

Intensive study and research into religious phenomena is a contemporary reality. The interest shown by the scientists, philosophers, humanists, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, historians and others in this subject in the past cannot be easily overlooked. Even today we witness a renewed effort to understand religions in keeping with the scientific temper of the modern man. Can religions be measured adequately by using the tools and methods of scientific research? Religion is usually conceived as a search and, consequently, it raises the methodological question whether research is parallel or equal to or identical with search. That they are distinct, each with its own peculiar and appropriate mental powers and functions, seems to be an undeniable fact.

The study of religious traditions of men has certainly a long history. In the Christian West it had long been confined to seminaries and denominational schools. But of late it has come to be regarded as a matter of general interest throughout the academic world. Both large secular state universities and small private colleges are starting centres to cater to the growing interest arising from religious questions.

Not only formal academic centres, but also novelists, poets and other literary men have shown fresh interest in matters relating to religion, as evidenced from modern literature. T.S. Eliot once said (1932): "literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological point of view." And this position necessitated the scrutiny of the relation between religion and literature. The complaint, however, is that modern literature is corrupted by what is called secularism. Yet even religious-minded people will continue to read the best of its kind that our age provides. One may read literature merely for the pleasure of aesthetic enjoyment. Hence men inspired by religious ideals have to endeavour tirelessly to clarify their own position to themselves and to evaluate and see whether what they read is in accordance with their own principles. When in the name of Nietzsche, who had taken pride in his role as the murderer of God and other thinkers of his genre, a battle is being fought in the literary consciousness of modern man, the world is changed into a bare, alien desert of sense data. On the other hand, the writers who see the world as transfigured by the sense of the divine be-

lieve that a literature without the presence of an absolute can only intensify our perception of life as meaningless and absurd. Thus literature is trying to make its way towards Religion.

Philosophical thought about religion had its beginning in antiquity. But the term "Philosophy of Religion" is a relatively new addition to the lexicon of philosophy. Its main concern is to discuss the reasons for and against various fundamental beliefs such as the various arguments for and against the existence of God, immortality of human personality, the nature and significance of religious experience, the nature of religion in general, the relation between religion and science, the influence of religion on human culture, the logical analysis of revelation, religious language and symbolism, and so on. This rational scrutiny of the claims of religion is often undertaken against the background of a number of philosophical issues such as the questions concerning the ultimate source of things, the ultimate purpose of the universe and the place of man in this scheme. All religions have something to say about these issues. Although the philosophy of religion proposes to subject these claims to rational criticism, that enterprise itself is conditioned by the concrete religious context within which these philosophers evolved their thinking. The main concern and interest of a philosophy of religion developed in the context of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and in the religious traditions like Hindu and Buddhist cannot but be different. This reminds us of the fact that even a philosophy of religion, and more so any philosopher, will be selective and restricted in their interests. Moreover an individual philosopher will be working from his personal philosophical position, and that again shatters our hope of finding a unified philosophical vision about religion taking the whole range of religious problems into consideration. Religion remains as something more than what philosophers and philosophies could tell us about it.

The relation between religion and science was not a happy one in the past. In the nineteenth century scientists and theologians came into open conflict. But it is often said that the story of the conflict between science and religion is a thing of the past. Though scientists have become less materialistic and theologians have abandoned most of their naive views, there have emerged some new areas which were not envisaged by previous generations. For example, Christian religion has certain tenets such as immortality of the soul and the efficacy of prayer which seem to be practically outside the reach of modern scientific tools of investiga-

tion. There are also other religious ideas which science can in no way prove or disprove. Christian religion conceives man as the crown of creation, an idea which is practically meaningless for science. When the evolutionary theory of science is being favoured even by religious men, the claim or belief that man is made in the image of God or God became man are ideas which science cannot easily accept. Hence the rosy picture drawn by the religious men depicting the relation between science and religion as cordial remains just a make-believe.

Various branches of sciences such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology have made their own attempts to understand and interpret the religious phenomena. We are witnessing the concerted effort of scholars for a scientific study of religion, making use of various methods such as historical account, empirical analysis, phenomenological description, statistical classification of behavioural patterns of religiously minded people, editing the religious myths and stories of the primitive people as well as the people of the ancient cultures, archeological study of the beliefs of the pre-historic people and so on.

But after everything has been said and done one is left with the feeling that neither literature, nor the speculative philosophy of the present times, nor science in general, nor the allied sciences in particular have reached the core of religion, and the essence of religion still seems to be untouched by the researches instituted by these mental disciplines. It is this feeling which throws us back to the searching-function of the mind which refuses to be structured into anyone of our known sciences. Then, will it really come to pass that we have to experience religious values in a no man's land where the mind has landed in its search for the unknown, through an uncharted route? Anyhow the religiously oriented spirit strongly believes that modern researches into the religious phenomena cannot clearly make out what religious search means as experienced in the depths of the human heart. The present issue of *Journal of Dharma* tries to clarify this issue through a series of articles which either stress the research or the search aspect in our study of religion..

Dr. A.R. Gualtieri in his article "Normative and Descriptive in the Study of Religion" discusses the legitimacy of the academic quest for ultimate Truth. By the terms "normative" and "descriptive" he seeks to cover the issue contained in the general theme of the present issue. The article "Prolegomena to the Philosophic

Discussion of Religion" by Prof. Warren E. Steinkraus is an ardent plea to the philosophers to enter upon the serious study of religious phenomena from the point of view of philosophy. Religious experience falls into a class of its own. The serenity and peace of mind the transcendental meditation claims to have through its special technique is an offshoot of Yogic practices, an aspect of Hindu religious discipline. Dr. Thomas Vithayathil in his article "Yogic Experience under Scientific Research" gives a descriptive account of the psychological experience of calm and tranquillity experienced by the practitioners of T.M., without passing any value-judgment on its claims.

"The Search for Absolute Value in Religion and Philosophy" by Prof. Sebastian A. Marczak is a theoretical discussion on our value-perception in religion and Philosophy. When we take up the issue of value, especially Absolute value, the dividing line between philosophy and religion meet and merge and overlap and a strict distinction between them disappears. Thus we see that philosophy makes out a strong case in support of search aspect in religion,

Coming down from the realm of Absolute value even on the borderline of value, there are certain strictly religious values which are unknown to science. The value given to animals from the religious point of view is one such case. Prof. Yuk Wong in his article "Reverence for Animals: A Relative Value Known in Chinese Religions and Christianity" clearly shows that it is a value believers seek to preserve, though the method of scientific research has nothing to do with it and does not tell anything about it.

General observation, philosophy, use of methods of scientific research and investigation and close examination of religious experience do not exhaust the ways and means for the study of religion. With the aid of history and archaeology Dr. R.W. Brockway in his article "Search for the Roots of Archaic Religion" tries to trace out the prehistoric shape of religious belief. That is yet another way of looking at religion.

In the discussion on interrelation between "Drug and Mystical Experience", Dr. Om Prakash touches upon the psychological dynamics working behind these experiences. Lawrence Pinto's discussion on drug-induced mysticism ends without drawing any specific, final conclusion. He contends that there are striking similarities between the so-called artificial and natural mysticism. But Prof. Cyrinc K. Pullapilly is very specific about the distinctive

characteristics of the two types of mystical experiences under discussion. Making several pertinent observations he singles out religious mystical experience from other forms of experience and contends that the former cannot be created by any laboratory technique.

Enemies and friends of religion alike agree that religion is a very elusive human phenomenon which baffles and consoles men at the same time. The mystery is never completely resolved; nor does it remain totally elusive to man. Thus the search for and research into the essence of religion is like a fascinating, developing and ongoing story.

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