CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Religion is a universal phenomenon present in all known societies in an endless variety of forms. It has always exerted a profound influence on many aspects of human life and personality. Many regard it as a bulwark of morality. Social scientists like Durkheim, Malinowsky see religion as reinforcing social norms and values and promoting social solidarity. Its usefulness in enhancing equanimity and peace of mind in individuals is often stressed. Some look upon it as the prime force in the civilizing process of mankind. An orientation to religion is held to serve multiple and diverse functions for the individual, from providing meaning to one's life, to yielding a sense of personal fulfillment, to securing access to social contact, to offering a set of standards against which to judge and guide one's actions.

At the same time religion has been the most controversial of human institutions. It has been
looked upon as a burden from an outmoded time and an obstacle that human race must outlast, overcome and forget. It has also been accused and blamed for its role in promoting fanaticism, intolerance, ignorance and superstition. Marx regarded religion as a distortion of reality which provides many of the deceptions that form the basis of ruling class ideology and false class consciousness. In his words, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (Marx, 1963). Religion is often seen as justifying the present order of things as God ordained and as an argument against change. It is held as useful in cushioning the effects of oppression and at the same time it constitutes an instrument of that oppression.

Many social scientists maintain that modern societies are undergoing a process of secularization. This means that the influence of religion in all areas of social life is steadily diminishing.
Secularization is usually defined as "a process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance" (Wilson, 1966).

If declining Church attendance is taken as an essential characteristic of religion, it certainly would appear that modern societies are undergoing secularisation. However, Church attendance may have nothing to do with a change in religious beliefs. In America a high proportion of those who regard themselves as Christians do not see regular Church attendance as a necessary part of being a Christian. Robert W. Bellah (1976) argues that the decline in institutional religion cannot be taken as an indication of a decline in religious beliefs and commitment. He argues that there has been a move from collective worship to privatized worship and from clerical to individual interpretation of doctrine.

Talcott Parsons (1965) argues that Church as an institution has lost many of its former functions. He holds that the evolution of society involves a
process of structural differentiation. Various parts of the social system become more specialised and so perform fewer functions. However, the differentiation of the units of the social system does not necessarily lessen their importance. Parsons argues that religious beliefs still give meaning and significance to life. He maintains that as religious institutions become increasingly specialised, their ethics and values become increasingly generalised.

The continuing emergence and proliferation of sects and the growth of the new religious movements are taken by some as evidence of the vitality of religion. They all indicate that the importance of religion has not declined for the individual; rather its form of expression has changed. No longer is religious doctrine imposed. Modern man has a greater freedom than ever before to search for and construct his own ultimate meaning.

In the past, until recently the personalities of individuals in all societies have been shaped
solely by religion and religious institutions. Even today a majority of the parents, in bringing up their children, continue to act as if they regard traditional religious values or a somewhat modified version of them as a necessary background for the building up of an acceptable character.

There are several prevalent types of adjustment to the problem of personality integration in modern industrial societies. First, the individual's personality may be integrated almost exclusively on the basis of the values of the particular religious organization to which he belongs. This type of integration is probably becoming rarer today. Second, the individual may achieve a working personality integration by a process of compartmentalization. He may combine a more or less conventional acceptance of the so-called traditional religion with a work-a-day orientation to secular values. Under stress however, this compartmentalized system may break down. In the third type of adjustment, some
individuals may come to adopt an integration of their personalities in terms of secular values alone. Whichever mode of adjustment is adopted, it is certain to be related to the total life experiences of the individual, shaped by and in turn shaping how he relates to what is happening to him intellectually and emotionally.

The present investigation is an attempt to investigate the personality traits which differentiate individuals with high religiosity from those with low religiosity. The place of religion must be considered in terms of the complex satisfaction of highly derived needs. The various theories of religion ascribe it to either a religious "instinct" or a specific religious sense (McDougall, 1948) or else explain it as a primitive theory of animism (Tylor, 1913) or Pre-animism (Narett, 1909) or ascribe to emotions of fear (Kundt, 1905) or aesthetic raptures and lapses of speech (Max Muller, 1972). These theories make religion something super-
imposed on the whole structure of human culture, satisfying some needs perhaps, but needs which have nothing to do with hard-worked reality of human existence. Religion however can be shown to be intrinsically, though indirectly, connected with man's fundamental needs. A whole range of anxieties, forebodings and problems concerning human destinies and man's place in the universe opens up once man begins to act in common not only with his fellow citizens but also with the past and future generations. Religion has not originated out of speculation or reflection still less out of illusion or misapprehension, but rather out of the real tragedies of human life, out of the conflict between human plans and realities.

Religious behaviour is a highly complex phenomenon arising out of the numerous needs, urges, desires, attitudes, sentiments and impulses of man. Man's dissatisfaction with the limitations of his finite nature, his desire for
protection and security, his quest for understanding the origin and the end of the universe, his fear of the uncertainties of life, his possessiveness in preserving the past, have all been regarded as giving rise to religious belief and behaviour. Social sciences like Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology have tried to understand and explain religious behaviour from their own perspective.

The relation between religious beliefs and behaviour and certain personality traits has long been recognized. In fact, some theorists have regarded personality traits as being present universally and seen them as the cause of religious belief, feeling and behaviour. Freud, for example, saw man's religious drive as grounded in man's racial heritage of crime and guilt. For him religious behaviour is a result of sublimation, triggered by anxiety and guilt, of man's powerful drives of aggression and sex.

Many writers have held that fear gives rise
to religion. Lucretius said, "Fear begets religion". Religious leaders in the past found it easy to use fears of all sorts as an effective organising principle. Some theologians opine that "fear of God is the beginning of wisdom". Trotter (1916) and Laube (1909) stressed the importance of fear in influencing the religious life of primitive man. Brightman (1956) holds that any true study of religion must take into account the fear aspect in the life of human beings. Russell (1957) remarks that fear is the foundation of religion. Conklin (1929) attributed all types of anxiety, insecurity, frustration, maladjustment and vulnerability to religious fear. The horrors of the Christian hell, portrayed by Jonathan Edwards was intended to frighten people into the virtuous path (Cotton, 1912).

The role of religion as a defence mechanism has been well recognised. Morgan (1961) says:

"A defence mechanism is a device - a way of beha-
ving - that a person uses unconsciously to protect himself against ego-involving frustra-
tion". Murphy (1951) says that defence mechanisms are "adjustments that enable a person to avoid facing a painful act or an unpleasant situation". Religion in this view, is a defence against anxiety, Vetter (1959) remarks, "Lucretius pointed out that under trouble, there was to be expected an increase in the attention paid to Gods, as at deaths, during famines, or other individual crises. The religious zeal of convicted criminals is considerably in excess of those of us still at large".

Stouffer (1945) says that fear of death seems to be another factor in shaping the religious beliefs of man. He has found in an investigation that soldiers in World War II attended Church services in large numbers when confronted with great danger. The religious activities of ex-service men who had been on active service were more intense than their religious
personality factors. But this leaves out the question, whether the parents themselves might in addition to transmitting their religiosity, also transmit, at the same time, their fears, anxiety, conservatism etc. to their children. Further, the religiosity that is developed because of parental influence may be strengthened or lessened by the said personality factors. For this reason, religiosity is studied here as a dependent variable and the personality factors such as anxiety, insecurity, conservatism etc. are studied as independent variables. In addition, the relation of certain socio-economic and family variables to religiosity are traced. The simultaneous as well as individual influences of the variables in question upon religiosity are studied.

The utility of this investigation lies in proper assessment of the role of different socio-psychological and personality factors in influencing religiosity among people. A study of this kind seems to be called for to increase our understanding of
religious behaviour, so that mere condemnation of religious beliefs as superstitious, ignorant etc., can be replaced by an analysis of the functions subserved by religious attitudes and beliefs in meeting certain psychological needs.