is not possible to make people follow one and only creed and bring every one under the same banner. There should be different forms which could be of equal importance for the service of every individual. So, different religions and different forms of worship should be tolerated.

"Any name, any form any symbol may set the whole being austere, and the divine in the heart of the seeker lifts him up and accepts the offering. God is sometimes viewed as personal friend and lover. Many feel the need for human intermediary, example incarnation. Some want to feel the divine in something entirely close to humanity, an Avatar like Krsna, Buddha or Jesus. Some find that even this is not quite sufficient and seek for a prophet like Mohammed and still others are restless without a living teacher, a Guru".  

No religion is considered to be absolutely perfect, but only symbolical and partially perfect. No single religion contains the whole truth. The external forms, the religions uphold, are not final and do not have ultimate validity. Radhakrishnan insists that there should be toleration of every form of religion and worship: "toleration is the homage which the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the Infinite".
8.3.2 Respect for other Faiths

Radhakrishnan calls for a positive appreciation of every faith and seeks a close fellowship of different faiths. He insists on absolute respect for other men’s beliefs. The tolerance should not be considered as a mere concession to the believer: "Even if the ideas are erroneous, it is good for truth to struggle with error. Nothing is more fatal to truth than suppression of error by force".¹⁷

The human being is only a wayfarer in this world, a pilgrim moving towards the ultimate goal. People of different religions are engaged in the same quest, seeking the same shrine and therefore they are all spiritual brothers. There should not be any quarrel among the pilgrims over their differences in the names ascribed to the Supreme being. Such quarrels over names, creeds, dogmas and labels attributed to the Supreme Being reveal lack of proper understanding of one’s own religion. This also indicates that there is no insight into Reality experienced by the believers, and that they all possess the second hand knowledge which results in their quarrels over shadows of the Reality. Only a realization of the unity of religions will relieve one from such strifes. It should be admitted that the mystery of the Supreme Being is inexpressible and indescribable. Every religion is based on a personal encounter and a human apprehension of Reality and all theologies are stammering attempts to translate the experience into words and to draw out its implications. The mystery and the majesty of Reality is so great and incomprehensive that human language fails to communicate its deeper aspects.
Radhakrishnan refers to the intolerance practiced by many religions in the past which ended in religious wars and damaged the cause of religion. Therefore, he suggests that tolerance is the urgent need especially with the various forms of religion and worship. In the past there were prophets of religions who respected the continuance of other faiths without condemning them. The examples of Buddha, Jesus and Asoka are usually mentioned.

Any claim by any religion as bearing unique witness to truth, is inconsistent with the belief in God who spoke to men by different languages and in diverse manners. Radhakrishnan does not subscribe to the view that revelation has occurred only once for all and delivered to the saints without leaving any such possibility in the future. In his view the creative Spirit is ever ready to reveal Itself to every seeking soul which is searching with an intense effort. He believes in the authority of the inward illumination which is tested by tradition and logic, but not in the authority of an Infallible Book or an Infallible Church. The diversity which is prevalent among the traditional religions will gradually diminish as soon as one reaches the goal of perfection.

8.3.3 Equality of all religions

In a number of passages, Radhakrishnan suggests the equality of all religions which serve as a means to salvation. This equality of religions is explained through many illustrations. Sometimes the different religions are compared to different facets of a single truth, "Truth wears many vestures and speak in diverse tongues". Sometimes he calls them as 'Dialects' of the same language of the spirit. Different religions are like One Truth said in different
languages, with different labels. Again they are like many paths leading to the hill top. Whatever path we take, we are sure to reach the hill top. So all religions lead ultimately, to God. "In heaven there are not only many mansions, but also many vehicles to reach them". 19

Radhakrishnan refers to a number of similes borrowed from other religions to illustrate the equality of religions. The cows may be of different colours, but the milk they give us is of one colour, white. The lamps may be different, but the light, the flame, the illumination they generate, are the same. The illustration of the blindmen and the elephant tells us that each religion stresses one or the other aspect of the eternal Truth. All the descriptions are equally good, but none of them contains the whole truth. The equality of religions can also be shown on the basis of the saintliness in each religion, for each religion has produced a number of saints.

8.3.4 The Unity of Spirit among Religions

His deep studies concerning the origin and development of major religions of the world revealed to Radhakrishnan that there is a remarkable unity of the spirit in the mystic traditions of the great religions. He says: "A study of the classic types of the mystical experience discloses an astonishing agreement which is almost entirely independent of race, clime or age". 20 The descriptions of the seers regarding their experiences show us an impressive unity for they are supposed to be near to one another on mountains apart.
It is difficult to find similarities in every aspect of religions such as dogmas, rites, mythologies, theologies etc., This does not mean religions should not aim at the higher ideals where the agreement will be striking. Whatever be the religion, there is the highest ideal for man which aims at his perfection. Radhakrishnan seems to find this idea of man in the religions.

The *Upanisads* proclaims the great truth 'thou art that', the Buddha teaches that everybody has the power to grow into Bodhisattva, the Jews are of the opinion that the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is within his followers and Mohammed affirms that God is nearer to us. In this important aspect, all religions seem to agree over the basic moral principles embedded in the various religious teaching with striking similarity.

Radhakrishnan attempts to find a transcendental unity among all religions, for all religious men have the one and the same aim to attain perfection through the experience of God. When Radhakrishnan describes the transcendental unity he says that the transcendent unity should not be hidden by the empirical fact of the plurality of religions. We can find a common substratum of religion. Some of the doctrines are common in almost all the religions of the world. The unredeemed situation of man, the longing for liberation, the recognition of the Divine Reality, and the many ways to reach the real are found in all religions.

A deeper study into the nature of religions will enable us to perceive the unity of aspiration and endeavour underlying the different religions.
According to him, the diversity in the traditional formulation tends to diminish as we climb up the scale of spiritual perfection. "All paths of ascent lead to the mountain top".²³

Those who reach the mountain top of spiritual perfection will be able to witness the convergent tendency of different religions. This convergent tendency in his view is found in the witnesses belonging to different religions, who have reached this mountain top, which stands as a strongest proof for his claim. Those who have realised the ultimate, will perceive the fundamental unity of all religions. In the origin and the end, the religions are the same. He says: "All religions are intertwined at the roots and meet at the summit".²⁴ If we overlook the unity of religions we will not be able to overcome nihilism, irreligion etc. He says; "To neglect the spiritual unity of the world and undermine, the religious diversity would be philosophically unjustifiable, morally indefensible and socially dangerous".²⁵

8.3.5 Fellowship of Faiths

At a later stage, Radhakrishnan felt that a mere preaching of unity and equality of religions is insufficient. He therefore called for a closer fellowship among all the religions. But his notion of fellowship should not be confused with a fusion or a combination of different religions. He was opposed to the formation of eclecticism in religion and he never encouraged the merging together of different faiths into a synthetic creed. However, his vision of fellowship of religions is based on the transcendental unity of religions.
Radhakrishnan does not believe in the emergence of a world faith, which has an eclectic or syncenristic character. Nor he believes in the faith which takes in the valuable elements of all religions. The attempt to have a religion, which is no religion in particular is like an attempt to speak without speaking any particular language. Each religion must learn to appreciate the values of others, while maintaining its own individuality. The different faiths are like different fingers of the loving hand of the supreme.\textsuperscript{26}

Such a notion of fellowship of faiths provides each religion the necessary scope for full expression. Each religion can develop its own distinctive doctrines, creeds, institutions and forms of worship, and no religion loses its distinctive identity by entering into fellowship. Radhakrishnan says: "The different religious traditions clothe the One Reality in various images and their visions could embrace and fertilize each other so as to give mankind a many-sided perfection, the spiritual radiance of Hinduism, the faithful obedience of Judaism, the life of beauty of Greek Paganism, the noble compassion of Buddhism, the vision of Divine love of Christianity and the spirit of resignation of the sovereign Lord of Islam. All these represent different aspects of the inward spiritual life, projections of the intellectual a plane of the ineffable experiences of the human spirit".\textsuperscript{25}

This notion of fellowship is the basis of \textit{Bhagavadgita} where the Lord says: "As men approach me, so do I accept them: men of all sides follow my path, O Partha".\textsuperscript{28}
This passage instructs the equality of all religions as diversified paths reaching the same goal. This implies that different religions in essence are one and they are not incompatible, but complimentary. Therefore, Radhakrishnan feels that the fellowship of faiths can be developed into a United Religious Organisation just like the UNO and other International Organizations.

8.3.6 Spiritual Fraternity

The fellowship of religions is a further step towards the goal of Universal Religion. This is followed by what is called spiritual fraternity, which is a community of those who have attained direct experience of the Divine in man, though belonging to different religions and geographical areas. All these saints and sages together form one great invisible community of God, a spiritual fraternity. "Those who have this experience, whatever religion they may adopt, belong to a single spiritual fraternity. These are the saints who live their life in God and form a spiritual nobility".29 "This is also called as the 'Household of God',30 or 'The Church of God Universal', to which persons like Socrates and Plato, Ramakrishna and Mahatma Gandhi belong".31

Such a fraternity belongs to the Religion which is above all religions and supersedes all our rituals, dogmas and doctrines. Radhakrishnan hopes that this may be the religion on the basis of which the whole world can be united.

Whatever point of view we start, from Hindu or Muslim or Buddhist or Christian, if we are sincere in our intention
and earnest in our effort we get to the Supreme. We are members of the One Invisible Church of God or One Fellowship of the Spirit, though we may belong to this or that visible church.\textsuperscript{32}

Though the seekers of truth may find differences while on their way to attain realisation, when they reach the end of their quest they will feel that they belong to One Single Family of kindred spirits. Whether they come from Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, or Buddhism, they belong to One Church of God Universal. This Spiritual Fraternity does not recognize the dogmas or doctrines or any religious differences. The pathways we tread, the name we give fade away into insignificance when we stand face to face in the glowing light of the Divine. All those who have experienced God, rise above the organized religions, look upon all believers as belonging to the household of God. These individuals belonging to the Spiritual Fraternity are the mystics, the God-men of all religions. In the words of Dean Inge: "Whatever their creed, race or nationality, the witness of the mystics is wonderfully unanimous".\textsuperscript{33}

8.4 RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THE IDEAL OF A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

Religions are now passing through a process of self-understanding, self-searching and self-criticism and will be able to respond adequately to great challenges.\textsuperscript{34} Religion has emerged matured, from the criticism of science and social conscience accepting whatever is valid in other religions. When the faiths interact, our own religion is imperceptibly modified; we give up the notions of
chosen peoples, chosen nations and chosen creeds. The unreal yields to the real.35

8.4.1 Study of other Religions

Inter-religious understanding and co-operation is possible only through learning the basic principles of world religions. Such a study of other living religions enables us to enhance the appreciation of our own faith. A more comprehensive vision and understanding of spiritual truth can be obtained by adopting a wider historical view of religion. As our world of today is neither Eastern nor Western and as every one of us is a heir to all civilization, it is our duty and privilege to enlarge our faculties of curiosity through such a study. By understanding the experience of people we enlarge our categories of others’ thoughts. This will enable us to widen our religious perspective and obtain a world wisdom worthy of our time. The New World Society requires a new outlook based on respect and understanding of other religious traditions. This does not mean that we should master all the scriptures of the world. Study of other religions offers a new spiritual reconciliation and outlook in the light of recent developments with the aim of living together in harmony.

8.4.2 Progress in Modern World Religions

There is an urgent need for human co-operation today, the barriers that we built from civilisation, to civilization, from nation to the nation, from one religion to other, are breaking and there is a movement for greater co-operation and understanding among people of the world. Instead of
confrontation between one religion and the other, there is now a meeting of
them. The leaders of different religions are coming forward to foster better
understanding between them, stressing more on the common aims of religion
rather than on doctrines that separate them. The realisation has already
dawned that isolation of any religion is not possible or that any single existing
religion can be the only religion for all mankind. Every religion seeks salvation
which is the aim of all religions. All religions plead for progress along the path
of mutual respect and understanding. They feel that they are partners. Their
meeting together contributes to the vitality of religions.36

8.4.2.1 Earlier doctrines and beliefs restated

Every religion is attempting to reformulate its faith in accordance
with modern thought and criticism. It has become necessary for the religions
to re-interpret and re-state the doctrines and beliefs of earlier age, so that they
may not be at variance with modern life and thought. The English Churchmen
were asked by the Archbishop of Canterbury and York to hold and to teach the
Christian faith in accordance with the verified results of modern Scientific,
Historical and literary criticism. Religions are attempting to emphasize on the
essential principles and ideals rather than the dogmatic schemes. For example
the moral and spiritual truths of Christian faith in Divine Being and in the
manifestation of the spiritual and moral nature of the Divine in the personality
of Jesus and a faith that we can receive strength and guidance by communion
with the Divine, are regarded as more important than other beliefs.
The people of other religions are also making attempts to cast off the non-essentials and emphasize on the essentials or basic truths. They all realise that the essential principles are eternal, while their expressions in various forms require continual change and development from time to time. Since the religions of mankind are vehicles carrying spiritual treasures, containing the inspiration of the centuries and also the encrustations of error, they need refashioning from time to time and from age to age. They require to be refashioned afresh to become more relevant to our modern experiences and to our own predicament. Re-statement of doctrines in each religion is considered essential and necessary for our times. Since every religion is growing under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit of truth, every re-statement and change that is made, is done under the guidance of the same spirit in order to meet the moral and the spiritual ordeals of the modern civilization.

All religions bear witness to the penetration of the finite by the Infinite. The Divine Spirit is always with us and in us. We discover the universal through the concrete. While the Reality is immutable, the human apprehension of it is mutable and changing from time to time.

8.4.2.2 Absolute and God, Statuses of One Reality

The Absolute and God are the two statuses of the same reality. The Concepts are used as symbols, the values of which lie not in their literal meaning but in their suggestiveness. They should be treated in the spirit of poetry but not of logic. When we emphasize the ineffable character of Reality and its transcendence of subject-object relation, we call it the Absolute. When
we look at it as the creative principle of all existence, we conceive it as God. Many religions have both these aspects. For Eckhart, God is Being above being. St. Gregory Palamos taught that God contains Being without being reducible to it. For Boheme, the Supreme is the ground and abyss of being. Radhakrishnan refers to many mystics and theologians who have conceived Reality as the God-head or Absolute, for he considered the conception of God as restrictive in character. Every belief in Ultimate Reality as God, is restrictive and fixed with limits and boundaries.

The assumption of a personal God as the ground of being and creator of the Universe is the first stage of the obscuring and restriction of the vision which immediately perceives the great illumination of Reality. It permits the knowledge of the truth that ever transcends God, does not annihilate God, but comprises it.37

8.4.2.3 God of Traditional Theism Rejected

God has been described variously. Radhakrishnan considers them only as points of view but not different objects of knowledge. For the Greeks, God is Absolute Reality, Spirit. The Lain theologians regard God as a Law Giver or a Governor. God in many religions dispenses justice according to his whims. He is sometimes represented as subject to human passions. According to Paul Tillich the God of traditional theism in favour of God above god, who is the ground of all beings and the source of man's ultimate concern. Bishop Robinson also rejects the traditional notion of a God - 'Out there', who exists above and beyond the world He made. They repudiate anthropomorphism.38
We have the testimony of the saints to these two forms of God and God-head. These are all attempts to express the economy in internal organization of the God-head. "When it is said that 'I am the way, the Truth and the Life', 'no one comes to the father, but through Me', it means that normally we reach the super-personal through the personal". To speak of God as a person is mere conceptual, and symbolic speaking. In the varied imaginative representation of God, we have to glimpse a substantial being superior to the world.

Hindu thought believes in the One Reality which is described in various ways. It starts from crude modes of worship and the devotee is expected to progress to nobler modes. "The first stage is image worship and the next is meditation and prayer and the higher one is mental worship and the highest is the meditation in the form 'I am He'.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are less intransigent than ever before towards other religions. We are now admitting the limitations of human mind and its inadequacy to know the inner truth. We are adopting a tentative attitude towards our own faith. We are not exaggerating now the adequacy to truth of our own religion because we know that people of other religions too have the same feelings towards their religions and of others. God is God of love and He is the creator of all creatures and so He must have revealed Himself to all. Therefore, says Radhakrishnan: "All revelations are to be admitted as having validity".
8.4.2.4 Growing sense of Church Unity to be extended to the 
Religions of the World

There is a growing sense of unity in the Church today. The Followers 
of the Church of England Presbyterians, Methodist, Baptist and free Churches 
are able to come together for discussing vital problems. By establishing a 
secretariat in Vatican under the Chairmanship of Cardinal Bia, the Catholic 
Churches are seeking unity among all Christians of different denominations. 
The meeting between Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope marks a new 
stage in the development of fraternal relations to remove the causes of conflict 
and to re-establish unity in the Christian Church. It is a sign of growing up of 
greater maturity. "The time has come for us to join in unity of Spirit, unity 
which embraces the richness in which the religious realities which have found 
expression in other faiths are not destroyed but cherished as value expressions 
of the one truth".43

The principle that is inspiring the movement of the reunion of 
Christian Churches should be extended to the union of great living faiths of 
mankind. In the sphere of religion also, there is room for diversity and no need 
for discord. "If the sects of Christianity can get together, giving up their claims 
for the exclusive possession of the truth of Christianity, it is not too much to 
hope that Christianity itself may modify its claim for the exclusive possession 
of spiritual truth".44
Belief in such exclusive claims of religious truth has been a frequent source of religious pride, fanaticism and a formidable obstacle to co-operation in the World of Spirit.

8.4.3 Religious evolution to higher truth

The concept of evolution plays a very significant role in the philosophical scheme of Radhakrishnan. Just as he discovers a creative evolution in the cosmos, an evolution in the process of reaching the highest knowledge of Reality, and an evolution of man towards his final destiny, he finds a gradual evolution of Religion through its historical development to denote man's spiritual development to commensurate with his physical and mental developmental processes.

8.4.3.1 From Polytheism to Monism

In Rig Veda, he finds the different stages of the process of religious evolution. It begins with the hymns sung in praise of various gods and goddesses indicating the first stage of religion which is called as Naturalistic polytheism. This is followed by Monotheism, worship of one God, as distinct from the earlier stage. However Max Muller finds what he calls as Henotheism in these monotheistic tendencies in the Veda. The third one is Monism, which is the apprehension of One Truth (ekām sat) without a second, one spirit without any form or name. "Everything centres round the One Spirit which explains everything. The human spirit (soul) and the World Spirit are identified with one Universal Spirit. This is the final stage."
There is the parallel religions or spiritual development in man shown in three stages in the upanisads - sravana, manana and nidhiyāsana. In the stage of sravana one hears and obeys. Manana is the stage of reflection with ability to argue, criticize and evaluate. Finally nidhiyāsana, is a disciplined meditation which identifies oneself with the Spirit. The stage of Polytheism where worship of natural objects and forces occurred could be identified as the crude beginnings of religion in primitive and sensuous forms. The second stage of Monotheism developing in a reflective form corresponds to the rational faculties of man. The final stage of Monism is attained in the identification with the highest spirit in a mystic form.

The first stage of primitive religion with its worship of objects has almost ceased to exist in majority of the religions, though vestiges of it are found here and there in the world. The gods and goddesses of these primitive religions are almost forgotten and their altars do not smoke any longer. The second stage of Monotheism which is the reflective stage in religions, though began about 2000 years before Christ still continues to exist. The monotheistic worship developed through organized religions, giving importance to external forms. Since, they correspond only to the intellectual stage of man, and not to his highest faculty which is the stage of the Spiritual, they should aim at the highest kind of religion which is the Religion of the Spirit. Organized religions and monotheistic forms are no longer necessary since the Spirit teaches man directly without a medium during the Age of Spirit which is on the threshold. "The days of external ceremonial religion which can co-exist with a deceitful
paganism are over". The old gods, old virtues and old values are fading. Sometimes he says: "Cling to religion, let religions go".

The term "Religions" in plural refers to all the existing religions organized or open and the term Religion in singular signifies the Religion of the Spirit, which is true and universal for Radhakrishnan.

8.4.3.2 All the Religious Traditions are Imperfect, Halting Expressions

We have different religious traditions which clothe the truth in language and symbol for the sake of those who do not have the experience themselves. The symbolic character of religious tradition should not be mistaken for reality. These are second-hand notions which fortify and console us, till such time we obtain the direct experience. The different traditions are the various versions which form the part of the historical and the relative world in which we live. By clinging to these historically conditioned forms as Absolute, we are left completely immersed in the relative. This does not mean that there is nothing central or absolute in religions. "The unchanging substance of religion is the evolution of man's consciousness. The traditions help to take us to the truth above all traditions and of which the traditions are imperfect, halting expressions".

No single religion can claim the possession of Absolute Truth, but possesses a fragment of the truth. The present quarrels will cease only if we know that the one truth is darkened and diversified in the different religions.
8.4.3.3 Convergence of Religions for Unity with differentiation

If we reflect on the matter deeply, we perceive the unity of spiritual aspiration and endeavour, underlying the varied paths indicated in the different world faiths. The diversity in historical formulations of the fundamental spiritual truths tends to diminish as we climb up the scale of spiritual perfection. This convergent tendency and the remarkable degree of agreement in the witness of those who reached the spiritual heights are the strongest proof of the truth in religion. Emphasis on this fundamental spiritual outlook, which characterizes the living religions of the world, is essential for the world order and peace which cannot be realised by political and economic planning alone. In the words of Radhakrishnan, "Where there is the spirit of the Lord, there is Unity".\(^{50}\)

Religions today may learn more from each other than they did in the past, though no one of them however modified by contact with others, is likely to provide a basis acceptable to all, for the spiritual unification of mankind. But the higher religions tend to converge if we look to the spiritual facts on which they are based and the moral universalism which they teach. We do not want a new religion, but we need a new and enlarged understanding of the old Religions. The future of religion is bound up, not with the acceptance of one religion for all, but by the acceptance of a fundamental unity with a free differentiation. Our unity is of the heart and spirit.\(^{51}\)

In the midst of travail in which we are living, we discern the emergence of the Religion of the Spirit which will be the crown of the different religions, devoted to the
perfecting of humanity in the life of the Spirit, that is, in the life of God in the soul.\textsuperscript{52}

The people of the world are working for a religion which teaches the possibility and the necessity of man's union with himself, with nature, with his fellowmen and with the Eternal spirit of which the visible Universe is but a manifestation and upholds the emergence of a complete consciousness as the destiny of man. "Our historical religions will have to transform themselves into the universal faith or they will fade away. This prospect may appear strange and unwelcome to some, but it has a truth and beauty of its own".\textsuperscript{53}

8.5 THE RELIGION OF THE SPIRIT - THE NEED OF THE WORLD

8.5.1 The New Age of the Spirit

The present world situation and its political conditions, did not deter Radhakrishnan from hopefully looking for a New Age of the Spirit. He is not pessimistic, but is highly optimistic, when he says: "If the world is today passing through a mood of atheism, it is because a higher religion is in the process of emergence".\textsuperscript{54}

In the opening passage of \textit{The Recovery of Faith}, Radhakrishnan says: "Great movements of spirit arise when despair at the breakdown of civilization makes the mind susceptible to the recognition of the insufficiency of the existing order and the need for rethinking its foundations and shifting its bases".\textsuperscript{55}
Further he states hopefully that scepticism, which is said to be the chastity of the intellect, riddles the faith of yesterday and prepares for the faith of Tomorrow. Inspite of the total secularization of the world, man will again be able to recapture an understanding of the sacred. We need to find a way back to the living spirit which combines the opposites. If the world is to be saved we must recover the spirit of the religion. We are persuaded that we are advancing towards the light. When the darkness is deep, the stars begin to shine. There have been prophetic revolts on behalf of spiritual values in all religions. The seers of the Unpanisads, Moses, Micah and Isaiah, the Buddha and Jesus, reformed traditional faiths and made new beginnings. A similar movement is taking place today in man's minds and hearts. We are on the threshold of a New Age of Spirit. The Age of Spiritual Awakening is the meaning of today's spiritual confusion.

8.5.2 The Religion of the Spirit

Man today needs a philosophy with a definite, direction, a goal and hope. We are in search of a religious message which is universally valid with sufficient authority, fresh sense of truth and the awakened social passion. The struggling and aspiring humanity is in need of a rational faith that does not mock the free spirit of man by arbitrary dogmas. True religion should be bereft of external forms including books and teachers. In every religion today, we have small minorities who look forward beyond the horizons of their particular faith. These are the ones who thirst for a first hand experience of the divine and are the prophets of the Religion of the Spirit which is independent of all ecclesiastical organizations.
These seers of different religions ask us to rise to the conception of a God above gods who is beyond image and concept who can be experienced but not known, who is the interiority of the human spirit and the ultimate of all that exists. The attainment of this goal represents the transcendental unity of all religions, which goes beyond the various empirical forms of religions.

Radhakrishnan discusses the basic characteristic features of the Religion of the Spirit which is the underlying force behind the innumerable forms of religion, which is also the ideal of a Universal religion, the Future Religion, and which is still in the state of embryo - 'the world's unborn soul'.

The following essential and foundational doctrines of the World Religions, have been the fundamental truths for the Religion of the Spirit. They are:

1. The Transcendent Supreme which is above and beyond all religions.
2. The freedom of human individual as a manifestation of the Supreme.
3. The right of the human individual to experience the Reality in his depths.
4. The unity of the mankind as the goal of history.

These constitute the very foundation and essence of all the major religions of the world. The Religion of the Spirit recognizes and re-asserts these fundamental and basic truths belonging to the religions.
The Religion of the Spirit does not regard dogmas and rites as anything more than unnecessary and inadequate symbolism. The religion of the spirit calls upon the leaders of religions to set in motion a process of fermentation that will preserve the faiths from hardening into moulds of orthodoxy.

The Religion of the Spirit should not be identified with any particular religion, because it is the religion which transcends every race and creed but at the same time includes and informs all races and creeds. The Religion of the Spirit calls upon the leaders of religions to transform the religions to which they belong, and make it approximate to the Religion of the Spirit which is the Ideal and Eternal goal of religions. Radhakrishnan is of the view that every religion has the potentiality and possibility to transform itself in accordance with the higher goals and ideals of this Religion of the Spirit. Hinduism and Christianity which are independent religions, might in the course of time can coverage and taken over into the larger Religion of the Spirit. Radhakrishnan is aware of our insufficiencies in this Age of tension, danger and opportunity. He hopes that: "These dangers and tensions can be removed if we have the right vision to see the ultimate goal and also courageously work to achieve it". 57

In one of his lectures on "Inter-Religious Understanding", Radhakrishan refers to the two summarized commandments Jesus Christ gave to men of his nation: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart with all thy soul and with all thy strength and thou shalt love thy neighbour
as thy self. All those who observe these two commandments belong to the Universal Church.\textsuperscript{58}

In these two commandments of Christ, Radhakrishnan discovers a very close resemblance with the fundamental truths of the Religion of the Spirit. Christ has summarized the Ten Commandments which God gave and brought them under these two. According to Christ they sum up all the Law and the Prophetic teachings. They also sum up the foundational and essential doctrines of all the World Religions. The first commandment brings out the Love of the Supreme Lord and the second one the love of man, as his own self. They instruct the love of the Transcendent supreme vertical dimension and the love of man to man as endowed in his heart and as directed horizontal dimension.

Radhakrishnan believes that all religions convey to their followers a message of abiding hope. "The world will give birth to a new faith, which will be but the old faith in another form, the faith of all ages, the potential divinity of man which will Work for the supreme purpose written in the hearts and souls, for the unity of mankind".\textsuperscript{59}

This universal religion, the eternal religion, this future religion which is underlying all religions, evolves and reaches its perfection. This spiritual religion will unify the whole world. This is the final attainment of perfection through fellowship of religious and spiritual fraternity of men when all of them will become God-men and humanity will grow into a single spiritual community. The purpose of the cosmic process is to reach the city of God in
time. Earth is the seed ground of the new life of the Spirit. The end of the world is the trans-substantiation of the whole creation. When Radhakrishnan describes this final stage of evolution he says that there will be a time when the world will be inhabited by a race of men, with no flaw of flesh or error of mind, free from yoke. When human beings grow into completeness then they will manifest in the outer world, i.e. the kingdom which is within them. That day there will be no difference of opinion among men regarding the nature of God.\textsuperscript{60}
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