CHAPTER III

UNDERSTANDING RELIGION
CONCEPT OF RELIGION

In Academia, religious studies itself is a modern quest. In the English speaking world it basically dates from the 1960s, although before then there were such fields as the 'comparative study of religion', 'the history of religion', 'the sociology of religion' and so on. Theology existed, as did Jewish studies, and various kinds of Orientalism and so forth. Religious studies was created out of the blend of a historical studies, comparative expertise and the social sciences, with a topping of philosophy of religion and the like it rapidly became a major enterprise in academia now. According to Ninian Smart, in academic religious studies, we need three-dimensional mode of representation. On the two-dimensional aspect it represents differing religions and cultures vertically: and the various approaches needed to interpret and understand them horizontally. So we have say for instance, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam and many more like the African classical religions, Native American religious traditions or various primitive religions and soon from top to bottom; and sociology, anthropology, history, philology, art-history, musicology, ritual studies and so on from the sides. We need another dimension to complement all these and represent comparisons and subsequent theories of religion. However the most vital grid is theoretical and horizontal. Nevertheless the third or comparative aspect remains vital because the very category of religion is cross-cultural even if we have lots of problems in defining religion.

The most commonly accepted explanation of religion made by saint Augustine about 1600 years ago is that "religion" comes from the words "re" and "ligare", which together mean "to tie back", that is, to reunite a broken...
bond. If the "re" is also taken to allude to the Latin word "res" meaning "substance" or "reality", then we could say that religion is the human experience of reuniting the broken bond between mankind and some transcendent Reality called "God" in most religions. According to Bouquet, "Religion is an European word, and it is an European convention which has led to its employment as a general term to embrace certain human interests all the world over." To know the literal meaning of the word 'religion' we need to look into its etymological uses. Scholars from very early times have been divided on the basic meaning of this term. The Roman writer, Cicero, held it to come from the root 'leg...', meaning to take up, gather, count, or observe, i.e. to observe the signs of a Divine communication between the human and the superhuman' or to read the omens. Servius held it to come from another root word 'lig....' 'to bind', so that 'religio' meant a 'relationship' between the human and the super human. In Greek religion is termed as parateres which means 'the scrupulous observations of omens and the performance of ritual'.

A Philosophy of religion starts with the supposition that religion and religious ideas can be taken out of the domain of feeling or practical experiences and made objects of scientific reflection. It implies that, whilst religion and philosophy have the same objects, the attitude of the human spirit towards these objects is, in each case, different. In the one they are present to it in an immediate way as objects of devotion or spiritual enjoyment; they come before it at most only in the form of outward fact or of figurative representation. In the other, they become the objects of reflection or intellectual apprehension, and are finally elevated to the form of pure or speculative thought. The philosophy of religion, today, concerns with the nature of God, language, experience, morality, and eventually ethics. Philosophy of religion is not just finding out about the basic so-called "truths"

of a religion, but it is actually concerned with analyzing the truths that religious people make, and analyzing them to see whether they make sense or not.

Philosophy of religion was at one time generally understood to mean religious philosophizing in the sense of the philosophical defense of religious convictions. It was seen as continuing the work of "natural", distinguished from "revealed", theology. Its program was to demonstrate rationally the existence of God, thus preparing the way for the claims of revelation. But it seems to better call this endeavor "natural theology" and to term the wider philosophical defense of religious beliefs "apologetics". Then, we may ask 'what really is philosophy of religion then?' Philosophy of religion is not an organ of religious teaching. Indeed, it need not be taken from a religious standpoint at all. The atheist, the agnostic, and the person of faith all can and do philosophize about religion. It is not a branch of theology (meaning the systematic formulation of religious beliefs), but a branch of philosophy. It emphasis on the study of the concepts and belief systems of the religions as well as the prior phenomena of religious experience and the activities of worship and mediation on which these belief systems rest and out of which they have arisen.58

Philosophy of religion is thus a second-order activity, standing apart from its subject matter. It is not itself a part of the religious realm but is related to it as, for example, the philosophy of law is related to the realm of legal phenomena and to juridical concepts and modes of reasoning, or the philosophy of art to artistic phenomena and to the categories and methods of aesthetic discussion. The philosophy of religion is thus related to the particular religions and theologies of the world as the philosophy of science relates to the special sciences. It seeks to analyze the concepts such as God, dharma, Brahman, salvation, worship, creation, sacrifice, nirvana, eternal life, etc., and to determine the nature of religious utterances in comparison with those of everyday life, scientific discovery, morality, and the imaginative expressions of the arts.

Many different definitions of religion have been proposed. Some of these are phenomenological, trying to state that which is common to all the acknowledged forms of religion; for example, religion is "human God or gods entitled to obedience and worship" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). Others are interpretative. Thus there are Psychological definitions - for example, "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (William James). Others are sociological - for example, a body of scruples which impede the free exercise of our faculties" (Salomon Reinach) or, more emphatically, ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling" (Matthew Arnold). Yet others are religious definitions of religion - for example, "Religion is the recognition that all things are manifestations of a Power which transcends our knowledge" (Herbert Spencer), or again, "Humanity's response to the divine".

But such definitions are all not complete and sometimes stipulative: they decide how the term is to be used and impose this in the form of a definition. Perhaps a more realistic view is that word "religion" does not have a single correct meaning but that the many different phenomena subsumed under it are related in the way that the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein has characterized as family resemblance. His own example was the word "game" or language game. We cannot define a game as being played for pleasure (for some are played for profit), or as being competitive (for some are solo performances), or as requiring skill (for some depend on chance), or indeed it would seem by any single feature. Yet all these different kinds of game overlap in character with some other kinds, which in turn overlap in different ways with yet other kinds, so that the whole ramifying collection hangs together in a complex network of similarities and differences which Wittgenstein likened to the resemblances and differences appearing within a family.\footnote{Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basic Blackwell & Mott, LTD., 1958), pp.66-67.}
Perhaps there is no one characteristic of everything that can be called a religion but rather a set of "family resemblances". In more religion there is the worship of a God or gods; but in Theravada Buddhism, for example, there is not. Again, religion often makes for social cohesion; yet in some strands it is aptly characterized as "what the individual does in his solitude"\(^6\). Again, religion often makes for the inner harmony of the individual; yet some of the greatest religious innovators seemed to their contemporaries to be unbalanced and even insane. The family resemblances model allows for such differences. It also allows us to acknowledge the similarities as well as the differences between more standard examples of religion and such secular faiths as Marxism. Marxism has its eschatological ideal of the ultimate classless society, its doctrine of predestination through historical necessity, its scriptures, prophets, saints, and martyrs. Thus we can see it as sharing some of the features of the family of religions while lacking other and probably more central ones. It is a question of degree within a widely spreading network of resemblances and differences.

Different kinds of conceptions of religion are found in different major religions of the world. According to Bouquet, 'For most Europeans, at any rate, 'religion' religion has come to mean a fixed relationship between the human self and non human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the Self Existent, the Absolute, or simply, 'God'. In this way religion is taken as a relationship between the man and God. Peter Connolly defined the term religion as "any beliefs which involve the acceptance of a sacred, trans-empirical realm and any behavior s designed to affect a person's relationship with that realm"\(^6\). Religion has been taken as a 'way' or path by some religions. In Zoroastrianism it has been taken as \textit{hodos} or way. Buddhism is described as 'the noble eight-fold path.' Shinto religion is called as 'the way of the gods', Confucius has called his message as 'The way'.

All the major religions of the world hold religion to be the path or way of divinity. Religion unites man with divinity. Religion promises man to provide

\(^6\) Quoted in E.J. Sharpe, \textit{Understanding Religion}, London: Duckworth, 1983 p.34
\(^6\) Peter Connolly, \textit{Approaches to the Study of Religion}, London and New York: Cassell, 1999 .p.6-7
him something divine, something higher, something which the man does not possess, something which man needs, something for which man should aspire and ultimately religion supports man in many ways. To understand the real nature of religion we must discuss the essential parts of religion. In other words, we must look into the subject matter of religion and then we must see which part of the religion is much emphasized in the major religions of the world. The first and foremost important part of the religion is metaphysics. Every religion has its own metaphysics. In metaphysics religion deals with nature of world, purpose behind creation of the world and the highest goal of the man. Metaphysical aspect of the religion is called its divine aspect. Religion tells about the divine aspect and promises to unite the man with divinity. Religion shows the path or way to achieve this goal. The path of achieving divinity is the second important part or aspect of religion. In this aspect religion deals with the nature and kinds of prayer, worship, yogic practices or sadhana. Along with this, religion deals with the divine law. Religion tells about the divine law and issues command to obey the law. Man has to follow the divine law and obey the commandments of religion. So to deal with righteousness of action and issue more codes of conduct is the third important aspect of religion. Religion is meant for all its followers. It bears the responsibility of the welfare of all its members. Religion takes care of an individual and also cares about the welfare of society. Thus religion has social phenomenon too. It prescribes rules and regulations to fix the relationship of man with society. Thus the social law is the fourth important part of the religion. Religion deals with divinity which is understood to be beyond the realm of general human understanding or intellectual knowledge. So, generally religious knowledge of divinity is based on religious experiences which are of the mystic characteristics. In this way mysticism is the fifth important part of religion.

But all these aforesaid things are found in almost all the major religions of the world. Therefore it is difficult to say that a particular religion emphasizes on a particular characteristic and so religion is meant in terms of that characteristic. Every religion has its own metaphysics, its own code of
moral conduct, and its own promise to abridge the man with divinity. Thus religion must be defined or understood in terms of these characteristics of religion. In this way, it may be said that religion is the way to lead a life which goes towards divinity as its goal. This spirit of religion is found in almost all the major religions of the world.

On the one hand, for most people, beliefs in God and in afterlife are the essential ingredients of religion because these are prominent elements in the religions we know best. But if we include these in a definition of religion, we shall find ourselves committed to excluding many primitive and some advanced religions. In Buddhism, for instance, there is neither a personal god nor personal immortality. What is essential to religion is (1) belief in supernatural powers, which may be thought of either as persons or impersonally, as "forces; (2) appropriate emotional attitudes, a sense of the sacred or numinous or uncanny, and an attitude of humility or reverence in its presence; and (3) rites, ceremonies, and other religious duties. Where the supernatural is thought of as a person or persons, theses duties are either thought of as duties toward supernatural persons or as enjoined by them, usually as both.  

Religions of the world can be broadly classified as traditional religions and prophetic religions. As for example, Hinduism comes under traditional religion. There is no propounder or founder of Hinduism. It is coming through the offshoots of Hindu traditions. Prophetic religions are those who have their propounder or founder. Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam are called prophetic religions as they have their founders or propounders. Confucianism and Taoism have also their propounders but these religions are not prophetic in the sense that they are the assimilation of the religious truths coming through the tradition. These religions are not based on the revelations dawned to their propounders. The propounder themselves do not claim to

---

propound their own views but bringing back the golden olden days' tradition. Shintoism is a religion coming through the tradition.  

There are several approaches to the study of religion like the anthropological, phenomenological, feminist, philosophical, psychological, sociological, theological approach and so on. The study of religion is mostly its base descriptive, phenomenological and theoretical but I believe it should contribute an understanding to global society of the place of worldviews in our new global world. By looking from the worldview does not mean making all religions the same but stressing their complementary values to give us knowledge or understanding of what we called 'Religion'.

**Philosophy of religion**

Philosophy of religion is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the philosophical study of religion, including the arguments over the nature and existence of God, man, immortality of the soul, religious language, miracles, prayer, the problem of evil, and the relationship between religion and other value systems such as ethics interrelate like morality. It is sometimes distinguished from religious philosophy, the philosophical thinking that is inspired and directed by religion, such as Christian philosophy, Hindu Philosophy and Islamic philosophy. Instead, philosophy or religion is the philosophical thinking about religion, which can be carried out dispassionately by a believer and non-believer alike.  

The philosophical investigation of the nature and grounds of religious beliefs is one of the oldest and most persistent areas of philosophical endeavor. Religious belief and practice give rise to a variety of philosophical issues, posing epistemological questions about the justification of religious belief, metaphysical questions about the nature of God and the soul, and


ethical questions about the relation of God to moral values. So many are the intersecting major philosophical concerns in the religious arena, and so immediate is the interest, that philosophy of religion is one of the most significant fields of philosophical endeavor to both Christian philosophers and those of other persuasions. The classic problems in the philosophy of religion center on the grounds for belief in God, the immortality of the soul, the nature of miracles, and the problem of evil.

The important concepts that are dealt with in the philosophy of religions are concept of God, origin of life, man, world, immortality of the soul including eschatology, sin and suffering, the problem of evil, worship and prayer, salvation, myth and ritual. It is also concerned of the issues whether religion is an offshoot of morality or morality is an offshoot of religion. The philosophy of religion is related to the particular religions and theologies of the world as the philosophy of science relates to the special sciences. It seeks to analyze concepts such God, dharma, Brahma, salvation, worship, creation, sacrifice, nirvana, eternal life, etc., and to determine the nature of religious utterances in comparison with those of everyday life scientific discovery, morality, and the imaginative expressions of the arts. What is important now is the hermeneutic aspects of interpreting even the primitive religion into some meaningful statement by delving deeply into the beliefs and practices of religion.

Philosophy of religion as a part of metaphysics

Philosophy of religion has classically been regarded as a part of metaphysics. In Aristotle's Metaphysics, he described first cause as one of the subjects of his investigation. For Aristotle, the first cause was the unmoved mover, which has been read as God, particularly when Aristotle's work became prevalent again in the Medieval West. This first cause argument later came to be called natural theology by rationalist philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Today, philosophers have adopted the term philosophy of religion for the subject, and typically it is regarded as a
separate field of specialization, though it is also still treated by some, as a part of metaphysics.

To understand the historical relationship between metaphysics and philosophy of religion, it can be remembered that the traditional objects of religious discussion have been very special sorts of entities (such as gods, angels, supernatural forces, and the like) and events, abilities, or processes (the creation of the universe, the ability to do or know anything, interaction between humans and gods, and so forth). Metaphysicians and ontologists in particular are characteristically interested in understanding what it is for something to exist—what it is for something to be an entity, event, ability, process, and so forth. Because many members of religious traditions believe in things that exist in profoundly different ways from more than everyday things, objects of religious belief both raise special philosophical problems and, as extreme or limiting cases, invite us to clarify central metaphysical concepts. However, the philosophy of religion has concerned itself with more than just metaphysical questions. In fact the subject has long involved important questions in areas such as epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophical logic, and moral philosophy.

Questions asked in philosophy of religion

One way to understand the tasks at hand for philosophers of religion is to contrast them with theologians. Theologians sometimes consider the existence of God as axiomatic, or self-evident. Most theological treatises seek to justify or support religious claims by two primary epistemic means: rationalization or intuitive metaphors. A philosopher of religion examines and does a critique on the epistemological, logical, aesthetic and ethical foundations inherent in the claims of a religion. Whereas a theologian could elaborate metaphysically on the nature of God either rationally or experientially, a philosopher of religion is more interested in asking what may be knowable with regards to religions' claims.
A philosopher of religion does not ask "What is God?", for such is a complex question in that it assumes the existence of God and that God has a knowable nature. Instead, a philosopher of religion asks whether there are sound reasons to think that God does or does not exist. Still, there are other questions studied in the philosophy of religion. For example: What, if anything, would give us good reason to believe that a miracle has occurred? Do we have any good reason to think that God does (or does not) exist? What is the relationship between faith and reason? What is the relationship between morality and religion? What is the status of religious language? Does petitionary prayer make sense?

We have many approaches to the understanding of religion from different point of view.

**Sociology of religion**

The sociology of religion is primarily the study of the practices, social structures, historical backgrounds, development, universal themes, and roles of religion in society. There is particular emphasis on the recurring role of religion in nearly all societies on earth today and throughout recorded history. Sociologists of religion attempt to explain the effects of society on religion and the effects of religion on society. In other words, it deals with their dialectical relationship.

The classical, seminal sociological theorists of the late 19th and early 20th century were greatly interested in religion and its effects on society. These theorists include Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx. Like Plato and Aristotle from Ancient Greece, and enlightenment philosophers from the 17th through 19th centuries, the ideas posited by these sociologists continue to be addressed today. Despite the claims of many classical theorists and sociologists immediately after World War II, religion has continued to play a vital role in the lives of individuals worldwide. As for instance, in America, church attendance has remained relatively stable in the past 40 years. In Africa, the emergence of Christianity has occurred at a
startling rate. While Africa could claim roughly 10 million Christians in 1900, recent estimates put that number closer to 200 million. The rise of Islam as a major world religion, especially its new-found influence in the West, is another significant development. In short, presupposed secularization (the decline of religiosity) might seem to be a myth, depending on its definition and the definition of its scope. For instance, some sociologists have argued that steady church attendance and personal religious belief may coexist with a decline in the influence of religious authorities on social or political issues.

A major issue in the sociology of religion is its power to predict social trends. Many sociologists predicted a rise in religiosity when cultural and philosophical figures were claiming "God is dead." Of course, many in each group also disagreed. Other examples include: James Hunter, noteworthy for anticipating the "culture wars" of the late 20th century, especially their religious character. Among many other predictive endeavors, sociologists of religion (notably Robert Wuthnow) are currently attempting to predict the success of U.S. federal funding of faith-based charities.

Durkheim, Marx, and Weber had very complex and developed theories about the nature and effects of religion. Durkheim and Weber specifically are often difficult to understand, especially in light of the lack of context and examples in their primary texts. Religion was considered to be an extremely important social variable in the work of all the three:

Karl Marx

Marx saw himself as doing morally-neutral sociology and economic theory for the sake of human development. Christiano states, "Marx did not believe in science for science's sake...he believed that he was also advancing a theory that would...be a useful tool...in effecting a revolutionary upheaval of the capitalist system in favor of socialism." As such, the crux of

---

his arguments was that humans are best guided by reason. Religion, Marx held, was a significant hindrance to reason, inherently masking the truth and misguiding followers. Marx viewed social alienation as the heart of social inequality. The antithesis to this alienation is freedom. Thus, to propagate freedom means to present individuals with the truth and give them a choice to accept or deny it. In this, "Marx never suggested that religion ought to be prohibited".  

Central to Marx's theories was the oppressive economic situation in which he dwelt. With the rise of European industrialism, Marx and Friedrich Engels witnessed and responded to the growth of what he called "surplus value". Marx's view of capitalism saw rich capitalists getting richer and their workers getting poorer (the gap, the exploitation, was the "surplus value"). Not only were workers getting exploited, but in the process they were being further detached from the products they helped create. By simply selling their work for wages, workers simultaneously lose connection with the object of labor and become objects themselves. Workers are devalued to the level of a commodity – a thing. From this objectification comes alienation. The common worker is told he or she is a replaceable tool, alienated to the point of extreme discontent. Here, in Marx's eyes, religion enters.

Émile Durkheim

Émile Durkheim placed himself in the positivist tradition, meaning that he thought of his study of society as dispassionate and scientific. He was deeply interested in the problem of what held complex modern societies together. Religion, he argued, was an expression of social cohesion. In Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Durkheim is of the opinion that the totems the aborigines venerate are actually expressions of their own conceptions of society itself. This is true not only for the aborigines, he argues, but for all societies. Religion, for Durkheim, is not "imaginary".

66 Ibid., 8 p.126
Religion is very real; it is an expression of society itself, and indeed, there is no society that does not have religion. We perceive as individuals a force greater than ourselves, which is our social life, and give that perception a supernatural face. We then express ourselves religiously in groups, which for Durkheim makes the symbolic power greater. Religion is an expression of our collective consciousness, which is the fusion of all of our individual consciousnesses, which then creates a reality of its own. The more complex the society, the more complex the religious system is. As societies come in contact with other societies, there is a tendency for religious systems to emphasize universalism to a greater and greater extent. However, as the division of labor makes the individual seem more important, religious systems increasingly focus on individual salvation and conscience.

Durkheim's definition of religion, from *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, is as follows: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." This is a functional definition of religion, meaning that it explains what religion does in social life: essentially, it unites societies. Durkheim defined religion as a clear distinction between the sacred and the profane, in effect this can be paralleled with the distinction between God and humans.

**Max Weber**

Max Weber examines how religious ideas and groups interacted with other aspects of social life, notably the economy. In doing so, Weber often attempts to get at religion's subjective meaning to the individual. Weber argues for making sense of religious action on its own terms. A religious group or individual is influenced by all kinds of things, he says, but if they claim to be acting in the name of religion, we should attempt to understand their perspective on religious grounds first. Weber gives religion credit for shaping a person's image of the world, and this image of the world can affect their view of their interests, and ultimately how they decide to take action.
For Weber, religion is best understood as it responds to the human need for theodicy and soteriology. Human beings are troubled, he says, with the question of theodicy (theory that says the presence of ills, evil or miseries or sufferings in this world need not negate the existence of all loving and all powerful God) – the question of how the extraordinary power of a divine God may be reconciled with the imperfection of the world that he has created and rules over. Men have the desire to know the reason of why there is undeserved good fortune and suffering in the world. Religion offers people soteriological answers, or answers that provide opportunities for salvation – relief from suffering, and reassuring meaning. The pursuit of salvation, like the pursuit of wealth, becomes a part of human motivation.

Sociology of Religion is the study of the beliefs, practices and organizational forms of religion using the tools and methods of the discipline of sociology. This objective investigation may include the use of both quantitative methods (surveys, polls, demographic and census analysis) and qualitative approaches such as participant observation, interviewing, and analysis of archival, historical and documentary materials.

Sociologists of religion study every aspect of religion from what is believed to how persons act while in worship and while living out their stated convictions. They study the changing role of religion both in the public arena (political, economic and media) and in intimate interpersonal relationships. Global religious pluralism and conflict, the nature of religious cults and sects, the influence of religion on racial, gender and sexuality issues, and the effect of the media and modern culture has on religious practices are all topics of interest in current sociology of religion research.

**Anthropology of religion**

The anthropology of religion involves the study of religious institutions in relation to other social institutions, and the comparison of religious beliefs and practices across cultures.
In 1841, Ludwig Feuerbach was the first to state the anthropologic principle that every religion is created by the human community that worships it (in his *The Essence of Christianity*). It is through human imagination that religion is created for wish fulfillment like Freud’s idea of religion. For Émile Durkheim, “religion is society worshiping itself”. In the 19th century, cultural anthropology was dominated by an interest in cultural evolution; most anthropologists assumed that there were simple distinction between “primitive” and “modern” religion and tried to provide accounts of how the former evolved into the latter. In the 20th century most anthropologists rejected this approach. Today the anthropology of religion reflects the influence of, or an engagement with, such theorists as Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. They are especially concerned with how religious beliefs and practices may reflect political or economic forces; or the social functions of religious beliefs and practices.

**Anthropological Approaches**

Anthropological approaches to religion reflect a more general tension within anthropology: the discipline defines itself as a science in that all anthropologists base their interpretations and explanations on empirical evidence (and many anthropologists are concerned with developing universal models of human behavior), and the discipline also defines itself in terms of the seriousness with which it takes local beliefs and practices and its commitment to understanding different cultures in their own terms through participant observation. Thus, although many Westerners (including some anthropologists) have rejected “religion” out of hand as being *unscientific*, virtually all anthropologists assume that there must be good reasons for the endurance and importance of religion and, by implication, assume that religious beliefs and practices are in some sense reasonable. It has never been difficult to make a case for the significance of religion in human life. Religion has been found in all societies studied by anthropologists. In order to determine the reasons for the importance of religion, however,
anthropologists generally move beyond the literal claims of any religion to look at its metaphorical meaning or latent social functions.

One major problem in the anthropology of religion is the definition of religion itself. At one time anthropologists believed that certain religious practices and beliefs were more or less universal to all cultures at some point in their development, such as a belief in spirits or ghosts, the use of magic as a means of controlling the supernatural, the use of divination as a means of discovering occult knowledge, and the performance of rituals such as prayer and sacrifice as a means of influencing the outcome of various events through a supernatural agency, sometimes taking the form of shamanism or ancestor worship. According to Clifford Geertz, religion is a system of symbols, beliefs, and patterns of behaviors by which human beings control that which is beyond their control. Today, anthropologists debate, and many reject, the cross-cultural validity of these categories.

In Western culture, religion has become more or less synonymous with monotheism and the various moral codes that monotheism prescribes. Moral codes have also evolved in conjunction with Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, independent of monotheism. However, prescriptive moral codes or even normative ethical codes are not a necessary component of religious beliefs or practices any more than they are a necessary component of science and the scientific method.

**Psychology of religion**

Psychology of religion is the psychological study of religious experiences, beliefs, and activities.

U.S. psychologist and philosopher William James (1842-1910) is regarded by most psychologists of religion as the founder of the field. His *Varieties of Religious Experience* is considered to be the classic work in the field, and references to James' ideas are common at professional conferences. James distinguished between institutional religion and personal religion. Institutional religion refers to the religious group or organization, and
plays an important part in a society's culture. Personal religion, in which the individual has mystical experience, can be experienced regardless of the culture. James was most interested in understanding personal religious experience. The importance of James to the psychology of religion - and to psychology more generally - is difficult to overstate.

In studying personal religious experiences, James made a distinction between healthy-minded and sick-soul religiousness. Individuals predisposed to healthy-mindedness tend to ignore the evil in the world and focus on the positive and the good. In contrast, individuals predisposed to having a sick-soul religion are unable to ignore evil and suffering, and need a unifying experience, religious or otherwise, to reconcile good and evil. William James' hypothesis of pragmatism stems from the efficacy of religion. If an individual believes in and performs religious activities, and those actions happen to work, then that practice appears the proper choice for the individual. However, if the processes of religion have little efficacy, then there is no rationality for continuing the practice.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) gave explanations of the genesis of religion in his various writings. In *Totem and Taboo*, he applied the idea of the Oedipus complex (involving unresolved sexual feelings of, for example, a son toward his mother and hostility toward his father) and postulated its emergence in the primordial stage of human development. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud reconstructed biblical history in accordance with his general theory. His ideas were also developed in *The Future of an Illusion*. When Freud spoke of religion as an illusion, he maintained that it *is a fantasy structure from which a man must be set free if he is to grow to maturity*. Freud views the idea of God as being a version of the father image, and religious belief as at bottom infantile and neurotic. Authoritarian religion is dysfunctional and alienates man from himself.

Carl Jung (1875-1961) adopted a very different posture, one that was more sympathetic to religion and more concerned with a positive appreciation of religious symbolism. Jung considered the question of the existence of God
to be unanswerable by the psychologist and adopted a kind of agnosticism. Jung postulated, in addition to the personal unconscious (roughly as in Freud), the collective unconscious, which is the repository of human experience and which contains "archetypes" (i.e. basic images that are universal in that they recur regardless of culture). The eruption of these images from the unconscious into the realm of consciousness he viewed as the basis of religious experience and often of artistic creativity. Jung had a very broad view of what it means to be empirical. Suppose, for example, that I hear a voice from deity but you do not, even though we are sitting next to each other. If only one person experiences something, for Jung it is an empirical observation. For most contemporary scientists, however, it would not be considered an empirical observation. Because of this, there has been little research in the psychology of religion from a Jungian perspective.

Alfred Adler (1870-1937), who parted ways with Freud, emphasized the role of goals and motivation in his Individual Psychology. One of Adler's most famous ideas is that we try to compensate for inferiorities that we perceive in ourselves. A lack of power often lies at the root of feelings of inferiority. One way that religion enters into this picture is through our beliefs in God, which are characteristic of our tendency to strive for perfection and superiority. For example, in many religions God is considered to be perfect and omnipotent, and commands people likewise to be perfect. If we, too, achieve perfection, we become one with God. By identifying with God in this way, we compensate for our imperfections and feelings of inferiority.

Our ideas about God are important indicators of how we view the world. According to Adler, these ideas have changed over time, as our vision of the world - and our place in it - has changed. Consider this example that Adler offers: the traditional belief that people were placed deliberately on earth as God's ultimate creation is being replaced with the idea that people have evolved by natural selection. This coincides with a view of God not as a real being, but as an abstract representation of nature's forces. In this way our view of God has changed from one that was concrete and specific to one that is more general. From Adler's vantage point, this is a relatively ineffective
perception of God because it is so general that it fails to convey a strong sense of direction and purpose.

An important thing for Adler is that God (or the idea of God) motivates people to act, and that those actions do have real consequences for ourselves and for others. Our view of God is important because it embodies our goals and directs our social interactions. Compared to science, another social movement, religion is more efficient because it motivates people more effectively. According to Adler, only when science begins to capture the same religious fervour, and promotes the welfare of all segments of society, will the two be more equal in peoples' eyes.

Gordon Allport (1897-1967) makes a distinction between mature religion and immature religion. Mature religious sentiment is how Allport characterized the person whose approach to religion is dynamic, open-minded, and able to maintain links between inconsistencies. In contrast, immature religion is self-serving and generally represents the negative stereotypes that people have about religion. More recently, this distinction has been encapsulated in the terms "intrinsic religion", referring to a genuine, heartfelt devout faith, and "extrinsic religion", referring to a more utilitarian use of religion as a means to an end, such as church attendance to gain social status. These dimensions of religion were measured on the Religious Orientation Scale of Allport and Ross (1967). A third form of religious orientation has been described by Daniel Batson. This refers to treatment of religion as an open-ended search (Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993). More specifically, it has been seen by Batson as comprising a willingness to view religious doubts in a positive manner, acceptance that religious orientation can change and existential complexity, the belief that one's religious beliefs should be shaped from personal crises that one has experienced in one's life. Batson refers to extrinsic, intrinsic and quest respectively as Religion-as-means, religion-as-end and religion-as-quest, and measures these constructs on the Religious Life Inventory (Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993).
Erik Erikson (1902-94) is best known for his theory of psychological development, which has its roots in the psychoanalytic importance of identity in personality. His biographies of Gandhi and Martin Luther reveal Erikson's positive view of religion. He considered religions to be important influences in successful personality development because they are the primary way that cultures promote the virtues associated with each stage of life. Religious rituals facilitate this development. Erikson's theory has not benefited from systematic empirical study, but it remains an influential and well-regarded theory in the psychological study of religion.

Erich Fromm (1900-1980) modified Freudian theory and produced a more complex account of the functions of religion. Part of the modification is viewing the Oedipus complex as based not so much on sexuality as on a "much more profound desire", namely, the childish desire to remain attached to protecting figures. The right religion, in Fromm's estimation, can, in principle, foster an individual's highest potentialities, but religion in practice tends to relapse into being neurotic. According to Erich Fromm, humans have a need for a stable frame of reference. Religion apparently fills this need. In effect, humans crave answers to questions that no other source of knowledge has an answer to, which only religion may seem to answer. However, a sense of free will must be given in order for religion to appear healthy. An authoritarian notion of religion appears detrimental.

Rudolf Otto's (1869-1937) most famous work, The Idea of the Holy (published first in 1917 as Das Heilige), defines the concept of the holy as that which is numinous. Otto explained the numinous as a "non-rational, nonsensory experience or feeling whose primary and immediate object is outside the self." It is a mystery (Latin: mysterium tremendum) that is both fascinating (fascinans) and terrifying at the same time; A mystery that causes trembling and fascination, attempting to explain that inexpressible and perhaps supernatural emotional reaction of wonder drawing us to seemingly ordinary and/or religious experiences of grace. This sense of emotional wonder appears evident at the root of all religious experiences. Through this emotional wonder, we suspend our rational mind for non-rational possibilities.
It also sets a paradigm for the study of religion that focuses on the need to realize the religious as a non-reducible, original category in its own right. This paradigm was under much attack between approximately 1950 and 1990 but has made a strong comeback since then.

Psychologists of religion have looked at how individuals may use religion as a resource in coping with stress. Evolutionary psychology is based on the hypothesis that, just like hearts, lungs, livers, kidneys, and immune systems, cognition has functional structure that has a genetic basis, and therefore evolved by natural selection. Like other organs and tissues, this functional structure should be universally shared amongst humans and should solve important problems of survival and reproduction. Evolutionary psychologists seek to understand cognitive processes by understanding the survival and reproductive functions they might serve.

**Inter-religious Relations & Dialogue**

The inter-religious relations promotes contact between communities of various faiths primarily through multi-lateral and bi-lateral dialogue with partners of other faiths that is aimed at building trust, meeting common challenges and addressing conflictive and divisive issues.

An increasingly important aspect is to interpret major trends in the religious, intellectual and political life of various faith communities and to consider the future of religion and inter-religious relations.

It seeks to encourage reflection on religious plurality and its significance for other faith's identity and witness. It explores issues related to indigenous beliefs, traditional spiritual beliefs/ideologies and new religious movements.

During the last few decades, questions about religious and cultural pluralism have attracted renewed interest. Everywhere there is a fresh sense of urgency to build creative relationships between peoples of differing faiths. As interest in dialogue has grown, so has its actual practice, enabling various
religious communities to understand one another better and to work more closely together. Here are but a few examples:

- In the Middle East, Clergy for Peace brings together rabbis, priests, pastors and imams in Israel and in the West Bank for common action and witness to peace and justice in the region;
- In Southern India, the Council of Grace brings together Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Jains in an attempt to address situations of community conflict;
- In the Pacific, Interfaith Search brings together representatives of many religions in Fiji seeking to overcome prejudices and to promote mutual respect and appreciation for one another.

It suggests strongly that many "classical" theological presuppositions and convictions need to be informed and challenged afresh by the realities of our times.

The most common one is the dialogue of life that goes on in all situations of plurality. Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, people of many different faiths in fact, live and work together sharing a common life. Even though these dialogues go unnoticed and are not consciously religious, their importance in the building up of human relationships is important. Another important one is the academic dialogue where exponents of different religious faiths meet and discuss the theological/philosophical bases of their traditions. Here genuine attempts are made to arrive at a common appreciation of the way in which each religious tradition has sought to explain and approach reality. These dialogues help in breaking down prejudices and misconceptions accumulated over centuries. They enrich, enlarge, challenge and correct the way some religions have understood and approached religious life in other traditions. Yet another form of dialogue may be described as spiritual dialogue. Here believers attempt to meet each other. They expose themselves to each other's spiritual and worship life. Often such dialogues take the form of participating in the prayer or mediation practices of others. This type of dialogue remains controversial because Christians are
not ready to participate in the spiritual life of their neighbours without compromising their own faith.

**Grounds for Belief in God**

Religious believers have generally found themselves obliged to defend their belief in such a supersensible reality as God by an appeal to philosophical argument. The classical arguments for God's existence are the five ways of Thomas Aquinas and the ontological argument of Anselm of Canterbury.

Aquinas's arguments are variations of two major forms, the cosmological and teleological arguments. The cosmological argument is based upon the contention that the existence and activity of the universe demand an explanation in an entity beyond itself. On one version propounded by Aquinas and by contemporary philosophers such as Richard Taylor and Frederic Copleston, the universe is seen as a merely contingent or possible being. As a contingent being its existence requires explanation in some being outside itself, a being that is capable of sustaining the universe in existence. According to this argument the universe owes its existence to a being who is "necessary," that is, incapable of nonexistence, which provides an explanation for its own existence. Thus, from the contingent, merely possible existence of the world, it is argued that God can be shown to exist.

The teleological or "design" argument advanced by Aquinas and William Paley, among others, urges us to infer from the well - orderliness of nature the existence of a supreme designer. Paley compares our experience of the intricate order and adaptation of parts to the whole in nature to finding a watch; surely the watch, by virtue of its complexity and apparent purposiveness of design, requires a watchmaker to explain it. No less than does the vastly more remarkable universe require a worldmaker. In Aquinas's more sophisticated version the constant, dynamic adaptation of various aspects of non-intelligent nature to the realization of a stable order in the world demands a granted orchestrator to account for this action.
Cosmological and teleological arguments have come under sustained criticism, notably by philosopher David Hume, noted empiricist and skeptic. Hume mounted a multipronged attack on the arguments, suggesting among other things that the phenomena in question are capable of alternative explanations, and that the arguments in general prove no single, all-powerful being, but at best a being of limited power or a group of entities far from infinitely wise or powerful, capable merely of bringing about the results in question. Since Hume's day debate has been pursued in philosophical circles with great ingenuity and care, with neither side being able to claim lasting victory. Nonetheless, such arguments on behalf of God continue to exercise a considerable appeal on the popular as well as the academic levels.

Anselm's ontological argument is the only theistic proof to proceed a priori, that is, by reflection on the concept of God alone, with no reference to such external evidence as the existence or nature of the world. Anselm observed that if God is defined as "the Being greater than whom nothing can be conceived," then to deny the existence of such a being lands one in a contradiction. One is thus implying that "something greater than God" can be conceived, that is, an existing God. This conceivable being would have, in addition to God's properties, a quality lacked by God, i.e., existence, and so would be greater than the being greater than whom nothing could be conceived. In his own day Anselm was criticized by the monk Gaunilo, who reasoned that along similar lines we would be bound to accept the existence of such fantastic entities as a "most perfect island," and later by Immanuel Kant. Briefly, Kant argued that to lack existence is not to be deficient in a property. Thus, the concept of an existing God is not "greater" than a nonexisting God, since the existing God has no properties not shared by a nonexisting God.

In addition to the use of arguments for God's existence, philosophers of religion traditionally have been interested in another avenue of possible knowledge about God, religious experience. Does a mystical experience or other putative encounter with the Divine provide good rational grounds for belief, as believers of all religious traditions have sometimes maintained? As
would be expected, skeptics tend to dismiss such experiences as evidence of over suggestibility in the experiences, as evidenced by Bertrand Russell’s pithy comment that “we can make no distinction between the man who eats little and sees heaven and the man who drinks much and sees snakes.”

**Immortality of the soul (Eschatology involved)**

Another classic problem is the status of the soul and its fate after death. Plato’s Socrates and others have held that the soul is related to the stable realm of eternal truth and thus is itself eternal, unlike the body, which belongs to the material world of impermanence and decay. Further, since soul is immaterial and has no parts, it, unlike body, is incapable of disintegration. Later philosophers less ambitiously have generally contented themselves with attempting to demonstrate that the soul logically is capable of being conceived as distinct from the mortal human body. Much recent philosophical discussion has been concerned with whether it is intelligible to assert that one could “witness one’s own funeral,” that is, survive bodily death.

An important part of Christian belief too is that of the doctrine of a personal immortality. Most Christians are committed to the belief in the resurrection of the body (specially the orthodox or Catholics) or the purely immaterial self that survives death (Protestants). With the advancement of physical or medical science many are not completely convinced whether the mind that is controlled by the brain processes survives death. Some philosophers elucidate mind in terms of bodily behavior, and others defend the doctrine that conscious experiences are brain processes. If such views are true, and then there is clearly no such thing as an immaterial mind that could survive death. But even if some form of philosophical dualism is accepted and the mind is thought of as something over and above the body, the empirical evidence in favor of an invariable correlations between mental states and brain states is extremely strong: that is, the mind may be thought of as in some sense distinct from the body but also as fundamentally dependent upon physical states. As for example, without oxygen or under the influence of anesthetics or sporadic drugs, we rapidly lose consciousness.
Moreover, the quality of our consciousness can be influenced in spectacular ways by appropriate drugs or by mechanical stimulation of different areas of the brain. In the face of all evidence that is being accumulated by modern research in neurology, it is hard to believe that after the dissolution of the brain there could be any thought or conscious experience whatever. The orthodox doctrine of the resurrection of the body clearly escapes the difficulties associated with the notion of the independent existence of the mind. But that too is beset with equally grave difficulties of another sort. But where, in accordance with modern cosmological views, can the resurrected bodies exist? Even if there difficulties in all this yet there is an extremely strong belief in the immortality of the soul by many religions of the world.

The Efficacy of Prayer

At one time the efficacy of prayer was an issue decidable by experiment, as for instance which is shown by the Old Testament story of the contest between Elijah and the priests of Baal. Now, however, a more sophisticated attitude is likely to be adopted. The efficacy is not usually put forward as an empirical issue, for whatever happens is taken to be the will of God, and if a prayer is not answered it is presumable because God, in his inscrutable way, knows better than we do what is best. Again, many religious people are not strongly inclined to pray for someone’s recovery from disease when they have modern medical knowledge of its diagnosis and prognosis. Some will still continue to pray for a miracle.

Miracles

Much philosophical effort has been expended in subjecting basic theistic, super naturalistic doctrines to critique or in providing refinements and defense of theism. The concept of miracle has received significant attention in philosophy. Christianity asserts the reality of the miraculous and stresses the importance of biblical miracles to Christian faith and doctrine, especially the conception of Jesus Christ in a virgin’s womb and the resurrection of Christ from the dead. In addition, Christ’s miraculous deeds are intended to be taken
as a sign of his divinity. Hume's monumental work on the miraculous in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, sect. X, depicted miracles as contradictions of our "firm and unalterable" experience in the regularity of natural laws, rendering them improbable in the extreme.

It is much more probable that the miracle account is false. Hume's critique of the miraculous has had widespread acceptance in an age dominated by naturalism. Even many Christians have been disinclined to place much importance on miracles, some even explaining them away or preferring to see them as symbolic. Still, many Christian thinkers join C S Lewis, who in Miracles: A Preliminary Study has argued that an open mind must accept the possibility of divine "interferences" in the ordinary course of nature.

The Problem of Evil

For many people it is, more than anything else, the appalling depth and extent of human suffering, together with the selfishness and greed which produce so much of this, makes the idea of a loving Creator seem implausible and disposes them toward one of the various naturalistic theories of religion. 'Evil as understood here ranges over anything undesirable, anything we would be better off without. There is evil in the world. Bad things happen to people like storm, earthquake, cyclone, famine, flood, drought, fire, disease etc(Natural evil) and people do bad things like war, persecution, killing, cheating and other moral wickedness(moral evil). There is also a third kind of evil, as for instance wicked people prosper, good people meet a grim fate, injustice, poverty etc. However, although a great deal of pain and suffering are caused by human action, there is yet more that arises from various natural causes or calamities. These sufferings pose a challenge to the idea of a loving, all powerful God.

The problem of evil concerns the contradiction between the reality of evil on the one hand, and religious beliefs in the perfect goodness and power (omnipotence of God or ultimate on the other. The problem arises not only in
religious thought, but also for metaphysical theories according to which
ultimate reality possesses certain perfections. The distinctive combination of
monism and dualism or of an ethical dualism set within an ultimate
metaphysical monism.

The problem of evil has traditionally been posed to theism (like
Epicurus) in the form of dilemma: if Good is perfectly loving, God must wish to
abolish all evil; and if God is all powerful, God must be able to abolish all evil.
But evil exists; therefore God cannot be both omnipotent and perfectly loving.
Theodicies (an attempt to show that the problem of evil need not lead to the
denial of the existence of God) had developed like (a) the Augustine theodicy,
(b) Irenaean theodicy and (c) modern process theology.

The most potent criticism of theism, both philosophically and
personally, arises from the so-called problem of evil. A significant intellectual
problem is posed for theism by virtue of the fact that it asserts the existence
of a God with unlimited power, wisdom, and goodness in the face of the
existence of a world acknowledged to be rife with both moral evil and
suffering. In a weak version the problem of evil raises a persistent problem in
reconciling the traditional concept of God to the existence of such evils. In a
stronger version, such as propounded by J L Mackie, it is seen as a positive
disproof of God's existence, amounting to what Alvin Plantinga has called
"natural atheology." Briefly, the core of the problem of evil is as follows: God
is held to be unlimited in power, goodness, and knowledge.

However, evil exists, in the form of undeserved suffering, perpetrated
by man and nature, unchallenged victimization of weak by strong, pestilence,
war, famine, and other horrors. In the face of this, God is limited either in
power, goodness, or knowledge, or he does not exist at all; that is, either he is
incapable or unwilling to remove evil, or he is unaware of its existence or of
solutions to it. The problem of evil presupposes that God would have no
reason for permitting evil that is adequate ultimately to outweigh in
significance the negative effects of evil. Traditional theistic responses, or
theodicies, have focused on this assumption. Augustine's "free will defense"
argues that God needed to allow the possibility of evil if he was to create free beings, and a world with free beings is superior to a world of automata.

Recently John Hick, taking a cue from Irenaeus, has suggested that God has placed us in a difficult environment that would be suitable for developing moral and spiritual maturity in his creatures rather than creating a maximally comfortable world. While Gottfried Leibniz attempted to argue that every evil is thus world is necessary, more modest modern theodicies such as Hick’s restrict themselves merely to removing the ground for alleged contradiction, showing that one can consistently affirm both God’s existence and the reality of evil.

Even if explanation s are being given by different thinkers and contributions been made in beautiful ways (stating that the problem need not explains away the existence of God) yet there are thinkers who still feels that some better explanations about the problem and solutions of the existence of an almighty (Omnipotent), all loving Creator God in relation to the real existence of evil in the world. The believers can be satisfied by the leap of faith by suspending reason but others would not agree to it. So, we need better explanations to quench the thirst of a purely reasoning mind. Therefore, the problem still exists for those who cling to the conditions made about the good almighty, loving Creator God (metaphysical + human reasoning conditions)

**Contemporary Emphases**

Much contemporary philosophy of religion focuses on questions surrounding the use of language in referring to God. Following Hume, contemporary philosophers such as Ayer and Flew have raised critical questions about religious language. In particular, they have argued that talk about God is as cognitively meaningless as mere gibberish, since it is incapable of empirical verifiability or falsifiability. Also of interest on the contemporary front is the logical coherence of the doctrine of God as is traditionally understood in Judeo - Christian thought.
Definitions:

Many different definitions of religion have been put forward. Some of these are phenomenological, trying to state that which common to all the acknowledged forms of religion; for example, religion is “human recognition of a superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship” (Concise Oxford Dictionary). Others are interpretative. Thus there are psychological definitions— for instance, “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude. So far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine” (William James). Others are sociological— for example, “a set of beliefs, practices, and institutions which men have evolved in various societies” (Talcott Parsons). Others, again, are naturalistic for example, “a body of scruples which impede the free exercise of our faculties” (Salomon Reinach) or, more sympathetically, “ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling” (Matthew Arnold). Yet others are religious definitions of religion— for example, Religion is the recognition that all things are manifestations of a power which transcends our knowledge” (Herbert Spencer), or again humanity’s response to the divine.

But such definitions are all stipulative: they decide how the term is to be used and impose this in the form of a definition. Perhaps a more realistic view is that the word “religion” does not have a single correct meaning but that the many different phenomena subsumed under it are related in the way that the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein has characterized as family resemblance. His own example was the word “game”. One cannot defined a game as being played for pleasure (for some are played for profit), or as being competitive (for some are solo performances), or as requiring skill (for some depend on chance), or indeed it would seem by any single feature. Yet all these different kinds of game overlap in character with some other kinds, so that the whole ramifying collection hangs together in a complex network of similarities and differences which Wittgenstein likened to the resemblances and differences appearing within a family. We may apply Wittgenstein’s idea to the word “religion”. Perhaps there is no characteristic of
everything that can be called religion but rather a set of "family
resemblances". In such religion there is the worship of a God or gods; but in
Theravada Buddhism, for instance, there is not. Again, religion often makes
for social cohesion; yet in some strands it is aptly characterized as "what man
does with his solitariness" (A.N. Whitehead). Again, religion often makes for
the inner harmony of the individual; yet some of the greatest religious
innovators seemed to their contemporaries to be unbalanced and even
insane. The family resemblances model allows for such differences. It allows
us to acknowledge the similarities as well as the differences between more
standard examples of religion and such secular faiths as Marxism. Marxism
has its eschatological ideal of the ultimate classless society, its doctrine of
predestination through historical necessity, its scriptures, prophets, saints and
martyrs. Thus we can see it as sharing some of the features of the family of
religions while lacking other and probably more central ones. But whether a
movement is religious is not an all-or-nothing matter but a question of degree
within a widely spreading network of resemblances and differences. Within
this ramifying set of family resemblances there is, however, one feature which
is extremely widespread even though not universal. This is a concern with
what is variously called salvation or liberation. This is probably not a feature
of "primitive" or "archaic" religion, which is more concerned with keeping
things on an even keel, avoiding catastrophe.

The problem of the origin of religion has been an interesting subject
for discussion among the scholars of religion. Different scholars gave evolved
different theories regarding the origin of religion. While determining the theory
of origin of it scholars have narrated the rudimentary forms of religion. It is
assumed that religions of present days' world are evolved from a primitive
religion. So the problem of the origin of religion is coincided with the primitive
form of religion. In construct- the conception about the nature of primitive
religion, scholars have attempted studying on two types of data- the
behaviour patterns of the primitive people and aborigines that still inhabit the
earth and the remains of the culture of the ancient people. On the basis of
these, scholars of religion have formed some conceptions or theories about the origin of religion, calling them to be the primitive forms of religion.

1. ANIMISM:

Tylor's theory is based on anthropological studies. According to it man in the primitive stage of culture was living in close contact with nature. Man observed different phenomena of nature and attributed some kind of soul or spirit in them. It was believed that the sun, moon, stars, trees, mountains, brooks and rivers were animated with spirit. The primitive man established some kind of relation with animated objects of the nature. He propitiated some animated objects to whom he held to be useful or good and he ascribed some to whom he found harmful or evil. In this way nature worship was started. Belief in animated objects of nature at least in the belief of the presence of some supernatural forces in them and their worship was the form of religion of primitive people.

According to Tylor, animism was the earliest form of religion. Belief in the spiritual being is the minimum definition of religion.

According to E.O. James, "men everywhere distinguishes the human soul from the body, they contended and by analogy project their own personality into the order of nature. Therefore beginning with soul, the whole complex phenomenon of religion can be explained as a process of evolution and growth in conception of personality, human and divine. In its full development animism includes belief in souls and future state, in controlling gods and subordinate spirits, these doctrines and practically resulted in some kind of active worship. The ancient philosophers probably took the first step, it is suggested, by obvious inference that everyman has two things belonging to him namely a life and a phantom. These two are evidently in close connection with the body, the life enabling it to think and feel and act, the phantom being its image and second self both also, are perceived to be the things separable from the body, the life as able to go away and leave it insensible or dead, the phantom as appearing to people at a distance from it. The second step, which
is also said to be easy for savages, to make, consists in the combination of the life and the phantom.\(^67\)

James explained the development of religion from primitive culture in the following way: He writes "In this way Tylor and his distinguished disciple Sir James Frazer, peopled the world with a multitude of individual spirits in every nook and hill, every tree and flower, every brook and river, every breeze that blew and every cloud that flocked with silvery white and blue expanse of heaven. From this unlimited number of indwelling spirits a limited pantheon of deities emerged, believed to control the various departments of nature. Instead of a separate spirit for every individual tree, they came to conceive of a god of the woods in general a silvanus, or what not; instead of personifying all the winds as gods, each with his distinct character and features, they imagined a single god of the winds, an Aeolus, for example who kept them shut up in bags and could let them out at pleasure to lash the sea into fury." By a further generalization the instinctive craving of the mind after simplification and unification of its ideas; as polytheism had evolved out of animism, the many gods were deposed in favour of one supreme deity, the maker and controller of all things, as polytheism passed into monotheism.\(^68\)

Animism as the theory of the origin of religion is based upon the conception of the soul or spirit which primitive people ascribed to natural objects. Tylor and the likeminded people are of the opinion that the conception of the soul and spirit is based on dream theory. According to this assumption, dream was a mysterious phenomenon for primitive people. Dream images seemed to possess a kind of vaporous materiality which come and go, appear as real and vanish tried to touch. From such images the idea of spirit apart from body could be formed by primitive people. Though it seems to be a simple and plausible hypothesis of the origin of the idea of soul but it cannot be admitted as the soul theory.\(^69\) It can be held that, beholding of some kind of visionary shapes may be the chief characteristic of primitive

---

\(^69\) *Ibid.*
man's religious experience but it cannot be held as the earliest form of religion or the origin of religion. It may be called a rudimentary world-view or some kind of early philosophy. Even as a kind of philosophy it cannot be called the earliest or the most rudimentary in character. Animism involves the concept of soul or spirit deemed as existing separately from the body. It is an intellectual conception so it is difficult to be applied for primitive man. James is of the opinion that to represent the savage as an intellectualistic reasoner or framer of carefully thought out systems and schemes operating in logical and evolutionary sequence is to misinterpret primitive mentality as thoroughly as to reduce him to a state of prelogical mysticism.

According to Pritibhusan Chatterji, animism further being predominantly intellectualistic, cannot take the form of a full fledged religion, as psychologically religion is more than mere thought it involves feelings and will as well.\(^7\)

Thus animism as a theory of the origin of religion is one sided. What is at the root of all the forms of religion, especially, the earliest one is some kind of awe towards the supernatural. Even the sun's rising and setting, man and animals being born and passing away, with the two opposing force at work beyond human control spoke a lot the primitive man. This supernaturalism may very well exist apart from animism, i.e. belief in spirits. The object towards which awe is felt need not be spiritual- it is enough if they are looked upon as repository of power. Thus curious stones may be regarded as the seat of some supernatural power and may be the objects of awe. Similarly, blood, especially of women, is taken to be somewhat 'mysteriously powerful' even though not associated with any spirit and may evoke awe. Thus it seems there was a pre-animistic phase of religion wherein no idea of 'spirit' could develop.\(^7\)

In the theory of animism, it is found that many natural objects were ascribed with spirit but all of them were not worshipped. What was the reason

\(^7\) Pritibhusan Chatterji, Comparative religion pp88-89, Beginning of religion-p.19
\(^7\) ibid
for not selecting some objects for worship and other for not. It is assumed that primitive man exercised some kind of choice or selection. There may be some kind of psychological need behind making such selection or choice. As Edwards commented "worship implies selection, and for selection a motive must be found. Thus, it is psychology that holds the key to the problem of religion." Therefore animism is not the satisfactory theory for the origin of religion.

2. ANCESTOR-WORSHIP (GHOST-THEORY)

According to Herbert Spencer, the theory of ancestor worship or ghost theory is considered to be the earliest form of religion. According to this, the origin of religion can be found in the worship of dead ancestors reappearing in the form of ghosts. He states "Anything which transcends the ordinary the savage thinks of as a supernatural or divine, the remarkable man may be simply the remotest ancestor remembered as the founder of the tribe; he may be a chief famed for strength or bravery; he may be a medicine man of great repute; he may be an inventor of something new. And then, instead of being a member of the tribe, he may be one of a superior race predominating by conquest. Being at first one or other of these, regarded with awe during his life, he is regarded with increased awe after his death; and the propitiation of his ghost, becoming greater than the propitiation of ghosts which are less feared, develops into an established worship. There is no exception, then using the phrase as comprehending all worship of the dead, be they of the same blood or not, we reach the conclusion that ancestor worship is not the root of every religion."

But E.O.James says "This far reaching hypothesis, like that of the development of monotheism from animism, was in line with the evolutionary thought of the last century, and gained a considerable measure of recognition though actually it was merely the restatement of the Greek Euhemeros (320-260) who urged that the gods originally were distinguished warriors or

---

72 D.M. Edwards, The philosophy of religions. P.38
73 Principles of Sociology, Quoted by E.W. James in Comparative religion p.37-38
benefactors venerated as deities after death. But ancestor worship is too
narrow a basis on which to establish or root a theory of religious origins, and
like all animistic conceptions, is really a rudimentary philosophy rather than
the beginning of religion itself. This indeed Tylor recognized in the case of
animism which he describes as the groundwork of the philosophy of religion,
from that of savages up to that of civilized man.

According to this theory, ghost worship was prevalent among
primitive people and from this they developed the generalized notion of spirit
worship Thus animism was derived from the ghost worship and it paved the
way for religious development. This theory too cannot be accepted as the
origin of religion. The nature of religion is very complex so it cannot be based
on the narrow foundation deification of ancestors. As Jastrow says- religion
is too complex a phenomenon to be accounted for by the growth and spread
of a single custom, worship of however primitive a character is not the
expression of a single emotion, but the product of thought so complex, so
powerful, as to force an expression in the same way in which a river, swollen
by streams coming the mountains from various directions, overflows its bank.
Ancestor worship as ghost worship cannot be taken as a part of religious
function. Wherever ancestor worship is held to be part of religious function it
is taken as the worship of gods, as some superhuman beings. So ancestor
worship is the worship of supernatural beings. Galloway said that fear of
ghost has left its impression on many burial customs, which show in a crude
fashion, attempts to neutralize the power of the ghost to do harm. But the
deliberate worship of ancestors is something higher than this superstitious
terror and social feeling.... At the same time it is difficult to draw a line
between fear and reverence which expresses the attitude of worship. In any
case ancestor worship is widely diffused. In the religion of China and the
ancient Rome the cult of ancestor has left its mark in the whole religious life of
the people.

3. ANIMATISM

The difference between animatism and animism is that animism attributes soul or spirit, while animatism means attributing simply personality. As for instance, when a storm approaches a village and the chief medicine man of the village shouts at it in order that its course may be diverted, it is a case of animatism, for no soul, but simply a crude form of personality is attributed to the storm. On the other hand, when a point Barrow-Eskimo, in order to get more fish from the river throws tobacco in the air and into the river and invokes 'Tuana' (spirit) it is a case of full fledged animism. Belief in spirits and separable souls implies a realization of personality, a conceptual attitude, since it is an intellectual standpoint. It is a stage of developed intellectual stratum.

Analyzing this theory of animism, James says, 'If it is not possible to establish a pre-animistic stage at the threshold of religion in the chronological sense, it is never the less true that rudimentary religion is at once a wider and in certain respects a vaguer thing than 'the belief in spiritual beings'. Prior to the time when man begun to speculate about dreams and visions, and formulate ideas concerning heroes and ancestors, he appears to have been aroused by deeper emotions in the presence of inexplicable and awe-inspiring phenomena. Whether or not this animistic reaction be associated with the widespread notion of a mystic impersonal force connected with mysterious persons, objects, and situations, variously called mana by some Melanesians, Orenda, Waken, Manitu by certain North-American Indians, arung-quitha among the central tribes of Australia, and baraka in Morocco, the type of experience which finds expression in religious behaviour belongs essentially to the realms of the sacred. Religion as such, independent of any particular, theoretical, philosophical or the theological interpretations, evaluations, is primarily a recognition of a sacred order or reality which transcends the ordinary and common place and is responsive to human needs. To enable to gain some measure of control over the unpredictable and inexplicable elements in his everyday experience, a technique has been devised with which certain belief has become associated, to establish an
efficacious relationship with the sacred. Thus have given rise to myth and ritual.\textsuperscript{76}

4. The Concept of the Numinous:

Otto is the propounder of this theory. He holds religion to be a category of \textit{sui generis}, like beauty, truth and goodness which is not reducible to any ordinary intellectual or rational ‘Knowing’; a unique original feeling-response, which can be in itself ethically neutral and claims consideration in its own right. This state of mind is termed as ‘numinous’ by Otto. This numinous may be in form of ordinary ethical concept at rudimentary level which evolves later in higher and deeper sense of religion. James explains the concept of the Numinous by saying "The nature of ‘something’ is only gradually learned, over against the individual self-consciousness, the feeling that there is another out beyond human consciousness, even when it is also felt as ‘the within’ man. In its presence the sense of ‘creatureliness’ is produced, of self-abasement with nothingness before an overpowering, absolute might of some kind,’ But this \textit{mysterium tremendum} also overpowering mystery has also within it the element ‘of fascination’ and so draws man towards it in mystical experience and communion. ‘the daemonic divine object may appear to the mind an object of horror and dead, but at the same time it is no less than something that allures with it a potent charm, and the creatures who trembles before it, utterly cowed and cast down, has always at the same time the impulse to turn to it, nay even to make it something somehow his own.\textsuperscript{77}

5. TOTEMISM

Scholars like W. Robertson Smith and F.B. Jevons advocated Totemism as the early form of religion. This theory is allied to ancestor-worship and it is found prevalent in some parts of the world, such as in North-America, Africa and Australia. According to this theory primitive people held some kinds of animals, trees or natural objects as their ancestors or originator. It was a belief among primitive peoples that the members of a

group or clan concerned was originated from a totem. A totem was usually a species of animals to which a clan or a group of man stands in an intimate relation. A. Lang explains Totemism as the name for the custom by which a stock (scattered through many tribes) claims descent from and kindred with some plant, animal or natural object. It is a state of society and cult .... In which sects of persons, believing themselves to be a kin by blood, call each other by the name of some plants, beast or other object in nature.

A particular clan or group was believed to owe its origin to the species of the totem animal, or birds and it was held that if the clan had its solidarity, it was due to the solidarity of the species. If a clan or group got success in any affair such a war it was held to be due to the power of their totem. It was believed that the totem and the totemites had a blood-relation being one flesh. They were not allowed to intermarry. A totem was worshipped and given honour. The flesh of totem animal was prohibited for meal in normal course. Only on the occasions of worship or sacrifice the flesh of totem animal was permitted for eating.

Various rituals and ceremonies are found associated with in totemism. Every totem-clan has its own totem mark. The totem-mark is tattooed or painted on the infant at birth. There are ceremonies for initiatives into the mysteries of the clan which increase the power of the initiated. The initiation takes place in secluded places and at dark hours for the welfare of individual, society, and for the totem-animal also.

Robertson Smith holds that the entire sacrificial system is evolved out of totemistic practice. Jevons is of the view that totemism is the most primitive form of society. Emile Durkheim holds totemism as the earliest form of religion and social organization. totemism is practiced in tribes but it is not practiced universally. Totem animal is also not found to be worshipped. So totemism cannot be held as the earliest form or religion. Frazer says that in pure totemism such as we find it among the Australian aborigines, the totem is never a god and is never worshipped.
A man no more worships his totem and regards it as his god than he worships his father and mother, his brother and his sister, and regards them as his gods. Totemism is essentially an institution through which a social group establishes an intimate relationship with the sacred regarded as a providential source of food supply variously personified. Like ritual in general, it is a particular and specialized technique for controlling. The forces of destiny which transcend his natural unaided powers, and call for reverential regard coupled with a sense of kinship and affinity. Indeed it is primarily a primitive system of economics governed by religious sanctions rooted in the desire to secure adequate means of sustenance for the community, James is of the opinion that which is deeply laid in the history of the human race cannot be denied, but its absence among such very primitive people as the Veddas of Ceylon, the Punan of Borneo, the Andaman Islanders, the Pygmies of the Congo, the Bushman of South Africa, and in the New World the clan less inhabitant of the north-west pacific coast and the Brazilian tribes shows that it is by no means universal in distribution, or a constant feature in the lowest cultures.

6. MANAISM

This theory was for the first time introduced by bishop Codrington. He explains that all conspicuous success is a proof that a man has mana... a man’s power, though political or social in character, is his mana... If a man has been successful in fighting, it has not been his natural strength of aim, quickness of eye or readiness of resource that has won success; he has certainly got the man of a spirit or of a diseased/deceased warrior to empower him, conveyed in a mullet stone around his neck, or truth of leaves in his belt.... or in the form of words with which he brings the supernatural assistance to his side.... A canoe will not be swift unless mana is brought to bear upon it, a wind will not catch many fish nor an arrow inflicts a mortal wound.79

According to this theory, it is believed that primitive man had some kind of vision of the diffused powers, which made him develop a spirit of fear and reverence to them. This power is designated by the Polynesian term *mana*. Other terms, like maitu, Orenda, Wokand are also used by different tribes to connote the same spirit. This term 'man' impels the primitive man's religious view. It refers to the powers attributed to the sacred persons or things. The idea of man was derived by primitive man by observing extra-ordinary phenomena of nature. This gave rise to strong emotional reactions to supernatural objects and events. Irving King says that (it is) a quasi mechanical thing with which spirits are in peculiar rapport, but which is also in a measure controlled by men who have distinguished themselves by great bravery and by daring feats, and hence by easy transfer is also possessed by the ghosts of these men as long as their memory is comparatively fresh.\(^8\)

The interesting features of manism is that it is regarded as the rudimentary phase of religion holding that other theories like animism, ghost-worship and totemism can be explained on the basis of it. Animism holds the view of supernatural spiritual beings which can be invested with mana. And in the theory of ancestor worship, ancestor may be held possessing mana. In totemism, totem animals can be explained as possessing mana. It is found that behind animism and totemism there is a working a vague fear and also an attachment to some mysterious power or powers which are regarded as extra-ordinary phenomena. Edwards remarks on this as, 'Here then we seem to have the common root of magic and religion. Pre-animistic religion is the sense of awe, mystery and wonder in the presence of this supernatural power, diffused, yet capable of immense concentration here is an attitude of

---

mind which provides religion its raw material. It is obviously more primitive in character than animism.®^  

7. Magic and Religion:-  

Magic is somehow found associated with various primitives' rites and ceremonies. So the question arises whether magic gave birth to religion or religion gave birth to magic. Was there magic prior to religion or religion prior to magic in primitive culture? Different views came out with regard to this problem. But there are two main views- one which holds the view that religion was prior to magic (Jevons) and another which stands for that magic was prior to religion (Frazer).

Primitive man used to worship supernatural things for the fulfillment of desire, sometimes he succeeded and sometimes he failed to gain. A feeling of acquiring control of supernatural powers arose in him and thus magic took birth. According to this theory, magic is a perversion of religion. The failure of religion gave birth to magic. It was an attempt to gain by stealth which could not be gained by worship. This theory opines that religion and magic are by nature opposed to each other and then, while enquiring into the origin of magic, attributes it to religion. It cannot give birth to a thing of opposite nature- There must be at least some affinity between the originated and the originator.

Frazer has advocated the view that magic gave rise to religion. He says ' Though magic is found to fuse and amalgamate with religion in man, ages and in many land, there are some grounds for thinking that fusion is not primitive, and there was a time when man trusted to magic alone for the satisfaction of such wants as transcended his immediate animal craving... Magic arose before religion in the evolution of our race, and that man essayed to bend nature to his wishes by sheer force of spells and enchantment before he strove to coax and modify a coy capricious or

®^ D.M. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion p. 46
irascible deity by the soft insinuation of prayer and sacrifice. Supra Frazer is of the view that magic was conceived as pseudo science by the primitive man. In ancient time magic as science was predominating and its failure gradually gave rise to religion. Frazer says, “If we analyze the principles of thought on which magic is based, they will probably be found to resolve, themselves into two; first that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. The former principle may be called the Law of Similarity, and the later the Law of Contact or Contagion.

The theory of Frazer is also not tenable. Frazer holds the view that primitive man was guided by the principle of Association. But it cannot be held that he was practicing it. King has given a comment on this saying “Many of those who have written upon the subject of magic lay great stress upon an axiom supposedly held by primitive man that 'like produces like'. Possibly such a conception of natural causation may, in time, have been constructed but if such were the case, we believe that it was the result of magical practices rather than their presupposition.

The aforesaid discussion reveals several theories of the origin of religion. Actually these theories are based on the assumption that religion is the result of the evolution of thoughts. But the question arises that whether the religion is formed out of the evolution of thought process or religion is the outcome of revelation, coming from the divine source. We find that any major religion of the world does not hold the assumption that it is the outcome of the evolutionary process of thoughts. All the major religions are based on divine sources. Even the atheistic religions, like Jainism and Buddhism are based on higher experience or higher knowledge which is of the status of divine. The aforesaid theories of the origin of religion cannot be held tenable but they are

83 Ibid. p.14
significant. They are good hypotheses. As it is well remarked by William A. that the origins of religion can only be speculated upon; they can never be discovered. Theories with enormous ‘documentation’ and nimble imagination may temporarily delude the impressionable reader into believing that answers have been found, but sober reflection will always show the futility of accepting anyone of them as constituting more than a scholarly guess. Should we on this account turn away from such speculation? Not at all. The better and more responsible of these hypotheses have pointed the way to rewarding lines of investigation. Not only have they caused an immense amount of field data to be collected and studied, but they have been ultimately responsible for analytic contributions of lasting value. Even scholars who have consciously renounced historical interests in religion owe a great debt to others who have had such interests and helped found a science of religion.

Zoroastrianism preaches to lead a righteous life of higher religious virtues to achieve the goal of life. According to Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda, the supreme Lord is all good and he requires no worship other than a life of goodness. It is held that man must inculcate the virtues of truthfulness, justice, compassion, chastity, charity, honesty, purity, care of cattle, service of human beings, etc. According to Zoroastrianism, the world is a ground of struggle between the forces of good and evil and man has to play his role in it. If a man chooses the path of goodness, he chooses the path of God. He thus does the reign of good on earth. Thus, according to Zoroastrianism, living a righteous life is above all to achieve the highest goal of life. In Judaism, it is held that God has created man in his own image. Due to the commitment of original sin man has been fallen on earth from paradise, the kingdom of God. The highest goal of life of man is to achieve paradise. It can be achieved by the imitation of God. It means imbibing in oneself the attributes of God who is imbued with essentially such ethical holiness. Judaism also prescribes to obey the law of Torah which is the record of the commands taught by God. Thus to lead a righteous and ethical life is the essence of religion in Judaism. According to Tiwari (K.N.), Christianity is a religion of redemption from a life of sin and suffering. Jesus Christ, the founder of the religion is regarded as the
redeemer of man and therefore the true religious path is nothing but to imitate his ways. *Imitatio Christi* is, therefore the basic Christian principle of religious or moral life. Imitation of Christ consists in cultivating all the virtues that Christ demonstrated all throughout his life. And Christ's humility and suffering for the sake of soul instead of flesh are the basic moral virtues that Christianity teaches its followers. The suffering of Christ on the cross is really a symbol of suffering for the sake of the spirit. The cross symbolizes the crucifixion of the flesh for the sake of the spirit. The senses are to be controlled and the spirit or soul within is to be adorned. Further, the life of Jesus is a burning example of a life of extreme love and humility. Thus, Christianity teaches essentially a life of love and humility. This is really the core of its ethical teaching. Love the neighbour as thyself and ‘Turn to him your right cheek who slaps on your right one’ are the two Christian ethical teachings which speak for its most earnest concern with the virtues of love and humility. Even hatred is to be met not with hatred but with love. Love is the essential nature of God himself and therefore it is the greatest virtue to be followed by every Christian in his relationship to both God and man. Thus, to follow the path of God may be understood as the core of religion according to the Christianity, which is to follow the path of holy virtues, ethical virtues and lead a life full of divine aspiration.

In Hinduism there is the conception of 'Dharma' which is generally meant religion. Hinduism is called Hindu Dharma. Indian scholars hold the view that dharma is a wider term than religion. Dharma cannot be translated as religion. The term 'dharma' is not the exact synonym of religion. Its nearest English word may be – law, righteousness, duty, morality. It covers the entire duties of a man. In Monier Williams’ Sanskrit English dictionary the following meanings of dharma have been given: (1) that which is established or firm, steadfast, decree, statue, ordinance, law; (2) usage, practice, customary observance or prescribed conduct, duty, (3) right, justice, (4) virtue, morality, religion, religious merit, good works; (5) nature, character, essential quality; (6) sacrifice, religious ceremony. P.V. Kane explains his views, as, “The writers on Dharmasastra meant by Dharma not a creed or religion, but a
mode of life or a code of conduct which regulated a man's work and activities as a member of society or as an individual and was intended to bring about the gradual development of a man and to enable him to reach what was deemed to be the goal of human existence. The classical religious literature of Hinduism has defined dharma and elaborated the conception of dharma.

Hinduism is a way of life. It may be called the complete way of life as it covers the whole life of the man. Almost every aspect of human life is covered. It prescribes individual's aims and objectives of man under its ashrama dharma; it prescribes the duties of man in the circumstances prevailing in the world at the present time under its yuga dharma. It directs to lead one's life by dividing it into four ideal stages. Although Hinduism is spiritualistic in spirit but it does not negate material achievements completely. It recognizes four purusarthas of which two, artha and karma, are related with material achievements. It only directs that the material achievements must be controlled by Dharma. Thus, Dharma, according to Hinduism may be called as way, way of life.

Buddhism is also held as path or way. Buddhism prescribes eight-fold path to achieve the highest goal of life. It emphasizes more on practice than theory. Buddha taught his disciples not to be indulged in theoretical problems rather to search the path of liberation, redemption from suffering. The four noble truths of Buddhism are the essence of this religion and they inspire that man to lead the life of spiritual practice.

In his first sermon Buddha said, "There are two extremes, O monks, from which he who leads a religious life must abstain. One is a life of pleasure, devoted to desire and enjoyment; that is base, ignoble, unspiritual, unworthy, and unreal. The other is a life of mortification; it is gloomy, unworthy, unreal. The perfect one, O monks, is removed from both these two extremes and has discovered the way which lies between them, the middle way which enlightens the eyes, enlightens the mind, which leads to rest, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvana. This is the Noble-Eight-fold path contained in the Fourth Noble Truths. The Noble-Eight-fold path consists of
eight steps which are (1) Right Faith (Samyag drsti), (2) right resolve (Sankalp) (3) right speech (vak), (4) rught action (karmanta), (5) right living (ajiva), (6) right effort (vya yama), (7) right thought (smrti) and (8) right concentration (Samadhi). This is to be followed by the clergy and the laity alike.

First two of the eight-fold paths are called prajna, the next three are called sita and the last three are called Samadhi. If eight-fold path is taken in this sense, prajna, sita and Samadhi are the three broad ways through which one can achieve final salvation. Sometimes this order is changed and these three are put as sita, samadha and prajna. This order gives the view that after practicing morality, mindfulness and concentration, a right understanding about the nature if a thing arises. This understanding leads to the path of salvation. This method involving right morality, right mindfulness, and right concentration for the attainment of right knowledge (in breaking the twelve links leading to samsara, birth, death or rebirth cycle) is a unique kind of Indian philosophy and religion. The twelve links can be systematically arranged in the following order:

1. Ignorance (avidya),

2. Karmic impressions (samskara)

3. Embryonic consciousness (vijnana)

4. Psycho-physical organism (namarupa)

5. Six sense organs (sadayatana)

6. Sense-object-contact (sparsa)

7. Sense-experience (vedana)

8. Desire to enjoy (tanha)

9. Clinging to the enjoyment (upadana)

10. Will to be born (jati)
12. Old age and death (jara marana)

Another area of interest is that whether morality is an offshoot of religion or whether religion is an offshoot of morality or whether the two are totally different concepts.

Primitive religions used to be regarded as man's first fumbling and, to us, bizarre attempts at what we should call science, history, and morality. Since the publication of Sir Henry Maine's *Ancient Law*, the following account of the relation between morality and religion among primitive peoples (both our own ancestors and people still living at a primitive stage of culture) has become an accepted orthodoxy. In primitive communities, it was held that, there are rules that are handed on from one generation to another. Some of these rules are what we would call technological-traditional methods of agriculture, hunting, fishing, and carrying on the other useful arts; others are moral, concerned with human relations; others are religious, concerned with the supernatural. No distinction is drawn between technological and religious rules. For example, Trobriand Islander learns how he must handle his canoe and also what religious rites he must perform before going on a voyage. Similarly, no distinction is drawn between moral and religious rules. Custom is king; and all customs, whether technological, moral, or religious, are thought of as having been ordained long ago by supernatural beings and recorded in the traditions of the community. These supernatural beings are not the only sources of all rules; they provide the authority and the sanction for them. Moral rules are not thought of as obligatory in their own right or as conducive in some direct, non-magical way to the welfare of the community; they are the commands of supernatural beings and are worthy of obedience simply because they are his commands. The penalty for disobedience is disaster in this world and damnation in the next. Morality, in this view, is wholly dependent on religion; it is not just that if there had been no religion men would never have learned morality; it is rather that without religion there could be no morality.
If this account of the origins of morality were true, it would be of great historical interest; but it would have no tendency to show that morality is dependent on religion and cannot exist without it. Modern chemistry grew out of the magical, pseudo-scientific theories of the alchemists, but we do not on that account regard it as owing its validity to alchemy; and, in general, it is fallacious to argue from the fact that belief A has grown out of belief B to the conclusion that A depends on B for its truth. But this received account of the origins of morality and of the ways in which primitive peoples regard their moral rules is seriously mistaken.

In the first place, since may savages have no conception of supernatural persons, they cannot possibly regard their rules as emanating from or being enforced by such persons. Second, although religion plays a large part in their lives, it is by no means so all-pervasive as the received theory makes out. Modern anthropologists assure us that savages are fully capable of learning from experience and that their technological practices are, like ours, based on what they have learned about natural phenomena, unconnected with their beliefs about the supernatural. Bronislaw Malinowski wrote of the Trobriand Islanders:

"The savages have a class of obligatory rules not endowed with any mystical character, not set forth "in the name of God," not enforced by any supernatural sanction but provided with a purely social binding force.... There are among the Trobrianders a number of traditional rules instructing the craftsman how to ply his trade. The inert and uncritical way in which these rules are obeyed is due to the general "conformism of savages" as we might call it. But in the main these rules are followed because their practical utility is recognized by reason and testified by experience. Again, other injunctions of how to behave in associating with your friends, relatives, superiors, equals and so on are obeyed because any deviation from them makes a man feel and look, in the eyes of others, a ridiculous, clumsy, socially uncouth. There are the precepts of good manners very developed in Melanesia and most strictly adhered to. There are further rules laying down the proceedings at games, sports, entertainments and
festivities, rules which are the soul and substance of the amusement of pursuit and are kept because it is felt and recognized that any failure to "play the game" spoils it."  

When we come to moral rules, however Malinowski and other anthropologists still sometimes cling to the theory of a religious origin and suppose them to be obeyed for fear of supernatural sanctions, in spite of the fact that their own detailed accounts of the savage's way of life point in a quite different direction. With savages, as with us, moral rules are obeyed hardly from a fear of social rather than of supernatural sanctions, partly from habit, and partly from recognition of the value of these rules to society. This recognition is as rational as is the recognition of the value of technological rules. The main "social binding forces" to which Malinowski refers seem to be loyalty, mutuality of service, regards for the rights of others, a sense of fairness and fear of reprisal or of social disapproval. These are moral, not religious motive. It is, we told, rare to find supernatural sanctions invoked unless the rule concerned is not a moral but a religious one.

Religion operates, indeed, in every department of the savage's life, in his work, his play, and his relations with others; but within each department, religion is concerned only with what the savage does not understand. His normal routines based on experience, are liable to interruption by abnormal occurrences (floods, droughts, tempests, earthquake and the like) which he cannot control. It is these catastrophes to which he attributes a supernatural origin and which he attempts to ward off by the performance of religious duties.

Myth of primitive people is a wonderful source for finding the origin of religion though it will have to be interpreted into a meaningful one. The hermeneutic aspect is important in studying religion. Myth is normally understood as something symbolizing important and may not have to be taken literally. In that way it even saved the theologians from physical scientific embarrassment.

---