



BOOK REVIEW

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RELIGION AND THE MODERN WORLD

(A Study of the Philosophy of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan),
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Religion is a universal phenomenon and it is a vital force in the human societies. The approaches of different religions to answer the ultimate questions are also different. The definitions that have been given and the theories that have been formulated reflect these differences while some thinkers have defined religion covering some aspects; others have laid emphasis on individual aspect by passing the social aspect of religion. No definition of religion is comprehensive and exhaustive. Perhaps there will never be a comprehensive definition covering all aspects.

The significance of religion lies in man's experience of the presence of God and his communion with Him and His love. Man has to share the social life as a religious ideal. He has to experience peace, joy and bliss in his communion with society. Man has to observe saintliness moral goodness, truth in all aspects of his life. Man has to be prepared to suffer for a good cause. He has to aspire for the eventual attainment of spiritual perfection and happiness.

Religion is manifested as an element of human experience. The institutions traditions, convictions and sacred writings are observable and open for examination. Most of the religions claim to be more than the collection of empirical data. Interior dispositions values, fundamental orientations of life include the religious phenomena. Religion claims to be true. Religion implies an interpretation of the meaning of reality in terms of its value. It is reckoning with the possibility that something at the core of reality does respond and satisfy human demands for life and fulfillment of destiny.

Meaning of Religion

Religion is personal and individualistic. Some people focus on the intellectual and emotional aspects of ethics and belief. Religion is conceived as a universal function of human societies. For many people religion is affair of the heart, so often inexplicable even to them, so colored by their own special feeling for the particular beliefs and ceremonies that they consider as sacred through long association. It is difficult of them to assume an objective and scientific stance.

Religion and Reason

Immanuel Kant says that when a person comes to know of something as his duty before accepting it as a divine injection is the natural religion. On the other hand he who interprets the natural religion alone as morally necessary as his duty can be called the rationalist. If he denies the reality of all supernatural divine revelation, he is



called a naturalist. If a person recognizes revelation but asserts that to know and accept it as real is not a necessary requisite to religion he could be named as pure rationalist. When the person holds that belief is necessary to universal religion, he could be named as the pure super-naturalist in matters of faith.

A rationalist restricts himself within the limits of human insight. He will not dogmatize. He does not contest either the inner possibility of revelation in general or the necessity of revelation as a divine means for the introduction of a true religion. For the matters of this nature no person could determine through reason.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says:

The choice before humanity is either cooperation in a spirit of freedom and understanding or conflict in an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and jealousy. The future of religion and mankind will depend on the choice we make. Concord, not discord will contribute to the establishment of spiritual values in the life of mankind. Concord alone is meritorious said Asoka.

The goal of world unity is to be achieved by ahimsa, (Non-violence) which is insisted on by Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Ahimsa has varied applications, ethical, economic and social used by Buddhists and Jainas. People of the world have to be viewed as one family without distinction of caste class or race differentiation by blood descent to achieve the human equality, which is the primary fact. The weapons of war should be turned to the service of peace. The nations form one family and they are inter-responsible and interdependent.

Man has to understand himself to lead a disciplined life extending love for all. The equality and brotherhood is a possibility. If mankind is relieved from the evils that have beset the world and the wastage of warfare is avoided and sources of wealth are properly utilized for their well being they live in peace and happiness in the modern world. The search for truth striving for justice and righteousness is essential part of religion in the modern life.

While the first three sections comprising five chapters are directly concerned with the central theme of the book, the issues discussed in sections four and five comprising six chapters at the most can be said to be only peripheral to the main thesis of the author. These chapters in the main deal with the philosophical issues of intercultural, post-modernism, realism, epistemology, and time.

Being well-versed with the original sources of Modern World and being its hard core advocate, the author has given an authentic Modern response to these issues, yet they remain alien to the discussion on Dr. S. Radhakrishnan ethics. The author has at no place explained his rationale for including these sections and chapters in the book. These chapters could have formed another valuable book on Religion and the Modern world, providing the singular advantage of not deterring those readers who shun a book because of its thickness.



Because of its profundity, which is the outcome of the author's reliance on the original sources, and comprehensive bibliography, I strongly recommend the book to the scholars as well as lay readers interested in Religion and the Modern World A Study of the Philosophy of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

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