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## FOREWORD

Comparative Religion as a discipline has gained recognition and significance during the second half of the twentieth century. Several American universities have opened separate departments for the subject. It is believed that one cannot understand one's own religion properly without knowledge of other religions. In the Indian setting, comparative religion is a new subject in the modern sense of the term. However, Guru Arjun (1581-1606 CE), the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, had initiated the Sikhs in the study of different religions in the early 17th century by including the verses of saints of different denominations in the *Adi Guru Granth*, the Sikh scripture.

Late Sardar Daljeet Singh, IAS (Retd) (1911-1994) had done a pioneering work in the comparative study of Sikhism with Eastern and Western religions. After his retirement in 1969, he devoted the last 25 years of his life to this study. His first book *Sikhism : A Comparative Study* clearly brought out that Sikhism was neither a sect of Hinduism nor its syncretism with Islam. In his later works, notably *The Sikh Ideology* and *Essentials of Sikhism* he asserted that the ideology, spiritual goals, methodology prescribed as well as the worldview preached by the Gurus were unmistakably distinct from those of any of the Hindu denominations like *Nathism* and *Vaishnavism*, or any other religious system of the world.

In the volume in hand there are four chapters containing his in-depth study of Judaism and Christianity in comparison to Sikhism, viz., *Introduction*, *Graeco-Roman Influence on Christianity*, *Judaic Heritage of Christianity* and *Developments in Christianity*. The author had intended to bring out the contribution of the Sikh thought to the progress of civilization and to compare it with other major religions of the world. For instance, while explaining Plotinus' doctrine of

Trinity of the One, Spirit and Soul, and talking about spirit he states, “Those divinely inspired have the knowledge or vision of it and its presence though they cannot describe it. Yet they may perceive it inwardly. This vision or knowledge is above reason, mind or feeling, though it confers on man all these powers. When divinely inspired, we see not only Nous but also One. *The Gurus see Him as Hukam, Raza, Command or Will or as Love that is all activity. But He is indescribable.* . . . . The Gurus in contact with Him or His Command, are all activity, for, in their case, the experience of love gives both command and direction for creative work. The goal of the soul is not merger or passivity after His vision.” At another place, talking about the *Jew Prophets and Their Role*, he quotes Job saying, “Surely I spoke of things I do not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.” The Sikh Gurus have also stated, “Wonderful, wonderful, unknowable, indescribable is He.” In sum, Job feels that it is not given to man to know this logic and ways, he is to do things in fear of the Lord. The same thing is stated by the Gurus, “Wonderful is His Will, if one walks in His Will then one knows how to lead the life of truth.”

Unfortunately, he had covered only two major religions viz., Judaism and Christianity, when his sudden death in 1994 put an end to the exercise. His main aim was to highlight the role of Sikh religion in the progress of human civilisation, which could not be fulfilled.

With the four chapters we received, including the *Introduction*, the book would appear incomplete. We, therefore, decided to add one of his earlier papers to which he refers in the opening sentence of the *Introduction* also — *The Sikh Worldview*.

The Institute takes pride in presenting this last book of Sardar Daljeet Singh. We are greatly indebted to Sardarni Daljeet Singh and Sardar Paramjit Singh for their generosity in offering the manuscript to us for publishing. We hope that the scholars and students of comparative religion, as well as readers in general will benefit from this publication.

October 15, 1999

Kirpal Singh  
President

## INTRODUCTION

In our earlier paper *The Sikh Worldview*, we indicated an outline of the Sikh whole-life system, and its place among the religions of the world. After the rise of Christianity during the time of the Roman Empire and the latter's subsequent fall, the question of Religion versus Empirical or Secular life arose. The issue came to the surface when after the Enlightenment, Renaissance and the rise of Science, Religion came to be increasingly marginalised. In this historical context two views are held. Some historians attribute the fall of the Graeco-Roman culture to the advent of Christianity. Others do not agree with this view and feel that the rise of Science and Technology has led to revival of the Graeco-Roman ideal of the national and parochial states.

In the twentieth century, apart from the two world wars and their holocausts, five other developments have taken place. First is the phenomenon of Hitler, Stalin, Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Second is the call of the North American Churches that consider Secularism to be a danger and suggest co-operation among different world religions to fight out its menace. Third is the fall of the Russian Empire and a part of the Communist world, an ideological development that the light of reason had placed before man. Fourth is the coming into existence of Secular national states with their own civil religions. Fifth is the rise of religious nationalism in many non-Western parts of the world and increasing tensions, even hostility, between Secular and Religious states. It is in this background of the history of the apparent opposition or even clash between Religion and Secularism that we propose to see the role and the views of Sikhism.

### *Problems*

The current and real problem today is Religion versus

Secularism. The Western world, as a whole, is wedded to Secularism. This view strongly believes that Religion, as such, has hardly any contribution to make to man's secular life, and, by and large, it pertains to a matter of personal salvation and relation between man and God. In fact, it considers the intrusion of Religion into Secular life to be something quite negative in its impact.

This view is virtually accepted by the American Society of Arts and Sciences that has initiated the Fundamentalisms Project in order to study the rise of religious movements in the world, which are many a time national in character. The West regards them as Fundamentalisms that impede the Secular progress and look backwards. Mark Juergensmyer in his latest book, *The New Cold War*, also seeks to present, on a smaller scale, the same problem of Secular nationalism versus Religious nationalism. His assessment is that a virtual war has started between the two ideologies, as had earlier been the case between Democracy and Communism. The question now is as to what is the historical experience of man about the equation between the Religious and Secular lives, and what is the position of Sikhism in this context.

### *Historical Perspective*

From the angle of thought, there are three ways of looking at the problem. The Secularist way, the Christian view of the matter, and, third, the Sikh understanding of the issue.

The Secularist view was first well presented by Gibbon in his classic work, *Fall of the Roman Empire*. Historians like Sir James Frazer and men of thought, like Bertrand Russell, wholly, or partly, endorse this view. Challenging the view of Gibbon and Sir James Frazer, Arnold Toynbee, in his *Burge Memorial Lecture* at Oxford, has presented the Christian point of view. Many Modernists, including numerous scientists, who do not believe in the existence of a Transcendental Reality, hold the Secularist view. For them, four values, namely, the entity of the individual, freedom, human rights and democracy are basic to the progress of man, and all thinking has led to it. Two criticisms of religious life are common. First, that it tends to be otherworldly, and, second, that in the social field, while sometimes emphasising communitarian values, it downgrades the individual personality of man and his capacity for creativity.

Instead of tracing the long and chequered history of this tension between the Religious and Secular views, for the sake of our brief presentation, we shall, on the one hand, refer primarily to the views of Gibbon and Frazer, and, on the other hand, to those of Toynbee. All of them are noted authorities in their own fields. It is true that both these expositions relate essentially and largely to the Western historical context. It may be objected that we are ignoring the Eastern context. Although the criticism is partly correct, yet, for all practical purposes, the discussion will have to be related mainly to the realities as they are today, especially because the invasions of Western thought and systems in the East, in the form of Communism, Dictatorship, or Democracy, have been very large. In China and some other countries of the East, Communism, a Western Secular ideology, stands accepted. The Indian land mass in its Constitution also accepts the Western Secularist-cum-democratic model. Islamic countries are the only major group that are holding to the views of Religious Nationalism. Thus, one reason for our taking up the examination of Western history is the overwhelming dominance of Western culture in the world. The second reason is that by the very examination of the problem of Religion versus Secularism, we accept the presentation of all views opposed to Secularism. Nor can we ignore the reality that Science and Technology, which have their own cultural implications, have been accepted by almost all Eastern countries including leaders like Japan.

### *Gibbon's Views (1737-1794)*

Gibbon believes that the Graeco-Roman civilisation represented a universal and thoughtful culture and was at its peak in the age of the Antonines, but after the death of Emperor Marcus, because of Christian influences, the Roman Empire went into decline. "All the values that I, Gibbon, and my kind care for, began then to be degraded. Religion and barbarism began to triumph. This lamentable state of affairs continued to prevail for hundreds and hundreds of years; and then, a few generations before my time, no longer ago than the close of the seventeenth century, a rational civilisation began to emerge again." Thus, Gibbon's view is that the age of the Antonines in the second century CE was the peak of the Roman Empire and its decline started after that period, which synchronises with the rise of Christianity. Its

influence worked to the detriment of the Graeco-Roman culture, leading to its enervation and fall before the barbarian invasions. He concludes that not only Christianity was the cause of the fall of the Roman Empire, but it was also the reason for the setting in of the subsequent Dark Ages in Europe. This view is also held by Bertrand Russell : “It is strange that the last men of intellectual eminence (He is particularly referring to the approach of St. Augustine, one of the greatest exponents of the Christian Gospel and author of *City of God*) before the Dark Ages were concerned not with saving civilisation or expelling the barbarians or reforming abuses of the Administration, but with preaching the merit of virginity and the damnation of unbaptised infants. Seeing that these were the pre-occupations that the Church handed on to the converted barbarians, it is no wonder that the succeeding age surpassed all other fully historical periods in cruelty and superstition.” Russell asserts that the otherworldly Christian world-view not only arrested the expansion of the ideas and ethos represented by the Roman Empire, which earlier had given its cultural gifts to the world, but also led to a long period of European history which was marked by bigotry, murders, massacres, pogroms, inquisitions, ghettos and the like. All this was subversive to the growth of an ethical culture, much less to a universal culture. For, the basic belief was of individual salvation in Heaven with the back to the Secular world of man.

Sir James Frazer has also expressed the contrasted impacts of the two views : “Greek and Roman Society was built on conception of the subordination of the individual to the community, of the citizen to the state; it set the safety of the Commonwealth as the supreme aim of conduct, above the safety of the individual, whether in this world or in the world to come. Trained from infancy in this unselfish ideal, the citizens devoted their life to public service, and were ready to lay it down for the common good; or if they shrank from the supreme sacrifice, it never occurred to them they acted otherwise than basely in preferring their personal existence to the interests of the country. All this was changed by the spread of Oriental religions, which inculcated the communion of the soul with God and its eternal salvation as the only object worth living for, an object in comparison with which the prosperity and even the existence of the State sank into insignificance. The invariable result of this selfish and immoral

doctrine was to withdraw the devotee more and more from public service, to concentrate his thoughts on his own spiritual promotion, and to breed in him a contempt for the present life, which he regarded merely as probation for a better and eternal one. The saint and the recluse, disdainful of earth and rapt in ecstatic contemplation of heaven, became in the popular opinion the highest ideal of humanity, displacing the old ideal of the patriot and hero who, forgetful of self, lives and is ready to die for the good of his country. The earthly city seemed poor and contemptible to men whose eyes beheld the City of God coming in the clouds of Heaven.

“Thus the centre of gravity, so to say, was shifted from the present to a future life, and however much the other world may have gained, there can be little doubt that this one lost heavily by the change. A general disintegration of the body politic set in. The ties of the State and the family were loosened; the structure of society tended to resolve itself into its individual elements, and thereby to relapse into barbarism; for civilisation is only possible through the active co-operation of the citizens, and their willingness to subordinate their private interests to the common good. Men refused to defend their country and even to continue their kind. In their anxiety to save their own souls and the souls of others, they were content to leave the material world, which they identified with the principles of evil, to perish around them. This obsession lasted for a thousand years. The revival of Roman Law, of the Aristotelian philosophy, of ancient art and literature at the close of the Middle Ages, marked the return of Europe to native ideals of life and conduct, to saner, manlier views of the world. The long halt in the march of civilisation was over. The tide of Oriental invasions had turned at last. It is ebbing still.”

We have recorded above the views of two distinguished historians and an equally distinguished man of thought. Their conclusion based on their historical understanding is that the Roman Empire represented a sound and rational culture that was doubly enriching life by educating people in Europe in higher ethico-social living, and by extending the sphere of this higher culture to larger and larger parts of the world. But the rise of Christianity, coupled with its otherworldly approach and contempt of social values and life on earth, brought about, on the one hand, the fall of the Graeco-Roman culture and the arrest of its expansion, and, on the other hand,

hastened the advent of the Dark Ages, steeped in superstition. This decline further led to the growth of corruption and cruelty in all spheres of life, religious, cultural and secular. Lest it should be understood that the above is a misinterpretation of the Christian view, it is relevant to quote the view of St. Augustine himself. For, Augustine's *City of God* (426) attacked both Christians who expected the world to get better and pagans with a cyclic view of history. Augustine did not believe that the spread of Christianity would ensure political and economic improvement, "The earthly city of self-will will continue to exist amidst the rise and fall of states and empires." For the Christians, the "good news" was that Christ's martyrdom was an act of redemption that had secured their place in Heaven, which was going to be an event not far in the future.

### *Toynbee's View (1889-1975)*

In the historical period from the martyrdom of Christ to the present day, Toynbee accepts three facts. First, that the age of the Antonines and Emperor Marcus was a peak in the Graeco-Roman civilisation, although he asserts that it was a smaller peak in what was otherwise a period of decline of that culture. Second, he agrees that the rise and expansion of Christianity synchronises with the simultaneous decline of the Graeco-Roman culture. Third, as a believer, he laments the revival of the Graeco-Roman parochial States since the beginning of the eighteenth century. In his study of this period, Toynbee's view is based on a number of assumptions, propositions and formulations. We shall discuss his views and their validity.

There is considerable substance in Toynbee's first proposition that the Graeco-Roman civilisation was not at its height in the age of the Antonines, but for the earlier over 700 years it had already been on the decline, and the times of Marcus were just a small peak or a flicker in that long period. For, the emphatic other-worldliness of Christianity only reinforced the growing life-negation of the later period of the Greek culture, which since Pythagoras and Plato had already downgraded the reality and worth of this world: "The psychological preparation for the other-worldliness of Christianity begins in the Hellenistic period and is connected with the eclipse of the City States. Down to Aristotle, Greek philosophers, though they

might complain of this or that, were in the main not cosmically despairing, nor did they feel themselves politically impotent. They might at times belong to a beaten party, but, if so, their defeat was due to the chance or conflict, not to any inevitable powerlessness of the wise. Even those who like Pythagoras and Plato, in certain mood, condemned the world of appearance and sought escape in mysticism, had practical plans for turning the governing classes into saints and sages. When political power passed into the hands of the Macedonians, Greek philosophers, as was natural, turned aside from politics, and devoted themselves more to the problem of individual virtue and salvation. They no longer asked : How can men create a good state ? They asked instead : How can man be virtuous in a wicked world or happy in a world of suffering ? The change, it is true, is only one of degree; such questions had been asked before, and the latest Stoics, for a time, again concerned themselves with politics — the politics of Rome, not of Greece. But the change was none-the-less real. Except to a limited extent during the Roman period of Stoicism, the outlook of those who thought and felt seriously became increasingly subjective and individualistic, until, at last, Christianity evolved a Gospel of individual salvation which inspired a missionary zeal and created the Church.” Undoubtedly, this other-worldliness in the Graeco-Roman culture increased in the time of Plotinus, a mystic, who only believed in contemplation and considered activity a fall. Greek thought had by then become almost completely otherworldly, and the social health and culture of Greek society was far from edifying. Russell writes about Plotinus; “He turned aside from the spectacle of ruin and misery in the actual world, to contemplate an eternal world of goodness and beauty. In this, he was in harmony with most serious men of his age. To all of them, Christians and pagans alike, the world of practical affairs seemed to offer no hope, and only the other world seemed worthy of allegiance. To the Christian, the other world was the Kingdom of Heaven, to be enjoyed after death; to the Platonists, it was the eternal world of ideas, the real world as opposed to that of illusory appearance. Christian theologians combined those points of view, and embodied much of the philosophy of Plotinus. Dean Inge, in his invaluable book on Plotinus, rightly emphasises what Christianity owes to him. “Platonism,” he says, “is part of the wider structure of Christian theology, with which no other philosophy, I

venture to say, can work without friction.” “There is,” he says, “an utter impossibility of excising Platonism from Christianity without tearing Christianity to pieces. He points out that St Augustine speaks of Plato’s system as “the most pure and bright of all philosophy” and of Plotinus as a man in whom “Plato lived again,” and who, if he had lived a little later, would have “changed a few words and phrases and become Christian.” St Thomas Aquinas, according to Dean Inge, “is nearer to Plotinus than to the real Aristotle.” Plotinus, accordingly is historically important as an influence in moulding the Christianity of the Middle Ages and of Catholic theology.” There is little doubt that except for the later period of Stoicism and the time of Marcus, when universal ideas took shape and equality of men, including slaves, was contemplated, the period of Greek civilisation, from Pythagoras down to Plotinus, was certainly of increasing other-worldliness and withdrawal. We shall consider this point about the Greek culture separately as well. Here we shall first state that Toynbee’s proposition and his reply to Gibbon’s arguments has certainly some validity.

The second proposition of Toynbee, which he himself seeks to demolish later, is that Higher Religions are a chrysalis between two civilisations. He suggests that Graeco-Roman culture being on the decline, Christianity acted as a Higher Religion that ultimately gave birth to two civilisations, the Byzantine and the Modern. He suggests that the collapse of Syrian and Egyptian civilisations gave rise to Higher religions of Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Similarly, the spiritual experience of Abraham was the fruit of the Fall of the Sumerian and Akkadian cultures. Later, for a number of reasons, he rejects his own proposition of Higher Religions being a chrysalis between two civilisations, one falling and the other rising. For, he does not find any Higher Religion intervening between the fall and rise of some earlier civilisations like Minian and the Graeco-Roman civilisations or between the Indus Valley culture and the Aryan culture. Second, he does not contemplate that the role of Higher Religion could just be subsidiary, namely, of being just a chrysalis or carrier between two civilisations.

His reluctance to accept this proposition could, perhaps, be due to the reason that as a Christian, it seemed difficult for him to contemplate that Christianity has completed its natural course and purpose of a chrysalis and that after the fall of the present Modern

civilisation, another Higher Religion would arise. On the other hand, while he cannot hide the receding role of Christianity in the Modern civilisation, he is disinclined to concede that Christianity is now past its historical utility. He, therefore, suggests a third proposition, saying that while rise and fall of civilisations is cyclic in character, the rise of Higher religions is progressive. Strangely and incongruously, while he considers that Judaism has been a base for Christianity, he is reluctant to concede any spiritual role for later Higher religions like Islam, or the disappearance of Christianity even though he agrees that it has a diminishing contribution to make in the Modern civilisation. Rather, he regards the fall of civilisation as a suffering, the purpose of which fall is to give rise to a Higher Religion.

In support of this he quotes the maxim, "It is through suffering that learning come," and the verse in the New Testament, "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth; and scourgeth every son who He receiveth." Thus, he now reverses the earlier proposition by saying that it is the fall of a civilisation which is subsidiary to the creation of a new spiritual experience of a Higher Religion. "The kingdoms of Israel and Juda were two of the many states of this ancient Syrian world; and it was a premature and permanent overthrow of these worldly commonwealths, and the extinction of all the political hopes which had been bound up with their existence as independent polities, that brought the religion of Judaism to birth and evoked the highest expression of its spirit in the Elegy of the Suffering Servant which is appended in the Bible in the book of Prophet Isaiah. Judaism, likewise, has a Mosaic root, which in its turn sprang from the withering of the second crop of the ancient Egyptian civilisation. I do not know whether Moses and Abraham are historical characters, but I think it can be taken as certain that they represent historical stages of religious experience, and Moses' forefather and fore-runner, Abraham, received his enlightenment and his promise at the dissolution in the nineteenth or eighteenth century before Christ, of the ancient civilisation of Sumer and Akkad — the earliest case known to us, of a civilisation going to ruin. These men of sorrow were precursors of Christ; and the sufferings through which they won their enlightenment were Stations of the Cross in anticipation of the Crucifixion. That is, no doubt, a very old idea, but it is also an ever new one."

"If religion is a chariot, it looks as if the wheels on which it

mounts towards Heaven may be the periodic downfalls of civilisations on Earth. It looks as if the movement of civilisation may be cyclic and recurrent, while the movement of religion may be on a single continuous upward line. The continuous upward movement of religion may be served and promoted by the cyclic movement of civilisations round the cycle of birth-death-birth.

“If we accept this conclusion, it opens up what may seem a startling view of history. If civilisations are the handmaids of religion and if the Graeco-Roman civilisations served as a good handmaid to Christianity by bringing it to birth before that civilisation finally went to pieces, then the civilisations of the third generation may be vain repetitions of the Gentiles. If, so far from its being the historical function of Higher Religions to minister, as chrysalises, to the cyclic process of the reproduction of civilisations, it is the historical functions of civilisations to serve, by their downfalls, as stepping stones to a progressive process of the revelations of always deeper religious insight and the gift of ever more Grace to act on this insight, then the societies of the species called civilisations will have fulfilled their functions when once they have brought a mature Higher religion to birth; and, on this showing, our own Western post-Christian Secular civilisation might at best be a superfluous repetition of the pre-Christian Graeco-Roman one, and at worst a pernicious backsliding from the path of spiritual progress. In our Western world today, the worship of Leviathan — the self worship of the tribe — is a religion to which all of us pay some measure of allegiance; and this tribal religion is, of course, sheer idolatry. Communism, which is another of latter-day religions, is, I think, a leaf taken from the book of Christianity — a leaf torn out and misread. Democracy is another leaf from the book of Christianity, which has also, I fear, been torn out and, while perhaps not misread, has certainly been half emptied of meaning by being divorced from its Christian context and secularised; and we have obviously, for a number of generations past, been living on spiritual capital, I mean clinging to Christian practice without possessing the Christian belief — and practice unsupported by belief is a wasting asset, as we have suddenly discovered, to our dismay, in this generation.”

In fact, in the case of Christianity, Toynbee seems to assume that it marks the peak of spiritual progress and has a continuing role,

it being a Higher Religious dispensation too recent to be superceded. Actually, he contemplates a universal role for Western civilisation and considers that just as the Roman Empire helped the expansion of Christianity, the Modern civilisation, too, preceded by its economic influence and expansion, would play a unifying role and create one world in which Christianity, as the successor of all Higher Religions and as enriched by the wisdom of spiritual experiences, would play an illuminating role as the carrier of His Grace : “Our modern Western Secular civilisation in its turn may serve its historical purpose by providing Christianity with a completely worldwide repetition of the Roman Empire to spread over. We have not quite arrived at our Roman Empire yet, though the victor in this war may be the founder of it. But, long before the world is unified politically, it is unified economically, and in other material ways; and unification of our present world has long since opened the way for Saint Paul, who once travelled from the Orontes to the Tiber under the aegis of the Pax Romana, to travel on from the Tiber to the Mississippi and from the Mississippi to the Yangtse, while Clement’s and Oregan’s work of infusing Greek philosophy into Christianity at Alexandria might be emulated in some city of the Far East by the infusion of Chinese philosophy into Christianity. This intellectual feat has indeed been partly performed already. One of the greatest of the modern missionaries and modern scholars, Matteo Ricci, who was both a Jesuit Father and a Chinese Literatus, set his hand to the task before the end of the sixteenth century of the Christian era. It is even possible that as, under the Roman Empire, Christianity drew out of and inherited from the other Oriental religions the heart of what was best in them, so the present religions of India and the form of Buddhism that is practised today in the Far East may contribute new elements to be grafted on to Christianity in the days to come. And then one may look forward to what may happen when Caesar’s Empire decays — for Caesar’s Empire always does decay after a run of a few hundred years. What may happen is that Christianity may be left as the spiritual heir of all the other Higher Religions, from the post-Sumerian rudiment of one in the worship of Tammuz and Ishtar down to those that in CE 1940 are still living separate lives side by side with Christianity, and of all the philosophies from Ikhnaton’s to Hegel’s; while the Christian Church, as an institution, may be left as the social heir of all the other churches

and all the civilisations.”

“That side of the picture brings one to another question which is always old and ever — the question of the relation of the Christian Church to the Kingdom of Heaven. We seem to see a series of different kinds of societies succeeding one another in this World. As the primitive species of societies have given place to a second species, known as the civilisations, within the brief period of the last six thousand years, so the second species of local ephemeral societies may perhaps give place, in its turn, to a third species embodied in a single worldwide and enduring representative in the shape of the Christian Church. If we can look forward to that, we shall have to ask ourselves this question : Supposing that this were to happen, would it mean that the Kingdom of Heaven would then have been established on Earth ?”

We have already quoted Toynbee giving a negative reply to this question. While predicting a permanent spiritual role for Christianity, he has to concede its present lean position. “But I would agree with Frazer, and would ask him to agree with me that the tide of Christianity has been ebbing and that our post-Christian Western Secular civilisation that has emerged is a civilisation of the same order as the pre-Christian Graeco-Roman civilisation. This observation opens up a second possible view of the relation between Christianity and civilisation — not the same view as that held in common by Gibbon and Frazer, not the view that Christianity has been the destroyer of civilisations, but an alternative view in which Christianity appears in the role of the humble servant of civilisation.” Because of this decline, he is very concerned and unhappy at the consequent rise of the national Secular States :

“On this political plane, the renaissance revived the Graeco-Roman worship of parochial states as goddesses; and it did this all the more insiduously because it did it unavowedly, out of deference to the West’s Christian path (the Greeks had deified Athens and Sparta consciously and frankly). This unavowed worship of parochial states was by far the most prevalent religion in the Western world in CE 1956. Even the experience of the rise and fall of Hitler’s Europe and the menace of Russian Communism have hardly begun to shake the hold of nation worship over Western hearts; and the Graeco-Roman inspiration of this Modern Western nationalism is ominous, because

we know, from the long since concluded history of the Graeco-Roman civilisation, that this form of idolatry was the main cause of that civilisation's breakdown and disintegration. The erosion of the West's traditional common institutions and common outlook by Nationalism has been progressive. The unity of the clergy in Western Christendom was broken by the Reformation."

Toynbee's third formulation that rise and fall of Higher Religions is progressive suggests clear dichotomy between the spiritual and secular worlds. But it also leads to corollaries that are self-contradictory. Apart from the fact that there is not much of an historical evidence to show that the fall of civilisations is subsidiary or necessary to the rise of a Higher Religion, it, at the same time, assumes a contingent relationship between the two courses of history, since it is the fall of a civilisation that gives rise to a higher religion. Equally self-contradictory is the connected argument that it is "suffering" that leads to "spiritual progress," meaning thereby that the two events, one in the secular or mundane world and the other in the spiritual world, are intimately related. But if there is dichotomy between the two worlds, and they are independent spheres of movement, it is so incongruous to assume that an event of suffering in the mundane world can be essentially effective in the spiritual world.

The fourth formulation of the learned author is a virtual endorsement of St Augustine's thesis, in *City of God*, of complete dichotomy between the spiritual and empirical worlds quoted earlier. Toynbee first raises the question whether the empirical world will improve, and then answers it in the negative, as did St Augustine : "As the primitive species of societies has given place to a second species, known as the civilisations, within the brief period of the last six thousand years, so the second species of local and ephemeral societies may perhaps give place, in its turn, to a third species embodied in a single worldwide and enduring representative in the shape of the Christian Church. If we can look forward to that, we shall have to ask ourselves this question : Supposing that this were to happen, would it mean that the Kingdom of Heaven would then have established on Earth ?

"I think this question is a very pertinent one in our day, because some kind of earthly paradise is the goal of most of the current secular ideologies. To my mind, the answer is emphatically 'No,' for several

reasons, which I shall now do my best to put before you.

“One very obvious and well known reason lies in the nature of the society and in the nature of man. Society is, after all, only the common ground between the field of action of a number of personalities, and human personality, at any rate, as we know it in this World, has an innate capacity for evil as well as for good. If these statements are true, as I believe them to be, then in any society on Earth, unless and until human nature itself undergoes a moral mutation which would make an essential change in the character, the possibility of evil as well as of good, will be born into the world afresh with every child, and will never be wholly ruled out as long as that child remains alive. This is as much as to say that the replacement of a multiplicity of civilisations by a universal church would not have purged human nature of original sins; and this leads to another consideration; so long as original sin remains an element in human nature, Caesar will always have work to do, and there will be Caesar’s things to be rendered to Caesar, as well as God’s to God, in this World. Human society on Earth will not be able wholly to dispense with institutions of which the sanction is not purely the individual’s active will to make them work, but it is partly habit and partly even force. These imperfect institutions will have to be administered by a secular Power, which might be subordinated to religious authority, but would not thereby be eliminated. And even if Caesar were not merely subordinated but wholly eliminated by the Church, something of him would still survive in the constitution of a supplanter; for the institutional element has historically up to date, been dominant in the life of the Church itself in her traditional Catholic form, which, on the long historical view, is the form in which one has to look at her.” He adds, “I have already confessed my own adherence to the traditional Christian view that there is no reason to expect any change in the unredeemed human nature, while human life on Earth goes on. Till this Earth ceases to be physically habitable by man, we may expect that the endowments of an individual human being with original sin and with natural goodness will be about the same, on the average, as they always have been as far as our knowledge goes. The most primitive societies known to us in the life or by report, provide examples of as great natural goodness as and no lesser wickedness than, the highest civilisations or religious societies that have yet come

into existence. There has been no perceptible variation in the average sample of human nature in the past; there is no ground, in the evidence afforded by History to expect any great variation in the future either for better or for worse." Evidently, Toynbee's view on the future of the world, based on his interpretation of Christian theology, is quite dismal and pessimistic, if not similar to that of scientific materialists. For, he believes that even if the secular life were put under the control of the Church, the moral position would be no better. In fact, his and St Augustine's stand about the fate of the secular world is, more or less, the same as that of Buddhism, that it is a place of suffering (*dukh*) and that the only way out is nirvana. He quotes Plato to say that we live in a hazy world and can never see the Truth clearly : "We live," Plato suggests, "in a large but local hollow, and what we take to be the air, is really a sediment of fog. If one day we could make our way to the upper levels of the surface of the Earth, we should there breathe the pure ether and should see the light of the sun and the stars direct; and then we should realise how dim and blurred our vision is down in the hollow, where we see the heavenly bodies, through the murky atmosphere in which we breathe as imperfectly as the fishes see them through the waters in which they swim."

Thus, according to the Christian view, no progress can be envisaged in the secular life of man which is deemed to be a cycle of growth and destruction. For, progress can be only in the spiritual field or in seeking and obtaining personal salvation. The main reason for its justification is the theological assumption that man is born with original sin. This being man's constitutional weakness, it is his basic and unalterable legacy. Thus follows Toynbee's interpretation that secular progress is cyclic and spiritual progress is linear. This inference, though arbitrary and self-contradictory, is a logical deduction of the dichotomous view of life and the separation of the spheres of spiritual and secular developments.

However, the formulation raises a new query, and its answer Toynbee gives in his fifth formulation. The question arises as what is the relevance of spiritual progress if the empirical life remains unaffected by it ? And what is the meaning of the Christian prayers : "Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven," and "For our daily bread." Toynbee's lengthy explanation follows: "In the first place, religious progress means spiritual progress, and

spirit means personality. Therefore, religious progress must take place in the spiritual lives of personalities if it must show itself in their rising to a spiritually higher state and spiritually fine activity. Now, in assuring that this individual progress is what spiritual progress means, are we after all admitting Frazer's thesis that Higher Religions are essentially and incurably anti-social ? Does a shift of human interest and energy from trying to create the values aimed at in the civilisations to trying to create the values aimed at in the Higher Religions mean that the values for which the civilisations stand are bound to differ ? Are social and spiritual values antithetical and inimical to each other ? Is it true that the fabric of civilisation is undermined if the salvation of the individual soul is taken as the supreme aim of life ?”

Again he says, “And if God's Love has gone into action in This World in the Redemption of mankind by Christ, then man's effort to make himself liker to God must include efforts to follow Christ's example in sacrificing himself for the redemption of his fellow men. Seeking and following God in this way that is God's way is the only true way for a human soul on Earth to seek salvation. The antithesis between trying to save one's own soul by seeking and following God and trying to do one's duty towards one's neighbour, is therefore, wholly false. The two activities are indissoluble. The human soul that is truly seeking to save itself, is as fully social a being as the ant-like Spartan or the bee-like Communist. Only the Christian soul on earth is a member of a very different society from Sparta or Leviathan. He is a citizen of the Kingdom of God, and, therefore, his paramount and all-embracing aim is to attain the highest degree of communion and likeness to God Himself; his relations with his fellow men are consequences of and corollaries to his relations with God; and his way of loving his neighbour as himself will be to try to help his neighbour to win what he is seeking for himself — that is, to come into closer communion with God and to become more God-like. If this is the soul's recognised aim for itself and for its fellow souls in the Christian Church Militant on Earth, then it is obvious that under a Christian dispensation God's Will will be done on earth as it is in Heaven to an immeasurable greater degree than in a secular mundane society. It is also evident that in the Church Militant on Earth the good social aims of the mundane society will incidentally be achieved very much more successfully than they ever had been or

can be achieved in a mundane society which aims at these objects direct, and at nothing higher. In other words, the spiritual progress of individual souls in this life will in fact bring with it much more social progress than could be attained in any other way. It is a paradoxical but profoundly true and important principle of life that the most likely way to reach a goal is to be aiming not at that goal itself, but at some more ambitious goal beyond it."

He goes still further to clarify his position : "The matter in which there might be spiritual progress in time on a time-span extending over many successive generations of life on Earth, is not the unregenerate nature of man, but the opportunity open to souls, by way of the learning that comes through suffering for getting into closer communion with God, and becoming less unlike Him, during their passage through This World. What Christ, with Prophets before Him and the Saints after Him, has bequeathed to the Church, and what the Church, by virtue of having been fashioned into an incomparably effective institution, succeeds in accumulating, preserving and communicating to successive generations of Christians, is a growing fund of illumination and of grace — meaning by 'illumination' the discovery or revelation or revealed discovery of the true nature of God and the true end of man here and hereafter, and by 'grace,' the will or inspiration or inspired will to aim at getting into closer communion with God and becoming less unlike Him. In this matter of increasing spiritual opportunity for souls in their passages through life on Earth, there is assuredly an inexhaustible possibility of progress in This World. Is the spiritual opportunity given by Christianity, or by one or the other of Higher Religions that have been forerunners of Christianity and have partially anticipated Christianity's gifts of illumination and grace to men on Earth, an indispensable condition for salvation — meaning by 'salvation' the spiritual effect on soul of feeling after God and finding Him in its passage through life on Earth ? If this were so, then the innumerable generations of men who never had the chance of receiving the illumination and grace conveyed by Christianity and the other Higher Religions would have been born and have died without a chance of the salvation which is the true end of man and the true purpose of life on Earth. This might be conceivable, though still repugnant, if we believe that the true purpose of life was not the preparation of souls for another life, but the

establishment of the best possible human society in This World, which in the Christian belief is not the true purpose, though it is an almost certain byproduct of a pursuit of the true purpose. If progress is taken as being the social progress of Leviathan and not the spiritual progress of individual souls, then it would perhaps be conceivable that for the gain and glory of the body social, innumerable earlier generations should have been doomed to live a lower social life in order that a higher social life might eventually be lived by successors who had entered into their labours. This would be conceivable on the hypothesis that individual souls existed for the sake of society, and not for their own sakes or for God's. But this belief is not only repugnant but is also inconceivable when we are dealing with the history of religion, where the progress of individual souls through This World towards God and not the progress of society in This World is the end on which the supreme value is set. We cannot believe that the historically incontestible fact that illumination and grace have been imparted to men on Earth in successive instalments, beginning quite recently in history of the human race on Earth, and even then coming gradually in the course of generations, can have entailed the consequences that the vast majority of souls born into the world up to date who have had no share in this spiritual opportunity have, as a result, been spiritually lost. We must believe that the possibilities provided by God of learning through suffering in this world have always afforded a sufficient means of salvation to every soul that has made the best of spiritual opportunity offered to it here, however small that opportunity may have been. But if men on Earth have not had to wait for the advent of Higher religions, culminating in Christianity, in order to qualify, in their life on Earth, or eventually attaining, after death the state of eternal felicity in the Other World, then what difference has the advent on Earth of the Higher religion, and of Christianity itself, really made? This difference, I should say, is this, that, under the Christian dispensation, a soul which does make the best of its spiritual opportunities, will, in qualifying for salvation be advancing farther towards communion with God and towards likeness to God under the conditions of life on Earth, before death, than has been possible for souls that have not been illuminated during the pilgrimage on Earth by the light of the Higher Religions. A pagan soul, no less than a Christian soul, has ultimate salvation within his reach; but a soul which has been offered and has opened

itself to the illumination and the grace that Christianity conveys, will, while still in This World, be more brightly irradiated with the light of the Other World than a pagan soul that has won salvation by making the best in this world of the narrower opportunities here open to it. The Christian soul can attain while still on Earth a greater measure of man's greater good than can be attained by any pagan soul in this earthly stage of its existence."

Toynbee's final formulation stresses that Christian belief, even though it is dichotomous, and envisages and involves virtually no change in the empirical life, yet makes for a tremendous progress in the opportunities available for spiritual growth. We wonder if Toynbee's long and laboured expressions could, in any manner, be considered impressive in its logic. In any case, he has no answer to Frazer's argument of fall in social values after the rise of Christianity. For, all values are a corollary of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the consequent brotherhood of man, and the love of your neighbour as yourself. It was these values and the related aspects of life which Emperor Marcus had emphasised. But as Russell has stated, it was exactly this doctrine and its values that were flagrantly flouted in the period of the rise of Christianity. It was the corruption and the fall in morals that ultimately led first to the emergence of national states, and the subordination of the Church to it, and later to the marginalisation of religion which Toynbee rightly considers a calamity or a decline. Historically, there is no evidence to suggest that there has been any marked spiritual progress since the rise of Christianity in the West. On the other hand, both Gibbon and Frazer have given ample evidence to show the increasing fall of social values in the Christian societies. And it is also on record that the rule of Muslim kings in Europe was more tolerant and humane than that of the Christian rulers. Strangely, Toynbee's analysis hardly takes into account the rise and impact of Islam as a Higher Religion. The very fact that since the 18th century, religion, the only source of human values, has increasingly been eliminated from the secular life of the Western world, shows its diminishing impact in this field. The twentieth century, with its phenomenon of two world wars and of its secular rulers killing millions of their own citizens, has alarmed all thinking persons.

Toynbee himself writes : "The release of atomic energy by

Western technology in CE 1945 has had three effects on Western technician's position. After having been undeservedly idolised, for a quarter of a millennium as the good genius of Mankind, he has now suddenly found himself undeservedly execrated as an evil genius who has released from his bottle a jinn that may perhaps destroy human life on Earth. This arbitrary change in the technicians's outward fortunes is a severe ordeal, but his loss of popularity has not hit him so hard, as his loss of confidence in himself. Till 1945, he believed, without a doubt, that the results of his work were wholly beneficial. Since 1945, he has begun to wonder whether his professional success may not have been a social and moral disaster. He has realised that the power he has been capturing from Nature, and bestowing on Mankind, is, in itself, a neutral force, which can be used at will for evil as well for good. He now sees his latest invention being used to give an impetus to morally evil actions by putting into them an unprecedentedly powerful charge of material energy. He finds himself wondering whether he may now have placed in human hands the power to destroy the Human Race. At the same moment, the technician has lost his intellectual freedom he enjoyed for 250 years ending in the year 1945. This freedom was lost when Western technology entered the field of atomic physics; for this new departure enslaved the technician in several different ways at once. . . . Indeed, among the public in a Westernising World in the later decades of the twentieth century, there might be a feeling of revulsion against Science and Technology like the revulsion against Religion in the later decades of the seventeenth century."

On the other hand, the North American Churches have openly proclaimed that Secularism is a danger, and it is time that Christianity co-operated with other religions to combat this menace. This being the historical reality, it is too much to say that there has been progressive rise of spiritual forces since the coming in of Christianity. It is undeniable, and Toynbee also concedes it, that God is Love, and love of your neighbour is its integral counterpart. All the struggle and sacrifice for the redemption and saving of your fellow beings and the operation of His Benevolent Will on Earth as in Heaven are all spiritual activities that can have their expression only in our mundane or empirical world. Thus, spiritual progress cannot be beyond the measure of these indices.

We leave here further discussion of Toynbee's views and take up three other related issues. The first two are the Judaic and Greek heritages of Christianity. Both these cultures have deeply influenced its form and course. The Judaic heritage of Christianity, because of the Bible, and Christ being from Jewish stock, is undoubted. But following the crucifixion of Christ, Christianity, especially in the earlier decades of its life, developed a distinct hostility towards the Jews who treated this splinter group with disdain. Understandably, therefore, it borrowed freely from the Graeco-Roman culture whose Emperors it later converted. In its theology, Christianity made a liberal adoption of Neoplatonism, Plotinus being in the third century CE an important figure representing the legacy of Plato and the Greek culture. His influence, in those centuries, was profound, since those were also the formative years of the theoretical structure of the Christian system and its Church. For, even the compilation of the Bible had taken place only in the first quarter of the fourth century CE. Except for the two matters of heritage, the third issue of consideration concerns the views of some modern Christian theologians who sometimes do not seem to agree with the dichotomous interpretation of Toynbee as expressed in his Burge Lecture. This is especially so, because of the question-mark that has been raised regarding the ethical impact of Science and Technology as indicated above.

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## GRAECO-ROMAN INFLUENCE ON CHRISTIANITY

### *Introductory*

Christianity appeared on the European soil in the early decades of the first century CE. It is only in the beginning of the fourth century CE that the Bible was compiled finally. The oldest known fragment of the New Testament, a scrap of papyrus, Codex of John's Gospel, copied about 130 CE is now in Manchester. Paul's Letters and Synoptic Gospels are, perhaps, a few decades older.

Thus, we find that the first three centuries of our present era are a period of socio-religious and political interaction between the Christian society and the Roman Empire and its people and culture. Apart from the general background of the Graeco-Roman culture, these three centuries were the period when Greek thought, in the form of Platonism and Neoplatonism, was the chief ideological and cultural influence. The Roman Emperors had their own religious system under which the Emperor was the representative of God on earth. Another notable feature of this cultural field was Later Stoicism of which Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE) was the chief exponent. These three centuries being the formative years of Christian thought and theology, it is quite necessary to give the background of Greek philosophers and culture and their discernable influence on the Christian religion and its development. This was particularly so, because, as seen already, there had been unfortunate animosity between the Sadducees, the chief carriers of the Judaic religion, and the Christians. And this hostility plagued the history of Europe for quite some centuries.

Greek thought has had a long and varied history. While philosophies of Plato, later followed by Plotinus and Aristotle, form its two main branches, there is hardly a variant system which has not

had its exponent and adherents among the Greeks, especially during the later periods of its history. Since many aspects of Christian thought show clear reflection of the Greek systems, especially of Plato and Aristotle, it would be helpful to have a broad glimpse of Greek thought and world-views.

When philosophers like Plato and Aristotle appeared, the heydays of Greek life were, to an extent, past. The Empire of Alexander was a later phenomenon which was not considered to be a product of the thought of Plato, or Aristotle whose student he was. The socio-political thought of earlier Greeks and the views of Plato, as reflected in his *Utopia*, are primarily related to the world of island or city states. It was the model of Sparta, and not of an Empire or a universal state, that influenced the thinking of these Greek philosophers. On the religious side, we shall, therefore, begin with Orphism and Pythagoras, whose other-worldly thinking influenced the views of Plato and other Greek thinkers to a marked extent.

### *Orphism*

Irrespective of whether or not Orphism is Egyptian in origin, there is no doubt that its influence on Greek religious and mystic thought has been quite substantial. The system involves the worship of Dionysus and assumes the existence of God and immortal souls which transmigrate. The soul is dealt with according to its deeds here in this world. Life is considered "pain and weariness." "We are bound to a wheel which turns through endless cycles of birth and death." The spiritual world, or Heaven, was the true realm with which communion was possible. Since the world was regarded as a burden, the system suggested renunciation, withdrawal, and asceticism. Vision or experience of the spiritual world was possible through ecstasy invoked by drink and dance. Actually, it would seem to be a legacy of the cult of Dionysus which employed passionate mystic methods for stimulating ecstasies or communion with the spiritual world. It was this spiritual experience or revelation which was the source of real knowledge. "The way in which, out of his (Dionysus or Bacchus) worship, there arose a profound mysticism which greatly influenced many of the philosophers, and even had a part in shaping Christian theology, is very remarkable, and must be understood by anyone who wishes to study the development of Greek thought."<sup>1</sup> "Among Greek

philosophers, as among those of later times, there were those who were primarily scientific and those who were primarily religious; the latter owed much, directly or indirectly, to the religion of Bacchus. This applies especially to Plato, and through him to those later developments which were ultimately embodied in Christian theology.”<sup>2</sup> The Orphic system promised to lead one to eternal bliss of the soul after it was released from the torments of the world. The system is, thus, basically other-worldly and accepts withdrawal and ascetic methods, the world being a burden.

### *Pythagoras (580 - ? BC)*

Pythagoras was a reformer of Orphism. For him, the visible world is false and illusionary, a hazy medium in which heavenly light is obscured by the mist and darkness of the world. As he believes in the fundamentals of Orphism, he too is other-worldly and ascetic in his methods. Strangely, however, he is also scientific and mathematical. He carried out and promoted intellectual activities, but accepted the reality of only the mystic and the spiritual world. Significantly, the two streams in the thought of Pythagoras, namely, mystical and intellectual, have continued almost throughout the Greek thought, especially during its early period.

*Bertrand Russell's tribute to Pythagoras :*

“The combination of mathematics and theology, which began with Pythagoras, characterised religious philosophy in Greece, in the Middle Ages, and in modern times down to Kant.”

“I do not know of any other man who was as influential as he was in the sphere of thought. I say this because what appears as Platonism is, when analysed, found to be in essence Pythagoreanism. The whole conception of an eternal world, revealed to the intellect but not to the senses, is derived from him. But for him, Christians would not have thought of Christ as the Word; but for him, theologians would not have sought logical proofs of God and immortality.”<sup>3</sup>

### *Socrates (469 ? - 399 BC)*

Socrates remains the most glorious character in Greek history. He believed that the supernatural world was more real than the world of senses, and that the soul was immortal. Therefore, his entire approach was other-worldly and strongly ascetic. For him, God was

good and he devoted his life to teaching knowledge of the good. It was his firm belief that true knowledge would enable persons to act virtuously and that it was only ignorance which made man sin. The intellectual strain in Greek thought has always led to the emphasis that knowledge would improve human conduct. Socrates had loyalty both to his conscience and to the Laws of the State. In the face of death, he displayed superhuman courage and spurned the offer to flee from prison. Up to the end, he was calm and cool, without any fear of death, which he thought might be a greater good than life itself. As he considered the spiritual world to be real, he was certain that after death he would be in the company of gods, and even of great persons like Homer. The idea of other-worldliness, and of consequent deliverance from this bad world, was so strong in the Greek mind that he asked his companion, Crito, to give a cock to Asclepius which was an offering or sacrifice made at the time of one's death in token of one's deliverance from this mundane world. Socrates was a strange combination of a saint and a loyal citizen of the State. His teachings had a deep ethical, rational but other-worldly bias. His fundamental emphasis was on justice and free thinking in this world, which he felt would lead to virtuous life. He was a martyr for the virtue of free thought and seeking knowledge of justice and truth. Few persons can live according to the logic of their convictions as did Socrates. And this is what gave a strong Socratic bias to the entire Greek thought, especially concerning its mysticism, immortality of the soul, other-worldliness and asceticism. Politically, he was opposed to democracy which he felt could not lead to justice and free ethical and intellectual living. No honest man, he felt, could live long in politics. Despite his other-worldliness, he held the belief, which was shared by most Greeks including Plato, that evil exists because of ignorance. For, no one commits a wrong knowingly, and, therefore, imparting knowledge of the good was the best way to improve human conduct and bring about justice in the world. This belief would seem to explain the continuous presence of a strong strain in Greek life for promoting knowledge, discipline and education, even though the ascetic other-worldliness of its mystic thought existed side by side with it.

### *Plato (427 ? - 347 ? BC)*

Despite the intellectual greatness of Plato, there is a distinct

imprint of Socrates on his thought. For Plato, there is a God and the eternal world of ideas which is the archetype of the created world. God did not create the world, but only arranged it and He alone can undo it. The soul is immortal, but the present world is illusory and cannot be compared to the supernatural world of ideas which alone is real and eternal. For Plato, there is a dualism between the soul and the body; eternal ideas and sensible objects; reason and sense perceptions; reality and appearance; and real knowledge and opinion. For him, it is the body that drags the soul to the world. The soul is, thus, unhappy and confused in the sensible world. It can be happy only while in contemplation of eternal things; and in this state, it gains real wisdom. Wisdom for Plato is not rational knowledge, but it is a "vision," of "truth," or "good." His ascetic other-worldliness is also evident from the fact that for him true knowledge can only be about the "ideas," and that all empirical knowledge obtained from sense perceptions is just opinions, and, therefore, not fully reliable. As such, the body is doubly evil since it hinders true knowledge of the eternal or spiritual world of Absolute Good and Absolute Beauty, gained only through spiritual or mystic experience. The body needs purification so as to have knowledge of eternal things, which could be had only through contemplation and not through sense perceptions. His approach is primarily mystic, with an ethical bias. Full knowledge of things eternal can be had only after death. For, it is then alone that the soul is completely free from the clouding and distracting influence of the body and its senses. The soul can never be at home in this world — since it belongs to the other or eternal world of spirituality. The influence of Orphism and Socrates is quite evident. For correct thinking, bodily pleasures have to be avoided. For having true knowledge, therefore, contemplation or mystic vision was essential. Therefore, the philosopher had to be exempted from worldly labour, since he was to deal with matters relating to the soul only. Plato felt that the philosopher had to play the role of a guide or superman, who had not only to know the truth and have a clear vision of it, but was also obliged to impart that knowledge to others. It was a strange contradiction both in Socrates and Plato that while they were other-worldly, they clearly emphasised the role and duty of the philosophers to teach knowledge to the people. So much so that Plato believed that if a virtuous man did not become a philosopher, he would become

a bee in his next birth. He believed in transmigration and thought that those who live a bad life in this world would become women at the time of their next birth. It was a strange combination of other-worldliness and worldliness. The fundamental reason was the clear dichotomy between the eternal and the empirical worlds assumed by Greek thought. Mystical tendency was the strongest in the philosophy of Plato. And this, with the views of Plotinus, formed later the very base of most of the Christian thought and theology. Like Socrates, Plato exhibited a strong ethical bias and faith in the importance of education. For, if men were properly taught, trained and disciplined, vice and conflict could be avoided in the world. May be, because of the narrow world of the City State in which Socrates and Plato lived, they had the fallacy that it was out of ignorance that people committed crime and that the wise were always virtuous. They ignored the human experience that it is the ego of man which leads to difference in personal, class and national interests and conflicts, and that egoistic pleasures and prejudices could be more devastating than worldly pleasures.

Plato believes that time, heaven and the world were created simultaneously. But the soul is from the eternal world. Souls are of two kinds; the immortal soul, the abode of which is the head; and the mortal soul, the abode of which is the breast. The latter is concerned with bodily emotions.

Despite the dichotomy of his thought and its other-worldliness, Plato shows a strong interest in the world by writing his philosophies and *Utopia*. It is true that his *Utopia* is modelled, to an extent, on the practices that had existed in Sparta, where children from 7 to 16 were given common training and were disciplined and categorised for their future work as soldiers or otherwise. Plato too divides men into four classes, namely, guardians, soldiers, common people and the slaves. Since he believes himself to belong to the upper class of guardians and philosophers, he never thought in terms of human equality. Government had to decide for which category a person was fit. Once the classification was done, each class had to be multiplied separately because of genetic differences, though some mobility between the classes was permitted on the exhibited talent of a child. Wives were to be common and children were to be segregated soon after birth, so that they did not know who their parents were. Plato spurned the use

of gold and silver coins and also of private property. For Plato, justice meant conformity with the law and everyone doing his assigned work in the class fixed. The socio-economic and political aims of the system were stability, avoidance of famine, and success in war. The practicality of Plato's system has always remained a moot point. It is well-known that in practice, as the guide of the Prince of Syracuse, he failed and had to escape from the State to save himself.

Plato's personality was without doubt versatile. But there was a strong mystical and ethico-religious streak in his world-view. He believes that good is that which is in harmony with the Will of God. But it is given to only a few philosophers to see that light. Apart from the basic other-worldliness indicated above, the flaw in his thought is the mingling of intellectual and conceptual vision with mystic vision. Notwithstanding all this, it is true that no other person has so profoundly influenced Greek, Christian and Western thought as has Plato. The unfortunate part is that the dichotomy and other-worldliness in his approach have also affected the Christian thought.

### *Aristotle (384 - 322 BC)*

For Aristotle, God is the first cause of everything. As against the view of Plato and Christians, he believes time and motion of things have always been there. Substances are of three kinds; first, sensible and perishable, like things of matter; second, sensible and non-perishable, like stars; and, third, non-sensible and non-perishable, like soul. Each object is constituted by form and matter. Actually, it is the form of a thing which gives it existence and identity. Form is not just the shape of a thing. For Aristotle, it has almost a metaphysical existence. All changes are due to giving greater and greater form and variation to matter. Entities are evolving towards a greater and higher degree of form. While Plato's ideas are mathematical, Aristotle is biological and teleological in his concepts. God is the fundamental cause of all activities. Aristotle believes both in necessity and purpose. He suggests that we should love God and try to be like Him, since all movement or progress is because of the love of God. But strangely, like Spinoza, he believes that God does not love man. Aristotle has a dual sort of concept about the soul of man. The soul in the body perishes with it, but there is a mind-part of the soul which does not perish with the body and is immortal. This part of the soul, however,

never directs the body nor guides it in performing practical things in life. The timeless and rational part of the soul exists independently — it only speculates and contemplates. It is the irrational soul that moves and directs the body and dies. The irrational soul divides, but the rational soul unites and contemplates. The immortality of the soul is not personal; it partakes of the Divine. Accordingly, Aristotle does not seem to believe in the transmigration of the soul, though he does say that women are weak, and cowardly persons become women in their next birth. The Greek bias against women is there. An important concept of Aristotle is that we should love God, and try to be like Him; which is, in fact, an activity of greater and greater form, evolving towards God and becoming more and more like Him. Like Plato and other Greek thinkers, Aristotle too emphasised the superiority of the contemplative activity, without necessarily a corresponding activity in the empirical field. This continues to be a flaw in all other-worldly systems. For Aristotle too, the activities of the body have no meaning and are perishable. But, without the idea of personal immortality and transmigration of the soul, there cannot be any adequate incentive for moral activity in the social field. This fault is a natural consequence of other-worldliness of Greek religion and thought, which consider the world to be evil or second rate and the body to be an impediment in the way of spiritual progress and vision of things eternal. Seen logically, there is an internal contradiction in his thought, because if ideas of perishability of the body and the guiding soul are correct, the very concept of purpose or teleology becomes lost and meaningless. On the other hand, Aristotle also believes that once the soul becomes perfect, it ceases to be personal. This idea is virtually the same as the concept of nirvana or merger in the Indian religions where, once a superman reaches the highest level, he ceases to be active.

However, ethical bias is evident in Aristotle's thought. Virtues for him are of two kinds, first, intellectual, and, second, moral. The first category is learnt by teaching, and the second category is formed by habit. For Aristotle, justice means only a sense of proportion and balance and not a sense of equality. For him, as also for Plato and most of the Greek philosophers, hierarchy is the norm of social justice and not equality. A son for Aristotle is the property of the father and the slave is the property of the master. A sense of proper pride, like

a knightly pride, is a virtue recommended by Aristotle, and not humility and charity. He suggests the maintenance of property, because otherwise the rulers and aristocrats cannot be magnanimous. Unlike Plato, he does not suggest the break-up of the family, since it would be destructive of filial loyalty. In the ethical field, he recommends the achievements of ends, the chief end being happiness. For him, all means that secure the right end are valid. He suggests friendliness and sociability only with people of one's own class. Aristotle considers intellectual and contemplative activity to be most conducive to progress and happiness and to sharing the Divine. Philosophers are, thus, the best and the happiest and most dear to the gods. Virtue is just an increased activity of form and organisation. It is a common failing of intellectuals that they consider reason a virtue, though like force, it is a neutral tool which can be used both for vice and virtue, for destruction and construction. Like Plato, he also prescribes different kinds of moral codes for each class, as also certain ethical limits for a member of each class that have not to be transgressed. For him, the sufferance of the masses is no evil and he justifies slavery, except that Greeks should not be made slaves. He even suggests war against an inferior nation, especially when it refuses to submit to the superior nation. The necessity to obtain slaves could for him be a good cause to wage a war against another nation.

As a political system, Aristotle recommends monarchy to be the best and aristocracy to be the second best. He supports Machiavellian methods for running the affairs of a state. The hierarchical feeling is so ingrained in him that he suggests that men working for a living should not have the status of citizens of the state. For him, the lives of husbandmen, tillers of the soil, mechanics and labourers were ignoble and non-virtuous. He believes that the higher class, the elite, is legitimately entitled to the best things in life. Considering the class to which Plato and Aristotle belonged, it was natural that they found it difficult to rise above the prejudices of their class, or of the class which supported them. Over the centuries, despite pretensions to the contrary, it has been the common weakness of intellectuals to give moral support to the social system or a class that gives sustenance to their profession or living. Even up to the Middle Ages, Christian priests supported the aristocracy and land-owning class that sustained them. They criticised the charging of interest by

the trading class on which they were not dependent. But later, when the trading classes came into power and the Protestant clergy and the Church became dependent on them, the charging of interest came to be considered a valid practice.

Two important facts about Greek life were its support of the hierarchical system of society and almost contempt towards the working class and the slaves. These were, we believe, the result of fundamental dichotomy in Greek thought, wherein only the spiritual and contemplative life was valued and worldly life was downgraded. This dichotomy became so damaging to the Greek world-view that later both the Stoics and the earlier Christians felt that one could lead a virtuous life and reach the House of God without being socially involved. For them, virtuous life had not much of a relation with socio-political activity, social conditions and environment; and one could be virtuous irrespective of evil in society and without the responsibility of reacting against injustice practised against one's neighbour and fellow beings. Consequently, they thought that a slave could be virtuous and moral, despite the degrading immorality of his social position which he and others accepted. In short, it is under this dichotomy, spiritual growth, unrelated to empirical life, could be achieved in isolation, without reference to or reaction against injustice and immorality in society. The logic of this ethical system may be compared to Ramanuja not allowing Sudras to be admitted to the Vaishnav Bhakti, but permitting them instead only to the path of *Prapati* or self-surrender. Such moral adjustments are quite common among religio-spiritual or other-worldly systems that remain divorced from, or unresponsive to faults in the socio-political conditions of the times.

Apart from the dichotomy of the Greek world-view and the related other-worldliness of its thought, there is another lesson to be drawn from the above, namely, that intellect alone can never lay down a just ethico-social standard. The reason is that moral life is the end product of two components in man's psychological functioning, i.e., his discriminating intellect and its intimate and almost dependent link with one's emotional development. The point is well illustrated by the life of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Socrates refused to flee, when given the offer to escape from prison, because he felt that doing so would be violative of the rationale, system and ethics he had been

preaching. But Plato, with hardly any spiritual or intellectual beliefs different from those of Socrates, chose to run away from the domain of the despot of Syracuse, when his life was threatened. Similarly, Aristotle also, when faced with punishment, decided to escape from the area of his work in order to avoid it. The difference in the conduct of Socrates, on the one hand, and of Plato and Aristotle, on the other hand, was not due to differences in their intellectual beliefs, but just followed differences in their emotional equipment and consequent moral development.

Despite the dichotomy of the Greek world-view, both Plato and Aristotle were too serious persons to ignore or lose interest in the life of the world around them. Plato not only had evident faith in the value of education in the socio-political field, and for that purpose detailed his blueprint for an utopian state, but also actually engaged himself as an adviser to the ruler of Syracuse for giving practical shape to his ideas and making the area into a model state. Comparatively, Aristotle was quite matter-of-fact and worldly. This is evident from his theory of teleology which holds out hope of purpose and growth in life.

### *Later Greek Thought*

In the course of time when these masters were off the scene, dichotomy in the Greek world-view had its corroding effect on the vigour and growth of Greek thought and life. It is in the subsequent centuries that appeared the Cynics, the Sceptics, the Epicurians and the early Stoics with their materialism and determinism. These world-views did not hold out much hope for the future of man. The thought of the later periods is hardly of great significance, except that the greater the emphasis on other-worldliness and withdrawal, the greater the decline in the moral tone of Greek society. Ultimately, as we shall find, with the Neo-platonism of Plotinus the dichotomy was completed. For Plotinus believed that the life of contemplation was the only life worth seeking. And it was during those times that chaos and corruption in Greek society were the greatest.

The Cynics despised things of the world, but they condemned slavery. They were ascetic in conduct, recommended withdrawal, and rejected the institutions of marriage, government, private property and religion. For them, indifference to things and conduct of the

world was the right approach. According to the Sceptics, none knew anything, none could know anything and hence all search for knowledge was just vain. Similarly, the Epicurians, who were materialists, also recommended liberation from worldly desires and things. They believed that everyone should pursue one's own pleasures and the best one could hope for was deliverance from the pains of life. The early Stoics were materialists, and for that matter, determinists. Man was a part of nature, and virtue consisted in being in harmony with it. Good and evil were parts of the same system, and one could not be without the other. There is, however, something great about later Stoicism, especially as expressed by Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE) and Epictetus. Like the last flickers of a fading flame, it preached universal love and equality; ethical ideas that have not since been surpassed in their humanitarianism. The great contribution of the later Stoics is that they rejected the hierarchical, sectarian and exclusive thinking of earlier Greeks. They, however, accepted Platonism and the presence of the soul. Marcus believed in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Everyone was a citizen of the world and slaves were equals of all others, because all men were the children of God. He recommended submission to God. Good conduct was necessary to please Him, and not to please any man on earth. No evil could befall a man doing good. Epictetus felt that everyone had been assigned a role by God and that we should play our part worthily. We should love our enemies as well. This morality, no doubt lofty, could only be other-worldly, unpractical and isolative. Marcus felt that life in harmony with God's Will was the best. He says, "Love mankind. Follow God. . . .the Law rules all." His thought, presumably because of its principle of non-resistance, was so acceptable to Christians that St Augustine in his *City of God* follows many of the writings of this Roman Emperor. He also says that we should love even those who do us wrong. These Stoics felt that the sinner harms himself and not the virtuous whom he tries to damage. For virtue is an end in itself. There is a contradiction in Stoic thought, because while they are determinists, they also accept the idea of free will and emphasise the doing of good and being virtuous. They suggest that a sinner's will is determined and we need not, therefore, blame him for that. The will of the virtuous alone is free, since it partakes of God, Who alone is free. Strangely enough,

this thought, while suggesting determinism in the world, also gives hope for progress of man towards virtue and freedom. Stoics felt that without being good and virtuous man cannot be happy. They accepted perception to be useful tool for man. An important Stoic belief was the presence of innate ideas, especially of the principle of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This law naturally meant equality of man, including slaves and women, and equal freedom for all under the law. This ethics, since it is entirely different from the hierarchical Greek ethics of Plato and Aristotle, is the greatest contribution of Stoics and Emperor Marcus towards human thought. It was taken up by Christianity in the later centuries, and now forms the unquestionable moral force behind the modern ideas of equality before the law, equality of the rights of man, etc. The Stoic principle of non-retaliation and love of one's enemy as well, became welcome to the Christians because of the doctrine in the Sermon on the Mount. In any case, the streak of other-worldliness in the Stoic thought is evident enough; its emphasis on moral life is considerable, though many of its ideas remained unpractical and without any social impact.

By this time, the decay in the Greek world was spreading, and because of its increasingly other-worldly trend, wise and good men gave up all efforts at improving the world around them, since they had virtually lost hope of doing so. Instead they thought and contemplated only about the next world. This climate may be the reason for Greek thought becoming cynical, sceptical and unpractical. In fact, even the examples of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates, who showed a distinct tendency to improve the world, was lost on these good men in the Greek world. It is strange and ironic that in those times the moral standards among Romans were higher than those among the contemporary Greeks, though it was in many ways a Hellenised Roman Empire. The Greek cultural influence on the Romans started declining, and it was this lost moral stature of Graeco-Roman life and the comparatively high ethical standards of the Christian community, coupled with other factors, that later made Constantine accept Christianity as the State Religion.

It is the period of Marcus Aurelius and the moral tone of his ideas and beliefs to which, perhaps, Frazer refers when he laments the social erosion of the Empire by the other-worldly, un-societal and individualistic ethics of the Christians. But the period of Marcus and

later Stoics was just a flicker in the thoughts of the Graeco-Roman world that had become increasingly other-worldly. By the time of Plotinus, the trend of other-worldliness and withdrawal from the affairs of the world was the greatest. And the tragedy was that Christianity at that time, as interpreted by its masters, was itself other-worldly, offering no hope and interest in the existing world. It held out prospects of salvation only in the world beyond. The reality was that the socio-ethical trend towards the improvement of the world, as it existed in the earlier Greek thought, and to which Frazer refers, had virtually been lost; and in their other-worldliness there was not much to choose from between the Greek thought of Plotinus and the Christian views. In fact, it was this identity of thinking that made Christian scholars and theologians borrow heavily from the thoughts of this quietist mystic.

### *Plotinus (205 ? - 270 ? CE)*

Plotinus, the last well-known philosopher in the line of great Greek thinkers and scholars, is particularly important for his philosophy of mysticism. In his time, the Greek world offered little hope and presented a spectacle of ruin and misery. But, unlike Guru Nanak, Plotinus remained unconcerned with it and turned only to the next world of contemplation and beauty. For him, as for all quietist mystics, the next world was of greater beauty and reality, and for that matter, demanded greater loyalty and allegiance.

Plotinus believes in the spiritual trinity of the One, Spirit, and Soul. One is God, Who transcends Being and All. It is present in all things; It is nowhere, yet there is no place where It is not. It precedes the Good or Beautiful. One cannot be described or defined. Second is Spirit, Mind or Nous, the intellectual principle. All activity or divinity is of Nous, Mind or Logos. It is the Self-vision of One seeing the light by which One sees itself. If we give up self-will, it is possible to see the Divine Mind. But to know the Divine Mind, we must put aside the body and that part of the soul that moulds the body, its senses and desires; and study the soul when it is most God-like. It is then that we could see the Divine Mind or Intellect. Those divinely inspired have the knowledge or vision of it and its presence, though they cannot describe it. Yet, they perceive it inwardly. This vision or knowledge is above reason, mind or feeling, though it confers on man all these

powers. When divinely inspired, we see not only Nous but also One.

*The Gurus see Him as Hukm, Raza, Command or Will or as Love that is all activity. But He is indescribable.*

One cannot speak about that experience; actually all description of that experience is just a subsequent recollection of the event. This Light is from the Supreme; it is the Supreme, and to reach it, is the goal of the soul.

*The Gurus in contact with Him or His Command, are all activity; for in their case, the experience of Love gives both command and direction for creative work. The goal of the soul is not merger or passivity after His vision.*

The Supreme illumines with Its own Light. This achievement is possible by cutting away from the world and everything. Plotinus had such a vision by contemplation. It is the end achievement, and activity after it is a fall. Plotinus says he had such an ecstasy or vision many a time. One is lifted out of the body and everything in the world, one is assured of communion with the Highest Order and identity with the Divine. Intellect and reason are at a lower level. After the vision, the soul descends and re-enters the body.

The third element is Soul, it is lower than Nous. It is the author of all living things in the world. It is the offspring of Divine Intellect. Soul is in two parts; the inner part connected with Nous and the outer part connected with the world, body, perception and nature. As against Plotinus, Stoics are Pantheistic, because they identify nature with God. For Plotinus, nature is connected only with the outer soul. We are at the lower level when the soul is linked with the world and the body only. It is not linked with Nous and has no vision of it. Unlike the Stoics, Plotinus does not call the world evil, but concedes that it is as beautiful as it could be; though he calls heavenly bodies not only more beautiful, but also superior to man. The soul, when it creates nature, does so from its memory of the Divine. He feels that admiration of the order and beauty of the world uplifts one to God. Matter is created by the soul and has no independent reality. He believes in transmigration. After living one life the soul enters another body — it has to be punished for its sins and errors. During contemplation, the soul is lost in vision and has no memory of its personality. While the soul is lost in the vision of Nous, it remains separate from it and does not merge with it. While a soul is pure, it

is in contact with all other souls, but when it enters the body, it forgets its relation with other souls; only a few souls are on occasions in touch with Nous and other souls. The body obscures true vision.

*This view is in contrast with the ideas of the Sikh Gurus, who call human birth an opportunity to meet God, and for that matter, a privilege. They do not consider the soul's entering the body a fall or a degradation.*

For Plotinus soul is at its best while in contact with Nous, because then it only contemplates and does not create. The world is a good creative image of the eternal. For Plotinus each is all and all is each. Therefore, every being should see all in every other being, for everywhere there is all. All are mirrored in everything. Sin for him is the result of free will given to men and not because it is a determined world. Plotinus maintained a high level of intellectual activity and exhibited the best standard of quietist morality. While the activities of Plotinus gave rise to scholastic philosophy, yet it made man to look within, because he laid emphasis on contemplation and not on creative activity in the world. He distinctly promoted other-worldliness and withdrawal from the world. For him, while we look in, we see Nous, but outside there is only an imperfect world.

This world-view, starting with Pythagoras, maintained and developed by other Greek philosophers, down to the Stoics and Neoplatonists, was a trend that increasingly promoted other-worldliness, withdrawal, asceticism, subjectivism and contemplation; instead of outward activity, resulting in the rise of moral standards and social responsibility in the empirical world. For Plotinus, virtue alone was important and enough. It could be without reference to social or moral uplift or the improvement of human welfare or institutions. Virtue involved only a virtuous will without relation to the human or social condition.

We have seen that despite the efforts of men like Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to improve the Greek world around them, the basic dichotomy in the Greek thought and the other-worldliness of its world-view never allowed them to generate enthusiasm, vigour and hope in the Greek life of the times. As it happens among decaying cultures, these centuries of despair and confusion were ultimately followed by the period of Plotinus, when religious men or good men turned away from the ideal of social salvation to that of personal

salvation. In history, this has generally been the role and the result of the world-views that suggest or promote other-worldliness and withdrawal. The important fact is that it is the later period of Greek thought, namely of Neoplatonism and Stoicism, that coincided with the first three centuries of the Christian era when Christian leaders and scholars were framing their doctrines and theologies. And there is little doubt that the doctrines and other-worldliness of Platonism, and more particularly of Plotinus and Neoplatonism, deeply moulded and shaped the thought of the Christians. What Plato thought to be the eternal world of ideas, which was to be reached by philosophic contemplation, was for Plotinus, and later the Christians, the beautiful kingdom of God to be enjoyed after death or by a mystical vision of it. It is important to state that it was the world-view of Plotinus and Plato that later became an integral and inalienable part of Christian thought and theology, both being equally mystical and other-worldly. So much so that Dean Inge has emphasised that it is impossible to separate the ideas of Plotinus from the structure of Christian theology; so deeply intimate is the connection between the two. The early Christians, mostly poor Jews, were just men of deep faith without any well-formed philosophical and theological ideas. To fill the gap, they were anxious to raise a rival theoretical structure. It is indeed the philosophies of these two scholars that have not only influenced the Christians and their world-view, but also supplied them the constitutional elements and doctrines of their system. Plotinus is a landmark. While on the one hand, he represents the culmination of the era of Greek other-worldly thought starting with Pythagoras, on the other hand, he forms a model and a trendsetter for the pioneers of Christian thought and ethics. Theologians like St Augustine, Christian philosophers, saints, preachers and mystics broadly followed the view of Neoplatonism. Thus, the other-worldliness of thought and the downgrading of the world continued unabated.

While Plotinus represents mystic and intellectual activity of the highest order, beauty and quality, his is also the era when the human conditions of the Greeks were at its lowest ebb. Evidently, the sublimity of the thought of Plotinus hardly had any visible impact on the moral conditions of the society. This we believe was due to the basic dichotomy in the Greek thought.

### *Conclusion*

We have briefly indicated the elements and trends of Greek religious thought from the time of Pythagoras to the period of Plotinus. Broadly speaking, the fundamental features of this world-view are (1) Timeless reality of the spiritual world; (2) Comparative unreality of the present world; (3) The eternal character of the soul; (4) Other-worldly approach to the empirical world, which was regarded as second rate, illusory, a burden or even evil; because in working through it, one can never have the highest vision.

Accordingly, this view involved ascetic withdrawal that emphasised only contemplative activity of the mind. Evidently, this thinking was perfectly logical in view of the system initiated by its philosophers and good men. By definition, all these systems were dichotomous, creating a clear division between the life of the spirit and that of the world. Preference was always for the former and withdrawal was sought from the empirical world. The ascetic other-worldly approach, starting with Pythagoras, continued increasing till the time of Plotinus, who almost completely discarded interest in the worldly life, especially after the attainment of spiritual vision. For him, after the vision of God or Nous, interest in the world was a fall. This is what Bergson says of Plotinus : ‘He went as far as ecstasy, a state in which the soul feels itself, or thinks it feels itself, in the presence of God, being irradiated with His light; he did not get beyond the last stage, he did not reach the point where, as contemplation is engulfed in action, the human will becomes one with the Divine will. He thought he had reached the summit; in his eyes, to go further would have meant to go downhill. This is what he expressed in language of rare beauty, yet which is not the language of thorough-going mysticism.’ ‘Action,’ he said, ‘is a weakening of contemplation,’ therein he remains faithful to Greek intellectualism, he even sums it up in a striking formula; and, at any rate, he did contrive it to impregnate it with mysticism. In short, mysticism in the absolute sense in which we have agreed to take the word, was never attained by Greek thought.” For, prophetic or activity mystic union involves being charged with unlimited energy, vision and direction in order to be the instrument of God, carry out His Will or mission in the world. For, this is what prophets of the world have done. We quote a hymn of the Ninth Guru saying : “My power has returned; my bonds are loosened and all the

doors are opened unto me. Says Nanak : O Lord, everything is in Thy Power, Now be Thou with me.”<sup>4</sup>

However, from Pythagoras down to Aristotle, there was another significant trend in the earlier Greek thought as well. For, there was a distinct emphasis on the life of the intellect and the belief that by education and discipline, life on earth could be improved. Pythagoras made important advances in the field of mathematics and rational activity. Socrates spent a lifetime to educate the youth in rational and free thinking. Plato also showed a marked interest in the world and a sense of social responsibility in writing his *Utopia*. True, his model was only for a small area or state, but he proposed a system for an entire community, its education, training and social structure so that it could cater to the chief problems of society, namely, of food, security, cohesion and stability. He joined the State of Syracuse in order to implement his thoughts on the ground. But as centuries moved on, there was a clear loss of earlier balance and a declining interest in the world for acceptance of social responsibility. At the time of Plotinus, as against the spiritual pursuits, worldly activity was considered a waste and a distraction. Thus, we find that for centuries the Greek empirical world came to be increasingly neglected, being no concern of the good or spiritual men. The result was that in the third century CE, there was a lamentable contrast between the ugliness of the socio-moral life of the Greeks and the beauty of the quietist-mystic thought of Neo-Platonists. It is evident that from the time of Pythagoras to Plotinus the increasing dichotomy in the world-view of the Greeks had become its settled component, resulting, on the one hand, in the chaotic misery of the Greek society, and on the other, in the primary emphasis on a life of contemplation of the spirit as laid down by Plotinus, who, while single-mindedly pursuing his spiritual course, showed hardly any concern for the empirical world or for the conditions of the Greek society.

There is another related factor that cannot be ignored. Whatever be the reasons, the Greek society was never universal in its approach, nor did it ever suggest or promote universal equality. On the other hand, by and large, both the Greek and the Roman thought accepted and promoted social hierarchy and slavery. Whatever be the period of history, maintenance of inequality resulting in social tensions can never lead, in the long run, to cultural or social cohesion or even to

political stability. True, as in the case of Marcus Aurelius, ideas of universalism and equality were given out. But such ideas were just brilliant intellectual shooting-stars that leave no residue. For, they never assumed the shape of a cultural ethos of the society or even of deeds. Because, as we find, Graeco-Roman society was basically a hierarchical or elitist society wherein slavery was approved and national and class values were enforced from the top in the form of discipline. These values never became part of the ethos of the people. As against it, the Judaic values of nationalism and its ethics had permeated the Jew masses far more pervasively than the Greek elitist values had been owned by its people. On the other hand, it is the other-worldliness and quietism of Greeks, as Spencer says, that had influenced the mystic and quietist sects of Judaism.

In fact, the main strength of the Christian society that enabled it to struggle successfully against the Empire was its ethics and social cohesion as a community. For, in reality, the Christians had hardly an established elite or an intellectual group to lead them. Rather it was, perhaps, their lack of a clear ideological understanding that led the budding Christian scholars to be willing to borrow and own the declining ideologies of the Greeks and Plotinus. How far in later years it affected the positive ideology of Christ is indeed a matter of opinion. But, there is little doubt that the clear other-worldliness of the thought of Plotinus was incorporated or reflected in Christian theology by men like St Augustine, its theologians, mystics and preachers.

So, Fraser and Gibbon are firmly right in saying that Christian thought was other-worldly and could hardly have a healthy influence on the declining ethos of the Graeco-Roman culture. But, they are equally wrong in believing that Christian thought, in any way, eroded the life-affirming Graeco-Roman culture. Rather, the truth, it would seem, is that it is the other-worldly ideology of the Greeks and Plotinus that affected adversely the emphatically this-worldly ideologies of Moses and Christ. When the structure and historical impact of the thoughts of Moses and Christ are seen, in comparison with the impact of the world-views of Plato and Plotinus, the above conclusion would seem inevitable. For, it is undeniable that from the time of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the situation in the first centuries of our era had changed radically and by the time of Plotinus, dichotomy in the Greek

world was deep and complete.

We have given a brief outline of the position of the Greek thought and culture when it had an interaction with the Christian society of the first centuries of our era. Undoubtedly, in those times, Christianity itself was quite other-worldly and had a world-view that was certainly and clearly incapable of raising the social cohesion and morale of the Roman society. Nor could Christianity, in any way, adversely affect the social conditions or cohesion of the Graeco-Roman society that had, as seen by us, itself become other-worldly, and for that reason, impoverished in vigour and socio-moral stamina. Both in its thought and social structure, Graeco-Roman society was clearly hierarchical. Large scale slavery was a sanctioned fact of life, as also the gap between the aristocracy or the land-owning classes and the tillers of the soil and tradesmen, whom Aristotle regarded as unfit for being given the status of citizenship. True, universal ideas of Marcus were great in their sublimity. But the social conditions in the Empire were far from conducive to their growth. As it happens, spiritual and moral ideas, beyond the reach of the common people to grasp and practise, unless demonstrated by a prophet with a mission, hardly make a social impact. Broadly speaking, the Graeco-Roman society was itself on its socio-cultural decline when Christianity appeared in Europe.

One lesson of our brief surveys of the Judaic and Greek religious history is that the doctrine of other-worldliness and withdrawal is such an enervating influence that in the course of centuries it inevitably saps the religious zeal and energies of a society leading to almost complete dichotomy in its life.

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This Chapter is based on :

Bertrand Russell's; *A History of Western Philosophy*

W.T. Stace's; *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy*

1. Russell, Bertrand; pp. 34-35.
2. Ibid; pp. 36-37.
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## JUDAIC HERITAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

There is little doubt that Judaic influence on Christianity, because of a common heritage, is basic and pervasive, especially in matters of myth, doctrine and ethics. In order to be clear, we shall record a bare outline of Judaic thought.

It is well-known that the Old Testament is a part of the Bible and the scripture of the Jews. It contains the Torah, the Genesis, including the Myth of Creation, Paradise, Adam, Eve and their Fall, the 613 Commandments or the Jewish ethical system, accounts of Kings and Prophets, and also Books of Ezekiel, Ezra, Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah, Hosea, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Ruth, Job, Ecclesiastes, etc.

Another fact is that Christ was born in a Jewish family, brought up and lived as a Jew. It is not seriously contested now that he wanted only to reform Judaism by bringing about the acceptance of the Law. He stated that he did not want to add anything to the Law or take out anything from it. He hardly effected any major change to suggest that he ever intended to start a new religious system. Because of the very short period of his ministry, about two and a half years, history is not able to throw much light on his activities, except for the stories and parables attributed to him. It is true that Christ had no doubt about his mission, and carried it out with marvellous precision and emphasis. He expressed his ideas with clarity, deep love and a sense of urgency. His crucifixion has been the crowning event of his life, the true meaning and implications of which are still being debated, interpreted and understood. Our present concern is how far his ideas were Judaic. For this purpose, we shall first indicate briefly the Judaic ideology and then compare it with that of Christ.

### *Judaic Ideology*

The Torah, or the Five Books of Moses, embody the fundamentals of Jewish thought and ethics. Without going into the details whether monotheism is originally Egyptian or Zoroastrian, there is no doubt that the revelations to Moses are categorically, if not fanatically, monotheistic. The context of the revelation has to be understood in order to grasp its full significance. First, this revelation has primarily a socio-political meaning and objective. For, through a set of miracles, God humbles the might of the Pharaoh, and frees the Jewish community from centuries of slavery in Egypt. Simultaneously, God goads the reluctant and diffident Jews, many of whom preferred the security of slavery to the risks of war, to attack and drive out the inhabitants of Canaan, occupy their country and settle there themselves. Second, God clearly sanctions the use of force and war when He says :

“I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have made ready. Pay heed to him and obey him. Do not defy him, for he will not pardon your offenses, since My Name is in him; but if you obey him and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

“When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I annihilate them, you shall not bow down to their gods in worship or follow their practices, but shall tear them down and smash their pillars to bits. You shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will remove sickness from your midst. No woman in your land shall miscarry or be barren. I will let you enjoy the full count of your days.

“I will send forth My terror before you, and I will throw into panic all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn tail before you.”<sup>1</sup>

“The people may have a change of heart when they see war, and return to Egypt.”<sup>2</sup>

Third, help to the Jews is the result of a covenant between God and the Jews who, by agreeing to abide by His Laws and not to worship other gods, became His Chosen Community. Fourth, the

God of Jews is very stern, almost a vengeful and punishing God. No one can fail to notice these four features of God's revelations to Moses as recorded in the Torah. In short, the Torah prescribes a whole-life system which not only involves socio-political participation and objectives, but also accepts the use of force, struggle and war for the achievement of those ends. The Torah lays down the laws both for the religious and civil lives, including rules for the punishment of the vanquished, the slaves, servants, masters, marriage, family relations, sacrifices, rituals, etc. For the cohesion of the community, the importance of family as a unit has been stressed. Obviously, the exclusive or the national character of Judaism has been quite prominent.

In Genesis there is an important fact which gives a meaningful clue to the world-view of Judaism and Christianity, since it is common to both these systems. We refer to the myth of Paradise, Satan, Adam's Original Sin, contrived by the Serpent through Eve, and their Fall. This myth is basic to the theological understanding of Judaism and Christianity, though in the former case some of the Prophets have tried to give a somewhat optimistic and evolutionary view of life. In fact, it is this myth which makes it necessary later to have a corresponding myth of the Coming of the Messiah and Redemption by him. For the same and similar reasons the system of atonement or the ritualistic sacrifices also become logical and compulsory. We have made a specific mention of this myth for two reasons. First, it is very relevant and helpful to our understanding of the course and character of the Christian thought and history, as also of Toynbee's interpretation of it, if it is taken to be true and typical. Secondly, while this myth of the Original Sin and Fall gives a significant clue to the Christian view of life, it is diametrically opposed to the thought of the Gurus, who do not contemplate any such Fall. Hence our reference to Genesis and its myth.

Before we proceed further to record the development of the Judaic ethics and the role and interpretation of the Prophets of Judaism, let us recapitulate in brief the salient features of the Torah as indicated by its scholars.

1. It is strictly monotheistic.
2. The relation between God and the Jews, as a Chosen Community, is governed by a Covenant. Accordingly, the system is exclusive and national.

3. God is very jealous and stern. He remorselessly prohibits and punishes the worship of other gods.
4. The system is whole-life, accepts a socio-political role, and prescribes laws, both for religious and empirical lives.
5. The revealed Commandments have a strong ethical bias. They accept the use of force and war for socio-political objectives.
6. Love of God and love of the neighbour is the essence of its ethics.
7. It prescribes animal sacrifices as means of atonement, and performing rituals. Other rituals like raising of Altars, circumcision, etc., are also prescribed.
8. Because of the story of the Original Sin and banishment from Paradise, the hope of a Messiah, who would redeem the Jews, or all men is a part of the later Jewish tradition.
9. Man has free will to do right or wrong.
10. The Laws could be modified as laws were for man and not man for laws. Under certain conditions, it could be necessary even to break the law.
11. All punishments and rewards were contemplated in this world.

### *Judaic Ethics*

Apart from its monotheism, the most important aspect of the revelation of Moses is its ethics. The Ten Commandments have an abiding character that have influenced the entire Western civilization. Judaic ethics forms the very foundation of the entire thought and theology of the Christians. God almost drives an enervated and spiritless community to attack the land of Canaanites and occupy it. The basic lesson of the revelation is that man as the instrument of God has to face and destroy Evil in life. God was aware of the weakness of the Jews when He said, “‘The people may have a change of heart when they see war and return to Egypt.’ So God led the people round-about, by way of the wilderness at the Sea of Reeds.”<sup>3</sup> “And Joshua overwhelmed the people of Amalek with the sword.”<sup>4</sup> The Law of Punishment revealed to Moses prescribes, “... the penalty shall be life for life, eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”<sup>5</sup> The Law is equally strict for the vanquished and violations of the prescribed rules governing religious, ritualistic and civil life.

An important facet of Jewish life and ethics is the clear prescription and value of animal sacrifices and rituals as laid down in the Torah :

“Speak to the whole community of Israel and say that on the tenth of this month each of them shall take a lamb to a family, a lamb to a household. But if the household is too small for a lamb, then let him share one with the neighbour closest to his household in the number of persons : you shall apportion the lamb according to what each person should eat. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a yearling male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month; and all the aggregate community of the Israelites shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they are to eat it. They shall eat the flesh that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw, or cooked in any way with water, but roasted — head, legs, and entrails — over the fire. You shall not leave any of it over until morning; if any of it is left until morning, you shall burn it.

“This is how you shall eat it : your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly : it is a passover offering to the LORD. For that night I will go through the land of Egypt and strike down every first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and I will mete out punishments to all the gods of Egypt, I the LORD. And the blood on the houses in which you dwell shall be a sign for you; when I see the blood I will pass over you, so that no plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

“This day shall be to you one of remembrance : you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD throughout the ages; you shall celebrate it as an institution for all time. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day to the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.”<sup>6</sup>

“You shall observe this as an institution for all time, for

you and for your descendants. And when you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?' You shall say, 'It is the passover sacrifice to the LORD, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but saved our houses.'<sup>7</sup> The Lord spoke further to Moses, saying, "Consecrate to Me every first-born; man and beast, the first issue of every womb among the Israelites is Mine."<sup>8</sup> "This is the law of the passover offering: No foreigner shall eat of it. But any slave a man has bought may eat of it once he has been circumcised."<sup>9</sup> "... you shall set apart for the LORD every first issue of the womb: every male firstling that your cattle drop shall be the LORD'S. But every firstling as you shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. And you must redeem every first-born male among your children."<sup>10</sup> "If you will heed the LORD your God diligently, doing what is upright in His sight, giving ear to His commandments and keeping all His laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the LORD am your healer."<sup>11</sup>

God presented very clear commandments against idolatry, worship of other gods, murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and coveting neighbour's wife, slave or property. On the positive side, respect for parents and elders was also prescribed, "And if you make for Me an altar of stones, do not build it of hewn stones; for by wielding your tool upon them you have profaned them."<sup>12</sup> Following is the rule for slaves, "When you acquire a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years; in the seventh year he shall go free, without payment. If he came single, he shall leave single; if he had a wife, his wife shall leave with him. If his master gave him a wife, and she has borne him children, the wife and her children shall belong to the master, and he shall leave alone. But if the slave declares, 'I love my master, and my wife and children: I do not wish to go free,' his master shall take him before God. He shall be brought to the door or the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall then remain his slave for life.

"When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not be

freed as male slaves are. If she proves to be displeasing to her master, who designated her for himself, he must let her be redeemed; he shall not have the right to sell her to outsiders, since he broke faith with her.”<sup>13</sup>

The Torah also gives to man the most important gem of all ethics, namely, love of God and of your neighbour. “You shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.....”<sup>14</sup> This forms the ethics of all religions that are whole-life and socio-political in character. A significant aspect of Jewish life is its strong emphasis on ethics. Its Prophets and scholars were very particular in doing so. The story goes that when a person respectfully approached learned Hillel with the request that he should be explained the meanings of the 613 Commandments of the Torah, and that while he did so, he would keep standing on one leg, the scholar’s response was, “Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. That is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary; go and learn it.”<sup>15</sup> This sums up the essence of all human ethics. This principle has probably helped the Jews to survive over the centuries.

It is no coincidence that a similar emphasis on the cultivation of this vital element as the base of all religious life has been made by Christ as well. For, in any whole-life system like Judaism, Islam, Christianity or Sikhism, the foremost religious or ethical principle is the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Another significant aspect of Judaic ethics is that reward and punishment for one’s deed take place in this world. No next world is assumed.

### *Jew Prophets and Their Role*

#### *(i) Prophets — Moral Conscience of Jews*

The appearance of a long chain of Prophets over a number of centuries after Moses, presuming he was a historical figure, is an uncommon occurrence in the religious history of the Jews. The role these Prophets have played has been unique, beneficent and ennobling. The Prophets were ordinary persons, but they had their moments or periods of inspiration or vision when they made their prophesies with the same sense of assurance and compulsion as that of any mystic. It is evident that Moses’s vision of the Jews is quite exclusive and national. But, it is indeed admirable that these Prophets while making their criticisms or prophesies, have been far more universal in their

approach, vision and sympathies than the original nationalistic thesis of Moses would seem to warrant. Undoubtedly, they have by their deeds and words helped the Judaic society to broaden their affinities and to remould their thoughts towards universal ideas. There is hardly a great thought which they have not expressed with conviction and sincerity.

Judaism had 48 Prophets and 7 Prophetesses. For obvious reasons, we shall state only salient features of their thought and work. David and Solomon have been exalted heroes of Judaic history. They and other rulers were very clearly criticised by the Prophets for their lapses, corruption and lavish living. David was accused of contriving to destroy General Uriah, the Hittite, and marrying his wife Bathsheba, whom he coveted. Similarly, Solomon, who had a large harem, introduced the worship of other gods in the Temple in order to please his Egyptian wife. It is the bold and healthy criticism of these Prophets that not only kept the rulers on the path of sanity and rectitude, but also helped to maintain public morale at a high level. For, they always kept the basic principles of ethics in view, namely, help to man, protest against injustice, and fight for truth and righteousness. Prophets Amos, Hosea and Isaiah also advised the rulers to remain prepared in order to fight, and dispel the armies of prospective invaders and attackers; or with what country to fight and with which to avoid war. In fact, to the Prophets goes the credit of mellowing down the nationalism or exclusivism of the Jews. Prophet Amos considered all men to be equal in the eyes of God who was the Lord of all mankind.

*(ii) Reward and Punishment in this World*

The Torah contemplates that all reward and punishment take place in this world. The Prophets too talk generally of reward or punishment in this very world. They were not otherworldly. In fact, so often many of the Prophets like Jeremiah have attributed adversity of slavery of the Jews to their failure to observe the Laws of God, and as His punishment to them. Since Torah and the Prophets prescribed a system that involved a combination of the spiritual and the empirical life of man and a struggle for righteousness, they contemplate reward and punishment to be a part of the dispensation in this world.

A corollary of this view is the difficult question of pain and sufferance of good persons in this world. The Book of Job discusses this question but hardly furnishes an answer. Job does not mention

that there is anything like hell or heaven for man. Man's story, he believes, virtually ends with his death. "So he who goes down to the grave does not return. He will never come to his house again."<sup>16</sup> "For I will soon lie down in the dust; you will search for me, but I will be no more."<sup>17</sup> "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure." "Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed."<sup>18</sup> "Only a few years will pass before I go on the journey of no return."<sup>19</sup> "He will perish for ever, like his own dung;"<sup>20</sup>

Presumably because of the myth of the Fall, Bildad, Job's friend, even talks about the basic sinfulness of man. "How can one born of woman be pure?"<sup>21</sup>

(iii) *Man's Aim is to do Righteous Deeds*

Though Job is unable to understand the injustice done to him and pleads man's incapacity to comprehend His ways, yet he asserts with emphasis and conviction in what lies real wisdom and understanding for man: "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing." "God understands the way to it and He alone knows where it dwells." Job lays down a profound truth for man to follow. "The fear of Lord — that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding."<sup>22</sup> Elihu stated: "Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong." And again he gives another great truth. "Can he who hates justice govern?"<sup>23</sup> Ultimately Job admits his or man's limitations. "Surely I spoke of things I do not understand; things too wonderful for me to know."<sup>24</sup>

The Sikh Gurus have also stated: "Wonderful, Wonderful, Unknowable, Indescribable, is He." In sum, Job feels that it is not given to man to know His logic and ways, he is to do things in fear of God. The same thing is stressed by the Gurus. "Wonderful is His Will, if one walks in His Will then one knows how to lead the life of truth."<sup>25</sup> It is a new epistemological doctrine. The two activities are not separate but simultaneous, because a Will known is essentially a Will carried out. "They who know His Will, carry it out."<sup>26</sup> Knowing is doing.

In Judaism, the stress is on doing righteous deeds and helping one's fellow beings. The present world is the field of doing religious

activities and practising righteousness. Therefore, there is no sanction on withdrawal or other-worldliness.

The Prophets, as in the Torah, make positive recommendations for the use of force for a truthful cause. Both Amos and Isaiah advised the kings to prepare for war against Assyria. Isaiah recommended that there should be no corruption in life so as to make the country strong and enable it to fight the enemy; otherwise Assyria would conquer Israel.<sup>27</sup> The Prophet also advised with whom to go to war, or to avoid it. Ecclesiastes lays stress on doing justice and protecting the rights of the poor.<sup>28</sup> The tradition of struggle for righteousness and war is so strong that later the famous Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi J.B. Baba asked disciple Rabbis, namely, Judah, Ilai, Yochai, Chalapha, Simon, Nehemia and Meir, to join the rebels against the Romans. These Rabbis fought and revolted against the Romans. They were tortured to death or died as revolutionaries. The Rabbis were all outstanding scholars, they espoused the cause of rebels and partook in the rebellion.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Zealots and Bar Kochpa also organised revolts against the Romans, though their rebellions were mercilessly destroyed.

May be, because of centuries of slavery, migration and dispersal suffered by the Jews, there is a streak of pessimism in Judaism as is clear from the Book of Job and otherwise too. For two years, it is recorded, the disciples of Hillel and Shammai, two top theologians, debated about the fate and life of man. Finally, they came to the dismal conclusion that it would have been better if man had not been born.<sup>30</sup> But so far as the Torah is concerned, it is positively optimistic because it says, "Choose life." Therefore, all withdrawal is contrary to the system of Torah. The Ecclesiastes describes all things to be meaningless and transient. All wisdom and things are of no value. Yet, in the end like Job, the conclusion is, "Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."<sup>31</sup> In short, the Old Testament commends a "doing life," a life of activity and faith in Him, according to His ethical commandments. It is the same thing as Guru Nanak lays down for the *Sachiara* or the true man, namely, "carrying out the Will of God."<sup>32</sup>

Three points are the consistent features of most of the Prophets, namely, righteous activities, use of force for a righteous cause, and reward and punishment in this world. The utterances of these Prophets

are a clear endorsement of the principles of the whole-life thesis of the Torah. It speaks volumes for the spiritual health of the Prophets that they have been more universal and optimistic in their conduct, expression and statements than otherwise the context or the historical conditions of the society would warrant.

*(iv) Universalism and Optimism of Jewish Prophets*

There is another admirable feature of the Jewish prophets who, charged with their vision and ethical zeal, have tried to transcend the limitations both of their context and the system, which, because of the sinfulness of man, suggests virtually a pre-determined world.

Evil in life is a fact of our experience. The reaction of spiritual men to this existential situation has been in two ways, leading to two different religious developments. Most of them find the situation very difficult and incurable, both because of the constitutional and egoistic weakness of man and of the heavy and insuperable odds of the historical situations. The reaction of one group in such a situation is of withdrawal, isolation and piety, with individual salvation as the spiritual goal. In a few cases, the spiritual persons have reacted altogether differently. They have pursued the path of confrontation with the forces of evil, ending sometimes in sufferings and martyrdoms.

Jewish history records that at the very inception of His revelation to Moses, God directed the Jews to take to war, attack the Canaanites and occupy their lands. For centuries, the Judaic society flourished politically and socially. However, later there were many setbacks. Religious men had no rational answer to the problem of sufferings of the righteous person. The only answer Job could give was that man could not comprehend the mystery of His ways and that the basic weakness of Original Sin could not be outgrown.

We find that Jewish Prophets like Jeremiah and some men of religion felt that the adversity of the Jews following the Babylonian attack, or later after the Roman conquest, was a justified punishment from God for the failure of the Jews to live by His commandments.<sup>33</sup> Hence Jeremiah recommended non-resistance. Thereafter, started the growth of Judaic sects that took to withdrawal, pacifism, asceticism, mysticism and even celibacy. They lived isolated group-life in communes or small colonies. Such reaction to adversity or evil is a significant development in the religious history of man. After the Babylonian attack in the sixth century BC, there appeared a number

of withdrawal, mystic and pacifist sects like the Essenes, Kabbalists, Therapeutae, Hassidists, etc. True, the majority of the Jews continued to believe in the Laws of the Torah and its system, but the appearance and the continued existence of a number of Judaic sects that had almost shed the whole-life approach of the Torah, became over the centuries, a regular feature of the Jewish life.

It is a marvellous achievement of some of the Jewish Prophets that despite all these historical setbacks, they took a distinctly optimistic view of life, not only for the Jews, but also for man as a whole.

The Myth of Original Sin and the Fall of man suggests that redemption by the grace of God is the only hope of man. Otherwise, he is doomed to live without hope of any radical improvement. For, Bilads, as quoted earlier, regards man as sinful and without hope : “a son of man, who is only a worm.” Obviously, this is the reason that Toynbee feels that the ingrained amount of good or bad that is there in the modern man is the same as was present in his early ancestors. It is, indeed, a gloomy picture that Toynbee portrays for the future of human civilization. May be, the ghastly tragedies of the two World Wars and the increasing presence of atomic stockpiles with the power-intoxicated leaders of the world was too heavy a burden on the sensitive psyche of the learned author to shed, and instead visualize a bright dawn for the fallen man.

Yet, a long period of adversity could not dampen the spirit of these Prophets who hold out hope of a harmonious life for man. Prophet Micah predicts that ultimately truth shall prevail, and there would be a time when a nation would not lift the sword against another nation, and they would give up war and live at peace with each other.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Isaiah speaks that in the long run righteousness and justice would prevail in the world; “Wolf shall dwell with the lamb and leopard shall lie down with the kid.” “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation.”<sup>35</sup> “There would be no peace for Israel as long as any part of the world endures sufferings.”<sup>36</sup> Strangely, Jeremiah also hopes for the return of good times, but only for Jews, who would be brought back from slavery under Babylonia. Amos too professes that in the end God would be merciful to the world. He says that God is the Lord of all mankind, and will be kind to them.<sup>37</sup> Zephaniah

prophecies that there would come a time when all nations would know Him and serve Him.<sup>38</sup> The Seers of the Apocalypse envision that ultimately God will bring peace to this world, but before that a bloody struggle will have to be waged with Satan involving great suffering to those who are fighting for justice in this world.<sup>39</sup> It is also recorded in the Talmud that God showed His universal concern, because He reprimanded Moses for being engaged in prayers in praise of Him, while God's creatures were drowning in the sea.<sup>40</sup>

It is presumably because of their universal approach that these Prophets make the proverbial prophesy that ultimately there would be peace and harmony in the world. These statements of theirs, in the context in which they were made, show superhuman vision, faith and optimism. For the student of religion, these statements, as coming from men of God, have great spiritual significance. Job's answer indicates that, while he is unwilling to leave his chosen path of righteousness, he cannot explain his adversity and sufferings. But these Jewish Prophets rise above their milieu and express a spirit of hopefulness and spiritual optimism for man, despite the presence of evil and adversity that they faced and suffered. The reaction of this group of religious men is entirely different from that of the pacifists who take to withdrawal. This group confronts evil and struggles against injustice. Martyrdom is the end result of such a struggle. We have already referred to the heroic struggle of Rabi Akiba and many other Rabbis who rebelled against the Romans and were tortured to death. This is the path God advised to Moses in His revelation as recorded in the Torah.

(v) *Rise of Pacifism and Mysticism*

We have seen that the Torah clearly recommends a whole-life system with undoubted interest in the pursuit of righteousness in this world. But the Babylonian attack and the destruction of the Temple changed the socio-political situation radically. These historical events caused a number of religious developments as well. On the one hand, it led to the introduction of the Messianic idea so as to maintain the spirit of the people and their faith in the Torah. On the other hand, it gave rise to a number of pacifist and mystic sects that withdrew from the mainstream of the Judaic society. In consequence, as against the Commandments in the Torah, and the statements of Prophets like Amos, Hosea and Mica (of the sixth and seventh century BC) that

recommend struggle and war in pursuit of righteousness, the opinions of the pacifist sects are mostly to the contrary.

The new realities that developed need some explanation and understanding. Indisputably, the Torah combines the spiritual and the empirical aspects of life. It accepts socio-political objectives and responsibilities, because these become necessary when the neighbour has to be treated as oneself and he has to be protected from injustice and oppression. The family is the sanctified unit of all socio-spiritual life. As against it, pacifist and mystic sects have different values : withdrawal, pacifism, asceticism, hope of individual salvation and celibacy are their prominent features. The contrast in values and methodologies is complete. The Bible emphasises that procreation is a desirable value. Prophet Isaiah says, "The world was created on the basis of procreation so that he who does no offspring actually destroys the world order."<sup>41</sup> But the Essenes, the main pacifist sect, of the Jews, say that celibacy has a value and helps to "attain true holiness."<sup>42</sup>

The Tannaim opposes it saying, "A teaching which would destroy the institution of the Jewish home and thus ultimately spell the end of the Jewish people, must be false and dangerous."<sup>43</sup> Pacifist sects in Judaism, thus, opposed by implication the basic teaching of the Torah. Such sects appeared in the sixth century BC following the prophesy of Jeremiah suggesting non-resistance to the Babylonian attack.

It is a fact of history that systems which are originally whole-life become pacifist when their religious elan is on the ebb and they are unable to fight the battles of life and confront evil and injustice. The first signs and acknowledgement of defeat in pursuing righteousness are the acceptance of dichotomy or division between one's spiritual life and empirical life. The man of religion withdraws from the main social stream and takes to asceticism, monasticism, mysticism and celibacy with the objective of personal piety and salvation. It is a complete reversal from the whole-life ideals where the objective is "struggle for righteousness" or "carrying out the Will of God." In this struggle against evil, martyrdom is quite often the end result. The goals, methodologies and values in the two systems are quite different. Whole-life ideologies, therefore, call pacifist ideologies dichotomous, escapist, isolationist, narrow, negative and even selfish.

Seen historically, it is evident that these changes in Judaism came because the society was unable to match the challenge of the Babylonians, and later of the Romans, and the man of religion took to the path of isolation, mysticism and withdrawal. The new ideals were radically opposed to the revelation of Moses and the Torah. But pacifist and mystic sects like the Essenes, Kabbalists, the Therapeutae and Merkabah mystics flourished and continued for over 600 years within the Jewish fold.

The recovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has disclosed the presence of a colony of religious men that existed in the first and second century BC and contributed to the pacifist ideals. Spencer gives us a detailed account of the visitations of Prophet Ezekiel and other mystic groups that took to experiencing visions and mystic states. He particularly mentions the mysticism of Merkabah which had many groups of followers. Philo gives a description of these and Greek groups who divorced themselves completely from life and its pleasures and griefs. They took to esoteric practices in order to attain mystic states and spiritual visions. These pacifist and mystic sects accepted what was magical and miraculous, and the use of similar practices. Spencer considers these developments in Judaism to be purely under the influence of the Hellenistic culture. The Riders of Merkabah used ascetic practices like fasting, ablutions, etc.<sup>44</sup>

The strange part of such mysticism is that, whereas according to the Torah God is completely transcendent and different from man, these mystics almost invariably tend to suggest identity between God and the human soul. It is a singular fact that all monotheistic systems theologically declare a clear difference between the Creator and the creature. But many of these mystics from Judaism, Christianity, Greece or Islam suggest pantheism. In fact, these tendencies have always been found untenable, and have even been called heretical by the main Church of the concerned religions that are theistic. Spencer records: "Jewish mystics may indeed have shrunk from drawing that conclusion explicitly, but at least it may be said that there was for them no infinite gulf between soul and God, no absolute division between the world of living beings and the Creator."<sup>45</sup> These groups would resort to penance and self-imposed sufferings and like ascetic practices. Since, in their long history, Jews failed to achieve independence, and had to suffer slavery or dispersal, these esoteric,

otherworldly and mystical cults of withdrawal gained faith and following among them.

The majority of the Jews, however, continued to believe in the Torah, especially those led by the Sadducees, but their beliefs were more ritualistic than realistic. It is also true that militancy among the Jews never died completely. The Zealots and Bar Kochba organised militant resistance against the Romans though they suffered heavily. Rabbis like Akiba and Meir and others supported and partook in the revolts. Most of them were done to death or persisted in the struggle which they felt was in pursuance of the Law in the Torah.

The religious history of Judaism is a clear example to show why and when pacifist sects appear in the life of a religious community.

(vi) *Concept of Resurrection and Redemption*

The Book of Job, which specifically deals with the subject of righteous living and the future of the good man, never talks of any other or future world of hopes. Neither the Torah, nor the early prophets, nor the Sadducees and early Pharisees mention the hope of a better world or heaven for a good person and hell for the bad. In fact, the very concept of a Messiah rose after the Babylonian attack and destruction of the First Temple. At that time, the socio-political conditions were at the lowest ebb; the concept of a Messiah who would bring hope and succour to the fallen Jews was, thus, raised. Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel were the chief protagonists of the Messianic idea. Along with it were floated ideas about what the Messiah would do. Originally, it was believed that the Messiah would bring about the resurrection of the dead and give them a renewed or new life in this very world. This was the view of the Sadducees when they later came to accept the Messianic idea. The pacifist groups or the Essenees, however, raised the concepts of the next world, heaven and hell, where the dead would be resurrected or the soul of man would go. Some later philosophers, like Saadia, who suggests creation *ex nihilo*, also talk of a soul after the physical death of man, but the soul would remain virtually isolated and enjoy spiritual bliss. Such ideas were advanced particularly by the mystic groups, who, it is said, were mainly influenced by Greek ideas or, may be, ideas from India. It is well-known that the corresponding Greek society, where Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas were ruling, was also on its socio-cultural decline. There, too, mystic ideas about the next world, as

detailed by Philo, were current. It is only after the rise of the Messianic idea that concepts of the next world and the soul were floated, especially by the Essenes and other mystic groups. Otherwise, as the Torah and the early Jewish history show, there is no concept of a next world or a soul in them.

It is, therefore, logical to infer that in a whole-life system, withdrawal, pacifism, inactivity and a theory of Hell and Heaven or a next world, are a contradiction in terms. This is especially so, because man, as a consequence of his Original Sin and the Fall from Paradise, is destined to continue in this world. This is the important basic concept which we have to bear in mind in our study of the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All of them are whole-life systems and accept the above myth. Evidently, when man is once thrown into this world for his sin, the question of his being raised to hell or heaven or to another world cannot be congruous with the myth of his Fall.

(vii) *The Messianic Phenomenon*

The history of Judaism from the time of the Babylonian attack and the destruction of the First Temple in the sixth century BC and to the appearance of Christ in the first century BC is indeed a classic case for study. It shows that when the zeal of a system is spent, socio-political events sometimes affect religious developments and ideas of a people.

Before the Babylonian attack, the Myth of the Fall of Adam and the Commandments in the Torah, directing the pursuit of righteousness in this world, were the firm basis of the religious system of the Jews. The long chain of Prophets endorsed the revelation of God to Moses, and guided the life of the community in the light of the Commandments given to it in the Torah. But the destruction of the Temple and the enslavement of the Jews changed the socio-political situation radically. Even before the Babylonian attack, the socio-religious health of the Jews was lean. Jeremiah prophesied that the Babylonian invasion would be a punishment by God for lapses of the Jews in observing His Commandments. He advised non-resistance and acceptance of their fate as determined by God. After this followed centuries of slavery. Even when the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and build the Second Temple, their political independence was never restored. Later came the Roman attacks and the inclusion of the area in the Empire.

During this period of over five centuries, religious

developments and ideas changed materially. New concepts were introduced and earlier ones were seriously modified, if not controverted completely. The first development was the increasing appearance of pacifism and the growth of many sects which owned dichotomous ideologies and propagated allied views. It is significant that while in the Torah there is no concept of another world, heaven or hell, or of rewards or punishments in a next world, or of pacifism, such ideas appeared in the Jewish life only after the rise of the pacifist sects that had withdrawn from the world consequent to the success of the Babylonian invasion, destruction of the Temple and mass enslavement of the Jews. Originally, it is well-known that the Torah contemplated reward or punishment in this very world. As in the Book of Job, death in this world was permanent and this was the view accepted by the Sadducees. When the Messianic idea was floated to raise the dwindling spirits of the Jews, the Messiah was to salvage the Jews from slavery, restore the independence of the country, bring back the lost tribes and raise the level of the Jewish society to glorious heights. He was to do redemption and resurrection of the dead, but the new life of the community was to take place in this very world. But pacifism and the withdrawal of the religious man from the social field brought about deep dichotomy in the life of the community. This dichotomy caused destruction of moral cohesion and strength of the society. It lost its moorings and its ability to resist evil or to pursue righteousness. This led to schism in the very core of the human psyche. Dichotomy saps the moral basis of the human personality which becomes pathetically split, resulting in increasing disintegration of the social fabric and its moral stamina to face all challenges of life in its pursuit of a righteous course. Since the sixth century, there was an increase of pacifist sects, chief among which were the Essenes. Correspondingly, in the social field, there was a mounting erosion of moral strength and social values. Instead of societal values and struggle for righteousness, religious values came to be isolation, withdrawal, pacifism, mystic practices and celibacy. Punishment, reward and hope of a better life were to take place in a next world and not in the present one. The values of the two systems, the earlier whole-life one, and the later dichotomous one, were completely contrasted. The reasons for this change are obvious. When the religious elan and zeal of a system are on the decline, it is unable to confront or struggle

against the unjust forces of life. The religious men being too feeble to meet the challenges, withdraw from life and take to monasticism, personal piety, asceticism and celibacy. Slowly, esoteric ideas of “a world to come,” “a soul,” and “a world of pure joy” are raised. The Essenes, who were the principal pacifist sect, took up these ideas of an “immortal soul” and “a world to come.” Originally the Pharisees did not accept the Messianic idea, as it misguided the energies of the people, but later some of them owned ideas of “a next world,” Heaven or Hell. The resurrection of the dead, which was originally to happen in this world, was later suggested to take place in another world. Such ideas, as were foreign to the Torah, were given currency. But the Sadducees, who were the Jewish elite in power in the religious field, generally rejected all ideas and concepts contrary to those in the Torah. It is obvious that sects that had themselves abandoned the social world, remained unconcerned with its fate and the socio-political conditions of the people. Their followers believed in life and hope only in the next world. Mystic sects developed their own methodologies and “a dream-world of pure joy” and “union with God.”

We only seek to emphasise that withdrawal and pacifism invariably lead to impoverishment in the socio-political field, demoralisation of the society and a distinct fall in its social cohesion and ethical levels. On the other hand, ideas of “mysticism,” “Heaven and Hell,” “pure joy for the soul,” “reward and punishment in the next world” are raised and propagated. Thus, dichotomy leads to division between the religious field and the socio-political field; the spiritualists leave the latter, and the secularists own it. The values and goals of the two systems are apparently contrasted.

The significant fact is that the history of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Greece shows that the withdrawal of the religious men from life leads to an increase in pacifist, monastic and mystic sects and their ideologies and methodologies. Dichotomy and pacifism always coincide with a corresponding fall in the religious elan and social cohesion of the society to face socio-moral challenges.

An important feature of a whole-life system is that its struggles for truth and justice almost invariably culminate in martyrdom as a phenomenon. But it is not so in pacifist or withdrawal sects, for, they never take up the course of struggle in this life.

In sum, the phenomenon of the Messianic idea, which was

hoped to raise the morale of the people, in effect, led to religious developments that ultimately caused further social disintegration and demoralisation.

### *The Coming of the Christ*

There were two parallel currents of life among the Jews, when Christ appeared on the scene. On the one side, the Essenes and the mystics were holding the field as leaders of true religious pursuits, but they remained unconcerned with the socio-political life of the people at large. Their religious ideas and practices were mostly contrary to the views of the Torah, though they sought to reinterpret it for their own purposes. In the life of the community, the Sadducees and the Pharisees were the chief groups who sought to practise and interpret the Torah. The Sadducees, being the elite group in control of the Temple, were mainly interested in continuance of the form and in ritualistic observance of the sacrifices and the Laws of Moses. The life of the community as a whole stood socially disintegrated. The Pharisees started giving credence to the otherworldly views and concepts of the pacifists and mystic groups. In short, the emphasis on ethical and social living recommended by the Torah, mainly love of God and of the neighbour, became virtually a paper dogma. The pacifists continued with their esoteric and mystic efforts to join the soul with God.

It is at this time that Christ appeared on the scene in the first century BC. His life has been both an irony and a tragedy. Undoubtedly, Christ's heritage was completely Judaic and he never wanted to alter the Law in the Torah. In fact, he was true to the Torah. The essence of the Torah, namely, "love of God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself," is also the emphatic message of Christ in the New Testament. It is the message of a whole-life ideology. Throughout his life, he was strongly critical of immorality in society, injustice to the poor, and the ritualistic and other corrupt practices that had grown in the Jewish life in those times. He condemned irreligious practices in the Temple which had become a place of crime. In fact, many earlier prophets like Samuel had also stated that God needs no sacrifices;<sup>46</sup> and Jeremiah had called the Temple a den of crime.<sup>47</sup>

The position of the Jewish society then, after centuries of

slavery, was virtually the same as was its condition in Egypt before the revelation of Moses. The Jews stood disintegrated and dispirited. The tragedy was that Christ came with a revelation, but the people were, whatever may be the reason, not prepared to accept him. Christ, who had been ordained with a new mission, straightaway confronted the religious leaders in Jerusalem. True, it has been suggested, especially after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that Christ was, perhaps, an Essenes. But the known activities of Christ in the life of Jewish society do not show that he ever took up the quietist path. He might or might not have had earlier association with the Essenes or a like sect. But many facts controvert the suggestion of his being an Essenes. The independence of his call from God and his mission are gloriously obvious. He pursued it with prophetic zeal and conviction. Second, far from settling down as a quietist and withdrawing from the mainstream, as quietists were doing, he worked tirelessly among the people and confronted the religious establishments both at the Temple and otherwise.

Let us recapitulate the facts of the ideological background and creed of Christ. Except for the Sermon on the Mount, there is no difference between the religious principles of the Torah and those of the New Testament. As argued by Cahn, germs of the Sermon on the Mount are there in the 25th chapter of the Book of Proverbs which is the same thing as represented by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, i.e., thoughts of non-resistance, forgiveness, and succour and assistance to the opponent are also a part of the Old Testament.

One of the outstanding Christian clergymen of our time, the Reverend Dr John Haynes Holmes, in a brochure entitled, *Christianity's Debt to Judaism; Why Not Acknowledge It ?* wrote :

“Let me begin what I have to say this morning with Jesus, who is the centre and soul of Christian faith. There are three things to be made plain about this man.

“In the first place, I would remind you that Jesus’ parents were Jews. Whether his father, Joseph, was of “the stem of Jesse,” and thus of the royal house of David, as the Bible states, is altogether unknown. As a matter of fact, we know very little about Joseph — only that he lived in Nazareth in Galilee, that he was a carpenter by trade, and that he died, in all probability, before Jesus came to manhood..... But amid all this obscurity,

there remains the indubitable truth that these two persons, who are so venerated by the Christian Church, were both of them Jews.

“The second fact is of course that Jesus, as the oldest child of these parents, was thus himself a Jew. Two attempts have been made to break down and destroy this simple fact. The first is theological, and is to be found in the dogma of the Virgin Birth, which represents Jesus as born not of Joseph and Mary, but of a divine conception of God upon Mary. But this leads to the fascinating and impressive conclusion, seldom mentioned in doctrinal discussion, that out of all the tribes of earth, God chose a Jewish maiden for the incarnation of his dearly beloved and only begotten son.....

“The third thing to be said about the Jewishness of Jesus is that he was reared and trained in the Jewish faith. His parents were pious Jews; they went up each year to Jerusalem to keep the feast of the Passover ! They taught Jesus, by precept and example, to attend the synagogue, where he became acquainted with the Bible of his race. In his early manhood, it was his custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, which is more than a good many Jews do today; and he began his public ministry, so the record tells us, by standing up in the synagogue in Nazareth and reading from the Prophet Isaiah. In spirit as well as in blood, this Nazarene was a son of Israel.

“It is from these three points of view — his parents, his birth, and his religious training — that we must agree that Jesus was a Jew. It is to the Jews that the Christians owe this peerless leader and founder of their faith. I would go so far as to say that we cannot understand Jesus unless we acknowledge that his rightful place in history is that of the last and greatest of the Jewish Prophets. It is to me as incredible that the Jews do not recognize this fact as it is discreditable that the Christians do not recognize it.....”

And again he concludes :

“We are beginning now, perhaps, to understand how stupendous is the debt which Christians owe to Jews. Not only Jesus himself, but the Bible, the Church, and Sunday all come from Jewish sources. But not yet have we gotten to the heart

of the matter. What about the teachings of Christianity — those great truths of the moral and spiritual life which constitute the essence of the Gospel ? The things which Jesus taught — were these original with him, or did they spring from the Judaism in which Jesus was born and reared ? ...

“If any statement of Jesus is commonly cited as the complete and perfect summary of his religion, it is the dual commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. Where does this come from ? First of all from the New Testament story of the lawyer who tempted Jesus, saying, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? But originally from the Old Testament, in two famous passages. The first is from Deuteronomy 6:4 :

“Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God, is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

The second is from Leviticus 19:18 :

“Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge..... but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

“If anything is original with Jesus, it would seem to be his non-resistance — his injunction in the Sermon on the Mount to “resist not evil.” This received its supreme expression in Jesus’ Commandment that we should love our enemies. This is very obviously a protest against and correction of the Jewish law of retaliation : “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” This law, without any question, appears in the Old Testament. Jesus was mindful of it, and would get rid of it. But he was not the first to take this stand. Long since the Jewish Prophets had laid hold upon the doctrine of love and forgiveness, even of enemies. But in one brief passage of the Old Testament we have an anticipation of this positive aspect of non-resistance which is breathtaking.

“If I were asked to name the most beautiful expression of Jesus’ teaching on this point, I would turn to St Paul’s great Epistle to the Romans, and read the closing verses of the twelfth chapter : ‘If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his

head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' If there is anything original in Christianity, this would certainly seem to be it. Yet, turn to the twenty-fifth chapter of the Book of Proverbs, the twenty-first verse, and what do you find ? 'If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou wilt heap coals of fire upon his head.' Even in his teaching of love, for enemies as well as friends, Jesus was only faithful to the noblest precepts of the Jews !

"All this shows what Jesus was really doing in his ministry. Not preaching a new religion, but reviving the pure and undefiled religion of Israel ! ....."<sup>48</sup>

Bertrand Russell also feels that seen in its Jewish background, the New Testament is not very new. For example, the severity of attitude towards non-Jews as expressed in the Book of Enoch is also reflected in the Christian thought, which is far from being charitable towards dissenters or sinners. Early Christian Fathers like Clement treated it canonical. This book "... influenced New Testament doctrine, particularly as regards the Messiah, Sheol (Hell), and demonology."<sup>49</sup> This book also has parables which are more cosmic than those of the New Testament. In the Last Judgement, there is no charity towards Gentiles who do not repent, and they would go to eternal damnation. There is no charity whatsoever towards sinners on the day of judgement, their soul shall descend into Sheol and they shall suffer for ever darkness and burning flame. "But as for the righteous, 'I and my Son will be united with them for ever.'"<sup>50</sup>

Russell says that *The Testament of Twelve Patriarchs* written by a Pharisee is a very ennobling book much of which appears in the New Testament or the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospels."<sup>51</sup> Dr R.H. Charles writes, "The Sermon on the Mount reflects in several instances the spirit, and even reproduces the very phrases of our text : many passages in the Gospels exhibit the traces of the same, and St Paul seems to have used the book as a *vade-mecum*."<sup>52</sup> The book contains the following :

"Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he repents and confesses, forgive him, but if he deny it, do not get into a passion with him, lest catching the poison

from thee he take to swearing, and so then sin doubly..... And if he be shameless and persist in wrong-doing, even so forgive him from the heart, and leave to God the avenging.”<sup>53</sup>

Dr Charles is of the opinion that Christ must have been acquainted with this passage. Again we find in the book; “Love the Lord and your neighbour.’ ‘Love the Lord through all your life and one another with a true heart.’ ‘I love the Lord; likewise also every man with all my heart.’” Further all hatred is condemned in the book and the author holds that “... not only the Jews but all the gentiles will be saved.”<sup>54</sup> This ideology was followed by the Hassids, another pacifist sect of Jews, and their teachings “... found their natural home in the bosom of primitive Christianity.”<sup>55</sup>

It is strikingly evident that Christ’s overt activities, while they were not in line with those of the quietists, were clearly and openly in pursuit of the ideology of the Torah. Even more than any earlier Prophet, he was critical of the degradation and corruption among the ruling elites. He even struck a direct blow at the evil practices at the Temple. None of the earlier prophets had proceeded beyond making oral statements. Christ’s mission is evident from the fact that he worked among the people, and the lowest of them, with prophetic emphasis, superhuman zeal and urgency. Naturally, his activities were not acceptable to the governing elite of the Jews. Hence, whereas the poor Jews accepted him as the Messiah, those in power disowned him. The very fact that his end involved confrontation with the State and consequent martyrdom, clearly shows that he was far from being a pacifist or a lone mystic. And, he was evidently not with the Sadducees, the main religious group of his times. Pacifists have never played the role that Christ did. Never has a pacifist been martyred by the State. Unfortunately, the historical situation was static. The bulk of the Jews were neither aware, nor willing to follow him. And those who followed him were too poor, enervated and feeble to take up confrontation with the State. They did follow him and suffered tremendously in keeping their faith. But as a society, they were too disintegrated to organise a struggle against the Roman might.

Christ’s confrontation with the State is of great significance. For, theologians like J.B. Metz, E. Kasemann, Moltmann and others talk of a “political theology” and the “freedom” of man generated by the crucifixion of Christ. Moltmann urges “the cross is our political

critique, the cross is our hope for a politics of freedom. The memory of Christ crucified compels us to a political theology.”<sup>56</sup> In short, whether it is the process of war, or of martyrdom at the cross, both are monumental political events on the path of confrontation and struggle against the forces of evil. Actually, it is the path of love of God and help to the neighbour against oppression and injustice. For, as Guru Nanak says : “God is the Destroyer of the evil and the demonical,”<sup>57</sup> and “His Will has to be carried out by the man of religion.”<sup>58</sup>

In the ideological field, thus, there is hardly a difference between Christianity and Judaism, both of which accept the Old Testament as their scriptural guide. But developments in the historical field led to hostility between the two societies. In the socio-political field, the Romans were the rulers, and the Sadducees were co-operating with them as the local religious and political elite. They were the masters of the Temple. All the activities of Christ were against known corruption in the religious and social fields. He attacked malpractices at the Temple and hypocrisy and degradation of the Jewish elite that controlled it.

We are aware that respect for Prophets and hope of a Messiah were a part of the Judaic tradition. Even confrontation with the Roman rulers was openly taking place by a section of the Judaic society. Jews belonging to sects like the Zealots fought and revolted against the Romans. In their anger, the Romans virtually harrowed Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. Rabbis like Akiba and Meir suggested revolt and war against the Romans. Rabbi Akiba and his six Rabbi disciples and supporters joined the revolt against Romans but were destroyed. But these being minority revolts by religious groups, they were crushed ruthlessly. There was hardly a unified Jewish society to struggle, as a united whole, against the Roman rule. Quietist and mystic sects stood aside divorced from the socio-religious objectives of the Jews. The conditions of the common Jews were quite poor. They were demoralised and lived in the hope of relief to their sufferings. They accepted Christ as the promised and predicted Messiah. For these Christians, he was the Word made Flesh. Thus, there came to be a serious rift between the followers of Christ, who were also Jews, and the Jewish elite. The latter would naturally not accept him, because they would have lost their leadership and interest in the Temple. They accused Christ of blasphemy and ultimately got

him executed, even though earlier it had been prophesied that this time God Himself would descend as the Messiah. A Messiah did come, but was disowned. The crucifixion of Christ increased friction and hostility between the two societies — Christians and Jews.

Christians, being pacifists, would not later join the army and this would further provoke the ire of the State which was supported by the hostile Jews. Large scale persecution and martyrdom of Christians followed. Thus, it is purely the historical circumstances that created not only a new religion, but also abiding hostility between Christians and Jews that lasted for almost 18 centuries.

The century after Christ's crucifixion is the period of travail and acute sufferings for the Christians. They underwent great tyrannies. Thousands of them were destroyed and martyred, because they would not shed their faith in Christ and accept the Roman Emperor as the representative of God on earth. Christians lived in the hope of the old Jewish tradition that Christ was the Messiah, i.e., God Himself, who by his crucifixion had redeemed them. This faith was passed on as "good news," suggesting that the day of redemption and resurrection was not far off, when they would be elevated to Heaven from this mundane world.

The greatness of Christ is unique. It lifted an impoverished society to a moral height and cohesion so uncommon in human history. The same people and the same religious system that had succumbed to the might of the invaders for centuries on end, were rejuvenated, and their self-confidence restored not only to confront morally the fading culture of the Roman Empire, but also to convert that society to the Christian faith.

During the period of their resurgence, the Christians created a new faith and a new scripture. Of course, it took them over 300 years to do so. The task was neither easy nor simple. Christ, as we have seen, accepts the Laws of the Torah as also the essence of its thought, namely, love of God as also of one's neighbour. He reiterates them in the New Testament. Since love has to be expressed in the world and life here, all human activities become meaningful. This means that the system is whole-life. For, love of the neighbour logically leads to the corollary of giving him due protection against injustice and oppression. Ideologically there is hardly a difference between the ideology of the Torah and that of Christ. Accordingly, the Christians

were obliged not only to accept the Old Testament, but also to reiterate its fundamental principles. The only theological difference that came to be was that man's future hopes and rewards were to materialise in the next world and not in the present one. The system, thus, became to a great extent otherworldly because, even though Christ confronted the State and worked here, the hope of a rewarding future was contemplated only in the next world, and the present world was downgraded. The Christians were far from being in a position to confront the Empire. While they stuck to their faith and suffered persecution by the Roman State, they could not come into an organised conflict with it. That forced the system to become otherworldly. It is this aspect of Christianity that became the subject of criticism by Gibbson and Frazer. They felt that the otherworldly character of Christianity hardly led to any social improvement or cohesion, since the eyes of religious men were always set on the world beyond. This part of their criticism is correct.

Recently, after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some suggestions about Christ's original role and views have been made. Similarity between the Sermon on the Mount and jottings on the Scrolls have also been indicated. Such suggestions appear to be quite simplistic. The Judaic society tolerated without objection for almost 600 years, pacifist sects even though all their systems and values were substantially opposed to the doctrines in the Torah, and its injunctions and ethics. But the same Jewish elite, the Sadducees, could not tolerate the spiritual mission of Christ, even for 2½ years. The confrontation came despite the fact that Christ was only trying to revive the faith of Jews in the Torah and the practice of its Law, ethics and injunctions. This fact alone rebuts the suggestion that Christ was just a pacifist Essene or of like views and sympathies. Revolutionaries, whether spiritual or secular, are never tolerated by societies that are fallen. Normally they die a martyr's death. How true is Bernard Shaw's view that our human societies find it too difficult and burdensome a task to follow our prophets or to practise the truth they preach. We find it more convenient first to crucify them and then to worship them. This is what the Jews did. For, while they had accepted the pacifist sects for 600 years, even though their views were clearly contrary to those in the Torah, they would not accept Christ, who only wanted them to abide by its Laws and ethics of love of God and of one's neighbour. Six centuries of

pacifism had completely isolated men of religion from the mainstream of Jewish society and life. On the other hand, the socio-political life of the Jews had become not only spiritless and demoralised, but it was also burdened with empty ritualism. Jews had become too disjointed to respond to the Messianic lead of Christ. A long period of dichotomy had sapped its moral cohesion and ethos. It failed, as a whole, to respond to God's call of love and truth given by Christ. True, all the religious principles which Christ wanted the Jews to follow were nothing new, but six centuries of withdrawal by religious men had created a society sterile of moral stamina. Because of this, religious men's eyes were fixed on salvation and mystic joys in the next world and not on this world.

### *Centuries of Post-Christ Developments in Judaism*

In the long history of Judaism in its post-Christ developments, there is only one important point, which needs to be mentioned for our purpose. It is known that after the loss of Palestine, Jews migrated to countries in Europe and Russia. Because of the initial years of hostility in Christian countries, they were mostly an unwanted community living in small colonies called ghettos. They suffered many massacres, pogroms and forced expulsions by the Christian majorities. Because of their three-time daily prayers for return to Palestine and their nationalist feeling, they were often looked upon with suspicion. In France, it was suggested that because of their separate nationalism, they should be regarded as foreigners. Slowly, in the 19th century, the pressures from the majority community, both external and internally generated, continued to mount.

In 1807 CE, the issue about the status of Jews was raised before the Jewish Sanhedrin, a body of two third Rabbis and one third leaders of the community. Considering the climate of the times, this body reluctantly agreed to the proposition that Jews were not a people or a nation, but they had only a separate religion.<sup>59</sup> Following this, like any other citizen of a State, all local laws were made applicable to them. The same position followed in other countries. Things did not stop at that.

In Germany, Friedlander declared that prayers about Jewish nationalism should be omitted from the Jewish Prayer Book.<sup>60</sup> Further, it was suggested that in order to avoid any distinction, the synagogue

building should look like the places of worship of the dominant faith in the country, and that in the prayer books, Hebrew as a language should be substituted by the language of the dominant faith, nation or country concerned.<sup>61</sup> Later one Jacobson also started supporting Friedlander's declaration. Jacobson was appointed Finance Minister and in order to please his masters, he introduced many innovations in a synagogue which he opened at his house. Friedlander suggested similar reforms in Berlin. Unfortunately, he introduced the use of music at the synagogue, even though centuries earlier it had been banned by the Rabbis. In 1818 CE, another reformed synagogue was opened at Hamburg, the prayer-book was changed and only a few portions of the prayers were left in Hebrew. Prayers about Zion and return to Jerusalem were eliminated. Similar reforms were also introduced in Hungary and Italy.<sup>62</sup>

But tensions increased and Jews were asked not to visit such reformed prayer houses. Opposition grew to all these reforms, joint declaration condemning these reforms was made by the Jews, including 40 Rabbis from all over Europe.<sup>63</sup> It is well understood that national Governments of States are always inclined to support such reforms as weaken the cohesive base of minorities. And those among the minorities who are anxious to gain favours, are always willing to support such Government favoured moves. The controversy grew, and supporters of reforms also started holding conventions in order to propagate their point of view. Actually it was the emancipation of the Jewry in the 19th century that had given rise to some of these controversies and problems. But, emancipation also gave rise to the Renaissance in a genuine study of Judaism.

After some years of debate, controversy and confusion, the No-Reformers won. Philosopher Steinheim, like Kant, believed that spiritual concepts could not be proved, these had to be accepted as such. Abstract things, he argued, could not be rationalised nor perceived by the senses. Reason, he suggested, was always fallible.<sup>64</sup> Another thinker, Rosenzweig, held that revealed ideas must stay in their pristine originality and that religion was eternal. It was not a social idea or theory that needed to be changed. No religious tradition could be re-created. It was strongly urged that the Jewish community had a mission and a message to give to the world. This it could do only as a community and not as individuals.<sup>65</sup>

In a language of rare beauty, Bergson, a great philosopher, talks of the Basic Elan, the Revelation or the Force which moves and directs the world. He says, "the ultimate end of mysticism is the establishment of a contact, consequently of a partial coincidence, with the creative effort which life itself manifests. The effort is of God, if it is not God himself. The great mystic is to be conceived as an individual being, capable of transcending the limitations imposed on the species by its material nature, thus continuing and extending the divine action."<sup>66</sup> Great scholars like M. Hess, Bergson, Einstein, Cohen Ahad Haam, Rosenzweig and Hirsch expressed the view that the national demand for return to Palestine as a Jewish homeland was necessary for the survival of Judaism. Jews have felt that it is the Jewish ethics which has helped the survival of the Jews as a community.

Rosenzweig argued that "the Jews had always regarded even the features of political autonomy, such as land and language, differently from the way they were viewed by other nations. To the Jews, their country had always been 'a holy land' and their language 'the holy tongue,' and hence the Jews had thought of themselves as 'a holy nation' under special obligation to lead a life of holiness in accordance with the Will of God. For this reason, no other country could take the place of Palestine in the heart of the Jew and no language could replace Hebrew as the sacred tongue of Israel. Thus, Israel was an eternal nation."<sup>67</sup> Rosenzweig emphasized his faith that Jewish people "would return to their roots as a holy nation which would endure for ever."<sup>68</sup> The vigorous support of philosophers and scholars gave the Zionist movement great strength. Einstein was a staunch supporter of Zionism and when the state of Israel was formed, he was offered its Presidentship.<sup>69</sup> It was stated that spiritual Zionism alone was not adequate, political Zionism was equally essential for the survival of Judaism.<sup>70</sup> Herzl wrote the first popular book for the creation of a Jewish state in Israel. During the days of the controversy, it was found that greater the pressure from the majority against the Jews, stronger was the reaction of poorer sections of Jews to stick loyally to their faith. The reaction of the better classes was quite often variant. Because of the growing strength and support to Zionism, the movement for reforms in Judaism died its natural death. The Zionist movement triumphed, and in 1917, the Balfour Declaration for the establishment of a "spiritual centre" in Palestine for Jews of

the world was made.

### *Conclusion*

While discussing the Judaic heritage of Christianity, Bertrand Russell makes a few pertinent observations. We shall now see how far our assessment varies from his conclusion. He records six important elements of Christian thought which are traceable to Judaism; first, a theory of Creation as in Genesis; second, that the Jews are the Chosen People and Christians are the elect; third, a system of righteousness with almsgiving as a particular virtue; fourth, hope of a Kingdom of Heaven, with an other-worldly approach; fifth, a revenge psychology towards those who have different religious views; and sixth, uncomplimentary views about women.<sup>71</sup>

Russell particularly mentions that the “exclusiveness of the elect” and its corollary of “revenge psychology” are allied concepts. These, on the one hand, suggest, as was emphasised by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that all religions except one are false, and, on the other hand, believe that whereas the redeemed Christians would enjoy everlasting bliss, the gentiles, others and the sinners would suffer eternal torment and damnation.<sup>72</sup>

Evidently, Russell is right that a sense of exclusivism and intolerance towards others are, unfortunately, features that have persisted with Christianity. He suggests that it is the inherited “vengeful psychology” that led to a severe persecution of the Jews in the Middle Ages and till the 19th century. “... Christianity powerfully stimulated anti-Semitism,” he says, “It was only among the Mohammedans at that period that Jews were treated humanely and were able to pursue philosophy and enlightened speculation. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Mohammedan were more civilized and more humane than the Christians. Christians persecuted Jews, especially at times of religious excitement; the Crusaders were associated with appalling pogroms. In Mohammedan countries, on the contrary, Jews at most times were not in any way ill-treated. Especially in Moorish Spain, they contributed to learning; Maimonides (1135-1204), who was born at Cordova, is regarded by some as the source of much of Spinoza’s philosophy.”<sup>73</sup>

Presumably, the feeling of being the elect has led to the Church doctrine of “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*” (outside the Church no

salvation) which persists. Despite all efforts at ecumenism and genuine persuasion of the Churches of North America, even in the present century, the World Council of Churches is reluctant to co-operate with other religions against the danger of Secularism, and instead it holds that "Secularisation not Secularism is the primary process, it is a process in which some of the values of the Christian faith have been put in a secular framework, bringing about a powerful force which is destroying all old ideas. Hence, secularisation is an ally because it will destroy Hinduism, Islam and other forms of what they considered to be superstition. So, we should ally ourselves with secularisation and see it as the work of God."<sup>74</sup> In spite of sincere efforts by great Christians to change the policy, the above view persists to date, and inter-religious dialogue on terms of equality is not possible.

On the issue of other-worldliness and the Kingdom of God, Russell writes, "Otherworldliness is a conception which Jews and Christians, in a sense, share with later Platonism, but it takes with them a much more concrete form than with Greek philosophers."<sup>75</sup> It is strange that the learned philosopher has failed to record correctly about the real heritage of Judaism, as in the revelation of Moses and the Torah, which are emphatically this-worldly or whole-life. In the Torah, the next world has no place. It is true that since the time of Jeremiah and the Babylonian attack, pacifist sects withdrew from the mainstream and when the Christians parted company from the Jews, the Essenes, pacifist and mystic groups were quite prominent in the religious field. But, they were, as indicated earlier, far from being the true representatives of the system of Moses. In fact, their views being otherworldly, were contrary to those in the Torah. The tragedy of Christ has been that in the demoralised and dichotomous atmosphere of his time, neither did the elite Jews follow the Messiah, nor did the poor Jews (later Christians), understand his great spiritual mission, which was clearly a reiteration of the message of the Torah; namely, the love of God which is inalienably linked with love of one's neighbour. It is a this-worldly thesis that also stands embodied in the New Testament. It is a thesis that Christ lived actively. Theologians like Moltmann and J.B. Metz are now clearly emphasising the socio-political magnitude and implications of his confrontation with the State and the crucifixion. There is little doubt that Christ was never with the isolationist and withdrawal sects of the Essenes

and the mystics. Nor was he with the Sadducees or Pharisees, whose belief in the Torah was only confined to formalism and ritualism.

It is indeed unfortunate that, whatever be the reasons, Christian theologians like St Augustine, instead of following the this-worldly message of Christ — love of God and of one's neighbour — as now understood by theologians like Niebuhr, accepted the otherworldly views of his opponents, the Essenes and the like, who thought only of "the Kingdom of God," "the next world" or "Heaven or Hell," and not of this world, or of the message of the Torah, which is "this-worldly." Even Russell concedes that the Sadducees did not accept the otherworldly beliefs of the withdrawal sects since those were contrary to the doctrines of the Torah. May be, pragmatically it suited the new leaders of the Christians to follow a soft course. Presumably, they were unprepared to tread the path of organised struggle and martyrdom and wanted only to reap the benefits of the next world which, they felt, Christ had gifted to them by his martyrdom. The tragedy is that Christ's martyrdom, instead of leading to a socio-political theology, was made the basis of a theology of the next world, which was a theology of the withdrawal sects and not of Jesus Christ or the Torah. Russell knows full well that Hellenism, Platonism, Neo-pythagoreanism and Stoicism had influenced the withdrawal and mystic sects of Judaism, and later, it is the withdrawal philosophy of these sects that was accepted by the Christians. Thus, Greek philosophy influenced Christianity directly, as well as indirectly, through these withdrawal sects of Judaism. Spencer has detailed how these pacifist and mystic sects of Judaism had been influenced by the contemporary esoteric beliefs and practices of Greek withdrawal groups described by Philo.

Russell also concedes that it is the Maccabean martyrs who were the true representative of Judaism, who saved Judaism and its monotheism. "... thus the blood of the Maccabean martyrs, who saved Judaism, ultimately became the seed of the Church. Therefore, as not only Christendom but also Islam derive their monotheism from a Jewish source, it may well be that the world today owes the very existence of monotheism both in the East and in the West to the Maccabees."<sup>76</sup> It should, however, be clear that these Hasmanaeen or Maccabean rebels and martyrs of the second century BC, the inspired followers of the Torah and the revelation of Moses, were not from a

group of the Essenes or the mystic sects who aimed only at godly vision.

In the above context, we can safely conclude that in reality the Judaic heritage of Christianity was only two fold, i.e., its theory of Creation and its exclusivism as an elect religion without a rival. The principal religious feature of Christianity, namely, other-worldliness was certainly not Judaic. It was, indeed, Hellenism that was channelised to Christianity through the withdrawal sects of Judaism who professed ideologies quite contrary to that of the Torah.

We have explained in brief what is the Judaic system as revealed to Moses, what are the views of Christ, what have been the beliefs of the pacificist sects of Judaism, and what is the system that the Christian theologians and scholars incorporated in the Bible. For the understanding of Christian theology and its future course, it is, therefore, necessary to know of its Judaic heritage, and the extent of Hellenism, Platonism and Neoplatonism that have filtered into it directly and historically, and also indirectly through the mystic and pacificist sects of Judaism that had been substantially influenced by the Greek sects and their philosophies. We shall now consider that aspect of Christianity and its theology that would seem to be related to contemporary Platonism and Neoplatonism of Plotinus.

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## DEVELOPMENTS IN CHRISTIANITY

### *Early Period*

The history of a society can be understood only in reference to its ideology or the canon embodied in its Scripture. But, obviously, problems arise where the Scripture was completed centuries after the period of the prophet, which in case of Christ was very short. Therefore, Christians had initially to determine two issues, namely, the ideology and the scope of the mission. Accordingly, early tradition remains the chief source for the purpose. As the Bible was compiled in the fourth century, it is necessary to know the various cross currents that interacted to form this early Christian tradition. For even the Scripture is "... the Tradition of the Apostles as committed to writing by them or by those closely associated with them." The subsequent tradition was supposed to follow the Apostolic tradition. Later the Church became the inheritor of that tradition, since it claimed to have spiritual (Holy Spirit) and Biblical sanction. Though for the Protestants the Scripture embodies the authentic canon, for the Catholics, as decided in the Council of Trent (1545-63), the Scripture and tradition are two distinct authorities. However, an important view is that since the Church itself fixed the canon and the Scripture, it clearly recognised that tradition could no longer be the criterion of truth.

### *Christianity*

Originally, Christianity started only as a reformed Judaism, with Jews having Christian leanings preaching to other fellow Jews. "Christian communities worshipped and operated essentially as Jewish synagogues" for more than a generation. The early Apostles believed that the system had to be confined to the Jews only. Evidently, they could not forget the direction of Jesus, "Go nowhere among the

Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” [Matt: 10:5]. The limitation of the mission is also clear from : “Truly I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes.” [Matt: 10:23]. Further, there is the prophecy of Jesus recorded by Mathew, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me, will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” [Matt: 19:28]. Primarily, because of the felt scope of the mission, there remained a tension between the Apostles at Jerusalem and Paul. “Thus, the Acts show that Paul, despite his gifts, is inferior to the original disciples, a witness of the Resurrection through their own witness, not directly called to the ministry, but ordained by the laying on of their hands.” Initially, the Jerusalem group looked upon Paul, with a certain scepticism. M.E. Marty makes a brief reference to their differences saying, “The clash, the oath, the concern in Paul all indicate how the question of the centrality of Jerusalem becomes itself a symbol of the clash over Law and Gospel, authority and freedom, tradition and renewal.” The chief issue of contention was the scope of the mission, since Apostles in Jerusalem were conservative and insisted on the observance of Jewish ritual Laws in the case of converts to Christianity, “Paul, observing much of the ritual without raising the theological question, showed the Gentile world the idea that freedom from the Law should be attractive. With Paul went Barnabas to face the pillars : John and, even more, James and Peter. Jerusalem held to its basic conservatism; though it would not go out to the Gentile world, it would tolerate the Gentile mission apart from close observance of the ritual Law..... No Jew, born a Jew, could ever turn his back on ritual Judaism. Peter withdrew from his more positive stand and Barnabas wavered. The one Church was two, even in the central supper. In one of the decisive “blasts” of Christian oratory, Paul opposed Peter to his face. “[Gat 2:11] ..... Paul went his own way, almost seeming to disregard restrictions of those who had been Apostles before him. In his trail went “Judaisers” who tried to impose ritual requirement on converts. It was they, and not Paul, that kept the tie to Jerusalem alive.” Paul was always more vocal and critical of the Apostles, “I through the Law died to the Law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but

Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the Law, then Christ died to no purpose.” [Gat 2: 19-21]. Lietzmann opines, “(Paul) therefore, had to be content to combat in principle the influences issuing from Jerusalem, and to rebuke, as firmly as he could, the emissaries who were ruining his churches. He never wrote a single word who gave them authority; nothing about James in Jerusalem; nothing about Peter in Corinth and Rome. He ignored them. But looking more closely, and reading between the lines of his letter, we perceive behind ‘*The Servants of Satan,*’ ‘*The False Apostles,*’ and ‘*The Spurious Brethren,*’ the shadows of the great figures in Jerusalem.”

These serious differences between the Jerusalem Apostles and Paul clearly show not only variant views about the scope of the mission, but also that the first Apostles who had lived and suffered with Christ, distinctly thought that his object was to maintain the Law and to work within its ambit and the Jewish community. Of course, Paul won. It is only when he started including Gentiles without the obligation to observe Mosaic rituals and Laws, that a clear distinction between the two societies took place, and this happened despite the opposition of the Apostolic group.

### *Formulation of the Ideology Starts*

On the ideological side we have already identified two factors that influenced the development of the Christian society, namely, its Judaic heritage and Graeco-Roman culture. Manichaeism, a Christianity oriented system, was a third dualistic ideology in the field. It was also a withdrawal sect that recommended vegetarianism, and preferred celibacy to marriage. Its mention is relevant because St Augustine, the first great Christian theologian, was originally a Manichaean.

#### *Origen (185-254 AD)*

Origen, from Alexandria, was the first well-known theologian of Christianity. It has been suggested that like Plotinus he was also a pupil of Ammonius Saccas, regarded as the founder of Neoplatonism. For him, souls are there since the time of creation, and virtuous souls become a part of Nous, a concept raised by Plotinus. Like men of his times, he accepts the validity of magic and miracles. After Resurrection,

he felt, all spirits would become bodiless. Because of his Neoplatonist and ascetic background, he was quite other-worldly and recommended that Christians should not take part in affairs of the State. They, being part of a divine nation, should do only religious works. He lived as an ascetic and had got himself castrated. As undoubtedly the first important theologian of Christianity, he proclaims the concepts of God, immortality and freewill, as also the divinity of God, Son and the Holy Ghost. He compiled the Old Testament. In a way, it was he who set the other-worldly pace of Christian ideology, which was later fully confirmed by St Augustine in his *City of God*. Apparently, Origen was not so exclusive and narrow, as were some of his successor theologians like St Augustine. For, in line with many of the Jewish prophets, he was universal in saying that ultimately everyone would submit to Christ and be saved, meaning thereby that there would be no permanent hell or eternal damnation. He also did not seem to believe in the complete equality of Father and Son. But, it is significant of the growing exclusivism, parochialism and intolerance of the Christian Church, that later some of his universal views and those about the inequality of Father and Son were declared heretical.

Originally, partly because of their reluctance to join the Army and to accept the Emperor as the representative of God, the Christians suffered considerable persecution and martyrdoms. But, by the third century things started changing. Christ's system was so positive in its approach, that almost in the first three centuries of its life, Christianity exhibited virtually no monastic trends, and this happened despite the fact that the entire religious environment, whether of Jewish withdrawal groups, the Neoplatonists and the Manichaeans, was against participation in the life of the world which stood downgraded.

In this context, three points need to be mentioned. Christ's crucifixion by the State apart, neither the Jerusalem Apostles, nor Paul was in a position to confront the Empire or organize an opposition to it. Second, the good news was that the end of the world and the day of Redemption were near at hand, and except from faith in Christ, other activities were fruitless and in vain. Third, reluctance to oppose the State was presumably based on Christ's reported statements; "My kingdom is not of this world," and, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's." "The New Testament does

not concern itself very often with problems of the secular state. Paul, of course, urged loyalty to the temporal authorities, because they were ordained by God," writes Marty. He adds, "His (Christ's) followers had a higher loyalty, and in momentary expectation of the end, were to make their way in day-to-day existence in the earthly realm of authority. Paul's outline in *Romans 13* goes somewhat further in expression of temporal loyalty, and the late "Petrine" writings are fairly earlier. Even Justin Martyr, an enlightened Christian, remarked, [Apology I, XVII], "The Lord said, 'Pay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, to God what belongs to God.' Therefore, we render worship to God alone, but in all other things we gladly obey you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of earth, praying that in you the royal power may be found combined with wisdom and prudence." Similarly, Martyr Tertullian, a lawyer, (220 CE) assures loyalty to the State saying, "In the Emperor we reverence the judgement of God, who has set him over the nations." [Apology II: XXXII]

But from the middle of the third century CE, the hot winds of persecution started cooling down or became erratic. Gallienus was comparatively a mild ruler. Galevius in 311 CE issued an order of toleration. Finally, in 337 CE Emperor Constantine made the declaration of religious freedom for the Christians and accepted the faith.

It is during these first centuries that gradually the doctrines of the religion and its rituals or sacraments were formulated. In this early period, the Jewish system, rituals and synagogue were the model to be followed, otherwise the Christians observed local customs in clothing, food, and the other aspects of life. But, because of a serious rift with the parent community, and Paul's open departure in giving up adherence to Jewish rituals while including the Gentiles, new practices also came to be formed. Baptism had been started by John who had also baptised Christ. Originally, baptism was not administered straightaway, and a three-year period of probation was the norm. Infant baptism was a very late adoption and ultimately it virtually substituted adult baptism. Under Paul's influence, the form of Didache was altered and circumcision was given up. The importance of the common meal decreased, and bread and wine replaced it at the time of morning service. Wine and bread were believed to represent the blood and flesh of Jesus, who had taken flesh and blood for the salvation

of his followers. The Judaic Sabbath was changed to Sunday. As time passed, rigidity in the observance of infant baptism and other rituals increased. Eternal damnation was the fate of un-baptised infants. These were signs of the system losing its elan, but trying to maintain the form and the position by the threat of curses and punishment hereafter. Rigidity in the observance of rituals always signifies that a culture is either on the decline or on the defence. This happened in the later centuries suggesting the decline of culture. Because, after the empire became Christian, there was no external threat to it, yet rigidity and insistence on form were greater than in the initial centuries.

Except for the Torah, Christianity never inherited a clear-cut canon or doctrines. These had to be formulated. It was a task to be done. Hence, for the purpose, debates and hair-splitting continued for centuries among theologians and scholars. It was only in the middle of the second century that the Epistles of Paul and the four Gospels took shape. "Perhaps by CE 200, they were as broadly accepted as the Old Testament among Christians," "... the canon in its present form was detailed completely for the first (preserved) time by Athanasius in CE 369." The Church regarded "... the body of inspired writings as qualitatively different from all others. It helped constitute doctrinal authority, and made clear a path of salvation." There were competing texts of the New Testament, called "Text types." In the West, the final New Testament text was approved only in the Council of Hippo in 393 CE and of Carthage in 397 CE. This is so far as bare formulation is concerned; as to what were the factors that contributed to the compilation, is an entirely different subject. For, "drawing together the loose ends of scriptures into a canon did not, of course, solve everything. The closed canon remains perpetually open, because it is a product of the Church it helped to produce. The diversity of teachings based upon the same scriptures also suggests enduring difficulties. The New Testaments canon, as such, is not the foundation of the Church's unity. On the contrary, the canon as such, i.e., as a fact as it is available to the historians, is the foundation of multiplicity of confessions."

### *The Emperor Becomes Christian*

After the initial period of suffering in the second and third century, Christians started converting wealthy and influential persons;

and Christianity became a religion of kings and princes. The Emperor becoming a Christian and Christianity becoming the State religion, is a major landmark in its history. Different reasons have been assigned for this decision of Constantine. Obviously, rulers hardly ever take such steps for reasons other than political, pragmatic or purely of self interest. The subsequent history of the Roman Emperors also suggests that.

Some of the reasons indicated by Gibbon and others are : (i) The Christians who were a cohesive group, formed a large section of the Imperial Army; (ii) A belief had gained currency that the Church had some control over the life after death. In fact, this was a trump card which the Popes so often used in their political tussles with the Rulers; (iii) The power of miracles attributed to the Church and its saints; (iv) The cohesion, sense of discipline and moral level of the Christian Community; etc.

After Christianity became the State religion, four developments started taking place. First was a fillip to scholarship and consequent attempts to formulate and standardize the theology and doctrines of the religion. Second was a continuous struggle for power and supremacy between the two major organised institutions, the Church and the State or States. Third, simultaneously started friction and tension within the Church organisation, and rivalry between the Western and the Eastern Churches. Fourth, began a rapid growth of monasteries and nunneries all over the Christian world; and the institutions of monks and mysticism influenced to an extent the ideological developments in Christianity.

### *Attempts at Standardisation of Theology*

During the early four centuries, serious argument continued as to what was Christ's ideology and its metaphysical position. The Christian view of Christ being the Son or an incarnation was at the very beginning criticised by fellow Jews as unworthy on two scores. First, it involved man-worship which was against the Torah and the Judaic tradition. Second, incarnation meant a pantheistic philosophy, and not a theistic one. At times it was suggested that Christ's appearance was angelic and in spirit only. Ignatius objected to it saying that in that case Christ's crucifixion becomes meaningless, being not in blood and flesh. Later, the Logos doctrine was suggested to avoid the

criticism referred above. Whether or not this view met the criticism of pantheism or man-worship, is a different matter, but it was accepted by the Church. Christians have since then been fully satisfied with the explanation.

Since the time Emperor Constantine turned Christian, he became interested in solving all ideological disputes in order to avoid wranglings among his leading co-religionists. Accordingly, he called a conference at Nicaea. The Council accepted the division between the spiritual and the secular worlds, with the superiority of the former, and virtually rejected the Arian views of the Trinity. The final rejection of Arianism took place at the Chalcedone Conference held in 451 AD. It is necessary to state that both these decisions were never fully accepted nor implemented in the entire Christian world. In the East, for all practical purposes, the superiority of the State got a *de-facto* recognition. Nor was the Arian view completely shed. The Arians believed that the Son was not the equal of the Father who had created him. But its opponents believed that Father and Son were not only two separate personalities, but the Son was begotten of the same substance and was His equal in every respect. Constantine and some of the Emperors were halting in accepting this view. It was only Emperor Theodisius (379 AD) who fully endorsed this anti-Arian view. As was perhaps natural with Christianity becoming the State religion, the Christian Church and its theology became rigid and dogmatic. There was so much insistence on the doctrine of equality between Father and Son, that some of Origen's views, which did not believe in equality of the Father and the Son and in eternal hell and damnation, were later declared heretical.

The doctrine that there could be no salvation except through the Christian Church, was endorsed and persists to date. Even Origen's views on many issues were a little different and comparatively liberal. Observance of rituals was made very rigid.

### *The Emperor and the Church*

From the time of Constantine and onwards, the Emperor became virtually the head of the religion and issued decrees to pronounce or enforce its doctrines. This position was always accepted in the East. Even in the West, it was the Emperor who called the Nicene Conference and presided over its critical discussions or

decisions. It was only later that the Emperor's position was questioned. Even, the subsequent Emperors called conferences, and, at the request of the Church, used their secular powers to give effect to their decisions almost as imperial orders. The Emperors also issued religious edicts. Emperor Constantine was trying to unite different groups of the Church and resolve the issue, but Athanasius was reluctant to forgive the repentant Arians. The Emperor, therefore, condemned the factional attitude of Athanasius. Some Bishops were summoned by the Emperor and asked to condemn Athanasius for his stand. When they were reluctant to do so and accept the decision of the Emperor on doctrinal issues, the Emperor said, "Whatever I will, shall be regarded as a canon ... Either obey or go into exile." The Church's claims apart, no one in this period of time objected to the directive influence and interference of the Emperor in purely doctrinal matters. In fact, the precedent of Jewish Kings' support to the doctrines was cited. Christ's words, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's," were also invoked in defence. Even St Augustine got issued a directive against those who did not abide by the decision of the Church.

### *Dichotomy Accepted — Fathers of the Church*

We have already indicated that Christian leaders, including Origen, virtually failed or declined to follow a whole-life system. They interpreted Christ largely according to the views of Jewish withdrawal groups like the Essenes. May be, because of the weak position of the Christian community and hostility of the Jews, they never thought of choosing the whole-life approach, which would have involved confrontation with the State. Perhaps, it was a wise tactical decision, otherwise the community might well have been crushed. In the earlier centuries, the Christians, with a deep faith in Christ, stuck to their beliefs to the point of losing thousands of lives. Their new hope was the belief that redemption was near at hand. We have seen that Origen, the first major theologian of Christianity, interpreted Christianity purely in terms of withdrawal from life. It was a strange contradiction, because the Christian belief in the importance of the family and social cohesion was quite strong, especially because the Judaic heritage was also like that. The significant fact is that almost throughout the first three centuries monasticism hardly had a place in the Christian life.

It is only in the fourth century that the Fathers of the Church, namely, St Ambrose (339-397 CE), St Jerome (342-400 CE), and St Augustine (354-430 CE), laid down the Christian theology for the Church and the community, completely confirming the dichotomous interpretation of Christ's system. The fourth century and the early fifth century are an important period in the theological history of Christianity. This was a period when the Emperors and the Empire became Christian. Later, when the Roman Empire fell, there was a criticism that the change of State religion to Christianity had contributed to the fall of the Empire.

It is in this context that the Fathers of the Church, especially St Augustine, who has been the most distinguished scholar and theologian of the millennium, formulated and expressed their theology. All these three fathers were emphatic that there was dichotomy between the spiritual life and the secular life. They owned and prescribed other-worldly goals and methodology for all religious life. St Jerome himself started life as an ascetic and helped the growth of quietist mysticism. He praised virginity and for him ascetic, withdrawal was more important than confronting the invaders. St Ambrose too was in favour of virginity and opposed widow re-marriage. True, these early Fathers were men of character and great piety, but some of their views were quite self-contradictory. Both St Ambrose and St Augustine insisted on the separation of the world of God from the sinful world of man. As sex was sinful, a family man could never be virtuous. And yet, they insisted on the supremacy of the Church over the Emperor, who was incharge of secular affairs. It was an unfortunate case of exercise of secular powers without the acceptance of the corresponding responsibility. For example, a Jewish synagogue was burnt, and the Count of the East held that it had been done at the instance of the local Bishop. The Emperor ordered that the actual incendiaries should be punished, and the guilty Bishop should rebuild the synagogue. St Ambrose was indignant and opposed the order saying that if the Bishop executed the order, he would become an apostate, and if he opposed it, he would become a martyr. He wrote, "Shall then a place be made for the unbelief of the Jews out of the spoils of the Church, and shall the patrimony, which by the favour of Christ has been gained for the Christians, be transferred to the treasuries of the unbelievers ? But perhaps the cause of discipline moves you, O, Emperor, which then is

of greater importance — the show of discipline, or the cause of religion ? It is needful that judgement should yield to religion.” Religious bigotry without responsibility always leads to arrogance, illogic and cruelty.

St Augustine too fully confirmed the doctrine of other-worldliness and unconcern of the religious man with the affairs of the world. It is stated that “Augustine’s *City of God* (420) attacked both Christians who expected the World to get better and pagans with a cyclic view of history. Augustine did not believe that spread of Christianity would ensure political and economic improvement. The earthly city of self-will would continue to exist amidst the rise and fall of states and Empires.” Actually, St Augustine’s *City of God*, was written as a defence of the Church against the charge made, after the fall of the Roman Empire, that it was the substitution of the Roman worship and ethos by the Christian system that had caused the calamity. It is the same inference as Gibbon draws later. That is why Augustine says that religion has nothing to do with the City of Man, and that we all are congenital sinners who could be saved only by the grace of Christ, Christians being the only elect in the world. Augustine completely absolves the Christians and the Church of their failure to save innocent citizens against rape, plunder, aggression and oppression.

He believes that if parents had not committed sin, posterity would not have died because of their sin. It is the eating of the apple that has brought sin and eternal damnation. And since Christians alone could be saved, those outside the Church are doomed to eternal damnation, torment, and misery. Augustine’s explanation of sin was quite simple, though hardly satisfactory. As we were all born sinful and wicked, punishment was natural. Grace alone could save man. Therefore, no non-Christian could be virtuous or be saved. In short, Augustine virtually believed in a pre-determined world of sin. He, therefore, discarded Origen’s view that ultimately all would be saved and Hell was not eternal. For Augustine God divided the world into the elect and the reprobate, but both were doomed to damnation.

But Pelagius, another ecclesiastic scholar, believed that man had free will and questioned the doctrine of Original Sin; adding that man could go to heaven if he did virtuous deeds. St Augustine also got these views of Pelagius declared as heretical. He observed that Adam had free will only before his fall. Thereafter man’s life was determined because we all inherit Adam’s sin and deserve eternal

damnation from which the Church alone could save us.

St Augustine's views on Christian theology are of great importance. But, one factor regarding his interpretation of Christianity needs to be kept in view while considering its rationale and merit. He wrote his *City of God*, may be, as a defensive measure because Christianity was being blamed for being one of the causes for the fall of Rome. For, the fall took place after Constantine had accepted Christianity as a State religion instead of Roman Systems, and worship. Centuries later, Gibbon, as we have seen, made a similar charge against Christianity for the calamity the Empire suffered. It has, therefore, been felt that Augustine's view that Christianity has nothing to do with this world or the City of Man has been expressed in order to avoid the blame for the decline of the Empire. Augustine completely endorsed the dichotomy between religious and worldly life, as earlier suggested by Jerome and St Ambrose; that the spiritual man has no concern with the affairs of this world.

Referring to St Augustine's *City of God*, Bertrand Russell observes that his logic therein is strange : "Christians who suffered the sack, have no right to complain. Some wicked Goths may have prospered at their expense, but they will suffer hereafter : if all sin were punished on earth, there would be no need of the Last Judgement." Again, "It is suggested that God permitted rapes, because the victims had been too proud of their continence."

He accepts the existence of angels and miracles in the field of eschatology, he virtually maintains the same system as suggested by the pacifist groups among Jews. This he had to do because he stuck to the Jewish myth of Genesis and the Fall of Adam and Eve.

St Augustine and the other Fathers of the Church were very insistent on the proper performance of sacraments and rituals like infant baptism. It is in the context of concluding his chapter on St Augustine that Bernard Russell writes, "It is strange that the last men of intellectual eminence before the dark ages were concerned not with saving civilisation or expelling the barbarians or reforming the abuses of the administration, but with preaching the merit of virginity and the damnation of unbaptised infants. Seeing that these were the pre-occupations that the Church handed on to the converted barbarians, it is no wonder that the succeeding age surpassed almost all other fully historical periods in cruelty and superstition." The lesson is

clear, dichotomy or divorce between the spiritual life and the secular life leads to enervation, pride, self-intoxication and a sense of callous contempt and unconcern for the people in the world.

In the East, the doctrine of Erastianism, namely, that the Church should be subordinate to the State was accepted. But, St Augustine strongly opposed this doctrine so far as the West was concerned. It is, indeed, strange, that although he and his group of theologians wanted separation between the world of God and the incurably sinful world of man, which they were unwilling to partake in or to defend, they insisted on the Supremacy of the Church over the Emperor who was incharge of the secular world and its affairs. It is an evident contradiction that, on the one hand, St Augustine should absolve the Church and Christianity of its responsibility to save people from rape and plunder and for the fall of Rome, and, on the other hand, he should lay down the doctrine of the right of the Church to give directions to the secular authority. Unfortunately, it was a case of the exercise of secular power without acceptance of the corresponding responsibility. This contradiction was amply demonstrated by the illogic of the stand of St Ambrose in the case of the burning of the synagogue by the Bishop as mentioned earlier. For, power without responsibility is always abused.

The religious views of Augustine are very important so as to understand the development of Christian thought and the Church in those centuries. He is the greatest theologian of the earlier period whose ideas were respected and have held the field for almost a thousand years. They have remained almost unchallenged at least till the Renaissance. St Augustine's version of Christianity has been called the epitome of Christian theology. *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church* records, "St Augustine's abiding importance rests on his penetrating understanding of Christian truth." It is doubtful if by any modern or humanitarian assessment St Augustine's views can be rated so highly. Whatever be their value in the context in which they appeared, they are certainly dated. One wonders if he ever did justice to the work and mission of Christ unparalleled as they were. Christ's fundamental dictum, "Love your neighbour as yourself," is unsurpassed in its depth and universality. But, the exclusivism of St Augustine never understood it; much less did he express or expound it. St Augustine's scholarship was remarkable, but there was nothing original

about it. His greatness lies in the fact that at a time when the Church was somewhat on the defensive and was being blamed for reverses of the Empire, he furnished some rational props to justify and maintain the position of the Church *vis-a-vis* the Empire, and the faith of the people. True, the Empire had its own troubles. But modern scholars like R.A. Todd do blame the Church for adding to the problems of the State. First is the evident dichotomy and divided loyalties the Church created. Most men of thought and creativity lost interest in the affairs of the world, and others took to monasticism or to the prestigious, unconstructive and easy life of the Church, where raising the moral tone of society was no one's concern. Christianity in the West instead of confronting the barbarian attacks, accepted them as God's judgement and even reached an understanding with them. Pope Gregory the Great while he despaired about the decaying City of Rome, negotiated an understanding with the invading Lombards, without any imperial authorisation to do so. But, there is one factor for which the Church has to accept the blame. With the Church having large estates, the Church men had become a part of the feudal society generally living a life of ease as an elite. Of the total Church receipts and income at Rome, hardly one fourth was distributed among the poor for whom it was really meant.

With St Augustine, the Catholic ideology was broadly settled for the Roman Church. Disputes with the East on points of ideology and otherwise continued and even conferences were held to sort out those differences and variant views. But, despite the efforts of the Emperors, ideological and political disparities continued. For, the Church at Rome had claimed its apostolic succession and priority.

There have been scholars whose views on some of the fundamentals of the Christian theology have been quite variant with those accepted by the Church. Quite often, all theological differences were sternly dealt with heavy punishments for all kinds of heresy.

### *Growth of Monasticism*

Whenever there is decline in the official Church of a system, monastic trends appear. For, persons with greater religious sensitivities, when they can neither agree with the fall of moral standards of the official Church, nor are in a position to reform it, invariably withdraw into the shell of other-worldliness. Growing

Christianity was becoming a religion of the wealthy and the well-to-do. Christianity was later called a religion of princes and kings. Christ after his crucifixion gave man a whole-life or people's religion. For almost two centuries, it was the people, the masses who fought with their faith. They struggled, suffered and were martyred in thousands — men, women and children. But, slowly and surely, the leaders, the theologians, may be because they were unequal to the task, created a religious system that was divorced from the world or the masses of people. Whether it was Origen, St Paul, St Jerome, St Ambrose or St Augustine, they all promoted a dichotomous system with the City of God having no responsibility for the City of Man, which was supposed to stew in its own juice. That is why it has been felt that Christ's religion of "Love your neighbour as yourself" was derailed.

It is in this context that by the end of the third century monastic centres started appearing, first away from Rome. Monasticism was justified on the words of Jesus, "There are some who are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God." After Christianity became State religion, dichotomy was formalised, and those religious persons who did not want to enter the organised life of the Church, went into monasteries and nunneries. The point of significance is that the appearance of dichotomy preceded far earlier than monasticism. In fact, the first monastery appeared only in a 315-20 CE. This clearly means that monasticism or dichotomy was never indigenous to Christianity. As it was, all external influences, whether of the pacifist groups of Judaism, the Neoplatonists or the Manichaeans, were other-worldly since they were all withdrawal groups, and were unconcerned with the affairs of the society. True, the imperial pressure on the Christian society was a factor that, in the interests of survival, made it non-confrontational and compromising with the State. For, isolationism became a good method of escape. Even Paul made it clear that celibacy favoured the work of the apostolate, and in reference to the State, he was quite polite. Origen definitely recommended non-involvement in State affairs and doing only religious works. Similarly, St Jerome, promoted monasticism. We have indicated that it became a standard achievement of the Church to attract the wealthy and the influential. This naturally diverted the religious-minded persons to isolationism. About this trend M.E. Marty opines, "It is best explained as a reaction against the secularisation of the Church in

the years when it was poised to overtake the Empire.”

From the fourth century onwards, monasteries and nunneries grew all over the Christian world. In the early period, discipline in the monasteries was very rigid and ascetic. But, in later periods, it became comparatively regulated and moderate. While monastic life has been considered to be the path to holiness, the institution has had its critics as well. It is true that compared to the increasing lust and corruption in the Christian society and even in the Church, life in the monasteries was far more Christian in its character. In the mediaeval period, as in the case of the Benedictine Order, a prescribed routine of prayers, duties, labour, service, sleeping hours, etc., had to be followed, and requisite discipline was enforced. This does not mean that indiscipline and intrigue were altogether avoided. There were sometimes incidents of immorality and even murder. The Benedictines, the Dominicans and Franciscans were some of the main orders.

An important contribution of the monasteries has been in the field of education and scholarship. Albert Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Occam, and Scotus are scholars from different orders. Many of the Christian mystics have also been the product of these institutions.

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## THE SIKH WORLDVIEW

### *Introduction*

In order to understand the Sikh worldview, it is necessary to answer a number of questions, namely, (1) what is the spiritual experience of the Gurus about the Fundamental Reality ? (2) what are the logical implications of that religious experience ? (3) how do these implications or ideas differ from those in other religions ? (4) did those ideas govern the course of Sikh religion ? and (5) what future does the Sikh worldview hold for man ? In answering these questions, we shall confine ourselves entirely to the *bani* in Guru Granth Sahib and historically accepted facts about the lives of the Gurus. Many of the misrepresentations about Sikhism arise from the failure of writers to understand Sikhism on the basis of its thesis, or to define Sikhism in terms of doctrines in Guru Granth Sahib. Obviously, in this short paper, we shall only give an outline of the Sikh worldview. We shall start with a definition of the Fundamental Reality or God in Sikhism.

### *God in Sikhism*

The Reality or God has been profusely defined in Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak calls Him "*Karta Purkh*" or "Creator Person", the world being His creation. Apart from being immanent in the world, He is the Ocean of Virtues, i.e., He is a God of Attributes. In defining the fundamental nature of God, the Guru says, "Friends ask me what is the mark of the Lord. He is all Love, the rest He is Ineffable."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the key to understanding the Sikh worldview is that God is Love. And Love has four clear facets : It is dynamic; it is the mother of all virtues and values; it is directive or has a will; and it is benevolent towards life in which He is immanent; i.e., it generates

neither a dialectical movement, nor a class war, nor suicidal competition or struggle.

### *Corollaries of 'God is Love'*

This spiritual experience leads to five corollaries. First, it *ipso facto* gives status, meaning and reality to the world and life, because Love and God's Attributes can be expressed only in a becoming universe. For, when God was all by Himself, the question of love and devotion did not arise. In unambiguous words, the Guru says, "True is He, and true is His creation."<sup>2</sup> Second, it clearly implies that the religious man has to lead a life of creativity and activity. Consequently, a householder's life is accepted and monasticism is spurned. Third, it gives spiritual sanction to the moral life of man, indicating thereby that it should be of the same character as the loving nature of God. For, "Love, contentment, truth, humility and virtues enable the seed of *Naam* (God) to sprout."<sup>3</sup> This clearly prescribes the methodology of deeds. Fourth, it unambiguously points out the direction in which human effort should move, and the yardstick with which to measure human conduct. This sets the goal for the seeker, or Godman. Fifth, it shows the gracious interest of God in human affairs and activities. An important attribute of God is that He is 'Guru' or Enlightener who gives both knowledge and guidance, i.e., spiritual experience is noetic. The Guru's God being a God of Will, one feels confident that one is working in line with His altruistic Will. For, God is perpetually creating and watching the world with His Benevolent Eye.<sup>4</sup> And, He rewards every effort to become divine.<sup>5</sup> For that matter, it gives man hope, strength and optimism.

### *Implication of 'God is Love'*

Here it is necessary to stress that the definition that God is Love, is extremely important for determining the category of Sikh religion. For, all systems in which God is Love, are life-affirming, and there is an integral combination between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man. And, as in the case of Abu Ben Adam, love of one's fellowmen, is the primary and essential counterpart of the love of God. But, in life-negating systems, there is a clear dichotomy between the empirical life and the spiritual life of man. And *sanyasa*, asceticism, monasticism, withdrawal from life, pacifism or *ahimsa*

and celibacy are the normal modes of the spiritual path. Sikhism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity belong to the first category. Jainism and most other Indian systems belong to the second category.

In fact, differences in approach to life are due to the basic difference in the spiritual experience. In the second category of systems like Vaisnavism and Vedanta, God has been defined as *sat-chit-ananda* (truth-consciousness-bliss). This is far from being a dynamic concept. Stace has made a detailed survey of the description various mystics give of the nature of their spiritual experience of the Ultimate Reality. They all give blessedness, tranquility, holiness, unitary consciousness and ineffability as the nature of their spiritual experience.<sup>6</sup> No mystic mentions love as the characteristic of that experience. The distinction is not arbitrary, but real. Huxley says, "The Indians say, the thought and the thinker and the thing thought about are one and then of the way in which this unowned experience becomes something belonging to me; then no me any more and a kind of *sat-chit-ananda* at one moment without *karuna* or charity (how odd that the Vedantists say nothing about love) ..... I had an inkling of both kinds of *nirvana* — the loveless being, consciousness, bliss and the one with love, and, above all, sense that one can never love enough."<sup>7</sup> He also says, "Staying in this ecstatic consciousness and cutting oneself off from participation and commitment in the rest of the world — this is perfectly expressed today in powerful slang, in the phrase 'dropping out.' It completely denies the facts, it is morally wrong, and finally of course, absolutely catastrophic." "Absolutely Catastrophic."<sup>8</sup> Hence, the religious system laid down by the Gurus is radically different from the earlier Indian systems.

### *Consequent Differences with Other Religious Systems of India*

As it is, the Guru's concept of God is quite different from the concept of many of the quietist mystics, or from the Indian concept of *sat-chit-ananda*. We find that Guru Nanak's system follows strictly his spiritual experience and his view of the Attributes of God. And as a Godman, he seeks to follow the line of expression of God's attributes in the world of man. Consequently, in the empirical life, this concept has important implications which stand emphasised in the *bani* and life of Guru Nanak. Hence, Guru Nanak's system and its growth are

entirely different from his contemporary religious systems and their growth.

First, it means, as already pointed out, the reality of the world and the life-affirming character of Sikhism. For, God is not only immanent in the world, He also expresses His Love and Attributes in the empirical world, and casts a Benevolent Eye on His creation. But in Vedanta and other Indian systems, the world is either *mithya*, an illusion, a misery, or a suffering. Second, Sikhism being life-affirming, this, inevitably, involves an integral combination between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man. This constitutes the foundation of the *miri-piri* doctrine laid down by Guru Nanak in his *bani*. In other words, Guru Nanak's system is a whole-life system like Islam and Judaism, which also combine the spiritual and the empirical lives of man. Third, in consequence of it, monasticism, *sanyasa*, asceticism, pacifism and withdrawal from life are rejected, and a householder's life is accepted as the forum of spiritual activities and growth. Logically, monasticism and celibacy go together, and Guru Nanak categorically rejected both of them. Obviously, God's qualities of being 'Shelter to the shelterless', 'Milk to the child', 'Riches to the poor', and 'Eyes to the blind',<sup>9</sup> can be expressed by the Godman only by being a householder and participating in all walks of life, and not by withdrawing from them. The fourth difference follows as a corollary to this and to the rejection of celibacy, namely, equality between man and woman.

In contrast, we find that in life-negating systems, and more especially in the Indian systems, the position on all these four points is essentially different. For them, life is far from real or an arena of spiritual endeavours. The spiritual path and the worldly path are considered separate and distinct. Whether it is Vedanta, Jainism, Buddhism, Vaisnavism or Nathism, asceticism, monasticism, *ahimsa*, *sanyasa* or withdrawal from life into *bhikshuhood* is the normal course. In consequence, celibacy is the rule, and woman is deemed to be a temptress. Dighambra Jains believe that a woman cannot reach *kaivalya* (spiritual summit), and has first to achieve male incarnation.<sup>10</sup> In Buddhism, woman *bhikshus* are deemed second grade compared to male *bhikshus* who are considered senior to them.<sup>11</sup> A male *bhikshu* is not supposed to touch and rescue a drowning woman, even if she were his mother.<sup>12</sup> Sankara calls woman 'the gateway to hell.'<sup>13</sup> Both

Ramanuja and Shankaradeva (a liberal Vaisnava saint) would not admit a woman to be a Vaisnava.<sup>14</sup> The latter stated, "Of all the terrible aspirations of the world, woman is the ugliest. A slight side glance of hers captivates even the hearts of celebrated sages. Her sight destroys prayer, penance and meditation. Knowing this, the wise keep away from the company of woman."<sup>15</sup> *Bhagat Kabir*, we know, is considered a misogynist and calls woman 'black cobra', 'pit of hell' and 'the refuse of the world.'<sup>16</sup> It is well-known that even today in Catholic Christianity, a woman is not ordained as a priest. Against this, Guru Nanak not only sanctioned a householder's life but stated as to, "How can a woman be called impure, when without woman there would be none."<sup>17</sup>

All this has been explained to stress that the basic perceptions about the nature of the spiritual experience and the ontological Reality being different, the spiritual paths, under the two categories of systems, become automatically divergent.

Further, the acceptance of a householder's life has important empirical and socio-political implications. Except for Guru Harkrishan, who died at an early age, every Guru married and led a householder's life. By way of demonstration, this step was essential, otherwise, the entire Indian tradition being different, Guru Nanak's system would have been completely misunderstood and misinterpreted. We are well aware that it is the Naths who questioned Guru Nanak as to how incongruous it was that he was, wearing the clothes of a householder, and at the same time claiming to follow the religious path. Guru Nanak's reply was equally cryptic and categorical, when he said that the Naths did not know even the elementaries of the spiritual path.<sup>18</sup> For this very reason, the Guru did not make his son, Baba Sri Chand, a recluse, his successor.

Regarding the fifth important difference about the goal of life of the religious man, Guru Nanak has made the position very clear in his Japuji. After putting a specific question as to what is the way to be a *sachiara* or a true man, the Guru, while clearly rejecting the method of observing silence, coupled with continuous concentration or meditation, replies that the right method and goal are to carry out the Will of God.<sup>19</sup> And, God being Love and the Ocean of Virtues, His Will is Altruistically Creative and Dynamic. The Sikh goal of life is, thus, to be active and live a creative life of love and virtues.

The goal is not personal salvation, or merger in Brahman, but an ever active life of love. It is in this context that Guru Nanak gives the call, "If you want to play the game of love, then come to my path with your head on your palm; once you set your foot on this way, then find not a way out and be prepared to lay down your head."<sup>20</sup> For him, life is a game of love. It is significant that the same advice was given by Guru Arjun to Bhai Manjh who was then a Sakhi Sarvarya and wanted to be a Sikh of the Guru, "You may go on with the easy path of Sakhi Sarvar worship, because Sikhism is a very difficult path, and unless you are willing to be dispossessed of your wealth and to sacrifice your very life, it is no use coming to me."<sup>21</sup> Exactly, the same call for total commitment and sacrifice was given by Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi Day, 1699, when he created the Khalsa and administered *amrit* to the *Panj Piaras*.

The goal being different, the sixth implication is as to the method to achieve that goal. In Sikhism, the emphasis is on the methodology of deeds. Guru Nanak has made this point very clear when he says in *Japuji*: "Man's assessment in His court is done on the basis of one's deeds",<sup>22</sup> and "It is by one's deeds that we become near or away from God."<sup>23</sup> In order to stress the fundamental spiritual importance of deeds, Guru Nanak says, "Everything is lower than Truth, but higher still is truthful living."<sup>24</sup> In fact, when the Guru defines the *gurmukh* or the superman, he calls him: 'One who always lives truthfully.'

### *Essentials of Sikh Life and Its Differences with Other Systems in Matters of Social Responsibility*

The basic difference between a whole-life system and a dichotomous system is that in the former, every field of life of operation of God, is also the field of operation and responsibility of both the Godman and the seeker. This is the broad approach. Having defined the nature of God and the goal of man, the important issue is what are the essentials of the religious life. In the context explained above, Guru Nanak has fixed specific duties and responsibilities of the religious life. The first is of accepting equality between man and woman. Guru Nanak clearly states, "Why downgrade woman, when without woman there would be none",<sup>25</sup> and "It is she who gives birth to great persons."<sup>26</sup> When the Third Guru created *manjis* or districts

of religious administration, women were appointed in charge of some of them.<sup>27</sup> The second responsibility is of maintaining equality between man and man. This was a direct blow to the social ideology of *Varn Ashram Dharma* which gave scriptural sanction to the hierarchical caste system. Guru Nanak found fault with that ideology saying, "The Vedas make a wrong distinction of caste",<sup>28</sup> and "One cannot be a Yogi by mere wishing, real Yoga lies in treating all alike."<sup>29</sup> He demonstrated the primary importance of treating all as equal by taking, after his enlightenment, Mardana, a low caste Muslim, as his life companion. This meant a total departure from the then existing religious prejudices, not only against lower castes, but also against Muslims who were regarded as *malechhas*. He made it clear that any one wanting to join his society, had, at the very start, to shed all prejudices against inter-religious or inter-caste dining and social intercourse. The revolutionary character of this step could be gauged from the fact that a Ramanuja would throw the entire food as polluted, if any one cast a glance on it while he had been preparing or eating it.<sup>30</sup>

The third social responsibility, Guru Nanak emphasises, is the importance of work. This too, we find, was something opposed to the then prevalent religious practice. Evidently, other-worldliness, *sanyasa* and monasticism excluded the religious necessity of work and sustaining the society. In fact, the Naths who were then the principal religious organisation in Punjab took a vow never to engage themselves in any work or business.<sup>31</sup> But Guru Nanak says, "The person incapable of earning his living gets his ears split (i.e., turns a Nath Yogi) and becomes a mendicant. He calls himself a Guru or saint. Do not look up to him, nor touch his feet. He knows the way who earns his living and shares his earnings with others."<sup>32</sup> The Guru deprecates the Yogi who gives up the world, and then is not ashamed of begging at the door of the householders.<sup>33</sup> The fourth social responsibility Guru Nanak stresses is about the sharing of wealth. He states, "God's bounty belongs to all, but men grab it for themselves."<sup>34</sup> "Man gathers riches by making others miserable."<sup>35</sup> "Wealth cannot be gathered without sin, but it does not keep one's company after death."<sup>36</sup> All this clearly condemns exploitative collection of wealth. The story of Guru Nanak rejecting the invitation of Malik Bhago, a rich person exploiting the poor, but accepting the hospitality of Lalo, a poor labourer,

illustrates the same point as stressed in his *bani*.

Thus, the twin ideas about the brotherhood of man and the sharing of wealth to eliminate poverty and maintain equality in society are stressed by Guru Nanak. Even after his missionary tours, Guru Nanak took to the role of a peasant for the last 18 years of his life. It is significant that till the time of the Sixth Guru, when social and military duties of the leadership and organisation of the Sikh society became quite heavy and absorbing, every Sikh Guru had been doing a vocation or business to support his family.

The fifth social responsibility, where Guru Nanak radically departed from all the contemporary religious systems, including Sufism, Santism and Christianity, was his approach towards injustice and oppression of all kinds in society. He made a meticulous study of injustice and corruption, aggression and incongruity in every field of life. He pointed out the greed and hypocrisy of Brahmin priests and Mullahs, the 'blood thirsty corruption' and injustice by lower and higher-rung officials in the administration, the misrule, oppression and irresponsibility of the local rulers, their inability to give security, fairplay and peace to the people, and brutal and barbaric butchery of the people. All this was not just idle rhetoric, but a diagnostic assessment of the prevailing turmoil and conditions in the society, which the Guru felt, needed to be changed. It needs to be emphasised that in Guru Nanak's ideology, there was nothing like private or personal salvation. Just as God of Love is benevolently looking after the entire world, in the same way, the Godman's sphere of activity and responsibility is equally wide, and is unhedged by any self-created barriers. This is, as we shall see, a fundamental difference between a salvation religion catering for individuals, and a universal religion catering for the spiritual well-being of society as a whole.

Here it is very relevant to give, as recorded by Bertrand Russell, the contrasted approach of St Augustine, one of the greatest exponents of the Christian gospel and author of *City of God*. Russell concludes : "It is strange that the last men of intellectual eminence before the dark ages were concerned, not with saving civilization or expelling the barbarians or reforming the abuses of the administration, but with preaching the merit of virginity and the damnation of unbaptized infants. Seeing that these were the preoccupations that the Church handed on to the converted barbarians, it is no wonder

that the succeeding age surpassed almost all other fully historical periods in cruelty and superstition.”<sup>37</sup> Whereas Guru Nanak meticulously points out every dark spot in the religious and socio-political life of his times, St Augustine is simply unconcerned with socio-political conditions of his period. For, “Augustine’s *City of God* (426) attacked both Christians who expected the world to get better and pagans with a cyclic view of history. Augustine did not believe that the spread of Christianity would ensure political and economic improvement. The earthly city of self-will would continue to exist amidst the rise and fall of states and empires.”<sup>38</sup>

Another important fact is Guru Nanak’s criticism in *Babar Vani* of the brutalities and massacres perpetrated and misery caused by the invaders. He condemns them in the strongest terms and complains to God for allowing the weak to be trampled upon by the strong.<sup>39</sup> This hymn has an extremely important lesson, which many of us have missed. For, anything which is within the sphere of His creation and the responsibility of God, is certainly within the sphere of responsibility of the Godman. The hymn has four implications; first, that injustice and oppression are violative of the Order of God; second, that as the Master and God of Love, harmony has to be maintained by His Will; third, that, as the instrument of God, it is the spiritual duty and responsibility of the Godman to confront all kinds of injustice; and, fourth, that, as such, resistance to oppression was a task and a target laid down by the Guru for the religious society he was organising. Because, it is Guru Nanak who defines God as ‘Destroyer of the evil-doers’,<sup>40</sup> ‘Destroyer of demoniacal persons’,<sup>41</sup> ‘Slayer of the inimical’,<sup>42</sup> and ‘Protector of the weak.’ Such being the God of Guru Nanak, it is equally the responsibility of the Godman, *gurmukh*, or the Sikh to carry out His Will which is just and altruistic.

In short, in Guru Nanak’s system to ensure equality and fair play and to react against injustice and aggression, become the religious duty and responsibility of the Sikh. Since the dawn of civilisation, the greatest oppression and injustice have undeniably been done by the rulers, the State, or the Establishment who have possessed all the instruments of power and coercion. It is impossible for individuals to confront such power. This leads to two important inferences. First, that in a whole-life system like Sikhism, which combines spiritual life with the empirical life of man and accepts the *miri-piri* doctrine,

the religious man must, as a religious duty, resist and confront injustice, wherever it takes place. Second, that such a religious man should not only be cognizant of such injustice, but also organise a society that should be in a position to face the challenge of such injustice and oppression. This follows logically both from Guru Nanak's *bani* and his system. This also explains why from the very beginning of his mission, he started organising the Sikh societies at places which he visited and how the societies were logically linked and developed by his successors into the *Panth*. These aspects are very significant and important about his society and religion. It is obvious to every student of the *Adi Granth* that so far as the ideology is concerned, it had been completely laid down in the *bani* of Guru Nanak. But what was lacking was the presence of a properly motivated and responsible society that should be in a position to successfully discharge the responsibility of reacting against injustice and oppression prevalent in his times.

There is another important and related issue. Having cast on his society the responsibility of confronting injustice, again it is Guru Nanak who eliminates the hurdle of *ahimsa* or pacificism that stood as a bar against the religious man or a religious society trying to confront socio-political aggression. Among Vaisnavas, Jains, Buddhist Bhikshus, Naths, or Radical Sants like Kabir, *ahimsa* is deemed to be a cardinal virtue and meat eating is a prohibition. These religious persons are all from life-negating systems, with personal salvation as the ideal. But a society that has to accept the social responsibility of confronting injustice cannot remain wedded to the hurdle of *ahimsa*. For, reason and force are both neutral tools that can be used both for good and evil, for construction and destruction. That is why Guru Nanak says, "Men discriminate not and quarrel over meat eating, they do not know what is flesh and what is non-flesh, or in what lies sin and what is not sin",<sup>43</sup> and that "there is life in every grain of food we eat."<sup>44</sup>

### *Role of Later Nine Gurus*

In a country, which for over 2000 years had been trained in religious systems involving clear dichotomy between spiritual and empirical life, and which had accepted *ahimsa* as a fundamental value and individual salvation as an ideal, it was no easy task to create a mature society with the new motivation of religious responsibility of

always fighting injustice and oppression in all spheres of life.

It is very significant that Guru Nanak laid the foundations of every institution that was later developed and matured by his successors. By starting the institution of *langar* (common kitchen) and taking Mardana as his life companion, he gave a heavy blow to the divisive institution of *Varn Ashram Dharma*, pollution and caste. He created a separate Sikh society with their own *dharmasalas* as centres of religious worship and training. He sanctified the role of the householder as the medium of religious expression and progress, and made it plain that work was a necessity of life, and idleness a vice. He emphatically made it clear that to fight injustice and oppression is an essential duty of the religious man and the religious society. For that end, while he created a new society with a new ideology, he also removed the hurdle of *ahimsa*, so that his society could discharge its socio-religious responsibility without any unwanted inhibitions and impediments in its path. And since the new society had not yet been fully organised and developed, and had yet to be properly oriented to enable it to discharge its responsibilities, he also created the institution of succession. It is very significant of the social and societal aims of Guru Nanak that after passing the succession to Guru Angad, when he found him to be living a somewhat solitary life, he reminded him that he had to be active since he had to organise a society or *Panth*.<sup>45</sup>

In the time of the Second, Third and Fourth Guru, four important steps were taken. Through the creation of 22 *manjis* or districts of religious administration, the Sikh society was organised into a separate religious *Panth*. But, the most important and difficult part of the task was the creation of new motivations and the acceptance of the new life-affirming religious ideals of Guru Nanak. For, these were radically new in their approach, implications and goals. The stupendous nature of the task of the Gurus can be judged from the fact that even today great Hindus, like Jadunath Sarkar, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, and Christians like McLeod, Cole, Toynebee and the like, all coming from pacifist traditions and conditioned by them, find it difficult to understand the spiritual role of the Sixth and the Tenth Master.

The Third Guru created new institutions which had the dual purpose of weaning the Sikhs away from the old Hindu society and

of conditioning them in new values, ideals and practices. For example, while Guru Nanak had bypassed his recluse son, Sri Chand, for the same reasons, the Second and the Third Guru avoided persons of ascetic tendencies from entering the Sikh fold. The institution of *langar*, with the dual purpose of feeding the poor and of eliminating the caste and status prejudices and distinctions, was strengthened. Finally, the important religious centre of Darbar Sahib and the town of Amritsar were founded and developed for the periodical meetings of the Sikh society and visits of the Sikhs to the Guru. The object of all this was to establish a separate historical identity of the Sikhs and to wean them away from the traditional society, its centres of pilgrimage, and its religious practices and rituals. Not only had they to be trained in the essentials of a new religious system, but they had to be taken out of the strangle-hold of the Brahmin priests claiming to be the sole medium of religious growth, practice and interpretation.

Then came the stage of the Fifth Guru who created and installed the Sikh Scripture as the revealed and final doctrinal authority. The system of *daswandh* (giving 10% of one's earnings for the cause of the community) was organised. Sikhs were initiated into trading in horses, so that the transition to the next stage of militancy could become smooth. As the instrument of God on earth, the Sikhs called their Guru, 'True Emperor.' In the time of the Fifth Guru, the Sikh society had become 'a State within a State',<sup>46</sup> and had developed a social identity which had caught the eye of the Emperor, who considered it an unwanted socio-political growth. By his martyrdom, the Guru not only strengthened the faith and determination of the community, but also sought confrontation with the Empire, leaving instructions to his son to begin militarisation of the Sikhs. In the process, the Sixth Guru even recruited mercenaries to train his people. This phase of martyrdom and confrontation with the Empire was continued by the subsequent Gurus till Guru Gobind Singh did, as recorded by his contemporary Kavi Sainapat, the epitomic work of starting the institutions of *amrit* and the Khalsa.<sup>47</sup> Having felt that the *Panth* had become mature and responsible enough, the Guru created the Khalsa in 1699, and requested the *Panj Piaras* to baptise him.<sup>48</sup> It is significant that at that time all the Guru's sons were alive, meaning thereby that Guru Nanak's mission had been completed and thereafter the succession was not to be continued. And, finally, the Guru made

Guru Granth Sahib the Everlasting Guru of the Sikhs.<sup>49</sup>

Let us have a rapid look back to find out if the five tasks indicated by Guru Nanak had been accomplished. First, the Sikhs had been formed into a distinct new religious society with a Scripture of its own, being the full repository and complete and final guide of the Sikh ideology and its way of life. This separateness was made total by Guru Gobind Singh's *Nash* doctrine of five freedoms — *Dharam Nash*, *Bharam Nash*, *Kul Nash*, *Karam Nash* and *Kirt Nash*.<sup>50</sup> This means freedom from the bonds of old religions and traditions, of earlier superstitions and prejudices, of earlier acts and of restrictions in choice of trade or calling, or in professional mobility. The Tenth Master made a complete break with the earlier traditions and societies. Second, it was a society of householders, rejecting all kinds of otherworldliness, idleness and monasticism. Third, it was a casteless society with complete fraternity among its members. Men from the lowest and Sudra castes rose to be its leaders. The contrast is evident from the fact that while the Sikhs have never had Brahmin leaders, in India after Independence in 1947, the Prime Minister and practically every Chief Minister was a Brahmin. Fourth, it was a society which was fully earthaware; and habits of work, production and service became ingrained among its members. Begging was considered a disgrace in its social ethos. The fifth social responsibility discharged by the Sikhs was to free the country from the curse of a thousand-year wave of invaders from the North-West. Though the Sikhs were subjected over the years to the worst persecution in Indian history, yet they suffered it and emerged triumphant. And, finally, they were able once and for all to stem that tide. They have been trained to react against wrong, injustice and oppression. A society has been created with the ideal of a *Sant-Sipahi* (Saint-Soldier).

### *Manmukh to Gurmukh : The Guru's Concept of Evolution of Man*

Here, it is necessary to state the *manmukh-gurmukh* concept, which is essential for understanding the Sikh worldview. As the Gurus say, over millions of years life has evolved into man from a tiny speck of life. The Guru says, "For several births (you) were a mere worm, for several births, an insect, for several births a fish and an antelope", "After ages you have the glory of being a man."<sup>51</sup> "After

passing through myriads of species, one is blest with the human form.”<sup>52</sup> “God created you out of a drop of water and breathed life in you. He endowed you with the light of reason, discrimination and wisdom.”<sup>53</sup> “O man, you are supreme in God’s creation; now is your opportunity, you may fulfil or not fulfil your destiny.”<sup>54</sup> At its present stage of development, man is, without doubt, better equipped than other animals, in so far as he has a higher sense of discrimination. But, as an ego-conscious being, he is still an animal, being a *manmukh*. This implies that whatever be human pretensions, man is basically and organically a self-centred being. His psyche is governed by an egoistic consciousness, that being his centre of awareness, control and propulsion. Because of his present inherent limitations of ego-consciousness, it is virtually impossible for man to avoid conflict, aggression, and wars. But the Gurus clearly hold out hope for man. There are four stages of evolution or development. The Guru says, “God created first, Himself, then *haumain*, third, *maya* (multifarious things and beings) and fourth, the next higher stage of the *gurmukh* who lives truthfully.”<sup>55</sup> The Gurus clearly say that it is human destiny to reach the fourth stage and to meet God, or to be a *gurmukh*, or one who is in tune with the fundamental Reality or Universal Consciousness, God, *Naam*, or Love. His ideal is not merger in God or salvation, or union as an end in itself. Being the instrument of, or in touch with God’s Altruistic Consciousness, he is spontaneously benevolent, compassionate, creative and loving. It is very important to note that the *gurmukh* or superman is not a quietist, he ‘lives truthfully.’ He lives as did the ten Gurus. For, Guru Nanak was called just a *gurmukh*. This is the next higher stage of evolution towards which life is striving and not towards darkness and death as materialist scientists would have us believe. Nor does Sikhism accept any concept of the basic sinfulness or fall of man from grace. It only indicates the constitutional weakness, immaturity or imperfection of man at his present stage of the evolutionary process or development. Hence, it gives us an ideology of optimism and hope, invoking and exhorting us to make moral effort.

### *Survey of Higher Religions*

Before we draw our conclusions, let us make a brief survey of some religious ideologies of the world and find the place of Sikhism

among them. There are four clear religious ideologies that are current today.

### *Dichotomous Religions*

First is the category of religious systems like Buddhism, Jainism, Nathism, Vaisnavism and Vedanta, in which there is clear dichotomy between the spiritual life and the empirical life. Monasticism, *sanyasa*, otherworldliness, celibacy, yogic meditation and *ahimsa* are the common but important features of this category. They hold out no hope for man, except by withdrawal from life and yogic or one-point meditation. In each case, it is a path of personal salvation without any involvement in the socio-political affairs of man. Practically, all the Indian religions, except Sikhism, belong to this category.

### *Judaism*

Second is Judaism which has a long and chequered history. Basically, it is a system in which there is no dichotomy between the religious life and the empirical life of man. Prophet Moses who got the revelation, was both a religious and political leader. His Torah or Commandments and Laws prescribe and govern the entire gamut of the spiritual and temporal life of the Jews. It is a system that prescribes rules governing the conduct of prayer, rituals, sacrifices and their socio-political life. The renowned Hillel when asked to explain the 613 commandments of the Torah, replied, "Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. That is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary, go and learn it."<sup>56</sup> In short, it is basically a life-affirming system. It makes no distinction between the spiritual and the socio-political life of man. The Torah governs every aspect of it. As to the means of resistance, Judaism recommends the use of force by saying, "Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth", and indicates rules for a righteous fight.<sup>57</sup> But, over its long history including the period of the prophets, this aspect of its principle has, to an extent, been altered, or changed at least by some sects of the community. At the time of the Babylonian attack (Sixth Century B.C.) on Palestine, Prophet Jeremiah strongly recommended non-resistance or pacifism. He asserted that the attack was God's punishment to the Jews for their non-observance of His Laws.<sup>58</sup> His assertion was something like Mahatma Gandhi's

statement that the Bihar earthquake was a punishment to the Hindus for their practice of untouchability. However, over the centuries thereafter, many religious sects of Jews like Essenes, Kabbalists, Hasidists, Therapeutics,<sup>59</sup> and even some Pharisees accepted the principle of non-resistance, pacificism, withdrawal and otherworldliness. Even monastic and celibate cults appeared among Jews, discarding both the world and the use of force. This important change, in a basic religious principle, we believe, came about in this religion in later parts of its history, when Judaism was unable to cope with challenges from the socio-political environment, and their religious fervour had been exhausted. Practically, all these otherworldly sects appeared after the destruction of the First Temple and the fall of Jerusalem, when thousands of Jews were driven out as exiles and slaves to Babylonia. We wish to stress that these fundamental changes in Judaic ideology, including otherworldly or monastic sects, appeared only during the lean period of Jewish history. This happened about eight centuries after the revelation of Moses, and after the heydays of Jewish life in the times of David and Solomon. But, it is very significant that despite the presence of somewhat pacifist or otherworldly cults and sects in Judaism, and despite about 2500 years of suffering and travail, the idea of Zionism, a virtual revival of earlier non-pacifist ideals, strongly reappeared in Judaism in the last century. And it is an important fact that Einstein, who says that his life was spent 'between politics and equations' was a staunch Zionist. So much so, that when Israel was formed he was offered its presidency.<sup>60</sup> However, apart from this apparent doctrinal ambivalence in its ideology, Judaism is a highly exclusive religion, not quite universal in its character, affinities and approach.

### *Christianity*

The Judaic heritage of Christianity is undoubted. As in Judaism, in Christianity, too, there is, in principle, no dichotomy between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man. For, Christ emphasises both loving God with all one's heart, and loving one's neighbour as oneself.<sup>61</sup> But like Buddha, he also emphasises the pacifist principles, 'resist not evil' and 'turn the left cheek if hit on the right.' Religious history demonstrates that pacifist religions almost invariably become otherworldly, even if they were life-affirming in the beginning.

Because of their religious pacifism, the Christians declined to take up service in the Roman army. In fact, historians like Gibbon and Sir James Frazer have mentioned Christian otherworldliness as one of the major causes of the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>62</sup> It is obvious that Christianity, which, like Judaism, was a religion of householders, showed, by the beginning of the 4th century AD, clear monastic trends.<sup>63</sup> Increasingly, monasteries and nunneries appeared as a significant development in the Christian religion. This life of monasticism, asceticism and nunneries led, on the one hand, to otherworldly quietist mysticism, and, on the other hand, to corruption and malpractices in the Catholic Church.

Consequent to this schism in the life of the Christian Church, ultimately arose the Reformation, causing a major blow to the supremacy of the Church and its role as the guiding moral force in the life of the Christian society. Lutheran and Calvinist reforms not only shattered the universal character of the Church, but also brought about its subordination to the national State. In addition, because of Luther's leanings towards the feudal princes, he took a very hostile and feudalistic stand against the rights of the peasantry. This landslide in the fortunes of the Church caused its gradual waning as a major moral influence in the socio-political life of the Christian societies. After the rise of science, which was considered to be the new elixir, it came to be believed that it would, in course of time, cure most human ills. The net result is that in the last 300 years, Renaissance, scientism, empiricism and secularism have virtually eliminated religion from the moral life of man in the West.

Toynbee says, "This transfer of allegiance from the Western Christian Church to the parochial Western secular state was given a positive form borrowed from the Graeco-Roman civilization by the Renaissance." "This unavowed worship of parochial states was by far the most prevalent religion in the Christian society."<sup>64</sup> Since the loss of supremacy of religion in the Christian society, Western life has lost its moral moorings. Nationalism, communism and individualism have been the unstable offsprings of this broken home. "Together with Darwinism, secularism and positivism, they have dehumanised the Western culture, reducing liberalism to a self-serving, highly competitive individualism."<sup>65</sup> By relegating religion to the background and having lost the moral springs of the Western culture,

either utilitarian ethics has been accepted as an expedient substitute or a reductionist search has been made to find appropriate ethical elements in the life of the animals, or in the material base of man which is considered to be its fundamental constituent. And this search has finally come to the dismal conclusion that all ethical life is 'a defence mechanism' or a 'reaction formation' to the impacts of the environment. After the Second World War, a third of the population of the world was living under the Communist system. As the century is closing, these countries find that despite the myth of dialectical movement and synthesis, the system has been unable to make any synthetic values or devise a system of ethics which is able to maintain cohesion within these societies. And it is the existence of this moral vacuum that made the Foreign Secretary of the Soviets proclaim that 'universal values should have priority over class, group or other interests.'<sup>66</sup> The warning remained unheeded, and the Russian Empire has collapsed, purely because of its inability to build internal cohesion. At the ethical plane, this decries, in a way, the validity of Darwinism, and its struggle for existence, and Marxism with its dialectical movement of class struggle. It involves equal condemnation of economic wars, cut-throat competition, consumerism and increasing disparities in capitalist societies.

From the point of view of internal cohesion, the position in the capitalist countries of the West is no better. Mounting number of divorces, broken homes, drug addiction, alcoholism, and individualism have created such a situation in North America, which made the Christian Church raised a strong voice saying that secularism was a common danger and needed to be eliminated as a social force, and that Christianity should seek the co-operation of other religions to combat its evil influence. Christianity had given to the empirical life in the West its cohesion, strength and elan; the divorce of religion from politics and the empirical life, has left secularism a barren institution without any hope of a creative future. This is the tragedy both of communism and capitalism. It is this tragedy with its dark future that the North American Churches wanted to avoid. But in the temper of the times, this voice of sanity was drowned in an exhibition of suicidal egoism of the European Churches who felt that "Secularization, not secularism, is the primary process. It is a process in which some of the values of Christian faith have been put into a

secular framework, bringing about a powerful force which is destroying all old ideas. Hence, secularization is an ally, because it will destroy Hinduism, Islam and other forms of what they considered to be superstition. So, we should ally ourselves with secularization and see it as the work of God." Later, it was again repeated : "We do not feel that we have anything lacking. And so we are opposed to dialogue unless it is for the sake of testifying to Jesus Christ." "That was it. Then they passed a resolution saying that under no circumstances should multi-religious dialogues be undertaken because multi-religious dialogues put Christianity on the same level as other religions, and this is unacceptable. So, because the European Christians had that point of view, the World Council of Churches has not been able to engage in multi-religious dialogues for quite some time."<sup>67</sup>

This is the state of affairs of the moral life of man in Western countries that lead the dominant culture of our times. Recently, however, some priests in Latin America have raised a voice for an integrated and composite culture of Liberation Theology, invoking the Bible in support of a revolutionary struggle to help the poor. Father C. Torres states, "The Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in mortal sin."<sup>68</sup> Theologian Moltmann says, "Political theology wants to awaken political consciousness in every treatise of Christian theology. Understood in this way, it is the premise that leads to the conclusion that, while there may be naive or politically unaware theology, there can be no apolitical theology." He concludes, "The memory of Christ crucified compels us to a political theology."<sup>69</sup> But these are still minority voices in the Christian world.

### *Islam*

Islam started with a full-blooded combination between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man. It is this combination that swept everything before it and created an epoch which is unrivalled in its achievements. It is a religious system and culture, which is, in many respects, more comprehensive and unified than the parochial culture of the city states of Greece. It is hardly complimentary to the Christian world of the West that while today it seeks to fashion many of its cultural institutions on the basis of Greek classical models, yet these, but for the interlude of the Islamic epoch which preserved most

of the Greek thought, would have been lost to posterity. Never was the concept of human brotherhood advanced, in thought and deed, on a scale as during this epoch. It speaks volumes for the liberalism of Islamic culture that the heydays of the Judaic literature, philosophy and thought synchronise with the countries and periods of Islamic rule. Not only were some of the Jewish classics written, but Maimonides, the king of Judaic philosophy, also flourished and wrote during the Muslim rule. As against it, under Christian rulers, the Jews suffered periodical massacres, persecution and the segregated life of the ghetto. Admittedly, the Muslim rulers were, by comparison, quite liberal towards the followers of other religions. Islamic contribution to the scientific thought of the day was significant. But far more important is the contribution of men like Al Qushairi, Al Ghazali and Arbi to the religious thought of man.

There is, however, little doubt that mystic quietism and otherworldliness of Sufis is a growth that appeared during the time of later Caliphs, when they indulged in luxurious and un-Islamic living. It has happened in the case of Judaism and of Islam, both whole-life religions, that in times when religiously sensitive souls found it difficult to face the social or socio-political challenges, they withdrew themselves into the shell of quietism, otherworldliness, monasticism and asceticism. Sufi sects appeared all over the Muslim world, but they never posed a challenge to the oppression and misrule of the Muslim emperors or kings. In this respect, the Jewish prophets were quite bold in their criticism of Jewish rulers, including David and Solomon.

It is very significant, and shows the lofty spiritual status of the Sikh Gurus and the basic ideological affinity between the two religions, that a Sufi saint like Pir Buddhu Shah fought and sacrificed two of his sons for the cause of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>70</sup> But it was the Sikh Gurus and not the Sufis who challenged the growing Mughal tyranny. This instance demonstrates that although as an organisation, Sufis had become otherworldly and failed to confront the major challenge of societal oppression in the Muslim empires, yet when the Sikh Gurus had actually taken up the challenge and the ideological struggle was on, the Sufi saint made it clear that, considering the tenets of Islam, on which side should be the sympathies of a pious person.

There are, however, some scholars like Iqbal and Abdus Salam

who believe that like the otherworldliness of the Christians, as in the case of the Roman Empire, Sufis also became a significant cause of the decline of the Muslim cultural supremacy in the world. For, there is considerable truth in Dr Mohammad Iqbal's couplet : "Whether it be the facade of a great republic, or the domain of a glorious empire, if its polity is divorced of the religious component, the system is reduced to sheer Changezian barbarity and tyranny." Thoughtful and saner elements in the Muslim world seem to be disillusioned with the bankrupt Western Secularism, and are trying to revert to a reformed and composite culture of Islam.

### *Religious History and Creation of the Khalsa*

In our brief survey, we have indicated four categories of religious systems. The Indian systems are all dichotomous. To the second category belongs pacifist Christianity which, though it originally suggested the love of one's neighbour as oneself, has gradually but ultimately reduced itself to sheer Secularism, Individualism and Consumerism, bereft of any religious component. To the third category belong Judaism and Islam which started with a full-blooded combination of the spiritual life with the empirical life, but ultimately, under pressure of circumstances, bifurcated, on the one hand, into otherworldliness or mystic quietism, and, on the other hand, into the pursuit of worldly gains and sheer animal survival.

Sikhism belongs to a different or a fourth category of the religious systems. For the purpose of understanding, clarity and comparison, it will help us if we recapitulate the salient features of Sikhism. The Gurus say that the Basic Reality is creative and free. It has a Direction and a Will. It is the Ocean of Values, Destroyer of evil-doers, Benevolent and Beneficent. That Reality is Love and we can be at peace with ourselves and the world only if we live a life of love and fall in line with the Direction of that Reality. Though ego is God created and man is at present at the ego-conscious (*manmukh*) stage of development, it is his destiny to evolve and reach the stage of Universal or God-consciousness and work in line with His Altruistic Will, i.e., achieve the *gurmukh* stage of development, when alone he can 'be spontaneously moral' and 'live truthfully.' At the present, or the egoistic stage of his development, man cannot avoid conflicts and suicidal wars. It is a futile search to try and find the moral base of

man either in the animal life or in the material constituents of man. Nor can reason, which is just a tool of the egoistic psyche, like any other limb of the individual, devise and give man a helpful ethics. God or the Basic Reality, which is Love, can alone be the source of the moral life of man. Ultimately, it is only God or *Naam*-consciousness, involving link with the Basic Fount of Love, that can lead to truthful living. That is why the Guru says, "*Naam*-consciousness and ego-consciousness cannot go together."<sup>71</sup> The two are contradictory to each other. It is a hymn of fundamental significance. For, ego-consciousness means man's alienation from the basic Force of Love. And, greater the alienation or isolation of man from his spiritual and moral source, the greater would be his drive towards destruction. Secularism as an institution represents that egoistic isolation. This trend, the Guru says, is inconsistent with the path towards link with the Universal Consciousness, the spring of moral life. The Gurus have given a lead to man in this field. Ten Gurus or ten *gurmukhs*, lived the life of God-consciousness. In one sense, it is the life of one *gurmukh* completing a demonstration and furthering the progress of life and its spiritual evolution and ascent. Guru Nanak's thesis involved the integration of the spiritual life of man with his empirical life. This integration has to enrich life and society. Because of the earlier cultural and religious tradition, it took ten lives for Guru Nanak, the *gurmukh* or *Sant-Sipahi*, to demonstrate his thesis and role, and discharge his social responsibilities.

These socio-spiritual responsibilities involved not only the creation of a society motivated with new ideas, but also the completion of the five tasks Guru Nanak had indicated as targets before himself and his society. With every succeeding Guru, the ideal of *gurmukh* or *Sant-Sipahi*, as laid down and lived by Guru Nanak, unfolded itself progressively. It is a path of love, humility, service, sacrifice, martyrdom and total responsibility as the instrument of God, the basic Universal Consciousness moving the world.

A question may be asked as to why there have been ten incarnations of Guru Nanak in Sikhism, while in other religions there have generally been only one prophet. To us, four reasons appear quite obvious. First, in a society in which dichotomous religions stand deeply embedded and established for over three thousand years and which claims to have contributed asceticism and monasticism to

the cultures of the rest of the world, it was not easy for a whole-life religion with its *miri-piri* concept to be acceptable and take firm roots in one generation. Second, the Sikh ideology did not involve individual salvation, or a *gurmukh* just living truthfully; but it also involved compulsively the creation of a society motivated with new aspirations and ideals. And this new orientation and conditioning could be done only by the process of creating a new ideology, embodying it in a new scripture, organising new institutions, socio-religious practices and centres of the new faith, and inspiring people, by the method of martyrdoms, into accepting a new ethical standard or morality and values. For, as Ambedkar<sup>72</sup> and Max Weber have stated, the Hindu society cannot be reformed from inside, and rid itself from the unjust system of caste and untouchability, because the *Varn Ashram Dharma* has the sanction of *Shashtras* and scriptures; and a Hindu while making caste distinctions and exhibiting caste prejudices never feels any moral guilt or abhorrence. Instead, he feels a real sense of religious and moral satisfaction that he is observing his *Dharma* and *Shastric* injunctions. Hence, the inevitable necessity of creating a new ideology and Scripture with a new religious and socio-moral code of conduct. Third, even if the ideology and institutions had been there, the Sikh society would, like some reformed societies, soon have reverted to the parent society, if it had not successfully achieved the social targets discussed above, including those of creating a fraternal society of householders, of dislodging the political misrule, and sealing the North-Western gate of India against the invaders.

The fourth reason appears to be very important. Our survey of the major religions of the world shows that revealed systems which start with a combination of the spiritual life with the empirical life and even with clear social objectives, over a period of time, either shed their social ideals and become pacifist, otherworldly, or a salvation religion, or become dichotomous, bifurcating, on the one hand, into monasticism, and, on the other hand, into either political misrule and tyranny or sheer secularism. Sikhism does not stand any such danger of ideological decline or bifurcation, because of its gradual and firm ascent and unfolding. It shows the prophetic vision of Guru Nanak that he not only profusely and clearly defined all aspects of his life-affirming and integrated ideology, but also detailed the targets his society had to achieve. He laid the firm foundations of the institutions

and the socio-religious structure his successors had to develop and complete. Guru Nanak defined his God not only as the Ocean of Virtues, but also as a *Sant-Sipahi* or the Destroyer of the evil-doers; and the ideal he laid down for the seeker was to be the instrument of the Will of such a God. Guru Arjun gave instructions to his son to militarise the movement and thereafter, as was explained by Guru Hargobind to Sant Ramdas,<sup>73</sup> his sword was for the protection of the weak and the destruction of the tyrant. While Guru Arjun, the first martyr of the faith, had confrontation with the empire and gave orders for militarisation, the subsequent five Gurus manifestly proclaimed and practised the spiritual ideal of *Sant-Sipahi*. So, whatever some votaries of pacifist or dichotomous ideologies or other outsiders may say, to students of Sikhism or a seeker of the Sikh ideal, there can never be any doubt as to the integrated *miri-piri* or *Sant-Sipahi* ideal in Sikhism. Because in the eyes of a Sikh, any reversion to ideas of pacificism, personal salvation or monasticism would be a manifest fall from the spiritual ideology laid down by Guru Nanak, enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib, and openly, single-mindedly and demonstrably lived by the ten Gurus, culminating in the creation of the Khalsa, with *kirpan* as the essential symbol for resisting injustice and oppression. The *kirpan* essentially signifies two fundamental tenets of Sikhism, namely, that it is the basic responsibility of a Sikh to confront and resist injustice, and that asceticism, monasticism, or escapism, of any kind is wrong. Thus, the *kirpan*, on the one hand, is a constant reminder to the Sikh of his duty, and, on the other hand, is a standing guard against reversion to pacificism and otherworldliness. The extreme sagacity and vision of the Sikh Gurus is evident from the thoughtfully planned and measured manner in which they built the structure of their ideology and the Sikh society, epitomised in the order of the Khalsa. That is also the reason that so far as the ideology and ideals of the Sikh society are concerned, there cannot be any ambiguity in that regard. Hence, considering the manner in which the lives of the ten Gurus have demonstrated the Sikh way of life, the question of its bifurcation or accepting pacificism or otherworldliness does not arise. And this forms, we believe, the fourth important reason for there being ten Gurus and the closure of succession after the Khalsa was created.

### *Conclusion*

The summary of the Sikh ideology, in the background of the religious history of some higher religions, makes the viewpoint of the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh position very clear. The Gurus emphasise that at the *manmukh* stage of man's development, man is constitutionally incapable of avoiding injustice, wars and conflicts. Because, man is basically egocentric and stands alienated from the Fundamental Force (God) which is Love. So long as he does not link himself with the Flow of Love and fails to work in unison with it, his problems of clash, disharmony and tensions will continue. The diagnosis of the authors of *Limits of Growth* is also the same, namely, that unless man is able to shed his egocentrism, there appears little hope for peace and happiness in the world.<sup>74</sup>

The state is an instrument devised by man to curb the basic egocentrism or wickedness of individuals and power groups. But, politics divorced from the Fundamental Spiritual Force, or moral brakes creates the situation that the State or Establishment is seized by individuals and groups, who openly use and employ all the enormous means of the modern state for the satisfaction of their egocentrism, working to the detriment of the masses and the poor. And the more backward or poor a country, the greater the oppression uninhibited secularism can do with the power machine of the state. The result, logically and unavoidably, is that the gap between the downtrodden masses and the oppressive elites goes on widening. This happens both within a state, and among the various national states. We wonder if anyone who is acquainted with recent history, can contradict this observation.

Rationally speaking, secularism is incapable of reversing the present trend, or finding a solution of the existing malady. The causes for this failure have been stressed by the Gurus. Reason being a tool or limb of the egocentric man (*manmukh*) and being unconnected with the Universal Consciousness or spirituo-moral base of man, it can never make the individual spontaneously altruistic. Hence, any search for a humanitarian ethics through empiricism, communism or secularism is doomed to failure. The hopes which science in the first decades of the century had raised, stand tragically shattered.

To us, materialism and morality seem a contradiction in terms. Similarly, dichotomous or life-negating religions are equally amoral

in their social impact. It is because of the Indian religions being dichotomous that the unjust secular institution of *Varn Ashram Dharma* and caste could continue in the Indian society, and also have the approval of its scriptures. The study of the three Western religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam also furnishes the same lesson. The moment any of these societies became otherworldly, or showed dichotomous tendencies, the moral strength of the society to face the challenges of life became minimal. Or vice versa, the society became dichotomous, when it failed to face effectively the challenges of life. And, ultimately it is the moral stamina of a people or culture that by and large determines its survival. This is evident from the known history, both of Judaism and Islam. But for the subordination of religious institutions to the national state, following the Reformation, the triumph of secularism and scientism to erode the Christian ethical base from the Western life would never have been possible. The ethical field today is in complete disarray.<sup>75</sup> Since religion is the only source which could furnish the moral sap to maintain social cohesion, and Christian elan being at its lowest ebb, the twentieth century has witnessed the worst slaughter and butchery of tens of millions, both at the international and the national levels. Hitler, Stalin and Hiroshima are phenomena of the twentieth century secularism. The nations of the world are spending on arms a thousand billion dollars each year. It is this dismal spectacle that had, on the one hand, forced the Soviets to talk of the 'priority of universal values over the class or group values', and, on the other hand, led the North American Churches to suggest co-operation with other religions in order to fight the common danger of secularism. For the present, either out of their ignorance, or for other reasons, the European Churches have overruled the American view. But, the problem remains and stands highlighted by thinking persons. Decades back, Collingwood wrote : "The discovery of a relation is at once the discovery of my thought as reaching God and of God's thought as reaching me; and indistinguishable from this, the performance of an act of mine by which I establish a relation with God and an act of God's by which He establishes a relation with me. To fancy that religion lives either below or above the limits of reflective thought is fatally to misconceive either the nature of religion or the nature of reflective thought. It would be nearer the truth to say that in religion, the life of reflection is concentrated in its intensest form, and

that the special problems of the theoretical and practical life all take their special forms by segregation out of the body of religious consciousness and retain their vitality only so far as they preserve their connexion with it and with each other in it."<sup>76</sup> This statement presents the view that unless reason and religion are combined, or the spiritual life is combined with the empirical life of man, his problems will remain insolvable. Reason is incapable of devising or creating a moral force. Hence, the inherent incapacity of secularism to create any worthwhile values, much less universal values. The fall of the Russian Empire has made this clear.

Five hundred years ago, Guru Nanak emphasised that unless the spiritual component enriches the empirical life, man's problems of conflict, war and disharmony will remain. The solution lies in working in consonance with God's Will or the Basic Force of Love and Altruism. The brotherhood of man cannot be a reality without accepting the Fatherhood of God. For the Gurus, the Fatherhood of God or Force of Love or Universal Consciousness is not an assumption, but a reality. For them, it is a true and most indubitable experience, spontaneously leading to activity. It is an experience far more real than the sensory perception of external phenomena or the construction of a pragmatic or utilitarian ethics, or the assumption of a dialectical movement raised by human reason. The Gurus exhort man to follow the path of altruistic deeds to reach the next evolutionary stage of *gurmukh* or God-man. It is a worldview of combining the spiritual life with the empirical life of man, thereby breaking the alienation from which man suffers. It is a worldview of total responsibility towards every sphere of life, the God-man's sphere of responsibility being co-terminus with the sphere of God. At a time when most of the higher religions have either become dichotomous, or are withdrawing from the main fields of social responsibility, and human reason feels frustrated, the Sikh Gurus express a comprehensive worldview of hope and eternal relevance. At the same time, it is important to state that, far from being exclusive, Sikhism is universal in its approach, always anxious and willing to serve and co-operate with those who aim at harmony among beings and welfare of man. For, the Guru's prayer to God is that the world may be saved by any way. He may be Gracious enough to do.<sup>77</sup> And, Guru Nanak proclaimed that his mission was, with the help of other God-men, to

steer man across the turbulent sea of life.<sup>78</sup> This fundamental ideal stands enshrined in the final words of the daily Sikh prayer, "May God bless all mankind."

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