

# THE NATURE OF VALUES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

By

**SAMUEL B. LYNDEM**



THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

To



DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY  
SHILLONG

1992

2/24

DS  
225  
LYN

**LIBRARY**

Acc. No. 103/89

Inv. No. Mr 225/89

Recd. By [Signature]

13/9/2000

Examination by \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**DEDICATED  
TO MY  
FATHER  
(LATE) MR. WINTO ROY MAWLONG  
AND  
MOTHER  
MRS. KWERSIBON LYNDEM**



Phone :  
Grams : NEHU

# North - Eastern Hill University

Mayurbhanj Complex  
Nongthymmai, Shillong - 793014 (Meghalaya)


*Department of Philosophy*

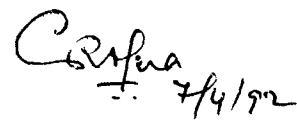
DATED SHILLONG, THE 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 1992

## CERTIFICATE

We certified that the subject matter of the thesis entitled **"THE NATURE OF VALUES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT"** is the record of work done by *Shri Samuel R. Lyndem*, that the contents of this thesis did not form a basis of the award of any previous degree to him, or, to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the thesis had not been submitted by him for any research degree in any other University.

In habit and character *Shri Samuel R. Lyndem* is fit and proper person for the **Degree of Ph.D.**

  
(Dr. N. Malla)  
Supervisor

  
(Dr. C.R. Agera)  
Co-Supervisor

---

(i)

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is my unique privilege to have had Prof. N. Malla, Department of Philosophy, School of Social Sciences, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, as my Supervisor, and Dr. C.R. Agera, Reader, as my Co-Supervisor. Their inspiration, guidance, and goodwill were always with me throughout the period in which I was engaged in the writing of the dissertation. I remain indebted to both of them for their invaluable suggestions which went a long way in shaping the dissertation. Prof. Sujata Miri, Head, Department of Philosophy, NEHU; Prof. Miri, Dr. Daniel and Dr. Jagat Pal for their encouragement.

I am thankful to the United Theological College, Bangalore, and Sacred Heart College, Mawlai, Shillong, for providing help and library facilities during my course of study.

Also, I am grateful to my friend, Dinel Uriah, who typed out the draft of the dissertation, and Mr. Joseph F. Khongbuh, for completing it in his final typing.

My mother and my wife had been an inspiration and strength to my effort, without whose help and prayer, my labour could not be completed. Over and above all, I thank God who had given me his Blessings and Grace, without whom, all my work would be in vain.

SHILLONG

THE 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 1992.

S. R. Lyndem  
(SAMUEL R. LYNDEN)

## CONTENTS

	<i>Pages</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i> ...	<i>(1)</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> ...	<i>1-11</i>
CHAPTER I <i>APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SACRED TEXTS</i> ...	<i>12-45</i>
CHAPTER II <i>NEW TESTAMENT VALUES</i> ...	<i>46-88</i>
CHAPTER III <i>FACT AND VALUE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT</i> ...	<i>89-136</i>
CHAPTER IV <i>ABSOLUTE VALUES AND THE NEW TESTAMENT</i> ...	<i>137-184</i>
CHAPTER V <i>CONCLUSION</i> <i>VALUES AND RELIGION: NEW TESTAMENT</i> <i>PERSPECTIVE</i> ...	<i>185-220</i>
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i> ...	<i>221-231</i>

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

Axiology or 'Theory of Value' has come to be treated as an important subject in the discipline of philosophy. It has taken its place alongside the traditional branches, such as logic, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Aesthetics and Philosophy of Religion. It would seem that perhaps all kinds of studies of value should now be classified under the general heading of Axiology. Thus, Ethics and Aesthetics are best treated as subsidiary branches of the field of value in its broadest sense.

Historically, the importance of 'value' in philosophical studies has been recognised very slowly and gradually. Moreover, its philosophic history is obscure. In the light of subsequent development, however, we may trace its emergence to the Platonic Doctrine (In Republic VI) of the idea of Good. When Plato conceived the Good as the culmination of the ideal world, and as the principle which was to unify, systematize, and organise all the other 'forms' he was really putting 'value' above 'being' conceiving it as the supreme principle of explanation, and expressing the same thought as Lotze, when he declared that the beginning of metaphysic lies in Ethics.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Hasting James, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.12, p. 584.

Since the development of value by Plato, after a long time, the investigation of value was carried on only in Germany. Even here the progress was very slow. The first, probably to see that there was a problem, was F.E. Beneke (1799-1854). The only empirical psychologist among the German philosophers of his time, he stated that "If the science of moral is practical the notion of value lies at the root of it."<sup>2</sup> He lays it down that the value which we attribute to a thing is determined by the pleasure which it has excited in us, and he makes the whole of Ethics depend on the concept of value.

Schopenhauer (1788-1860), by raising the question of value of life as a whole, emphasizes the importance of values. F.W. Nietzsche (1844-1900) effectively drew attention to the transformation of values, and set himself before he died, to bring about a transvaluations of all accepted values.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of value began to get matured in the 1890's in the writings of Alexius Menong and Christian Von Ehrenfels, two Austrian followers of Franz Brentano. The general theory of value has some influence in Great Britain, in the works of Bernard Basanquet, W.R. Sorley, J.M. Mackenzie,

---

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

John Laird, G.E. Moore, and J.N. Finlay. But rather less than elsewhere, for, on the whole, British philosophers have held to more traditional terms like 'Good' and 'Right'. But it received an excited welcome in the United States just before the World War I. The idea was taken by Hugo Munsterberg and W.M. Urban in 1906, and Ralph Barton Perry, John Dewey, D.H. Parker, D.W. Prall, E.W. Hall and others continued the tradition. Later, it was refurbished by S.C. Pepper and Paul W. Taylor. This wide ranging discussion in terms of 'value' and 'valuations' subsequently spread to psychology, the social sciences, the humanities and even to ordinary discourse.<sup>4</sup> Values have played an important role not only in the area of ethics but also in religion. Bereft of values, religions are forms without content. Religion is the way to realise the supreme value in man's life called liberation or salvation. But it also opens the way for man to realise other values such as the moral, social, and the cultural that enrich his earthly existence and make it meaningful. The great religions of the world have assigned a high place to moral conduct and to the cultivation of moral values. They have also laid utmost emphasis on the cultivation and development of social values which are necessary for the solidarity of society and for the promotion of its well being and development.

---

4. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 7 & 8, Macmillan Pub. Co., New York, 1972, p. 229.

This fact is well illustrated in the Bible, the Koran, the Gita and in some other religious scriptures of the world. Thus, true religion does not admit any kind of polarity between spiritual life and secular life or between religious values and secular values. They are distinct but not opposed to each other. Religion on the one hand, opens the way for man to the divine and, on the other hand, it activates him to realise the other values that sustain and enrich his earthly existence. Thus, religion embraces both dimensions of man's existence – the spiritual as well as the secular.

But in spite of its involvement in the secular pursuits and values of life, true religion does not lose its touch with the Divine who constitutes the supreme concern of man. This is the unchanging and the everlasting truth of religion. All other values, namely religious, moral, social and cultural etc. are subject to change but the supreme truth of religion remains unchanged.

In a historically given religion, its religious beliefs and ritual system cannot be served from its way of life, the praxis, that it advocates. After all, religion is not merely a ritual system but also a manner of living that at once takes into consideration a set of values that have their impact on the code of conduct. Thus, morality and religion are indissolubly related, nay more, the one is schematized

on the other; it only depends upon one's perspective as to what schematizes on what.

Secondly, the theme that I have chosen for my study is not a general one; it is with special reference to the New Testament. The New Testament to the Christian, is the basis of the Christian doctrine. Again, before it ever becomes a doctrinal foundation, it is first of all a book that sustains the way of life of a community. Jesus and thereafter his disciples, in particular, St. Paul, were primarily ethical teachers rather than 'cerebrally' - oriented philosophers. Quality of life in the context of a religious metaphysics is the core of ethical teaching. The New Testament thus has been a book of life and practical living to millions of people. Thirdly, the New Testament is a piece of world's religious heritage and literature that has been the undercurrent of philosophies and cultures, especially in the West.

All the New Testament twenty seven books were originally written in Greek. On the face of it this may surprise us. Aramaic, a language akin to Hebrew, was the mother-tongue of Jesus, and though he was probably able to speak Greek, it was in Aramaic, not Greek, that he preached and taught. The Greek of the New Testament is called 'Common Greek'. This Koine, or common Greek, was in Christ's time the international language of the day, very much as English is today.

The New Testament Greek is the common Greek with a Semitic accent. This is what we might have expected; for all the New Testament writers, save Luke, were Jews. Some of these Semitic elements in their Greek are due to the influence of the Hebrew scriptures and to the Aramaic spoken by Jesus and his first followers. More often, the Semitic case of New Testament Greek springs from the fact that the Bible which most early Christians used was the Septuagint – a literal translation of the Hebrew old testament made at Alexandria two or three centuries before Christ.

Now the question arises, why should a student of philosophy be interested in studying the nature of values in New Testament? It is true that one may begin studying the New Testament with a purely literary concern and end up by valuing it for a quite different reason. There are others who, finding the essence of Christianity in 'Christ's views about God and the sermon on the Mount', think that it is in these that the value of the New Testament lies. In the New Testament, we find the highest and purest 'message of God and the good'.

The New Testament values are supposed to be the revelation of God. Therefore they are theonomous in nature, and because of this divine nature, they play important role in the life of the individual, the society and the nation as

a whole. Therefore, the study of values in the New Testament cannot be separated from the religious meaning of the text itself.

In any sacred text, be it the Geeta of the Hindus, or the Koran of the Muslims, or the Bible of the Christians, it is the value system that plays the central role. Seen in this light, values are central to religion and these values play a pivotal role.

This dissertation is a textual study. Therefore, all the references from the text has been quoted and inserted. Only some secondary references have been used in the footnotes to outline its scope of research and to substantiate the text of the New Testament. The dissertation consists of the following chapters:

The first chpater is entitled the Methodological Issue. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to spell out and elaborate the method of studying a religious text. A religious text is neither a purely historical nor purely scientific document, though often it does reflect a socio-cultural history of the times. The attempt to study the religious texts with the application of scientific and historical categories has often led the positivists to denounce religion as a pseudo science. In this dissertation, I wish to point

out that the study of religion requires altogether a different method. Historically speaking, some theologians have treated sacred text as containing scientific truths. Hence, the conflict between science and religion. On the other hand, I wish to point out that religion does not advance either a scientific or a historical theory; it has its mooring elsewhere. The conflict between science and religion is only apparent and not genuine. It is the result of wrong presuppositions. Science, history and religion belong to different realms. The conflict appears to be there only when we try to understand the one in terms of categories appropriate to the other. In short, the method and categories applied in the study of a religious text are radically different from those employed in scientific and historical enquiry. The chapter is devoted to an explication of these methods and categories. The positivistic denunciation of religion will also be examined in this connection.

The second chapter is entitled the New Testament values. This chapter is devoted to an exhaustive elaboration of value system of the New Testament. Broadly speaking, all the New Testament values such as moral, social, economic and political, have to be elements of the religious values which are theonomous in nature. Therefore, the New Testament values cannot be separated from the religion out of which

they have grown. It is the Christian conviction that no man can reach the ethical heights without the power and faith in God.

The third chapter is entitled the New Testament Fact-Value dichotomy. This chapter begins with an examination of the dichotomy between Fact and Value. The contemporary literature in moral philosophy is replete with discussion of such dichotomy. This problem is examined by considering the five major schools of thought: Naturalism; Intuitionism; Non-cognitivism or Emotivism; Prescriptivism and Descriptivism. All these theories in moral philosophy make claims and counter claims to bring out the different aspect of the dichotomy between Facts and Values. But, in so far as the New Testament values are concerned, the dichotomy does not operate. What is value in the spiritual sense becomes a fact, and what is a fact in spiritual sense becomes a value. Christ reconciles the dichotomy between Facts and Values in order to fulfill his mission of reconciliation between God and man. Christ is the embodiment of Fact and Value in one integrated whole. He has created values and discovered facts, in his own life. Hence, fact and value in the New Testament are inseparable from the concept of God. They have their fulfillment and realisation only in God, and because of this unique feature, the dichotomy in the context of New Testament becomes absurd.

The fourth chapter is entitled Absolute Values and the New Testament. This chapter is devoted to a critical examination of the Absolute values enshrined in the New Testament; values such as Love, Goodness and Truth. These Absolute values are eternal because they refer to an aspect of divine nature itself. We partake of the eternal life in so far as we realise them in our own life. This recognition is indeed the immortal message of the New Testament. These Absolute values are at the core of the New Testament. The New Testament as a holy scripture would be empty without these Absolute values.

The fifth chapter is entitled Values and Religion: New Testament Perspective. In the concluding chapter, I have made an attempt to explore the possibility of the meeting point of religions. In order to do this, I have discussed the general problems of the identity of purpose that religions share. Their belief and ritual system have been discussed since every religion has invariably such systems. I have discussed the system of symbols that a religion generally has. It is only on the value system that provides common ground between the diverse types of religions. The present study is only an attempt to explore the possibilities of religions coming together.

All religions advocate the same universal and absolute values, although in different ways. Thus, I have made an attempt to argue that the New Testament advocates a set of values both spiritualistic and humanistic in nature and this is true of all other religions.

---

**CHAPTER I**

**APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SACRED TEXTS**

## APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SACRED TEXTS

Religion has been a subject of study from various standpoints. Some of the well-known approaches to the study of religion have been through History, Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology. The historian has been interested in religions as social movements and has taken pains to trace the development of various religions. The anthropologist, who treats man as essentially as a social animal, has stressed on the genetic approach in the study of man, both in physiological and psychological aspects. How has religion come to acquire a place and importance in the life of the homo sapiens has been one of his concerns. The sociologists lay emphasis on the development of human society, and study its nature and laws which govern it. The sociologist therefore is primarily interested in the institutional and the ritualistic aspects of religion. But to a transcendentalist, religion is concerned with 'Values' and 'Ideas'. It can be understood only in terms of values and belief systems which a person accepts. These can be rationally justified and logically established. The transcendentalist approach to religion is different from those of other disciplines of Social Science because whereas the latter study religion only as a 'struc-

ture', the former studies the religious values as constituting the inner core of religion. But this approach of the transcendentalist too can be subject to criticism, depending upon the kind of methods it adopts to study religion.

In this chapter, I will not elaborate on the methods of studying religions; I shall rather be concerned with another aspect of this methodology as it is applicable to the study of religious texts, since my concern in this thesis is textual. Religion without its religious scriptures cannot be understood fully; its meaning and functions cannot be fully understood without a reference to its scriptures. Therefore, to understand religion one has to understand the religious text, be it the Bible for the Christians or the Vedas for the Hindus or the Koran for the Muslims. If we take away these sacred books from their respective religions, the latter will lose its meaning. Thus, one of the important concerns in the study religion is to study the different methods for the understanding of the religious text. But this is not to say that religions, particularly tribal religions that do not have a sacred text are not religions at all. In fact, what I wish to suggest is this: In one very significant sense, to study a religion means to study its sacred text and where textual materials are not available to fall back on oral traditions that come to us in the form of legends and stories.

## I. METHODS OF STUDYING SACRED BOOKS

A study of religion is made possible by the study of sacred books of that particular religion. Thus, one can study Hinduism with special reference to a sacred book, for example, Bhagavad-Gita, even as one can study Christianity with reference to the Bible. For this, we need first of all an overall perspective about scriptures in general and the special status given to these books by the members of the corresponding religion.

In the first year, we shall reflect for a while on the sacred books in general, highlighting the sacred, human and communitarian aspects of these books; in the second, we shall discuss the appropriate methods of getting into the 'truth' of the scriptures. Finally, a few remarks will be made concerning historical questions with regard to any scriptures. I shall take the case of the Gita and the Bible, as an instance.

### (A) SACRED BOOKS IN GENERAL

#### (1) Sacred Aspects of the Scriptures

The first observation we may make about the scriptures is that they are 'sacred'; they are sacred books, set apart from other kinds of literature. Irrespective of what people see in the 'sacred', one thing that is common to the structure of the sacred is this: that which we call sacred is marked

103181



by a sense of 'the other', the extraordinary; it is set apart from the 'secular'. For instance, we shall consider the scriptures of two of the world religions, viz. Sikhism and Islam. The Adi Granth occupies the most prominent place in the Gurudvāra. The book is treated with awe, reverence and love. When Guru Govind Singh, the tenth and last Guru, was asked just before his death as to who was to succeed him in the spiritual throne of Nanak Dev, he replied: "The word enshrined in the Granth Sahib. Whoever searcheth me here, findeth me. You shall hereafter look upon it as the visible embodiment of the Gurus".<sup>1</sup> With no less reverence and awe do the Muslims treat the sacred Quran. This idea is clear in names like Al-Kitab (the Perfect Book), Al-Nur (the Light) and Al-Ileda (Guidance), by which the Quran is known. Special treatment of reverence is displayed to the scriptures in other religions too, including the non-theistic ones, though the reasons for such treatment may differ.

103179.

Why are these books considered sacred? To pin-point just one or two reasons will not do justice to this special consideration, though an elaborate treatment of this subject would be far beyond the scope of this study. We may, however, briefly say that the chief reasons should be sought in the

---

1. Gopal Singh, Guru Govind Singh, Delhi: National Book Trust, 1966, p. 73.

belief of the people with regard to the origin of these books, and in the function these books perform in the religious life of the people. All world scriptures are believed to have some sort of preternatural or extraordinary, if not divine, origin. Thus, for example, we can even speak of the Constitution of the country as a political entity as sacred, in the sense that the constitution of a nation has a special status because of its privileged function as the principles guiding the process of all laws of the country. To some extent the function of the scriptures with respect to the religions, to which they belong, is similar to that of the constitutions with respect to the nations concerned. Another way of approaching this question would be by a close consideration of the numinous and mystical power attached to the concept of 'word' in the 'primitive' and in the world religions.

## **(2) Human Aspect of the Sacred Books**

Books are specifically human means of communication. Even when divine authorship is ascribed to a sacred book, as in Christianity and Islam, it does not mean that there was an absolute need on the part of God to communicate his designs through books; but rather it means that God adapts himself to human situations. This will become obvious to us if we closely observe the symbolic expressions, parables, metaphors, allegories and paradoxes used in the world scrip-

tures. Let us suppose that God himself dictates certain books as a boss dictates to his secretary. If this message is to be relevant and meaningful for the people for whose sake it is dictated, it has to be situationalized or humanized, taking into account the spatio-temporal limitation of man. For instance, if the Biblical message had been communicated in terms of a heliocentric world view or of an Einsteinian physics, it would have remained unintelligible to a large extent to the people of the Biblical times.

The failure to take into account the human elements in the scriptures has caused many needless controversies in different religions. An example in point is the Galileo controversy with regard to the teachings of the Bible. In spite of the experimental evidence provided by Galileo in defence of the Copernician theory of heliocentrism, the church authorities are said to have opposed him on the ground that the Bible 'teaches' geo-centrism. The enlightened statement of one of the chief spokesmen of the church, Cardinal Boronius, that the Bible is not to teach the movement of the heavenly bodies but to teach us 'how to go to heaven in final liberation', fell on deaf ears.

### **(3) Communitarian Aspect of the Scriptures**

When a few human individuals who have experienced a significant event come together to share their experience,

a community grows up. It is natural to have a sort of 'Constitution', stipulating the common ground of their coming together. When such a community grows up on religious grounds, often centered around a charismatic and a prophetic personality or events, this community eventually will have a 'Sacred Book', either in written form of considerable details or in the form of mnemonic statements, embodying the spirit and insights of this person or event. This is easy to understand in the case of religions, like Buddhism or Christianity, which trace their origin to a sacred person. It is however not very easy to conjecture the origin of at least some of the sacred books of religions, like Hinduism, which do not claim to have sacred founders. This is the reason why I refer here not merely to a person but also to events, at any rate. It is however obvious that the scriptures of these religions too functioned, as far back as their history goes, as sources of enlightenment, inspiration and guidance to the members, thereby establishing their intrinsic connection with the religious body to which they belong.

Here we may make a passing reference to the sacred traditions of the 'primitive' religions. As the languages of the primitive may not have scripts, their sacred oral traditions, transmitted from generation to generation, do in a way what the sacred books do in more developed forms

of religion. These traditions contain various myths, ritualistic formulae, customs and taboos, as we find in some of the sacred books. When we take into account that many of the world scriptures had centuries of oral existence before they were committed to writing, we may rightly call these sacred traditions, Sacred Books in the process.

When we observe the inter-relationship between the Sacred Books and their respective religions, and when we consider the beliefs of the people with regard to their origin, we are led to say that the Sacred Books belong to the essential constituents of different religions. Indeed, the scriptures are the self-expressions of the religion concerned. When we take into account the intimate relationship between the scriptures and their respective religions, we must not overlook the fact that we cannot truly understand the scriptures totally independent of the interpretations given to the scriptures by the religious communities concerned.

## **(B) PARTICULAR METHODS**

### **(1) Community-Oriented Method**

We have pointed out that religious texts belong to the essential constituent of religions, and that religions and scriptures are intimately connected in their origin, growth and functioning as the case may be. They are only the conceptualized verbal expressions, mostly of the 'ineffa-

ble' religious experience of a religious founder, religious reformer, and an official religious teacher, and the like. This obviously implies that the scriptures do not and cannot contain exhaustively the religious experience, but rather partially, symbolically and suggestively. But scriptural statements are such that they can evoke and help to recapture the original experience in various degrees.

Indeed, the scriptures come into being in a sacred numinous milieu of religious experience. And, if they are separated from this milieu, they will be literally out of their elements. It is therefore obvious to say that the interpretation of the Gītā by a Saṅkarācārya, or by a Rāmānujācārya, will be far more credible than that of a Rodolf Otto or of a Hopkins. If a non-Indian with no knowledge of the socio-cultural background of the Indian people cannot enter into the spirit of the Indian constitution, it is much more difficult to get into the spirit of the Indian scriptures without getting into the religious background. Hence, to know the true meaning of a particular sacred book, one has to 'study' it within the religious milieu whose self-expression it is, however partial and inadequate it may be.

By this we do not mean that the interpretation of the scripture by their respective religions, or the spokesmen of these religions, would be totally free from error. Cer-

tainly not. For instance, the interpretation of the Gītā by Saṅkarācārya and Rāmānujācārya are very different, though both represent Hinduism. Nor do we say that a non-Hindu, or non-Christian, cannot grasp the meaning of the Bhagavad Gītā and the Bible respectively even in a better way than a Hindu or a Christian. We in fact uphold even the latter possibility, provided that these persons 'study' them without detaching them from their respective religious life, or the stream of experience.

## (2) Hermeneutical Method

The word 'hermeneutics' is derived from the Greek word 'hermeneuses' meaning 'interpretation'. The Greek word, 'hermeneuses' is in turn derived from 'Hermes' (called Mercury by the Romans) who, in Greek mythology, was the messenger of the gods and patron of eloquence. Thus, at the outset, we see that hermeneutics is concerned with 'divine' truth, and with making that truth clear and precise so that it can be understood. Therefore, hermeneutics may be defined as the science, and art too, of interpretation, especially of ancient writings which are held to contain divine truth.

In a technical sense, then, hermeneutics, as applied to scriptures, can be defined as the investigation and determination of the rules and principles which guide the interpretation of scriptures. Hermeneutics is the theory and the

methodology of scriptural interpretation. Its basic principles of interpretation are based on psychology, sociology and culture. For example, the culture of the New Testament was to some extent built upon the categories of Greek philosophy. So, to study the New Testament in the Bible, one has to take into account the sociological and the cultural background of that period of time. Similar is the case with the religious texts of other religions also: Closely associated with the hermeneutical method is the symbolic method for the study of religious texts. In modern times the name of Paul Tillich is associated with this method.

### **(3) Symbolical Method**

Central to Tillich's theory of religion is his understanding of religious symbols. Religious symbolism can be taken as the method to study the religious text, because every religious expression is symbolic. A symbol is not a sign, even though both point beyond themselves. A sign stands for something other than itself; such a representation is either natural or conventional. A symbol however, participates in the reality it points to. This reality is not merely factual and empirical; it is an existential reality. Symbols cannot be invented intentionally; they are born in situations where their meaning is relevant; they live as long as they have existential power, and they die when they no longer

evoke response. There are two fundamental types of symbolism, discursive and presentational. But what is important about symbols, as Susanne K. Langer says, is that "It is the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly mean".<sup>2</sup> The religious concepts like God, Love, Power, Justice etc. are all symbolic. Paul Tillich says, "Symbol is the native language of religion."<sup>3</sup> Symbols are not a primitive form of expression which has been superseded by modern scientific thinking; it is rather a perennial form of human consciousness which conveys profound insights into the nature of reality and the depths of human being.

In understanding the religious text of any religion, we cannot ignore the fact that symbols play an important role to exhibit the values enshrined in the sacred text. So, in order to understand the religious texts, one has to treat symbols conceptually.

#### (4) Ethico-Mystical Method

Unless one has certain empathy with the ethico-mystical attitudes, it is impossible to get into the numinous, or sacral, aspects of the scriptural truths. The statement of the Rig Veda, that "Even if he (who does not know 'The path of righteous action') hears her (vāk), still in vain he

---

2. Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in the New Key, Oxford University Press, 1951, p. 61.

3. Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 55.

listens" (10:71:6), is echoed in the New Testament when Christ, quoting the Old Testament (Isaiah 6:9), says, "You will listen and listen again, but not understand" (Matt., 13:14).

"Interpretation always presupposes a spiritual communion between the interpreter and the object he seeks to interpret. This becomes imperative when one seeks to interpret a culture, a way of thought, or a thing of the spirit. A process of saturation, resulting in a participation mystique, must set in before the eyes are ready to see and the mind to grasp."<sup>4</sup>

The author referred to goes on to say that,

"Not to have a mystic touch in one's soul and yet to think oneself qualified to interpret the scriptures of any faith including one's own, is a piece of presumption which scientific scrupulousity should not have allowed."<sup>5</sup>

In other words, we cannot get into the meaning of the scriptures by approaching them as the book of science, or history or even of aesthetics. We have to approach without missing the intrinsic meaning of the scripture by the process of "participation mystique".

To get the meaning of scientific statements, it is enough to consider them with detachment and without subjective

---

4. Cfr. Srimat Anirvan, The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol.I, pp. 311-332.

5. Ibid., p. 326.

involvement. But the meaning of aesthetic statement is grasped or rather experienced, when there is intuitive participation by the subject. When it is a question of religious statements, a purely objectified and externalized consideration would make us miss completely the numinous element in them. Rightly therefore, Robert Avens says, though in a slightly different context:

"In the religious context, what has to be reversed, if we are serious about revivifying the traditional creeds and formulas, is the process of externalization and intellectualization of religious images and symbols. The numinous value which, as a result of this process has been largely extinct, must be recaptured and made an integral part of man's religious experience".<sup>6</sup>

How then shall we get into the sacral dimension of the scriptural truths? We can however get definite guidelines from the Upaniṣadic tradition which can be applied to the study of the sacred books of other religion as well. In the context of explaining the supremacy of the knowledge of the supreme self the Upaniṣad says, "Verily, O Maitreyi, it is the self that should be seen (draṣṭavyaḥ), heard of (śrotavyaḥ), reflected on (mantavyaḥ) and meditated upon (nidihyāsitavyaḥ)" (Br. Up, 2:4:5). Here we can only make some general remarks of these four steps suggested by the Upaniṣad to

---

6. Robert Avens, "G.G. Jung's Analysis of Religious Experience", The Journal of Dharma, Vol. I, No.3, Jan., 1976, p. 227.

get in touch with the numinous element of Vāk. This is how Kochumuttam gives a brief description of this method:

"In darśana and sṛavana, the sage, apart from the ascetic preparation by tapas, is almost passive under the spell of the spirit manifesting itself or of resounding Vāk. The new experience has put him in a very strange predicament in which he feels a kind of unrest. He should get used to the new situation, by his personal reflection and contemplation and this process is meaningfully called manana and nidihyāsa".<sup>7</sup>

In the Indian tradition, Mīmāṃsā ( in the sense of scriptural exegesis) is a spiritual exercise rather than merely a rational discipline. In this matter, Anirvan's observations are enlightening:

"It (Mīmāṃsā) is more of the nature of a coordination of spiritual experiences or of thoughts having an inner certitude, and is thus more akin to the spiritual practice of manana than to the logical procedure of tarka. The mind there works ... more by illumination derived from within than by ratiocination dependent on objective data. If we carefully study the psychology of spiritual expression (Vāk) we have no doubt left as to the antiquity of mīmāṃsā as a form of intense meditation creating a tradition of mystic knowledge which must have been orally handed down from father to son or from teacher to disciple".<sup>8</sup>

---

7. Thomas Kochumuttam, "Sanskrit Terminology and Christian Theology", Unique and Universal, Dharmaram Pub., Bangalore, 1972, p. 62.

8. Ibid., pp. 316-317.

In highlighting this ethico-mystical method, our purpose has not been to work out systematically a methodology for getting into the numinous dimension of the scriptures, but rather to bring out the insufficiency of the purely positivistic methodology which is today used in getting into the 'truth' of the scriptures. We maintain that the Indian tradition can provide us with the materials for such a methodology.

#### (5) Scientific Method

We have seen how important it is to recognize the human element in the sacred books. This implies that, apart from the ethico-religious method, various other devices used for the correct interpretation of various kinds of secular literature, could also be used for getting into the 'truth' of the scriptures. In this matter both the Indian as well as the Western contributions in scientific exegesis can be fruitfully used.

The whole of the Vedānga literature with its six branches of sikṣā (Phonetics), kalpa (Ritual), vyākaraṇa (Grammar), nirukta (Etymology), chandas (Metrics) and jyotiṣa (Astronomy) are exegetical devices for the correct interpretation of the Vedic literature. It goes without saying that this ancient literature needs revision in the light of modern studies in the fields of philology, linguistics, structural

analysis, etc. Still this literature can complement the Western methods of scientific exegesis. For instance, without a certain understanding of metrics and phonetics, one cannot fully grasp the fuller import of a scriptural verse.

Scientific exegesis of the scripture is very much of a modern phenomenon in the West. It was largely the result of the gigantic strides empirical sciences have made. Philosophy, since the time of Descartes, also has contributed much to Biblical criticism. In the context of Biblical exegesis the following five types of criticism are in vogue in the West: textual criticism, literary criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism and historical criticism. Textual criticism tries to find out whether the present day text is faithful to the original. Literary criticism inquires into the literary form, authorship and the inter-relationship among the books of the scripture concerned. Form criticism inquires into the pre-history of the text before it was committed to writing. Redaction criticism makes conjectures with regard to the ideological bias of the compiler or the redactor of various oral traditions into a final book form. Historical criticism makes queries with regard to the authorship, the date and the historicity of the persons and events spoken of the scriptures.<sup>9</sup>

---

9. Cfr. Rudolf Bultman, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, John Marsh (Tr.), Oxford, 1963.

The scientific objective to arrive at the 'truth' is also applied to the study of religion. And the scientific method of analysis is one of the important studies of religion and of our conclusion with the understanding of the sacred books. Thus, it tries to bring out the close relationship between science and religion, whose differences are only apparent but not genuine.

**(6) Historico-Critical Method in the Context of the Bhagavad Gītā and the New Testament.**

Through this method one tries to find out who was the author of a book, at what time the book concerned was committed to writing and how historically the events and persons mentioned in the book are. This method is applicable to the study of any ancient book. But the grades of importance of this type of investigation vary according to the nature of the book in question. Here we limit ourselves to pointing out the different degrees of emphasis on historical questions required by the Bhagavad Gītā and the New Testament.

From an overall look at the Bhagavad Gītā and the New Testament a feature that strikes us the most is that the former is more doctrine-centred than fact-centred, while the latter seems just the opposite. But at the same time stories about Kṛṣṇa's childhood, youth and friendship with Arjuna is well known to the Hindus. In the Bhagavad Gītā much

of the doctrine communicated could stand by itself, independent of any authority, though the Lord's own authority enhances its value. In the New Testament, on the other hand, what is primarily important is not what Christ merely taught but what he was and what he did. The New Testament records not only words spoken by Christ but He himself is the 'Word' (John, 1:1), incarnated (John, 1:14); he not only spoke truths but He was the truth (John, 14:6), not only pointed out ways of salvation but the way (John, 14:6).

There is hardly anything mentioned in the Bhagavad Gītā with regard to the personal life of Lord Kṛṣṇa: his birth, childhood, parents, activities etc. In the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, the personal life and activities of Christ are given great importance. When we read the commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā by the great ācāryaṣ or the modern Hindu scholars like Sri Aurobindo or Dr. Radhakrishnan, very little interest is shown whether Kṛṣṇa was truly a historical person, whether the doctrines taught in the Bhagavad Gītā are the very words of Kṛṣṇa or only an interpretation of the Lord's words by a later writer, whether all the 18 chapters of the Bhagavad Gītā constitute one whole book or a compiled whole of various strands of literature already existing. Radhakrishnan says:

"So far as the teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā is concerned, it is immaterial whether Kṛṣṇa

the teacher is a historical individual or not. The material point is the eternal incarnation of the Divine, the everlasting bringing forth of the perfect and divine life in the universe and the soul of man."<sup>10</sup>

Aurobindo would say in the same way that "The Kṛṣṇa who matters to us is the eternal incarnation of the Divine and not the historical teacher and leader of men."<sup>11</sup>

The New Testament commentators, especially the modern scholars, are to a considerable extent different from those of the Bhagavad Gītā commentators. They seem to be more interested in the Christ-fact, although they are not oblivious of the Christ-value, if such a distinction is permissible. Are the events described in the New Testament historical or mythical? Are the sayings attributed to Christ really his own or of the interpreters? Are the narratives on the miracles factual or imaginative? How are we to reconcile the apparently incompatible resurrection narratives? What are the sources from which Jesus drew his doctrines? Such questions are of great concern to them. Though the Bultmannian School of New Testament criticism was to shift the emphasis from the Christ-fact to the Christ-value, still it failed to achieve its goal due chiefly to its inability to take

---

10. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad Gītā, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1948, p. 28.

11. Aurobindo, Essays on the Gītā, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1959 p. 18.

seriously the ethico-mystical method. On the other hand, the early fathers of Christianity, like Basil, Jerome and Augustine tried to bring out the Christ-value far more fruitfully and forcefully than the Bultmannian, without at the same time dividing artificially between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. The orthodox Christian position is that the Christ-fact in itself has the meaning or the value factor, and that the one cannot be considered independently of the other.

Because of this inseparable and intimate relationship between the Christ-value and Christ-fact, the New Testament interpretation is immensely helped by the contributions of the modern historical critics. But the greatest danger in getting into the truth of the New Testament is in approaching the Christ-fact as though it were independent of the Christ-value on the one hand, and of utilising only the secular methods, overlooking the ethico-mystical method, on the other. In this chapter we have pointed out that the peculiar nature of the sacred books demands special methods to get into their true meaning and import. Since the ethico-mystical method is very much overlooked today, we have laid a special emphasis on it. We have also stressed the need for taking seriously the communitarian discussion of the scriptures in trying to understand them, especially in a centralised religion

like Christianity. In our special considerations of the Bhagavad Gītā and the New Testament we have highlighted the special relevance of the historico-critical method in interpreting the New Testament in contrast to the Bhagavad Gītā.

A religious text is neither a purely historical nor purely scientific document, though often it does reflect the socio-cultural history of the times. In this chapter I wish to point out that religion is neither science nor history in modern sense. It does not advance either a scientific or historical theory, it has its mooring elsewhere. Science, history and religion belong to different realms.

## II. SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Irrespective of different methods being applied for the study of religious text, we have to bear in our mind of a few general observations in the study of religion itself. Firstly, since religion is a cultural phenomenon, its historical moorings must not be overlooked. Secondly, since study of religion is sometimes done from a scientific standpoint, we must not fight shy of the application of the scientific tools and investigation. Thirdly, even when we have applied the historical and scientific method, we must be sensitive to what is specifically religious in the phenomenon that we called religion. This at once brings us to the inter-relation between history, science and religion.

Science and religion though can be treated to some extent as identical in purpose, yet they are opposite in methods. So, scientific enquires cannot purely explain the meaning of religion, or given an interpretation of the scriptures. Treatment of science and religion as similar entities often led the positivists to denounce religion as a pseudo-science.

Science explores that which is perceptible through physical manifestation. It confines itself to the external phenomenal world. Things that belong to the materially manifest world of form, space and time are detectable through the physical senses and comprehended through the mind by science. But there are also things that we cannot grasp through our physical senses or through the mind, but the presence of which we cannot deny. This transcendental realm is the domain that religion explores. Religion explores life as it manifests from inside out, and expresses it in reference to the universe outside. Religion thus goes further than the physical universe by exploring the mysteries in the transcendental realm beyond the mind, whereas physical science explores the manifestation of the material world. Man is the combination of the spirit and the body. But science searches for the meaning of life, excluding the spirit and inner values. Nevertheless, science and religion are actually

not two separate and opposing phenomena. Science deals exclusively with the physical universe, whereas religion deals with the realm of the spirit. Nonetheless, spirit and matter cannot be so divided as to treat them entirely independent of each other, for they are manifested simultaneously. In the light of what is stated above, we may make the following observations.

Firstly, the basis of the exploration of science is objective analysis. Science compares things to determine their differences. But religion begins with postulation of the unity of all. Secondly, doubt is an important element of the scientific process; but faith is a corresponding necessary element of religious practice. Thirdly, the scientist is careful to establish his objectivity, and not become personally 'involved' in his clinical process. But the religious seeker must be fully involved personally in his practice. Scientific procedure makes use of hypothesis-questioning-measurement of results etc. Results must be consistent and repeatable, no matter who conducts the experiments. When the scientist comes up with his discoveries and inventions, they become the common property accessible for all. Thus, although Franklin discovered electricity and Edison invented the light bulb, anyone can use these inventions without being a Franklin or an Edison. But, because religious search is

subjective and individual, the realised truths of religion can be talked about but not passed on to another. It takes another man to become a Buddha; Buddhahood cannot become the common property of those who fail to apply themselves on the path of Buddhahood.

Religion deals with the 'Why' of things. It deals with the highest and the noblest that responds to the highest and the noblest, something beyond the mere physical or material or chemical. We cannot explain everything by science. There are items in the realm of the soul which are beyond the grasp of the physical sciences, and they can be contemplated, studied and explained only through the science of religion.

Fourthly, science deals with the things seen but religion deals with things unseen. Huxley went to the extent of saying: "Science is nothing but trained and organised common sense".<sup>12</sup> But there is uncommon sense which is religion. Fifthly, the religious urge is an urge to be encompassed. It is an urge to feel oneself a part of something greater. On the contrary, the scientific urge is an urge to encompass. It is an urge to manipulate, control, direct and dominate.

---

12. Huxley, T.H. Collected Essays, 9 Vols. 1894-1897, London.

There is no contradiction in these two urges, since it is clearly possible for us to be in control of our functioning on one level, while, at the same time, being controlled or encompassed on another level. Basically then, the religious urge and the scientific urge are complementary, as each reinforces the other. Finally, science is the systematised study of the things we experience with our five senses. It is the knowledge ascertained by observation and experiment, critically tested, systematised and brought under general principles. Religion however is that part of our human experience which has to do with realities beyond the reach of our five senses, and theology is the systematised study of such religious experiences.

Historically speaking, some theologians have treated sacred texts as containing scientific truths. Hence, this led to a dichotomy between science and religion, but this dichotomy is bizarre and uncalled for. The antagonism between the two has arisen out of a misunderstanding about their meaning and purpose. The conflict between science and religion is only apparent and not genuine. Einstein writes, "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind".<sup>13</sup> Science and religion are not antagonistic in and of themselves.

---

13. Einstein, Out of My Later Years, New York: Philosophical Library, 1950, p. 26.

The basic thrusts of both science and religion have always been to explore the mysteries of the universe and to alleviate human suffering. Science and religion, each has the same aim, but they are different in methods.

Likewise, we can also take note of a contrast, and yet a complementarity, between history and religion. But first a comparison between science and history. Science and history also have their different purpose and methods, and religion is neither science nor history as such. R.G. Collingwood, a British Philosopher, tries to differentiate between science and history in his book, The Idea of History. He puts two questions, one scientific and the other historical: The one, why does this red litmus paper turn blue? This is a scientific question. And the other, why did Brutus murder Caesar? This is a historical question. To the first question there can be only one answer. Even Einstein could not give another answer. If he gives the one answer, and if it is correct, that would be the only answer, so that at no time can there be simultaneously valid but different answers to this or any scientific question. On the other hand, for the second question, there can be many answers and all of them equally valid at the same time. The purpose of historical enquiry and the purpose of scientific enquiry differ, and this constitutes the vital difference between science and history.

The following differences can be pinpointed: Firstly, the scientist can repeat his experiments; the historian cannot call for a repetition of the past. Secondly, the scientist can be objective towards the phenomena before him. The historian cannot be objective in a sense in which science is objective. This is certainly not a difference in degree, it is one of kind. Thirdly, the ultimate objective in scientific exploration is the formulation of a scientific law. But there can be no law in history, the kind of which one comes across in science. Scientific knowledge provides the power of prediction on the basis of such laws. The historian cannot make such absolute prediction. Fourthly, the scientist makes no moral judgement, the historian cannot help making them. Fifthly, the material which the scientist deals with is mostly inanimate, and where animate, it is incapable of rationality. On the other hand, the historian deals with human material. Sixthly, history is not a positive science though it adopts scientific methods in the matter of collection of data. The primary function of the historian is to collect the data, interpret the facts, classify them and make guesses and formulate constructions. The historian is not concerned generally with the past as such but only with the select realities of the past. The scope of history is not static as it moves in time. Thus, the method, functions and scope of history are radically different from those of science. Now we are

in a position to compare and contrast between history and religion.

In virtue of its human concern, specially with the system of human values, religion is more closely related to history than to science. Indeed it is possible to consider religion as a humanistic discipline par excellence; this in so far more than one reason. In the first place, there hardly is a religion in the vacuum, a religion is always given in a historico-cultural milieu. It is possible to think of religion that does not entail the concept of God; but every religion without exception has to be a religion of man. Hence, religion necessarily has a historical dimension. Secondly, a religion is a human response to concrete human situations that man was forced to adopt himself to; it is in virtue of this that religion is intimately associated with man's life and his system of values. Finally, a religion may also be linked with the transcendental aspirations of man who is a spatio-temporal being. It is here that religion, while having the history of its own, yet, transcends the history of religion. At any rate all these make the link between history and religion intimate. Nonetheless, religion and history belong to different realms. The conflicts appear to be there, only when we try to understand the one in terms of the categories appropriate to the other. In short, the

method and categories applied in the study of religion are radically different from those employed in scientific and historical enquiry. Religion would go beyond the secular, but everywhere history includes religion within its scope.

A failure in our understanding of the inter-relations among history, science and religion in the right perspective makes a study of religion vulnerable to the charges of the positivists. It is to this that I now turn.

### III. POSITIVIST'S DENUNCIATION OF RELIGION

The attempt to study the religious text with the application of the only scientific and historical categories has often led the positivists to denounce religion as a pseudo-science. In this connection, I would take up the view of Karl Marx and Freud who had tried to denounce religion in general, and established their ideology in accordance with the historical, the sociological and the scientific evidence of the times.

In the historical context of a critique of religion, a comparison between Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud seems almost indispensable. To start with, they share the same intellectual and cultural life of the nineteenth century bourgeois society; but they turned out to be critics of that social class and its culture, religion and morality. Whereas Marx analysed

and criticised the economic structure of the bourgeois society, Freud took up the burden of analysing and criticising the sexual life of the same society. They theorized, more or less, under the same intellectual tradition which embodied in it the two elements of scientism and romanticism. The scientific influence is easy enough to recognise in their works; for both of them were wedded to determinism and a belief in the ultimate victory of rationality. For both Freud and Marx, there is no possibility of man disobeying the laws of nature explicated by science. Both Marx and Freud were in a sense social atheists. They were concerned with the social function of religion, not with the philosophical disputes about the existence or the non-existence of God. Nowhere in their writings do we find any arguments designed to refute the traditional proofs for the existence of God, such as those advanced by theologians and philosophers. Marx refused to attack religion on its own terms. They are both critics of the reactionary social role which religion plays in supporting an exploitative social system.

Marx holds, that "Man makes religion, religion does not make man". Religion does not originate from a source independent of man, such as divine revelation in the Christian and Jewish traditions. Religion is used as the opium of the people. He taught that people to abolish religion. The fantasy

compensations of heaven must be destroyed. He does not use the opium metaphor when speaking of the function of religion for the capitalist class but only to the middle class. The proletariat takes its religious opium in response to actual pain. Just as the drug addict or the alcoholic is simultaneously seeking relief from his sufferings, so it is with religion. Religion provides compensation for the intolerable conditions of the worker's life. Under the influence of religious opium the proletarian enters the deep sleep in which present misery is forgotten, and thereby gains a fantasy compensation and consolation.

To Marx, religion is used as a Capitalist Ideology. The real profit of religion benefits the capitalist class from the religious belief that a man's social status derives not from a dominant exploiting class but from the divine will. It is the capitalist who profits from the religious devaluation of material goods and economic power. The aim of Marx was not simply to diagnose the evils of capitalist society, but above all to overthrow the system itself. His critique of Christianity exposes the two sides of the reactionary social function of religion. On the one hand, he shows how it can support the dominant position of the exploiting capitalist class, on the other hand, he demonstrates that religion offers a narcotic compensation to the proleta-

riat, thereby disguising the true source of their suffering and their revolutionary energies.

For Freud too, religion is a dangerous illusion. Religion, he says, is an 'enemy' of human progress. It functions like a sleeping draught which gives consolation at the expense of wakefulness. It is a poison that destroys reasons. It further induces infantilism by subduing intellectual vigour.

Religion, according to Freud, impoverishes a believer's ability to effectively cope with the threatening forces impinging upon him from the natural world without, and from the unconscious impulses within himself. Instead of dealing with these forces in a mature and rational manner, Freud demonstrated, the religious person frequently turns to a divine father-figure whose protective love is sought through prayers, penances, confessions and so forth. He thought that the impoverishment of a person's critical ability in one area such as this impedes the use of reason in other areas as well.

The views of both Freud and Marx make it abundantly clear that, if we try to explain religion by purely historical or scientific explanation, religion will be nothing but an illusion or a narcotic opium, and the religious and moral

values only serve as the means for exploration of the middle class in the society. Freud and Marx denounce all values upheld by religion and morality, since these values degrade the lower classes of the people in the society. But this argument does not hold good, as such religion is unique, it cannot be explained away purely by history, or science, or economic order of the society or even by culture etc. Religion is a sacred feature in man's life. One has to understand it not merely collectively, but by personal relationship with the infinite in one's own life and its values.

---

**CHAPTER II**

**NEW TESTAMENT VALUES**

## NEW TESTAMENT VALUES

Understanding the nature of values is complicated by the facts that many different kinds of values exist and that a multitude of confusions about values result from the false ideas. Therefore, before I discuss the nature of values in the New Testament, I would first briefly analyse the nature of values in general. In this connection, I shall roughly categorize ten kinds of values distinguished and described in five pairs. These ten kinds of values do not exclude each other, for some values embody the essential characteristics of all ten kinds.

### 1) Good and Bad Values

The distinction between good and bad is so obvious that we often omit mentioning it. One can safely assume that all adults at least know how to distinguish between good and bad. Yet, the distinction is so fundamental that it is basic to all other discussions about values. Any value theory failing to recognize the distinction between good and bad is not merely inadequate, it is false.

Good and bad are opposites. Although some interpret existing opposites as contradictories, good and bad are non-

contradictory opposites, if we do not exclusively subscribe to Augustinian theory of evil. Contradictory opposites have nothing in common. But good and bad have something in common. Both can be considered as values. Their likeness in both being values is inherent in their nature. Thus, good and bad are unlike in some respects, and alike in others.

## 2) Ends/Intrinsic & Means/Extrinsic Values

The distinction between ends and means is the most important distinction necessary for understanding the nature of values. The meanings of 'ends' and 'means' are interdependent. Means are means to ends; ends are ends of means. Technical language refers to means as 'instrumental values', whereas to ends as 'intrinsic values'. Ends-in-themselves are called intrinsic values, because their value is contained within themselves. Means to ends-in-themselves are called instrumental values, because their value derives from their usefulness in bringing about or maintaining intrinsic values. If there were no ends-in-themselves, there would be no means to them either. Under intrinsic values we may enumerate all those 'transcendentals' spoken of by the classical ethical thinkers such as truth, goodness, beauty etc., which are ends-in-themselves and are pursued for their own sake. It may be suggested, however, that the terms 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic' insofar as their character of being whatever they are is

due to the fact that sometimes what is intrinsic at one level of our life may become extrinsic when that level is transcended. The most basic problem of axiology as a general science is the understanding of the nature of intrinsic value.

W.D. Ross, like G.E. Moore, believes that there is a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic values. But John Dewey attempts to break down this distinction between the means and the ends, or between the extrinsic and intrinsic values; he insists that there is no such thing as final end, one which is intrinsically an end in itself. Means and ends are the two names for the same reality. A thing can have value only in relation to human beings. In short, all values for Dewey are instrumental.<sup>1</sup>

### 3) Subjective and Objective Values

Those who present arguments for the subjective interpretation of values are likely to stress the fact that value judgements as to goodness and beauty have varied from individual to individual, from group to group and from one age to another. Values are in some sense subjective in that they depend upon a relationship between an observer and that which is being evaluated. And those, who consider value to be objective, believe that they are strictly out there in our world

---

1. John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct, New York: Modern Library, 1930, pp. 34-36.

to be discovered. If I judge a landscape to be beautiful, there are objectively colours and shape before me which are beautiful. Values seem to reside in objects just as truly as do colours, smell, size, shape etc. However, in respect of values, either a pure subjectivism or objectivism is an exaggeration. In objectivism, there must be a clear distinction between the act of judging on the one hand, and the thing or situation about which the judgements is made, on the other. Even so the subjective theory of value also inevitably leads us to relativism.

#### **4) Relative and Absolute Values**

By absolute values we mean truth, goodness and beauty as objective forces that form the very essence of the absolute spiritual reality. They manifest themselves with man's rational realisation of his unity and attunement to the ultimate spiritual reality; and all other values which fall short of such rational realisation are regarded as relative values, because they fall short of the absolute values in their origin and appreciation. Absolute values are objective in the sense that they are independent of subjective evaluation.

#### **5) Higher and Lower Values**

One of the main questions with which moral philosophers have concerned themselves is the question of hierarchy. Therefore, within a comparative perspective of values, they

often speak of higher and lower values. There are number of issues associated with this problem. In the first place, because of the unity of man's personality, the lower values are fundamental to the higher ones. For example, though economic values are instrumental rather than intrinsic, they provide a necessary basis for spiritual values. In the second place, the presence of spiritual values bestows upon lower values a higher significance than they would otherwise possess. Any sharp separation of the two is artificial; indeed, it destroys the integrity and the wholeness of the self for whom they are values.

The so called higher values cannot be higher, if there are no lower values. According to R.B. Perry, since there are no values apart from interest and, since there is a diversity of interest among persons, the idea of a scale of values, according to which values are ranked a higher or lower, becomes meaningless. However, this does not mean that he is not interested in the notion of comparative value. Although values cannot be ranked as higher or lower, they can be compared with one another quantitatively by measuring the amount of interest involved in them. In the light of the general analysis of the nature of values done above, we could say that the system of values in the New Testament are also found to be intrinsic and extrinsic; subjective

and objective etc. But at the core of all these relative values, the New Testament values remain absolute in nature.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT VALUES

Value has its own different connotation at the hands of different schools of thought in philosophy, as I have stated earlier. But in the New Testament and in the Christian context, values are 'theonomous', or God-centered, rather than 'autonomous', or man-centered. For example, "We are to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect ..." (Matthew, 5:48).

The theonomous value referred to in Matthew is at once a value of thought, action, feeling and conduct. Jesus as an ethical teacher used some sound educational methods; by employing the Socratic question and answer method, people were drawn into dialogue to encounter their own subjective reality and also one another. Many of these values which I am going to take up for my study fall under values discovered through such methods of investigation. The fact that Jesus taught great ethical principles rather than rules gave his ethics validity and permanence. His lofty ethical values have had a perennial significance, and they transcend all times. And, yet, Jesus did not begin his teaching of the value system without a grasp of the existing value systems of the Judaic culture. Therefore, to be sure, he borrowed

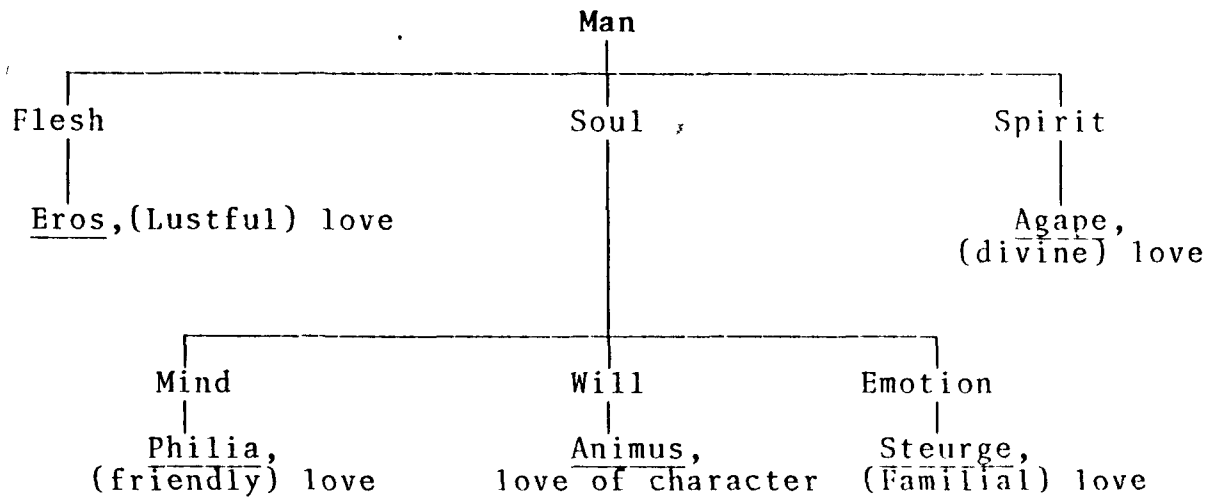
some of the ideas from the Old Testament, specially the prophets and the psalms.

Every philosopher is bound to be deeply concerned with values because, when he thinks of them, he is impressed both with their mystery and their importance. Man does not survive at the truly human level by a mere concern for survival, but also by a concern for the quality of life; concern how he ought to think and live. If man has any duty at all, he has the duty to revere the truth, goodness and beauty wherever they may be found. It is in this way the value system of the New Testament is sought; the values may be either – (1) religious, (2) moral, (3) social, (4) political or (5) economic.

Broadly speaking, in the New Testament context, all different values, whatever their nature be, centre on the religious one. If we take for our consideration whichever value we want, be it moral, or social, or political, or economic, they ought to have within itself an element of the religious values, which are life-breath of the New Testament value system. Therefore, the value system in the New Testament is undeniably a religious one, either instrumentally or intrinsically. So, it is important that we first of all take note of the religious values.

1) **Religious Values** – In every religion there are basic religious values which stand at the core of that religion. This is equally true of the religion of the New Testament; and love is the fundamental value enshrined in it.

a) **Love** – Influenced as it was by the Greek and the semitic thoughts, the New Testament considers man as a complex unity of 'flesh' or 'body' (sarx), 'soul' (psyche) and 'spirit' (pneuma). Accordingly, it traces the forms of love to these three sources. The form of love that is traced back to its origin, namely body, is called 'carnal' love or eros, after the Greek God of love. The form of love that is traced back to its origin, namely soul, is further categorized into three types, depending on their flow from mind, or will, or emotion: accordingly, they are philia (friendly love), animus and steurge (familial love). Finally, the form love that is to be traced back to its origin, namely the spirit, goes by the name of divine love (agapé). Indeed it is agapé the transcendental divine love which is at the core of the New Testament religion. The following chart will help us to understand:



Among the five categories listed above, agape-love, which is divine, is the greatest of all, and find its place as the highest value in the New Testament; the other types are secondary, they are supposedly to reflect the divine love. Therefore, it is not unlikely that the secondary forms of love can easily vitiate, and become what the New Testament speaks as 'sin'. This is clearly reflected in the fifteen characteristics that Paul attributes to love in the I Corinthians, 13:1-7: (The negation of these characteristics would be sin).

"Love is patience; kind; knows no envy; is not proud; It does not seek its own importance; It does not behave gracelessly; It does not insist upon its own right; It does not fly into temper; It does not store up the memory of any wrong it has received; It finds no pleasure in evil doing; it rejoices with truth; It can endure anything; It completely trusts; It never ceases to hope and it bears everything with triumphant fortitude."

It is this kind of love that a Christian both knows as God, and abides in him (I John, 4:7-21). Love has its origin in God, it comes from God and it leads to God. This truth is deeply embedded in the Christian consciousness in his definition of God as love. Indeed it is the very essence of his religion. Love, understood as agape, is intrinsic and absolute. In saying that 'God is love', the New Testament is not without certain religio-philosophical insights.

Firstly, it is the insight that bears upon the notion of creation: Creation is clearly seen as an expression of God's love. If God is love, he cannot exist in lonely isolation. Thus the Christian concept of God is bipolar; it is not a monistic concept, however blissful it be within itself. This at once serves a model for the human community to be founded on the principle of a bipolar, or even a multipolar, relation of love.

Secondly, it is the insight that bears upon the notion of providence. If God created this world by his law or order, He could have left it for its own destiny like a machine to run by itself. But, in virtue of the fact that God is love, His creative act is followed by his constant care. Hence, the New Testament religion insists upon God's involvement with human history. God here is also a God of history, and not merely a God of changeless eternity. Redemption

and sanctification are therefore, processes in the history of man, shaped by the spatio-temporal vicissitudes. In this respect, Christianity and Hinduism came very close. When chaos and disorder prevail God comes down the earth to protect Dharma.

Thirdly, it is the insight that bears upon the notion of salvation: If God had been only law and justice, he would simply have left man to the consequences of the limitation of his nature. On the contrary, the New Testament insists that in virtue of the fact that God is love, he had to seek and save the sinful man and overcome man's limitation. Thus, salvation is seen as an extension of God's love. Closely associated with love is the value of faith. If love is seen as objective, in the sense that it directly refers to the nature of God, faith may be seen as subjective in the sense that it is the attitude and the response of man to the loving God. St. Paul in his epistles repeatedly harps upon the close intimacy between love and faith. It is in love that faith operates. Faith and love are the two related concepts because they are the two sides of the same orientation of man. Faith denotes the attitude of openness or simple trust on the basis of which alone he can relate truly to God. And, love denotes the generous self-giving which flows from the centre of divine life. They are linked together inseparably; wherever there

is no love there is no faith either. This is explicitly stated by St. Paul, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains but if I have no love, I am nothing" (Hebrew, 11:6). "Faith can operate only through love" (I Corinthians, 13:2). "Faith working through love" (Galatians, 5:6). Therefore, the religious values of love and faith cohere together as the core elements in the New Testament.

b) Faith – It is impossible to understand Paul's philosophy, unless one has grasped the conception of faith. A mere belief in God is not necessarily faith. Therefore, we must not mistake religious faith for a belief, as though it were a lesser form of knowledge, an opinion to be substantiated by objective evidences through a laborious epistemic enterprise. We may distinguish in religious faith four elements for an adequate understanding thereof. They are belief, trust, loyalty and love. All these are far from being epistemological factors; they are rather factors of deep personal and existential commitment. And, if anyone of these elements is withdrawn, what remains is no longer faith.

Therefore faith, while admitting within itself a metaphysical structure, centres around such existential attitudes as trust and commitment. Thus it is one's belief in the reality of an unseen spiritual world; and in the process of acquiring and strengthening it, it incorporates within

itself the elements of trust by surrender of one's will to God. Man can trust God, only when he concedes the validity of moral claims God makes upon him, and when he looks to God for power to fulfill them. And trust in God implies a genuine loyalty to Him. But, on top of these elements mentioned above, love is the greatest, because without it faith is empty.

All these elements, present in the conception of faith, not only play their part in the act of faith, and its response. But, they exercise an extraordinary influence on the ethical life and practice of man.

The author in the book of the Hebrews, chapter eleven, states the important characteristics of faith as under:

- 1) Faith is a substance of things hoped for - Verse 1
- 2) Faith is the evidence of things not seen - Verse 1&7
- 3) Faith is the creative power of divine works - Verse 3
- 4) Faith is the divine testimony of right doing - Verse 4
- 5) Faith is the cancellation of natural laws - Verse 5
- 6) Faith is the basis of pleasing God - Verse 6
- 7) Faith is the assurance of God's faithfulness - Verse 17 to 19
- 8) Faith is the confidence of things to come - Verse 20 to 31

The above characteristics of faith clearly indicate faith as a religious value; and faith plays an important

role in relation to God, because without faith we cannot please Him. Similarly faith, as the Christian sees it, is important to man and his religious life, because only through faith in God, man attains salvation (Ephesians, 2:8), justification (Romans, 8:1), redemption (Mark, 10:45), reconciliation with God (Romans, 5:1), sonship or adoption (Ephesians, 1:5) and above all, sanctification (Romans, 12:1) or consecration to aim at holiness in life.

c) **Holiness** – In the New Testament genuine faith in God stresses the importance of holiness. Thus, the Christian concept of holiness for man is founded on the conception that God is holy in his nature. In fact, 'Holy' as a category is primarily applied only to God; only secondarily, it is applied to many other items of religion and morality. The above religio-moral injunction to be holy is not an invitation to be perfect in this world alone; it has a character of transphenomenality. Rudolf Otto offers us two terms which he coins, 'Numinous' and 'Holy'; he attempts to distinguish between the meaning and function of these terms. The numinous or mysterious power is the object of the religious experience in the rough, and we might call it the raw material of religion. Whereas holy is the concept for the divine at a much more physically advanced state of mind. The numinous or mysterious power is the indefinable reality and is the object of religious consciousness.

Nevertheless, having offered this distinction, Otto appears to forget it when he comes on to speak of holiness as a value. He is almost entirely pre-occupied with the numinous, with what is most manifestly distinctive in the religious experience.

In the New Testament holiness as a value is understood with one term only; there is no difference between the numinous and the holy. The absolute moral quality of holiness requires, as its expression, an absolute moral worthiness in conduct or righteousness. In the New Testament righteousness and holiness are the absolute laws of life; as laws they are inward and spiritual, for it is the righteousness of faith in Christ. To Christian ideals, the absolute law is both qualitatively and quantitatively in spirit and in conduct.

The religious life of a Christian cannot be isolated from his moral life. Christ teaches the importance of moral values in order to substantiate the religious ones. We shall now consider this importance of the moral values in the light of the New Testament.

## 2) Moral Values

All the ethical teachings of Jesus and his moral values are rooted in God. The idea that ethics can be separa-

ted from religion never occurred to the Hebrew mind. For the Hebrew, religion and ethics were indissolubly conjoined; they did not conceive of religion as belonging to one domain of life and ethics to another. The knowledge of God was both the rule of faith and the rule of life. All the moral demands of Jesus are thought of as the moral requirements from God. His ethics is the ethics of the kingdom of God, and his moral teaching set forth the way of the kingdom, the way in which God's will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

Thus, the moral values of Jesus cannot be separated from the religion out of which they grew. It is the Christian conviction that no man can rise to the ethical heights without the power and the living faith in God. Religion and ethics are fused into one indissoluble whole. Religion is inconceivable without the moral values, and the moral values are unintelligible and impracticable without religion. Religion is the soul of morality, and morality is the body of religion.

There is a sense in which we can say that the New Testament moral values are an extension, or fulfillment, of the values of the Old Testament. But this is not to state that the New Testament values do not herald a new way of life, and therefore enshrine a new code of conduct. Jesus claims, according to the Gospel of Matthew, 5:17, "Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets:

I am not coming to destroy, but to fulfill". Hence, he did not come to abrogate the law, but to complete it, not to suspend, but to supplement it. But, at the same time there is a vital difference in the spirit of the New Testament, if we compare the law of Moses and the moral demands of Christ. Jesus' moral values supersede the law specially as it was understood in his times in the narrow Judaic sense. This can be illustrated in different antithesis; in a series of contrasts, he compares his own teaching with that of Moses.

Christ's new righteousness (Matthew, 5:21) is deeper, and it demands more than what was being taught and practised by the people of his days. This fact is illustrated in the antithesis, contrasting the old righteousness and the new (Matthew, 5:21-48). Firstly, the new righteousness of Christ demands more reverence for human person (Matthew, 5:21-26). The law says, 'no murder' (Exodus, 20:13); but Jesus says, 'Not even anger'. In the old law, the act of murder exposes one to judgement, that is, conviction and punishment by the constituted authority of the local Jewish court (Sanhedrin) composed of 23 members. But, Christ exposes what lies beneath the act of murder, that is the passion of anger which makes man liable to judgement, the judgement of God. Murder is the result of anger, and Jesus would prevent such murder by eliminating the passion of anger in man.

Secondly, the new morality of Christ extends the respect for human person in a special way to woman's status in the society. The law says, 'No adultery' (Exodus, 20:14). Jesus says, 'Not even lustful look' (Matth. 5:27-30). He required purity of thought as well as of action. The Jews tended to limit adultery juridically to sexual intercourse of a man, married or unmarried (Exodus, 20:14). Jesus teaches that the lustful look is incipient adultery.

Thirdly, the new morality demands truthfulness in one's transparency before God (Matthew, 5:33-37). The old law says, 'Do not swear falsely' (Leviticus, 19:12). But Jesus says, 'Swear not at all'. The law allows oaths but forbids false swearing. The New Testament insists on truth in simplicity and to refrain from swearing 'either by heaven or by earth or with any other oaths' (James, 5:12).

Fourthly, Christ teaches non-retaliation (Matthew, 5:38-42), in contradistinction to the existing law of tit for tat. The old law speaks, 'an eye for an eye' (Exodus, 21:23-25, and Deuteronomy, 19:16-21). But Jesus says, 'No retaliation at all'. When he gives the injunction, 'resist not evil', it is inconceivable that Jesus would suggest that no form of evil should be resisted. What he means to suggest is that the disciples should not exact revenge for personal wrong. In other words, he is articulating the principle of non-retaliation in cases of personal wrong.

Finally, Moses commands to love our neighbour (Leviticus, 19:18). At a time when the ancient Jewish confederacy was yet to form, the word 'neighbour' often meant another man of the same ethnic community; a man from another community was considered as an alien. The Mosaic injunction had not changed much during the time of Jesus, the more so in the context of the Roman hegemony over the Jewish State. But, Christ unmistakably demands of his disciples the love not only of the neighbour, but also the love of one's enemies too. (Luke, 6:27-36).

This transformation of the law into love, according to the spirit of the New Testament, is beautifully crystalised in the teachings of St. Paul. Love is the sum total of the law, the fulfillment of the law (Romans, 13:10), the transcendence of the law, and the abrogation of the law. In doing this, St. Paul is inspired by what Jesus spoke of the single commandment of the scripture that has for itself love of God and the love of neighbour as its two sides. When we have such love, we can never violate the law, because in love there is no evil.

The great champions of the brotherhood of man, after Christ, have drawn from the inestimable resources of the New Testament with or without acknowledgement. To a Christian, however, the love of God is the precondition and the inspira-

tion for the love of man. The latter is the practical expression of the love of God. Kant's ethical theory about 'duty', I am afraid, has only the form but not the content. Kant's ethics seems as a 'law unto all'. But the New Testament ethics is 'love unto all'. Thus, Kant's ethics has a universal law, it is suggested by some, not necessarily with the universal love. But Jesus' ethical law is not for a conformation to any external rule, but for the confirmation of love in human heart. He makes no appeal to reason in a narrow positivistic sense. But, when the law of love is accepted and acted upon, reason confirms and conscience approves. His values become internal life-principles. As the New Testament sees it, he who loves God and loves his neighbour as himself is on the high-road to the highest ethical achievement.

The religious and the moral life of man has its existence in the social context where he lives. So, the religious and moral values cannot be thought about without the contents of the social values. We shall explicate here some of the important social values in the New Testament.

### 3) Social Values

Ever since the great days of ancient Greece, Western philosophy has been concerned not merely with the value system related to science, art, religion and morality but also with the life of man in society. We find this concern in the "Dia-

logues of Plato", especially in the Republic. Plato was very much under the influence of Socrates, and the latter's thought was more and more directed to values needed for a good society. Likewise Christ also lays great importance on the social values. In the New Testament, it may be noted, social values are always socio-religious, since religion constitutes for it the essential dynamics of social life. Hence, while the religious values are the primary factors, the social values involved in it should not be overlooked. When we speak of Christ's 'Social Gospel' we do not mean to imply that Jesus enunciated a systematic programme for the detailed needs of human society. Yet His examples and His preaching offer some broad ethical principles in His message. Once a doctor of law asked him, 'Master, which is the great commandment of the law?' Jesus told him: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and mind" (Mark, 12:30). After this, without being asked, he was quick to add to it an aspect of the same commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, on these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets" (Matthew, 6:10). Here, in these two commandments or rather in the single commandment with two sides, we find unmistakably asserted the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. To Jesus they are normative, for they are the two poles around which human society in the new era should revolve. 'Brotherhood' indeed, is a word that has

caught up our imagination in recent times, from French Revolution to atheistic communism. It however, had constituted a foundational social principle to the disciples of Jesus. Humanity seems to realise that the master-key for the solution of the social problems in practical life is the brotherhood of man, brought about by the practice of love in the society. Brotherhood of man founded on love gives rise to some important social values such as:

a) **Justice and Truth (aletheia)** – What the traditional philosophers are accustomed to speak of as truth for man and society, the New Testament speaks of as justice and truth, thereby bringing out the close relation between man and man in the society. Christ was not the first to lay down the principle that man should live according to justice and truth. Indeed all world religions, in greater or lesser measure, retained as a formal principle of society the principle of justice, which is recognized as the foundation of any social order. Hence, it may be said that Christ did not establish a new principle when he lay down the law of justice. But He incorporated it in the Christian Ethics of the New Testament as the first principle of brotherly love.

Christ himself was confronted with a generation that was guilty of practising injustice, especially on the part of those who by their rank in life were supposed to be the

official protectors of justice; he takes the scribes and Pharisees to task for their violation of justice. In the sermon on the Mount, he proclaims by way of a negative injunction: "I will tell you, that unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew, 5:20). Further, by way of positive injunction, he proclaims that justice occupies a special place in his social message and that, therefore it bestows special blessings for the lovers of justice: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice for they shall be filled". Conversely, he pronounces benediction on those who suffer injustice: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake; for their is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew, 5:6-12). The supernatural truth in respect of justice, according to the New Testament, demands of any society a manifestation of natural truthfulness of men in order to save human society from deception: "He that doth truth cometh to light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God" (John, 3:21). Justice and truth are so important in the society that without them a society would simply lose its moral props that support human society in times of corruption and decay.

b) **Equality** – What the traditional philosophers treat under the concept of justice, the New Testament speaks in

much more concrete terms as equality. Needless to say, it is an equality that is rooted in man's common origin in God. In our age of democracy, equality gives each individual certain rights to enjoy the goods of the state. Capturing this spirit of equality, Paul says to the Corinthians:

"For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body: So also is Christ. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; or If the ear shall say, because I am not the eye; I am not of the body; Is it therefore not of the body? God set the member everyone of them in the body, that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And if one member should suffer, all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it". (I Corinthians, 12:12-26)

All the members of a body partake in the same life-current pervading the body; and all the members of a body have equal rights to their own existence, and equal duties towards the preservation of the existence of the whole body, though in different forms and functions. Such is also the case with the members of a society. There must be equality of rights and duties and this, according to Christ, is a sacred society offering the best to all and demanding the best from all.

**c) Service (diakonia)** – Christ recognised another value, namely service in human society that has become dear to the heart of the Christian:

"He that will be first among you, shall be your servant; even as the son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a redemption for many".  
(Matthew, 20:27-28)

The spirit of service necessarily calls for a spirit of self-sacrifice. Christ's own life here is the model for a humanity that seeks to conform itself to the likeness of Christ. It is the outstanding social value demanded by Christ of all men in general and the believers in particular in their relationship to one another. Through it Christ replaced the power dynamics of human relation based on overlordship of one man over the other; he wants to envisage a society where human relations are governed by a spirit of mutual service.

**d) Solidarity (koinonia)** – Christ wanted human society to be a vast indissoluble unit, governed by the law of solidarity without distinction of caste and creed, nation and race, male or female and rich and poor. Christ illustrated the absolute necessity of unity for human society most strikingly in the following:

"Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate; and every city or houses divided against itself shall not stand".  
(Matthew, 12:25-26)

We can bring out some of the implications of this desired solidarity in the society. Firstly, the hardest and

the most difficult demand of Christ is the command to love one's enemies. The solidarity of human society necessarily would break down without the observance of this law. This law of Christ surpasses all natural instincts and virtues of man. Secondly, human solidarity envisaged by the New Testament even goes so far as to demand that a man should not approach his God in offering his gift, if he is conscious that the harmony of brotherly love has been disturbed (Matthew, 5:23-24). Reconciliation must first restore this harmony. It would thus appear that human solidarity is the right spirit in which worship of God is meaningfully carried out. Thirdly, human solidarity would even demand the non-resistance of violence. Retaliating violence by violence is not Christian attitude. It calls more positively for the acceptance of humiliation (Matthew, 5:38-41), which needs greater courage than what retaliating violence would demand. Fourthly, most of these obligations presuppose another Christian social value, in which Christ himself is the most exalted example, forgiveness. The basis of the obligation to forgive is our own indebtedness to God and the readiness of our heavenly Father to forgive man. Christ describes the value of forgiveness graphically in the parable of the prodigal son. Jesus expressively demanded forgiveness of injuries in the great prayer which he formulated for humanity:

"Thus therefore shall you pray ... Forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors... For if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men neither will your father forgive you your offences". (Matthew, 6:12-15)

No other social value would bring out more forcefully the religious moorings of the social values of the New Testament. If there is an independent doctrine of ethics by which a religious system of thought is to be supplemented, probably a much stronger case can be made out for its identification, not with the utilitarian ethics, but with the moral theory of Immanuel Kant. There is a sense in which Kant's rigorism can be compared with the social teaching of the New Testament. Let us consider Kant's articulations of the categorical imperative. The first and formal articulation of the categorical Imperative is this: 'Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will a universal law'. And the second formulation is this: 'So act as to treat humanity whether in thine own persons or in that of any other, in every case, as an end, never as a means only'. These Imperatives of Kant's to treat humanity as an end and not as a means to something else, is similar to the idea of the brotherhood of man, which makes for the social values discussed above.

Kant's formula of respect for persons as ends in themselves is simply a non-religious version of the moral

principle of 'Love thy neighbour'. It therefore, comes to me as no surprise when Kant speaks of the perfectly moral will as the 'Holy Will'. In using the expression 'holy will', Kant is unconsciously informed by the value system of his own Christian culture. If Christianity were not the first to formulate the principle, it was the first to stress it, according to the teaching of Jesus. Therefore, Christian social life is closely related to religion, and yet one often believes that Kant is the champion of the human autonomy when it comes to moral action. Whereas he was not at all insensitive to his own Christian moorings, this cannot be said equally of some of his own interpreters. This, for example, R.S. Downie used the term, 'Autonomous Social Morality'<sup>2</sup> which does not essentially depend on religion, as for example, is the morality enshrined in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke, 10:23-37). The point of the parable is to answer the question, who is my neighbour? He is not just a person with whom I happen to be in a close relationship, but any human being needing help. Now, one ought to love one's fellowmen simply as being human, regardless of religion or politics or community; then it follows that the neighbour 'is a person in distress which provides sufficient reason for action'. Therefore, it has been conceded that morality is not essen-

---

2. Cf. Downie, R.S. Social Ethics and Christianity.

tially dependent on religion. But the Christian would argue without any pretension to scholarship that to love or help one's neighbour is provided by the fact that one's neighbour is a son, or a creation, of God, and God commanded us to love our neighbour. It is in virtue of God's love that man can love his neighbour in distress. Therefore, speaking of social values in the society, a Christian would not separate religion from society or vice-versa. Because what we do to the least of our brethren is what is done unto God. Jesus says to the righteous:

"I was hungry and ye gave me to eat;  
I was thirsty and ye gave me drink;  
I was a stranger, and ye took me in"

The righteous would ask so to when did they do these things, and Jesus replies: "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew, 25:31-36). It is important that we take note of the fact that the Christian social values do not make for a mere humanism. The point here is that we are not loving or feeding the poor for the sake of humanity, but we are doing even to the least of our brothers for the sake of God. Therefore, all social values of the New Testament are being treasured only because God is love. In him the social values have their meaning and functions sundered from God, there is neither society nor social values. We should not commit

therefore the mistake of equating the social values of the New Testament as constituting a mere humanism. It is a humanism that necessarily points to a beyond of humanity.

In the context of social life of man, the political values must not be overlooked. There is a sense in which we can say that the social values are extended into political values as well. Hence political values have come to acquire a significant place. This is in a special way true of our modern social life. Does the New Testament throw any light on this?

#### 4) Political Values

It must be admitted that Jesus had very little to say about political questions. He gave no direct advice to the civil, judicial or military authorities as to how they should discharge their duties of their office, or to private citizens as to their duties to the state. But the little that he did say here has far reaching significance. Therefore, his apparent indifference to political questions must not be construed as his ignorance of political issues of his times. Nor should it be construed to mean an advocacy of a form of anarchism, for he displayed no mildness towards criminal and social offenders. He took civil service for granted, and recognised public order and civil authority in their own province. He was certainly no political reac-

tionary, although he was not less of a revolutionary in questioning inhuman socio-political institutions, often sanctified by tradition and religion.

Klausner complains that Jesus did not think it worthwhile to fight against the political oppression of Rome.<sup>3</sup> He had no sympathy for the political zealots of his day, whose ideal it was to set the Jews free from the Roman domination by force. His mission was clearly apolitical. Even when, at the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, he publicly hinted at his Messiahship, he spoke not of an earthly kingdom. He rode into the city as a humble Messiah on an ass, thus clearly indicating that he was on a mission, not of war, but of peace; and that the Messianic king was no warrior – rival of Rome but a messenger of peace even to the mightiest of the empire at that time. That Jesus had not dabbled in politics is clear from the account of his trial, for the Jewish leaders did not find it easy to convince Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, that he was politically dangerous. They naturally stressed the fact that Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah, but they invested the term with political implications. Pilate was not convinced of the charges; whatever doubts he may have had vanished, when he saw Jesus did not go with a political conception of Messiahship; he even ridiculed the Jews

---

3. Marshall, L.H. Challenge of New Testament Ethics, Macmillan Co. Ltd., London, p. 149.

by presenting Jesus to them with the statement, "Behold your king".

However, Jesus acknowledged the political supremacy of Rome. He also exhibited the awareness of the political situation in order that he may not fall in the trap laid by his adversaries. He handled the dangerous question of the payment of tribute to Caesar with great skill: "Restore to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Mark, 12:17). His reply to the question, if it is lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, is entirely non-committal, and indeed an evasion of the real issue. Had He replied that it was perfectly right and proper for Jews to pay tribute to their military masters, he would have been regarded as a sympathiser of the Romans, therefore, an enemy of the Jews who were His own people. On the contrary, had He stated plainly that the Jews should refuse the payment of tribute, he would have been idolised by many of his fellow country men as an anti-Roman agitator; but, in this case, he would have been brought into collision with the Roman authorities. Thus, a plain 'Yes' or 'No' would have been a lightning flash that would have laid his work in ruins, for he would either have antagonised those whom he most wished to influence or he would have been forced into a political arena to fight an unequal contest with the power of Rome; this would be equally disas-

trous to his mission. Thus, a categorical reply was plainly impossible. Referring to the inscription of Caesar on the Roman coin, Jesus framed his answer. The image and inscriptions were those of Tiberius, the reigning emperor. All emperors were called Caesars. He reminded the Pharisees that they were actually using Caesar's coinage. In ancient time coinage is the sign of power, when anyone conquered a nation, the first thing he did was to issue his own coinage. This gives the seal of guarantee of kingship and power, where the coin was valid, the king's power held good. Further, because the coin had the emblem of king's head and inscription on it, it was held, at least in some sense, to be his personal property. Jesus' answer therefore was that the Jews, by using the coinage of Tiberius, in any event recognised his political power in Palestine, and that the coinage is Tiberius' own because it has his name on it. Therefore, the Jews were to give to Caesar what belongs to him; at the same time they were to remember that there is a sphere in life which exclusively belongs to God; it is beyond the jurisdiction of any earthly Caesar. The soul of man, made in the divine image is a spiritual entity and belongs to God alone. Therefore, they were to give to God, what belongs to God, his image in man (Genesis, 1:26-27). This neither means that the state and God are identical, nor that they are absolutely related, for it is man who is related to both; they have their own claims, qualitatively different on Him.

The important implication here is that man has duties that go beyond the duties to the state. This perhaps is what was meant by the disciples who, when they were tried before the courts, proclaimed, 'We must obey God rather than men'. (Acts, 5:29).

Jesus was aware of the distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. He was also aware of the flaws inherent in every political systems of the world. But this does not mean that he was against all political systems. He would approve of a political order that respected human person and its dignity. As a matter of fact the empire of Rome was maintained by the sword to keep and perpetuate the great glory of the Roman Empire even at the cost of human dignity in its vassal states. Jesus was aware of the state of affairs. It was this idea of greatness that Jesus decisively rejected, and contrasted it with the spirit of the kingdom of heaven. To him all political authority was essentially an institution for the service of mankind.

It is this attitude to all political authority, exhibited by Jesus, that finds further expression in Paul's writings. Following his master, St. Paul present himself to us neither as an anarchist nor as a servile advocate of the ruling powers. If it should appear to us that Paul advocates some form of divine right theory of Government, it is only

because his reflections here stem from the monarchical set up of his times that culturally ruled all political thinking. It however, does not mean that Paul would blindly support any unjust political system that violated the integrity of the human person. He wrote in the Letter to Romans:

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves." (Romans, 13:1-2)

The state is ordained by God, Paul thinks, and the general function of human Government as instituted by God is to protect, punish and promote. Looking into Paul's thought in the New Testament, we may acknowledge the following three points. Firstly, we are to recognise and accept that the powers of the rulers are ordained by God. Secondly, we are to pay taxes to human Governments, customs to whom customs are due, fear to whom fear is due, and finally, honour to whom honour is due (Romans, 13:7). Thirdly, we are to pray for the kings, leaders and rulers and all those in authorities in human Governments, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God. (I Timothy, 2:1-3)

Paul extends his respect for political authority to the authority within the church as well. This is signifi-

cant in a context, where the church was yet to develop and elaborate hierarchical structure; it indicates Paul's concern for an order and organised way of life according to the spirit rather than blind submission to a government based on the dynamics of power. This is amply evidenced in his advice in the Letter to Titus: "To be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work" (Titus, 3:1).

We must not overlook the fact that Paul draws his political thinking from his master. Jesus was not hostile to forms of authority, political or otherwise. He regarded politics as an instrument of peace and love, for which all citizens of the state have a right to enjoy. And, as such, Christians can and ought to play an important role in politics, provided that it is inspired by values that the New Testament highlights. The political values taught by the New Testament are not based on power dynamics but on service, love, trust and the well-being of the community.

Finally, political values cannot be fully effective in the state without the support of the economic values. If any government or ruler in authority has any power in the history of man, it is due to the economic values which upholds the political strength and authority of the political system. Hence, we may now turn our attention to the economic values of the New Testament.

## 5) Economic Values

It must be stated at the very outset that there is nothing that goes by the name of Christian economics in the New Testament. Nonetheless, a Christian approach to economic life may be meaningfully spoken about, since there are certain broad Christian principles which may be said to be normative to Christian attitude to an economic ordering of man's life and activity. An enquiry into these principles would involve an examination of the values concerning man, society, and property in particular. Obviously we do not find any blue print for a Christian economic order, for neither the prophets nor Jesus were philosophers of economics and planning. However, there are throughout the scriptures ethical principles bearing upon economic issues.

In the Old Testament, the principles relating to property and its use are quite clear: "All these things my hand has made, so all these things are mine, says the Lord" (Isaiah, 66:2). The Old Testament principles, crystallized in the truth that God is the master of all creation, are also reflected in the teachings of Jesus. As we have noted, Jesus was not an economist, but his principles on possessions are unmistakably derivable from his total message. Jesus recognised the rightfulness of personal property in terms of food and clothing (Matthew, 6:32). He indicated that the

property of others must be respected. He forbade theft and fraud. He attacked scribes who devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers. Thus wealth gained by improper means is condemned. Beyond this, Jesus did not specifically condemn the process of acquiring wealth, but warns against its dangers and deceitfulness in its use. This is a simple ethics in economics that is not sufficiently tried by mankind, as it directly comes into conflict with the greed of human nature.

From this it may be construed that, while Jesus is not against private property, he stresses on the proper use of it for the welfare of community. Nor can we without any qualifications idealise here the right to private property. Jesus believes that the earth is God's, and man is only called upon to use it and its resources for his own, and his fellow man's welfare. If this is the case, man's is only vicegerency over property, his right to private property is not one of absolute ownership, but of vigilant and humane trusteeship, an insight which comes very close to Gandhi's idea of trusteeship. Therefore, the authority of the New Testament must not be resorted to, either for maintaining the institution of the sacrosanct private property or the abolition thereof. We find the need for stressing these points because not less often it is argued by the liberals that the institution of

private property is an absolute and sacrosanct right hallowed by the Christian doctrine. Conversely, it is also argued by the socialists that the abolition of the institution of private property is a value of the New Testament, since Jesus and his disciples, to begin with, and thereafter the early Christian communities, live a life possessing whatever wealth they had in common. Neither position is substantiated by the teaching of the New Testament. Therefore, the Christian is commanded to be only a good steward of all that God has created; for riches must always be under the rule of God, otherwise they prove to be deceitful and dangerous.

It is equally wrong to think from the condemnation of the riches by Jesus that he entertained a negative attitude to riches. Such a misconception has also given rise to the view that Jesus glorifies poverty. Nothing could be farther from truth. He had friends from all walks of life, the rich and the poor. Though Christ insisted on the dangers of riches, yet he did not take the other extreme of glorifying poverty itself as a virtue. What is wrong with wealth is not the possessions, but the possessiveness. One should not be possessed by his possessions. It is not wealth that is condemned, it is rather a certain greedy attitude to wealth that is condemned. It is the attitude, whereby a man is so infatuated by his possessions that he has made his wealth into an 'idol'

and has forgotten the maker of the world and its resources. This is the idolatry in one's heart against which Jesus repeatedly warns his followers. Such a man with mammon installed on the altar of heart is constantly led to hold and acquire more and more to the detriment of the satisfaction of the basic needs of his fellow men. It is here that the one man's possession becomes the privation of the other.

It is in this situation that Jesus says to the rich young ruler that it is very difficult for him to enter into the kingdom of God (Matthew, 19:23-26). Therefore, the freedom of any man from the dangers of wealth entails the conviction that wealth must be regarded as something to be shared; and that wealth is to be used as a means for the common good, not as an end in itself, not even as a means for the exclusive satisfaction of one's own needs resulting in the want for others. Jesus could not be more explicit on this than when he warned that no man can serve two masters, God and Mammon.

In the New Testament, the economic values are reflected only in the light of religious and moral values. And therefore, it's intrinsic worth is judged by the criteria of religious and moral standard. A person ought to live morally in his economic life by abiding by the religious principles, because God is the giver of all things in life.

Before I conclude this chapter I may briefly make a reference to, what is known in the New Testament as, the Beatitudes of Jesus. Scholars in ethics are accustomed to identify the Beatitudes with the Christian ethics. This identification, I am afraid, is inadequate. The Christian ethics is the total value system of the New Testament, and for that matter, it is more than what is enshrined in the beatitudes. Indeed, it is not only the eight beatitudes, but also the entire sermon on the Mount, which may be said to reflect a certain spirit that informs through and through the value system of the New Testament. In fact, the beatitudes do not constitute a mere Sermon, it is a portrait of Jesus himself. He teaches a system of values to his disciples by personifying it with the fact of his own life and experience. We would be mistaken if we look at it as a mere juridical chart of the Christian duty; rather it is the charter of the spirit of Christian values. Therefore, it has the liberty to go beyond, to do the thing that love impels and not merely that thing that duty compels.

There are philosophers who think that the Christian value system is debilitating to human spirit; that the practice of Christian values would make man servile and thereby take away his precious autonomy. Nietzsche immediately comes here to our mind. He advocates: "Assert yourself, care for

nothing except for yourself. The only vice is weakness, and the only virtue is strength. Be strong, be a superman, the world is yours if you can get it".<sup>4</sup> Such a philosophy of man aiming to transform man into a superman minus God, and also advocating a social ethics severed from God, is clearly against a plan of life advocated by the New Testament, and this is not without philosophical justifications. The cult of self-assertion that knows no bounds has been far from liberating to human spirit; it has been in the history of mankind enslaving and destructive. Hitler's self-aggrandisement is a classic example of self-assertion that refuses to acknowledge limitations to human power. Hitler is a superman, a product of Nietzsche's power philosophy. Such a cult of man clearly has no place in the value system of the New Testament which clearly is theonomous. This theonomy in the final analysis is more liberating and humane than any autonomy that makes of man an idol. It must be noted here that the value system of the New Testament requires of man superhuman powers to practice, for it presupposes a strength of character rarely to be encountered elsewhere. If however, it is sought to be practised, it needs men with lion's heart; it is not meant for the cowards.

---

4. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Tr. by R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books Ltd., England, p.

To conclude, all the New Testament values, be they religious, moral, social, political or economic, are theonomous in nature. God is the pivotal point on which they revolve. He is the source of all values; his nature is the meaning of all the values. Therefore, being theonomous, they are essentially religious in their nature.

---

**CHAPTER III**

**FACT AND VALUE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

## FACT AND VALUE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this chapter, I shall discuss a fundamental question that has far reaching consequences on morality and religion in the context of New Testament. What role do facts and values play in moral justification? Can values be understood as a species of facts, or must values be grasped by non-scientific means? Is there a dichotomy between values and facts such that two different kinds of understanding are required.

I shall weave my ideas around the central problem in contemporary Moral Philosophy that goes by the name of the 'Fact-Value dichotomy'. In order to do this, I must first clarify two concepts "value" and "facts". However, since in the second chapter I have already discussed at some length the notion of 'value', I will restrict the discussion to 'facts' alone. Having done this, I shall enquire, against this background, if there is any dichotomy between fact and value in the New Testament.

### A. CONCEPT OF FACT

Usually a fact is taken for granted. But 'fact' presents a host of philosophical problems. Science gives us

factual knowledge about the world. In other words, what is 'factual' belongs to the exclusive domain of science. Science represents the spirit of exciting adventure in search of facts hitherto unknown. It may be said that science has not yet explored all the facts of the world. But this does not mean that science cannot solve all factual questions. Scientific method of observation and experiment are used to explore facts.

Science, as understood from the foregoing, is factual. But it does not concern itself with such question as what a fact is. According to C.I. Lewis, a fact is what "makes some propositions true".<sup>1</sup> For every true proposition there is some corresponding fact, and every fact is expressible by some proposition which is true. A fact is something which is the case. Its being the case is independent of anybody's mentioning it, and independent of anybody's apprehension or misapprehension of it. But by its nature it must be propositionally formulatable. This way, a fact is distinguished from an object or an event. Objects exist, and the existence or non-existence of any mentioned object is a fact. But the object itself is not a fact, and to say that a fact exists or does not exist is logically odd. Similarly, events are not facts. An event happens or takes place. The happening

---

1. Lewis, C.I. Values and Imperatives, Ed. by John Lange, Stanford University Press, 1969, p. 85.

and non-happening of an event is a fact. But the fact does not happen or fail to happen. If it is said that an object or event is a fact, what is meant is that the object exists or that the event occurs.

Amongst the characteristics of objects and events are time and place of their existence or occurrence. Both objects and events have space-time boundaries. But facts have no date and locus - Once a fact, always a fact; and what is anywhere a fact is everywhere a fact.<sup>2</sup> More precisely, the ascription of time and place to a fact is odd.

In his Logical Atomism, Russell argues that by fact we mean that kind of thing which makes propositions true or false. For example, if I say, 'it is raining', what I say is true in a certain condition of weather, and is false in other conditions of weather. The condition of weather that makes my statement true or false, as the case may be, is what he calls a 'fact'. This is similar to C.I. Lewis' description of fact.

Facts are neither more nor less than what are often called 'truths'. G.E. Moore says that if we use the phrase of the form, 'It is true that so and so', it can absolutely always be used as equivalent to the corresponding phrase

---

2. Ibid., p. 86.

of the form, 'It is a fact that so and so'. And similarly, anything which is a fact in this sense can always equally naturally be called a 'truth'. Instead of talking of 'the fact that lions exist', we can equally well talk of the 'truth that two plus two makes four' or 'the truth that lions exist'.<sup>3</sup>

Further, truths are entirely dependent on mind; there could be no truths in the universe if there were no minds in it. And so far as Moore's conception is concerned, the reason why this has been supposed is that the word 'true' stands for a property which can belong only to 'acts of belief'. It is quite obvious that there could be no true beliefs in the universe, if there were no minds, because an 'act of belief' is an act of consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

But, if we accept that 'truth' is merely another name for 'fact', and that it is different from its property 'true act of belief', it becomes possible that there could be truths in the universe, even if there were no minds in it. G.E. Moore admits that this is not the only sense in which the word 'fact' is commonly used. Philosophers, at all events, use it in a wider sense; they maintain, for instance, that not merely 'the existence of lions is a fact',

---

3. Moore, G.E. Some Main Problems of Philosophy, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., New York.

4. Ibid., p. 298.

or that which I directly perceived – this sense datum itself – is a fact.

In the universe there are many facts. Some of these are only absolutely known to be facts under certain circumstances. Others can never be known to be facts in the present state of knowledge. Thus, it might be said that where a man believes in a thing, and his belief is true, yet, what he believes need not be a fact. Whereas according to G.E. Moore, whenever a man believes in a thing, and his belief is true, what he believes is a fact even if nobody living could absolutely know it to be so.<sup>5</sup> G.E. Moore claims that his use of the word 'facts' in a wider sense is commonly used by ordinary people. Anybody who uses language implies that, when a belief is true, what is believed is, in a sense, a fact, whether anybody can know it to be so or not. (But there is also a narrower sense of the use of the word 'fact', which is confined to things which are held rightly or wrongly to be capable of being absolutely known; but I will not take this narrower sense into consideration for my discussion of the concept of facts).

From what has been said above, we can identify the following characteristics of facts:

---

5. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

1) A fact is one that corresponds to a statement or a proposition. This is in a special way true for Russell. A fact does not refer to a particular existing thing, such as the name of a person, or objects or things. For example, Socrates, rain, sun etc. Russell calls a fact the sort of thing that is expressed by a whole sentence, not by a single name like 'Socrates'.

2) A sentence, as we know, is not a mere jumble of words; it is a complex of words with an internal structure. In the words of Wittgenstein, "The sentence is not a jumble of words (just as the musical theme is not a jumble of notes), the sentence is articulated" (Tractatus, 3.141). Therefore, a fact, since it coincides with a sentence, is also a complex of elements or constituents, for example, 'X loves Y'. Here we have three constituents of facts stuck together. Therefore, facts are complex.

3) Facts are objective, they belong to the objective world. They are not created by our thoughts or beliefs except in special cases. They exist independent of our mind.<sup>6</sup> Likewise Russell also says that facts are there independent of our mind.

4) Facts are of different types, particular and general

---

6. Cf. Berkeley, Principles 'Est est Percipi'.

facts, positive and negative facts etc. Things in the world are described by different kinds of facts.

5) Facts cannot be either true or false. It would be a mistake to say that all facts are true, because true or false are co-relates; only the propositions which describe facts are either true or false.

Hence, the question, 'What is a fact?' is the question of the analysis of fact, and the question of the analysis of fact is the question of the analysis of its structure. As philosophy is a study of the structure of facts, a philosopher does not attempt to discover facts of a kind comparable with those studied by any of the natural sciences.<sup>7</sup> The philosopher is not concerned to discover any new facts, he does not add to the sum total of human knowledge in the way in which the natural scientist or historian does. Science ventures to give knowledge of new facts, but philosophy is concerned with analysis of fact.

I wish to point out in this connection that facts are a kind of logical fiction that a philosopher creates. Besides the world of things and propositions there is not another world of facts. Consider the following:

i) It is raining.

ii) It is true that it is raining.

---

7. Kamar Kalyan, Language and Reality, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, p. 12.

iii) It is a fact that it is raining.

In (ii) & (iii), the addition of 'it is true' and 'it is a fact' respectively, does not really make any addition to the meaning of the propositions at hand. There are events and happenings in the world. But there are not facts in the world in the same sense. Facts emerge the moment we start using concepts. That is to say application of concepts on the given gives rise to the so called facts. In short, without conceptualisation there cannot be any fact at all. The distinction made by Searl between brute facts and institutionalised fact is a case in point. It is our language and concepts that create an illusion of facts.

#### **B. FACT-VALUE DICHOTOMY**

In contemporary literature in moral philosophy, a dichotomy between fact-value has been created. In this connection, the following questions are raised.

- 1) What is the difference between fact and value?
- 2) Can value be derived from fact?
- 3) Do value statements assert? In other words, do they give factual knowledge?
- 4) Are value judgements true or false?

The problems relating to the dichotomy between fact and value are examined by considering the five major schools

of thought: Naturalism; Intuitionism; Non-cognitivism or Emotivism; Prescriptivism and Descriptivism. Some of these approaches to fact and value explicitly offer answer to the problems of moral judgements and their justification. Some point out that both fact and value can properly be used to justify moral situations. I will take up first of ethical naturalism and discuss it.

### 1) Naturalism

R.B. Perry, the chief advocate of naturalistic theory, claims that value words are definable in terms of concepts that refer only to empirically verifiable properties.<sup>8</sup> He defines value in the following way: "Whatever is an object of interest is by that very fact (ipso-facto) valuable".<sup>9</sup> 'Interest' here is broadly defined to include desires, likes, approval, love and so forth. If a given thing has an interest within itself, in any of the above senses, it is valuable. Likewise, it is also an empirical fact if any given thing has value. Hence, value judgements are empirical in nature.

Other naturalists claim that values are a type of fact, and that value properties are natural properties. The naturalists, thus, believes that value statements are subject

---

8. Perry, R.B. General Theory of Value: Its Meaning and Basic Principles Construed in Terms of Interest, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1950.

9. Ibid.

to confirmation or disconfirmation in the way all factual statements are.

The naturalists argue out their theses in the following manner: In value judgement, a value property is attributed to a subject, for example, in 'Mr. X is courageous', the value term 'courageous' is attributed to 'Mr. X', that is, the value predicate 'courageous' is applied to or conjoined with the subject 'Mr. X'. The naturalists hold that all value predicates, such as 'courageous', can be defined in terms of, or translated into, factual, non-valuational terms.<sup>10</sup> The example, 'Mr. X is courageous' can be translated into 'Mr. X. acted in accordance with the ideals of behaviour adopted by his family or culture'. The translated statement is a factual statement and, in principle, a verifiable proposition.

But the problem here is not that simple. Different naturalistic theories provide different definitions, or translations of value predicates into their factual counterpart. But they are in agreement in their belief that value words can, without loss, be understood in terms of factual predicates. They also believe that value problems are factual in nature, whose solution depends on empirical evidences.

---

10. Perry, R.B. "Value as an Objective Predicate", Journal of Philosophy, 28 (1931), pp. 477-484.

Therefore, value properties can be ascertained by empirical tests, and hence, the justification in morals is factual in character.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that one can derive an 'ought', or value statement, from an 'Is', or factual statement. For 'ought' can be defined in terms of 'Is'. Given a naturalistic definition, one can proceed logically from an 'Is' to an 'Ought' statement by retaining its meanings, for example, 'one ought to do X' means 'one is required by the legal and moral code of one's society to do X'. Therefore, the naturalists conclude that it is indisputable that values can be logically derived from facts.

Although R.B. Perry is a subjective naturalist, his theory resembles that of Bentham in many respects. He begins by observing how value terms such as 'good' and 'bad' are closely connected with things, events, or state of mind that people like and dislike, approve and disapprove, or love and hate. There are, of course, psychological states, and Perry's naturalism is thus rooted in psychological facts. His strategy is to define goodness in terms of persons' positive interests in things, and to define badness in terms of negative interests. He then defines moral goodness as 'harmonious happiness', — a definition based on a broader conception of nature and function of morality. If ethical

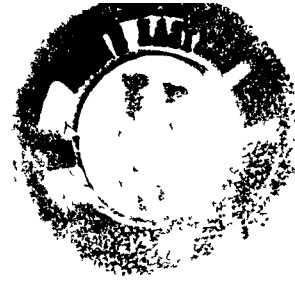
naturalism is correct, then there is no basic difference between facts and values. Perry denies that there are any unique value properties in the universe; there are, he says, (at least) with respect to values only empirical properties. Words like 'good' are definable in terms of words that refer to empirical properties, there is no property of goodness over and above the empirically verifiable properties of being desired, liked, approved and so forth.

All these claims made by the naturalists are widely discussed and criticised by David Hume and G.E. Moore.

David Hume holds that value statements cannot be derived from purely factual statements, because at least one non-factual value premise is logically required to have a logical syllogistic conclusion. Hume argues that anyone who tries to move in an ethical argument from purely factual premise – from the so called 'Is' statement to purely evaluative conclusions or the so called 'ought' statement, – owes an explanation as to how this move can be made. It has very often been asserted in philosophy that, as matter of logic, 'ought' statements cannot be deduced from 'Is' statements.<sup>11</sup> If one holds this view, he would also have to assert that factual statements do not entail moral statements, or value

---

11. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by Nidditch, Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 458, 468-470.



statements. This gap between facts and values, the 'Is' and the 'ought', may be called the 'Entailment Gap'; and it is generally agreed in contemporary philosophy that this gap obtaining between factual and evaluative statement is known as a logical gap. Thus, 'ought' statement of values cannot be logically deduced from the 'Is' statement of facts.

G.E. Moore attacks the naturalistic method of defining a value predicate, such as 'good', for example, 'This is good'. Moore has reductive conception of 'analysis': to analyse something is to break it down to its componential parts. To appreciate this point, it is useful to consider an example that Moore gives of the difference between the words 'good' and 'horse'.<sup>12</sup> The term 'horse', he says, can be understood through those component properties making up 'horse': legs, head, liver, etc. All are arranged in a definite order and parts. That is, one can define the term 'horse' by identifying and distinguishing the various components constituting that which the term designates. But 'good' cannot be analyzed in this way, because it has no parts, and certainly no factual parts.

103189

Moore's central contention in the preceding reflections is that the meaning of value predicate is not identical with that of factual predicates, for value words cannot be broken down into factual units without losing their sense.

---

12. Moore, G.E. Principia Ethica, Cambridge University Press, 1903.

Moore's complaint is this: Many writers in ethics, having claimed to discover the properties belonging to all things which are in fact good, believe that by naming these properties they have defined the word 'good'. This is precisely what Moore means by the "Naturalistic Fallacy".<sup>13</sup>

Another objection has been offered against Perry's theory. It is said that Perry's theory makes it possible for something to be both good and bad at the same time. For example, if I take positive interest in Mr. X, and you take negative interest in Mr. X, then Mr. X is good to me and bad to you. This outcome of his theory has led to the following objection: 'Good' and 'Bad' are usually considered to be contraries, that is, the same thing can be neither good nor bad but nothing can be both good and bad at the same time. This theory permits some sort of absurdity. But what actually Perry would offer is a revisionary account of value predicates through his subjectivism. On his subjectivist view, it makes perfectly good sense to say that the same thing can be both good and bad when two or more parties take interest in it.

## 2) Intuitionism

In respect of the problem of fact-value dichotomy, the intuitionists are known as anti-naturalists, because

---

13. Frankena, William K. "The Naturalistic Theory", Mind 48(1939), pp. 464-477.

they believe that evaluative statements are not factual, and that value predicates are not definable in naturalistic terms. But the intuitionists agree with the naturalists on one point: Value predicates are attributed to the subject in moral judgements. But the intuitionists regard value properties as distinct in kind from factual ones. Thus, they believe that value terms, such as 'good', 'right' and 'courageous', do not refer to something that can be known through sense experience or through empirical method. The intuitionists disagree with the naturalist contention that 'ought' statement can be directly derived from 'Is' statements; in other words, value terms cannot be derived from factual terms, because in doing so we commit the naturalistic fallacy.

In examining the naturalistic fallacy, the intuitionist asks the questions: What is the property of the value term 'good'? Is it visible and tangible? How shall we characterise and analyse it? The intuitionists argue that any proposition of the form, 'X is good', refers to a unique property (namely goodness), and when we speak of something as 'good' we are ascribing this property to it. We cannot, however, define 'good' through other terms in the dichotomy; all that can be said is that 'good' refers to goodness, which is an ultimate, unobservable, untestable and unanalysable property.

In a noteworthy passage in recent philosophy, G.E. Moore expresses this view as follows:

"If I am asked 'What is good?' My answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How is good to be defined?' My answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it.... My point is that 'Good' is a simple notion, just as 'Yellow' is a simple notion; that just as you cannot, by any manner or means, explain to anyone who does not already know it, what yellow is, so you cannot explain what good is.... You can give a definition of a horse, because a horse has many different properties and qualities, all of which you can enumerate. But when you have enumerated them all, when you have reduced a horse to its simplest terms, then you can no longer define those terms."<sup>14</sup>

Because goodness cannot be directly experienced in sensory terms, Moore labels it "non-natural". His general view is that 'good' is the name of the simple property 'goodness' which is shared by all things that are said to be good. Since the property is simple (non-complex), the word is indefinable.

One of the critical questions about intuitionism is this: How can it be known that a particular value judgement is either true or false? Since value judgements cannot be supported by factual evidence – the empirical method of discovering truth – what method could there be for testing the correctness or otherwise of a value judgement? Intuitionists answer this question by arguing that the basic principles of morality are known by intuition. Just as we intuitively see that, if a triangle is equilateral, then, it is equiangular as well, so too we see that, if an act is the keeping

---

14. Moore, G.E. Principia Ethica, op.cit., pp.6-8.

of a promise, then, it is right. The claim here is that we directly apprehend the presence of a value property without the aid of any form of sensory experience or empirical testing.

Perhaps the intuitionist's theory of self-evidence and moral justification can best be explained by an analogy from religious theories of divine revelation. Taking into consideration what a religious category would mean to a believer, a divine commandment is claimed to be authoritative, and ought therefore to be followed. Religious leaders have for centuries maintained that such claim is a revealed truth. Unlike knowledge acquired by tasting, touching, performing an experiment etc., knowledge of religious truths is said to be gained by a unique method namely, revelation. Analogously, intuitionists hold that direct apprehension of the truth of moral principles is a method unto itself. The principle, that 'one ought not to harm an innocent person intentionally', provides an example. We do not feel, see, touch, taste or otherwise empirically experience the quality of wrongness. According to the intuitionist, we rather grasp immediately the truth of the statement, and are directly aware of the wrongness of the acts it prohibits. This is akin to religious knowledge through revelation.

Philosophers of empiricist persuasion are in general

skeptical of theories based upon an appeal of apriori propositions. There has yet to be a convincing explanation of how such truths or properties known. Many people who introspect, when making judgements of intrinsic value, claim no awareness of a simple, unanalysable, non-natural property. For such reason intuitionism as a theory about the nature of values has been unable to obtain wide spread support.

Though naturalism and intuitionism differ in many ways regarding the problems of facts and values, yet they are both known as 'cognitive theories'. They believe that value judgements are cognitive assertions. Many philosophers, on the other hand, are opposed to the cognitivism of naturalism and intuitionism and, have adopted instead theories that can be classified as forms of 'non-cognitivism' or, to use an older terminology, 'Emotivism'. Both naturalism and intuitionism advocate that moral assertions are either true or false, thereby they are moral propositions. Non-cognitivism, by contrast, denies that moral language reports something to be the case; and that moral assertions are either true or false; and that there is a form of knowledge that can be said to be moral knowledge.

The non-cognitivist, on the other hand, sees quite a different function value discourse. Sometimes value language can be used to express our feelings directly: As when we

say, after a victory, 'Ah! how sweet is the victory!' or when we say, after hearing a piece of music, 'Once more!'. Likewise, we use moral language for exhorting, pleading etc. At times, we attempt to persuade others, and on other occasions, we issue commands. In carrying out these objectives, says the non-cognitivist, we do not make true or false claims; nor do we report something to be the case; we do not refer to value properties at all.

The following table summarises the difference between cognitivism and non-cognitivism in relation to fact and value.<sup>15</sup>

	Problem of Meaning	Problem of Justification
<b>1) Cognitivism</b>		
a) <u>Naturalism</u>	Ethical value terms are defined through factual terms. They refer to natural properties.	Ethical and value judgements are disguised assertions of some kind of fact, and thus can be justified empirically.
b) <u>Intuitionism</u>	Ethical and value terms cannot be defined through factual terms. They refer to non-natural properties.	Ethical conclusions cannot be derived from empirically confirmed propositions. Intuition alone provides confirmation.
<b>2) Non-Cognitivism</b>		
a) <u>Emotivism</u>	Ethical and value terms do not ascribe properties, and their meaning or use is not descriptive, factual or referential. Rather they are emotive or attitudinal.	Ethical judgements are not factually justifiable; they are not justified by appeal to intuition and may not be justified by any rational method at all, or by knowledge.

15. Beachamp, T.L. Philosophical Ethics, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1982, p. 359.

Non-cognitivism, in general, covers a wide variety of theories, some of which have little in common. Nonetheless, they all accept the view that ethical judgements are not fact-asserting, and are non-cognitive. But, beyond this initial point of agreement, opinions diverge sharply over the role of moral justification in moral judgements. Of particular interest to me in the present context is Emotivism.

### 3) Emotivism

One of the most important and controversial non-cognitivist theories is emotivism. According to the emotivist, it is incorrect to treat value judgements, or assertions, as real propositions or judgements. A characteristic, usually attributed to a judgement by the cognitivist, is that it must convey information, or it must be either true or false.

These philosophers draw a distinction between the merely assertive and expressive functions of language. If we do not give due weightage to this distinction between assertion and expression, emotivism cannot be properly appreciated; nor can it be distinguished from subjectivism which also is a cognitive theory. According to subjectivism, value judgements can be translated into sentences that convey cognitive information, and are true or false. But emotivism is clearly a non-cognitive theory because value judgements cannot be translated into sentences that convey cognitive information

including those of our own states of mind.<sup>16</sup>

Emotive theory was further developed by C.L. Stevenson, particularly in relation to fact and value, in his first feature of moral discourse, 'Disagreement in Attitude and Belief'. Here he tries to explain the distinction between belief (facts) and attitudes (values).<sup>17</sup> This view is also supplemented by A.J. Ayer, when he says: 'Men never really dispute about value but only about fact'. If we cannot show our opponent in a moral argument that he is mistaken on some matter of fact, we abandon our attempt to convince him. But, to Stevenson, this problem is somewhat more complicated than Ayer's statement, as can be shown here below.

There are, says Stevenson, two sorts of agreement or disagreement in moral arguments. The one is in respect of belief (fact); and the other is in respect of attitude (value). In ethics, generally, disagreements occur when there are conflicting attitudes, i.e. value (which are of course neither true nor false), not when there are conflicting beliefs i.e., facts, (which are either true or false). Beliefs can modify attitudes only to an indeterminate extent that attitudes depend on beliefs. Consider, attitudes towards marriage, for example. A person may hold strong attitudes of approval

---

16. Lewis, White Back & Roberts Holmes. Philosophical Enquiry, Prentice Hall Pub., New Delhi, p. 426.

17. Stevenson, C.L. The Nature of Ethical Disagreement, Yale University Press, 1963, pp. 1-8.

towards the whole institution of marriage but, upon experiencing a failed marriage and seeing how a relationship can easily go sour, the person may change his or her attitude to marriage. The new attitude depends on the new beliefs, but neither the new nor the old attitudes (values) are true or false.

"In order to highlight the disagreement in attitude, let me give another example. Suppose that the representative of a union urges that the wage level in a given company ought to be higher; that it is only right that the workers receive more pay. The company's representative urges in reply that the workers ought to receive no more than they get. Here we face disagreement in attitudes, the one of the union and the other that of the company. Neither is content to let the other's attitude remain unchanged. Perhaps the parties disagree how much the cost of living has risen and how much the workers are suffering under the present wage scale. Here the disagreement is in belief (fact). This argument involves both disagreement in attitude (value) and disagreement in belief (fact)."<sup>18</sup>

- 
18. Disagreement in attitude plays a predominant role in the arguments. Firstly, disagreement in attitude determines what beliefs (facts) are relevant to the argument. Suppose that the Company affirms that the wage scale of 50 years ago was lower than it is now, the Union will immediately urge that this contention even though true, is irrelevant, simply because 50 years ago the wage level maintained under different circumstances is different from now. Secondly, ethical argument usually terminates when disagreement in attitude terminates, even though a certain amount of disagreement in belief remains. Suppose, for instance, that the Company and the Union continue to disagree in belief about the increasing cost of living, but that the Company, even so, ends by favoring the higher wage scale. The Union will then be content to end the argument and will cease to press its point about living costs. The fact that the Company has argued in attitude (value) is sufficient to terminate the argument.

Attitudes are often functions of belief. We often change our attitudes to something when we change our beliefs about it; just as a child ceases to want to touch a live coal when he comes to believe that it will burn him. Hence, Stevenson says that the link between belief and attitude is always factual and not logical. Because logically it would imply the possibility that the disagreement between belief and attitude can always be stated without any reference to attitudes. Stevenson concludes that our fundamental moral judgements and principles rest on attitudes which may themselves lack the support of any factual belief. If so, there is no way that we can be persuaded rationally to either abandon them or provide an ultimate justification for them.

In the last three or four decades, emotivism, understood after Stevenson, as well as naturalism and intuitionism, have undergone sustained criticisms in ethical theory. A view to emerge from these discussions is referred to as Prescriptivism. It too is associated largely with the name of a single philosopher, R.M. Hare.

#### 4) Prescriptivism

In order to understand the historical development of R.M. Hare's prescriptivism, it would be useful to reconsider for a while the naturalistic fallacy explicated by G.E. Moore.<sup>19</sup> Many believe that one of Moore's great contributions

---

19. Moore, G.E. Principia Ethica, op.cit.

is the explication that value judgements are distinct from, and not reducible to, factual judgements. Hare accepts this part of Moore's argument, but he resists Moore's assertion that value judgement reports properties, however, simple they be in their nature. This is precisely what Hare thinks they do not. Accordingly, he sees Moore as having been led only to the threshold of an adequate theory in morals, especially through his open question argument against naturalism. Therefore, he thinks that Moore has gone astray in proposing intuitionism as a substitute.

R.M. Hare also subscribes to David Hume and other non-cognitivists' distinction between facts and values. Hare sees value judgements as having a prescriptive, or action-guiding, function. This orientation to action is entirely absent in purely factual judgements. Evaluative language in general is said to function by way of commending a particular course of action. The foundations of normative ethics as well as all value judgements are thus clearly prescriptive. Factual discourse, by contrast, is not action-guiding. It deals instead with mere description. The statement of facts and values display an unbridgeable logical difference according to prescriptivism.

Further, according to prescriptivism, moral judgements are distinct also from emotive statements. Moral language

functions quite differently from language expressing an emotive attitude. A person who commends something uses specific criteria for value words. He thus can support value judgements by appeal to reasons. Several features of this prescriptivistic doctrine merit our closer considerations. One such feature is Hare's attempt to understand values and facts in terms of meaning and criteria.

#### **MEANING/VALUES AND CRITERIA/FACTS**

R.M. Hare believes that the naturalists' great mistake lay in their supposition that a single set of characteristics attends every good thing; and in the assumption drawn therefrom that "good" means this set of characteristics. Hare challenges anyone to indicate what "good" means by merely pointing to a set of natural or non-natural properties. Consider for example, the statement, "That's a good strawberry". This assertion is not identical in meaning to "That's a strawberry, which is sweet, juicy, firm, red and large". These are factual properties which the strawberry possesses, and they often are the features leading us to say that a strawberry is good. Nonetheless, terms describing these factual properties do not mean what "good" means; and "good" cannot be reduced to a list of such properties. For one thing, says Hare, if a lengthy list of all the factual properties of strawberries were to be prepared - redness, sweetness, juicy-

ness etc. - even then the strawberry would be described but not evaluated.

Therefore, some terms, having commending power such as "good", must be employed to serve the value functions. If all value words are dropped, this commending power disappears with them. R. M. Hare argues that the general meaning of "good" is the same regardless of the context. Otherwise, we could not understand the commending force of the term in unfamiliar contexts. He, therefore, introduces an extremely important distinction between the meaning (values) and the criteria (facts) of value terms.<sup>20</sup> For example,

	<u>Meaning/Value</u>		<u>Criteria/Factual Properties</u>
1)	This ball is good.	-	Because of its (a) leather (b) colour, (c) durability, (d) size etc.
2)	This apple is good.	-	Because of its (a) taste, (b) flavour, (c) size, (d) vitamins etc.
3)	This book is good.	-	Because of its (a) famous author, (b) paper, (c) contents, (d) printing etc.

The word "good" has a common meaning in all its uses, functioning as 'the most general objective of commendation'. 'Good' has this meaning in every context, regardless of the items involved in the criteria thereof. But while the meaning of "good" is always the same, the criteria (facts) of goodness

---

20. Hare, R.M. Language of Morals, Oxford University Press, 1952, p. 69.

shift from context to context and from type to type; the criteria of a good ball is different from those of a good apple, and the criteria of a good apple is different from those of a good book. Learning the criteria of goodness applicable to a new class of items may always be a new lesson, but we are able to use "good" for entirely new classes of objects. But a different lesson in meaning is not involved, once we understand the commending function, function of words. Thus, the criteria of goodness is different in different cases but the meaning of "good" in all cases is the same. Thus, facts and values and their relationship are unbridgeable: We can neither consider facts by means of value nor values by means of facts.

Further, the prescriptive meaning of value term is more preponderant, because it can change the descriptive meaning itself (facts), from one time to the other, of the same object. An example: What we called a 'good' motor car in the year 1950 may change in the course of time its model, design, quality etc.; and so by the year 1960, the same motor car having the good-making characteristics, or criteria of goodness (factual properties), may not have the same good making characteristics as those of 1950. It may not be worthy to be called good at all, again, after the period of ten years.

Notwithstanding the many insights of prescriptivism, it has been widely debated, and numerous arguments against it have been proffered. These arguments challenge that the prescriptive model cannot accommodate all forms of moral discourse. A scathing attack on prescriptivism comes from another influential ethical quarters, namely descriptivism.

### 5) Descriptivism

Descriptivism claims to account more adequately for the language of morals, the relation between facts and values and certain features of moral choice. The writing of Philippa Foot have been especially prominent in the recent discussion of these questions. The presentation here broadly follows her treatment of them. She ranks as a descriptivist, because she seeks to undermine prescriptivism by attacking R.M. Hare's sharp distinction between facts and values. She wants to restore in a sense the naturalistic perspective on the close relation between facts and values, and she is therefore sometimes referred to as a neo-naturalist.

Philippa Foot tries to argue out her thesis on the analysis of the language and logic of morals. It would be impossible to appreciate the force of descriptivism without having some understanding of this orientation. She specifically attacks two major assumption in Hare's thought: (1) That the descriptive, or factual, component of criteria and

the prescriptive, or value, component of meaning are separable, as R.M. Hare suggests in distinguishing (prescriptive) meaning and (descriptive) criteria. (2) That one individual may accept criteria for evaluating things which another may not accept as criteria.<sup>21</sup> The challenges against these two assumptions of prescriptivism have crystallized themselves into description.

Philippa Foot wonders why, when we offer a value judgement such as "Mr. X is courageous", a prescription is involved. She thinks it untrue that, in judging Mr. X to be courageous, we must accept an imperative of the form of "Let me be courageous" or of "Be courageous!". Her view is that one can recognise the virtue of courage in another even though one is a complete and unreformable coward; there need not be any commendation for an action prescribed either for oneself or for another.

Philippa Foot questions the prescriptivist's thesis that facts and values can be so separated as to view them as criterion and meaning. Consider words which are generally used to describe objects but which, by their logic, also require one's taking negative attitudes whenever one uses them. The word 'dangerous' is typical of the examples she has in mind. When we use the word 'dangerous', we can supply

---

21. Foot, Philippa. "Moral Beliefs" in Proceeding of the Aristotelian Society, 59 (1958-59), p. 83.

factual evidences for an object being dangerous, such as a threat offered to human life. But one kind of 'evidence' required for the proper use of 'dangerous' is that there be a 'threatening evil', as she puts it. Danger is thus evaluatively neutral, for the use of this concept entails an appeal to such value concepts as harm and evil. Therefore such terms, as 'danger' etc., have facts and values so intertwined that the concepts cannot be sorted out into 'factual' and 'evaluative' components. The whole idea of two sorts of components is thus under attack in Foot's philosophy. Thus, the descriptivists, maintain that descriptions are often logically inseparable from modes of evaluation.

In the light of the earlier discussion about the naturalistic theory, however, it is worth noting that descriptivism does not say that values actually are facts. Values are not reduced to facts anymore than facts are reduced to values. Rather, the claim is that conceptual considerations show values to be logically connected to facts so much so that it makes no sense to distinguish them into two different types with different functions. The descriptivist therefore maintains that action-guiding features and factual features of concepts are not distinguishable in such a way that they can be separated into factual and evaluative components. Some radical descriptives even maintain the thesis that there

is no distinction at all to be made between facts and values.

Another important question which Philippa Foot directs at R.M. Hare, and which has a direct bearing on the second important thesis of the prescriptivist is the following: Are we free to choose what counts as evidence for moral goodness? This is the question about whether morality permits the latitude of autonomous choice that Hare seems to think it does.

According to prescriptivism, one man may say that a thing is good because of some facts about it, and another may refuse to take that fact as an evidence at all, for nothing is laid down in the meaning of 'good' which connects it with one piece of 'evidence' rather than with another.<sup>22</sup> But Philippa Foot tries to argue that "Criteria for the goodness of each and every kind of thing ... are always determined, and not a matter for decision". In support of her contentions, she points out that we cannot in general choose criteria for the goodness of something, for example, we cannot choose criteria for a good knife, a good farmer, or good reader. Latitude in the selection of criteria for good knives, etc. she says, is not permitted by "the language of mankind". In these evaluations, and in moral evaluations as well, the

---

22. Ibid.

perspective of the activity and the function of the objects involved impose a limit upon what the criteria of goodness can be. If someone does not adhere to these standards in commending relevant items. Philippa Foot believes, we cannot then understand that person as speaking from the moral point of view.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, we find that all these theories of contemporary literature in meta-ethics have had a great impact on philosophy in the twentieth century. It has introduced a commendable measure of clarity and rigour, and its very generality has led to closer relations among ethics, epistemology, aesthetics and the general theory of value. How do the values in the New Testament stand related to these theories?

### C. NEW TESTAMENT FACT-VALUE DICHOTOMY

As we have seen, contemporary moral philosophy is replete with the controversies of facts and values. The controversy has given rise to the problem of a dichotomy between them, to which Naturalism, Intuitionism, Emotivism, Prescriptivism and Descriptivism have addressed themselves with much enthusiasm too. All these theories in moral philosophy make claims and counter-claims to bring out different aspects of the dichotomy between facts and values. But, in so far as the New Testament values are concerned, our tentative

---

23. G.J. Warnock has further substantiate Philippa Foot thesis in his book Contemporary Moral Philosophy, (New York: St. Martin Press, 1967), p. 67.

remark is that the fact-value dichotomy does not either arise or hold good here, and this is not without certain philosophical justifications. To strengthen my observation in respect of the fact-value relationship in the New Testament, I shall reflect first on the above moral theories in the light of the New Testament perspectives. Going along this line, I shall begin with the naturalistic approach to facts and values.

According to the naturalists, there is no dichotomy between facts and values. This seems to substantiate the stand of the New Testament. But the New Testament differs from the naturalist, when the latter gives an explanation that value terms are definable in terms of empirically verifiable properties.

In the New Testament, we see a type of naturalism, although it may not be the type of naturalism advocated by R.B. Perry. Let us consider for example, the beatitudes of Jesus under the two components of fact and value:

<u>Value Statements</u>	<u>Factual Statements</u>
1. Blessed are the poor in spirit -	For their is the Kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are those who mourn -	For they will be comforted.
3. Blessed are the meek -	For they shall inherit the earth.
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness -	For they will be filled.

<u>Value Statements</u>	<u>Factual Statements</u>
5. Blessed are the merciful -	For they will be shown mercy.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart -	For they will see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers -	For they will be called the sons of God.
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness -	For theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
	(Matthew, 5:3-10)

In R.B. Perry's naturalism, value is defined as 'interest' which includes desires, likes, approval, love etc. Here, in the above examples, the value statements are inspired by factual statements. Because of this element of interest involved here, a believer may be said to go to the extent of becoming meek, mournful, merciful, peacemaker, and so on. The believer seems to acknowledge the reward that God has prepared for those who are counted to be 'blessed'.

But the type of 'interest' elicited is not empirical as Perry would understand. It is the insight into the spiritual destiny of man which the New Testament takes into considerations in the system of values. This insight far exceeds the understanding of 'interest' in the naturalistic explanation. Therefore, the New Testament facts and values overach the mere empiricity. Values here, therefore, may be said to be known more by intuition than by empirical evidence.

This brings us to the viewpoint of intuitionism advocated by G.E. Moore and others. Whereas naturalism is an aposteriori theory, intuitionism may be viewed as an apriori theory in respect of the values and our apprehension thereof. The latter holds that values cannot be defined by means of natural properties because, in doing so, we commit the naturalistic fallacy. Hence it argues that the value term 'good' is known by intuition. The New Testament tends to give an intuitive explanation of its values especially of faith, love, hope and others. Though it insists that values should manifest in concrete actions in the life of the believer, it does not at any stage advocate a theory of criterion for moral judgement. On the contrary, it appeals to man's conscience as to what is true, good etc., the voice of conscience is intuitive. Nonetheless, it is not the intuitionism of G.E. Moore that one would come across in the New Testament. Intuitionism of Moore is still a cognitive theory, although it refuses to understand values in terms of natural properties. The justification of moral judgement is sought to be given by appealing to intuition. This piecemeal and an analytical approach is not what characterises the value system of the New Testament. The meaning and justification of values here proceed from a transcendental scheme. Thus, for example, the call for the value of holiness is in virtue of the fact that God is holy: "Be ye perfect, for the father in heaven

is perfect" (Matthew, 5:48) is not merely a command but also a demand of human nature that is created after God's own image. Hence, it can be said that in the New Testament there is no dichotomy between facts and values. What is value in the spiritual sense becomes a fact, even as what is a fact in spiritual sense equally becomes a value.

The New Testament system of values does not provide us with any justification of moral judgements in terms of truth and falsity. It rather seeks to justify its values with reference to attitudes entertained by its cultural system. The New Testament cultural milieu is substantially semitic, whether reflected in Teachings of Jesus or developed in the early Christian communities. Even St. Paul who gives the message of the Gospel to the non-Jews, considerably modifies his message, but does not abandon entirely the semitic cultural system which is substantially attitudinal. Indeed, the semitic value system often wears exclusively the garb of emotivism. In his preaching, Jesus explicates the right attitudes of heart to the world, to one another and to God. He passes judgements on the scribes and Pharisees for their wrong attitude in the worship of God. He calls them hypocrites brood of vipers because externally they may appear sanctimonious but their interior life is misguided with wrong attitudes.

But, in spite of the advocacy of a form of emotivism, the New Testament does not get bogged down to the dichotomy between facts and values. For the very cognitive context, which is countered by emotivism in the debates among the moral theorists in philosophy, is lacking in the New Testament. In the context of the New Testament, it is not a fact-system which is opposed to the value system, though there is a perception of 'facts' (not the propositional context), which to an extent determines the values. Nonetheless, the values are to a greater extent independent of the fact. It is the values that determine the perception of the reality. This is amply exhibited in the teaching of Jesus who often contrasts the existing order of reality with the new order that He wants to establish. It is not less exhibited in the teaching of St. Paul who preaches the value system of the New Testament even outside the region where the semitic world view was not shared.

Further, the value terms here are not only understood in attitudinal sense, they are also sought to be acknowledged in a commending sense, as put forward by R.M. Hare in his prescriptivism. Prescriptivism derives its very name from the advocacy of values in terms of their commendatory forces. The New Testament values are neither purely cognitive nor merely emotive; they are substantially and primarily commen-

datory in nature. They goad us to a set of actions which encompass the entire course of life. This is amply evidenced by Jesus' statement that, "For a tree is recognised by its fruits" (Matthew, 12:33). If we now equate 'fruits' with moral actions, the latter are here clearly the standards to judge the quality of life. Likewise in the statement: "I will tell you the truth whatever you did for one of the least of these brethren of mine, you have done it unto me (Matthew, 25:40). The New Testament religion and its system of values are then action-oriented in the fullest sense.

Every religion claims to be a way of life, the New Testament value system also places before us a particular (Christian) way of life in which faith and reason do not oppose each other. Faith is not merely a sentiment, but a conviction. On many occasions, Jesus aims at strengthening the conviction of his believers to support a set of action. For achieving his purpose he does not hesitate to draw from his immediate environment which is given to the immediate perception of his listeners. Conversely, in strengthening their convictions, he also urges them on to actions. This brings us to the insights offered by prescriptivism.

The prescriptivist meaning of value term is more preponderant because it can change the descriptive meaning itself. In the New Testament, therefore, values are so central

that they can change at times the 'fact'. For example, when Jesus states: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul" (Mark, 8:36), it is meant to bring about a radical perception of reality in one's evaluation of the world. The givenness of the world pales into insignificance before the worth of the invisible spiritual entity of the human soul. The value that Jesus ascribes to soul in contra distinction to the whole world is incomparable; he draws a qualitative distinction between the two. Here the perception of the value has radically changed the perception of the world.

An understanding of the fact-value relationship in the New Testament in the prescriptive manner would not be complete without taking into consideration the descriptivism as well, specially as explicated by Philippa Foot. Descriptivism may also be fruitfully applied to the understanding of the New Testament values. Its insights can have a direct bearing on our apprehension and the rejection of the fact-value dichotomy in the New Testament. Descriptivism has challenged the separation between fact and value advocated by prescriptivism. By implication, it has found the need to revive naturalism to an extent to counter the exclusive commendatory nature of moral judgement. For, in its opinion, the meaning of a moral judgement is derived by the prescrip-

tivists exclusively from action; thereby ethics, is turned into a system of action, argues the descriptivist, without necessary belief systems or cognitive convictions to support the way of life. The challenge against a blind prescriptivism has an inestimable significance to the New Testament.

It is true that the New Testament values goad one to action, to a way of life, so much so that it may be said to constitute a whole course of life. Nonetheless, it is salutary for us to remember that the values of the New Testament are not a mere call for a blind action. Jesus condemned empty action no less than fervid feelings. The religion of the New Testament is not a mere formalism of action, devoid of fidelity to facts. Even as it is not sentimentalism, it is also not ritualism of action. If this is the case, we cannot separate facts from values in the New Testament. Descriptivism may be said to lend admirable support to the inseparability of fact and value.

Further, the autonomy of human person in respect of moral action is not without objective restrictions. This is yet another insight of the descriptivist, which can fruitfully be employed for our understanding of the New Testament values. In the New Testament, the value of goodness is not constituted by the mere subjective choice; there is an order of 'facts', both at the natural and supernatural levels.

Both Jesus and St. Paul, in their interpretative theology, are quite sensitive to the order of facts; and also to its integration with values. Facts and values are continuous and inseparable, neither having its being apart from its correlate. This comes to be realised by most varied shades of philosophical thinking of pragmatism, idealism (both subjective and objective) and even some form of realism. So long as there is fact, there is value as well; and vice versa. It may, however, be conceded that only at times values are not discernible equally, clearly in all ages and by all minds. If the sharp cleavage between facts and values were to be justified, then ethics itself, not to speak of the New Testament ethics, as an intelligible, non-mysterious field of enquiry would be impossible; and the entire enterprise of ethics would be left as something undecidable, indeterminate and even illusory.

In the light of what is stated above, the New Testament may be said to rule out the dichotomy between facts and values. If this was not the case, it would not be possible for us to evaluate and appreciate the integral moral teachings of the New Testament. Christ unmistakably points out values only in relation to facts; likewise he points out to facts in relation to a hierarchy of values. This clearly indicates their close relation, and indeed their inseparability. To

further strengthen this close relationship between facts and values in the New Testament, the following observations may be made:

Firstly, facts and values, as Jesus taught, are radically theocentric. In the New Testament scheme, God, and not man, is the measure of all morality and values. Efforts, therefore, to divorce ethics and religion would do violence to the message of Christ. The standard of facts and values is the religio-moral nature of God himself. Man's action, bearing on either facts or values, centres on God. He is the ultimate fact and value alike; hence there can be no dichotomy whatever between facts and values.

Secondly, Adolph Harnack claims that Jesus was 'the first to bring value of every human soul to light'.<sup>24</sup> Jesus taught that men are more valuable than anything in the created order, and that the life of one person is worth more than the society considered in abstract. As for example, when he forgave a woman accused of adultery and put her accusers to shame (John, 8:1-11), Jesus unmistakably values the soul, the image of God in this woman. But, he does not stop there: he goes on to instruct her at the same time that this value did not supersede the fact of her actions, that this woman

---

24. Adolph Harnack. What is Christianity? Trans. by T.B. Saunders, New York, Harper & Bros, 1957, p. 4.

was an adulteress. If he had judged her on the fact of her action, she had to be stoned to death according to the Law of Moses. The value of forgiveness overpowers the Mosaic legalism. Jesus forgave her, but commanded her, "Go and sin no more" (John, 8:11), as if she should be faithful to the given order of facts in the divine scheme. The manner Jesus handles this situation is also a model for the reconciliation of the dichotomy between facts and values. The particular instance is an extension of his mission of reconciliation between God and man. Reconciliation is clearly linked to the realisation of the fact of sin by putting together forgiveness along with the need for a life of holiness ('neither do I condemn you' and 'sin no more'). Fact and value are clearly reconciled admirably in his mission of reconciliation between God and man.

Thirdly, Jesus taught noble values by demonstrating the facts in his own life. Professor H.H. Henson's exuberant comments that,

"there is no other religion in which the historic founder is recognised as a norm of personal morality .... Jesus alone is able to offer himself as the sufficient illustration of his own doctrine",<sup>25</sup>

are not without an element of truth: When the disciples argued

---

25. Henson, H.H. Christian Morality, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1936, p. 301.

as to which one would be accounted greatest, Jesus said to them, "If you want to be great in God's kingdom learn to be the servant of all". This was not a mere theoretical discourse on service. He sets this example in his own life by washing the disciples' feet. In the backdrop of this living example, his exhortations acquire added significance:

"The king of the gentiles exercises lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater one who sits at the table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

(Luke, 22:25-27)

By his own personal example, Jesus explained that true greatness in the kingdom of God comes not from rank and power, as measured by the secular world, but by service to others. This is one of the values in the kingdom of God, and it is being personified in the fact of his own life.

Men have taught high ideals and values, not always demonstrating them in the facts of their personal lives. Philosopher's great ethical treatises need not necessarily correspond to their facts of life. But the New Testament time and again asserts that its values are not a mere formalism, they are rather to be manifested in the life of a person.

Hence, the ultimate norm for a Christian is not the rule, creed and ethical system, no matter how ennobling, but values and facts together personified in Christ's own life. Christ himself becomes the final criterion of all character and conduct. For he is the embodiment of fact and value rolled into one as an ideal to be emulated by the Christian. This further indicates the absence of fact-value dichotomy in the New Testament.

Finally, all the ethical teaching of Jesus is rooted in God, therefore in his religion. This inevitably leads to an ethics of purity and holiness. For him, ethics is part and parcel of religion, and completely inseparable from it; Christian morality springs out of a new relation to God. He bases ethics entirely on the postulate of faith in God and God's own nature. The right and the good are aspects of the holy will of God. Was Kant influenced by this perception when he thought of the perfectly moral will as the holy will? This is an open-ended question. In this way Christ's ethics solve the problem of dichotomy between facts and values, which perhaps the non-religious ethics would find difficult to bridge. This is an added reason why the values of the New Testament cannot be treated as pure ethics minus religion. The ethics of that discourse has at its core the element of religiosity, and the ethical life, to which it points,

is impossible to attainment without the help of the religion which inspired it. Therefore, here, facts and values which come under the scope of ethics cannot be studied separately, for whatever is a fact or value in the New Testament ethics is religious in its origin as well as finality. This clearly explains why all the moral demands of Jesus are conceived of as the moral requirements of God.

Therefore, values and facts, as well as their relation in the New Testament cannot be understood exclusively in terms of either cognitivism, or emotivism or conativism. Hence, the contemporary debates in Moral Philosophy that have arisen in the schools of naturalism, intuitionism, emotivism, prescriptivism and descriptivism may have their cumulative effect on our understanding of fact and value in the New Testament. But their exclusive application to the New Testament ethics, I am afraid, may not do justice to its proper understanding. Regardless of what is understood, a fact is not a value and value is not a fact; yet, facts and values are never understood in complete isolation of each other, although the one or the other predominates in our awareness in a given situation.

In conclusion, the New Testament fact-value relationship is theonomous, and therefore religious, in nature. But such a statement would be countered by philosophers like

Nietzsche, who claim that values are not objective at all; that they are to be understood in terms of the persons who hold them; and that they cannot be supported by facts; that values are created rather than discovered: "By virtue of what value is, it has to be willed or created, not discovered – whatever be the nature of the world, and whether God exists or not".<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche further believes "that Christian morality and values could survive without theism". We see in these views yet another move in favour of the radical dichotomy of fact and value that does not hold good in respect of the Christian ethics. As far as his view that Christian morality and values can survive without theism, it may be seriously doubted.

The Christian values have their origin in Christ's life and teachings; his life and teaching cannot convey any sense outside a theistic context. In the New Testament, Christ creates values and discovers facts, and further he integrates them in his own life. Therefore, values and facts become inseparable in Christ's life and teachings. It is not possible for Christian values to survive without a belief in God. Hence, facts and values in the New Testament are inseparable from the concept of God; God is both the ultimate fact and value; fact and value as they are incorporated into man's

---

26. Wilcox, T.J. Truth and Value in Nietzsche, University of Michigan Press, p. 12.

ethical life have their fulfilment and realisation only in God. And because of this unique feature, the dichotomy between facts and values becomes absurd in the New Testament. We can, at best ordinarily distinguish between judgement of facts and judgement of values, but we cannot separate them completely.

It is true that a value statement cannot be logically derived from a factual one. The reason is obvious. If 'derivation' is understood in the sense of logical or deductive derivation, only analytically true proposition can be said to have such relation. But 'value statements' are different from ordinary statements of facts. Further, values emerge only in the context of life and living conditions. In other words, only in the context of facts and values emerge. So a social fact – a fact of life cannot be adequately understood without reference to values. In other words, in concrete life situations, facts and values get intermingled. Moreover, values in the end have to be absolute in nature. The relativistic doctrine of values cannot satisfactorily account for moral justification. Therefore, the basic values have to be absolute in nature. Only with the help of these absolute values we justify our actions. Take away these absolute values, justification of human action will be inadequate. The New Testament advocates such absolute values.

**CHAPTER IV**

**ABSOLUTE VALUES AND THE NEW TESTAMENT**

## ABSOLUTE VALUES AND NEW TESTAMENT

Any study of absolute values in the context of the New Testament would first of all warrant a clarification of the notion of absolute value as such. However, the phrase 'absolute value' is not absolute, in so far as it is a correlate of the 'relative value'. Hence, what I have in my mind in this chapter is to bring out the relation that holds good between the absolute and the relative values in the New Testament. In order to do this I shall, first, briefly discuss the sense in which a value may be considered as absolute. In this connection, I will briefly refer to some of the narrowly conceived absolutistic values and also the attack made on them by some of the relativistic philosophical schools. Secondly, I shall examine the relationship that may be said to exist between the absolute and the relative values in the New Testament.

### THE NOTION OF ABSOLUTE VALUE

By 'absolute value' is meant one that maintains its validity under any and every circumstance. Thus, the ancient maxim of the Stoics, "Let justice be done though the heavens fall", is a dramatic way of expressing the absolute validity of justice as a principle. For the moral theologians of the

Middle Ages, the general principle, "Follow the good and avoid the evil", was regarded as a major or ultimate premise carrying with it absolute validity. In modern philosophy, the ethics of Immanuel Kant furnishes the best example of an ethical absolute. The 'good will', which Kant defined as the will that acts out of respect for the moral law, has absolute validity; it is good in any context and has a worth that cannot be calculated because it surpasses all values in exchange.

But, the traditional belief in absolute values was based upon the extreme objective theory of values which may be untenable. Though the ethical objective absolutism in this traditional form lingers on, it has largely been abandoned by many scholars. The error of this traditional absolutism consisted in the manner it conceived values, as if they were some sort of objective entities, on the one hand, and its exalted view of reason, on the other.

The absolute values were regarded as eternal and immutable. The claims of values like truth, goodness and beauty are said to be experienced as unconditional. As Kant says, the claim of duty upon the will comes in the form of categorical, not hypothetical, imperative. Similarly, the pursuit of truth by the scientist or philosopher would be meaningless, unless he were to presuppose the existence of

fixed and final truth as the goal of his pursuit. Thus, the quest for the higher values requires us to postulate absolutes. However, to postulate them is not to possess them; they are not entities that can be possessed by us. The error of traditional absolutism lay not in entertaining the conception of the absolutes, but in its proud assumption that man could clearly grasp and even obtain them.

Therefore, what we mean, when we postulate absolute values, is not that there exist absolute ideas of each value in a Platonic realm of being, but that there are absolute principles which should govern the creation, appreciation and judgement of of all values. For example, there is no ideal of beauty which all beautiful things must 'imitate' or in which they 'participate', but there are principles which should be followed by all artists in creating beautiful things. Similarly, there is no ideal of justice to which every just state must conform, but there are principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity which must govern any state which expects to be called just.

Yet another error of traditional absolutism at this point has been to equate these universal principles with specific rules or standards which have been formulated by men of specific cultures. The result has been the treatment of these rules or standards, which are relative to time and

place, as if they were absolutes. Therefore, it must be strongly insisted upon that the 'absolute' of which we have been speaking are general principles rather than specific rules; even as they are not entities; nonetheless they are not merely abstract, rather they have to be embodied as facts of life.

Absolute values are limited because of their unique features. Firstly, absolute values are intrinsic or ends in themselves, and can never become means; but they still need means to become real. Like all values, they become real by being embodied; and the embodiment is achieved with the help of means and ends. Thus they do not exclude but, on the contrary, demand the application of other scales of values. Secondly, absolute values are not concerned with the details of how they come into being, but with the singular essence of objects which come to embody them. Their task is to determine the purpose by which the relative values serving them are defined. Practically, any relative value can be transformed by absolute values; likewise, any 'object' may come to embody values, relative or absolute. Thirdly, traditionally it has been acknowledged that truth, goodness and beauty are absolute values par excellence. They are, in the ethico-religious context, objective forces that form the very essence of the absolute spiritual reality. They are not dependent

on subjective desires and impulses; nor upon the exertion for survival on the part of human beings. But they manifest themselves with man's rational realisation of his unity and attunement to the ultimate spiritual reality. These absolute values, though unique and ends-in-themselves, cannot however be fully understood without the elements of relativity in them. Therefore, relative values are equally important to understand the absolute values, and vice-versa.

Some values are relative in the sense that they relate to age, sex, intelligence, culture, technology and other conditions. In this sense, values vary, depending on circumstances, for example, health, knowledge, pleasure, courage, kindness, honesty, love, friendship, beauty etc. These values have a basis in man's nature and the nature of the world in which he lives. They are necessary for the continuation of life and the development of man. Relative values belong to an existing reality. Thus, 'good' is not something that can stand alone; nor can it be assigned as a predicate to some other quality, unless that quality be conceived as existing. When I say, 'Love is good' or 'Justice is good', I mean that love as realised in a personal life is good, that justice as manifested in a man's character or in a social order is good. It belongs only to the concrete. In this way, ethics is different from other sciences. For example, a mathematical

proposition holds true without any postulate about existence. As distinct from a mathematical proposition, when we say, 'Mr. X is good', we mean to say that a particular person is good in virtue of some qualities or characteristics which he possesses or which constitute his nature. And these qualities or characteristics are manifested in the way in which he reacts to his environment. It is the concrete person who can be said to be good. He is the centre of life and consciousness and his conscious life requires an objective environment which he must know and modify in his action. Man lives in the midst of changes in the society. Therefore, his values also become relative to the environment that he is in and the social order that he lives in.

Against the backdrop of a close relationship between absolute and relative values, it may be noted that absolutism has come under attack by different relativistic ethical theories in the modern and contemporary world.

#### **a) Moral Experimentalism**

The appeal of John Dewey's Moral experimentalism is largely due to his emphasis upon the relativity of values and ideals to changing situations. According to Dewey, all ideals and values, however old and respected, should be held tentatively. They should be tested by the consequences of acting upon them. If they increase values and further the

growth of individuals and society, they are to that extent confirmed. But they are not to be accepted as finally and absolutely valid. They are always to be acted upon in an experimental way, the mind keeping itself open to new possibilities of values. The danger however of this view is obvious: It would put all ideals and values in flux and make it impossible to establish any of them as a firm basis for personal and social life. As a result, it would make unity and continuity in the life of the individual or society impossible. Thus, unmitigated experimentalism in morality would be as disastrous as complete relativism.

Nevertheless, moral experimentalism, like moral relativism, points to an element of truth that is important. As stated earlier, while principles of values are absolute and unchanging, the forms assumed by values in different times and places are relative and changing. There are several reasons for this: The most obvious is that changes in human knowledge and social conditions are continuous, and values are modified as a result of these changes. Secondly, we can think of infinite possibilities. For example, man's knowledge of nature is still partial; and there are many different forms of beauty which are still to be created. Human mind should always be open to new forms of value which may be discovered and realised. Finally, man is a spiritual being,

characterised by freedom and the capacity to transcend himself. He is essentially creative, always seeking to produce forms through which he can express new possibilities of values. Hence, he cannot be content with a single style of art or literature, merely copying the masters of the past and repeating their achievements, for he sees always things in fresh ways and experiments with new methods of expressing what he sees. Thus, the boundless possibilities of value in nature and history interact with the creative spirit of man to bring new forms of value into being. This is particularly characteristic of the modern world in which scientific methods of knowing and the democratic ways of life have combined to emphasize rapid changes, although life in such a world is difficult because of the constant necessity of mankind to adjustments to changing situations and demands.

Thus, in Dewey's moral experimentalism, we cannot deny the fact that man's life is relatively oriented to values which are in a sense experimental and relative. Yet we cannot conclude from this that these values are totally relative, because we cannot isolate them in relation to absolute values. Therefore, the boundaries between them need not be drawn too rigidly.

#### **b) Emotivism**

Like Dewey's moral experimentalism, A.J. Ayer's emoti-

vism too plays down the relationship between the absolute and the relative values; emotivism is also a form of relativism. A.J. Ayer argues that all ethical statements are emotive. "Thou shalt not ...." really means "I feel it is wrong" or "I dislike it". Ethics is not cognitive, much less prescriptive, it is simply emotive. Ethical pronouncements are merely ejaculations of our subjective feelings, and not divine imperatives about moral duty. This is clearly a radical relativism, since on this ground everything would be relative to the vastly different feelings of different individuals. Therefore, there would be no room for absolute principles in ethics.

### c) Subjectivism

Jean Paul Sartre's atheistic existentialism involves a form of radical subjectivism in ethics. He believes that there is no objective meaning or value in life. "Man is a useless passion", says Sartre. He writes, "To give me orders .... I am doomed to have no other law but mine.... For I am a man, and every man must find his own way".<sup>1</sup> Man is absolutely free and everything is relative to what the individual wills to do. We can create our own meanings and values. There are no objective values to be discovered; all values are made subjectively by those who will them. While we may

---

1. Jean Paul Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays, "The Flies", New York, Collier Macmillan, 1966, pp. 121-123.

acknowledge here the merit of giving prominence to the subject who makes his choice in this theory, we must not forget to acknowledge equally that a notion of pure subjectivity in ethics is a chimera; for our choice is not made in the vacuum but in concrete and objective situations of life.

#### **d) Situationism**

Joseph Fletcher's 'Situational Ethics' exemplifies yet another form of relativism. Everything is relative to the situations, says Fletcher.<sup>2</sup> In certain situations it may be right to lie, steal, commit adultery, kill etc. All values are determined by the specific situations. Thus, he claims that the ends justify the means. But this kind of situationism is fraught with a total rejection of all ethical norms and values; the absurdity of the position is self-evident; ethics would then cease to be a normative discipline.

#### **e) Cultural Relativism**

One of the powerful sources of relativism in ethics in modern times is anthropological and cultural analysis that highlights the great variety of customs and practices found in different groups and cultures. From this point of view, ethical absolutes are sought to be ruled out, because there cannot possibly be a universal agreement or consensus

---

2. Fletcher, J. Situation Ethics, S.C.M. Press Ltd., London, p. 39.

of opinions with regard to any standard or norm. It is argued that each set of values is relative to a geographical place and time, and we have no way of transcending this situation, leaving us confined to an ethical cultural relativism.

Before we point out in general the untenability of the forms of relativism in ethics, it may be granted that ethical absolutism is wrong, if we understand the absolute values as if they are objective entities either in this world or in a mysterious realm. Nonetheless, absolute values become a necessity both in the context of ethics and religion. We need rather to understand them as the principles which get embodied in relative and changing situations. Against this backdrop, we may note that the attacks on the ethical absolutes by the forms of relativism fails to take into consideration the close relation that exists between absolute and relative values. It ignores the fact that the absolute values get embodied in relative values and that relative values derive their significance from the absolute values. Although relative values may fall short in their standards in comparison with the absolute values, yet they are not without any significance to the absolute values. Both are equally important in their own context; and in order to understand values, either absolute or relative, one has to synthesize their differences without creating any dichotomy between them.

Thus, absolute values would be merely abstract, or mere ideas, without their manifestations in the relative values. And the relative values would be merely means without ends if they are sundered from the absolute values. The relative values would simply lose their significance without being fulfilled, if they are separated from their ground of the absolute values.

#### THE NEW TESTAMENT ABSOLUTE VALUES

The New Testament ethics at the core is firmly absolutistic: It is based on the nature of an unchanging God, "Who cannot lie" (Titus, 1:2). It is manifested in God's law which "cannot be broken" (John, 10:35), and in the person of Jesus Christ who "is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb., 13:8). Total ethical relativism, therefore, is not an option for a Christian. But, to be realistic, we must however acknowledge that we live in a constantly changing world. The absolute values have to take the forms of relative values as well. But this does not mean that we underestimate the values as absolute. In fact, values at the core of the New Testament, for that matter of any religion, have to be absolute, no matter what forms of relativity they may come to acquire. In other words, absolutism in the New Testament is not incompatible with the different relative forms of the absolute values. We encounter in the New Testament neither a mere

relativism nor a total absolutism, though absolute values in their own unique features do predominate therein, as they are the undercurrent of Christian ethics. This New Testament orientation to the absolute values, it may be noted, is different from that of Immanuel Kant in his advocacy of the Categorical Imperative.

Our above contention, that, in understanding the New Testament ethics, the absolute values therein must not be understood in terms of either mere relativism or total absolutism at the peripheral level, deserves a closer scrutiny. In general it may be stated that, while a mere relativism is rejected in virtue of the unchanging nature of God and of his will being embodied in the moral law, a total absolutism too is equally rejected for the following reasons.

Firstly, a total absolutism would fail to speak to man in his ethical concerns. Finite man does not have the perfect understanding of God's absolutes. Paul says,

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

(I Cor. 13:12)

Paul suggests that our understanding of God's perfect law is imperfect; that God's word may be infallible (John, 10:35), but our understanding of it is not. God is infinite by nature,

but we have only a finite grasp of him. However, our understanding may still be adequate for a reasonable moral life, but it is not yet omniscience. This inadequacy in our understanding of the absolutes makes for a certain relativism.

Secondly, not all prescriptions of the New Testament are intended for all men at all times in all places. They are not universal either in intent or in content; they too are context-bound. Some commands are not universal in extension, they need not be obeyed in all circumstances. For example, it is clearly acknowledged that the commands to obey parents or governments may sometimes be superseded by the higher laws. This is the import of Peter's statement, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts, 5:29).

Finally, not all ethical commands have equal importance. Jesus himself spoke of the "weightier matters of the law" (Matthew, 23:23) in contrast to mere formalistic laws. He spoke of the "greatest" and the "least" commands (Matthew, 23:23). If this is so, a Christian is not committed to the commands casuistically. There are occasions when one has to go by the spirit of the commands rather than the letter of the demands. It is also possible to attach greater significance to some laws than to others' this at once suggests a gradation in importance of the laws (Matthew, 23:23,24).

The New Testament absolute values cannot be fully defined. Therefore, there is a sense in which we can consider them to be subjectively absolute, especially when we reject an objective absolutism. Nonetheless, it is not a mere subjectivism just because they cannot be defined; they can be described and to some extent elucidated. It is equally difficult to identify values as absolute in the New Testament. However, it is generally admitted that love, goodness and truth have a claim to be considered absolute. Other values, in so far as they are seen as some forms of the manifestations of the absolute values, are considered to be relative. In what follows is a brief elucidation of love, goodness and truth with their inseparable relation to the relative values.

### 1) Love

If we are not to dwell here on the distinction of the kinds of love spoken about in the New Testament, (which is already discussed by me in Chapter II), love as the absolute value may first of all be identified with the holy nature of God (agapé); and secondly, with the reflection of God's holiness in the life of men, in particular, in the relation that they bear to one another. With this conviction, Paul writes that there "abide faith, hope and love; but the greatest of these is love" (I Cor., 13:13). Indeed, the criterion to judge if one is a follower of the New Testament is love

(Romans, 13:8; John, 15:12). St. John brings out explicitly the twofold aspects of love as what abides in God and what is reflected in man in the sphere of intersubjectivity: "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (I John, 4:16). In order to know God, a Christian must abide in love. It is a value that is absolute because all other values are tested by love, and love cannot be tested by other higher values. Other relative values are sought to be attested by love. Even truth and goodness must be permeated by love. To pursue them without love could lead them to mere intellectualism and voluntarism respectively, turning at once our concern with ethics and religion alike into blind formalism and emotivism.

Love is an absolute value in the New Testament. It is often extended beyond the confines of the temporal existence. In the temporal sphere, it entails forgiveness and compassion, revealed in the person of Christ himself. Men, who accept this foundational truth, are to find a clear endorsement of it in their own personal life. I shall now discuss its absoluteness along with the concern of the Christian ethicists to incarnate the abstract principle of love into concretely dynamic but relative values. These ethicists inject into their Christian ethics elements of relativism, situationism and personalism, although not in the sense of rela-

tivising the absolute value. This may bring out clearly the relation between the absolute and relative values.

Ethical relativism, not at all in its derogatory sense, has come to liberate ethics progressively ever since the simultaneous appearance in 1932 of Emil Brunner's The Divine Imperative and Reinhold Niebuhr's Moral Man and Immoral Society.<sup>3</sup> Both moral theologians built their conceptions of the Christian ethics on the principle that Divine command is always the same in its 'Why', but may be different in its 'How'. It is absolute and changeless as to the 'Why', but contingent as to the 'How'. For example, we are always commanded to act lovingly. The 'Why' of this command is the agapēic nature of God, whereas the 'How' of it depends on the concrete situation of our nature. How we are to love depends on our own responsible estimate of the situation. Only love is constant; everything else is a variable. The shift to relativism liberates the contemporary Christians from code-ethics, from stern iron-bound do's and don'ts, from casuistic conducts and legalistic morality, and bestows upon him the freedom according to the spirit.

The Christian relativism spoken above can therefore well go along with the Christian situationism in the cause

---

3. Brunner, E. The Divine Imperatives, Charles Scribner's Son, 1932.

of incarnating the absolute value of love in concrete situations. In Christian situationism, the ultimate criterion still remains agapeic love. This love however concretizes the abstract absolute principle; it does not either absolutize the relative or relativize the absolute. Concretization is not relativization at any rate. Joseph Fletcher says, "The Christian does not understand God in terms of love; he understands love in terms of God as seen in Christ". His statement beautifully captures the truth, "We love because He first loved us".<sup>4</sup>

Yet, love is meaningful as a value only in the community of integral human persons. Brunner declares that the notion of value apart from persons is an illusion.<sup>5</sup> There are no intrinsic values, values exist only with reference to persons. Value is what it is for a person, rather than something with an absolute, objective existence; the absolute value is not a thing but only a principle. Like Brunner, Edgar Brightman combines with Christian relativism and situationism yet another important item, namely personalism. Personality is the only true intrinsic value we know. All values are but forms of personal experience of the absolute principle.<sup>6</sup>

---

4. Fletcher, Joseph. Situation Ethics, S.C.M. Press, p. 49.

5. Brunner, E. The Divine Imperatives, Charles Scribner's Son, 1932, p. 194.

6. Brightman, Egar. Nature and Values, Henry Holt & Co., 1945, p. 62.

If so, the value of love is the absolute principle that finds expression in the personal experience of human beings as centres of consciousness, will and free actions.

While incorporating the elements from Christian relativism, situationism and personalism into Christian ethics, it is important to note that the absolute principle of love is not relativized, for the simple reason that it stands for the agapeic love; the elements only bring out the ways in which the absolute value of love becomes meaningful in the concrete living of a Christian. In other words, they indicate the relation between the absolute and relative values in the New Testament. In conclusion, it may be stated that in the New Testament, the absolute character of love as a value, lies only in the agapeic love. 'God is love' amounts to saying that 'God's nature is love', and that all other forms of applications of love are derived from the agape as its source; the latter are the relative concretization of agape itself.

We may now fruitfully look for the close relation between the absolute and the relative values of love in some of the texts in the New Testament. Divine love as demanded by Christ becomes absolute in his reply to the teacher of the law that the first and the most important commandment is:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength."

(Mark, 12:30)

The absolute principle has an absolute demand on one's heart, soul, mind and strength. This calls for a total surrender on the part of a believer to God, he lives no longer for himself but only for God. It is only in a Christ-like manner that a Christian can understand the absolute law of love that demands the dedication of his total life to God. It is absolutely unique, in the sense that it transcends all other demands in his life.

The practice of the absolute love, according to the New Testament, liberates man from the law understood in a narrow sense of strict conformity with rules. If we have this absolute divine love, law ceases to operate in man's life for the simple reason that love fulfills all laws. In this sense, love being a unique absolute is said to supersede the law. Again, in the same sense, it is said that Moses gave form to the law, but Christ could give a substance to it by way of love.

Moreover, divine love as an absolute value not only fulfills all laws, but it at once becomes antithetical to a natural law of hating one's enemies. Christ is explicit on this love of enemies, too:

"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you".

(Luke, 6:27-28)

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them".

(Luke, 6:32)

"But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them; without expecting to get anything back".

(Luke, 6:35)

It is not only the love of one's friends but even of one's enemies that ought to be characterised by an unconditionality. It is a love that does not expect anything in return. This absolute love is said to be antithetical to natural law, in the sense that it clearly transcends the instincts imbedded in human nature, not necessarily evil. One can manifest this heroic love to one's enemies only in the spirit of Christ himself. Thus, the absolute agapeic love personalised in Christ becomes the model for a Christian life. The absolute and the relative values of love meet in the person of Christ.

We may fruitfully cite a few concrete instances in the teachings of the New Testament to drive home the truth of Christ being the meeting point of absolute and the relative value of love:

"If anyone says, 'I love God', yet hate his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen".

(I John, 4:20)

Love of God is an absolute value, but, in a sense, it is an abstract principle. But it can be concretised by way of filling the abstract schema with flesh and blood by relating it to our fellowmen. It is the communitarian context that transforms the abstract principle of love into concrete love. Since all value is related to our day-to-day activity. The apostle seems to suggest that, if our love is not concretely expressed to our fellowmen, our claim that we love God is nothing short of a fraud. Again,

"A new commandment I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

(John, 13:34-35)

The new commandment given by Jesus explicitly makes the love of one's fellowmen the criterion for one's love for God. Moreover, it is not only the criterion, but also the content of divine love. For in addition to being the test for the principle of love, it is also the mark that is supposed to distinguish a Christian. It is this idea which is implicit in the call for discipleship in the text.

St. Paul also reiterates the New Testament teaching that seeks to materialise abstract love into concrete forms:

"You my brothers were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather serve one another in love".

(Galatians, 5:13)

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient bearing one another in love".

(Ephesians, 4:2)

Paul takes into consideration the relative values of service, humility, gentleness, patience as the concrete forms of love itself. For they fulfill the demands of the absolute love. To understand love in Pauline philosophy, we have to realise it as related concretely to our day to day living.

John in his epistle further explicates the teaching on the value of love, adding to it an element of concern for sharing:

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him. How can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words to tongue but with actions and in truth".

(I John, 3:17-18)

Relativising love in the Christian context is not minimising it, but rather relating it to one's concrete actions. It is not a mere profession in mere words and speech that we

love God. Loving God entails one's sensitivity to the needs of one's fellow men and their fulfilment in action. John, who is known as the great apostle of love, is fully aware that these actions of love are firmly rooted in the agapeic love, as is clearly evidenced in the following:

"Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love".

"No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us".

"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him".

"And he has given us this commandment: Whoever loves God must also love his brother".

(I John, 4:7-8; 12; 16; 21)

One has a feeling that a commentary on the above texts would only defile the exquisite beauty of the texts that could not be simpler for one's understanding. Its lucidity can be gauged directly as flowing from the apostle's heart to the heart of man open to the spirit. In conclusion, it may be admitted with many that the New Testament ethics is absolutistic. But, if absolutism were to be understood that the ethics concerned excludes all relativity, it cannot however be subscribed to. It is rather absolutistic in the sense that it admits the principle of absolute love, identical

with the divine nature, that seeks concrete manifestations in the life of man. Such ethics is not a static ethics, for it is the ethics of love and liberty: Hence, it admits many a form that is relative. Thus, speaking of the co-relation between the absolute and the relative values, the value of love not only permits, but also demands, that we concretize absolute love and determine the relative values of love in each situation in the light of its unique demands. Therefore, a large element of relativity is required in applying the absolute value of love; in the New Testament an ethical absolutism is not incompatible with a Christian ethical relativism, situationism and personalism.

## 2) Goodness

In the Old Testament, "good" is generally referred to what is 'pleasant', 'right' (Deuteronomy, 6:18) and 'beneficial' (Job, 2:10). In the New Testament, the Greek words 'agathos' and 'kalos' are rendered by 'good'. In none of these usages, however, 'good' has its full ethical content. In contrast to Greek ethics, the Bible centres goodness on God, the source of all goodness. It is true that both Plato and Aristotle also make "the good" central in their systems of thought: "If it is true that in the sphere of action, there is an end which we wish for its own sake, and for the sake of which we wish everything else – It is clear that

this will be the good or the supreme good" (Aristotle, Ethics Bk. I). Noble as these ideas are of the nature of the summum bonum, for the New Testament they do not lead to a living personal God as the ground and source of 'the good'. Throughout the Bible, however, God is declared to be good, because of his acts of redeeming love.

The triad of values of beauty, truth and goodness, acknowledged by many philosophers, are often reduced by Christian philosophers and theologians in the context of the New Testament to a fundamental value of goodness. The underlying reason for this coalescence is that God who is the fullness of being (truth) and auspiciousness/holiness (beauty) is experienced by man in his redeeming acts (goodness). In addition, what constitutes any of these values is precisely the goodness they share in common. Moral goodness in particular exists for person. The ideal of absolute goodness can exist only in a person from whom all reality and holiness is derived. Therefore, goodness cannot be explained on merely naturalistic or evolutionistic grounds. Even though we do not always follow the good, we are compelled to acknowledge its absolute claim upon us.

The New Testament declares that goodness must shine in its own light. Since it refers to action, the right context for it is the world of free persons; it has to be embodied

and lived. Since the concrete living of persons is the context of goodness, a feeling for goodness plays an essential part. Like all other feelings, this feeling too cannot be acquired once and for all, but must be experienced afresh each time. Goodness in the New Testament admits a hierarchy of values all of which may be considered as good. Nonetheless, God who is the end in itself for the specifically human soul, may be considered as the absolute value. In virtue of its specific bearing on the soul, it is more a spiritual than a purely ethical value, unlike it is the case with Plato and many other contemporary moral philosophers.

The New Testament terms the highest goodness variously as 'the kingdom of God', 'the state of blessedness', 'the life eternal', 'salvation' etc. Christ himself called it the kingdom of God. In most religious and philosophical systems, the highest good is conceived either negatively as cessation from life's miseries and sufferings or positively as happiness and bliss conceived often in terms of the joys and pleasures of empirical existence.

At the higher philosophical level, bordering on a non-dualism and even mysticism, goodness is often equated with contemplation of, and absorption in, the divine or the ultimate reality. But to Immanuel Kant kingdom of God is the intelligible world of pure reason:

"The Kingdom of God has come to us so soon as even the principle of the gradual transition from church faith to the pure religion of reason, the principles of a divine ethical state on earth, has been anywhere recognised as a fundamental principle, however, far off may be the actual realisation of such a state".<sup>7</sup>

The kingdom of God thus seems, for Kant, to have been inspired by the spirit of enlightenment, to have already begun in the shape of pure reason, or what he calls 'the intelligible world'. But in this empirical and historical world, it is only in a process of manifestation, and the full development lies ahead in the historical future. Nonetheless, for Kant the kingdom of God began now with the spirit of enlightenment, and will be consummated in the historical future, but this kingdom is unequivocally an ethical kingdom. Indeed, we would not expect anything more than this from the author of Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone. Thus, Kant seems to equate the reign of reason with the reign of God. He seems to believe that the reign of reason establishes a supersensuous order of things through which the highest good is made possible, and can come into the possession of men. Thus, it is ultimately a kingdom of man on earth.

But the kingdom of God in the New Testament is not a mere ethical kingdom of pure reason, as Kant would have.

---

7. Martin, H.V. The Kingdom of God, Christian Literature Society for India, Bangalore, 1952, pp. 20-21.

But it is the kingdom of God, in which God himself reigns in the life of a believer. The New Testament clearly acknowledges that the kingdom of God is the kingdom of 'Grace', 'Love' and 'Power'; it does not acknowledge the kingdom to be the reign of pure reason alone, as it is acutely conscious of the mystery of evil in human life. Hence, it considers the foundation of such a kingdom to rest on divine power, grace and love. It heralds the kingdom to have begun in the life of Jesus, but it does not envisage its fulfilment in the flowering of human reason alone; its fulfilment is not in the historical future, rather in eternity. This transcendental dimension does not minimise the importance of the refinement of reason in man but rather it takes into consideration the ultimate victory of man over the problem of evil, both physical and moral, which it conceived as the religious concept of sin. Therefore, the New Testament subscribes to the belief that the kingdom of God is already begun, in so far as God rules as the spirit in the heart of man, but it is to be consummated only in eternity. Therefore, it clearly transcends the ethical kingdom identified by Kant with the rational ordering of the world and of the human relations therein.

What is stated above is not meant to establish that Christianity is an other worldly religion, having nothing

to do with ethics that govern the human relations in this life. On the contrary, the New Testament clearly acknowledges that the kingdom of God is already inaugurated in the life of Jesus on the earth. This is abundantly clear in the teachings of Jesus. Jesus' moral ideal, as disclosed in his doctrine of the kingdom of God, is meant for the life to be lived here and now. Hence, it harps on the continuity with the prophetic teachings of the Old Testament. His idea of the kingdom, to be sure, took root in the common ground of the Israelitic hope of the restoration of their secular kingdom. Jesus, however, spiritualises their material expectations. His doctrine of the kingdom expands on the broader lines of the prophetic teachings concerning the Messianic age which is yet to come. A peculiarity of Jesus' preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, which immediately arrests attention, is his announcement that it is now and here on this earth. He taught with remarkable insistence that it was an immediate and actual presence and reign of God among men. (Matthew, 4:17; 10:7; 12:28), (Mark, 1:15), (Luke, 17:20-21).

Jesus' announcement of its presence on this earth was different from that of John the Baptist, proclaiming that it was at hand. He had not come like John the Baptist to enforce a stern requirement of repentance as a preparation for the coming of the kingdom. On the other hand, in Jesus'

Gospel, the kingdom of God is already here; and because it is a present reality, God is said to invite man for faith. The real presence of the power of heaven on earth is the joyous reason for Christian life and hope. Whereas John's proclamation was, "Make ye ready the way of the Lord", and it concerned still the preparation for the kingdom of God, Jesus' proclamation was, "The time is fulfilled", and it announced the kingdom being present in the midst of men. The Christian conception of life and its supreme good rest on this fundamental fact which Jesus announced: that the kingdom of God is not something wholly pertaining to future or remote from our present participation in it, but it is a real power and an actual reign of God already begun on the earth, in the life of those who accept God as the ultimate good of their life. The Christian conception of the highest good is, accordingly, both ideal and real; it is an ideal which is transcendent, and at the same time real as immanent.

Besides these general observations of the kingdom of heaven revealed by Jesus, we may note some specific characteristics of his doctrine of the highest good, in the New Testament:

Firstly, the kingdom of God is a personal good. To the Jewish mind, the expectation of the kingdom of God as

the establishment of their secular kingdom had become too predominantly a political hope. Jesus taught that the beginnings of the kingdom of God lie in personal character, and its good is to be realised through the new life and spiritual victory of the individual man. Jesus called his disciples by name, man by man, into his kingdom. He taught the Pharisees that the kingdom of God should not come with outward pomp and observation; that it already was in the midst of them:

"The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is' or 'There it is', because the Kingdom of God is within you".

(Luke, 17:21)

His gospel of the rule of God became an intensely personal message. The kingdom of God among men is a temper of mind, a spiritual disposition, a state of heart. To enter into the kingdom is not to make a pilgrimage, or to go up through the gates into the holy city; but to come into a certain willingness of mind, to be of a certain spirit, in short, to have a new heart.

Secondly, the kingdom of God is a social good. The kingdom of God is not only a personal good as shown above, but also likewise a society of men. Therefore, its good is to be secured in the larger life of humanity. This humaneness

of the New Testament corresponds to the personal identification of Jesus with humanity. The Messiah who has come to establish the kingdom of God as an ever present and continuous reality on earth, himself belongs to humanity. The highest good, then, as it is presented to our thoughts and desires in Jesus' teaching is more than its conceptions by any of the prophets before him, in the latter it is still ethnically determined. The highest good in the New Testament is therefore at once social and human. It is no ideal of life to be attained by men merely individually, apart from the perfection of humanity; it entails the participation of the entire humanity in its own redemption. The Christian conception of the highest good then is to be realised in the consummation of the human history. The New Testament asserts that man is to play his personal part and to share individually in this human weal and perfection through a life bound up dutifully with the lives of others, and in the fulfillment of his common human relations, obligations and destiny. It is the true reign of God in human heart, in other words, the kingdom of God on earth.

Thirdly, the kingdom of God is a spiritual good. While this kingdom belongs to humanity and thus, is, in its idea and purpose, for man, it is also superhuman. It is the kingdom of God for man. The coming of the kingdom is there-

fore, also the revelation of God. The New Testament believes that this good comes from above, and is to be gradually naturalized in the life of man and his institutions. Hence, it is said, it does not come 'of flesh and blood, but of the spirit'. This humanitarianism thus envisages the hope of the glorification of man through the spirit of God. Jesus' gospel of the kingdom of God is not the same as a gospel of some possible kingdom, however great, to spring up from the earth: 'My kingdom is not of this earth' rings out in the ears of any reader of the gospel. It is the enunciation of a spiritual power in man, working for the good which is here and now to be realized. Nonetheless, it is not to be limited by the conditions of present environment; and it has in itself the potency and the promise of a higher spiritual life and perfection. Therefore, the New Testament thinks that men belong to this kingdom of God as immortals.

Thus, the kingdom of God is personal, social and spiritual, in virtue of the facts that it is for nurturing persons, having Christ-like characters; that it is meant for the perfection of humanity; and that it is for the highest good of the human spirit. In this sense, goodness becomes an absolute value different from its abstract philosophical conceptions. But mere absolutism of goodness is not tenable to the New Testament, because we cannot understand it merely

as abstract ideals. It is to be understood and grasped in terms of relative values of goodness embodied in the life of man.

An embodiment of the absolute value of goodness, identified with the kingdom of God, into relative values is instantiated in the following:

"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of God. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of God".

(Matthew, 18:2-4)

In the above instantiation, Jesus reveals how the kingdom of God is incarnated in the concrete living of man, without its ceasing to be what it essentially and eternally is: The kingdom, negatively, is not an abstract entity. It is not also a restored Hebrew commonwealth with its throne of dominion, not a glorified earthly city which shall exercise lordship over the nations. Also, it is not the supreme political good which the Saducees covet, nor the reign of the law which the Pharisees exalt above the claims of humanity. But the kingdom, positively, is the spirit of a child: Its simplicity and the purity of heart. Jesus' invitation to man to become a child is not a regression to an infantile stage, but a progression to a nature stage of life characterised by child-

likeness and guidelessness. We can thus understand the supreme good only in the nature of a child, who has the simplicity of mind, purity of heart and the trustful spirit, open to God, its ultimate good.

All these attributes are the relative values, concrete expressions of the absolute good. They are the manifestations of God's reign in man. This is further substantiated by the truth that only the pure in heart are favoured with a vision of God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew, 5:8). The purity of heart is here considered to make for the vision of God, which to the New Testament is identical with the attainment of the kingdom of God.

In conclusion, the New Testament value of the highest good, conceived as the kingdom of God, is an ideal for personal and social humanity, to be reached through ethical and spiritual progress in one's life. It is the reign of God in the hearts of men, who are to reflect God's own nature in their personal and social endeavours. In this way they prove in their life and actions that the kingdom of God is already inaugurated here and now, but will be consummated hereafter. It is an absolute value in so far as it reflects God's own nature of immutable goodness; nonetheless, it is relative in so far as it reflects Christ's spirit that governs the life of an individual and humanity as a whole in myriad ways.

### 3) Truth

Yet another absolute value in the New Testament is truth. It is absolute because it stands for the fidelity and reliability of God (Romans, 3:1-7). Nonetheless, in so far as man is related to the absolute truth, it is also relative in man's life. Thus truth is the quality that is in Christ (Ephesians, 4:21); again, the preaching of the gospel is the word of truth (Ephesians, 1:13); again, the righteous man who fulfills the law of Christ is said to walk in the truth (II John, 3:4). Despite the difficulty involved in defining truth, in the above contexts, we may say that a Christian, in his conception of truth, will have to take into consideration the transcendental dimension of God's own nature and its immanentism in the life of Christ, therefore, of himself. Hence, truth is man's conformity to divine nature after the manner of Christ's own conformity. The conformity spoken of is not merely static but dynamic to the extent that man is entrusted with the task of realizing in himself the fidelity and reliability of God. Thus, truth in the New Testament has to be understood as a character of a covenant between God and man.

The kind of truth, for which a scientist strives, is open to change. It is discovered with the help of the objective methods, in which observations and experiments

play a dominant role; the discovery of scientific truths has nothing to do with the ethico-religious methods. The noun 'truth', as we encounter in the New Testament, is not the simple statement of something which is true. It implies both the knowledge of facts and the understanding which makes sense in terms, related to our experience. This kind of truth cannot be reached by the objective methods, because it forces itself upon us as ultimate and which, once we have recognised and accepted it, can no longer be shaken by doubts, nor ever change. Such a truth is necessarily ethico-religious. The New Testament truth, accordingly, must be judged in the light of our experiences. Its absoluteness can only be confirmed by our experience. It is the truth by which we live, and it is confirmed if we are committed to it. This element of commitment, combined with its understanding, is the specific character of all ethico-religious truths; the New Testament truth is no exception here.

Scientific truth is determined by the external facts or the objects that it studies; it has its objective determinations. The ethico-religious truth of the New Testament, on the other hand, while not ignoring the objective nature of God, is also determined by the relation that the subject bears to the absolute truth; it has its subjective determinations as well. It governs our conception of the kind of

persons we ought to be. It cannot be brought about by conscious effort of discursive thinking, nor is it capable of being the conclusion a logical argument. Hence, the New Testament emphatically states that 'truth must shine in its own light'.<sup>8</sup> The New Testament may not go against the general philosophical thesis that truth is based on our judgement. For it holds that the organ, by which we grasp truth, is, in the last resort, our 'sense of truth'. This sense, however, can mislead, but it can also be tested. A precondition for all such test is that we must see truth in the right context. For instance, a mathematician may consider his findings to be the nearest approach to absolute truth; but this is also not the context in which truth can be discovered, because mathematics is purely formal and has to be applied to acquire significance. Absolute truth in the contrary must give us direct knowledge of a content i.e., both fact and its meaning.

We may here point out that the right context for ethico-religious truths is constituted of two conditions, namely, personal approach and freedom. These two conditions, closely related to each other, are equally essential. We must firstly be concerned and involved as the individual persons, because it is the subjective method which opens approaches truth. And secondly, truth must appeal to us as

---

8. Roubiczek, Paul. Ethical Values in the Age of Science, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 278.

free persons. For truth must strongly compel our attention and influence our lives, so that our sense of truth is stimulated into free action. Free action because without freedom our search for truth would be meaningless.<sup>9</sup>

It may be granted however, that we cannot hope to know the absolute absolutely, but only its facets. This follows from the very logic of the absolute truth. Nonetheless, each facet must belong to the same kind of truth: To be true, each partial truth must partake in the whole truth. Moreover, truth must be experienced always anew, and the new experience must be a vivid experience. Therefore, knowledge of truth loses its significance once it is no longer understood in terms of living experience. All established forms of truth, if they no longer evoke a new experience, can become a dead ritual or worship. Therefore, no single facet of truth can be regarded as something which we rely upon as possessing forever; it must awaken our feeling, our sense of truth, constantly afresh and be tested by new experiences. If it is a facet of truth, it will re-emerge triumphant; if not, it ceases to be truth, failing to touch our experience.

All that is stated above goes to substantiate the point that truth must be embodied in such a way that it can be lived; and that it has to be lived to become entirely

---

9. Ibid., p. 279.

real. A mere proclamation of truth is insufficient; our belief in the truth which a mystic professes, for instance, will be severely shaken, if we discover that he evidently desires powers and luxury, even though there may be truth in what he proclaims. Truth as an absolute value must affect the quality of life in such a way that we are compelled to commit our lives to it.

This explains why a new truth so frequently needs a personal sacrifice before it becomes powerful, it needs the witness by whom it is made moving, compelling, even terrifying. Buddha, Socrates, Christ, religious martyrs and the early Reformers in the Christian tradition had their own measure of sacrifice, even to the extent of laying down their life as a witness to the truths that they professed. In the absence of the possibility of proof, a new truth becomes convincing when we can see a personal participation in the truth concerned. Christ could have recourse to measures that would have guaranteed the worldly success, but he had to bear witness that his conception of truth mattered to him profoundly; otherwise his sayings would have seemed no more than interesting speculations. In the absence of conclusive proofs, it is life which has to bear witness to the truth. But while the personal testimony to truth is incontestable, there is also a caveat; we have to guard ourselves against

the notion that sacrifice in itself is the criterion for truth. For even as weakness of character, or lack of courage, may prevent a sacrifice demanded in the service of truth, dynamics of power and self-aggrandizement too may goad one to sacrifices, not necessarily in the service of truth. Men have given up their lives for the most atrocious causes, from the crusades to Nazism, yet it is not done in the service of truth.

How does the New Testament conceive of truth? Firstly, the absolute value of truth lies primarily in the fact that it enables man to transcend himself by participation in being beyond himself. The pursuit of truth, for anyone who is a real lover of truth, cannot stop at any point, but must press on beyond every limit in the effort to know reality as a whole. Moreover, the lover of truth seeks knowledge of the meaning and value of his own being as well as of Being itself. Truth enables man to embrace the fullness of Being. Thus it bestows upon him the power to participate in universal Being and Value, which is identified by the New Testament with God's own nature of absolute fidelity and reliability for man: 'God is my rock and my salvation'.

Secondly, if the goal of truth is participation in the realm of reality and value, it is obvious that all the human faculties must be enlisted in the quest for it. A fallacy

of Positivism with its narrow conception of scientific reason is that truth is discovered only by reason working on materials provided by sense experience. This may be an adequate account of the process by which scientific knowledge is attained. But it is completely inadequate as a description of the process of attaining truth in morality and religion. In these fields, besides reason, intuition, feeling and action are also involved in the discovery of truth. The New Testament is explicit here: Religious truth can come only to him who is pure in heart (Matthew, 5:8); it comes to him who seeks God with his whole self; it comes to him who surrenders his will to God; God will henceforth be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Thus rational analysis and synthesis must be supplemented by intuition, feeling and commitment of the will, if truth and value is to be discovered.

Thirdly, the New Testament holds that truth must ultimately be understood from the religious perspective. The knowledge of natural laws by the scientist, the appreciation of qualities and values by the artist, and the synoptic vision of reality by the philosopher are, for the New Testament, all partial expressions of the truth that is in God. It is to this conception of the New Testament that St. Augustine gives expression to in stating that all truths must be seen in the light of the universal truth which is in God.

How can man know the final secret of this divine truth? In the Greek view, man knows truth by reason, since truth is an impersonal and universal structure or order. However, in the New Testament, man cannot know the ultimate truth by mere scientific analysis, or artistic contemplation or by mere philosophical speculation alone; he must rather interpret it with the help of God's revelation of His truth in concrete historical events. For the New Testament God has revealed truth in Christ, not merely in his teachings, but also in his person. This is why Christ is called in the Gospel the 'Word', the self-utterance of God:

"The word became flesh and dwelt among us,  
and we beheld his glory, the glory as of  
the only begotten of the father, full of  
grace and truth".

(John, 1:14)

The New Testament believes that the fullest and the clearest expression of God's nature and of his purpose for man has come through his incarnation in Christ. The word of Christ in the gospel reflects the faith of the early church about him: "I am the way, the truth, and the life". The meaning and value of this truth can never be demonstrated by scientific or artistic or philosophical arguments. It is grasped with the help of revelation, and is accepted by faith. Therefore, the vision of truth in the New Testament cannot be separated from God's revelation in the person of Christ.

Finally, the New Testament conviction, that the ultimate truth about reality has been made known through revelation, does not imply a depreciation of the value of other truths which can be known by the methods of common sense, science, art and philosophy etc. Indeed, it enhances their value immensely, for it enables us to see truths in relation to their divine source and to the creation as a whole. In this way, our knowledge is endowed with a broader and deeper meaning, every fact pointing beyond itself to its ultimate origin and taking its place in the totality of truth that is in God.

From all that is stated about the conception of the New Testament truth, it should be evident that the absolute value of truth should not be divorced from other relative values in the life of man. There must be an interpretation of values, if there is to be a unity in the personality and the completeness in the spiritual life of man. In modern thought, however, there has often been a tendency to assert the 'autonomy' or independence of truth, and to insist upon the thesis, "truth for truth's sake". The New Testament may be said to admit that truth is "autonomous", but only in the sense that it should not be determined by an appeal to human authority; it may be said to further subscribe to the thesis, "truth for truth's sake", but only in the sense of

an affirmation of the intrinsic value of truth. But, it would also simultaneously uphold that the absolute value of truth is not divorced from other relative values of truth, which give flesh and blood to the abstract absolute value. Since truth enables the self to transcend itself by participating in reality and value beyond itself, it exists not merely for its own sake but for the sake of the enlargement of life. This is the wider vision of the New Testament truth.

Let me explicate the process through which the absolute truth comes to acquire flesh and blood through the relative values. Truth as an absolute value can be understood only in terms of "truthfulness" in the life of man. All the virtues of truthfulness materialises the absolute truth. Thus truth may be defined as expressive of the moral virtues of love, gentleness, goodness, kindness, justice and so on. Further, even these relative truths the New Testament seeks to materialise in such a way that they are personified in a living moral being. We are unable to conceive of love without thinking of it in a person who manifests it in action. All moral virtues therefore, have a concrete value only when they are seen in a human being. The human mind cannot conceive of any of the moral virtues without a being in whom these qualities are personified. For the New Testament, Christ is that person the whole humanity can look upon as the perfect

ideal, the complete and perfect personification of all the moral qualities; and in him all the moral and spiritual truths are eminently realized. He is the meeting ground of the absolute and relative values. It is against this backdrop that we have to interpret Christ's claim to be the 'truth'. In him, we see perfect love, holiness, purity, goodness, kindness, mercy and justice – all blended together in perfection. In so far as he is an ideal for man, in him we find the truth about our duties towards our fellowmen and towards God.

In conclusion, the absolute values of love, goodness and truth in the New Testament are eternal values, because they refer to an aspect of divine nature itself. They are unaffected by the flux of events. Therefore they are absolute. But, in so far as we realise them in our life, in a sense, we partake of the eternal life. This recognition is indeed the immortal message of the New Testament. These absolute values are at the core of the New Testament and they constitute the heritage for the soul as ends in themselves. The New Testament ethics would be empty without these absolute values. God is the only source of their substance; they transcend all other relative values. The reinstatement of the absolute values of the New Testament is relevant today in a special way, when the naturalist psychologists and philosophers have precipitated a cultural crisis in modern world.

They advocate a doctrine that values are simple objects of desires or interests which are to be used by man as far as they bring satisfaction to him, without imposing any absolute demand upon him. And yet, the New Testament ethics is not an objective absolutism, for the absolutes here are not objects but principles. Therefore, we cannot ignore the importance of their being relative too, in so far as there is a constant need for their concrete manifestations in the life of man. The absolute values may be transcendental, but they have an aspect of immanentism in being embodied as relative values.

Values do not exist in vacuum. That is to say, they got imbedded in human action and attitudes. Further, justification of action requires absolute values. If we do not accept absolute values justification of human action will be impossible. In short, there is a logical need to accept absolute values. In a sense, Truth, Good and Beauty can be regarded as absolute values. Historically speaking, these three values have played a very significant role in civilization. They represent three distinct aspects of human life.

---

**CHAPTER V**

**CONCLUSION**

**VALUES AND RELIGION: NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE**

## CONCLUSION

### VALUES AND RELIGION: NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

In this concluding chapter, instead of merely summing up the results of the earlier chapters, I shall explore the possibility for a common ground wherein the plurality of religions can meet. However, my study here tends to be general rather than specific. Therefore, I shall not single out religions in the plural. On the contrary, my concern, firstly, will be in the context of religion as such. Secondly, the objective of my exploration is not meant to rob any religion of its specificity and unique contribution, but to view them as making for the fulfillment of a fundamental human need, transcendental though it be. In order to do this, I shall first discuss the general problem of identity and its relation to religion. I shall then pass on to belief and ritual systems, since every religion has invariably such systems. Thirdly, I shall discuss the system of symbols that a religion generally has. The purport of the above discussion is to argue out that neither at the level of doctrines nor of rituals nor of symbols, do religions meet. They can, however, meet at the level of the symbolised meaning. The symbolised meanings are a system of values that can be said to be common to all religions, since they stand for the universal values of man qua man. Hence, the title of this concluding chapter,

Values and Religion. Consistent with the spirit of the thesis, I shall keep close to the perspective of the New Testament here, too. I shall however be only selective in identifying the symbols of the New Testament. Nonetheless, it is only at this stage that the chapter may also be a synthesis of what is stated throughout the thesis.

Religion is the way to realise the supreme value of man's life called liberation, or salvation. But, in so far as religion is a historical phenomenon, it also opens up the way for man to realise a system of values, moral, social and cultural, that enrich his earthly existence and often, an existence even beyond. The great religions of the world have assigned a high place to moral conduct and to the cultivation of moral values. They have also laid utmost emphasis on the cultivation and the development of social values which are necessary for the solidarity of society and for the promotion of its well-being. Hence, it may be said that true religion does not admit any kind of polarity between the spiritual and the secular life, or between religious and secular values. They are distinct but not opposed to each other. Religion, on the one hand, opens the way for man to the Divine and, on the other, activates him to realise the other values that sustain and enrich his earthly existence. Thus religion embraces both the dimensions of man's existence,

the spiritual as well as the secular. And yet, in spite of its involvement in the secular pursuits, true religion does not lose its touch with the system of values which constitute the supreme concern of man. This is the unchanging and the everlasting truth of religion.

Against this background, values play an important role at the core of all religions, the New Testament religion not excluded. They create a harmonious relationship among values, often, in a hierarchy of their own, without any prejudices to one another. The question that I address myself to in this chapter is this: Can the New Testament values make for a harmony of all religions, in spite of their different belief and ritual systems?

### 1) Religion and Identity

Whatever other functions religion may have in the life of the individual and the communities, one important role assigned to it is that it provides a person with an individual and a corporate identity. Identity is central to all the pursuits undertaken by human beings. While at the individual level, it makes for a psychological stability, and further for a discovery of his ontic foundations, conceived either as God or Brahman or the purity of one's own pristine nature etc., at the corporate level it gives a sense of security and belonging, rootedness and direction in his

life that is basic to human existence. By providing man with a system of meanings and by enabling him to celebrate that meaning through worship, liturgy, festivals, beliefs, religious observances etc., religions sustain the life of man both at the personal and the corporate level. Lack of identity and of belonging can lead people to neuroses and schizophrenia at different levels of his being, which is often at the heart of most social evils of our time. Thus identity and its formation are important to human beings both at the individual and collective level. The formation of identity which religion is to contribute generally includes the following elements.

Firstly, religion provides man with the belief in a transcendental or divine principle, either personal or impersonal, either negative or positive. Man believes it to be the ground of his existence and meaning in life. Secondly, closely associated with his belief in a transcendental principle, there is the belief that not only his own existence but also that of the world is closely subordinated to this principle. Thirdly, religion makes man adhere to a set of different ways in which he establishes a relation with the transcendental principle; this at once makes for modes of prayer, worship and rituals. Fourthly, religion equips man with a code of conduct which he follows on the belief that it embodies the divine will. Finally, religion makes man

attach special significance to some places which he believes to be specially holy, as they are supposedly sanctified by the presence of the divine. All these elements contribute to the formation of a psychological, social and religious identity in man.

Every religion, in so far as it is a complete system of salvation, provides man with all that man looks forward in a religion and preserves its own elements of identity. The New Testament religion is not an exception here. In it too we find a set of beliefs, modes of worship and a system of values. In comparison with other religions, it may differ in beliefs and rituals; it may also differ from the set of symbols that it uses. But, when it comes to the set of values, I am inclined to believe, all religions do meet one another, because all of them advocate the same universal and absolute values that bestow significance and meaning on human life, although in different ways. To explicate my thesis I will first discuss the role and functions of religious beliefs and rituals; secondly, the importance of the system of symbols that serve as a unique mode of expression in religion.

## **2) Religious Beliefs and Rituals**

Every religion contains a set of beliefs. These beliefs constitute what is known as the religious doctrine. The doctrine is thus a sum total of attitudes, either verbalized

or non-verbalized. In either case the attitudes constitute a world view. The world view may bear upon the particular conceptions of a transcendental reality, man and the world; of their interrelatedness; of the destiny of man on earth, and even beyond the terrestrial life etc. Therefore, religious beliefs are different from ordinary and scientific beliefs, in the sense that the latter are accepted or rejected on the basis of evidences. In other words, ordinary and scientific beliefs are amenable to verification. These beliefs are expressed in propositions. Hence, truth or falsity is inbuilt in them. Hence, we may say that the ordinary and scientific beliefs can change in course of time with the knowledge of new relations obtained between objects. In science, new beliefs can replace old beliefs. But, in the case of religious beliefs, the situation is different. As a matter of fact, the religious beliefs or the world view of the particular religion are relatively permanent; in a way, they do not change easily. The change of religious belief systems is tantamount to a replacement of one religion by the other. In this sense religious beliefs are persistent.

The above distinction between beliefs suggest that not all beliefs are religious. In popular discourse, belief is contrasted with knowledge; but the contrast is relative and changeable. If a belief is validated, then it becomes

knowledge. That is to say, if a belief fits into the pattern of commonly accepted facts and principles, it is said to be true. Likewise, if it fits into the pattern of scientifically accredited facts and theories, it is said to be scientific knowledge. On the contrary, religious belief influences behaviour, both personal and social. Its impact is not so much epistemological as attitudinal, for it influences one's behaviour. It is, therefore, obvious that religious beliefs cannot be distinguished from non-religious beliefs simply on the basis of truth and falsity, because one of the characteristics of religious beliefs is that they cannot be proved or disproved by scientific procedures.

We have to grant that all religions do not have the same religious beliefs. For example, in respect of their conception of reality, some believe in monism, others in polytheism, and yet others do not believe in any God. This only indicates that, though all religions have a set of beliefs, the belief systems cannot be their meeting point. There are some religions which do not believe in any supreme being or God, they are neither centered in God nor give Him any place in their particular metaphysics. Can we treat a belief system without God as religious? The answer is in the affirmative. It is true, as a matter of fact, that these religions do not entertain the idea of a personal God; nonetheless,

they may have the concept of an impersonal cosmic principle that is both a model for human conduct and also the ideal to be realized in the life of man. Likewise, the creation stories along with the type of relationship that they seek to establish between man and the transcendental reality can be treated as religious beliefs that vary considerably from religion to religion. Thus the presence of the transcendental element makes them in every sense religions; such is also the case with the millenarian ideologies, although scholars of religion are wont to call them pseudo-religions.

Consistent with this spirit, there are scholars who treat humanism and Marxism as either full fledged religions or quasi-religions, in virtue of their entertaining ideas of the flowering of the fuller human nature and of millennium etc. I, however, do not think them to be religions but only ideologies. There is a sense in which it can be said that all religions are ideologies, but not all ideologies are religions. This way both humanism and Marxism are ideologies without being religious. While humanism makes man the measure of everything, Marxism, on the other hand, seeks to interpret everything in terms of economic structure of human society, and human liberation in terms of liberation from economic oppression, and hopes for the dawn of the perfected state. We can notice here that Marxism too in the final analysis

becomes a kind of humanism. But, I am inclined to believe that a sense of 'the transcendence' and 'the beyond' is the sufficient and the necessary condition for an ideology to transform itself into a religion as well. But these concepts are permanently absent in Marxism and humanism. Therefore, they cannot be treated as religions.

Religion also contains a set of rituals, which consist in specific behaviours, actions, prayers etc. These activities become religious only when they are done in the context of the 'sacred'. For example, if certain sweets are eaten in any context, we do not consider the eating of it a religious act at all; but, if the same sweets are eaten in connection with a certain sacred ceremony, it can be considered as a religious act or ritual. The sacral context bestows on it the quality of a ritual; or it becomes the sacred action, or ritual. We can agree with Mircea Eliade that any definition of religion and the ritual should have a reference to the experience of the sacred; and consequently religion and its ritual should be related to the ideas of (ultimate) being, meaning and truth. In a similar vein, Rodolf Otto's theory, that the basis of religious consciousness is the experience of the 'Numinous', a pre-reflective and unconceptualizable experience, which contains simultaneously the feelings of fascination to and of awe of something overpowering and myste-

rious, highlights the element of an objectively experienced transcendence. For Otto the category of the numinous is identical with the 'sacred' or 'holy' minus its rational factors.

Sociologists define ritual as a rhythmic procedure, controlling a series of acts directed to the same end and repeated without variation on the appropriate occasions. The term 'same end' is important for us to consider, as it distinguishes one ritual from another. Sociologists are further not averse to incorporate the idea of the sacred in their definition of ritual. Emile Durkheim argues that the idea of sacredness is a necessary part of ritual, though he traces the origin of sacrality to the society itself. Harvey Cox understands ritual as "A dynamic symbol which could be enacted, sung, danced ... doing something for the people, moving them from one state to another".<sup>1</sup> Thus, the folding of hands, the bowing of head, the closing of eyes – a ritual so often performed in prayer – are in themselves incomplete. If these actions must be considered as rituals, they must first of all evoke meanings that are associated with our relation with the sacred. The meanings are symbolic, and are attached to the actions to make the phenomenon of ritual.

---

1. Cox Harvey, The Seduction of Spirit, 1973, p. 283.

It goes without saying that the belief and ritual systems are closely interlinked. Any system of belief evolves during its course of its own system of rituals. These rituals are important for the sustenance of the system, for the belief systems, abstract in themselves, get framed in concrete actions. The rituals are the enactment or the dramatization of the beliefs. We may identify the following significant features of ritual: Firstly, ritual is the behavioural action that is necessarily associated with religious faith. Without the element of faith, the action concerned is not rooted in the sacred, the source and sustenance of ritual. Secondly, the behaviour is habitual; it is a matter of routinized action. Thirdly, the behavioural action is social: Ritual is invariably an action of, and in, social solidarity. The motivation present originally in its institution may have long disappeared; hence, a ritual may be a behaviour that continues as mere habit. Nonetheless, in its institution, it always had a significance. The significance often is couched in the word that accompanies the ritual action.

Rituals usually seek sanction from the cultural context of the group which practice them and, from a sociological point of view, are grounded in the mores, folkways, customs and habits of the group who practice them. Rituals then find an expression in the ceremonies, occasions, and events of the individuals who practice them as a manifest action of

belief in a particular social group. Often routinized habits are also described as rituals as long as the habit is performed according to the definition of rituals given above. For example, the saying of grace before meals may be a ritual to Christian; it may not have any significance to another religionist, unless perhaps he too has a similar ritual of sanctifying the food that he is to nourish his life.

All that is stated above, along with the example given above only highlights my contention that, like beliefs, rituals too are different in different religions. Beliefs and rituals are represented by different symbols. But these symbols are not only mere signs, they have in them more than what meets our eyes. To this I now turn.

### 3) Religious Symbols and Values

Paul Tillich thinks that the religious symbols are the language of religion. If the values are at the core of all religions, as we have been maintaining throughout this thesis, then religious symbols must be intricately linked with the values in different ways. Religious symbols, we are inclined to believe, not only express religious beliefs and rituals, but in addition also exhibit the value systems of their religions. Hence, religious symbols play a pivotal role in religions in the identification of the values and their interpretation.

**a) Need for Symbols in Religion**

All religions make use of the system of symbols, irrespective of their being in the mainstream or otherwise of the scientific and the technological culture. Thanks to the insights of depth psychologists, we know it today better that man is largely influenced by the Unconscious. Within the structures of the unconscious and the conscious alike, Paul Tillich identifies man's ultimate concern as constituting the essence of religion. The ultimate concern of man assumes many a form, from incoherent to clearly and cogently defined philosophical concepts of reality, that bestows meaning structures on man's life. If so, the language of religion may come to be symbolised, for only symbol can express the riches of the unconscious as well as the conscious. The ultimate concern often is inexpressible, only a symbol tries to express what is inexpressible, to an extent. The symbols are the ways through which religious realities, as they affect man in his depth dimensions, can express themselves, indirectly though; this is not to deny that religion can also express itself reflectively in theological, philosophical and artistic forms. But the specific medium of expression for religion has always been the symbol; religious language is symbolic.

**b) Meaning and Characteristics of Symbol**

The word 'symbol' has been derived from the Greek

word 'symbolon' (from the root ballein + sym), meaning literally 'to toss together'. In Greek, a 'symbolon' was a 'tally', that is, each of two pieces of an object that the two contracting parties tossed and broke between them as a token of their contract. Each party keeps his piece in order to have a proof of the identity of the person presenting the other piece. The one piece had to fit into the other (hence, 'tally'). A symbol is therefore to be presumed to resemble what it represents. But this resemblance will be apparent only to those who are in the knowledge of the situation in which symbol is being used. For example, if we are entirely ignorant of the Hindu tradition and its philosophy of the pranava, we would not be able to read any meaning in the sacred symbol of Om. But once we are familiar with the context of the sacred symbol Om (it could be the context of a prayer, a ritual, a belief or even the scripture), its religious meaning is obvious to us as representing the ultimate reality. Likewise the symbol of a cross as the redeeming love of God in the Christian context.

According to Paul Tillich, the characteristics of symbols are as follows:

The first and the most fundamental character of symbol is that it points beyond itself to something else. Symbol points to something which cannot be grasped directly, but

only indirectly. Therefore, all symbols are representative in character. Thus symbol has a presentative being but a representative meaning. In this sense, it is akin to sign, though there are qualitative differences between the two.

Secondly, the symbolic material is taken from the finite reality, indeed from the items of our day to day experience. In spite of their finite presentative appearance, their functions are representative, in the sense that symbols point beyond themselves to the ultimate reality. In so far as they stand for something other than themselves, they are similar to signs. Symbols are similar to signs in one decisive respect: "Both symbols and signs point beyond themselves to something else".<sup>2</sup> Thus, for example, red light at the traffic is a sign which points beyond itself, i.e. to the necessity of vehicles stopping. Therefore, every symbol points beyond itself to a reality for which it stands. And yet, there is an important difference between symbols and sign that we must not ignore. Tillich himself clarifies the difference: "Signs do not participate in the reality of that to which they point, while symbols do"<sup>3</sup> (emphasis is mine). This leads us to the consideration of the third characteristic of symbols.

---

2. Tillich, P. "The Nature of Religious Language", in God, Man and Religion, ed. by K.E. Yandell, p. 389.

3. Tillich, P. Dynamic of Faith, p. 42.

Thirdly, symbols participate in that to which they point. In other words, the symbol participates in the symbolised. For example, at the level of one's national or political life, a flag participates in the power and glory of the nation of which it is the flag. Hence, a disrespect shown to the flag is deemed to be an attack on the nation itself that is represented thereby. Likewise, at the level of one's religious life, a sacrificial altar or an icon participates in the sanctity and power of the religious reality itself. This is so because the symbol participates in the reality that it symbolizes. It radiates the power and meaning of that for which it stands. Signs, on the other hand, though similar to symbols in their representative function, do not participate in the reality and power of that to which they point.<sup>4</sup>

Fourthly, religious symbols cannot be created at will, in the sense that symbols are not produced intentionally. They are not the matter of expediency, as signs are. Therefore, metaphorically it can be said that like living beings they are born, they grow and, finally, they die. They come to birth when the situation is ripe for them. They become obsolete and gradually fade away, when the situation becomes unfavourable for them. The use of the symbol of king, for

---

4. Tillich, P. God, Man and Religion, op.cit., pp. 389-90.

example, in religion grew in a special period of history characterized by the institution of monarchy; but it dies in most part of the world in our own times, which are characterized by parliamentary democracies. Symbols die, when they no longer evoke the response in the group where they originally found expression. If so, it follows that one symbol cannot be replaced by another symbol at our will. Every symbol has special function; hence, it cannot be replaced by other symbols. Nevertheless, new symbols may emerge to meet new situations in human life. But, the signs can always be replaced. If one finds, for example, that a green light is not so expedient as a blue light, then, we put a blue light at the corner of the street, and nothing is changed as the traffic is concerned.

If the religious symbols are not created at one's will, the question arises: out of what womb are the symbols born? Tillich's reply would be: out of the womb which is usually called today as the "group unconscious" or the "collective unconscious".<sup>5</sup> Symbols grow out of the unconscious, individual or collective; and they cannot function without being accepted by the unconscious dimension of our being. Symbols which have deeply felt emotional functions, such as religious and political symbols, are created by the collec-

---

5. Ibid., p. 392.

tive unconscious of the group in which they appear. They are not created intentionally, and even if somebody were to invent a symbol, then, it would become so only when the unconscious of the group says "yes" to it. This implies that, in the moment at which this inner situation of the human group to a symbol has ceased to exist, the symbol too dies. Thus in religions, when the situation, in which the polytheistic gods appeared, changed, their symbols too died.<sup>6</sup> All this only goes to indicate that symbols are deeply rooted in some primordial, either physical or psychological or spiritual, needs of human nature.

The fifth characteristic of symbol is its power for opening up the dimensions of both the subjective and the objective reality. It,

"unlocks dimensions and elements of our soul which correspond to the dimensions and elements of reality. A great play gives not only a new vision of the human scene, but it also opens up the hidden depths of our own being. Thus, we are able to receive what the play reveals to us in reality. There are within us the dimensions of which we cannot become aware except through symbols as melodies and rhythms in music."<sup>7</sup>

Thus every symbol opens up a level of reality for which non-symbolic speaking is inadequate. Tillich applies his insights

---

6. Tillich, P. "Symbols of Faith" in Philosophy of Religion, ed. Abernethy and others, p. 358.

7. Tillich, P. Dynamic of Faith, pp. 42-43.

first of all to artistic symbols before he extends them to the sphere of religion. The more we try to enter into the meaning of artistic symbols, the more we become aware that it is a function of art to open up levels of reality; in poetry and music as well, levels of reality are opened up which cannot be opened up in any other way. Tillich suggests that, in order to open up the levels of reality, something else must be opened up at the levels of our "soul", or the levels of our interior reality. The opening up of the levels of soul corresponds to the levels in exterior reality, which are opened up by an artistic symbol. Thus every symbol is two-edged: It opens up the objective reality, and it opens up the soul, or the subjective reality. This is in a very special way true of the religious symbols.

Religious symbols too are ciphers that need to be deciphered. Its decipherment consists in the manner in which they lay bare aspects of the religious reality. A total comprehension here is fraught with impossibility; nonetheless, an apprehension of something of the riches of the religious reality is legitimately sought by man. However, this 'revelation' is only to the extent that the human soul itself opens up in its layers of consciousness to the religious reality. Thus in revealing aspects of the nature of religious reality, man himself stands transparent before that reality. All this

is made possible by way of the function of the symbols in the life of the religious man.

Finally, a characteristic of symbols is their integrating as well as their disintegrating power. We need to be aware of this opposing dimensions of the symbols. History of religions gives endless examples for the elevating, quieting and stabilizing power of religious symbols. One can thus speak of the healing power of religious symbols. But, in contrast to their integrating function, symbols can also have disintegrating effects as well. They may cause restlessness, depression, anxiety etc. In other words, symbols can have both creative and destructive effects on social groups; they have tremendous power of creation as well as destruction. They are by no means harmless semantic expressions.

In view of all that is stated above in respect of symbols, we can now proceed to identify some of the basic symbols of the New Testament. Having identified them, we should be in a position to reflect on the values symbolised thereby, and thereupon examine if there should be a scope for the meeting of the religions on the level of the New Testament values.

#### 4) New Testament Synthesis

In trying to identify in the New Testament the reli-

gious symbols and their meanings, we cannot ignore the implications of values therein. For what is symbolized in the set of symbols is nothing other than the system of values universally significant for human life. Therefore the New Testament symbols either directly or indirectly try to explicate the values inherent in the New Testament religion.

Religious symbols of the New Testament identify certain values. This is one way of bringing the values closer to the life of common man. It first of all, proceeds at the level of understanding before they are incorporated in the actual living. Hence, values are made intelligible by way of symbols drawn from man's day-to-day life that have a paradigmatic, therefore universal, significance. Secondly, the mysteries of religion are explicated for the sake of bringing out the simple truths of religion by way of symbolical language. For this purpose Christ uses the parables, metaphors, ethical discourses and even proverbs, that were hallowed by the age-old culture of the milieu. In all these literary genres that are used, his purpose is to communicate the values of the new religion that he propounds. Therefore, religious symbols of the New Testament convey religious values at a level which common people could both understand and integrate in their lives. This symbolic language is not devoid of its theological and philosophical insight and, yet, the latter

are not the purport of Jesus' teaching. It is at this level of the meaning of symbols, which are identical with the values perennial to human life, that the New Testament religion may be said to constitute a common platform with other religions. What then are the prominent symbols of the New Testament?

One of the important symbols in the New Testament, that has become an external sign of Christian religion, is the cross; literally cross is the gibbet on which Christ was crucified. Symbolically however cross has become the instrument of human salvation. The symbol of the cross, since the death of Christ on it, has grown and lived in the hearts of millions of Christians. What was originally a symbol of shame reserved for a criminal has since then transformed itself into a symbol of divine love and forgiveness, manifested through the sufferings and death of Christ on it for the redemption of the whole world. Hence, cross now is the symbol of a sacrificial love. Seeing the cross, the Christian himself is reminded of God's love for man, that commissions his only begotten son to lay down his life for the sins of man. It is this theological perception that is shared by John in his Gospel:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life".

(John, 3:16)

Christ's sacrificial death on the cross does not merely con-  
 note a liberation from sin; it also positively serves as  
 a symbol of hope for an eternal life. Both the liberation  
 from sin and the salvation unto eternal life are symbolized  
 by the cross. This symbol thus becomes so important that  
 it becomes an integral part of the Christian life. In a sense,  
 it constitutes the meeting point of divinity and humanity  
 in the person of Christ. Hence, it stands for love, forgive-  
 ness, compassion, peace and hope for a new life. Now, it  
 needs be emphatically stated that these are the values that  
 are dear to the heart of man in any religion, whatever be  
 their theological interpretation. Indeed, they are the values  
 that enrich the quality of human life, and every religion  
 may be said to be concerned seriously with them. They may  
 be differently symbolized in other religions, but the values  
 themselves symbolized therein are of universal significance  
 to human life, even when a concept of a personal God may  
 be said to be absent in the religion concerned. Even an atheis-  
 tic, but humanistic, ethics of Mahāyāna religion may be said  
 to capture the spirit of these values in its concept of the  
 great compassion (karuṇā).

Moreover, the cross for the Christian is not only  
 a symbol of divine love and redemption, but also what enriches  
 his spiritual life by way of identifying the values of self-

denial and the renunciation from one's own narrow self. It is against this backdrop that we should read the meaning in the words of Jesus addressed to his disciples:

"If anyone would come after me, he must take up his cross and follow me".

(Math. 16:24)

The call to 'take up the cross' is identical to a Christian with the value of self-denial and self-sacrifice. Renunciation of the interests of the narrow self is in the New Testament spoken of as the 'death to the self'. For through self-renunciation is sought God-realisation in the New Testament religion. An aspect of this important value is captured by the notion of surrender to the will of God. It demands therefore humility and total commitment to God, that St. Paul speaks of as the kenosis, or the spiritual self-emptying. The urge for God-realisation by self-renunciation is the value recommended by Christ himself to his followers. Thus cross in its variegated aspects becomes a necessary constituent of the Christian life. It may now be added that the significance of self-denial as a value is spoken of by all other religions, too. In Hinduism, in particular, the relinquishment of the empirical self, understood as ahaṁkāra, is a repeated theme in the spiritual disciplines advocated by different schools of religio-philosophical thought. It would make no difference to them, irrespective of their belief in a God

or otherwise. The realization of the transcendental Self or nirvāṇa or vaikunṭha or mokṣa or kaivalya is said to result, only when the individual is totally freed of the empirical self. Thus, the value of self-denial is incorporated in the heart of the spiritual disciplines of every religion.

Another set of important symbols, that operate in the New Testament, both in the Gospels and in the formation of early Christian theology in the hands of St. Paul, is that of Adam and Christ. By this symbol is sought to be clarified the contrast between the natural and the spiritual man, or more specifically, death on account of sin and the new life in the spirit. St. Paul puts it graphically:

"Just as the result of one trespass (Adam) was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness (Christ) was justification that brings life for all men, for just as through the disobedience of one man (Adam) many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Christ) many will be made righteous".

(Romans, 5:18-19)

The natural man, or man's sinful nature, is symbolized by Adam, the symbolical first man. Likewise the spiritual man, or the glorified human nature, is symbolized by Christ, symbolically the second Adam. The first Adam inherits for man through his disobedience, or sin condemnation. The second Adam or Christ, however, by his act of obedience, or righteousness effects for man justification and eternal life.

In Christ man sees the hope of glory that is to realize within himself. Whereas the set of symbols of Adam and Christ is specific to Christian philosophy and theology, what is symbolized thereby viz. man's passage from death to glory, or from the natural 'sinful' state to a supernatural glorified new life, is a theme that is common to all religions. They often conceive of a limited state of man, that is restricted to the world of beginningless ignorance (maya-avidyā), contraction and restlessness (saṃsāra), that is to give way for an existence of expanded infinite consciousness. They seek a passage from finitude to a new state of life, characterized by the totality of being, fully blossomed consciousness and complete bliss (sat-cit-ānanda). The finite state is the state of death, but the infinite state is that of new life. The new life need not necessarily mean the acquisition of a new achievement, but only a realization of the pristine pure nature of the soul. Nonetheless, the movement is always a passage from non-being, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.

Closely associated with the value of passage from death to new life is the symbolism, in the New Testament, of baptism, that stands for a spiritual purification of man. Through the external ritual of washing man has always felt the need for an inner purification of his mind and heart.

Thus the value of purification of the heart is a common expectation of all religions.

In the New Testament religion, the word baptizo has a long history of its own that goes back to what the Jews had made of it in the Old Testament. In the Mosaic laws of purification (Exodus, 30:17-21, Leviticus, 11:25), it means a washing, or cleansing, that comes by way of repentance of one's sins. Thus, we see that John's baptism is clearly proclaimed to be a baptism of repentance. Its validity was acknowledged by Christ himself submitting at the hands of John to this baptism of repentance as a preparation for his public ministry, although Christian theology has always held that Jesus did not stand in need of it. Later on, Jesus himself institutes his own baptism of the spirit (Luke, 3:16; John, 1:26). Both the baptism of John and Jesus alike are probably best understood as an adaptation of the Jewish ritual of washing, which was primarily a baptism of repentance. This clearly stands out in the following statements.

"He went into all the country around Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins".

(Luke, 3:3)

"I baptize you with water for repentance".

(Math., 3:11)

St. Paul adds a new dimension to the meaning of baptism.

He associates it with not only the remission of sins (Acts, 2:38), but also with man's union with Christ (Galatians, 3:26-27). This union is of the nature of identification with Christ in his death to sin and resurrection to new life (Romans, 6:3-5); and with becoming a member of the body of Christ (I Corinthians, 12:13). St. Paul clearly asserts:

"We were therefore burried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the death through the glory of the father, we too may live a new life".

(Romans, 6:4)

The theme that baptism is not an event but a process is uppermost in the thoughts of St. Paul. According to him, dying with Christ was not a single event of the past; identification with Christ in his sufferings and death is a life-long process (Romans, 6:5). So it may be said that Paul thought of baptism as the continuing symbol of Christian existence, while the spirit denoted the new life in Christ.

The early Christians lived with the conviction that baptism as a symbolical act had effected in them a new life according to the spirit. Therefore, its memory was a constant 'appeal to God for a clear conscience'. This is expressly stated as under:

"Water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God".

(I Peter, 3:21)

What is more, the cleansing, that the early Christians spoke about, was seen as a universal need of all men without distinction between Jesus and the non-Jews alike:

"He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith".

(Acts, 15:9)

Again,

"Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he (Christ) is pure".

(I John, 3:3)

It is through this act of purification and repentance that a believer is said to live the new life in Christ.

Similarly, in other religions too, the concern for a purification of the self, mind and heart (ātma-suddhi, citta-suddhi, pasāda) is something that we meet every now and then. Their symbols may not be the same, but their meaning of purification is universal. For example, in the case of Hindu religion, taking bath in the holy rivers on special occasions is at once to seek purification of the outer and the inner man alike. On other occasions, the purification is sought through the symbols of fasting, penance and prayers. Here too the symbolized meaning is man's vital concern for self-purification.

There are a series of symbols in the New Testament that stand for a vital concern in its religion. Such symbols are those of 'washing of the feet', of 'the good samaritan', of 'the little child' etc. - all symbolizing the value of service rendered in simplicity by man to his fellow being. This value of service, technically known in the New Testament as 'Ministry', is of universal significance to man, and is taught in one way or other by every religion.

The Christian calling is not only a command for living a new life of the spirit for one's own well-being, it is also a demand for serving, or ministering to the needs of his fellow men. Christ is explicit in his statement to the Apostles that he, even being the Master, came to this world not to be served unto but to serve. As if to concretize the truth of his statement, he symbolically washed the feet of his disciples and, thereafter, commanded them to put into practice the principle of service to one another. The fuller implication of his teaching on service however was not always grasped by his disciples. When James and John wanted to know what position they would be given in his kingdom, he forthrightly said:

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be the first must be a slave of all".

(Mark, 10:43-44)

The ministry in the life of Christ himself was service to mankind in different forms that are at once social and religious. The Gospels assert that he went about preaching and teaching, consoling and healing. His life was a mission of service to others with love, compassion and self-sacrifice (Galatians, 5:13). The spirit of service has manifestly become an important characteristic of the New Testament religion. In addition to his examples in his own life, he made the theme of service central to his teaching. Many are the parables that he employed to put across the message of service. Of them the parable of the good Samaritan has a vibrant force in this religion of contemplation overflowing into action. The fact that service is an action, issuing forth from contemplation, calls for a greater degree of humility and simplicity symbolized by the child:

"Whoever humbles himself like this child  
is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven".

(Matth., 18:4)

This, again, demands a total surrender and commitment to God.

All religions of the world, in one form or the other, do preach the value of service in the spirit of humility, simplicity, surrender and commitment; emphasis however may vary. Hinduism may capture the value of service to one's

fellow man as service to God. Buddhism may capture the same value in the practice of the virtues of brahmaviharas, within which the universal love (mettā) and the great compassion (karuṇā) have touched the heart of man across cultures and countries. It is a moot point how the values concerned came to be unfolded, or even forced to occupy a back seat, in the actual historical development of a given religion. What I want to emphasize here is the availability of the value of service in the centre of a spiritual tradition that a religion is. It may be variantly symbolized but its meaning bearing upon the value is one and universal in the religious traditions of mankind.

Finally, there is the great symbol of trinity at the heart of New Testament religion. Indeed, it is the symbol that bestows on Christianity a specific character, distinct from all other religions, including its own source of Jewish faith. I tend to see in this great symbol a significant social model for the human solidarity and community. The value of social solidarity is of a fundamental significance to any religion, in so far as a religion is a way of life not only for an individual in his isolation but also in his mutual relationship with his fellow beings. It gives him not only his individual but also social identity.

To the New Testament God is the trinity of persons,

Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. In spite of their distinctiveness as persons, they co-exist eternally in a relationship of absolute equality and reciprocity. Christian philosophers and theologians may have employed the available philosophical categories for explaining the doctrine of trinity, however inadequate they may be for grasping his experience of God as a perfect community. The mystery of trinity affirms not merely the oneness of the divine nature, but also within it the full and perfect communion of the divine persons. The Christians believe that the trinity ought to be a prototype for the human society. The model society should be one that affirms unmistakably, after the model of trinity, personal individuality but social solidarity. Society is what, while safeguarding personal individuality, makes for human beings living in communion and collaboration with one another as equals and yet, dependent on one another.

This idea is captured by St. Paul in his doctrine of the mystical body of Christ:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one spirit to drink".

(I Corinthians, 12:12-13)

Again,

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it".

(I Corinthians, 12:27)

Having captured this fundamental insight, St. Paul declares that we, as human beings, are members of one another. Mankind constitutes the great human 'body-society', a 'corporation', the church, whose head is the Christ. The church thus has come to symbolize the fellowship of mankind, through the great symbol of trinity itself.

The value of fellowship, whether we understand it purely socially or religiously, is an important human value. All religions incorporate it in the centre of their teachings. They may capture it by symbols, very different from the one that are operative in Christianity. But the symbolized value is the same, namely the ultimate oneness, or the fellowship, of the entire mankind. Christian religion may have the symbols of the trinity, 'the communion of saints', the Church etc. Hinduism may have the symbols of Brahman being sat, cit and ānanda; or puruṣottama qualified by cit and acit; or the ultimate reality as Siva-Śakti; or Viṣṇu as Śrī and Nārāyaṇa etc. Many indeed are the symbols. Buddhism may have the symbol of the trikāyas. The Gītā may capture it in the concept of the great common-weal of lokasaṁgraha. Nonetheless,

they all harp on the essential unity of mankind through these symbols. This is a value that is sorely needed to be highlighted in our modern society, that more often than usual is divided by dissensions and divisions, conflicts and conflagrations on the slight pretext of differences in symbols, that really do not matter.

In conclusion, it is the common ground of the value systems on which the plurality of religions can meaningfully meet. Religions have their own belief, ritual, and symbol systems. They derive their specificity from the above sources in so far as they are different in different religions, but only at the level of the symbolized meanings which constitute the value systems they may be said to touch upon the essential human predicament in a unique way. Therefore, these values of the religions have a perennial significance. The New Testament synthesis presented in this chapter is only a modest attempt at a perspective to explore the possibilities of religions coming together for the benefit of man. Religion is a quest. It is a quest after meaning and significance of life and the world. In course of the search, man visualizes his relationship with the transcendent. Accordingly, many a religion have come into existence. In a sense, it can be said that man seeks to express himself in form of religion. Religion in this sense can be treated as a form of expression,

a form of life (to use Wittgenstein's terminology). Further, the religious quest has given rise to values. In short, there is no religion without values. A value free religion is a myth. Thus, it proves that human existence cannot be understood without reference to values. A purely positivistic understanding of human existence is impossible only in this sense. Seen in this light, it turns out that values constitute the core of religions. If this thesis is accepted it rules out religious conflicts. So, it can be said that one religion is not superior to another and various religions are different ways or forms of life. Christianity is one form of life, Hinduism is another, and Islam is still another, so on and so forth. Viewed from this standpoint religions lead to fellowship and not to confrontation and conflict.

---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abhishiktananda. Hindu-Christian Meeting Point, I.S.P.C.K., Delhi, 1976.
- Aurobindo Shri. Essays on the Gita, Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1959.
- Aykara, Thomas A. (Ed.) Meeting of Religions, Published for Centre for Indian and Inter-Religious Studies, Rome. Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore.
- Bahm, Archie J. Axiology - The Science of Values, Las Lomas Road, N.E. Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA, 1915.
- Bahm, Archie J. Philosophy - An Introduction, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1975.
- Barnette, Henlee H. Christian Ethics, Broadman Press, Tennessee, USA.
- Barnhart, J.E. The Study of Religion and its Meaning, Mouton Press, USA, 1977.
- Barry, F.R. Christian Ethics and Secular Society, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1966.
- Beauchamp, Tom L. Philosophical Ethics, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1982.
- Bhattacharyya, Gopinath (Ed.). Studies in Philosophy, Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi.

- Bhattacharyya, Hari Mohan. The Principles of Philosophy, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1944.
- Bhattacharyya, Krishna Chandra. Studies in Philosophy, Vol. II, edited by Gopinath Bhattacharyya, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1983.
- Bhattacharyya, Krishna Chandra. Studies in Philosophy, Vol. I & II, ed., G. Bhattacharyya, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi.
- Brandt, Richard B. Ethical Theory, Prentice Hall Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1959.
- Brightman, Edgar. Nature and Values, Henry Holt and Company, London, 1945.
- Bultman Rudolf. The History of Synoptic Tradition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1963.
- Callahan, Daniel. God, Jesus and Spirit, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1969.
- Campbell, James I. The Language of Religion, Bruce Pub. Co., New York, 1971.
- Carpenter, Canon. Common Sense About Christian Ethics, Victor Gollanz Ltd., London, 1961.
- Cave, Sydney. Hinduism or Christianity? Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., London. (Lecture given in Graduate School of Theology Oberlin College, 1939).
- Chatterjee, Margaret. Philosophical Enquiries, Motilal Banarsidass Pub., New Delhi.

- Creel, Austin B. Dharma in Hindu Ethics, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1977.
- Coward, Harold. Pluralism-Challenge to World Religions, Orbis Books, New York, 1985.
- Cunningham, G. Watts. Problems of Philosophy, George G. Harrap Co. Ltd., London, 1936.
- Dewey, John. Human Nature and Conduct, Modern Library, New York, 1930.
- Devaraja, N.K. Hinduism and Christianity, Asia Publishing House, Bangalore, 1969.
- Dunlap, Knight. Religion - Its Foundation in Human Life, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1946.
- Edwards, Paul. Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 1-8, Macmillan Publishing Co., New York. 1967
- Einstein, Albert. Out of my Later Years, Philosophical Library, New York, 1950.
- Feaver, J. Clayton and Horasz William (Eds.) Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective, East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1971.
- Findlay, J.N. Axiology Ethics, Macmillan St. Martin's Press, 1970.
- Findlay, J.N. Value and Intention, George Allen and Unwin, New York.
- Flew, Anthony. An Introduction to Western Philosophy, Thomas and Hudson, London, 1978.

- Flew, Anthony (Ed.). New Essays in Philosophical Theology, S.C.M. Press Ltd., London, 1972.
- Fletcher, Joseph. Situations Ethics (New Morality), S.C.M. Press Ltd., London, 1966.
- Foot, Philippa. Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1978.
- Frankena, William K. "The Naturalistic Fallacy", MIND, 48 (1939).
- Geisler, Norman L. Options in Contemporary Christian Ethics. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids Michigan, USA, 1981.
- Graner, Richard T. Moral Philosophy, Macmillan Co., New York.
- Johnson, Roger A. Critical Issues in Modern Religion, Prentice Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1973.
- Jones, Stanley E. The Christ of the Mount, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York.
- Kemeny, John G. A Philosopher Looks at Science, D. Vanstrand Company, New York, 1959.
- Knox, John. The Ethics of Jesus in the Teaching of the Church, Epworth Press, London, 1962.
- Kumar, Kalyan. Language and Reality, Allied Publishers, New Delhi.
- Hare, R.M. Language of Morals, Oxford University Press, 1952.
- Harnack, Adolph. What is Christianity? Trans. by T.B. Saunders, Harper and Bros., New York, 1957.

- Hartmann, Nicholai. Ethics, Vol. II (Moral Values), George Allen, New York.
- Hastings, James (Ed.) Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 1-12, T. and T. Clark, George Street, Edinburgh.
- Henson, H.H. Christian Morality, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1936.
- Hogg, A.G. Karma and Redemption, Christian Literature Society, 1970.
- Houston, G.W. (Ed.) Dharma and Gospel, Sat Guru Publication, Delhi, 1984.
- Hudson, W.D. Modern Moral Philosophy, Edited by D.J. O'Connor, Macmillan & Co., New York.
- Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature, Edited by P.H. Niddich, Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Hutchings, Patrick. Kant on Absolute Value, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1972.
- Lala Chhaganlal. Bhakti in Religions of the World, D.K. Publishers & Distributor Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1989.
- Langer K. Susanne. Philosophy in a New Key (Study in Symbolism), Harvard University Press, London, 1971.
- Lewis, Clarence Irving. Values and Imperatives. Edited by John Lange, Stanford University Press, California, 1969.
- Lillie, William. Studies in New Testament Ethics, Oliver and Boyd, London, 1966.

- Machan, Tiborr. Introduction to Philosophical Inquiries, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1977.
- Mackintosh, Robert. Values. Independent Press Ltd., London.
- Mac Muller, Clarence O. (Ed.) Rituals and Sacraments in Indian Religions, I.S.P.C.K., New Delhi, 1979.
- Martin, H.V. The Kingdom of God, Christian Literature Society, Bangalore, 1952.
- Marshall, L.H. Challenge of New Testament Ethics, Macmillan Co. Ltd., London.
- Misra, R.S. Studies in Philosophy and Religion, Bharatiya Vidya Prakasana, Varanasi, 1971.
- Moore, G.E. Principia Ethica, Cambridge University Press, 1903.
- Moore, G.E. Some Main Problems of Philosophy, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London.
- Mukerjee, Radhakamal. The Dimensions of Values, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1964.
- Mukerjee, R.K. The Social Structure of Values, S. Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1964.
- Munsterberg, Hugo. The Eternal Values, Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, 1909.
- Nayak, G.C. Philosophical Reflections, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, Delhi, 1987.
- Nietzsche. Beyond Good and Evil. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books Pub., New York, 1982.

- Nirman, Bharat (Ed.) International Conference on Science and Religion, B. Nirman Publisher, Calcutta, 1988.
- Otto, Rudolf. The Idea of Holy, Oxford University Press, London, 1923.
- Perry, Ralph Barton. General Theory of Values, Longmans Green and Company, New York, 1926.
- Perry, Ralph Barton. "Value as an Objective Predicate", Journal of Philosophy, 28(1931), Longman Green & Co., New York, 1931.
- Philips, J.B. New Testament Christianity, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., London, 1962.
- Raganathananda, Swami. Eternal Values for a Changing Society, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1958.
- Randall, John Herman. Philosophy: An Introduction, Barnes & Noble Books, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1971.
- Ramsey, Ian T. (Ed.) Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, S.C.M. Press Ltd., London, 1966.
- Ramsey, P. Basic Christian Ethics, Charles Scribners & Sons, New York, 1950.
- Richard, Larry and Norm. Basic Christians Values, Wakefield, Zondervan Pub. House, 1981.
- Roubiczek, Paul. Ethical Values in the Age of Science, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

- Rowe, William L. Religious Symbols and God: A Philosophical Studies of Tillich's Theology, University of Chicago Press, 1968.
- Russell, Bertrand. Why I am Not a Christian, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964.
- Russell, Bertrand. Religion and Science, Oxford University Press, New York, 1972.
- Samartha, S.J. The Hindu Response to the Unbound Christ, The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, 1974.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. No Exit and Three Other Plays, "The Flies" Collier Mac, New York, 1966.
- Schacht, Richard. Nietzsche, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983.
- Scullard, H.H. Early Christian Ethics in the West, from Clement to Ambrose, Williams and Norgate, London, 1907.
- Sen Gupta Kalyan Kumar. Language and Philosophy, Allied Publishers, Calcutta.
- Sengupta, Santosh Chandra. Logic of Religious Language, Prajna M.G. Road, Calcutta, 1978.
- Shankar, K.P. Marx and Frued on Religion, Binny Publishing House.
- Shrivastava, R.P. Language, Meaning and Religion, Ajanta Publication, Delhi, 1990.

- Singh, Gopal. Guru Govind Singh, National Book Trust, Delhi, 1966.
- Singh, Harbans (Ed.). "Approaches to the Study of Religion" (Seminar Paper), Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjab University, Patiala, 1967.
- Singh, Sachindra Kumar. Religious Philosophy of Paul Tillich, Capital Publishing House, Delhi, 1989.
- Smart, Ninian (Ed.). 19th Century Religious Thought in the West, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Smit, Newman. Christian Ethics, Charles Scribners & Sons, New York, 1906.
- Sorley, W.R. Moral Values and the Idea of God, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1930.
- Sperry, Roger. Science and Moral Priority, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983.
- Srivastava, Rama Shanker. Comparative Religion, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- Stevenson, C.L. The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms - Studies in Ethical Analysis, New Haven Conn, Yale University Press, 1963.
- Stevenson, C.L. Facts and Values, New Haven Conn, Yale University Press, 1963.
- Stevenson, C.L. The Nature of Ethical Disagreement, Yale University Press, 1963.

- Thomas, George F. Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy, United Theological College, Bangalore, 1955.
- Tillich, Paul. Dynamic of Faith (God and Symbols), S.C.M. Press, London.
- Tillich, Paul. "The Nature of Religious Language" in God, Man and Religion, ed. by K.E. Yandell, S.C.M. Press, London.
- Tillich, Paul. "Symbols of Faith" in Philosophy of Religion, ed. Abernethy and Others, S.C.M. Press, London.
- Titus, Harold H. Living Issues in Philosophy, Eurasia Publishing House (P) Ltd., Ram Nagar, New Delhi, 1968.
- Tiwari, K.N. Comparative Religion, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi.
- Trethowan, Illyd. Absolute Value - A Study in Christian Theism, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1970.
- Vempeny, Ishanand. Kṛṣṇa and Christ, Ishawani Kendra, Pune, 1988.
- Wadia, A.R. Religion as a Quest for Values, Calcutta University Press, 1950.
- Weinberg, Julius R. and Keith E. Yandell. Problems in Philosophical Inquiry, Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc. New York, 1971.
- Whiteback, Lewis and Holmes Robert L. Philosophic Enquiry, Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1968.
- Wilcox, John T. Truth and Value in Nietzsche, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1974.

Zacharias, O.S.D. An Outline of Hinduism, Published by C.F. Joseph, St. Joseph Apostolic Seminary, 1956.

Zacharias, O.S.D. Studies in Hinduism, Vol. I. Published by C.F. Joseph, St. Joseph Apostolic Seminary, 1956.

LIBRARY  
No. 10318  
BY  
DATE  
RECEIVED BY  
DATE

#### **BIO-DATA**

*Samuel R. Lyndem was born in Shillong, Meghalaya State, on 11th August 1957, in a Khasi family. He did his High School Leaving Certificate from Meghalaya Board of School Education, then continued his study at Union Christian College upto the Bachelor's Degree. He completed his M.A. in Philosophy from the North-Eastern Hill University, in the year 1981. After a gap of five years he pursued his higher study by registering himself for the Ph.D. programme in the same University. He has also specialised in Development Education studies at Birmingham, England, and at present, is working as Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, Union Christian College, Barapani, Shillong, Meghalaya.*