

CHAPTER - I

Nature of Religious Belief.

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### NATURE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

A belief is more than an assertion about the existence or non-existence of some being, event or value. When one says he believes in God, he may simply mean that it is his judgement or opinion that there is a God, but he is not using the word 'belief' in any way distinguishing it from opinion, or judgement or value. To believe (in God or in any being) implies that one is prepared to act on the postulate that he is correct though he realizes that he may be wrong in his opinion or judgement. If human being held infallible knowledge, there would be no point to the word 'belief'. To believe that a friend is honest is to be prepared to treat him thus, even when complete proof is not forthcoming. Our habits of action are testimonies to the seriousness with which we take our beliefs. We believe when we assent in mind and action to a judgement known to be less than certain. Thus religious belief involves earnest expectancy, the willingness to form habits of thinking and living engendered by the conceived nature of the religious object.

To have a clearcut understanding of the belief which is more than an assertain about the existence or non-existence of some being, event or value we will have to take classical views.

From the time of Plato and Aristotle it had been differentiated as (1) Theistic and (2) non-theistic religious belief. Before coming to our subject i.e. 'the nature of religious belief' we will have some ideas about these two classical religious beliefs.

#### CLASSICAL THEISTIC FORM OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

"The theistic form of religious belief is one that has exercised the greatest influence on western civilization in general, and western philosophy in particular. Consequently when anyone in the west is asked 'Do you believe in God?' he assumes that the question points to the Judeo Christian concept of God. So far as the western world is concerned, theism has a double origin : the Bible and Greek Philosophy. All the divine properties are implied in the Bible, but the expression and still more amplification of them were due to the influence of Greek Philosophy."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Concept of Deity - By H.P. Owen, p.1

(c) H.P. Owen - 1971, Robert MacLchose and Co. Ltd.

The University Press, Glasgow - 1971

Now the question comes what are the properties of God ? To answer this question, we must go to the classical theism.

Theism may be defined as belief in one God, the Creator, who is infinite, self-existent, incorporeal, eternal, immutable, Impassible, Simple-perfect, Omniscient and Omnipotent.

(1) The unity of God :

The unity of God to western man throughout the history of Christendom has been taken for granted, people of all intellectual and moral types believes in many Gods (both in the members of the ancient Olympic Pantheon and in the newer deities of the mystery cults). Even those philosophers (such as plato and Stoics) who imply monotheism in some passages are uninhibitedly polytheistic in others they can even use 'God' and 'the Gods' interchangeably in the same passage without explanation.

There are three possible grounds for affirming God's unity, revelation, experience and reason. Theistic belief must in fact always be justified on one or other of these grounds, which overlaps and intermingled in many ways.

(a) The first of these grounds is obvious. The Jews affirmed the existence of one God (Yahwen), not on the score of abstract speculation, but because they believed that Yahweh had thus revealed himself to them through out their history, and especially in the pivotal events of the Exodus and the exile.

According to the New Testament this self-disclosure of the one true God was fulfilled in Christ both in his teaching on the father and in his person as the father's only son.

(b) The 2nd consists, not in the mere fact of religious experience ( which has taken polytheistic forms), but in an inference from the experiences subjective aspect to its putative object. The inference runs thus, If the divine is to be the object of absolute devotion it must possess absolute being, but one among many gods can't possess such being, for he shares his nature with other gods, therefore the divine must be one.

(c) Lastly, philosophers have attempted to demonstrate Gods unity by pure reason. In this regard Aquinas has given his view to demonstrate God's unity by pure reason when we will explicate the medieval views on religious belief we will have to discuss Aquinas's position.

God the creator - According to classical theism - God created the world "out of nothing" (ex-nihilo). Two things must be noted. Two things must be noted concerning the phrase exnihilo, first, it is analytic, not synthetic. It does not add anything to the idea of creation ; it merely makes the idea explicit. Secondly, 'nothing' is to be taken in the strict sense of absolute non-being or non-existence. There is no form of being that exists apart from God's creative act

Everything depends absolutely on him for its very being.

The idea of Creation is thus radically opposed to the non-theistic view of God. It is opposed to the view held in ancient world by Plato and in the modern world by A.N. Whitehead, that God imposes form on pre-existent matter which we will discuss later on. It is opposed to the ploterian theory that the world is the last in a series of emanation from the Godhead. Still more obviously it is opposed to pantheism.

Divine infinity - It is necessary to begin what is 'infinity' in classical theism. First, it does not mean that God is shapeless or formless. On the contrary he is (in terms of Aristotelian contrast) pure form, for there is no composition in his being. Secondly to say that God is infinite is not to say that he is characterless. He has the character of pure spirit.

These erroneous interpretations of divine infinity are especially apt to occur when we think of it by means of the sensory imagination, we also easily imagine (the infinite' as a shapeless and indeterminate mass ( or perhaps empty space). Here , as elsewhere, we must remember that God is wholly incorporeal , so that, although we can't rid our minds completely of sense -images in thinking of him, we must ultimately negate all those properties of being that are applicable only

to matterial entities. Thirdly, and in particular we must not think of God's infinity as an infinite extension of merely human attributes. In order to arrive at a true notion of him i.e. 'infinity' we must deny all those limitations that affect created being. Therefore we very often need to use negative predicates (such as immutable) to express his infinity. But we can also use positive ones, provided they are properly interpreted. Thus God's 'simplicity' means his complete expression of all his attributes in all his acts.

Now the question that what the forms of being in which God's infinity is expressed ?

The first, primary and all determinative sign of God's infinity is his self-existence. God, however is self-existent. He does not depend upon any external factors for his being. He is wholly self-sufficient. His self-existent or self-sufficiency is the primary point of difference between him and his finite creatures. Correlatively it is the primary mark of his infinity as Thomas Aquinas remarks.

"The very fact that God's existence itself subsists without being acquired by anything and as such is limitless (Prout dicitum infinitum), distinguishes it from everything else and sets other things aside from it."<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, it is obvious that matter is general and the

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2. Summa theologica - by T. Aquinas,

material body in particular are intrinsically limiting. Everything that exists in space inevitably excludes other-things that occupy other portions of space. Therefore if God is infinite he must be non-spatial and bodiless. He must be pure and spirit.

How?

God's incorporeality can also be proved from his self-existence, which (it must always be remember) is the primary work of his infinity.

No material entity can be self-existent, for each is determination or mode of being.

Thirdly, the divine eternity, in which the adjective 'eternal' can have two senses : 'everlasting' and 'timeless'. The first sense can be given either a strong or weak form. According to the strong form, the entity so designated always has existed and always will exist. According to the weak form, although the entity had a begining it will have no end. The weak form is the one that is employed in Christian statements of human immortality. Every human soul is temporal in the sense that it had a begining, but it is eternal in the sense that it will never end. Yet it is the strong form that theists have always used with reference to God. Classical theists have held that it is not sufficient to say

that God is everlasting. God, they affirm, is outside any temporal series ; he is wholly timeless. The equation of eternity with timelessness was derived from Plato.<sup>3</sup>

Fourthly, the immutability or changelessness, of God is entailed by his eternity (in the sense of timelessness) St Augustine stated the truth of his immutability in Platonic terms. St Thomas rested it in terms of Aristotle's contrast between potentiality and act. God, being self-existent, is pure act, he actualizes all his potentialities simultaneously ; hence there is no form or degree of being that he can either acquire or lose.

Fifthly, 'Divine impossibility' can be given a meaning that is nothing more than amplifications of immutability. It can mean that God is incapable of suffering change from either an external or an internal cause. But the word means particularly that he can't experience sorrow, sadness or pain. That God is impossible in this sense was an axiom of platonic theology. It was also considered to be axiomatic by Christian fathers and medieval school man.

Sixthly, the 'Divine simplicity' that if God is infinite he must be simple ; he must express his whole nature in a single act,

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3. Religious Platonism - T.K. Feibleman.

(Printed in Great Britain in 12 on 13 pt type  
By Urwin brothers limited.)

for if any part of his nature were not expressed he would be protanto limited. Alternatively, if there were any property that he did not express he would not be self-existent ; for self existent being a being in whom essence and existence are identical must express his whole nature simultaneously. The point can be amplified through the Aristotelian categories of potentiality and act.

If God is infinite or self existent there can't be any potentialities in his being that are not actualised, he must exist as pure, unconditioned Act. Consequently there must be perfect coincidence of all his attributes. Thus his intelligence must coincide perfectly with his will, and his justice with his love.

Aquinas states God's simplicity thus ; "Since there is no composition of quantitative parts in God, for he is not a body, nor a composition of matter and form ; nor are his nature complete substantiality distinct, nor his essence and existence, nor is there a composition of genus and difference, nor of subject and accidents - it is plain that God is altogether simple and nowise composite.

If God is infinite then he is obviously perfect in being, and if he is perfect in being he must be perfect in every attribute that self-existent being composes. Conversely if he were defec

tive in any spiritual attribute he would be defective in being, and so he would not be self-existent. As Aquinas put's it :-

"Although being an existent thing does not involve being living or wise (for nothing partaking of existence need partakes every mode of existence) nevertheless, existence itself does involve life and wisdom( for subsistent existence itself can not lack any perfection of existence).

God is omniscient, this means that God knows all things There are innumerable things that no human mind can know, or that even the most penetrating human mind can know only in an imperfect manner. But knows all things perfectly. The perfection of his knowledge is shown both in its manner and in its extent. God's knowledge is different from human knowledge. He knows all things by a direct intellectual intuitions ; as Aquinas expressed it :-

"is not reasoned or discursive though he knows all reasoning and processes. Indeed, in knowing himself he must know the nature of everything that does or can exist, for there is nothing in the world that does not pre-exist as an idea in his mind and that does not owe its being to his will."<sup>4</sup>

The world is merely the projection into actuality of the possibilities that his mind contains.

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4. Summa Theologica - T. Aquinas,

But for omnipotence or to call God 'omnipotent' can mean either (a) that he is ruler over all things obviously if God is the infinite creator he rules over all finite things he has created (b) that he can do all things. This is the sense that is normally given to 'omnipotence' this sense, too, is required by the affirmation of infinity. If God is infinite he must be able to do all things which are in accordance with his nature. God can't do what is logically impossible (and what is contrary to reason), he can't make  $4+2=7$ . He can't change the principles of morality; he can't make charity wrong or cheating right. He can't violate human freedom which is a spiritual good that he himself has given.

Besides this there are four further elements in classical theism i.e. the ideas of transcendence divine immanence, divine personality and the attribution of the terms 'objective' and subjective to God. The first is that, the God of classical theism is transcendent. This objective means (a) that God is substantially distinct from the world, (b) that he does not need the world (c) that he is incomprehensible. Secondly, Immanence, which is implied in the theistic concept of creation. Theism differs from deism in its assertion that God's creative activity is continuous. Every creature at every moment depends on his immediate power for its existence. Aquinas expressed this truth thus,

"God is in all things, not, indeed, as part of their essence, or as a quality, but in the manner that an efficient cause is present to that on which it acts. God does not impart his own uncreated life to creatures. On the contrary his immanence consists precisely in their continuously dependence on his creative power. This power, moreover, is spiritual and invisible. We can't defect, or even partially comprehend God's immanence. God, as the primary cause of all things, remains perpetually concealed within them and their secondary causes.

Thirdly, if God possess the spiritual attributes then he must be personal; for these are the marks that distinguish personal from super-personal forms of being. If, then, the analogies of being and proportionately are valid we can speak of God as one who expresses in an infinite form those personal characteristics that we express finitely. As pure spirit he is the archetype of personality. Fourthly, the attribution of the terms 'objective' to God in which it has been debated in the recent year so is largely due to the influence of existentialism that whether faith is 'objective' or 'subjective' we can say from both sides i.e. 'ontological' and 'epistemological'. So far as the ontological purpose is concerned, the interpretation of 'objective' and 'subjective' is clear. God is objective in the sense that he is an independently existing

reality. But he is also subjective in the sense that he is the subject of personal experience - an 'I' who can be addressed as 'thou' in prayer.

On the epistemological plane also, theism is both objective and subjective. It is objective in so far as theists claim to know God both by a direct apprehension and by descriptive statements (within the limits imposed by the analogy of proportionality). It is subjective in so far as this apprehension of God is unlikely occur and certainly can not develop without the personal attitudes of wonder humility and contemplation. The knowledge of God is also subjective in so far as the only positive meaning we can give our theistic language is the one which it has in our own finite experience.

#### CLASSICAL NON THEISTIC RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Classical theism rests on the belief that God is infinite that his infinity is to be understood primarily in terms of his self-existence, and that he is therefore the creator of the world ex-nihilo. But many distinguished philosophers, example Plato & Aristotle held that God is finite. They are the opinion.

Plato - his view of a finite God is contained in his 'Timaeus'. According to the myth expounded there God as the supreme craftsman, imposes on independently given matter an

order that he copies from the forms ( or Ideas). His motive for doing so is that , being good and so incapable of jealousy, he wishes everything to become as like himself. Plato's God is thus doubly limited - by the forms, on the one hand, and ( or necessity) on the other. In another we can say that Plato had two religions.

(1) One is a kind of supernaturalism, consistent with his idealistic philosophy and with the orphic religion.

(2) The other is a kind of naturalism consistent with his realistic philosophy and with the traditional Greek religion.

The truth seems to be that for Plato God was both, one version belonged to Plato the idealist, the other to Plato, the realist.

Now what is the Idealistic version of religion i.e the supernaturalism consistent with his idealistic philosophy?

The orphic doctrines of man centres upon the belief in immortality. The orphic eschatology is in conformity with the belief in the immortality of the soul. After death the soul of the orphic goes to Hades, repeats the formula which identifies him and asks for the cold water from the lake of memory. He drinks and then after enjoys lordship among the other heroes. The soul of the orphic in this way is saved

from the eternal return to the body, having "flown out of the sorrowful circle."<sup>5</sup>

According to Plato, God holds the beginning the end, and the centre of all things that exists ; God, not man, is the measure of all things. Atheists are to be punished. God is the author of good only. He never deceives or changes. There is God, then and there are gods, and there is the good. And God is good and the good is ordered by God but God is not the same as the good, but the author of good only, and the good can't be defined. Evil is the opposite of good. It does not belongs to the gods but to mortals. To escape from evil means to become like a god. Evil is due to human defects.

It has its source in the material constituent inherited from the original chaos. Human affairs are unworthy of earnest effort. Yet the righters life is the most pleasurable in the end.

Secondly the realistic version of religious belief by Plato.

There is little doubt that Plato accepted the traditional religious beliefs of his land and people. He declared that he would leave all religious matters, ie. the erection of temples, the performance of sacrifices, and other forms of worship of the gods to the Appolo or Delphine. Plato clearly believed in

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5. Religious Platonism - By James K. Feibleman p.67-68

the reality of both worlds and considered God an intermediary with control over the actualization of the Ideas. He strengthened being at the cost of creation, and confined God's efforts to persuading the receptable to receive the forms, and so enters the picture after the facts, with his power greatly diminished as a result of encountering two interactable levels. God is hard to find and when we find them. He is found to be neither all-knowing nor all powerful. Furthermore, the worst impiety is that God can be wooed by prayer, to suppose that the gods do not exist, that they are careless, or that they could be bribed, are crimes. God, in fact, does not have any need of man <sup>or</sup> anything. It is improbable that the gods should feel either pleasure or its opposite. God is simply the cause or the intelligence behind the universe.

Plato sought the divine in things which were both concrete and eternal, which the Ideas assuredly were not. Indeed the only concrete things which were also eternal. So far as he could discover, were the stars, which thought to be fixed. In this way he escaped from the narrow confines of the civic religion and moved towards the cosmic without being limited to a personal conception of it. God leads towards the good life, but the good is not God. The Ideas constitute a second natural order, not super-natural order. The Ideas are not personalities and the highest Ideas is therefore not God.

One of the strongest arguments for the Greek version of realism in Plato's religion is the emphasis he gave to attempt to establish a good life on this earth. The two longest dialogues, the Republic and the laws, though both containing evidence for the belief in the immortality of the soul, are chiefly efforts to draw up the blue-prints for a successful commonwealth in this world.

According to Aristotle, the God whom he described in his 'metaphysics' is also finite. He is the first unmoved, among many celestial movers, and he does not create the world which exists eternally in independence of him. He 'moves' the world by inspiring love and desire in the 'first heaven'. But he does not love the world, or even know it, he remains wholly enveloped in the purely intellectual activity of self-contemplation. Hence, although, Aquinas, borrowed from Aristotles 'metaphysics' he modified the latter by affirming that God, having created the world 'out of nothing', directs it by his providence.

In the nineteenth century belief in a finite God was strongly advocated by John Stuart Mill in his 'Theism'. Having argued that adaptation in nature afford probability to belief in a cosmic Designer he denied that the latter is omnipotent. God, he affirmed, does not create matter but arranges it to the extent

and in the matter that its properties permit. Yet though Mill held that God is limited in power he conceded the possibility that God is limitless in intelligence.

The most sophisticated and influential formulation which the idea of a finite God has received in this century is to be found in the writings of A.N. Whitehead, who here resembles both his great Greek Predecessors. Whitehead's God has both a 'Primordial' and a 'consequent' nature. According to the former nature he imparts form and value to the world by ensuring the expression of eternal objects in temporal flux. According to the latter nature he incorporates the experiences of the world and preserves its elements of good within his memory. Whitehead's God is thus limited both by the existence of the world and by the incorporation of its experiences within his being.

But towards the age of Aquinas the nature of religious belief has been developed in a different way. For Aquinas ;

"Religious belief consists essentially in intellectual assent to the truth of certain propositions."<sup>6</sup> Although practical conclusions as to how the believer should live his life follow these acts of assent, they do not constitute religious

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6. Philosophy of Religion - The historic Approach - by M.J.Charlesworth, p. 84.

The Macmillan Press Ltd., London and Basingccke - 1972.

belief. To put it crudely, one is defined a religious believer if one assent to certain propositions, where as, if one does adopt the practical policies or attitude consequent upon these beliefs, one may be classed as an inconsistent or hypocritical believer, but one will still be a believer. For Aquinas, it is therefore at least possible to say without contraction,

"I believe in God but this belief makes no difference to the way I live my life", and in this sense there is for him a logical gap between religious belief and religious practice. For Kant and the Kantian of course, this furnishes grounds for a conclusive objection to the whole intellectualist position represented by Aquinas. Religious belief, they claim, is of its very nature practical, so that to say "I believe in God" is precisely to commit oneself to live in a certain way.

The Idea that belief and practice are inseparable that we can find in the writings of THOMAS MC. PHERSON in his book 'Philosophy and Religious belief'. For him that "religion has a number of elements and an adequate account of religion is hardly to be got if any of these is totally ignored. In particular, there are two elements which have been given different emphasis from time to time, namely "religious belief and religious practice". Concentration on the belief element can undoubtedly lead to a one-sided picture of religion, and the belief element

itself is not fully intelligible if separated from the practice element, as the latter is seen in participation in religious ritual or in the living of a life in accordance with certain moral policies.<sup>7</sup>

The same thing has been defined by 'Emile Durkheim'

Defi - "A religion is united systems of beliefs, and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - belief and practices within write into one single moral community call a Church all those who adhere to them"<sup>8</sup>

It is the nature of religion as a whole that they seek to express. They proceed as if it were a sort of indivisible entity, while as a matter of fact, it is made up of parts, it is no more or less complex, system of myths, dogmas, rites and ceremonies.

Now a whole can't be defined except in relation to its parts. It will be more methodical, then, to try to characterize the various elementary phenomena of which all religion are made up.

Religious phenomena are naturally in two fundamental

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7. Philosophy and religious belief - by Thomas MC Pherson  
(p. 1)

8. Elementary forms of religious life - by Emile Durkheim,  
(p.47)

(First Published in 1915)

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categories :-

(1) Beliefs and (2) rites

The first are states of opinion, and consists in representations : The Second are determined modes of action. In more accurate way that religious beliefs are the representations which express the nature of sacred things and the relations which they sustain, either with each other or with profane things. Finally, rites are the rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should comfort himself in the presence of these sacred objects. Now what is the sacred and profane things, this we can understand easily from Durkheim writings.

All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristics :- they presupposes a classifications of all things, real and ideal, of which man think, into two classes, or opposed groups generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words profane and sacred (profane-sacre). This division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of religious thought ; the beliefs, myths, dogmas, and legends are either representations or systems of representations which express the nature of sacred things the virtues and powers which are attributed to them or their relations with each other and with profane things.

But by sacred things one must not understand simply those personal beings which are called gods or spirits, a rock a tree, a spring, a pebble, a piece of wood, a house in a word anything can be sacred.

The rites can be defined and distinguished from other human practices, moral practices, for example only by the special nature of their object. A moral rule prescribes certain manners of acting to us just as a rite does, but which are addressed to a different class of objects. So it is the object of the rite which must be characterized, if we are to characterize the rite itself.

Now a question arises by what general characteristics sacred things are to be distinguished from profane things? One might be tempted, first of all to define them by the place they are generally assigned in the hierarchy of things. They are naturally considered superior in dignity and power to profane things, and particularly to man, when he is only a man and has nothing sacred about him. One thinks of himself as occupying an inferior and dependent position in relation to them; and surely this conception is not without some truth. Only there is nothing in it which is really characteristic of the sacred. It is not enough that one thing be subordinated to another for the second to be sacred in regard to the first. Slaves

are inferior to their masters, subjects to their kings ; if it is sometimes, said of a man that he makes a religion of those beings or things whose eminent value and superiority of himself, he thus recognizes it is clear that in any case the word is taken in a metaphorical sense, and that there is nothing in these relations which is really religious.

On the otherhand, it must not be lost to view that there are sacred things of every degree, and that there are some in relation which a man feels himself relatively at his case. An amulet has a sacred character, yet the respect which it inspires is nothing exceptional. Even before his gods, a man is not always in such a marked state of inferiority ; for it is very frequently happened that the exercises a variable physical constraint upon them to obtain what he desires. He beats the fetic<sup>h</sup> with which he is not contented, but only to reconcile himself with it again, if in the end it shows itself more docile to the wishes of its adore. To have rain, he throws stone into the spring or sacred lake where the god of rain is thought to be reside ; he believes that by this means he forces him to come out and show himself. Moreover, if it is true that man depends upon his gods is reciprocal. The gods also have need of man, without offering and sacrifice they would die. We shall even have occasion to show that this dependance of the god upon their worshipers is maintained even in the most idealistic religion.

But if a purely hierarchic distinction is a criterium at once too general and too imprecise there is nothing left with which to characterize the sacred in its relation to the profane except their heterogeneity. However, this heterogeneity is sufficient to characterize this classification of things and to distinguish it from all others, because it is very particular, it is absolute. In all the history of human thought there exists no other examples of two categories of things, so profoundly differentiated or so radically opposed to one another. The traditional opposition of good and bad is nothing besides this : for the good and the bad are only two opposed species of the same class, namely morals, just as sickness and health are two different aspects of the same order of facts, life, while the sacred and profane have always and everywhere been conceived by the human mind as two distinct classes, as two worlds between which there is nothing in common. The forces which play in one are not simply those which are met with in the other, but a little stronger, they are of different sort. In different religions, this opposition has been conceived in different ways. Here to separate these two sorts of things, it has seemed sufficient to realize them in different parts of the physical universe, there, the first have been put into an ideal and transcendental world, while the material world is left in full possession of the others. But howsoever much the

forms of the contrast may vary the fact of the contrast is universal.

This heterogeneity is even so complete that it frequently degenerates into a veritable antagonism. The two worlds are not only conceived of as separate, but as even hostile and jealous rivals of each other. Since man can't fully belong to one except on condition of having the other completely, they are exhorted to withdraw themselves completely from the profane world, in order to lead an exclusive religious life. Hence comes the monasticism which is artificially organized outside of and apart from the natural environment in which the ordinary man leads the life of this world in a different, one, closed to the first, and merely its contrary. Hence comes the mystic asceticism whose object is to root out from man all the attachment for the profane world that remains in him. From that come all the forms of religious suicide, the logical working out of this asceticism, for the only manner of full escaping the profane life is after all to forsake all life.

The opposition of these two classes manifest itself outwardly with a visible, sign by which we can easily recognize this very special classification, wherever it exists. The two classes can't even approach each other and keep their own nature at the same time.

Thus we arrive at the first criterium of religious beliefs. Undoubtedly there are secondary species within these two fundamental classes which, in their turn, are more or less incompatible with each other. But the real characteristic of religious phenomena is that they always a bypartial division of the whole universe, known and knowable into two classes which embrace all that exists, but which radically exclude each other.

Sacred things are those which the interdictions are applied and which must remain at a distance from the first. So religious beliefs are the representations which express the nature of sacred things and the relations which they sustain, either with each other or with profane things. Finally, rites are the rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should comfort himself in the presence of these sacred objects.

When a certain number of sacred things sustains relations of co-ordination or subordination with each other in such a way as to form a system having a certain unity, but which is not comprised within any other system of the same sort, the totality of these beliefs and their corresponding rites constitutes a religion. From this definition it is seen that a religion is not necessarily contained within one sole and single idea, and does not proceed from one unique principle

which, varying according to the circumstances under which it is applied, is nevertheless at bottom always the same, it is rather a whole made up of distinct and relatively individualized parts. Each homogenous group of sacred things, or even each sacred thing of some importance constitute a centre of organization about which gravitate a group of beliefs and rites or a particular cult ; there is no religion, howsoever unified it may be, which does not recognize a plurality of sacred things.

The really religious belief are always common to a determined group, which makes profession of adhering to them and of practising the rites connected with them they are not merely received individually by all the members of this group, they are something belonging to the group , and they makes it unity. The individuals which compose it feel themselves united to each other by the simple fact that they have a common faith. A society whose members are united by the fact that they think in the same way in regard to the sacred world and its relations with the profane world, and by the fact that they translate these common ideas into common practices, is what is called a church.

Like the Durkheims religious beliefs and practising , the rites where both are related ; by ignoring one of it

can undoubtedly lead to a one sided picture of religion. The belief will not be fully intelligible if separated from the practice.

There are several reasons why concentration on its belief element gives a one-sided picture of religion. The ordinary religious believer is probably not very reflective about his beliefs. He may be able to utter appropriate formulae but he may not be able very well to explain these or defend them. Indeed some times he is praised by religious leaders and teachers for the 'simplicity' of his faith, and it may be said by those who thus praise him that there is more of religious value in the acceptance of religious formulae together with the attempt to live a particular sort of life, than in the kind of close examination of these formulae that is undertaken by some philosophers and theologians. The God of the philosophers has often been contrasted with the God of the ordinary religious believer, in ways intended to suggest that the latter is nearer the centre of religion. Philosophy (even theology) is one thing, religion another. The philosopher's analytical or critical approach to religious belief may lead to failure on his part to appreciate the role that it plays in the life of ordinary religious believer ; it is likely to miss the religious point of belief. It is necessary that we

consider question about how within this religion - a given society whose religion it is the belief element is connected with the ritual element, the moral element, and the element of experience, if we ignore these questions our understanding of the belief element itself will be incomplete.

Now let us consider the question of religious experience.

Some one who has enjoyed what he would call a religious experience but who makes no attempt to describe this experience or to connect it in any way with his religious beliefs puts himself out side the possibility of discussion.

We may note that Durkheim that says he has had experience but he will not say anything at all about the nature of experience, or about whether or not it goes to confirm his previously held beliefs etc. In his opinion there is little or nothing to discuss. Many will have something even a little to say about their experience, for they will want to make them clearer to themselves let alone do others. But now we see the importance of the belief element. The effect of religious experience is generally represented as being to confirm belief, or to induce it where it did not exist before. Even more fundamentally, we can't give an account of an alleged religious experience unless we are able to say what it is an experience of. The precise form taken by religious

experience unless we are able to say what it is an experience of. The precise form taken by religious experiences, seems often to be determined by the expectations of the person having the experience ; and these expectations are shaped by his previously held beliefs, or any rate by the particular kind of religious teaching in the shape largely of imparting of propositions that he has received ; it has often been remarked that whereas both protestants and Catholics may have visions, visions in particular of the virgin mary are much less likely to occur to the former than to the latter.

It seems important for many to define religious beliefs as clearly as they can, and to produce, in some ~~cases at~~ least arguments in support of them. It is the belief element in religion that men are best able to argue about. The assumption may be involved here that religious belief is not 'rational' unless it can be argued for may be questioned. It is not necessarily 'irrational' for a man to adopt a set of beliefs for which he is not prepared to give reasons.

There is no obligation on a man always to back up his beliefs with reasons or arguments. We might find his failure to do so in a particular case irritating and we might want to call him foolish or obstinate etc., but we should not have any right to call him irrational - unless, of course, in calling him rational we merely wanted to point to the fact that he

would not give reasons, but this would be very weak sense of 'irrational'. Why should he give reasons, if he does not want to, if all he is claiming is to believe something? It would be otherwise if he were claiming knowledge (calling him 'irrational' would, for e.g. be justified, if his beliefs themselves or his reasons for them were hopelessly internally inconsistent, or if some of his reasons were clearly irrelevant to the beliefs they were supposed to support etc). The view that it is irrational to hold a belief that one can not produce evidence for or give reasons for is one that is found among both supporters and opponents of religions. A general assumption to the effect that it is never justifiable (logically) (morally) to believe anything without evidence or on insufficient evidence, has sometimes been made. Yet there seems to be good reason to assert to this. Unless, that is, 'belief' is taken as equivalent to 'knowledge'. Generally, a man may believe anything he pleases; but if, when he claims to believe, what he really means to say is that he knows, then we would usually be justified in saying that he can't be allowed to 'believe' (= know) what he pleases. (There are no doubt, knowledge claims which do not need support by arguments or reasons can properly be demanded-knowledge - and cases where they can't be belief.)

It is worth remarking that traditional natural theology

gives a force to shape the definition of religious concepts and to argue in support of religious doctrines which would simply be denied by many religious thinkers since Kant and Kierkegaard.

The 'expression "religious belief" is commonly used, to cover not only religious belief in a narrower sense (where belief can be contrasted with knowledge ) but also religious knowledge (or claims thereto) religious commitment, religious faith etc. The kind of analysis that it would be appropriate to give of religious knowledge. The degree of ambiguity that there is in the expression 'religious belief', it is possible to suppose <sup>n</sup> might after the religious believer an all too easy way of escape from criticism. He might begin by defending a certain position, but if criticism of its presumed rational foundation become too destructive might retreat into an admission that the position is after all only one that he 'believes' and that therefore does not need to be supported by argument ; he might, that is, decline from an implied claim to know P, perhaps through an amendment of this to a claim merely to strongly believe P, to the position of one who just 'happens to believe' P. At all of these stages, as far as its verbal expression is concerned, his claims can be put in the form 'I believe P.'

So if a man commits himself to beliefs and assertion

about God or the supernatural, and also to morality, a way of life or a set of principles which is somehow connected with these beliefs and assertions, then he has a religion.

Here one question may arise that how the two essential features the beliefs and the way of life are connected ?

"According to wilson these beliefs or assertion and way of life are the two necessary and sufficient condition of religion. To have the idea about the connection between religious beliefs and practices, we can take different type of relation between them. There may be psychological, logical relation which is also advocated by John Wilson."<sup>10</sup>

The first relation that psychological perhaps a question more appropriate to history or anthropology than to philosophy. "If we consider for a moment of typical phrase of a primitive stage in religion, such as the Latin "numen inest" "there is something supernatural in there" - we can perhaps see how this phrase both states a belief and express an emotion. The speaker thinks and asserts that something supernatural is there he also feels awed, fearful, and abashed. We can also be more precise about the kind of belief and the kind of

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10. Philosophy and religion - by John Wilson (p. 16)  
 (The logic of religions belief)  
 Oxford University Press, Amen House London C.4(1961)

emotion which are involved. The belief is essentially a non-scientific belief, in the sense that it is not a belief about objects or things. The primitive sages may believe that his God controls the thunder and lightning ; and this may be part of his religion ; but it would be a mistake to suppose that he is just indulging in false theories about the causes of thunder and lightning - that his belief is just bad science. It is not science at all. It is a belief in personal or semi-personal forces which (he thinks) it would be mistake to approach scientifically, that is why most primitives resist a bluff, hearty scientific approach to their religion.

"Belief and morality in religion are psychologically homogenous, being compounded of the same attitude to life."<sup>11</sup> How religion develops will depend on local conditions. It is possible for a religion to be unduly weighted either on the side of belief or on the side of moral feeling, and it is probable that most successful religions or religious rivals succeed by uniting or reuniting the two elements. In certain forms of Buddhism, for instance the moral attitude is so dominant, to the exclusion of belief, that we sometimes hesitate about using the term 'religion' at all ; where as, were it not for the sort evidence we have from the Greek tragedians

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11. Ibid - p. 22

and the mystery religions, we might be tempted to think it possible for classical Greek to entertain beliefs about his many gods without any serious feelings of awe or terror.

Psychologically, then, religion arises from the encounter of our own fears and desires with the world, which gives rise both to assertions about the world and to certain feelings in ourselves. Whether there is anything in the world which can be the proper object of these assertions we are not yet in a position to say ; we do know, on the other hand, that man tend to adjust their beliefs to fit their fears and desires. In otherwords, it is psychologically probable that their feelings have moulded their beliefs, the sheer variety of beliefs is itself sufficient to vouch for him. The psychological connection between our two essential features which is clear i.e. the belief largely depend on the feelings.

Besides this psychological connection there is supposed ( by religious people ) to be the logical connection between belief and morality. According to Wilson, there is no doubt at all that religious people claim to derive ways of living and moral principles from their religious beliefs and assertions about the supernatural. "God is love, therefore we must love each other", "Christ was his son, therefore we must follow him", these statements show quite clearly that believers

suppose their principles to be logically reinforced by supernatural facts. "Certain things ( of a supernatural kind) are so ; therefore act thus" that is a generalized form of the whole of what religion has to tell us. This point is unaffected by the endeavour on the part of some believers to use morality itself as evidence for the existence of God. For, first it is not a particular set of moral values which are used but the alleged existence of objective moral values as a whole ; believers do not first decide on their particular morality, and then adjust their concept of divinity to fit it or if they do - they do not do so deliberately, which is the present point. Secondly, the existence of a supernatural and objective set of moral values is itself a matter of belief and not of morality ; so that, the attempts is, in fact, to use one metaphysical belief to point the way of others, and not to derive judgements of fact from judgements of value. Thus, to Kant "the starry heavens above and the moral law within" are both facts which point to God.

As soon as we get to particular principles, the movement is always from what God is like, what he wants, or commands, what human beings ought to do.

Now another problem will come that what is , in fact, the logical connection between them. According to Wilson this

logical connection between beliefs and principles, between assertions of fact and assertions of value would be of academic interest merely unless we had reason to suppose the beliefs and assertions to be true, or unless we thought that it was reasonable to commit ourselves to them. It turns out, then, that the reasonableness of religious commitment stands or falls by the reasonableness of commitment to religious beliefs and assertions of fact. Here it is important to remember that these beliefs and assertions form a necessary perhaps the most necessary condition for religion. Whatever kind of beliefs and assertions they are, whatever kind of truth they are supposed to hold, whatever is the appropriate method for verifying them, and whatever actual evidence for or against them, they must be genuine beliefs and assertions, in the sense that they must be logically capable of allowing us to derive a way of life or a set of principles from them: for if they are not only are they themselves in suspicion, but also the connection between them and their derived off spring is fatally severed. And this severance would be a death-blow to anything that can properly be called religion.

The something i.e. the relation between belief and a way of life can be available in Braithwait's writings. "His view has been often called reductionist. The effect of his

view is to reduce Christian religious beliefs to a combination of certain moral beliefs and certain empirical beliefs."<sup>12</sup>

Though 'belief' he in fact regards as a somewhat inappropriate term, for he holds that the empirical belief of religion need only to be entertained and not necessarily adhered to as true, and he holds further that the moral element is not properly a matter of moral beliefs but of practical intentions. Of the two elements the moral is the more important. It is here that Braithwaite finds the essence of religion.

The empirical elements, chiefly is a way of distinguishing between religions which seems to share the same or similar moral beliefs ; the difference is found by noting that adherents of these religions will entertain a different set of stories - the Christian a set of stories about Christ, muslim a set of stories about Mohemedan etc. The relatively minor part played by the empirical element (the stories) in Braithwaits view is seen also in the fact that the connection between the adoption of a moral policy by a religious man and his entertaining of certain exemplary stories about Christ is claimed by Braithwaite to be causal or psychological

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12. Philosophy and religion - by T.M.C. Pherson (p. 42)

but not a logical one.

Braithwaites starting point is a certain view of the nature of moral beliefs. This view is one which "makes the primary use of a moral assertion that of expressing the intention of the asserter to act in a particular sort of way specified in the assertions.

The moral beliefs is an intention to behave in a certain way ; a religious belief is an intention to behave in a certain way ( a moral belief ) together with the entertainment of certain stories associated with the intention in the mind of the believer.

According to Richard Swinburne "Religious belief is of necessary condition of much moral action, the desirability of which, unlike that of the action of acting as if there is a God , is not the way connected with the truth or falsity of religion. A man believe that he ought to pursue an honest and upright course of life and believe that he can not do this without a religious belief ( including, perhaps the belief that honestly is rewarded in the world to come). So to secure an honest course of life he may try to persuade himself that religion is true. Or it may be someone heroic moral action which a man feels that he ought to perform, but can't perform without religious belief ; and secure the

performance of which he tries to persuade himself into religious belief."<sup>13</sup>

Here we are concerned about the relation of belief and practice. So if belief is related with practice, then, there must have purpose which is also related with belief. If one has true beliefs he will be able to achieve his purposes without true beliefs there is no good purpose.

Many actions and states of affairs are good in some respects but bad in others. Giving large amounts of pocket money to a child is good in the respect that he will get the pleasure out of spending it, but bad in the respect that having too much money he will not learn self-discipline. There is no objective scale on which competing reasons can be weighed so as to say whether it is over-all better to do a certain action than to refrain from doing it or to do some rival action.

In so far as actions are good, they are important. What matters morally, what is of moral importance, is that a man does the action (if any) which are over all better to do than to refrain from doing. In so far as One seeks to

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13. Faith and reason - by Richard Winburne, p. 85  
Oxford - at the Clarendon Press - 1981.

achieve some purpose, he will consider it to some extent a good thing that he achieves that purpose ; and for that reason he must hold that his beliefs matter. For only if we have true beliefs then we will be able to achieve our purposes. I want to go to London and am confronted by two roads. If I believe that the right hand road leads to London and the left hand one does not, I shall go on the right hand road ; and if I believe that the left hand road leads to London and the right hand does not, I shall take the left-hand road. There is the logical connection between them. It then follows that I shall attain my purposes only in so far as I have true beliefs. I can't give you money unless I have a true beliefs about which pieces of paper are money or a true belief about what we can do with a signed cheque. I can't give you information unless I have true beliefs about what words mean.

If I have a duty to attain some end, I have a duty to ensure that I have a true belief about the way to attained ; (the greater the duty to acquire the true beliefs). If as a parent, I am under a moral obligation to ensure that my children are happy and well-educated, then I am morally obliged to investigate possible schools so that I arrive at a well justified belief that a certain school will provide and good education. Also it I have a duty to provide knowledge

for others (c.g. for my children when they can't obtain it for themselves ), then I have duty to acquire that knowledge in order to so - and knowledge involves true belief.

The holding of true beliefs, so far as, is of importance, moral or other, because beliefs tell us the means by which ends can be achieved. This does not however seem to be the only reason <sup>as to</sup> why the holding of true beliefs is important. The holding of true beliefs seems to be valuable in itself, not merely as a means to something else. For true belief is necessary for knowledge, and knowledge is valuable in itself, and especially knowledge of things which concern the nature, origin and purpose of our particular human community ; and the nature, origin and purpose the universe itself.

"With true religious beliefs we will also fulfill our moral obligation in the way of educating our children, and from this too it follows that we have an obligation to cultivate rational beliefs about religion."<sup>14</sup>

"However W.K. Clifford in his famous 'The ethics of belief' argues that all our beliefs and the ways in which we acquire them influence others and for that reason we have a duty to complete rationality in all matters."<sup>15</sup>

14. Faith and Reason - by Richard Swinburne (p. 79)

15. The Ethics of belief - W. K. Clifford.

He writes that 'no man's belief' is private matter which concerns himself alone and that man who believes unproved and unquestioned statements for their own solace and private pleasure are perverse influence. Where a man's influence is very obvious and the responsibility is clear, as with a parent towards his children, or a teacher towards his students, or a priest towards his parishioners, this is fair enough. But surely there is a sphere of private morality in which a man may choose what to do even if some others for who he bears no responsibility who saw what he was doing might possibly be led astray thereby. And of course, outside the parent-child context, where rational adults are viewing a man's behaviour, the influence of his bad actions on them, may only be to lead them to avoid such actions in future. Clifford seems to have exaggerated a fundamentally good point.

A further reason why it matters to acquire true beliefs about religion is that religious beliefs themselves have moral consequences. If there is a God and he has made and sustains the world and issued commands to men, men have moral obligations which they would not otherwise have. The grounds for this are as follows - men ought to acknowledge other persons with whom they come into contact, not just ignore them and this solely becomes a duty when those persons are our benefactors.

Kinds of beliefs :

Religious believers claim to believe or to know something and to possess understanding or faith or to be committed to something. They adopt several types of inquiries. What is it that is the object or objects of such claims ? What kind of knowledge belief, understanding, faith commitment etc., is claimed ? How far is belief in a religious context similar to, or, different from belief etc. elsewhere ? Are there kinds of beliefs found only in religion and not elsewhere ? How is religious belief or knowledge achieved i.e., by what methods or techniques ? Now let us take religious belief as the central concept and make reference to the others as may be necessary.

Propositional and personal belief :

The object of religious belief is sometimes a proposition (I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God ). Similarly, the object of faith is sometimes a proposition ( or a number of propositions, which taken together make up a statement of the Christian faith ), sometimes a person ( Jesus or God). Similarly, again in the case of commitment. Let us use the term 'propositional belief' for the kind of belief exemplified by 'Jesus Christ is son of God', and the term 'personal belief' for the kind exemplified by belief in God. The expression 'personal belief' may seem to beg certain questions. Is God a person ? may not something other than persons be the object of this kind

of belief ? (For e.g. a man may say, "I believe in democracy ). But the expression 'personal belief' is intended here merely as a convenient label, and no assumptions are being made about the answers to such questions as these.

What is the relation between the two types of object ? In particular, it might be wondered whether the difference between, say, 'I believe that God exists' and 'I believe in God' is any more than verbal. For someone to say that he believes in God is for him to say more than that he believes in the existence of God, it carries an implication of trust, or commitment. I believe that the Dalai Lama exists ; but I do not believe in him as the Christian believer would say he believes in God.

The beliefs of an adherent of a political party may also be partly propositional and partly personal. It is difficult to think of any third sphere of belief which shares this characteristics with religion and politics. Religion and really unequivocal cases where the two sorts of objects of belief are normally present together.

It might appear that religion is a stronger example of this than politics, in the sense that while a man's religious adherence might be said to involve him inescapably in both propositional and personal beliefs, his political adherence can much more easily be limited to propositional beliefs. But this is

probably a matter of cultural context. In Christian society, a man may adhere to the Christian religion and to the conservative party and in the case of former adherence there will probably be personal belief, and in the case of latter there probably will not. But in some other societies political adherence may involve a large element of personal belief, perhaps a much greater amount of personal belief than of propositional belief. And in the case of religion other than Christianity, the element of personal belief may be slight or non-existent (e.g. some kinds of Hinduism). The point is not that it is essential to religion or politics that they always contain a measure personal belief, but rather that it is never appropriate to say of instance of religious or political belief that it is partly personal, where as it would be inappropriate of scientific or historical beliefs (in any culture ) that they should be partly personal.

Propositional belief may seem to offer the philosopher more scope for investigation than does personal belief.

Not only is the quantity of material ; but also there are a number of different types of questions that can be raised about the material ; the philosopher can concern himself with the content of the propositions, with the relations of

implications if any, between certain of them, with their character as literal or non-literal, on the grounds on which it would be reasonable to hold them ; and so on. By contrast there may seem to be little for a philosopher to say about personal belief. It may be the case that techniques applicable in the examination of propositional belief are not appropriate for the study of personal belief. At the same time, it would be surely wrong to let capacity for responding to particular investigatory techniques be the test for what is important in any field. There is a reciprocal relationship in this matter. The invention of new techniques of investigation can virtually create a new branch of study. In general, the concepts we bring to our experience can help to determine where we draws the boundary between one field of study and another, and certainly play some part in the determination of what is 'important' and what is not. The study of personal belief has not been much undertaken by philosophers ; but it would seem to be a necessary study if religious belief is under consideration.

This idea of personal belief is known as fundamental belief by John Hick.<sup>16</sup> For him what is fundamental belief

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16. Faith and Knowledge - by John Hick.

Macmillan - London, Melbourne - 1967

which is similar to personal belief ?

The fundamental beliefs are to be argued about for example, the belief that there is an external world, or that things will continue to behave as they have been observed to behave in the past, or that there are certain objective moral truths (e.g. that ~~turturer~~ and murderer are wicked). Less fundamental beliefs whether there is a table in the next room or it will rain tomorrow are possible subjects for arguments, but such arguments utilize the fundamental beliefs, about which we can't argue with profit.

Thus argument about whether there is a table in the next room already presupposes that there is an external world of tables and chairs, and that things continue to behave as they have been observed to behave in the past (e.g. tables stay where they put) and that in general, what we think we remember happened (e.g. that if <sup>I</sup>/think I remember having put a table in the next room, then probably I did ). The fundamental beliefs form a framework within which we can argue about the less fundamental beliefs. But the fundamental beliefs are not things about which we can argue in a rational way. We just do believe these fundamental beliefs, although we have a certain freedom not to believe.

Hick claims that, whether the world is created and controlled by God is equally fundamental, and therefore not the proper subject of argument. It must be granted that if a man really did not believe in the external world or the general principle, it would be hard to devise a worthwhile argument to convince him. But in fact all men do, and therefore they have common beliefs about the world, and similar inductive standards, which enable them to advance from their present beliefs to new beliefs. There is no reason to suppose that in its closedness to rational inquiry the existence of God is as fundamental as the existence of the external world. There is no a priori reason to suppose that with common beliefs about the world and common inductive standards, men can't advance to a rational belief about the existenc of God.

The interest of the philosophers of religion in the content of religious propositional belief is partly an interest in arriving at a delimitation of the field of propositional religious belief. These religious propositional beliefs are opposed to the propositional beliefs of economists, physicists etc. They are belief about God or about Jesus of a kind authorised by the Bible, or by the tradition of the Church, or certain branches of the Church, the teachings of

the Jusus as recorded in the Bible, or as interpreted by the Church or by certain individuals. To say this is, however, hardly yet to have stated the content of Christian religious belief, but rather to have mentioned certain formal features of it. As far as the content is concerned the philosophers generally limited himself to discussing certain examples such as "God exist" 'God loves us', 'we shall survive bodily death."

It would be inappropriate for a philosopher - though not for a theologian to become too closely involved in the details of the content of Christian faith. At the same time although examples might, presumably be chosen at random (given that the subject matter can be independently delimited in some such as that just mentioned ) they are infact not chosen at random. Indeed to refer, to the propositions for study by philosphers as 'examples' does them less than justice ; for it suggests that they might be replaced by other propositions without serious loss. But this is misleading. The propositions typically taken for discussion ; and as is usual in such matters, the tradition is to a large extent self -perpetuating one. The propositions in question are apt to strike the philosopher as particularly worth discussing partly for the reason that they have been already through a long past, a good deal discussed. There is also the further point that they have been presented

by , and discussed by, acknowledged authorities - the founders of religions, its prophets - or its great theologians. But the discussion would probably be justified by those who engage in it on the grounds that the propositions they discuss are in their subject matter important. And certainly, matters of life, love and death of eternal salvation or damnation and the like are matters of important.

The origin of beliefs are sometimes relevant to our assessment of its truth ; for instance if we thought - there was good reason to suppose someone's belief to be wishfully thinking or if someone were to assert something on the authority of another person notorious as a liar. Beliefs are not held in a cultural vacuum ; and not only is it the case that what people believe can not be isolated from what sort of people they are and sort of influences there have been upon them ; but neither can questions of truth always be so isolated. It is natural to want to say that from biographical or psychological facts about individuals nothing follows that can have a logical bearing upon questions about the existence or nature of God. But religion is a way of life and not just a set of beliefs ; and religious beliefs are neither fully intelligible nor easily to be labelled 'true' or 'false' in isolation from religion in all its aspects. And religious

experiences are of religious significance and not 'merely' biological or psychological significance. Indeed, that Christian mystical experiences are of Christian religious significance can hardly be denied, and it may well then seem over-intellectual to deny them, some logical relevance to religious belief ; for it is a particular application of the general assertion that beliefs are not held in a cultural vacuum that religious beliefs are not held in a religious vacuum.

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