

12. The Naturalistic Re-construction of Religion

Religion is a social institution and like other social institutions it undergoes re-construction in course of time. The development of knowledge and morality, no less socio-economic and political conditions necessitate the re-construction of it. The classical religions are Vedic religion, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. They all hold that their religions are entirely different and absolutely superior to the primitive religions. The primitive religions were product of uncivilized and ignorant state of tribes, but their religions reflect the civilized and enlightened state of man. If these religionists are told that today there is far greater advance in knowledge and perception of high social values of life than what was the case at the time of the origination of their religions and hence there is need for further re-construction of religion, they do not accept the logic of this reasoning. They hold that their religions admit no change. They are 'Sanatan Dharma', i.e. eternal words of Divinity. However, the future cannot remain eternal prisoner of the past. The classical religions need to be replaced as they had replaced the primitive religions.

(2)

I. Supernaturalistic Religions' World View Supernaturalistic Religions Bifurcate the Universe into Natural and Supernatural Worlds

The classical supernaturalistic religions of Hinduism (Vedic Dharma), Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam hold very different and even contradictory views on the nature of the universe and man. However, they are all of one view on two fundamentals. They all divide the Universe into two worlds: the natural world and the supernatural world. The natural world is the world in which we live, move and have our being. It comprises the inanimate, the vegetable, the animal and the human orders of existences. It is the world given to us in our perceptions and encountered in our actions.

It is the world which sciences study and technologies manipulate. This world has two characteristics. All its entities are embodied. A stone, a plant, an animal, and a man have a body, i.e. each of them occupies space. All these entities are under time. They come into existence and go out of existence. They have a date of birth and a date of death. A scientist can tell us the age of a rock and even the age of the earth. Scientists opine about the time our planet might collide with some other planet and be shattered into pieces.

The supernatural world has characteristics opposite to the natural world. The supernatural world is the world of God, angels and disembodied 'mukta' souls. God, if he is anything, is disembodied. He has no physical dimensions. Similarly, the 'muktas' or souls who have attained moksha or salvation are disembodied. Further, the entities of the supernatural world, i.e. God and sinless souls or 'muktas' are outside time. They are free from change and time. They are immortal / eternal.

Secondly, all these classical religions hold that the natural world is inferior and unworthy of habitation. It is full of sins and sufferings. Its attractions are bondage of evil and unhappiness. Human freedom is freedom from bondage to the natural world. It is possible if one develops 'vairagya' or non-attraction, nay aversion to association with natural objects, however enchanting they may be in beauty, and human beings, however innocent and lovable they may be in their excellences. All aesthetic delights in natural beauty divert the soul's attention from its divine destiny. All human loves debar the soul from supernatural destiny of mukta. To run after the natural and human world is to run after the world of shadows and be trapped in the mirage of wasted life.

All the classical world religions signal man to dangers of being trapped into this ever-changing world of space and time and causality. They call him to the world beyond, the supernatural world, the real world of eternal felicity, joy and freedom. Some of these classical religions give direct control to God of the supernatural world in making and running the natural world.

Christianity and Islam hold that God made the heaven and the earth. He made the vegetable world, the animal world and the human world. God is infinite in power and so nothing moves in the natural world without his will. When someone is dead due to some disease or accident in early years of life, it is said that God had willed the time of the death for the young deceased and that the disease and the accident were accidental or secondary causes. The primary cause was God who had arranged the accidental or secondary causes. In the same way, if a couple is blessed with a son it is lyrical in praise of God for his grace in granting them a son. Thus life and death of man, in fact all that happens to him or what he wills to do is God's will. God in his inscrutable wisdom runs the natural world.

Till the rise of science all classical religions of Hinduism (Vedic), Jainism, later Buddhism, Christianity and Islam orbited round the supernatural world beyond, speculating on its nature and character and its relation to human destiny.

(3)

II. Scientific World View

Science Discards Dualism of Natural and Supernatural Worlds.

Modern experimental Science started its career in the West in the 17th century with Galelio. Science means scientific knowledge, i.e. the knowledge obtained by the use of the scientific method of observation and experiment. Its steps are careful observation and isolation of facts to be explained, formation of a hypothesis as a suggested explanation of observed facts, deduction from the hypothesis and verification.

1. Physical Sciences and Religion - As Science advanced it found that the explanations offered by the theistic religions about the cosmogony and nature of the universe were without foundation of truth. The earth was not made, it has evolved. The plant and the animal worlds are not made by God but evolved. Man is not made in the image of God'. He is evolved with a vestige of tail of the chimpanzee from which he has evolved. The natural

world is not a seven days wonder created by God. It has history of billions of years of evolution to reach its present state. The rain is not made to efficient or final fall. There is no god Indira or Almighty God who is the efficient or final cause of the fall of rain. Rain falls because of natural conditions preceding it. Whatever happens in the world has natural causes for it. But even today the theists hold that God chooses to will or withhold rain. Some years ago when there was water famine in Bombay the high priests of all theistic religions, inspite of their education in science, joined together to pray to God to forgive their sins and to send them rain. Science laughs at such prayers. They are more childish than the prayer of Tommy who sings, "Rain, Rain, go away, little Tommy wants to play". These events in the natural world are inter-linked in cause-and-effect relationship and cannot be wished in or wished away. Rain is independent of God's wishes and will. Even if God decides not to send rain, we can have artificial rain. What science has discovered is that explanation of events in the natural world we inhabit is in other natural events and there is no place or room for supernatural factors in explanation of them.

2. Psychology and Religion - It is not only events in the inanimate and the biological worlds that can be explained in natural occurances, but even religious experiences or mystic experiences can be explained in natural causes. The religious or mystic experiences are found by psychology and sociology to admit of as much naturalistic explanation as physical events like rain or earthquake. Let us take an instance of mystic experience of St. Teresa, a great woman saint of Christianity. She describes one of her mystic experiences as under:

"Often when the soul least expects it, our Lord calls her suddenly. She becomes very conscious that her God calls her and it gives it such a start, especially at the beginning that she trembles and utters plaints. She feels that an ineffable wound has been dealt her and the wound is so precious in her sight that she would like it never to heal."

This is a mystic experience of a woman saint who has been under strict

vow of chastity. The psychological explanation of this experience is that the woman saint had excluded sexual life from her consciousness through repression. Nevertheless the sexual desire had been seeking satisfaction. It could not be satisfied directly. It had found satisfaction through experience of intimate contact with male deity. Of course not all mystic experiences provide easy target for the psychologist, but more complex explanations of the experience of God or Brahman are offered by psychologists.

According to Freud, the religious experience of Father-in Heaven is reminiscent of the experience of the father on earth. The experience and belief in God is due to natural causes. Theistic experience is human in origin, not divine in character. The experience does not report an objective reality of God but subjective condition of the experienter. To a child his father appears to be all-powerful, all-knowing and his protector. He feels awe and love for him. At the same time the child wants his mother all to himself. He wants to cling to her physically like a baby monkey. He relishes¹ her and does not want to share his mother with any one else. But she leaves him on demands from his father. So the child naturally experiences a feeling of hate for his father. This feeling of hate arouses in the child pain of guilt in relation to his father. He suppresses this painful experience which he comes later on to project on father in heaven, showers praises on him and asks for his forgiveness. Again, the experience of the identity of Brahman and Atma is explicable as womb experience in which the infant in the womb of the mother experiences sense of identity with his mother.

There are some differences between Freud and other psychologists like Adler and Jung in the nature of libido and the processes involved in their explanation of God experience and God belief, but all hold that religious experience can be explained in naturalistic terms. These experiences and

¹ Freud very much widens the meaning of sex to include all pleasures of bodily contact as sex pleasures. Infant sexuality is not the same as adult sexuality. However, our whole body is sensitive to yield sex pleasure. It is not confined to excitation of sex organs. Freud speaks of pansexuality from infancy to adulthood. But the child sexuality is not the same in content and character as the adult sexuality. There is physical contact pleasure both at the infant and the adult levels and Freud calls it sexual in character.

belief in God have only subjective significance and can be explained in the psychology and sociology of the experiencer. They do not require God as a casual factor in their explanation just as fall of rain does not require divine causality to explain it. A man in a state of fear may see ghosts in a bush in a dark night. His experience of seeing ghosts and his belief in their objective existence does not establish that ghosts exist. His experience and belief are illusions. Freud and other psychologists explain God experience on the same pattern, i.e. explain such experiences in psychological conditions of the experiencer. Freud calls God experience 'mass-hallucination'. For the Freudian the voice of God is, in the end, our own voice, or the voice of an aspect of our personality projected, unknown to ourselves, upon the cosmos at large. It is as if one shouted to the hills and took the echoes to be the hills replying.

3. Sociology and Religion - While psychologists take individual's God-experience and show it to be subjective in character, the sociologists find the roots of God - experience of a group in the social feelings and the sentiments of a tribe. A social group has a tendency to project its feelings and sentiments into a symbol. Bharat Mata' or our National flag is a symbol of our sentiments of love and regard for our country and our common cultural life. 'Bande Matram' song is reverence shown to 'Mother India'.

Mother India or Bharat Mata is not a 'living entity' like any other Indian woman. She is not one of them or sum total of them. She does not breathe, or eat or drink like any other woman of India. Though she does not exist, she transcends us all in power and dignity. The symbol 'Bharat Mata' is replete with sentiments of countless generations. We feel small before the majesty of her all-pervasive influence. We feel her infinite in comparison to us. She evokes our reverence, awe, love and worship. We Indians feel humble before her and some of us are prepared to sacrifice for her. She is the supreme lord of us. Her claims are most authoritative for us and we feel glory in obeying her claims and guilty in ignoring them.

Emile Durkheim reduces God to a symbol like Bharat Mata and thus denies

its objective existence as is the case with 'Bharat Mata'. "The totem", Durkheim points out, "is like the flag which is a symbol of the clan. While generations change, it remains the same; it is the permanent element of the social life....Since religious force is nothing other than the collective and anonymous force of the clan, and since this can be representative in the mind only in the form of the totem, the totemic emblem is like the visible body of the God. Therefore it is from it that those kindly or dreadful actions seem to emanate, which the cult seeks to provoke or to prevent; consequently, it is to it that the cult is addressed. This is the explanation of why it holds the first place in series of sacred things. This religious force conceived as incorporated in the totemic emblem, appears to be outside the individuals and to be endowed with a sort of transcendence over them, but like the clan of which it is a symbol, it can be realized only through them;....it is immanent in them and they necessarily represent it as such. They feel it present and active within them for it is this which raises them to a superior life. Religious force is only the sentiment inspired by the group in its members, but projected outside of the consciousness that experiences them, and objectified".

It is this same sentiment of a tribal unity which is expressed in the conception of supreme God common to the tribe as a whole.

The supreme God, however influential in the life of millions of people like 'Bharat Mata', has as little objective being as Bharat Mata. This fact religion does not know nor acknowledges. It does not know that its theistic belief has emotional significance and not cognitive truth.

Says Emile Durkheim, "As a matter of fact it (religion) does not know itself. It does not know what it is made of, to what need it arouses. It is itself subject for science."

There are other sociologists like E.B.Tylor and Sir James Frazer, who give different interpretations of primitive religions but all hold that the idea of God is explicable in the naturalistic feelings and mental life of the group. They all consider experiences leading to the belief in God to have social

roots and therefore have no truth value as representing reality beyond or outside social experience.

To conclude: Science finds that events, physical, social and religious, can be explained in naturalistic terms. Science does not deny the existence of God but it holds the hypothesis of the idea of God as redundant for explaining events in the Universe. To refer to divine causality for explanation of any physical event or mystic experience is mythical. The Universe, it finds to be self-sufficient. Therefore no event in the natural world however exalted, requires explanation in causality outside the natural order.

4. Scientific Outlook Disintegrates Religious Outlook- Education in science in the West for the last three and a half centuries has brought about a revolutionary change in the outlook of the western people. It has replaced their theological outlook of the universe and man drawn by Christianity (for that matter all theistic and supernatural religions) by scientific outlook based on facts and laws of Nature.

To quote theologian Robert Adolf from his paper, 'Is God Dead?' in his edited book, *The Meaning of the Death of God*: "Indeed unbelief seems to be a sign of our time. I do not mean by this primarily the cultural phenomenon of atheistic humanism. Rather it is question of disbelief among Christians and it is not rebellious disbelief. It is quiet indifference which develops in people who discover that they can be complete human beings without religious (theistic) faith."

The scientific culture has brought greater instability in the minds of Christian bishops and theologians than is the case with ordinary Christians. The distinguished theologian William Hamilton in his book *The New Essence of Christianity* writes, "We are reduced to fragments, partial vision, broken speech, not because of the unbelieving world out there', but precisely because that unbelieving world has come to rest within our selves." 2

An ordinary Christian can afford to be indifferent to religion but this option is not open to a bishop or a theologian. He must find a way out of the situation of indecisive attitude towards science and religion. The pressure of scientific culture is too imperious on the mind of priests, and theologians to allow them to rest in their see-saw position. That this is clear from the state of religious literature under the title of Death of God Theology² and the several attempts at re-definition of the idea of God to bring it in harmony with science.

However, the theologians of the death of God theology seem to indulge in double think. They reject God on the one hand and then by sleight of hand bring him back. Again, the theologians in their attempt to re-define God to escape all criticism by science, hardly realize that the concept of God so defined loses all its links with God believed in the churches and becomes empty of meaning. We will consider these attempts at the proper place.

III. Four Responses to conflict between Religious & Scientific Outlooks

(6)

We can distinguish four reactions or responses to this conflict between Science and Religion.

1. Outright Rejection of Religion - One school of thought, originally the French Thinkers of Enlightenment, Paul Henri D'Holbach(Baron), d'Alembert, Diderot, Condillac, Helvetius, etc. and then the 19th century thinkers such as Jacob Moleschott, Ludwig Buchner and the 20th century thinkers like McTaggart and Russell reject religion altogether. For them theistic religion is mythical in belief and inimical to the health and happiness of man. It has stood in the way of the progress of knowledge by scientific method. It has opposed development of medicinal technology to reduce human suffering.

² Altzer, T.J.J., The Gospel of Christian Atheism, Altzer and Hamilton, Radical Theology and The Death of God; Vahanian, Gabriel, The Death of God Controversy: Mehta, V., The New Theologian, Ogden, Schubert, The Reality of God;

It has condemned the satisfaction of human instincts as sinful and glorified the denial and torture of the body under the need of asceticism. It has emphasised the virtues of mortification, penance, abject obedience, humility and passive suffering. It accepts suffering as a divine dispensation. It has stood in the way of improving life on the earth for false prospects of life in heaven. Its morality is static, unresponsive to the new problems of human conduct. Its authoritativeness is repulsive to the modern culture of freedom of thought and expression.

Again, the political and social consequences of the institution of religion have been and are disastrous. We have the history of crusades between Christianity and Islam. These crusades have been as blood-drenched as any other political war in the past. We all know what religion has done in our country. It has led to the partition of the country, but this is not enough. The two countries are at daggers drawn, each draining its meagre resources on armament to the neglect of the welfare of the people and the progress of the cultural values. In spite of the Partition, the problem of communalism in our country remains the same. We have frequent riots which dehumanise relations between us as fellow Indians.

It is, however, an error to think that if there were one religion, there would be peace on earth. A religion is divided into sects and the conflict between these sects is as relentless and cruel as between two different religions. Islam is divided into Shias and Sunnies. Their conflict has taken the form of bloody wars. History of organised religion is as ugly as the political history of a country.

During peace times, in civil life the relation between different sects of the same religion are as un-becoming and even bitter as between a dog and a cat. Each sect is jealous and unhappy at the success of the other and gloats over the failure of the other, though each accepts the same founder, the same scripture and does the propagation of the same teaching. This is failure of religious life among different religions and different sects of the same religion. It appears that religion does not make us religious-kind and

humane, generous and just.

The demoniac beliefs (beliefs in gods, spirits or God) had emotional baptism and so they still cling with us. We all know how strong and lasting is the impact of emotional responses we underwent during childhood. The emotional experiences of fear and love have a tenacious hold on us even when we grow into manhood. We rationalize the beliefs formed during childhood of painful experiences of fear or overwhelming experiences of delight in certain situations. Prof. Ernst Cassirer in his five volume book entitled *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* shows how emotional clinging to the belief in God is rooted in mythical consciousness of the primitive period of humanity at which stage there was no sharp distinction between perception and phantasy, between the object itself and the emotional reaction to it. At that primitive stage of human consciousness what is real is what arouses the greatest intensity of emotional responses and especially what is felt as sacred. The sophisticated theology represents an unsatisfactory compromise between mythical and scientific modes of thought. Mythical beliefs do not cease to be mythical, however much face-lift is given to them.

On these and such grounds the above school of thought holds that it is time to put religions in Cultural museums as a relic of classical primitive and pre-scientific thought and conduct just as specimens of the vanished species are placed in Zoological museums. There is no place or room for them in the modern world of scientific thought and culture.

2. Reduction of Religion to Morality -The second school of thought, mainly represented by Protestant Liberalism in the nineteenth century, holds that the total rejection of religion is over-reaction and misses the true function which religion has been discharging and can discharge. Even when classical religions of Hinduism (Vedic), Christianity and Islam took their birth, the intellectual frame work in the society was of anthropomorphic supernaturalism in which natural world was thought of as play-thing of God, in which miracles happened in the natural world at the will of God. So

beliefs in the Virgin Mary, miracles, Resurrection were intellectually acceptable and respectable. It is in this intellectual framework that religion functioned to guide man in his conduct. What is important in religion is not what it believes but the way of life it preaches. It is incidental to Christianity that early evangelists believed Christ to be son of God or even Christ believed in God but belief in God and miracles was not distinctive of Christ as Christ. What was distinctive of Christ was the truth of his life. The excellence of Christ is independent of beliefs about his supernatural birth and divine relationship. The function of religion has been and is to build moral life of man though in the past it was mediated through superstitious supernatural beliefs. To discard supernaturalism was not to discard religion as rationalists had done. It is only to remove the shell or crust of supernatural beliefs of religion and to reach for the essence of religion which is its moral teaching for mankind.

Again, the history of crusades and constant bickering among religions and sects of religions is not an argument against religion. No other discipline except religion draws forceful attention to man's inborn passion for evil life, mythologically called 'original sin'. When human nature has inborn evil dispositions it is natural that it should exploit its institution of religion, like other institutions, for satisfaction of his passion for violence, greed, and possessiveness, etc. Religion claims to deliver man from his evil dispositions. It cannot do magic and remove all evil in man. The failure of religion to satisfactorily remove man's passions for violence, cruelty and possessiveness only shows the limitation of religion but it does not invalidate its role in man's moral education.

The liberal protestants in their blinkers went enthusiastic and tried to build up a different image of Christ from the traditional image of him as divine being calling upon mankind to accept him as their saviour for salvation. They rejected as incidental to the supernatural pattern of thought that religious life was love for salvation and not love of neighbour. These Liberal Protestants selected Biblical stories, and parables, especially Sermon on the Mount to make up the image of Christ as moral genius and his ethics

as non-prudential. Kant, for example, after giving a shattering blow to traditional theology and incisive criticism of the proofs for the existence of God, aligned himself with those who located the core of Christianity in its morality. Hegel also toyed with this idea in his early essay, 'The Life of Jesus'.

In the 20th century we may refer to similar attempts by the Cambridge philosopher, Prof. R.B. Braithwaite; Prof. Paul Van Buren, theological teacher at Temple University; and the best known theologian turned social reformer, Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr.

Prof. R.B. Braithwaite holds that religious assertions are not scientifically verifiable and therefore not cognitively true. But these assertions have a use. The plain and simple use of religious assertions is to arouse allegiance to a set of moral principles. There is difference between religious assertions and moral assertions. The religious assertions are moral principles accompanied by particular stories, parables, whereas moral principles are abstract moral claims on us. "A man is not, I think, a professing Christian," says Prof. Braithwaite, in his book, *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy*, "unless he both proposes to live according to Christian moral principles and associates his intention with thinking of Christian stories, but he need not believe that the empirical propositions presented by the stories correspond to empirical facts.**

He holds that Christianity preaches an agapistic way of life or ethics of unrequited love. To say that God is love is that we should cultivate love in interpersonal relations as described in I Corinthians.

Prof. Braithwaite is too selective in his pick up from the text of the Bible to be true that religious assertions are moral assertions. Take 'Buried treasure' in Matthew xiii. 44. On close examination we see that the story is about a piece of trickery and deceit. In 'Unjust Steward' (Luke xvi, 1-8 and 9-11) a fundamental immoral action is taken to exemplify the singleness of mind appropriate to the time of judgement. It is impossible to convert the originally eschatological story into an edifying moral one. The teachings of

Jesus are fundamentally eschatological and cannot be made the basis of a moral way of life. "4

Again, how many prayers in the Book of Common Prayers ask for cultivation of disinterested love? Very few. Quite the contrary prayers often ask for protection against danger and even enemies. Again, not a single word is said of love in the great creeds of the church.

Paul M. Van Buren is a very distinguished theologian teacher at Temple University, Philadelphia. He carries to logical conclusion Bultmann's demythologizing of the Christian gospel. According to Bultmann the Christian message is hindered from reaching the Christians because of the mythological beliefs of the Virgin Mary, miracles and resurrection etc. If the mythological portion of the text is removed and rejected, the message of Christianity can shine beautiful and bright. However Bultmann holds that, belief in God is the highest truth.

Paul M. Van Buren goes further in his great book. *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*. He shows how secular meaning can be given to the gospel. According to him whatever men were looking for in looking for God is to be found by finding Jesus of Nazareth. The gospel when shorn of supernaturalism speaks to man from the perspective given by Jesus. Van Buren speaks of his view as 'Christological Humanism'.

The interpretation of Christ as a moral genius made by Liberal Protestants after rejecting traditional supernaturalistic interpretation of Christ as son of God, primarily concerned with salvation of those who believed him to be the son of God, came to grief in the 20th century. Although the liberal protestants had themselves begun the ambitious programme of Biblical exegeses during the nineteenth century and in particular 'the quest for the historical' Jesus, their own researches proved to discredit their own image of the historical Jesus. Jesus as preaching a liberal ethical creed. Schwetizer and other Biblical scholars argued that when set in historical context the Sermon on the Mount had to be read as interim ethics, not designed for a practical politics of love even for Christians but for a brief

period between the crucifixion and last Judgement. Jesus himself appeared to be a forbidding world-denying figure hardly a nineteenth century social reformer with whom Liberal Protestants could easily identify.

Reinhold Niebuhr who is occasionally hailed as America's greatest thinker in spite of his major differences from Liberal Protestants on certain points, shares with Liberal Protestants that what is focal in Christ's life and teaching is his ethics. In Niebuhr's book *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, there is a chapter on 'The Ethics of Jesus' in which he tries to show that Christian ethics is non-prudential ethics, it is not an ethics of rewards and punishments. Like Goldsmith's master, he argues for non-prudential character of ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, though promise of reward accompanies most of the sayings of the Sermon.

There are two questions that must be faced and answered separately: historical and philosophical. 1. Do the religious utterances truthfully admit of being interpreted as moral assertions? Is it historically true that what theistic religions have been preaching is ethics in mythical stories? It appears that it is forced interpretation to consider that theistic religions have all along functioned as vehicle for ethics of love of neighbour.

2. Is it philosophically valid to identify religion with morality? No. A man can be perfectly upright and yet lack religious dimension to his life. Moral categories and religious categories are incommensurable. There is something more to religion than righteous moral conduct. Religion involves feelings of awe, reverence, love and worship whose object need not be supernatural. If we accept this view that the object of highest value can be natural in origin, governed by natural laws, our anxiety to identify religion with morality will disappear. We will search for a God within the natural world. This leads us to the third response.

(7)

3. Reclaiming of Religion through Re-definition of God - There is a third group of thinkers who hold that though religion has a conspicuous place for

morality, it cannot be reduced to it. Reverence, awe, love and worship are invaluable and inescapable ingredients of religious experience and therefore God is essential to them. The idea of God is not to be rejected but to be given a deeper meaning to make religious experience worthy for modern secular man.

The ordinary interpretation of the idea of God is crude anthropomorphism. A theist to impress me with God's responsiveness to his prayer told me that he was anxious to get a coupe in a train back home. There was little chance to get it due to heavy booking. He prayed to God to make possible for him to get a coupe so that he could pray in the train in early morning. Suddenly, he was informed by his assistant that a coupe was now available for him. Another couple said that they were not getting a child. The doctors had failed to help them. They continued to pray. They have been blessed with a male child. Some parents are found to thank God if they are able to find a good boy for the marriage of their daughter. The in-laws of a boy were all praise to God to save their son-in-law from a very serious accident. God saved their son-in-law from being crippled in both legs. This interpretation of God, hopping from one job to another and still worse assisting his highest devotees (bhaktas) to perform miracles, i.e, to break the laws of Nature which He has Himself made, is crude and childish. Where is a law-maker who asks his lieutenants to break the laws he has made! The idea of God as a problem-solver and need-fulfiller, whether the problem or the need is physical or social or even spiritual, is unacceptable to modern understanding of Nature, which is found to have within it processes for solving these problems. The whole picture of God given in the Bible as a celestial manager-director is to be given up. Bishop J.A.T. Robinson in his book entitled *Honest to God* published in 1963, tells his Christian brothers to give up three-storeyed world-view. The whole idea of God in heaven is to be discarded. The book had unparalleled success in the Christian world, for it relieved the average Christian of the traditional interpretation of God as supernatural providence, which is so repugnant to his scientific understanding of the universe (as law-bound) in which he is

educated. The book removed the split in the minds of the people divided between traditional belief in God and the scientific world view by rejecting the traditional view of God.

Let us now consider two attempts to re-define God which try to make traditional theism acceptable to scientific understanding. We must be clear as to what is the traditional concept of God whose re definition is attempted. The Christian faith is that Jesus addressed God in prayer as 'Father' and encouraged his disciples not only to say 'Our Father' but also to ask God for things, notably bread. It is a belief in the reality of a supernatural being endowed with transcendental powers and worth, together with the complex emotive attitude of worship intrinsically appropriate thereto. Schubert Ogden in his lecture 'The Reality of God' sets out to re-define God. He says, "We are not justified in rejecting God as such, but in casting aside the supernaturalistic conception of his reality, which is in fact untenable, given our typical experience and thought as secular man" (p 19) He admits there is incompatibility between our experience as secular men and theism of traditional faith. He seeks for a re-definition of God so that every one must in some sense believe in him and in no way deny him. He attempts a re-definition of God which even an atheist cannot but accept. The locus of experience of God, Ogden holds, is an original confidence in the meaning and worth of life' (p. 34) and of 'our invincible faith' (p. 36) that our moral choices make a difference. He further holds that the primary use or function of God' is to refer to the objective ground in reality itself of our ineradicable confidence in the final worth of our existence (p. 37).

It is one thing to have experience of 'meaning and worth of life in the naturalistic world in which we live, move and have our being and another thing to have experience of God (as reported by theistic mystics) as an encounter with a personal, supernatural being. The Christian faith which Schubert Ogden wishes to save is not saved if the idea of God functions as ineradicable confidence in the worth of our existence'. A secular humanist has ineradicable confidence in the worth of human existence but denies

that this faith has ground in God.

It is true that by identification of God with ineradicable confidence in the worth of human existence, no atheist can deny the existence of God³ but God has lost his definition and description and become non-entity. Take a crude example. If one were to say God means having a nose on human face, no one can deny that there is a God for nobody can deny that there is a nose on human face. "It is not difficult to find some element in reality which is basic to human existence as we know it and call that element God. But we empty the concept of God from historical description and render it unhelpful for purpose of Church sermons."⁵

All those theologians who attempt to re-define God in such a way that an atheist cannot deny it, forget that they have surrendered to the atheist's view that there is no aspect of experience of reality which answers to supernatural personal being of God, entirely other than the world in which we move, live and have our being.

Ogden does bring God to earth by giving evolutionary interpretation of God. But this also does not avail. Let us understand what Ogden does mean by saying that God is the objective ground of the reality itself, of our ineradicable confidence in the worth of life. He holds to process view of reality in contrast to a view of absolute transcendentalism. According to him change or becoming is not appearance or inferior in existence but is the essence of reality. This process world view is process of evolution. The theists interpret evolutionary process as process of divinity unfolding itself. Ogden holds that God is not to be understood in the old static unchanging categories,

"Rather," says Ogden, "he, too, is understood to be continually in process of self-creation, synthesizing in each new moment of his experience the whole of achieved actuality with the plenitude of possibility as yet unrealized"

³ It is not true in the case of atheist Sartre. He holds that man is a useless passion. Human existence is absurd.

Theological sleight of hand is seen here in the sudden appearance of the pronoun 'he' to describe a reality which earlier had been described as 'it'. The evolutionary process in the natural world which science studies and the secular man believes in, is not a conscious process, or a conscious entity seeking fulfillment on the pattern of human development.

The second attempt to re-define God is that of Paul Tillich. He has raised the status of divine being higher than traditional theism. According to traditional theism God 'is a being greater than that which cannot be conceived.' It defines God as the top most being conceivable. Tillich holds that God is not a concrete entity, a being at all. He is above all beings. He is being itself, beyond essence and existence. His universality of being is not that of a class or genus. He is being in itself. He is the ground of all beings without being any one of them. Let us put it in everyday language. There are persons in the world. Some are superior to others in qualities like knowledge, power, and goodness and God is the supreme most of all. He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent. No person can have qualities superior to Him. Tillich holds that if God is a person or an entity, however superior, the atheists are right in asking where he is, what is the proof of his existence. So he lifts God above this objection. The divine being is not a person, he is the ground of all persons and things. He is existence itself. Nothing can be said about it except that it is ultimate. No predicate is true of it.

There are objections to this view. 'Being' or 'existence' is not a quality or a predicate which adds to the definition or identifiable description of a thing. If I say "bring the book with a red cover from the books on the table", you know how to choose the book. 'Red' is a descriptive or identifying quality or predicate but if I tell you "bring the book from among the.. books" you can ask, "which is the book you are asking for?". Some sense can be allowed to the talk about 'justice itself or "beauty itself' but there is no sense in talking about being itself" for existence or being is not a quality at all.

Further, this view holds that God as worshipped in the churches is symbolic

of 'Being itself'. Since God is a symbol, it is neither true nor false. Symbols have subjective significance, and express traditional sentiments like 'Bharat Mata'.

To say that 'x' is a symbol of 'y' means that 'x' tends to evoke feelings appropriate to 'y'. To say that 'Bharat Mata' is a symbol of Indian tradition and culture of Hindus, is to say that it evokes the same emotions and sentiments in us even when it is presented outside our country. Since Being itself is without any character, it can evoke no feeling or emotion. So if God is a symbol of Being itself', it could not evoke any feeling of reverence, awe and love for the Being itself does not evoke any response since it is without any character.

Again, no religious man is prepared to accept status of a symbol for his God. He asserts God to be the highest truth and showers his love on him.

Tillich holds that the doctrine of Being itself is an abstract form of the great commandment: "The Lord, our God, is one, and you shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength". Here the word 'The Lord' has personal meaning and there is full shower of love for him which is not possible for Being itself". The Lord God' is not saved for religion by this intellectual sophistication of God with make-belief of Being itself which is meaningless joining of words.

(9)

4. Naturalists' Response to Religion - The fourth response is by some Naturalists who reconstruct religion. According to them it is futile to think that any re-definition of God of religion can save classical theistic and supernaturalistic religions from being rejected. All the frantic efforts to reform or re-define the concept of supernatural being of God arises out of the fear neurosis that if God is rejected as superstition nothing remains available to serve and satisfy the invaluable religious feelings of awe, reverence, love, worship and dedication. The naturalistic thinkers on the contrary hold that after rejection of the supernatural, religion is

emancipated and a new phase of religion emerges which can raise and realize human destiny. To put it in the words of J. Huxley, "For my own part the sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a supernatural being is enormous. I see no other way of bridging the gulf between religion and the scientific approach to reality." An Indian atheist, Principal P.V. Kanai, puts it, "If God-belief is expelled from the world of religion all that matters remains. Nature remains, its infiniteness, its eternity, and its indestructibility remain. Its mighty process of evolution which has been behind all building work remains. Its moral and spiritual order remains. Those who live the life of justice by being fair and square towards things, objects and persons in Nature, prove that the moral order is and remains in Nature. Those who develop higher or altruistic feelings and sacrifice and surrender all their powers and possessions in promoting the welfare of the existences and kingdoms of Nature prove that the spiritual order is and remains in Nature and that they are moral and spiritual who develop feelings of justice and altruism in cosmic relations.

Cosmic relations remain and the kingdom of moral and spiritual life is there for man to gather and grow."

(10)

IV. Six Main Naturalistic Reconstructions of Religion

There is a large number of naturalistic reconstructions of religion. We have picked some which are typical :

1. Comte's Religion of Humanity - The first attempt in the European world to reconstruct religion on naturalistic or scientific basis originated with Auguste Comte (1789-1857). He was born at Montpellier in France. His parents were Royalists and Catholic. As a boy of fifteen, he rejected Catholic religion and worked for Republican government for which he had to suffer in his career. He was a man of extraordinary genius in his understanding and social consciousness. At the age of about 20, he came in contact with Henri Saint Simon which oriented his interest and devotion

to reconstruction of society. Whereas Henri Saint Simon's genius was romantic, Comte's genius was essentially scientific. He thought that reconstruction of society needs to be based on the development of the science of society. He founded the science of Sociology as a separate and independent discipline. Earlier to him physical sciences were discovering laws of Nature. He worked on the basis that there are laws of social life as there are laws of physical events.

(a) In his study of society, Comte came to observe three stages in the development of human thought. The first stage of thinking is the theological stage in which events are explained not in terms of relation of cause and effect but as caused by the will of gods or goddesses. This earlier stage developed into the stage of belief in one God, whose volition determined the course of events. The second stage is metaphysical or philosophic mode of thought in which God no longer directs the events. It is held that there is power or force inherent in an object which explains its activities instead of God. Instead of God producing and regulating the activity of the plants, each plant is said to have a soul. Aristotle holds that plants have a nutritive psyche which was later called vital principle. Objects do what they do because it is their essence to do so. The third stage of thought is liberated from theological or mythical, and metaphysical or speculative mode of thought. This third stage of thought is scientific. It is study of the uniform inter connection of events. This third stage is called positivism by Comte. He coined this term to emphasize that knowledge must be based on observance of facts and laws of Nature. He calls his philosophy and his religion Positivism.

(b) Religion has passed through the first two stages and needs to enter the third stage with the development of the scientific study of facts and laws of Nature. Religion is to be reconstructed on the basis of facts discovered by sciences. It is to set aside the mythical God of theological mode of thinking and the abstract concept of God - transcendental and immanent of the philosophic mode of thought. The religious feelings of reverence, awe, love, worship and dedication are not to be directed to mythical God but to

Humanity whose existence is verified in every moment of our existence. He thus states in his book *A General View of Positivism* how Humanity is to be the object of worship for mankind in place of God, in the present scientific age.

"The Being upon whom all our thoughts are concentrated is one whose existence is undoubted. We recognise that existence not in the present only but in the past, and even in the future; and we find it always subject to one fundamental law, by which we are enabled to conceive of it as a whole. Placing our highest happiness in universal Love, we live, as far as it is possible, for others: and this in public life as well as in private; for the two are closely linked together in our religion a religion clothed in all the beauty of Art and yet never inconsistent with Science. After having thus exercised our powers to the full, and having given a charm and sacredness to our temporary life, we shall at last be forever incorporated into the Supreme being of whose life all noble natures are necessarily partakers. It is only through the worship of Humanity that we can feel the inward reality and inexpressible sweetness of this incorporation.

Comte brings all the fervour of a religious devotee, earlier expressed by theists for mythical God, towards the living and pulsating reality of human society. Humanity is the Supreme Being, an incorporation in it through love and service is the inexpressible sweetness of harmony. Can religious sentiments go beyond those expressed by Comte in relation to humanity? In the year 1848, Comte brought out a small book entitled *The Catechism of Positive Religion* in which he declared himself as the founder of the new religion of Humanity which was to replace the religion of God.

(c) Comte was one of first to hold to an organic view of society arguing that a society can no more be decomposed into individuals than a surface into lines and lines into points.

The humanity constitutes one great organism though scattered in space and time. The individual as such is an abstraction, for every individual is born as member of a family, then of neighbourhood, city, nation and finally

of humanity which is made up of all nations.

What an individual is to realise is his eternal indebtedness to humanity for his birth, development, culture and creativity. Each one, whatever be his gifts as a genius, remains a child of his time. An individual has to find himself through love and service of humanity, to actualize his unimaginable potentialities.

(d) Religion in Comte's definition consists in full harmony of life. Head and heart must work to realise it. Both must concur to produce true unity of life. Scientific knowledge being universal makes for unity of understanding among mankind. Scientific knowledge being always open to revision keeps alive the spirit of free enquiry and free discussion. It is fundamentalism in thought and conduct that divides humanity. It is the spirit of impartial inquiry of science that builds harmony of human thought.

It is true that pursuit of truth in scientific spirit makes for intellectual unity of mankind but intellectual unity is not enough for social solidarity of humanity. There is a need for moral or emotional unity. The moral unity of humanity is possible because there is sociability in human nature. What is needed for religion is to cultivate this social sensibility into love of mankind. Affection and love are the modes of development of social unity. Man in contributing to the perfectibility of society, feels awakened to some hidden potentialities of humanity as such.

(e) To give organisational shape to his religion of Humanity, Comte adopts the framework of Catholic religion, its rites, its calendar, its festivities and its prayers but fills them with new content and spirit. He takes over the nine sacraments but directs them to humanity. Let us take the sacrament of baptism. The parents would dedicate their child not to the service of God. but to the service of humanity in an impressive ceremony. In place of calendar of Christian Saints he framed a calendar of the contributors to science, arts, literature and religion. The first day of the first month of every year was consecrated to impress that humanity is the positive God, the Supreme being and its service the highest goal. The sermons in the Church

of Humanity were to raise to view the excellences of noble souls who had contributed to human progress in science, art, literature, religion and other fields of human endeavour. Besides these innovations, Comte introduced and emphasized private prayers four times a day. Such prayer consisted of two parts : commemorative and purifactory. In the first part a secular man of religion is to recall some great man and appreciate his contribution. Inspired by the first phase of meditation, the secular man of religion is to ponder over what contribution he can make to society. It is worth quoting Einstein as an example of prayer fitted to a secular man of religion : "Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labours of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received. My peace of mind is often troubled by the depressing sense that I have borrowed too heavily from the work of other men."

Humanity is made up of family, community, social and cultural groups and nations. An average individual is called upon to do good to his family, his community, and his social or cultural group. In bettering relations at any level he upgrades humanity.

(f) What Comte emphasized was altruism as the basic principle of human relations. He was the first to coin this word in European languages. Altruism focuses attention on the good of others rather than of oneself but does not exclude cultivation of personal excellence. However, Altruism is inconsistent with purposeless denial of basic needs. To live for others implies the maintenance of our full powers of service including physical health and cheerfulness of temper. Pleasure is not an evil except when it involves neglect of duty towards ourselves or pain or injury to others.

(g) Comte purged religion, theological and metaphysical, of fear and temptation of hell and heaven or re-birth in fortunate or unfortunate conditions. He shifted the focus of concern from self to humanity. He eliminated the prudential ethics of theism and gave intrinsic value to ethics of love. What should enthuse a secular man of religion is his concern to

contribute, however little, to the unlimited potentialities of progress of humanity.

Comte had considerable influence during his life-time and some churches of humanity were established. However, with time the church aspect of this religion of humanity shrank altogether. However, his religion inspired humanistic societies throughout the world which hold international conferences from time to time. All these humanistic societies hold to the faith that scientific method is the only source of knowledge of what exists and humanistic values of altruistic loves are the true values of life and give meaning and worth to life.

2. Ludwig Feuerbach's Reconstructing of Religion as Anthropology - Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), German philosopher, theologian and moralist can be taken as contemporary of Auguste Comte, who also gave an allied naturalistic reconstruction of religion, consisting of love and service of humanity.

Ludwig Feuerbach was born in Landshut, Bavaria in Germany. He studied theology at Heidelberg and Berlin Universities but in 1835 got himself transferred to philosophy under the influence of Hegel. In the course of his philosophical development he became a critic of Hegelian idealism and built naturalistic dialectic which is well reflected in his philosophy of religion. He interpreted supernatural God in anthropological terms. He demonstrated that talk about God is in reality talk about man. God is another name for the deification of essential predicates of human excellence. "The beginning," says Feuerbach "middle and end of religion is Man"

Religion is the collective dream of mankind in which it worships its own essential nature. How does Feuerbach establish that what religion attributes to God are in fact attributes of man in an ideal state? How

is religion led to misinterpret about its subject? How does religion fall into

the error to mistake human excellences as excellences of God? How does religion come to believe in an external being of infinite excellences and call it God?

Feuerbach makes three propositions to explain this religious illusion about God.

Man has capacity for self-transcendence. For example, we humans can objectify ourselves in an autobiography. In an autobiography our life stands before us as an object outside of us for our review which we touch and re-touch to make it acceptable to ourselves and others.

Secondly we can idealize our virtues. We humans have in us in smaller or greater degree, virtues of compassion, justice, love and disinterested service. We idealize these virtues into perfect form to deify an ideal man in the context of humanity. The Christian doctrine of incarnation is nothing but reflection of the dream of man to be God and the realization that this can be achieved only through love of fellow men. Feuerbach thus writes, "All divine attributes, all the attributes which make God a 'God', are attributes of the species-attributes which in the individual are limited in the essence of the species, and even in its existence, in so far as it has its complete existence only in all men taken together. My knowledge, my will, is limited; but my limit is not the limit of another man, to say nothing of mankind; what is difficult to me is easy to another: what is impossible, inconceivable, to one age, is to the coming age conceivable and possible. My life is bound to a limited time: not so the life of humanity. The history of mankind consists of nothing else than a continuous and progressive conquest of limits, which at a given time passes for the limits of humanity, and therefore for absolute insurmountable limits. But the future always unveils the facts that the alleged limits of the species were only limits of individuals Thus the species is unlimited; the individual alone limited."9

This idealized picture of human excellence as a species has been involuntarily and unconsciously projected into an external object and named as God. God is deification of human essence and excellence. There

is no excellence of God whose prototype is not in man. That which I realize in the understanding as essential, I place in God as existent. God is what the understanding thinks the highest. At first, God is thought of as an object but then he is converted into a subject so that man realizes that he encounters another subject of supreme excellence. He experiences 'I-thou' relationship in intimate communion with his God. Thus God is the acoustic illusion of human consciousness.

By a third process deification of God is carried further. It is a process familiar in romantic love when the lover goes on deifying the beloved and degrading himself to a servile on the mercy of his beloved. Man like Narcissus, falls in love with his own creation and he goes on embellishing it with more and more excellences and in proportion denuding himself of virtues. reducing himself to a contemptible creature of sin and corruption.

Thus in worship of God, man alienates from himself. He becomes 'another', and subordinates himself to his own created God, giving him absolute authority over him. To put in the words of Feuerbach, "religion is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as an antithesis of himself

Disuniting of man from himself is psychologically comfortable to man. He throws the responsibility to realize his own excellence on the grace of God. "The fundamental dogmas of Christianity," says Feuerbach, "are realized wishes of heart...." is pleasanter to be redeemed and made free by another, than to free oneself; pleasanter to make one's salvation dependent on a person than on the force of one's own spontaneity,"¹² However, what is pleasanter is neither good nor true. Feuerbach points out how this disuniting of man from himself has stood in his freedom to grow his excellences, distorted his vision of relationship with fellow human beings and the universe. The business of philosophy is to deliver man from his bondage to God by making him withdraw his projection, that is, deny the existence of God outside of him. "Atheism is the secret of religion itself, says Feuerbach, "What yesterday was still religion is no longer such today;

what today is atheism, tomorrow will be religion. It is freedom offered by atheism that man can attain to true vision of truth and virtue. A religionist's love for his fellow men, for example, is ostensible and illusory since his love for fellow men is in reality love for God. It is by rejection of God that man discovers that the appropriate object of worship is humanity itself. The individual human being is, of course, limited and imperfect. But humanity in its entire stretch from past to future is not limited, nor is it characterized by the imperfections of individual human beings; the religious projection should be directed towards humanity and religion should become the religion of humanity. 14

3. John Dewey's 'Common Faith' - The third important naturalistic reconstruction of religion is done by Prof. John Dewey, philosophy of understanding the human world and solving an American philosopher who gave social function to human problems.

Prof. John Dewey (1859-1952) was born in Burlington, Vermont. He was educated at Vermont and Johns Hopkins Universities. During his undergraduate studies he made acquaintance of Comte through Harriet Martineau's exposition. He was deeply impressed by the Comtean emphasis on science as instrument of social ends. He acknowledges that Comte was an important influence on him and his own position is not inaptly styled as Neo-positivism. More than any other thinker Dewey may be regarded as Comte of the 20th century. However there are important differences in their naturalistic reconstruction of religion.

(a) Dewey quotes a typical religious experience and analyses it to separate what is religious quality in it. A writer says, "I broke down from overwork and soon came to the verge of nervous prostration. One morning after a long and sleepless night... I resolved to stop drawing upon myself so continuously and began drawing upon God. I determined to set apart a quiet time every day in which I could relate my life to its ultimate source, regain the consciousness that in God I live, move and have my being. That was thirty years ago. Since then I have had literally not one hour of

darkness or despair."¹⁵ If we analyse this experience it tells us two things. First, it tells us how the experiencer got over darkness and despair in life and how he gained strength and stability in life. This may be called valuational part of experience. The second part of the experience is that the experiencer interprets that this effect in his life is produced by his relating his life to God. It may be called the interpretative part of this experience.

The two parts of the experience are distinct, separable, autonomous of each other. The valuational part speaks of the effect, that is, readjustment of value attitudes which removed darkness and despair in the mind of the experiencer. The interpretative part gives the causal explanation for the occurrence of the effect. The experience holds that God, the saviour, is responsible for it, that is, his re-adjustment in life. That the two parts are distinct is clear from the fact that disciples of different religions report the same effect of adjustment which brings security and strength, peace and serenity. harmony and peace of mind; but each gives different causal interpretation in terms of his religious deity. What a Christian attributes to his saviour God, a Hindu attributes to Rama or Krishna, a Buddhist to Buddha and a Jain to Tirthankaras. This difference of causal interpretation shows that the valuational part is not tied to any particular theistic interpretation. Further, such valuational adjustment is reported by persons who owe no allegiance to any religion whatsoever. It means it is distinct and independent of all forms of particular belief systems, theistic, non-theistic and atheistic.

(b) Dewey identifies religious quality of experience with its value attitudes which is not to be tied to the belief system of the experiencer. Dewey holds that this religious quality, i.e. value attitude is all that is important and it should be emancipated from the mythical supernaturalistic element of religion.

Let us go back to the religious experience quoted above in which Dewey distinguishes the valuational and the supernatural interpretative aspects of experience. Religionists take the supernatural aspect of experience as

constituting the essence of religious experience. They hold that supernatural aspect of experience is not an interpretation, but direct apprehension of supernatural reality of God. What is peculiar of religious experience is not peace and security, that can take place in some other conditions than the experience of supernatural reality of God or Brahman. The peace and serenity of mind is secondary to the commune with the supreme supernatural being.

The above quoted religious experience is in a minor key, point out the religionists. The best and the highest religious experiences are the mystic experiences in which the valuational element is nominal and even absent. In reply Dewey points out that the interpretation of mystic experience varies so much from culture to culture, time to time that it is not knowable what the mystic experience discloses of reality. Again, scientific methods used in social sciences like anthropology, sociology and psychology have shown how mystic experiences are human in their causation and therefore not revelation of an objective reality of supernatural being. If religion means faith and experience of supernatural being called God, there is not truth in it and, it has no place in the life of the modern man brought up in scientific culture.

We find in Dewey, Comte's law of three stages in human thinking when he holds (a) that the attempt to substantiate spiritual view of the universe is mythologizing of reality, a survival of primitive animism; (b) that all metaphysics is bound to decline and disappear like the theology of which it is the last lingering stage; and (c) that leaving in its stead only a purely positive science of phenomena. Dewey firmly holds that religion as theology is an aggregate of self-contradictory beliefs. Religion in any of the above mythical and metaphysical senses is essentially pre-scientific-an abject submission to a blank reality beyond a surrender which was excusable when man did not know how to handle his environment.

Dewey holds that religion as sui generis supernatural experience is not only

illusory but what is still worse, it endangers the cultivation of valuational attitudes and ideal ends. Let us follow him:

(1) If value attitude of experience is tied to supernaturalistic beliefs which are false and at best doubtful, it weakens or endangers it. It is said that if God is dead, every thing is permitted. This shows how values when tied to God are denied place in human life with the denial of God.

(2) Again, dogmas of supernaturalism divert attention and energies from exploring the actual conditions by means of which ideal ends may be promoted. Theism in pre-scientific period has been cringingly dependent on God for tasks which it is our responsibility to tackle. In the present scientific age, we know how we have solved some of our major problems without recourse to God. 'Dependence on external supernatural powers is counterpart to surrender'¹⁶

(3) It is a mistake of the theologians to think that the ideal ends of justice, affection and truth, need authority, power and sanction of God to make human beings respond to them. These ideal ends have claim to our allegiance and dedication due to their intrinsic nature as ideal ends and need no outside authority." Again, 'the reality of ideal ends and values in their authority over us, is 'an undoubted fact' and needs no mediating power outside of it to enforce them.

(4) In fact the supernaturalistic religions take away motivation for pursuit of ideal ends for they hold that the goods we aim at are already perfectly realised in the divine nature. This belief cuts the nerve of moral effort which is sustained by the belief that in doing good one is contributing to the good of the world unknown to its earlier history.

(5) Analysis reveals that attributing of the power and inspiration for pursuing ideal ends to God is due to the hypostatizing of ideal ends into an existent due to the human tendency to convert the object of desire into antecedent reality. The motivating power belongs to the ideal ends and is projected on to God. 1

(6) Worst of all is the fact that commitment to supernaturalism has led to depreciation of natural relations between husband and wife or parent and child, friend and friend and fellow workers in science, industry and art. They have been regarded as 'dangerous rivals of higher values', 'as usurpation by flesh of the authority of the spirit, as revolts of human against the divine. Such theistic beliefs stand in the way of quality cultivation of values of interpersonal relations.

(c) Dewey's own understanding of the value attitude and perspective of religious experience is that it can be better developed apart from and independent of and total rejection of supernaturalistic religions. The steps in his identification of religious quality of experience with conservation, creation, transmission and rectification of ideal ends are as under: (1) The world in which we human beings are born is present to us not only as a world of facts but also as a world of values, good and bad. There are concrete goods of love and service of family, of fellowship and friendship in social relations, values of science and fine arts in all their forms, in different degrees. It is this value matrix within which our ideal aspirations are born and grown. It is from this source of values that the moral imagination projects as directive criteria and as shaping purposes'.

(2) Our imagination turns some or many of these values of the matrix into aims and ideals of life. These ideal ends move us to action. We know how aims and ideal of social reformers against slavery, untouchability, labour exploitation, denial of equal rights to women, have modified social institutions. Whenever a person is committed to the pursuit of any ideal end, be it scientific, social, artistic, or whatever, his experience attains the kind of fulfilment which has always the characteristics of what is most valuable in religion.

"I should describe this religious faith," says Dewey, "as the unification of self through allegiance to inclusive ideal ends which imagination presents to us and to which human will responds as worthy of controlling our desires and choices."

(3) "Any activity pursued on behalf of an ideal end, scientific, social, artistic or whatever against obstacles and inspite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its values is religious in quality. Many a person, inquirer, artist, philanthropist, citizen, men and women in the humblest walks of life, have achieved without presumption and without display such unification of themselves and of their relations to the conditions of existence. It remains to extend their spirit and inspiration to ever-wider numbers" 20

(4) "Understanding and knowledge also enter into the perspective that is religious in quality. Faith in the continued disclosing of truth through directed co-operative human endeavor is more religious in quality than is any faith in a completed revelation".

It is objected that this view that we can realize our ideal ends without dependence on divinity breeds arrogance and egoism and throws mankind into the jaws of materialism. These are too naive objections.

The feeling of dependence or humility need not be built around supernatural God. Our dependence on forces outside of us and beyond us is manifest to us in pursuit of our ideal ends. We know only too well that our success depends on co-operation of fellow human beings and natural conditions and this checks our arrogance and egoism.

Our sense of awe and reverence for society is aroused in our consciousness at the thought how untold generations of human race have worked to share their achievements and give meaning and significance to our life. We are conscious of the products of co-operation and communication operating among human beings living together.

There is no room for materialism in the cultivation of values of justice, compassion and sense of obligation to social and material conditions in life. These values are part of human nature. We have impulses, however elementary towards affection and service. If bring the same ardour for cultivation of these values which have been harnessed by supernaturalistic

religion for God, a new harvest of values will be reaped bringing richness and dignity to human personality. Dewey's testament of religion is summed up in the last para of his great book *The Common Faith*: "We who now live are parts of humanity that extends into the remote past, a humanity that has interacted with nature. The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by grace of the doings and suffering of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received, that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant."²¹

A Review of Religious Humanists

We have considered three naturalistic reconstructions of religion. They locate the three religious values of reverence, awe, worship, which were earlier directed in God, in human society. Let us have a critical look at them.

Comte makes humanity as the 'Great Being', the ideal object of worship. Religion at its highest level has conceived of its object of worship, i.e. God, to be perfect in goodness and therefore it is hard put to how to account for evil in the world. It desperately tries to whittle down evil by denying it positive character or by reducing it to appearance. So the object worthy of worship is held to be all good without the least predisposition of evil in it. On this standard of Godhood, Humanity cannot claim to be object worthy of worship, for humanity has an aspect of imperfection of cruelty and injustice and positive evil. Humanity which has gone to two World Wars within twenty five years is not entitled to be worthy of worship, though we cannot deny its incalculable contribution to our personality - our birth, education and culture.

A similar objection can be raised against Feuerbach's view who replaces

God first with ideal man and then with potentialities of human species. The concept of God, in its highest reach is concept of being superlatively good and entirely unique in its excellence, it is super-human in excellence. Again, identification of God with human species does not improve the situation. The acts of love of God, or his justice or mercy cannot be equalled with imperfect acts of human love, justice or mercy. Further, in human species there are also acts and predisposition of to bestiality, hatred, genocide, cruelty and injustice.

Dewey is right that ideal ends are felt to constitute our destiny and have rightful claim on our allegiance, obedience and reverence. He holds that God could be thought as unification of ideal values acknowledged at a given time and place. Our criticism is that unification of ideal values is not an accomplished task. The ideal ends do not show even convergence. "On the face of it", says Prof Ronald W. Hapburn, "all goods, all virtues, all forms of beauty are not convergent, or compossible. The goods of society and of solitude, active and passive enjoyments, creating and appreciating the heroic and the unobtrusively decent, the grandly beautiful, the minutely exquisite: these show little tendency to merge in higher syntheses or come to any focus." Further, the ideal ends develop, deepen and change so that divine is said to change. The religious consciousness holds God to be accomplished perfection. But the more serious objection is that human ideal, however exalted, falls short of the attribute of divinity. Divinity is not thought to be a limit to a series of self-superseding ideals. It is held to be a species apart from human excellence. Thus a unified ideal falls short of an object worthy of worship, even if there is unification and perfect realization in it.

Further none of these three humanistic reconstructions of religion takes seriously the non-human side of the natural world as source of value as much as the human side. All the three religious reconstructions take the natural world as background to human drama. But the natural world enters into the very fibre of human existence. Man epitomizes the four orders of existence. Man in its ultimate analysis is development from the physical

world, a quintessence of dust. Man is body first and then anything else. He is an embodied being and therefore harks back to its primeval origin in dust. Man shows with plants the characteristics of life-force. Man has a biology as do plants. Man shares life with animals in his sense activity and instincts. Over and above he enjoys his rationality and social life. Since he is an integration of all the four levels of existence he is part and parcel of the natural world. It is truncated view of man to perceive man in the context of society only. Man and Nature must be considered in intimate and indissoluble relationship for his religious reconstruction. We will consider religious reconstruction of the distinguished biologist, Sir Julian Huxley and the religious genius Devatma who have taken man in the wider context of Natural Evolution.

4. Spinoza's View of Intellectual Love of Nature - Before we discuss Huxley and Devatma, let us consider some scientific thinkers who find that the law-bound character of the universe does evoke and deserves to evoke the religious response of awe, reverence, love and worship. The law-bound character of the universe is as exhilarating in religious feelings for us as secular intellectuals as the idea of God is to an average man of religion. This view appears unacceptable to men of religion who uncritically assume that the object of worship and admiration was and could only be God and if God does not exist, no other object could be object of admiration and worship. The history of religion belies this view. Objects other than "God" have been and are objects that have aroused and do arouse awe, reverence and worship in the highly cultivated religions of Buddhism and Jainism which are both non-theistic. The feeling of sacredness, that is awe, reverence, and worship are aroused by objects of bewildering characteristics. To quote Huxley: "This same high sense of sacredness and transcendent value may be vouchsafed in many ways and in many objects. Some may find it in poetry. Shelley was an avowed atheist and a hater of Christianity, but was obviously of religious temperament. It may come through art or music; it may be vouchsafed through love. It may be found in the pursuit of pure truth. We think of Lucretius, Galileo, Pasteur, Thomas

Huxley. It may be found in the practice of life devoted to the service of suffering humanity, Damien, or Mrs Elizabeth Fry and Dr Schweitzer. Still others as with Father like Richard Jefferies, Wordsworth or Thoreau may find it in the solitude of Nature or again in born patriots in the sanctification of their country."22 The problem is not what can be object of awe and worship, for any conceivable object can arouse religious feelings of sacredness, i.e. awe, reverence and worship. The real problem to be faced is what is worthy object for feelings of awe, reverence, love and worship. These religious feelings can be aroused by a so-called miraculous event, as much as perception of the invariable sequence of events called laws of Nature. Which of them is worthy object of religious feelings? Miracles means a chaotic universe governed by an arbitrary supreme will joining any event with any other event irrespective of their nature. A universe characterised by law makes universe a cosmos where there is invariable and inviolable sequence of events, without being interfered by an agency outside Nature. Which is more worthy of reverence and love, a world of miracles or world of regular order of events determined by their nature?

Take the case of Archimedes. He was anxious to find density of metals. He was taking bath in a tank when the truth dawned on him with the suddenness of lightning. He felt illumined, for it unlocked a character of a thing in otherwise puzzling universe. He ran out of the bath naked, shouting, 'I have found it', 'I have found it. A dark corner of the world had yielded to his understanding. He saw how in a world which is otherwise puzzling, he had found a way to truth. A scientist is besides himself in joy when he discovers a law in apparently disconnected events. A new reverence for the Universe is born in a scientist when he discovers a law in the Universe. He loves the discovered law. He dedicates his life to further development of his understanding of it. His insight into law-bound character of the universe, evokes feeling of numinous awe in him. We take the philosopher Spinoza, who influenced by new experimental science, interpreted the universe as a system of determined events. He interpreted determination as logical necessity. For him the universe was as logical an

order as Euclidean geometry. His intellect felt irresistibly fascinated by this character of the universe. He fell in love with it. He defined man's highest destiny as intellectual love of Nature. (Spinoza uses God and Nature as synonymous terms and speaks of intellectual love of God, but it is in the interest of clarity to say intellectual love of Nature rather than intellectual love of God, for the traditional idea of 'God' has historical meaning of a personal transcendental being outside the natural order of things which Spinoza vehemently rejects).

The intellectual perception of the harmony of laws of Nature became as much object of reverence and love for Spinoza, as God is to a man of theistic religion. Sir Julian Huxley is another great intellectual who felt feeling of wonder and love in relation to the unconscious purposeless, process of evolution. "Self creation of novelty is the basic wonder of the universe, the eliciting of mind from the possibilities of world stuff and its intensification and increasing importance during evolution is basic wonder of life". He experienced the evolutionary process in the universe as the key concept of intellectual delight and emotional satisfaction. Let us understand him.

5. Julian Huxley's Evolutionary Humanism. - Sir Julian Huxley came from a family of biologists.. He was born in 1887, educated at Eton, Balliol College, Oxford and became professor of Zoology at King's College, London. He has carried forward the traditional biological interest and commitment of his grand father. We best quote his autobiographical note in his preface to *The Humanist Frame*: "The idea of evolution had kindled my imagination while I was still at school. As an undergraduate I became a firm Darwinian. As a young teacher, the first public lecture I gave was on the evolutionary relativism of the senses, the second on the critical point or discontinuity between biological and human evolution. In the twenties I became concerned with the idea of progress, as an evolutionary movement in a certain definable direction; and with religion as general human function, not necessarily involving a belief in God or in revelation" 23.

Huxley, like Comte, affirms naturalistic reconstruction of religion. He shows how the functions of theistic religions can be best satisfied through interpretation of the universe as evolutionary naturalism. 'Let us jettison the transcendent and we open a new and glorious phase in the development of religion'.

The function of all religions, diemonic or theistic, is two fold. They indicate to man his place and position in the universe and his relation and role in it, i.e. it describes to him his destiny. All developed religions speak of salvation, liberation, Nirvana, Moksha. All these ideals describe man's destiny. What is explicit in the case of the developed religions or classical religions is equally true of primitive religions though the place and position of man on earth and his role in it and his destiny is ill or poorly defined.

Further, diemonic or theistic religions also tell man what he is to do while on earth. He is to observe certain rituals and moral commands of God in their conduct. Each command of God is felt as sacred by him. Every instruction of God is held absolutely authoritative.

In short, a man of religion, whether primitive or civilized, is a man who conceives his object of worship as sacred, performs certain rituals in celebration of it and takes to certain ethical conduct as part of his religious thought pattern.

Huxley's position is that if the idea system of supernaturistic religion is replaced by the idea system of evolutionary understanding of the universe and man, then our understanding of our destiny, our religious feeling of sacredness, our ritualistic performance and ethical conduct will find true and richer satisfaction.

The idea of God is rejected by Huxley, like Comte and Dewey, as pre-scientific, as born in ignorance and helplessness. Science has shown how explanation of cosmology in terms of doings of God is false in toto. "I submit," says Huxley, "that the discoveries of physiology, general biology and psychology not only make possible but necessitate a naturalistic

hypothesis in which there is no room for supernatural." The events in the universe are found to have their cause in other events and there is no place or room for supernatural factor outside natural series of events. The universe is self-sufficient and self-explanatory. Hence the notion of God as principle of the explanation of the events of the universe is utterly false.

Fortunately, religion is not logically dependent on theism. There are already religions like Buddhism and Jainism which are non-theistic. Religion is a concern to know man's position and destiny in the universe. Theism is one way in which human destiny is thought out. Since theism stands rejected as superstition, religion should be founded on bedrock of natural world as the only and total reality and human destiny must be defined according to the evolutionary processes in Nature. Huxley offers his naturalistic reconstruction of religion thus:

What is most amazing, evoking wonder, reverence, love, and dedication, is the creative process of evolution. (a) Evolution offers new eyes to understand the universe.

The earth was not created, but evolved. So have animals and plants and human beings. We are made of the same matter and operated by the same energy as all the rest of the cosmos and linked by genetic continuity with all the other living inhabitants of this planet. Animals, plants and micro-organism are all our common or remote kin, all parts of single branching and evolving flow of metabiological protoplasm.²⁴

(b) Thus evolution relieves us of the feeling of alienation from the natural world. We have not come from another world and this earth is not a tavern or stop over for the world of God. The natural world is not only world of our birth but of ultimate destiny. This world in which we are born is our first and last home. We and Nature belong to each other. All flights from this natural world are flights into fancy, into nothingness.

(c) Evolution explains man's place and position in the universe and his destiny. It tells us that there has been a process of evolution from

inanimates to animal existences. In the animate existences there has been evolution of dominant type of beings, who have branched off again and again. In the process of animal evolution the human species has appeared as the highest dominant types of mammal. It is in man that evolution has become self-conscious. Earlier to man evolution was a mindless, purposeless process. Again, before man's appearance evolution took place through acquiring new biological equipment. New spurt in evolution was through the appearance of a new species with difference in physiological equipment. With the appearance of man, there is change in the mechanism of evolution. Now onward further evolution is psycho-social. It operates by the mechanism of cultural tradition which evolves the cumulation of self-reproduction and self-variation of mental activities and their product. Accordingly major steps in the human phase of evolution are achieved by breakthrough to new dominant thought pattern of mental organisation instead of physiological or biological organisation. There was a time when men entertained magical pattern of thought. This was succeeded by theistic pattern of thought of medieval period. Today we have discarded the theistic thought pattern or idea system and we have developed scientific thought pattern or idea system. There is a world of difference between the understanding of a primitive man who thought that potatoes do not boil on a hill station because there is a devil in the pot and the modern school-going child who knows that potatoes do not boil at high altitude due to low boiling point.

(d) The evolutionary process opens to us our true place and position and our destiny. Man as a species is now in a position and role to guide the evolutionary process to higher excel lences. It is his sacred duty and glorious opportunity to be an architect to draw and work out fascinating blue prints of relation between man and man and between man and the three other worlds of animals, plants and the inanimate world.

"Biology, I repeat," says Huxley, "has thus revealed man's place in nature. He is the highest form of life produced by the evolutionary process on this planet the latest dominant type, and the only organism capable of further

major advance or progress. Whether he knows it or not, whether he wishes it or not, he is now the main agency for the further evolution of the earth and its inhabitants. In other words, his destiny is to the cosmic process, to be the instrument of further evolutionary progress on the planet.²⁵

(e) Man can find the best utility for his gifts of knowledge and reason, imagination and sensitivity, capacity for wonder and love for comprehension and compassion, for inspirational and moral effect'; in the service of the evolutionary process. There cannot be greater destiny for man than to be ceaseless architect of this planet. All ancient religious ideals of destiny for man pale before this evolutionary role, bestowed to him by the process of evolution.

Huxley holds that human destiny revolves round three things: Science, Art, and Religion under the light of evolutionary process.

6. Devatma's Dev Dharma as Evolutionary Reconstruction of Religion - In the end we will consider the view of Devatma whose legal name was Shree Satyanand Agnihotri (1850-1929). He was born in Akbarpur, District Kanpur, in the Uttar Pradesh, India⁴. After his education at his village school he sought and got admitted in Thomson Engineering College at Roorkee at the age of about 16 years. He was temperamentally a man of religion. During his college days, he found his guru in the most saintly person of Shri Shiv Dayal Singhji, the Curator of the Central Instrument Depot at the College, who initiated him in the Vedantic interpretation of the philosophy of Gita. At the age of 23 years he was appointed as a teacher at the well-known Government School, Lahore, the capital of the Punjab (now in Pakistan). However, his primary interest and engagement was not teaching. He joined

⁴ I have given comparatively more space to Devatma's biographical details of his journey to naturalism and naturalistic reconstruction of religion in view of the fact that he has not found place in encyclopedias and anthologies on Indian thinkers. There is therefore, no easily available literature on him and his philosophical reconstruction of religion due to apathy and hostility of the religious renaissance of Brahmanvada in the country in the 19th century. Again, of all naturalistic reconstructions, his presentation is more detailed of the four aspects of religion - theology, its study of human personality, its analysis of the problems of religion, the duties and prohibitions in all relations to the four orders of existence, its ritualism and ceremonies connected with various stages of life.

the most reformed religious movement of Brahma Samaj and within a year became its Acharya or missionary enthusing people with ecstasy of pure theism and advocating social reforms. At the age of 37, in the year 1887 he founded his own religious society of Dev Dharma.

Even though a God-intoxicated founder of the religious society of Dev Dharma, his progressive soul got forcefully drawn by the scientific philosophy. He studied Spencer's First Principles, Henry Drummond's Outline of Cosmic Philosophy and Darwin's Origin of Species. He was caught by the new naturalistic outlook. At the age of 45, that is in the year 1895, he gave up his belief in God and the supernatural world and came to believe Nature to be primary relation for his personality. He writes "I who was earlier a God-believer (Brahmavadi) became a Naturalist (Vishavavadi). In the new light of truth I came to think and feel Nature to be my primary relation, which I had in my erroneous belief considered as secondary in relationship. I dissociated myself from the fictitious creator and ruler and established my true essential relationship with true and real Nature. Two years before he rejected his belief in God, he wrote a poem which expresses his pro-attitude of kinship amounting to religious intoxication with the natural world as such.

"O Nature ! may I get united with thee,

May I establish harmony with thee.

Making Devatva my basis,

May I deepen day-by-day my love for thee.

Thy birds possess variegated colours,

And they sing melodious songs;

The fishes play in water, Flowers, ivys and green leaves,

When seen by me fill my heart with delight,

The animals graze and loiter in jungles,

The butterflies hop from-flower-to flower,
I want to love them all.
The dawn of sun's light at day-break,
The beauty of stars at night
And the beautiful sight of the moon-light,
Fill my heart with nectar of life..... etc., etc.

Jivan Path. (Hindi Monthly) April 1950.

"The longing that I had expressed in that song of my heart", says Devatma, "to establish my higher harmonious union with Nature was at last realized when I was liberated from the false belief of the so-called creator and master of this Nature. "

Devatma now came to commit himself to scientific method as the only true method of truth investigation in all fields of non-formal studies including religion.

He writes, "After renunciation of the false belief in God, a new chapter opened in the evolution of my life. Having stepped into this new world of thought, it became the most essential task for me to study on the one hand, the nature of the universe and on the other hand, the nature of man who is part of this universe. From now onward Vishva Tattwa (Philosophy of the Universe) and Manushya Tattwa (Philosophy of Human Personality) became the chief concerns of my study. The scientific methods of investigation which were so imperative for the researches into these domains, gradually acquired sovereign sway over my heart. The love of experimental investigation gradually developed in me to such an extent and it had so entrenched itself in me through my study of logical principles that there was no room left in my mind to entertain any mythical or purely speculative belief. 28 He repeats his commitment to the scientific method

when he says" After I had rejected the belief in God, and the scientific method had become completely dominant in me, only that belief became worthy of acceptance by me which was verified by this method. No belief remained true for me because it was ancient or modern, current or uncurrent, authoritative, Indian or foreign. Whatever belief was tested and supported by the scientific method alone was worthy of acceptance as true and it became my central ideal to discover and attain scientific knowledge."

Difference between Devatma & Other Naturalists

There is a difference between the western thinkers who have presented naturalistic reconstruction of religion and Devatma. None of these western thinkers whose reconstructed naturalistic religion we have considered belonged to the field of religion as such. Their field of specialization was other than religion. Comte originated and worked in the science of sociology. Feuerbach, Dewey and Spinoza were distinguished philosophers in their own fields. Julian Huxley was a distinguished biologist. Devatma's field of specialization was religion from the start of his career. He had no other career except religion. He was full-time engaged in the field of religion, not as a theologian in a university, but as a practising founder of a religion. His distinction is that he reconstructed religion from inside his practising religion. His was not an outsider's view of religion but inside view of the character and institution of religion.

Again, of all thinkers of the West, Comte alone attempted to work out all the four aspects of religion. He proposed Humanity as the object of worship. He adopted the Catholic religion's prayer and sermons but with humanistic content and end. He laid down the ethics of altruism. He set up church of Humanity and declared himself founder of it. But none of the other naturalistic thinkers laid down all these four parts of an organised religion, They were primarily interested in discovering new location of values in place of God, for the satisfaction of their religious feelings of awe, reverence, love, worship and dedication, earlier felt claim to be evoked by God. Dewey rejects institution of religion altogether to have any role in

human concerns. What is religious in a religion can be better cultivated in the pursuit of any work of ideal end without reference to worshipful being. A scientist, an artist, or a social worker can have religious quality of experience in the pursuit of his professional commitment.

The institutional, ritualistic and ceremonial side of religion is also absent in Feuerbach and Spinoza in their pursuit of human destiny through love of humanity and intellectual love of Nature respectively. Huxley does recognise urgent need of the institution of religion. But he holds that it is not the function of a scientist as such to work out its theology, morality involved in human destiny, ritualism or ceremonies for cultivation of reverence, love, worship, and organisational structure of religion. All that science can do is to offer its ever-expanding acquisition of knowledge.

However, Huxley stipulates six conditions which an emergent religion is to satisfy to meet the demands of fulfilment of human destiny.

(1) 'The emergent religion of the near future is to take advantage of the vast amount of new knowledge produced by the knowledge explosion of the last few centuries in constructing what we may call its theology - the framework of facts and ideas which provide it with intellectual support. Its theology must be naturalistic and scientific. 30

(2) 'It is to be evolutionary. It must help us to think in terms of an overriding process of change, development and possible improvement, to have our eyes on the future rather than on the past.... to find support in the growing, spreading, preaching body of knowledge instead of the rigid frame of fixed dogma or ancient authority.* 31

(3) 'The new emergent religion is to have a background of reverence and awe in its belief system and must seek to keep alive man's sense of wonder, strangeness, and challenge in all his particular dealings with the general problems of existence.¹²

(4) 'It should be able, with our increased knowledge of mind to define man's sense of right and wrong more clearly so as to provide better moral

support.33

(5) 'The relation with which (an emergent religion) must attempt to deal with are the relation of mankind with the rest of external nature, the relation of man's individualised self with the rest of his external nature and the relation of individual man and woman with other men and women and their communities.³⁴

(6) 'All religions provide for some ceremonial sanctification of life, especially of events of birth, marriage and death and those marking the transition from one stage of life to another, like initiating or the taking of a degree; the new emergent religion must continue to do this, though it must translate the ceremonial into terms that are relevant to the new vision and the new circumstances of his life ³⁵.

As an evolutionist Huxley holds: 'I am sure, that the world will see the birth of a new religion. Just how it will develop and flower no one knows but some of its underlying beliefs are beginning to emerge (as stated above).' We quote him further: "How that religion will take form, what rituals or celebrations it might practise, whether it equips itself with any sort of professional body or priesthood, what symbols it will adopt that is something no one can prophesy. Certainly it is not a field in which the scientist should venture."³⁶

Devatma is a religious genius with absolute commitment to evolutionary naturalism, who has meticulously built a new edifice of naturalistic religion with scientific theology, scientific system of morality related to human destiny, new ritualism and celebration to cultivate religious feelings of awe, reverence, love and worship towards higher manifestation in Nature'. Let us study his naturalistic reconstruction of religion which he calls Dev Dharma.

The problems of human destiny are two-fold: social and personal. All the naturalists before Devatma concentrated on social problems. They thought that the function of religion was to rebuild a just and compassionate society. We take Huxley's case. He is primarily concerned

with social and political problems such as population explosion, consumption explosion leading to over depletion of natural resources, the under-privileged section of world population etc. The problem of interpersonal relations, say between parents and children, brothers and sisters, husband and wife or between relatives on paternal or maternal side, between neighbours are marginalised. The problems of inner life as to how to reduce or eliminate feelings of hate, envy, rage, aggressiveness, selfishness, ego-love, greed and lust for power that are in major part responsible for the epidemic of friction, bitterness, disharmony among fellow human beings are left to solve themselves. Again, how to grow fellow feelings of appreciation and creation of beauty, feeling of disinterested service of society, is nowhere focal. Devatma's main concerns are the marginalised, ignored and unattended problems of person-to-person relationship. This requires study of human personality or human soul and sets task for religion to seek their solution.

Human soul can be best understood and its problems solved in the context of the nature of the universe in which we human souls are at present stationed which theists even admit.

Devatma holds, with other naturalists, that Nature and Nature alone is real and belief in anything apart or above it, is fictitious. He completely rejects the dualism between the natural and the supernatural world. Nature is one and only terra firma of reality.

Nature consists of units of matter and energy and their relation is inseparable. There are no disembodied beings. So there is no God or disembodied souls.

All embodied beings are subject to the law of change. There is nothing outside the world of change. So there is no changeless God or souls.

The change is either evolutionary or devolutionary. Every embodied being is getting better or worse in every moment of its action. Human soul is not only part of Nature, but product of Nature like any stone, plant or

animal. It has no privileged position for its origin, and is under the laws of growth, development and degeneration. Its total being is subject to the process of evolution and devolution. Its soul is liable to complete extinction. It is not immortal by its intrinsic nature.

Man stands differentiated from other animals in his gifts for reasoning, imagination and language. He can accumulate his contributions and communicate them to others of his generation and coming generations. These differentiations are vouchsafed to him by the process of evolution and they put him under obligation to serve the process of evolution. What stands in the way of man to enjoy the destiny of participating and contributing to the evolutionary process through building constructive and harmonious relationship with the four orders of Nature: the human, the animal, the plant and the inanimate worlds? To answer this puzzle of relationship between man and evolution, Devatma takes to the study of the following questions on human soul and religion.

Nature of Human Soul

1. What is the nature of human soul?
2. What is the relation of human soul to its body?
3. What are the various forms of changes the human soul undergoes according to the law of change?
4. How are changes produced in human soul?
5. What are the consequences of continuous higher changes which gradually occur in human soul?
6. What are the consequences of continuous lower changes which gradually occur in human soul?
7. What is religion after all about which different theologies give different and sometimes mutually self-contradictory teachings?
8. How is man related to religion? Does religion connote specific state of

soul-life? If so, what is this specific soul life and by what criterion it can be known?

9. How can this specific soul life be cultivated?

10. What is worship? Do we need this spiritual exercise for religious life?

Devatma accepts biological origin of man. Both his body and soul are the result of the coalescence of sperm and ovum. He rejects all metaphysical views of soul as eternal, unborn and self-existent, unchanging in character. Soul is nothing but life-force and it is determined in its origin and career like other living beings by the laws of change, of evolution and devolution. 37

Like a medical man Devatma sets out to discover: what are the laws of health and strength of the human soul? What are the causes of weakness and death of the soul? How can man meet the challenge of ill-health and death of his soul and cultivate health and strength of soul? The laws of the health of the human soul are the moral laws. The violation of the laws of health constitute immorality or sin.

Devatma's answer to these questions is that human psyche or human life-force or organism of human soul shares with animal psyche and plant psyche, the biological characteristics of building body, maintaining body, nurturing body and reproduction of its own species. 38

As a life-force of a separate species human soul has distinct characteristics too. He has mental powers of intellect, memory, recall, language formation, and a sprinkling of altruistic feelings. of justice, compassion and disinterestedness.39

The Role of Pleasure Principle in Human Soul

The human soul has biological and social urges of food, sex, family life, group life, self-assertion. For example, when his instinct of food is satisfied, the pleasure of satisfaction reinforces the decision for taking more and more of that particular article of food. The principle of pleasure is not the principle of good. They are not congruent. They diverge also. An exclusive

desire for pleasure for a particular eatable, say at a party, may impel the agent to take that dish even knowing that it is not in the interest of his health and of justice to others. He eats more than what he knows his body needs and denies some others of their share. In spite of himself, he is led to satisfy pleasure issuing from one or another desire which works against the health and strength of his bodily organs or interest of social life. Man's transgression of social sex ethics may cause the ill-health of his body and of the soul too. It is not only body which gets diseased due to over-eating or over-indulgence in sex, the soul loses its strength too. A man's over-indulgence shows how his soul or life-force is losing strength to protect its personality from harmful thoughts and actions of over-indulgence leading to the death of the body and the soul. 40

The same is true of psychological urges. We all need recognition of others. When we get it, we begin to desire more and more of it. So we take even knowingly to untruth and undesirable ways to satisfy it.

Take the desire for money. When a person starts earning, he experiences pleasure in this activity. This pleasure may intensify the desire to earn more, he then earns for the sake of earning and he takes to unethical ways like exploiting labour and customers and may grow so miserly as not to spend his money for his own welfare and enjoyment, even for the treatment of his sick body.

When a human soul is obsessed by pleasure of a certain desire, biological or psychological or social, he deviates into untruthful and undesirable ways to satisfy himself and thus harms himself and others in body and soul. Such diseases are called low-loves. When a low love is frustrated it gives rise to low-hatred for factors responsible for the frustration.

In his book *The Dev Shastra*, vol 3 *Devatma* classifies low loves and low-hates into different categories and presents detailed account of the evil and untruthful thoughts and conduct of each low-love and low-hate. He exposes the ugliness of each low-love and low-hatred which develop in mankind."

Low-likes and low-hates cause four kinds of degradation of soul in man:

(i) A man of low-likes and low-hates develops cataract concerning the truths about the health of his soul. His cataract degenerates into blindness if he fails to attend to his cataract. He fails to see that his personality (soul and body) is going down the drain by his low-likes and if he continues to follow his low-likes and low-hates, his personality, both soul and body, will be extinct. A man who takes to bribes, at first feels he is degrading himself. But if the pleasure of the desire to take bribes in him gets hold on him, he fails to see the degradation of his soul.

(ii) A man in the grip of low-like for money or power gets perverted. He regards those who help him in his low desire for money or power, as his friends; and those who warn him against his dubious ways and ruin, as his enemies. He takes good for bad and bad for good.

(iii) A man of low-likes and low-hates invites avoidable suffering to himself. We know how intemperance in food or sex leads to avoidable suffering; how jealousy, greed, and over-attachments lead to avoidable misery.

(iv) A man of unabated low-likes and low-hates loses his personality completely. When a man persists in his low-likes and low-hatreds, he vitiates his soul and if he persists in that, his soul loses its capacity to stay alive. It gets extinct. One of the tasks of religion is to give moksha or freedom from low-likes and low-hates for they breed evils and untruth which eats into the vitality of body and soul, leading to total extinction of the soul and body of the agent. Devatma gives a valuational naturalistic interpretation to moksha. He rejects metaphysical interpretation of moksha as disembodied existence. Moksha is a disease-free state of soul, when soul is no more under the exclusive dominance of the pleasure of desires which harms the agent's own personality and of others through untruthful and evil conduct of life.

Moksha is not asceticism from biological, psychological and social desires. It is to learn to keep desires from deviating into damage to one's ownself

and others. It is the first task of religion. to educate us in this task. The desire for the taste of food is desirable if it is taken in nutritive food. The desire for sex satisfaction is desirable which it is consistent with the laws of health of both partners, respect for the sex rights of partners, and family harmony. The economic activity is welcome so long our exclusive motive is not profit which leads to exploitation of labour and consumer. The desires for recognition is welcome if it keeps to the rule of the game and does not take to shady means. Desires can be educated to keep off the grass, i.e. not to indulge in evil and untruthful ways. So long pleasure is considered a value, not the value, and joins what is good and true, it is desirable to indulge in it. Dev Dharma breaks with asceticism for it accepts pleasure as one of the values in one's decision of conduct.

Further, it is to develop such desires which contribute directly and indirectly to the good of oneself and others. We can divide them into those which mainly avoid harm to others. Non-violence avoids harm to others. Sex purity avoids violating the honour of other persons. Honesty avoids violating the property rights of others. Untruthful speech avoids cheating others. All these virtues help us to keep off the grass. It is not tending the grass. Compassion helps us to reduce human suffering. Justice, legal, social, economic, helps to better adjustment of human relations. Disinterested service helps to raise society to higher level of life for all.

Devatma calls all these virtues altruistic feelings which when developed become higher loves. Higher-loves are accompanied by higher-hates. Compassion is accompanied by higher hate for cruelty. Higher-love for justice is accompanied by higher-hatred for denial of rights to others.

All higher-loves and higher-hates of altruistic men are some of the factors responsible for the evolution of man from his savage state to the present state of civilization. All scientific knowledge, all forms of arts, all institutions of justice and welfare are results of labour of men of higher-love in the field of sciences, arts, literature, education, social justice and compassion. These higher loves are pro-truth and pro-good. They help to

generate world of truth and beauty and society of justice and compassion.

However, these higher-loves and higher-hatreds, inspite of being pro-good and pro-truth, are not free from the influence of craving for pleasure of their satisfaction and therefore lead us sometimes into untruthful attitude (called prejudice in ordinary language), and actions. A man of compassion for the labour be comes partial to their interests and does not hesitate to use untruthful and violent means to serve them. A man of justice may show cruel conduct when compassion is needed. A man interested in some good cause may come to give it priority in scale of values beyond its truthfulness. All these prejudices for certain values served by a person are caused in him by the dominance of the pleasure he finds in their noble service.

Humanity at large is dominated by low-loves and low-hates and this leads it into untruthful and evil conduct and makes it work against the process of evolution. The drive of the process of evolution is the development of life and conduct which is truthful and good, leading to higher harmony between all the inhabitants of our planet - human, animal, plant and inanimate existences. Man needs religion to check his tendency to untruth and evil so that he could avoid damaging whatever little harmony exists in the personal and intra-personal relationships. Again, an average man is poor in his equipment for higher-loves and higher-hatreds. We know how compassion, justice, fraternity and equality are in low ebb in an average human being and this disenables us from posi tive contribution to the process of evolution in actualizing its beneficial potentialities and higher harmony.

Man must be enabled to be free from low-loves and low-hates and cultivate higher loves and higher hatreds to enjoy the destiny of the health and strength of his soul and to be director of the evolutionary process. This is the second task of Religion. Devatma thus defines Religion: "The true Religion consists, on the one hand in man's getting Freedom or Moksha from slavery to (i) ignorance (ii) various lower appetites; (iii) lower passions; and (iv) lower self-love; which impel him to lower courses of conduct in relation to various existents of the different kingdoms of Nature of which

he is a part, and thereby harm them and as a consequence vitiates day-by-day the form and vitality of his own soul and walks on the path of his annihilation; and on the other hand, in evolving all such higher (altruistic) forces in him which lead him to good conduct in various relations in the universe and thereby build the vitality and beauty of his soul-life and enable him to establish evolutionary harmony all around and develop in him the most glorious higher life" 42.

Devatma as the New Manifestation of the Process of Evolution

How can religion discharge its functions? Devatma agrees with Huxley that further evolution in Nature is socio-psychological, i.e. through manifestation of men of genius. We know how the theistic culture is being replaced by the scientific culture. It is through men of science thrown up by the process of evolution. In the same way naturalistic religious culture which can lift man above low-loves and low-hates and cultivate altruistic potential in him is possible through emergence of some religious genius.

Devatma claims that he is the new manifestation of the process of evolution in the field of religion. Let us understand what is his psychology that shows that he is the required *manifestation' (to use Huxley's phrase) to serve mankind for realizing its destiny through dedication to the evolutionary process.

In his autobiography *Mujh Mein Dev Jiwan ka Vikas'* (The Evolution of Divine Life in Me), vol II, he writes: "I was completely free from my very childhood from those soul-destroying great evil feelings (jealousy, vindictiveness, violence and ego love) from which it was necessary to be free due to their antagonism to the sublime loves whose development was to constitute my sublime life. "43

"Whereas no disposition of the soul-destroying passions like jealousy, vindictiveness, violence, and vanity grew in me at all, the instinctive urges which did appear in me did not have dominance over me and therefore I

never became slave to any one of them. This is due to the fact that love of goodness which sprouted and grew in my heart was so dominant from my very childhood that it kept control over every one of my instinctive urges. I could not leave the path of goodness to allow any of my instinctive urges, however pleasureable they were, to dominate me. When there was conflict between them, my love of goodness defeated them and was triumphant. Due to this most glorious and ever-victorious love of goodness I did not and could never become slave of any of my instinctive urges. Hence, I never became-world-worshipper or lost in the things of the world, even though these instinctive urges were very much in me and I lived and moved in the world and maintained my social intercourse. No wonder I was successful to present the example of the process of development of sublime life in me which had appeared in the course of millions of years of evolution, and on whose maturity I could and did commit myself to my unique ideal, adopted my unique life-vow and made all true and necessary sacrifices in its fulfillment." 44

At the age of thirty two, he took his life-vow as under:

May beautiful truth and goodness , My foremost aim represent;

And in the service of the world, May my life be fully spent.

Can anyone of us with human psychology claim to be completely free from the feelings of jealousy, violence and ego love in the form of vanity. Jealousy is as inseparable from our psychology as white corpuscles are from our blood or nails from our skin. An introspection will reveal the presence of these soul-destructive feelings in us both in gross and subtle forms. Meditation reveals many ugly spots of these life-destructive motivations in us.

Can we claim that in the case of instinctive urges we are always able to check their devious satisfaction by us? Are we never without regrets for having acted against our better judgment in the satisfaction of our imperious desires? The pleasure of our desires, innate and acquired,

sometimes intoxicates us and we break out of the boundary of right conduct.

However, it is not enough to be free from destructive feelings of jealousy, vindictiveness, violence and vanity and have complete control over deviations of our imperious instinctive desires from the path of goodness and truth.

The religious genius must have, on the positive side of his character, love of truth and goodness and on the negative side complete hatred for all untruthful and evil thoughts and actions.

Devatma's autobiography describes in detail the origin, development and maturity of complete love of goodness and truth in him. His love of goodness led to development of harvest of virtues and his hatred for evil made him shun evil thoughts and conduct in all forms. His love of truth developed into eight constituents, viz. to speak truth; to go in for unambiguous expression of truth in all circumstances; to acquire true knowledge; to assimilate truth; to strictly keep to promises; to disseminate truth; to espouse truth; to do research in the field of religion. His hatred for untruth took the form of repulsion for all forms of speaking untruth; false promises; assimilating untruth; supporting untruth; hypocrisy; darkness born of untruth; pleasure seeking untruthful satisfaction and all forms of gains deriveable from untruth. Each constituent of the complete love of truth and goodness and complete hatred for all forces of untruth and evil is well described in his autobiography. ** 45

These four kinds of psychological equipment matured in him: the psychology of complete love for the highest soul excellences; love for the study of the nature and laws of soul; commitment to use of scientific method; and perspective to study Nature and man under the laws of evolution and devolution. This four-fold equipment has made him the founder of new religion called Dev Dharma based on the evolutionary process of Nature.

His light as exhibited by his researches of the origin, growth, development and decay of soul reveals to a reverential reader the ugliness of his deviated desires of low-loves and low-hatreds and gives him strength to checkmate them according to his capacity. These teachings reveal to him the beauty of altruistic feelings of compassion, justice, and disinterested service and give him strength to develop them. The light and power generated in him entitles him to be a spiritual object of worship.

Devatma as Object of Religious Worship

The naturalistic philosophies of religion have been looking for some natural object to replace supernatural God which could evoke and satisfy the religious feelings of awe, reverence and wonder and worship. However, these feelings of undoubted values are unfortunately bestowed on bewildering objects of both admirable and condemnable character. These feelings are found to be aroused in primitive tribes by 'mana' (an undefined force, altogether distinct from physical power which acts in all kinds of ways for good and evil) held sacred by them, as Jehovah arouses these feelings in Christians. Therefore Prof. Rudolf Otto takes the objects involved in religious experience as ethically neutral and names them 'numinous'. He offers the phenomenology of religious experience. He analyses it in three constituents: The worshipper holds the holy or sacred power as mysterious, i.e. wholly other in character than the worshipper and beyond his comprehension. Secondly, the worshipper finds the holy power awe-inspiring in its majesty, in its overpowering and overwhelming character. Thirdly, the worshipper both fears and feels attraction for the power held holy or sacred by him.

The progress of religion is to find holy or sacred object of higher and higher values for these religious feelings. So naturalistic religion has to find some object which is most worthy to evoke the numinous experience.

We have studied the 'object' held sacred or holy in place of God by different naturalistic thinkers.

None of them satisfies the character of numinous experience. The object of worship must be 'wholly other than the worshipper. The humanity is certainly a much more adequate object in its excellence than an individual member of it. But it is not wholly other in its excellence. Again, humanity is ridden with evil and is therefore not the most worthy object of worship. Feuerbach reduces God to human excellence, but we have seen how the best of human excellences leans on pleasure and gets infected with prejudices, leading to evil and untruthful behaviour. The intelligibility of the universe as a deductive system of events is a very worthy object of love as pointed out by Spinoza. But if the universe were perfect in values as it is perfect in logic, naturally nothing could surpass it in worth for worship. But evil is as much or more rampant on earth than good. Spinoza reduces evil to privation which is not a satisfactory solution. Huxley is lyrical about evolution as the one single sweep of development towards life and mind. There is enough reason for it. But how can we forget that glorious evolutionary sweep can be viewed with repulsion in certain aspects. Prof. Ronald Hepburn points out that centuries of evolutionary process leading to man have also been centuries of ceaseless animal suffering of killing and being killed. The rejoicing in evolution is no more unmitigated satisfaction as the victory of the Allied forces against Hitler and Mussolini, for we know the World War has meant reckless destruction and more so of sacrifice of thousands of youth on both sides in their unblossomed excellence's.

Devatma satisfies to the highest degree the worthiness to be an object of worship. The worshipper experiences in the excellences of Devrupa of Devatma as 'wholly other than him. He finds Devatma's psychology entirely other than his. He knows how Devatma is free from the feelings of jealousy, violence, vindictiveness and vanity, and is in full control of his instinctive urges which know no deviation in him. The feelings of awe and reverence, love and worship find no limit in a worshipper when he is witness to

Devatma's love of truth and goodness and complete hatred for untruth and evil. The excellence of these psychological forces surpass imagination in their depth, quality, all-pervasiveness and sublimity. In the worship of Devrupa of Devatma he experiences himself to be nothing but 'dust and ashes'.

The Devrupa of Devatma is experienced by his worshipper as most awe-inspiring. It is felt too majestic, too over-powering, too overwhelming and gives the sense of terrific. In spite of the overwhelming character of the Devrupa of Devatma, it is yet felt to be object of irresistible fascination. The experience is one of wonder of wonders that evolution could throw such manifestation to satisfy the highest reach of man's love, and dedication and worship. There is no tinge of supernaturalism in such religious experiences.

How does Dev Dharma Function?

Let us attend to more concrete part of this naturalistic reconstruction of Dev Dharma. The first characteristic of Dev Dharma as an organisation, is to help man to get rid of evil habits of smoking, drinking, gambling, adultery, meat eating, killing, bribe-taking, stealing and suppression of debts and deposits. It initiates a person in its society when a person found to stay free from these evils.

The second characteristic of Dev Dharma as an organisation is to cultivate sense of duty and feeling of service in multiple relations. Dev Dharma holds that the supreme ideal of life for man consists in establishing higher harmonious relations with the cosmos by means of forces of higher life. Man stands in multiple social and natural relationships. He is a son, a brother, a husband, a parent, a member of his clan, community and mankind. He is related to the animal world, the plant world, and the physical world. Since man is structured in multiple relationships, he cannot but act and react in these relationships. Devatma considers man in sixteen relationships to the world. Each of these relations in which man stands can enrich his moral life if he brings altruism to it. Sattvicta or altruism is not a

single feeling. It is a gamut of emotions and attitudes. We are altruistic or sattvic when we have feelings or attitudes of appreciation, gratitude, affection, respect, reverence, justice, faith, disinterested service, reparation, harmony etc. Altruism or sattvicta is the texture of our life when we develop all these feelings in different relationships. The development of altruistic feelings and discharge of our duties in these relations and observation of prohibitions (evil thought and conduct) are called spiritual exercises. Let us take the relation of parents and children. The spiritual exercises for children consist in recalling their love and services, in developing feeling of gratitude and love for them, to feel an urge to serve them in newer and newer ways, to ask for their forgiveness for wrongs done to them. These spiritual exercises are nothing but exercises to cultivate in relations the feelings of sweetness and harmony of love, understanding, joy and service. Similar spiritual exercises pertain to all the relations.

In The Dev Shastra, vol. 4, Devatma works out with the earnestness and dedication of a researcher, the various attitudes, duties and prohibitions in each relation as is done concerning low-loves and low-hatreds and higher loves and higher hatreds in The Dev Shastra, vol. 3.

A month or portion of a month is allotted for meditation in some relation and spiritual practices are recommended in each relation to deepen it for the good of all concerned. The Dev Shastra, vol. 4, is entirely devoted to enlighten and enthuse the devotees to refine their personal relation to all the four orders of existences. It provides a culture of sweetness and light in conduct. These spiritual exercises are found effective to raise humanity a step up towards its destiny of health and strength of the soul and to share in building further the edifice of evolution.

The third characteristic is to up-grade humanity is to cultivate a higher level of disinterested service to the existences of the four orders. We are differently gifted and circumstanced in health, strength, intelligence, character dispositions and in capacities. In society we have the sick, the poor, the handi capped, mentally retarded and morally degraded. All these

are our fellow human beings. If we cultivate feeling of compassion. we reduce suffering in the human, the animal, and the plant worlds. If we cultivate feelings of justice, we work for society in which there is less and less deprivation of rights to the weaker section of society the poor, the women and the children, no less the animals, the plants and inanimate existences. Through the feeling of disinterested service we seek to remove disharmony in inter-personal relations - between parents and children, brothers and sisters, husband and wife etc. We try to lessen in others their low-loves and low-hatreds and cultivate in them higher loves and higher hatreds.

There is a fourth characteristic upward in the evolutionary process which Dev Dharma provides. Just as there is such a thing as education in health consciousness there is need of education in health consciousness of soul. Dev Dharma cultivates atma-bodh, i.e. health consciousness of soul. It enlightens an individual to know the origin of soul, its laws of health and decay; it awakens the individual to the fact that low-loves and low-hates vitiate the soul and bring about its death if one persists in them. Higher loves and higher hates build health and strength of the soul. The ideal for us is atm-gyan (the knowledge of soul) and atm-kalyan (the welfare of soul). There is no place or room for supernaturalism in these concepts of moksha and vikas of the soul. Says Devatma "As a competent doctor and effective medicine are helpful in curing physical maladies of man, in the same way, in order to get freedom from slavery to ignorance, false beliefs, low attachments, and sinful courses and to evolve higher life, every fit soul requires the help of a true preceptor possessed of the highest psychic forces of complete love of truth and goodness and complete hatred for untruth and evil" 46.

Dev Dharma educates humanity in the above four steps of ascent to help it to attain to its destiny of moksha and vikas, which makes it fit to participate and contribute to the process of evolution on earth for new quality of life for all the four orders of existence human, animal, plant and inanimate worlds.

Thus the Church of Dev Dharma is anxious in its sermons and practical exercises to create in its congregations the four steps of ascent, namely, to create hatred for evils of smoking, drinking, meat diet, adultery, gambling, suppression of deposits, bribe taking, theft and killing. It creates the consciousness that development of altruistic attitude and discharge of duties in various relations and disinterested service of society are laws of the health of the soul. It has fixed days to celebrate the last day of the spiritual exercises in each relation. Further, sermons awaken consciousness and concern for soul welfare which helps to check the operation of low-loves and low-hates and strengthen higher-loves and higher-hatreds. Finally, the sermons and teachings highlight the sublime character (Devrupa) of Devatma whose light and power best help understanding and will to know what is evil and to reject it, to know what is good and true and to accept and assimilate it. To repeat, there is no place of supernaturalism in all these spiritual exercises.

There are songs sung together by the whole congregation for experiencing religious emotional appreciation of the sublimity of the Devrupa of Devatma. We can mark the distinction between praise of God and praise of Devatma when we know how Dev Dharma's hymns have different contents. These hymns help the whole congregation to experience religious feelings of awe, reverence love and worship.

The Dev Satotra runs as under:

One who has developed in himself the Devajivana^{5*};

One who propounds the Deva Dharma;

One who brings about the Satya Dharma;

One who establishes the good of all;

⁵ Devajivana is the life of complete love of truth and goodness and complete hatred of untruth and evil

To Devaguru, I bow.

One who sheds 'Devajyoti' ⁶

One who shows the form of soul;

One who diagnoses diseases of soul;

One who reveals the fall of soul;

One who demonstrates protection of soul;

One who enlightens the soul;

One who enkindles knowledge of the soul;

One who awakens awareness of True Dharma⁷,

One who arouses the consciousness of Deva Dharma;

To Devaguru, I bow

One who sheds the 'Deva Teja' ^{**};

One who destroys low loves;

One who obliterates low hates;

One who bestows the true liberation;

To Devaguru, I bow.

One who sheds the 'Deva Teja'^{**8};

One who produces feelings higher;

⁶ Deviyoti is the light which reveals the truths about the nature of soul and its evolution and devolution.

⁷ True Dharma or Religion for Dev Dharma consists in getting freedom from evil passions and desires and cultivating higher loves and higher hatred.

⁸ ^{**}Dev Teja is the power which moves our will to action. It refers to the psychological power which helps to throw out evil thoughts and conduct and helps to cultivate altruistic feelings.

One who arouses higher loves;

One who evolves a higher form;

To Devaguru, I bow.

The Dev Aarti is mass singing for the victory of Devatma's love of truth and goodness on earth and on human life.

Dev Dharma has inspiring ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death, oriented to cultivation of higher love and higher hatred. They awaken and strengthen the altruistic dispositions in the persons concerned and the congregation. These ceremonies are showers of blessings for better life in all cosmic relations. The individual's good of the soul and the good of the world are shown to coincide so that man and Nature can work hand in hand to create a world of unity, harmony, peace and bliss both for the tiniest and the most exalted being.

Notes:

1. Adolf, Robert, ed, The Meaning of the Death of God, "Is God Dead?" p.85
2. Hamilton, William, The New Essence of Christianity, p.28
3. Braithwaite, R.B., Christian Ethics & Contemporary Philosophy, p.85
4. Alistair Kee, The Way of Transcendence. p. 171
5. Ibid, p.40
6. Ogden. Schubert, The Reality of God. p.59
7. Kanal, P.V., My Story, p. 122
8. Fenerbach, Ludwig, The Essence of Christianity, p.184 9 Ibid, p. 152-53
10. Ibid. p.38
11. Ibid. p.33

12. Ibid, p.140
13. Ibid
14. Reese, W.L.Dictionary of Philosophy & Religion, p.172.
15. Dewey. John, The Common Faith, p.11.
16. Ibid, p.46 17. Ibid, p.23
18. Ibid, p.48
19. Ibid, p.72 20. Ibid, p.27
21. Ibid, p.87
22. Huxley, Julian Sorell, Religion Without Revelation, p.168
23. Huxley, Julian Sorell, The Humanist Frame, Preface,p.5
24. Ibid, p.19
25. Huxley, Julian Sorell, Religion Without Revelation, p.193
26. Agnihotri, S.N.(Devatma), The Evolution of Divine Life in Me, Vol.1, p.101
27. Agnihotri, S.N.(Devatma), Jivan Path', (Hindi, monthly) April, 1905.
28. Agnihotri, S.N.(Devatma), The Evolution of Divine Life in Me, Vol. 1, p.132.
29. Ibid, p.137
30. Huxley, Julian Sorell, The Humanist Frame, p.26
31. Ibid, p.22
32. Ibid, p.42.
33. Ibid. p.26

34. Ibid p.43

35. Ibid, p.43

36. Huxley, Julian Sorell, Religion without Revelation, p.209 37. Devatma (Founder of Dev Dharma), The Dev Shastra, Vol.3, 4,6(Tt.)

38. Ibid, ch.5,p.23 39. Ibid, sh.8,p.32

40. Ibid, sh.9,p.46

41. Ibid, ch.9

42. Agnihotri, S.N.(Devatma) The Evolution of Divine Life in Me, vol 1ch.31 p.165 43. Ibid, vol.2, ch.3, p.24

44. Ibid, vol.2 2,ch.4,p.27-28

45. Ibid, vol.1, ch.5 and 6

46. Ibid, vol.1, ch.37,p.195