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Professor William P. Sears

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RICHARD THOMAS NOLAN

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Education of New York University

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Richard T. Nolan

Sept. 15, 1972
(Date)

Sponsoring Committee: Professor Lee A. Belford, Chairman;
Associate Professor Norma H. Thompson;
Professor William P. Sears

AN ABSTRACT OF

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF EDMOND LA B. CHERBONNIER FOR A BASIC OBJECTIVE FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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The purpose of this investigation was to determine the significance of the religious thought of Edmond La B. Cherbonnier for a basic objective for religious education. The subordinate problems included: 1) What religious concepts are related to a basic objective of religious education ? 2) What religious concepts related to a basic objective for religious education have been examined and interpreted by Cherbonnier ? 3) What is the significance of mystical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, for a basic objective for religious education ? 4) What is the significance of biblical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, for a basic objective for religious education ?

The significance of the study rests upon the established importance of the basic objective to religious education, the relevance of religious thought to religious education, the need for further research in these areas, the recognition of Cherbonnier as a theologian who has already been cited as relevant to religious education, and the thesis that his religious thought further clarifies relationships between religious thought and religious education.

An analysis of related literature was made to determine and select the religious concepts related to a basic objective; the results were reported in Chapter One. An analysis of Cherbonnier's writings produced a systematic exposition of the relevant concepts of his religious thought; Chapter Two describes his interpretation of mystical religion or perennial philosophy, and Chapter Three delineates his interpretation of biblical religion. The significance of mystical religion for a basic objective was determined by the logical relationship between each mystical concept and a basic objective; this was described in Chapter Four. The significance of biblical religion was ascertained by the logical relationship between each biblical concept and the basic objective and reported in Chapter Five.

It was suggested that in the development of a basic objective for religious education, the consideration of epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology is essential and consequential. The investigation sought to show that Cherbonnier's writings sort out what he claims to be the two basic religious perspectives, mystical religion (or perennial philosophy) and biblical religion. Both consist of contrasting theories of knowledge, reality, and value, stated or implied. For Cherbonnier, the historical intrusion of the mystical into biblically based traditions is an error. The significance of Cherbonnier's analysis rests, for this study, in the greater clarity of religious

concepts and their particular implications for a basic objective for religious education. It was proposed that the conceptual development of specific religious concepts is pivotal to the actual meaning of any basic objective.

Further studies recommended were an analysis of Christology in the light of Cherbonnier's thought and implications for a basic objective and a study of relationships between the two perspectives (mystical and biblical) for curriculum and methods in religious education.

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PREFACE

The advantages of having had the comments of Edmond La B. Cherbonnier on this study need no elaboration. His suggestions were gratefully received after a characteristically gracious scrutiny of the document during a vacation with his family in France. Included in his response were these words:

> Needless to say, it is gratifying indeed to "read all about it," and I feel greatly in your debt for pulling the threads together.[1]

From the outset, readers should bear in mind (as mentioned in the text) that Cherbonnier's analysis of religious thought within mystical/perennial and biblical perspectives does not leave him loyal to both. His own choice, based upon epistemological canons acceptable to him, is for the biblical. In his research he normally analyzed a mystical concept followed by the biblical alternative; consequently, this study presents his interpretations of the two philosophies in the same order.

As the guide for suitable style, the provisions of Kate L. Turabian's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers,

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[1]Letter to the author from Edmond La B. Cherbonnier, September 1, 1972.

Theses and Dissertations (third edition, revised) were utilized in this presentation.

The completion of this dissertation has involved relationships with a number of persons significant to me personally and professionally. Lee A. Belford, Norma H. Thompson, and William P. Sears, with whom I have studied in courses as well during the preparation of the thesis, have guided me most helpfully in content and research methodology.

The inspiration for my understanding better his own approach to religious thought, consequential for the continuing development of my world-view, has its source with the Reverend Professor Edmond La B. Cherbonnier, Ph. D., D.D. A pivotal teacher during my undergraduate years, he continues to serve as friend and mentor.

The assistance of three students relieved me of much drudgery during my administrative term at the Hartford Seminary Foundation and thereby freed me to pursue some teaching and writing. James D. Bartolini, Steven Charleston, and Fred M. Ritzau, Jr., were indispensable to me.

The continuing friendship of Robert C. Pingpank since freshman year at Trinity College has sustained me, especially during those periods when one is tempted to abandon a dissertation and pour contempt upon all scholarship! His support and encouragement have been vital.

"Get wisdom, get knowledge, but with all thy getting, get understanding," introduced many assemblies at the Boston Latin School. Though the words were new to me at that classical school, the thrust was not; education of this sort had set my vocational perspective as early as nursery school. My parents, Elizabeth L. and Thomas M. Nolan, Jr., with ready assistance from my maternal grandmother, S. Edna Leishman, and paternal grandfather, Thomas M. Nolan, Sr., provided opportunities and motivation to pursue formal and informal education throughout my life. Without them, the issues with which I have been concerned would never have been raised.

The preliminary typing of Marjorie L. Busse and the final edition produced by Carol L. Steiman were completed expertly.

My sincere thanks go to all of these persons and the many students and colleagues who have challenged my interpretations and thereby forced greater understanding upon me.

Richard T. Nolan

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The problem of this investigation was to determine the significance of the religious thought of Edmond La B. Cherbonnier for a basic objective for religious education. The subordinate problems in the main problem were these: 1. What religious concepts are related to a basic objective of religious education? 2. What religious concepts related to a basic objective for religious education have been examined and interpreted by Cherbonnier? 3. What is the significance of mystical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, for a basic objective for religious education? 4. What is the significance of biblical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, for a basic objective for religious education?

Certain specific or technical terms were defined as follows:

1. Mystical religion: This term denotes the religious perspective whose "metaphysical assumptions . . . comprise what Aldous Huxley has called the 'perennial philosophy': Reality is an undifferentiated unity. The everyday world, since it is a multiplicity, is therefore

not really real, but at best a fragmented distortion of true Being. Though illusory, it nevertheless imprisons all who take it seriously. The goal of human living is to dissolve all connection with the realm of space and time, including even consciousness itself."[1] "Mystical religion" and "perennial philosophy" are used synonymously in this study.

2. Biblical religion: This term denotes the religious perspective whose metaphysical significance is ascribed to events in the external world. "This implies that man's life is not a shadow-drama, an illusion in the minds of the actors, or a mode of the divine consciousness leaving no room for an effective agency of man. On the contrary, man's deeds have a real significance, and man's history is, under God's direction, the record of real achievements."[2]

3. Religious concept: This term refers to any idea associated with formal religion, such as God, doctrine of man, and doctrine of creation; a theological motif.

4. Basic objective: This term means the over-all goal within which subordinate aims, curriculum and

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[1]E. La B. Cherbonnier, "Mystical vs. Biblical Symbolism," The Christian Scholar, XXXIX (March, 1956), p. 33.

[2]H. Wheeler Robinson, "Prophetic Symbolism," Old Testament Essays (London: Charles Griffin & Co., Ltd., 1927), p. 17. Quoted by Cherbonnier in paper cited above, p. 36.

methodologies are developed. The concept is used as a pivotal idea by D. C. Wyckoff.[3]

5. Religious Education: As used in this investigation, the term means "the gaining of personal religious faith . . . ., the function of the Church."[4]

It was assumed that: 1) A basic objective for religious education is related to certain religious concepts; 2) the religious thought of Cherbonnier includes an examination and interpretation of the concepts related to a basic objective for religious education; and 3) statements about a basic objective for religious education can be comprehensive in nature.

The following delimitations were placed upon the research in order to circumscribe and confine the problem: 1. This study was pursued without a formal consideration of denominational or age group interests. For example, objectives of religious education for Presbyterian children were not discussed as such; however, a basic objective for religious education would have implications for all situations. 2. Sources for the religious thought of Edmond La B. Cherbonnier included those produced by this theologian in the years 1951 through 1971. The year 1951 was selected because

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[3]D. C. Wyckoff, The Gospel and Christian Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 127.

[4]Vergilius Ferm, Encyclopedia of Religion (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, & Company, 1959), p. 649.

in that year Cherbonnier received his Ph.D. degree. 3. This investigation focused upon Christian religious education, inasmuch as the religious thought of Cherbonnier falls within the Christian tradition.

Significance of the Problem

Wyckoff has written:

> The basic objective is the key to the situation. Its function is to provide "direction and perspective for the whole process. Its strength is its drawing power--its ability to give unity, direction, and selectivity to the entire educational plan. The basic objective is thus the objective for every learning task, every lesson, every unit, every meeting throughout the curriculum." (From the National Council of Churches; senior high document.)[5]

The investigation acknowledged this insightful principle proposed by Wyckoff. The "basic objective" sets the perspective for religious education theory and practice; therefore, clarification of the objective is essential.

What, though, is the source for the perspective of the basic objective? R. C. Miller has noted, "Christian theology is the primary source of Christian educational theory and procedure."[6] The religious interpretations of the nature of man, God, and other vital aspects provide the framework

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[5]Wyckoff, Gospel and Christian Education, p. 127.

[6]R. C. Miller, Education for Christian Living (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1956), p. 7.

for the "key" to the religious education enterprise. Therefore, the importance of the interrelationships between religious thought and the basic objective is readily established.

The need for further studies in the relationships between religious thought and religious education theory and practice has been stated recently by one scholar, who has written:

> One may wonder why such slow progress was made in Christian education research at a time when rapid progress was being made in general education research. A number of factors are probably involved: 1. Cost . . . . 2. Need for a theological foundation . . . . Theological questions have not been adequately answered, but answers have begun to emerge as Christian educators themselves have become more deeply involved in research and evaluation.[7]

Wyckoff has reported that a trend of the current efforts in research is the development of a single objective: "Objectives have been stated in Christian education in many ways. There is a current trend toward the use of a single objective, or purpose, for curriculum."[8] Thus, it might be concluded that it is both pertinent and timely for further studies in the relationships between religious thought and a basic objective for religious education.

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[7]L. A. Sibley, Jr., "Research," Westminster Dictionary of Christian Education, p. 569.

[8]D. C. Wyckoff, "Curriculum," Ibid., p. 171.

The selection of the religious thought of Cherbonnier is with sound reason. First, he is a recognized theologian, presently (1972) Professor of Religion at Trinity College (Connecticut). His book, Hardness of Heart (Doubleday, 1955), written while he was on the faculty of Barnard College, Columbia University, is one of the volumes of the "Christian Faith Series" under the general editorship of the late Reinhold Niebuhr. In a review of this book, James C. Spaulding of the Trinity University, Texas, faculty wrote:

> Cherbonnier has written a lively volume to the already significant new "Christian Faith Series" . . . . He stands out . . . as an independent thinker related to but not dependent on other theologians . . . . Cherbonnier's book makes a valuable addition to such a conversation. . . . We are indebted to Cherbonnier for a fresh, incisive, and independent statement of the doctrine of sin.[9]

In the Interpreter, a reviewer wrote: "The argument of this book is careful and complete, at times subtle, yet always brilliant and sophisticaled" (Vol. X, 1956, p. 102).

A publication[10] by Frank Dilley, Chairman of the Philosophy Department at the University of Delaware, refers to Cherbonnier, though Cherbonnier's influence on Dilley

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[9]J. C. Spaulding, book review in The Christian Century, Vol. 72 (1955), pp. 1143f.

[10]F. Dilley, Metaphysics and Religious Language (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964); see specifically pages 110-112.

is evident throughout the study. In fact, the volume is dedicated to the Trinity College theologian, along with the late Paul Tillich, Daniel Day Williams, and L. Pinsky.

Cherbonnier's publications have also been included in scholarly journals of religious thought. In 1959, the University of Vermont awarded him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa.

Second, an implication of Cherbonnier's thought for religious education has emerged in one prominent publication, Rachel Henderlite's Forgiveness and Hope: Toward a Theology for Protestant Christian Education. Thus, it can be safely assumed that this theologian's thought is significant for religious education.

The analysis determined the significance of the religious thought of Cherbonnier for a key religious education principle, the basic objective. The fundamental relationship between his interpretations of relevant religious concepts and the "key" to religious education provides the field with a study that is contemporary both in theological content and research needs in religious education. The investigator is confident that a clarification of basic objectives within "mystical" and "biblical" contexts, a distinction in religious concepts made by Cherbonnier, in itself provides the field with clarifying data presently all

but unexplored with his methods and conclusions; certain non-biblical emphases and concepts can be distinguished and classified for religious education theory and practice.

As a summary, the investigator submits that the significance of the study rests upon the importance of the basic objective to religious education, the relevance of religious thought to religious education, the need for further research in these areas, the recognition of Cherbonnier as a theologian who has already been cited as relevant to religious education, and the thesis that his religious thought further clarifies relationships between religious thought and religious education.

Related Studies

A number of studies have been made recently in the field of religious foundations of religious education. However, none of these aims to investigate the significance of mystical and biblical religious thought in relation to a basic objective for religious education. Instead, the dominant pattern has been to study the relevance of an area of theology (e.g., systematic theology, biblical theology) to overall religious education theory and practice.

Heralded as one of the most significant contemporary studies in relating theology to religious education is

Miller's The Clue to Christian Education.[11] Its objective is to show "the relation of the content of the Christian revelation to the best creative methods of teaching."[12] With data on certain behavioristic patterns of various age groups, and the promise that the "clue" to Christian Education is the "rediscovery of a relevant theology,"[13] Miller illustrates how a relevant theology may be used in actual situations.

In another study, Biblical Theology and Christian Education,[14] Miller followed the same avenue of research, but within the context of biblical theology. He acknowledges that all Christian theology is based upon the Bible, but in this study the Yale scholar is concerned with the Bible, as the source of theology, as it relates to various age groups. Miller relates major motifs of biblical thought to the groups' needs by illustrating the religious concepts' relevance to those needs. He concludes that the Bible can illumine the relationships of daily living in terms of the resources of the Gospel.

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[11] R. C. Miller, The Clue to Christian Education (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950).

[12] Ibid., p. vii.

[13] Ibid., p. 15.

[14] R. C. Miller, Biblical Theology and Christian Education (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956).

Sherrill's The Gift of Power[15] is a discussion of the "new philosophy of Christian Education which is taking shape."[16] The thesis of this study is that all aspects of Christian education must find their roots in the Christian faith and community, with a focus upon revelation.

Smart's The Teaching Ministry of the Church[17] includes a short history of religious education with an excellent discussion of certain theological conflicts relevant to religious education. Other concerns of this scholar are philosophical; for example, what is the goal of religious education?

A number of articles related to the proposed study have been published in the periodical, Religious Education. Of special significance is the symposium on "Linguistic Philosophy and Christian Education."[18] As a result of his reading of the provocative Secular Meaning of the Gospel,[19] Miller, editor of the magazine, asked scholar Paul Van Buren

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[15] L. J. Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955).

[16] Ibid., p. xi.

[17] J. D. Smart, The Teaching Ministry of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954).

[18] R. C. Miller (ed.), "Linguistic Philosophy and Christian Education--A Symposium," Religious Education, XL (1965), pp. 4-48.

[19] Paul Van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963).

to write an article on the implications for religious education of his point of view. Eight scholars responded to Van Buren's essay, and in Miller's words: "The result is an exciting discussion of some of the fundamental issues in both theology and education, moving from metaphysics to story telling."[20] This symposium is especially related to Cherbonnier's discussion "Mystical vs. Biblical Symbolism"[21] in that the meaning of religious language is a focal point.

In a relatively unknown essay, "Theology of Education,"[22] theologian Paul Tillich discussed educational aims and their relations as a principal issue of education today. Tillich presented his interpretations of the general orientations education can take (technical, humanistic, and inducting) and analyzed these in terms of their development in history and practice. Regarding the Church School, Tillich concluded:

> For the problem of the Church is more than the problem of the Church School. It is the problem of the relation of Christianity and culture generally

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[20] R. C. Miller, "Symposium," p. 4.

[21] E. Cherbonnier, "Mystical vs. Biblical Symbolism," pp. 32-44.

[22] Paul J. Tillich, "Theology of Education," The Church School in Our Time--A Symposium (Andover, Mass.: Andover Press, Ltd., 1957), no pagination.

> and Christianity and education especially. The problem is infinite and must be solved in every generation again.[23]

Theses submitted at New York University, Princeton Theological Seminary, Columbia University, and Boston University may also be classified as "related studies" but as with the other works cited, none focused upon the relationships between mystical and biblical religious thought and a basic objective as does this study.

Procedure in Collecting and Treating Data

The determination of the religious concepts related to a basic objective for religious education provided the investigator with the religious concepts considered in the remainder of the study. The method for solving the sub-problem was: 1. The reading of literature related to "religious concepts and a basic objective for religious education." Most studies on religious education theory included the related religious concepts. For example, Chapter 4 of Miller's Education for Christian Living discussed "Theology and Christian Education." Other works focused on the topic of the relationship of religious concepts and religious education (e.g., Henderlite's Forgiveness and Hope: Toward A Theology for Protestant Christian Education). In

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[23] Ibid.

these studies a prime consideration was the topic of objectives for religious education.

The literature was selected from the extensive bibliography of the Westminster Dictionary of Christian Education; theses from seminaries and universities accredited by either the regional Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the American Association of Schools of Religious Education; recognized scholarly journals (e.g., Religious Education); and reference sources (e.g., Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Education Index). These criteria ensure, as much as possible, the selection of literature of responsible and recognized scholars.

2. The analysis of the literature to determine and select the religious concepts related to a basic objective for religious education. The investigator searched for concepts (e.g., God, Man, creation) and their respective relationships to basic objectives. The following questions were asked of each study: What religious concepts have been discussed in relationship to a basic objective? What is the relationship between the concept and the basic objective?

3. In Chapter One the data are presented in expository form. An analysis of "philosophy of religious education" with a justification for using Butler's model and Cherbonnier's parallel terminology is presented.

The results of the first sub-problem having been established, the investigator determined basic data required for the support of the second sub-problem, selection of the religious concepts related to a basic objective for religious education examined and interpreted by Cherbonnier. The findings of this sub-problem provided the investigator with Cherbonnier's interpretations of the relevant religious concepts. The method for investigating the sub-problem was:

1. The reading of the literature produced by this theologian; included were published and unpublished materials, including books, articles, lectures, and mimeographed materials for his courses.

2. The analysis of the literature to determine Cherbonnier's interpretations of the relevant religious concepts. Examples of questions put to the literature were: What criteria does he use for examining and interpreting the concepts? How are the concepts interrelated by Cherbonnier? What are the distinguishing characteristics and emphases of these concepts?

3. Chapters Two and Three contain the data presented in expository form. The interpretation of each relevant concept is described according to Cherbonnier's terminology (e.g., The Real or God). Mystical religion or "Perennial Philosophy" as Cherbonnier interprets it, is described in Chapter Two; his understanding of biblical religion is presented in Chapter Three.

The investigator obtained the data required for the solution of the subsequent sub-problem, forming Chapter Four, the significance of mystical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, for a basic objective for religious education. The findings of this sub-problem provided conclusions concerning the significance of mystical religion for a basic objective for religious education. The method for solving the sub-problem was:

1. A summary of Cherbonnier's interpretations of mystical religious concepts ("Perennial Philosophy") is presented.

2. A determination of the relationship between each mystical concept and a basic objective is presented.

3. A determination of the significance of mystical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, for a basic objective for religious education is described.

The fourth sub-problem, the establishment of the significance of biblical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, for a basic objective for religious education, is presented in Chapter Five. The findings of this sub-problem provided tenable conclusions concerning the significance of biblical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier--and thereby the significance of the other of the two areas of his religious thought, for a basic objective for religious education. The method for solving the sub-problem was:

1. A summary of Cherbonnier's interpretations of biblical religious concepts is presented.

2. A determination of the relationship between each biblical concept and a basic objective is presented.

3. A determination of the significance of biblical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, for a basic objective for religious education is described.

A Biographical Sketch of Cherbonnier

Edmond La Beaume Cherbonnier was born on February 11, 1918, in Saint Louis, Missouri, to Edward Goodwin Cherbonnier and Adelaide Alice (La Beaume) Cherbonnier. After graduation from Saint Louis Country Day School, he entered Harvard University, where he majored in geology and received in 1939 the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

A post as a teacher of Latin at Avon Old Farms School in Avon, Connecticut, preceded his matriculation at Union Theological Seminary, New York, this study being interrupted while Cherbonnier served as a naval aviator during World War II. However, in 1947, he received the degree of Bachelor of Divinity from Union and was ordained a deacon by the Episcopal Bishop of Missouri.

Subsequent study, on a Fiske Fellowship from Harvard, led to the degrees of Bachelor of Arts (1948) and Master of Arts (1952) from Cambridge University, England. In addition,

from 1948-1949 Cherbonnier was in residence as a Union Seminary Travelling Fellow at the University of Strasbourg and the University of Zurich.

By the time he formally entered the doctoral program at Columbia University, Cherbonnier had been married six years to the former Phyllis White of St. Louis, who earned her Master of Arts in religion also from Columbia. During the 1949-1950 school year, while studying, he was a tutor-assistant to Henry P. Van Dusen at Union.

A one-year appointment as assistant professor of religion at Vassar (1950-1951) saw at its conclusion his Ph.D. degree in religion conferred by Columbia. From Vassar, Cherbonnier joined the faculty of Barnard College of Columbia University, where he remained until the spring of 1955 as assistant and associate professor of religion. Also, from 1952 to 1955 he served as Deacon at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, under the Deanship of James A. Pike. In 1955 his book, Hardness of Heart, was published by Doubleday.

Now the father of a girl, Laurie Goodwin, in the fall of 1955 Cherbonnier was invited by Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, to establish a religion department. A son, Camden La Beaume, was born the summer following his first academic year at Trinity. After serving two years as an associate professor, he was promoted to full professor and was then joined by a second department member. Under his chairmanship,

the department was enlarged to a staff of five full-time professors, plus adjunct faculty.

In 1959, the University of Vermont awarded Professor Cherbonnier the degree of Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa. His 1962-63 sabbatical leave in England was partially underwritten by a Lilly Post-Doctoral Fellowship and was spent in further work on distinctions between mystical and biblical philosophies. At this writing, Cherbonnier is on another leave (the 1970-1972 academic years, plus the first semester of the 1972-1973 year), also spent in England.[24]

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[24]Biographical data was obtained from Cherbonnier's curriculum vitae, obtained from the Public Information Office at Trinity College; from the Clerical Directory (1971 edition), published every three years by the Church Hymnal Corporation, New York, of the Episcopal Church; and the 1968 Alumni Directory of Union Theological Seminary.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS RELATED TO A BASIC OBJECTIVE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Undefined Scope of Philosophy of Religious Education

In his discussion of the nature of philosophy of religious education, Cully remarked, " . . . to speak of 'philosophy of religious education' is no simple task."[1] To refer to this field of study in any precise manner would imply at least a clarity as to the nature of its contributing fields: philosophy, religion, and education. Yet these very areas of knowledge, their contents and functions, are under scrutiny today, and scholars are not in any sense of one mind on any of them.[2] Thus, the very discussion of philosophy of religious education would appear at first glance hopeless.

Philosophy and Philosophers

Philosophers may be grouped into two broad categories, those who attempt to deal synthetically with the traditional

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[1]Kendig B. Cully, "Philosophy of Religious Education," in Westminster Dictionary of Christian Education, ed. by Kendig B. Cully (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 502.

[2]John Passmore, "Philosophy," in The Encyclopedia of

problems of epistemology, metaphysics, axiology and logic, and those who look upon philosophy as an activity for analysis of concepts and language with a view toward clarification of meaning.[3]

It would be an oversimplification to imply that these two categories offer respectively clear-cut distinctions from each other and unanimous schools of thought. Quite the contrary: both orientations provide many variations. "Synthetic" or "speculative" philosophers have in common their traditionally based (i.e., on metaphysics, epistemology and axiology) inquiry and systems, but they range in thought from types of mysticism to forms of naturalism. "Analytic" philosophers, likewise, agree that their task is analysis, rather than prescription or system-building, but vary from Ayer's logical positivism to the more tolerant directions of Austin's "performative utterances." As one scholar has noted, regarding analytic philosophy:

> This philosophy cannot be identified in terms of any system, and its exponents are widely separated on many important conclusions. What makes it a school is its adherence to a method. It believes that the main purpose (and sometimes the sole purpose) of

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Philosophy, ed. by Paul Edwards (New York: The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1967), Vol. 6, pp. 216-225.

[3]Steven M. Cahn, A New Introduction to Philosophy (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971), pp. 7-12.

> philosophy is to analyze the way in which language operates.[4]

Philosophy's uncertainties are borne out further by some scholars who have written, "Philosophers are not in general agreement about the nature and methods of philosophy; what philosophy and its method is, or should be, is itself an important philosophical question."[5]

Religion and Theologians

Magee has noted:

> Religions in their full historical concreteness confront the investigator with the profusion of a tropical jungle. It is therefore not surprising that definitions of religion show wide disagreement, even among competent scholars.[6]

He pointed out some representative and opposing definitions of religion, including "a sum of scruples which impedes the free exercise of our faculties," "whatever introduces genuine perspective," "the common element in all expressions of religion . . . is that we are conscious . . . of being in relation with God," and "religion is the action of men who

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[4]William Hordern, "Logical Analysis," Westminster Dictionary, p. 396.

[5]Maurice Mandelbaum, et al. (eds.), Philosophic Problems (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 3.

[6]John B. Magee, Religion and Modern Man (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 19.

have fallen out of their relationship with God . . . . Religion must die . . . . In God we are rid of it."[7] Substantiating this point further, the same scholar referred to a study that "quoted 47 classic definitions of religion . . . . These reveal conflicts of the same order."[8]

One might simply scan college and university course offerings to find studies of various scriptures, history of religions, religious thought, and similar topics, but these might fall either within a formal religion department or within English, history, philosophy and other departments. The first instance may be interpreted to imply that there is a body or kind of knowledge which can be called properly "religion"; the latter raises the question whether there is any uniquely "religious" subject matter.

Thus, philosophers and theologians share a lack of consensus about the very nature of their scholarly concerns.

Education and Educators

One may readily observe as well the variety of understandings of "education." Kneller has noted three definitions of education that illustrate well this situation:

> Education . . . is the external process of superior adjustment of the physically and mentally developed, free, conscious, human being to God, as

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

> manifested in the intellectual, emotional, and volitional environment of man. (Herman Horne)
>
> Education may be defined as a process of continuous reconstruction of experience with the purpose of widening and deepening its social content, while, at the same time, the individual gains control of the methods involved. (John Dewey)
>
> Education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created . . . . The subject of education is man whole and entire, soul united to body in unity of nature, with all his faculties natural and supernatural, such as right reason and revelation show him to be . . . (Pope Pius XI)[9]

The continuing debate over the scope of education as a discipline, not unlike religion, is evidenced by the uncertainty of whether to locate "history of education" within a history or education department, "educational psychology" within a psychology or education department, and "philosophy of education" within a philosophy or education department.

Thus, education joins philosophy and religion in the uncertainties of their respective natures and scopes.

The "Blik" and Philosophy of Religious Education

How then can one suggest the scope and nature of philosophy of religious education with any finality, when its ingredients apparently defy hopes for scholarly consensus? Another way of raising the question is--What can be

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[9]George F. Kneller, "Philosophy and Education," in Foundations of Education, ed. by George F. Kneller (2nd ed.; New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967), p. 64.

said to be a philosophical, religious, or educational fact? Were one to answer satisfactorily the latter question, one could locate that which is specifically philosophical, religious, or educational, and thereby establish more tenable boundaries for each field.

Facts and Interprefacts

The problem, however, is further complicated by an attempt to define "fact." For example, a fact for an empiricist may not be a fact for a rationalist; that is, the former could assert as factual the sole reality of the sensible, physical world, whereas the latter might include in his book of facts the reality of only the rational.

This problem has been clarified by Dilley, who has written:

> . . . it must be pointed out that appeals to "fact" involve metaphysics, since "facts" are always facts-from-particular-perspectives. . . . It has even been suggested that the word "interprefact" is more proper than "fact." Factuality is fact-for-some-particular-person, factuality-from-some-particular-point-of-view, and as someone has said, "this being the case, there is no such thing as givenness which is its own untouched and unqualified and ununderstood and uninterpreted self." Views as to what the facts are vary widely, each metaphysic presenting its own version of the real facts.[10]

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[10] Frank B. Dilley, Metaphysics and Religious Language (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 57.

Along the same line of thought, Holmer noted:

> . . . the meaning of "fact," the very concept, is not single at all. It varies with the intellectual context so that there is no one concept of fact at all. There are many of them, and they do not overlap very significantly.[11]

"Facts are what are indisputable in this context and that."[12]

An implication of this position which is compelling is that philosophical, religious, and educational "facts" are facts only for particular metaphysical contexts. For example, it is a religious fact for most Christian idealists that reality includes a non-physical (i.e., spiritual or mental) dimension of which God is whole or part; for a religious naturalist such a conception of deity is certainly non-factual. Indeed, the whole conception of the nature of religion, spiritually oriented for the idealist, naturally oriented for the naturalist, would vary.

It seems, therefore, that one cannot point to an issue or problem as being a fact or factor of philosophy, religion, education, or philosophy of religious education. The issue of God, for example, is not a fact, factor or issue for most naturalistically based philosophies, though it would be for many others. One can only speak of any kind of fact as fact within a theory of reality, a particular metaphysic.

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[11]Paul L. Holmer, "Metaphysics and Theology: The Foundations of Theology," The Lutheran Quarterly, XVII (November, 1965), p. 309.

[12]Ibid., p. 315.

Metaphysical Adequacy

Does this mean then that each person may pronounce ex cathedra that which can be accepted as fact and justify his dogmatism by simply pointing to his metaphysic? In other words, is there any objective criterion for testing the adequacy of a metaphysical system? Again, one may turn to Dilley for assistance.

Utilizing Whitehead's descriptions of metaphysics ("the science which seeks to discover the general ideas which are indispensably relevant to the analysis of everything that happens"; "the dispassionate consideration of the nature of things"; and "the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted"),[13] Dilley posits that metaphysics "must take into account all facts or alleged 'facts' from all areas of human knowledge, and must attempt to work these into a world view which is adequate as a description of the nature of things. . . . the final criterion for a metaphysical theory is its adequacy as a description."[14] However, in that "metaphysical descriptions are 'confessions' of the nature of things as seen from a particular perspective and are actually tested in terms of an

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[13]Dilley, Metaphysics and Religious Language, p. 62.

[14]Ibid., pp. 66f.

appeal to the nature of things as seen from that perspective,"[15] one is faced with "a degree of circularity in metaphysical argumentation."[16] Thus, there is "no such thing as a neutral objective proof for metaphysical hypotheses,"[17] since the criterion for the truth is built into the perspective or metaphysic itself.

It is important to note that although, according to Dilley, metaphysics are "tested" on their own grounds and by their own respective built-in and implied rules, each must take into account all facets of human experience; this eliminates total subjectivity and requires the metaphysician to account for all experiences in one way or another. Beyond this ground rule, however, "raw" objectivity, as with the case of "pure" fact, is impossible. Man "confesses" on faith his orientation to reality upon which his metaphysic is built. In Dilley's words:

> A philosophical position is based upon a particular view of reality which cannot itself be justified except in terms of the adequacy of the system to which it gives rise, and which itself helps supply the view of the world used to test its own adequacy.
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> This is not to say that philosophical views are based wholly upon faiths, but merely that they reflect the faiths on the basis of which man structures his view of the world. There is a world of some sort to which man is related, and metaphysical

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[15] Ibid., p. 69. [16] Ibid. [17] Ibid.

> theories arise out of man's effort to understand the world; yet man does not see that world, think about that world, or know that world apart from the presuppositions which affect his view of it.
>
> To articulate one's metaphysical views is thus to confess one's faith, and it is also to work out the consequences of that faith that it might be tested.[18]

But, again, the test is not for objective certainty, but for adequacy as a description, for interprefactual tenability.

In essential agreement is Titus, who wrote: All proof must begin with certain assumptions. This is true in science, philosophy, or religion. Some ideas or facts must be accepted as postulates--that is, must be taken for granted."[19] This is not to propose a relativism that all statements are equally true, but rather to imply two principles. First, in developing a world-view one makes certain initial assumptions believed to be factual. Second, because one's subsequent statements are based upon belief in or trust of initial postulates, the "factuality" of the subsequent claims depends upon the actual truth of the postulates. That is, if the postulates happen to be false, the truth of statements dependent upon them is questionable.

A central problem becomes the truth of the assumptions or postulates. A mystic's assumptions differ from a

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[18] Ibid., pp. 141f.

[19] Harold H. Titus, Living Issues in Philosophy (5th ed.; New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1970), p. 86.

naturalist's; the contrasting systems resulting from the opposing postulates can account for all human experience in different ways, thereby meeting Dilley's test for adequacy. However, which system really describes reality, as it is in itself, is an insoluable problem. A certain degree of agnosticism or tentativeness seems inevitable concerning the actual truth of a particular philosophy.

The Significance of "Blik"

An argument similar to Dilley's and Titus' has been offered by Hare, who has introduced the idea of a "blik."[20] Though his concern was with religious beliefs, the idea is as widely applicable as Dilley's. A blik is an unverifiable and unfalsifiable interpretation of one's experience. As Hare wrote, " . . . it is by our bliks that we decide what is and what is not an explanation."[21]

We have found it helpful to understand Hare's blik as the assumed epistemological-metaphysical-emotional set, acquired by learning, and by which one interprets existence. The inclusion of "emotional" is significant, in that the organic unity of the person, the inseparability of mental and

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[20] R. M. Hare in New Essays in Philosophical Theology, ed. by Anthony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1955), pp. 99ff.

[21] Ibid., p. 101.

emotional functions, is carefully recognized. "Blik" is not simply one's objectively abstracted world-view, one's apparently intellectualized philosophy divorced from emotion, but the felt (conscious and subconscious) rational interpretation of one's experience. By coining the word, Hare has avoided the assumption that our philosophical positions are simply the result of calculated thought alone; he contributes to Dilley's position an acknowledgement of the feeling dimension of man's cognitive processes.

Utilizing the Dilley, Titus, and Hare positions, our investigation concludes that one's understanding of any sort of facts depends upon one's blik, which one confesses existentially, but which cannot claim certain, objective finality. As Hare has written, "Certainly it is salutary to recognize that even our belief in so-called hard facts rest in the end on a faith, a commitment, which is not in or to facts, but in that without which there would not be any facts."[22]

The significance of blik to the problem of determining the scope and nature of philosophy, religion, education, or philosophy of religious education becomes apparent. There are no objective facts or factors of these areas that are indispensable to all interpretations, to all bliks that give

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[22]R. M. Hare in Faith and Logic, ed. by Basil Mitchell (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1957), p. 192.

rise to and set the context for interpretations. For example, "God" need not be a necessary consideration for all philosophies; rather, according to one's blik, one attempts to abstract factors logically that must be considered for the development of one's interpretation of an area of existence. This is to argue that one cannot with finality assert that a particular motif must be interpreted and considered for all philosophies of religious education; a secular existentialist looking upon his world-view as a religion need not, if he is indeed an atheist, utilize a doctrine of God in his philosophy of religious education. Furthermore, his use of "philosophy," "religion," and "education" would acquire meanings according to his blik. To say that his use is false would be to judge his language from a different perspective, and he could retort on the same grounds. Instead, it would be more accurate to note that his use is "different from this one or that" and in keeping with his blik.

On a broader scale, this is to imply that language acquires its meaning not through unalterable definitions, but by the use of words within particular perspectives. To the Hindu, "God" may mean one thing and have one referent; to the Jew the same word may mean something quite different. For one scholar, "philosophy of religious education" may refer to one set of concepts; to another, a different group of issues. Thus, it is our conclusion that one may develop a philosophy

of religious education in harmony with one's blik, appealing to those ideas, concepts or issues logically necessary within one's blik.

The Contribution of J. Donald Butler

Granting the assumption of the consistent interrelatedness of aspects of reality, the investigator has found Butler's orientation to philosophical issues, scope, and content (though not necessarily his particular interpretation of them), most useful. Butler has been recognized as an authoritative source; as one scholar has written, "The most thorough survey of philosophy as it relates to religion and education has been written by J. Donald Butler."[23] In her New York University PH.D thesis, Thompson utilizes Butler's insights as a model for establishing the issues of philosophy of religious education.[24]

Recognizing the traditional philosophical divisions of epistemology, metaphysics, axiology, and logic as a method for testing the validity of reasoning, Butler has offered as a

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[23]Marcus J. Priester, "Philosophical Foundations for Christian Education," in An Introduction to Christian Education, ed. by Marvin J. Taylor (New York and Nashville: Abington Press, 1966), p. 62.

[24]Norma Thompson, "Contemporary Trends in the Philosophy of Protestant Christian Education" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1961).

structure of philosophy the following factors:[25]

1. Metaphysics (theories of the nature of reality) with its issues: cosmology (theories of the nature of the cosmos and explanations of its origin and development, including the nature of cause and effect relations, the nature of time, and the nature of space); the nature of man as one important aspect of reality (the problem of the essential nature of the self, the problem of the relation of body and mind, and the problem of freedom); conceptions of any kind about God; teleology (considerations as to whether or not there is purpose in the universe); considerations relating to constancy or lack of it in reality; problems of quantity (consideration of the number of ultimate realities); ontology (the meaning of existence as such).

2. Epistemology (theories of the nature of knowledge) with its issues: the possibility of knowledge, the kinds of knowledge, and the instrument of knowledge.

3. Axiology (the general theory of value). The nature of values, the different kinds of value, specific values worthy of possession.

Butler is by no means alone in this orientation. Substantially the same model is offered by Kneller[26] and

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[25]J. Donald Butler, Four Philosophies and Their Practice in Education and Religion (3rd ed.; New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968), pp. 41ff.

[26]George F. Kneller, Introduction to Philosophy of Education (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964).

Morris.[27] An earlier (1957) edition of Butler's book is listed in bibliographical sections of both of these studies.

The Centrality of Objectives

Butler has proposed that a central issue for education is "aims," or as we will use interchangeably with "aims": "objectives," "goals," and "purposes." He has written:

> Education must have objectives if it is to be effective; otherwise it descends to the level of aimless activity which is the antithesis of educative experience.[28]

In line with Butler's comment, another scholar has noted, "The first step in the development of an educational program, it will be generally admitted, is the determination of the aims and objectives."[29] It is with the issue of objectives that Butler has noted the starting point of philosophy of education:

> It may be well to begin in philosophy of education as people commonly do with questions concerning educational objectives such as "What are we about in Education?" Or to focus on the function of the educational institution in society, the question is commonly stated as "Why does the school exist?"[30]

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[27]Van Cleve Morris, Philosophy and the American School (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961).

[28]Butler, Four Philosophies, p. 12.

[29]Velorus Martz, "Philosophy of Education," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. by Walter S. Monroe (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 798.

[30]J. Donald Butler, Religious Education (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 126.

He is again supported by the same scholar, who has written, "The philosophy of education concerns itself with the aims and outcomes that the educative process should strive to realize."[31]

Objectives and Philosophy

It is a failure to acknowledge the dependence of educational objectives upon prior considerations, when and if an educator posits an objective(s) without prior analysis of the blik that gives rise to the aim(s). The neglect of such a conscious effort runs the risk of developing shallow, haphazard goals or even ones incompatible with their own actual perspective.

The basic question of objectives, however, gives rise to questions of value, the philosophical issue axiology. As Kneller has remarked, "We cannot criticize existing educational ideals and policies or suggest new ones without considering such general philosophical problems as the nature of the good life, to which education should lead . . . "[32] Also, the same scholar has written, " . . . in selecting educational goals and policies, we have to make value judgments; we have to decide which of a number of possible ends and means we

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[31]Martz, "Philosophy of Education," p. 798.

[32]Kneller, Introduction, p. 22.

ought to adopt."[33] In agreement with Kneller, Butler has posited, "My argument is that responsible thinking about the aims of education necessarily involves much more than casual consideration of the value aspect of life and existence."[34]

However, Butler insists that to deal adequately with the issue of aims, and the whole of philosophy of education, one must not only consider axiology, but also the epistemological and metaphysical implications or bases of axiology. He suggests, " . . . in order to blossom into a philosophy of education, this pursuit needs to follow these questions (such as aims, 'why does the school exist?' etc.) to their roots in the whole range of value theory of reality, and theory of knowledge."[35] In greater detail, elsewhere, he has illustrated the influence of a given axiological orientation for objectives; a spiritually directed value system would include in its objective the goal and value source of "Ultimate Existence." He has commented:

> . . . if some values exist independently of man and if they have their existence as qualities of One who alone has Being, then the source of value for man is quite different. The importance of human society is not made less, but it is no longer the exclusive source of value; it is rather a source derived from the Ultimate. Individual man is still a unit of mankind, still a socius, an individuation of society. But

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Butler, Four Philosophies, p. 488.

[35] Butler, Religious Education, p. 126. (The parenthetical insertion is our own.)

> Ultimate Existence is the source of value both for individual and social man. And, accordingly, some kind of effectual relation to Ultimate Being becomes the gateway to value and value experience --at least to ultimate value. Education in such a value context should be no less social, but it will face the difficult fact that man's value experience is contingent upon theological concerns as well as social concerns. It will recognize that the full impact of man's value experience is not understood unless it is viewed as having a horizon beyond which there is an abiding value experience with which it has some connection.[36]

In keeping with his understanding of the structure of philosophy, Butler builds his case further with the point that axiological considerations are linked with epistemology and metaphysics.[37] His own summation of his position is now noted:

> . . . it is impossible . . . to deal responsibly with the aims of education and the function of the school unless theory of value is taken very seriously as the necessary rootage of educational aims and functions. In dealing with value theory, I have made the observation that value thinking involves conceptions of reality . . . In addition to this succession of steps, I have proposed that an added and final step must be taken by anyone who will be responsible in building a philosophy of education. This added step is to address onself to a theory of knowledge and thereby determine how a world view is known to be true, and also what world view can have a value theory solidly based on it and educational aims or functions soundly formulated within its context.[38]

Thus, objectives of education are dependent in their formulations upon interpretations of axiological, metaphysical and epistemological issues, upon the logical interconnectedness

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[36]Butler, Four Philosophies, p. 490.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., pp. 494ff.

and consistency of the interpretations--in other words, upon one's blik. It becomes apparent that one cannot develop THE philosophy of education with THE objective(s) any more than one can point to a blik as THE blik. Rather, one might establish an objective(s) which is consistent with one's perspective; perhaps this dilemma accounts at least in part for the numerous, competing philosophies of education and their consequent aims, and further, that attempts at "intellectual objectivity" are unable to deliver a final and certain philosophy of education. At most, a given community might "confess" its blik and consequent implications, but hardly claim "raw objectivity" for its systematized claims.

Philosophy of Religious Education

Likewise, a philosophy of religious education is confessional, the acknowledged educational philosophy of a particular blik; but, it, too, if Butler's analysis is assumed, cannot claim exemption from careful interpretation of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. Here, as well, objectives are dependent upon these prior considerations, and with regard to the "basic objective," there is an equal dependence.

There is a distinct lack in the field of religious education of such an approach. As Butler commented, "This is one place at which educators and religious educators do not

go deeply enough . . . ."[39] Consequently, Priester has observed, "There remains the need for a clearly articulated and more systematic philosophy of Christian education . . ."[40]

The centrality of objectives for such a philosophy is as true as with philosophy of education. As noted earlier in this study (p. 4), however, the role of a basic objective is gaining importance. Though he did not use "basic objective," Miller utilized the same reasoning and understanding as Wyckoff when he wrote:

> An objective is the point toward which an army is advancing. It is synonymous with goal or end. A general objective[41] may provide directives for a total plan of action . . .
>
> An objective exists to guide the educational life of a community. It provides the reason for existence, and understanding of the basis for motivation, and the end toward which the process moves. It is sufficiently broad in its coverage to be relevant to all of the activities of the community, and yet it is specific enough to be a basis for unity. It operates in many ways when it is broken down into particular goals, but it serves in at least three capacities when it remains generalized.
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> First, it is a guide to all writers and editors of curriculum materials, for it provides an overarching goal . . .
>
> Second, as a teacher works out the specific goal of a unit, the aim for a particular lesson, or the long range plan for the year, the objective provides the orientation needed so that the myriad of particular educational activities may point toward adequate outcomes . . .
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> Third, an objective provides a basis for evaluation. Because it is general, it is helpful as a

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[39] Butler, Religious Education, pp. 126f.

[40] Priester, "Philosophical Foundations," p. 69.

[41] "General objective" is here synonymous with "basic objective."

> basis for establishing specific goals that are open to some degree of measurement, observation, or estimates of achievement.[42]

Philosophy and Theology

The lack of a systematic philosophy of religious education is the result, at least in part, of the myriad interpretations of the relationships between philosophy and religion or theology. It would be possible to understand this relationship in as many ways as one might relate the many different definitions of "philosophy," "religion," or "theology." This possibility has been reflected with two extremes, as one book on the philosophy of religion has indicated:

> In the history of the reciprocal influence of theology and philosophy in the Western tradition, a number of views of the relationships between these two areas have been expressed. Some philosophers and theologians have tended to deny that any connection is possible, each claiming that the other's discipline is either irrelevant to his own or without any validity whatsoever. . . .
>
> At the other extreme there have been attempts to fuse the two disciplines completely. Here the view is that no disparity exists between reason and revelation, for they are two sides of the same coin: reasons seek and can find what revelation would make evident. Proponents of this position feel that the best rational structuring of the universe is the best theology, for revelation is reason exercising its inherent power.[43]

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[42]Randolph Crump Miller, "The Objective of Christian Education," in An Introduction to Christian Education, p. 94. This essay traces prominent religious educational objectives since 1930 in accurate but brief detail.

[43]George L. Abernathy and Thomas A. Langford, eds.,

Continuing to use Butler's insights, we find it valid to look upon theology as a kind of response to the issues raised by, and sometimes interpreted by, philosophy. In Butler's own words:

> . . . theology begins with revelation, not with revelation as an idea, but with empirical historical events of revelation . . . . Philosophy, on the other hand, begins with questions of the human mind and because it begins here, it also has a certain characteristic structure. Now both deal very much with the same subject matter, but they deal with it in different ways--not from different points of view so much as from different points of departure. The concern of theology with the doctrine of God or with the doctrine of the Trinity and the concern of philosophy with metaphysics, for example, are concerns which necessarily converge.[44]

This is not to say that philosophy must exclude revelation, but that its starting point is not there. Thus, philosophy, as here understood, raises and often interprets issues, whereas theology is a response to revelation, and this response often includes interpretations of the same issues raised by the philosopher.

The convergence of philosophy and theology at many points is further attested to by Dilley, who wrote:

> Christian theism, then, is not unlike other metaphysical views. It appeals basically to certain facts or "interprefacts" as being fundamental

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Philosophy of Religion: A Book of Readings (2nd ed.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 95.

[44]Butler, Religious Education, p. 127.

> for understanding the nature of things . . . . Thus there is no escape from the claim that Christian theism is a metaphysical view beside other metaphysical views appealing to facts-as-seen-in-a-particular-perspective just as do other views, and subjecting its fundamental doctrines to the same internal and external scrutiny.[45]

For Dilley, not only is theology metaphysical in that it offers descriptions of reality, but also as a kind of metaphysic it is a confessional articulation of one's blik, a blik that includes theos. Further, just as there are many philosophies, depending upon one's perspective, in the same manner, there can be various theologies, commonly confessing theos and revelation, but interpreting their confessions in varied ways; hence the numerous Christian theologies.

Theological Bases of Religious Educational Philosophy

If the foregoing analysis is valid, it would seem that the development of a philosophy of religious education, especially a basic objective, involves the assumption or conscious interpretation of theories of value, knowledge, and reality. However, the investigator submits that such interpretations need not use the language of philosophy, but that the language of theology, offering interpretations of reality, knowledge, and value, is able to provide the foundations for a basic

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[45]Dilley, Metaphysics and Religious Language, p. 54.

objective, Miller's statement, "The clue to Christian education is the rediscovery of a relevant theology . . . ,"[46] supports the claim that theology colors the objective, curricula and methods of Christian education.

The lack of a systematic theological approach to the development of a basic objective, as well as whatever else might constitute one's educational philosophy, is the result of two primary factors. First, any religious concept or theological doctrine would have some implication(s) for a basic objective; hence, most scholars pick somewhat at random a particular motif and illustrate its relevance to Christian education. The result has been a lack of consensus as to the necessary theological bases. Second, the type of philosophical analysis offered by Butler as to what issues must be considered in developing educational aims has seemed irrelevant to the discovery of a relevant theology for Christian education.

However, assuming that the problem is one of language (philosophical versus theological), Butler's philosophical model may be used with the translation of terminology, where necessary, from philosophical to theological vocabulary. For example, "cosmology" as used by Butler is, theologically speaking, the doctrine of creation. The investigator submits

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[46] Miller, Clue, p. 15.

the following basic model as theologically equivalent to Butler's:

I. Reality (with its issues): creation or the world, human nature, and a doctrine of God, or the Real. II. Revelation or Religious Knowledge. III. Value or Consequences for Living.

The issues have been unchanged basically in the above model, but the language permits a theological focus necessary for a theologically based philosophy of religious education. Thus, in whatever way one's blik influences one's theology, if one utilizes Butler's model, it becomes clear that in order to establish a theologically oriented religious educational philosophy, one must articulate one's interpretations of reality (including creation, man, God), religious knowledge or revelation, and consequences for living or value. This is not to imply that one must begin with any particular one of these concepts; it is simply to note that a systematic philosophy of religious education, including the basic objective, must include prior interpretations of these religious concepts, but even here only when Butler's model is found useful within one's perspective.

At this point it could be argued that a philosophy of religious education would cease to be philosophical and become a "theology of religious education," or a "Christian philosophy of education." Whatever label is attached, the

"basic objective" and its prior considerations remain the same. However, in that philosophy and philosophical reasoning provides the initial structure or model, we will continue to use "philosophy of religious education."

Religious Educators and the "Basic Objective"

In her thesis, Thompson traced objectives of religious education in recent times,[47] but none of the works mentioned developed a systematic understanding of the philosophical-theological bases of a basic objective. Studies concerned, in whole or part, with philosophy or theology of religious education and statements about a basic objective's presuppositions deal randomly rather than systematically with the issues.

Reality: God

Thompson observed, "In Christian education the nature of reality is usually discussed in terms of the Ultimate Reality, and this, in turn, is identified with God."[48] Such is in keeping with the proposal made above that theological language is not inappropriate as one explores philosophical-theological bases of religious education. Few scholars,

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[47] Thompson, "Contemporary Trends," pp. 205ff.

[48] Ibid., p. 390.

however, have linked the doctrine of God with the basic objective, and none examined in this investigation have proceeded along the systematic lines of Butler's model.

However, Schreyer sees the relatedness of "God" to the basic objective quite concretely. In a section, "How is the Central Objective Determined?", he wrote:

> The central objective of Christian education has been determined by insights of Christians, past and present, who have become possessed with the belief that the supreme purpose of Christian education is theological in nature. This decision has come through the inspiration of at least five basic concepts . . .[49]

Schreyer goes on to name the Hebraic-Christian concept of God as a prime factor. The concept is important in that "the true objective in Christian education can be determined only as man sees his life and redemption real in God, his Father, and in Christ, his Savior."[50]

In another study, Miller similarly appeals to theology, including the doctrine of God, as "the determining factor in the development of a philosophy of education, of techniques to be used, of goals to be attained . . . ."[51]

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[49] George M. Schreyer, Christian Education in Theological Focus (Philadelphia: The Christian Education Press, 1962), p. 127.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Miller, Education for Christian Living, p. 5.

Cully noted, "The purpose of Christian nurture is to help people through their growing relationship to God in Christ so to live that they may glorify him and effectively serve others . . ."[52] This statement does link God with purpose, but as with Miller and other similar statements, the logical relationship (i.e., basic objective requires prior theory of value, which in turn requires prior epistemological and metaphysical theories, the latter involving "God") is not explicitly stated.

Similarly, Little has included "God" as one of the basic concepts in the formulation of a religious educational philosophy. Though he did not utilize the "basic objective," Little links "God" with "objectives" in these words:

> Are they consistent with the tenets of the Christian faith, with the basic doctrines and convictions, which have formed the main body of Christian tradition? Do they take into account the biblical view of God . . . ?[53]

Nels F. Ferré, also, appeals to a doctrine of God, but only hints of its precise relationship with a basic objective: "Education in the light of God consequently makes central to its aim . . . the fostering of the kind of community of open, inclusive, and creative concern . . . ."[54] In a more recent

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[52]Iris V. Cully, The Dynamics of Christian Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 29f.

[53]Lawrence C. Little, Foundations for a Philosophy of Christian Education (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 197.

[54]Nels F. Ferré, "God," in Westminster Dictionary, p. 282.

study Ferré links the aim of Christian education with God much in the same way as did Cully.[55]

Thus, even though there are prominent scholars who have noted the relevance of "God" to a basic objective, none has systematically utilized a model similar to Butler's.

Reality: The World or Creation

Thompson wrote, "Only a few educators discuss reality apart from the nature of God and the nature of man."[56] This was the case at the time of her investigation, and the situation remains the same today. Apart from the personal versus the non-personal interpretations of reality reported by Thompson,[57] no systematic approach such as Butler's has been used by religious educators.

The most concrete type of reference in this matter is exemplified by Little in the following paragraph:

> One of the terms commonly used to indicate the Christian conception of God is that of Creator, "the maker of heaven and earth." God is believed to be self-sufficient and eternal, the sole source of all existence: the physical universe, life, and man. Conceptions of that process have varied, but about the fact it was God who created there has been general agreement. As distinguished from their

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[55]Nels F. Ferré, A Theology for Christian Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), p. 183.

[56]Thompson, "Contemporary Trends," p. 70.

[57]Ibid., pp. 70ff.

> Creator, all creatures, including man, are finite, mortal, contingent, and dependent upon the sustaining power of God. And, in the universe which he has created, God is sovereign.[58]

Little's comments are, as Thompson indicates, offered in a section headed "God."[59]

Later in his study Little does link "creation" or "the world" as central issues in determining objectives, though not specifically a "basic objective." He wrote:

> Are the objectives Christian? Are they consistent with the tenets of the Christian faith, with the basic doctrines and convictions which have formed the main body of Christian tradition? Do they take into account the biblical view of God, of man, and of nature?[60]

Specifically how one takes into account the doctrines mentioned, Little does not elaborate. However, it may be assumed that he and other scholars approaching the issue of objectives mean the implications of these doctrines.

Reality: Human Nature

Often throughout the history of thought the "nature of man" has been regarded primarily as a philosophical or theological issue, and only that. It is not our purpose here to affirm or deny these or other alternatives. Rather, the

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[58] Little, Foundations, p. 146.

[59] Ibid., pp. 145f.

[60] Ibid., p. 197.

investigator submits that there is a philosophical, a metaphysical, dimension to the "nature of man." Butler has developed his understanding of the problems of this issue as follows:

> Among the many questions man can ask himself, one which is most significant in metaphysics is this: What am I? Just a body, a physical organism, a machine? Or am I a soul, a spirit, a mind? Or perchance, am I both soul and body? Now the answers given to this question, or cluster of related questions, will determine rather completely one's entire metaphysics . . .
>
> There is at least one other consideration concerning man which has a metaphysical connection, the question of his freedom or lack of it.[61]

In other words, Butler is asking about man: "What is true always about man? In what sense is man real?" At this point, at this level, the issue can be classified as metaphysical, though this says nothing about the method by which the questions are answered!

The relevance of the nature of man to education has been summed up well by Millard and Bertocci:

> . . . every educational system or body of educational practices involves at least some metaphysical presuppositions, that is some conception of the nature of man and his place in the universe in light of one's conception of the kind of universe this is. . . . Somewhere this issue of what men in fact are needs to be faced. Such assumptions as the following lead to quite different educational practices and conceptions of the nature of education itself: All men are selfish; all men are

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[61] Butler, Religious Education, p. 20.

> altruistic; all men are economically determined; all men are only physiological organisms determined by stimulus-response patterns and conditioning; all men are children of God.[62]

Sidney Hook has related the issue "nature of man" directly to educational objectives:

> There are two generic ways of reaching what are sometimes called the "ultimate" ends of education. One relies on an immediate, self-certifying intuition of the nature of man; the other on the observation of the consequences of different proposals of treating man. The first is essentially theological and metaphysical; the second is experimental and scientific.
>
> When they are intelligently formulated both approaches recognize that the ends of education are relevant to the nature of man.[63]

Thus, man being an integral part of reality, the reality which provides the perspective for education, plus the fact that it is man who is to be educated, an implication is that the issue of "the nature of man" is related to the determination of a basic objective for education as well as "immediate" objectives and goals.

The relationship of an interpretation of human nature to a basic objective for Christian education is, by and large, the same relationship suggested between "man" and a basic objective of general education. However, when man is seen

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[62] R. M. Millard and P. A. Bertocci, "Philosophy and Philosophy of Education," Journal of Education (October, 1958), p. 8.

[63] As quoted in John S. Brubacher, Eclectic Philosophy of Education (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 167.

within a Christian perspective as basically a "child of God" the objective adds the dimension of man's relationship with God.

A real problem lies in the predominance of a number of interpretations of the Christian view of man, with consequent colorations for the determination of a basic objective.

However, it can be concluded safely that the very basic understanding of man as a "child of God" (an answer to "what is always true about man?") channels the basic objective from the possibility of man-centeredness to the metaphysical reality of a relationship, to be further interpreted, between the Divine and the human. Thus, even at this fundamental level of anthropological understanding a unique perspective envelopes Christian educational objectives. The fullest consequences for a basic objective would depend upon the fuller interpretation of man's nature as part of a "Christian metaphysic."

Religious educators have concerned themselves with the problem of interpreting human nature.[64] The relationship between interpretations of man and objectives are often implied or stated. The most succinct account we have studied is Schreyer's observation, in a section entitled, "How is the

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[64]Thompson, "Contemporary Trends," pp. 117ff. (Dr. Thompson traces religious educators' interpretations of human nature in this section of her study.)

Central Objective Determined?"[65] The five basic concepts necessary for such clarity are the following: 1. The Hebraic-Christian Concepts of God, Man, and Redemption. 2. The Insight of the Way in Which Persons Become Christian. 3. The Insight of the Graded Development of Persons. 4. The Insight of the Compulsion of the Christian Faith. 5. The Insight of the Purpose and Mission of the Christian Church.

"Man and Redemption" are clearly related to human nature, as are items two and three. It could be argued that items four and five are also related to the nature of man. In any case, it is clear that Schreyer regards this issue as pivotal to determining the central objective.

Henderlite, who, like Schreyer, links "man" to the "basic educational goal,"[66] also points out that certain interpretations of man color the basic objective.

Revelation or Religious Knowledge

It has been shown elsewhere that a philosophy of religious education must include epistemological considerations.[67] But as the same scholar pointed out: "Most religious

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[65] Schreyer, Christian Education, pp. 127ff.

[66] Rachel Henderlite, Forgiveness and Hope (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1961), pp. 20f.

[67] Thompson, "Contemporary Trends," pp. 147ff.

educators do not struggle with this problem philosophically; rather, the nature of the Christian religion, as interpreted by each educator, involves an answer to the epistemological problem of the possibility of knowledge. In each instance, there is little doubt that man can have some knowledge of God, either through the initiative of God or through the struggle of man himself to discover God."[68] That Protestant religious educators regard some form of revelation as the unique instrument of knowledge of God[69] is clear.

The relationship of revelation or religious knowledge to the basic objective is stated most succinctly by a contemporary theologian:

> The Christian understanding of God, whether of his nature, or of his work, is thus to be grasped through the central reality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ as holy love. All other aspects of his nature and all God's work in creation and redemption are to be understood in terms of God as the personal Spirit who is holy love. Education in the light of God consequently makes central to its aim, communication, and concrete methods, the fostering of the kind of community of open, inclusive, and creative concern that receives its pattern of orientation, its power for motivation, and its measure of fulfillment in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.[70]

Cully implies the same centrality of revelation for the basic objective in the following statement: "The purposes

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[68] Ibid., p. 150.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Nels F. S. Ferré, "God, Understanding Of," Westminster Dictionary, p. 282. (Our italics.)

of Christian Education grow out of affirmations about God made known through Christ in the Bible."[71]

Miller wrote something similar: "Theology, which is the 'truth about God in relation to man,' is the determining factor in the development of a philosophy of education, of techniques to be used, of goals to be attained . . . ."[72]

Other than assertions concerning the centrality of revelation for development of the basic objective or goals, and traditional proclamations of God's revelation in Christ, even these scholars, typical of those investigated by Thompson, do not deal with the problem philosophically in the studies cited.

However, in more recent studies two religious educators have given some attention to a problem of revelation, the nature of religious language.[73] However, in these studies the specific relationship of the problem to the basic objective is not discussed. Though this has not yet been done, it is clear from all of these studies that revelation or religious knowledge is a basic concept affecting the development of a basic objective.

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[71]Cully, Dynamics, p. 29.

[72]Miller, Clue to Christian Education, p. 5.

[73]Randolph C. Miller, The Language Gap and God (Philadelphia and Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1970), and William B. Williamson, Language and Concepts in Christian Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970).

Theory of Value or Consequences for Living

The final area suggested by this investigation as necessary for the basic objective is theory of value, or in other words, consequences for living. The significance of axiology for philosophy of education has been discussed earlier in this chapter (see pp. 35ff.). Thompson shows the necessity for such considerations for a philosophy of religious education as well, but notes that "few writers in religious education deal with value theory in a systematic way."[74] However, she presents in great detail an analysis of relationships of value theories to basic objectives found in a number of scholarly works.[75] An emphasis upon one's relationship to God or Christ as the highest good was found to affect directly the goals of religious education as formulated by various scholars.

Summary

It is difficult to arrive at a precise definition of "philosophy of religious education," because philosophers disagree about the nature of philosophy and students of religion and theologians disagree about the nature of religion

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[74] Thompson, "Contemporary Trends," p. 194.

[75] Ibid., pp. 209ff.

and theology; also, educators vary in their opinions about the nature of education. Because one's blik or philosophy, one's confession of faith, determines what is and what is not, one may conclude that a model for philosophy of religious education can be whatever is consistent with one's blik.

The model suggested by Butler, as he described the ingredients of a philosophy of education, has been used by responsible scholars as appropriate for religious education as well. The basic concepts used by Butler are useful in this investigation, including his insistence on the centrality of aims. Particularly appropriate is Wyckoff's use of "basic objective," compatible with Butler's model.

To develop a "basic objective," it is necessary to deal with concepts of reality (including creation or the world, human nature, and God), revelation or religious knowledge, and value or consequences for living. Although most religious educators have not dealt with these issues systematically, we have found that these concepts are related to a basic objective of religious education.

CHAPTER TWO

CHERBONNIER'S INTERPRETATION OF MYSTICAL RELIGION OR PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY

The Nature of "Mystical Religion" or "Perennial Philosophy"

"Perennial Philosophy" or "Mystical Religion" is a generalized label, a kind of umbrella word designated by Cherbonnier and others to categorize a great number of different religions and philosophies. The study of perennial philosophy is actually a study of major themes, of those key elements at work in any system of thought that employs its presuppositions. The intention of this chapter is to describe Cherbonnier's interpretation of those primary themes common to the thought patterns of perennial philosophy.

It should be understood that Cherbonnier claims nowhere to have coined the term, nor is his interpretation one with which all scholars would agree. In essential harmony with Cherbonnier, however, is Aldous Huxley's popular exposition,[1] although Cherbonnier presents the topics according to a different sequence. Introducing the "perennial

[1]Aldous Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy (London: Chattos and Windus, 1946).

philosophy" in a journal, Schmitt has written the following:

> Of the philosophical phrases which have come into popular use during the twentieth century, perhaps none is more curious than "perennial philosophy" or, in its more common Latin form, philosophia perennis. Although there is no agreement on the precise meaning of the phrase, it is usually taken to indicate that some sort of continuous theme runs throughout the history of philosophy, that certain enduring and lasting truths are recognizable in the philosophical writings of all historical periods. . . . Particularly during the past seventy years has "perennial philosophy" become a popular term, and numerous books and articles have discussed its meaning in detail. What precisely "philosophia perennis" means is not easy to determine, and the task of determining it is made more difficult by the fact that a great many philosophers of various persuasions have, as it were, appropriated the conception and so bent it that their own philosophy turns out to be perennial philosophy.[2]

Although Cherbonnier uses the term, it should be understood that he does not associate his own philosophical-religious position with it; quite the contrary, he uses "perennial philosophy" to distinguish his position from perennialism. Nor, as Schmitt implies of all those utilizing the term, would he claim that the various statements of perennial philosophy are "truths."

Huxley's Summary of "Perennial Philosophy"

Huxley has written: ". . . under all (the) confusion of particularist doctrines, there remains a Highest Common

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[2]Charles B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXVII (October-December, 1966), p. 505.

Factor, which is the Perennial Philosophy in what may be called its chemically pure state."[3] He has summed up the major motifs of perennial thought:

> At the core of the Perennial Philosophy we find four fundamental doctrines:
>
> First: the phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness--the world of things and animals and men and even gods--is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be nonexistent.
>
> Second: human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.
>
> Third: man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.
>
> Fourth: man's life has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal Self and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground.[4]

The following exposition is of Cherbonnier's interpretation of "Perennial Philosophy" or "Mystical Religion." Though not at odds with Huxley, Cherbonnier does, as mentioned above, elaborate the themes differently.

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[3]Aldous Huxley, "Introduction," The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita (New York: Mentor Books, 1954), p. 12.

[4]Ibid., p. 13.

The Real or God

One of the basic issues raised by any philosophy, and noted first in Cherbonnier's model,[5] is the nature of reality. The position on this issue serves as the groundwork on which all subsequent notions build. In a general sense, a perennial system would use this rule of thumb: "the most inclusive is the most real."[6] What this implies is that ultimate reality must be that element in life which somehow incorporates all of being into its own existence. The real, therefore, is a kind of final receptacle for being; it supplies each element in the universe with being, because it embodies all of being in one form. The real is immaterial, non-physical, and beyond the laws of space and time. It is the foundation for life, that object or force on which everything else must depend; the real, therefore, is not only all-inclusive, but absolutely necessary.

The Rationale

Such conclusions about the real are derived statements; they are products of a logical method which begins with the first maxim "the most inclusive is the most real."

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[5]Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," a topical outline, mimeographed (Hartford, 1957), p. 1.

[6]Ibid., p. 1.

The first step to understanding the perennialist concept of ultimate reality leads beneath the surface of its conclusions to the inner mechanisms that make it work. In Cherbonnier's words, the thought process is described:

> The reasoning by which so many philosophers of Platonic stamp have arrived at their conclusion concerning the nature of the real is plausible enough; if we are to know anything, then the object of our knowledge, the real, must be "rational." It must conform to the requirements of reason; but if it is not alien to the canons of reason, it cannot be different from them. And if not different, then, according to the momentous conclusion of the idealist philosophy, reality and reason are the same. In Hegel's formulation, "The real is the rational, and the rational is the real"; or in Parmenides', "Thought and Being are One."
>
> To the further question, "If the rational is the real, then what exactly do you mean by 'rational'?" the answer is evident: the rational is the logical. The most real is, therefore, that which enjoys the greatest logical priority.[7]

The One

The first designation given to the real is its singularity. It cannot only be called being or non-being but is referred to as the One. Terms such as "that than which there is no other" relate to the unique status attached to the real; they point toward its quality of being absolutely necessary; the One is singled out as being the focus of existence, the object of universal dependence. This means that the

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[7]Cherbonnier, "Jerusalem and Athens," Anglican Theological Review, XXXVI (October, 1954), pp. 254f.

perennialist can coalesce the paradox of being and non-being into one unit; beyond a compromise, they begin to speak in terms of a "Whole." The real, therefore, has an identity; it is something more specific than just being.

This process of designating the One gives rise to what can be called its negative characteristics. Because it stands at the pinnacle of the material universe, perennial systems want to differentiate it from the multiple objects of the natural world; and because those objects have less reality, the One must be given complete reality. It cannot include all of being unless it has the ability to do so. Mystics, therefore, apply a whole genre of quality-words to describe the nature of the One, to separate it from any object lower on the scale of reality. There are two important factors that all of these definitive words or names have in common: first, each implies a state of perfection. This means that the One is absolutely defined; it is totally pure in nature. Secondly, designations for the One carry an implicit understanding of what it cannot do; that is, if it violates its own character, it is no longer the One; it must be "Wholly Other."

With these two common elements in mind, the nature of the One can be implied by the "names" associated with it. In order to place them into some context, Cherbonnier has grouped them into three general categories:[8]

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[8] Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," p. 1.

I. The One as existing without limitation.

(a) Infinite means unbounded; it implies that the One is constant; it "exists as an eternal focus through eternity."

(b) Immutable means changeless; the One is beyond the effects of time and cannot be measured by any historical categories.

(c) Immaterial implies that the One is not of the same substance as the finite; it is purely non-physical.

(d) Independent removes the One from any sense of relationship with another object since that would require it to be dependent on some external being.

(e) Absolute is a general term that refers to the One as being perfect and completely above the particulars of lesser reality.

(f) Unconditioned means that no artificial or natural limits can be imposed on the One.

(g) Indeterminate implies that no force can affect the One or shape its being.

(h) "Wholly Other" is another general term which elevates the One ontologically beyond any limitations.

II. The unity of the One.

(a) Impartible separates the One from the quality of multiplicity that is characteristic of the natural world.

(b) Undifferentiated means the One has no necessary parts; there is no possibility for internal cycles of cause and effect.

III. The nature of the One.

(a) Impassible means the One is unfeeling; it cannot enter into a relationship with anything; it is beyond suffering or emotion.

(b) Ineffable leaves the One nameless since a name limits or particularizes its object.

(c) Inactive means that the One is still; it does not act since action can imply change.

(d) Mute implies that the One is silent; it does not speak to any external object.

(e) Impersonal implies that the One does not share the qualities of human emotion; as a self, it is perfect and unmoved.

(f) Without purpose means that the One does not require any reason to exist since it would then be dependent on that reason.

(g) Unmanifest means that there is no accessible knowledge of the One that can be acquired or deduced.

(h) Transcendent implies that in its entirety the One is on a completely unique plane of reality, separate from the physical world.

What perennial philosophy has done, according to Cherbonnier, is to establish a kind of working definition for the One; it has constructed an image of reality out of the elements of perfection and inclusiveness. These are powerful concepts in both religion and philosophy because they do not admit to change or manipulation. At best, ultimate reality can only be expanded in an allegorical sense, where the gods might be identified as the "faces" of the One in nature.

It is apparent that mystical religion has succeeded in developing a consistent approach for deriving the nature of reality; it has answered its first question with the concept of the One. But having accounted for perfection and the source of being, perennial systems must now contend with

what remains, all those objects of lesser reality that comprise the natural world. It is at this point, Cherbonnier notes, that the mystic splits reality into two halves. The result is a major theme which runs through the entire spectrum of perennial thought: the duality of existence.

The Status of the Everyday World

Creation is the Fall

The fact that the natural world exists is an acute problem for mysticism; it has supplied a definition for what is real and has given that reality certain characteristics: it must be unlimited, unified, and transcendent. The central issue for perennial systems comes into focus when one compares these three main qualities to the world of nature; in each case it is obvious that none of the definitions can be fulfilled. In fact, the natural world is the antithesis of real reality. But if this is true, why does it exist at all? What explanation does perennial philosophy offer to justify a second reality? It is fair to state that mysticism has no final solution to this problem. There seems to be no necessity for a finite world based on the assumptions already made about the One. It appears contradictory to have a perfect unity existing simultaneously with an imperfect, multiple world. At best, perennial philosophy can only accept the fact of the natural world and attempt to deal with its nature.

The first view one gets of the finite world is that of something which has been created. This means that the internal mechanics behind the "lower" realm presupposes a disruption of both unity and perfection (since the two are subsumed by the One). Consequently, the natural world gains its finite or imperfect nature because it is a composite of all those things that are negative and alien to reality, i.e., space, time, and matter. At best, it is a poor copy of the original, made with inferior materials, and not very dependable.

Cherbonnier interprets perennial thinking saying, "the physical world, in all its multiplicity, contradicts the ideal of unity and universality" of the Divine. Hence, the world is in some sense the "Fall" from the Divine, no matter how the ontology and cosmology is developed.[9] Thus, the world is a somewhat unhappy, and at the best tolerable, condition in its separation or distant extension from the Divine Ground.

Ways of Relating the One to the World

A real problem with this interpretation of reality is the precise relationship of the Divine to the world.

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[9]Cherbonnier, "The Judaeo-Christian Sources of Western Culture," mimeographed (Hartford, 1955), p. 7.

Cherbonnier has noted:

> The Achilles heel of all philosophy of Platonic stamp, whether Oriental or Western, is the impossibility of explaining the relation of the one to the many, the timeless to the temporal, the infinite to the finite, the absolute to the relative. All attempted explanations amount in the end to what Kierkegaard calls "solution by superscription"; that is, while they purport to solve the problem, they really only state it in other terms, such as "reflection," "participation," "emanation," and the like.[10]

From this perspective, it is not necessary to run through the list of creation narratives or myths to get the flavor of a perennial view: since there is only one, true reality, and since it has a monopoly on all affirmative (perfect) qualities, then the finite can only be a creation of negative (imperfect) particles. This means that not only is the raw material of the finite subject to decay, but also limited by space and time; and because reality is without activity or emotion, the natural world must contain them as its motivating factor. Perennial philosophy, therefore, admits to two realms of reality; it has both the One and the finite, each of which is contained by its own set of definitions. What a perennial system must now do is to somehow bring them into a balance, to reconcile the two halves without sacrificing any of the earlier conclusions about the One. In

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[10] Cherbonnier, "Is There A Biblical Metaphysic?", Theology Today, XV, No. 4 (1959), p. 462.

order to do this, it must deal with the status of the everyday world in one of three possible ways: (1) It must place all of its emphasis on the One, denying any reality to the finite. (2) It must permit the finite a small amount of credibility by seeing it as the reflection of the One. (3) It must speak of participation between the two realms in which the finite shares reality with the One.

The first alternative (Maya) is the logical extension of assuming that the One contains all of reality. It represents the natural world as only an illusion, possibly a dream supplied by the consciousness of the One. In effect, this removes the burden of proof for the existence of an imperfect world from perennial philosophy and gives any explanations over to the transcendent nature of the One. The mediation between the two realms is made by simply refusing to recognize the claims of one party; the balance is shifted to favor completely the original suppositions about reality. Obviously this approach leaves little room for argument concerning the status of this world and its adherents tend to maximize the "other worldly" or mystical aspects of religion.

The second alternative (dualism) is an amendment of the first. It is not as strict in interpretation because it allows the finite a special kind of reality. Where the concept of maya (the world as illusion) restricts all reality for the One, this approach speaks of the world as a reflection

of the One, though its reality is fragmented like light passing through a prism. What is real in this world, therefore, is kept in dependence of the One; it is a diluted reality without substance or self-motivation. There is, however, a closer contact between the two realms since the image or presence of the One is somehow mysteriously in the natural world.

As a third approach a perennialist system may attempt to reconcile the duality between the One and the finite through "participation." Under this alternative, the hierarchy of forms becomes the "Great Chain of Being." This implies that reality filters down through the multiple objects beneath the One; each of them contains a minute portion of reality in what has been called a "divine spark." The importance of this idea is that it sets up a one-to-one link between man and ultimate reality and, consequently, leaves open the possibility for man to gain some direct contact with the One. It should be pointed out that this idea of the divine being dispersed through the finite is one of the key elements behind pantheism.

The approach taken by each of these alternatives varies, but they serve one primary purpose: they attempt to fix the status of this world as it relates to the One. They are the products of the duality inherent in perennial philosophy and reflect the effort to reconcile the two

elements of reality. They also suggest the different degrees of emphasis that a perennial system places either on the One or on the nature of the finite. If a graph were drawn of perennial philosophy and its concept of the natural world, there would be three main points: At one end would be the world as illusion where only the One has any claim to reality; in the center is reflection, which attempts to conserve reality for the One, but also admits to the existence of another, less perfect, realm; and at the opposite extreme is participation, where the possibilities for direct contact are greatest. What does this say about perennial philosophy? Beyond its being the product of duality, the three alternatives are indicative of the difference of opinion in perennialism as to whether existence should be narrowed to the One or expanded to accommodate the finite.

From the methodology of the perennial idea of creation, we can see a movement toward "narrowing" existence. It recognizes a disruption of being by space, time, and matter. The plurality which occurred is considered an evil, and the thrust is toward reducing the elements of real reality to their highest, single point.

The Nature of Time

What these three alternatives imply is that perennial philosophy moves off the foundation set down in the One in a

variety of ways. The inexplicable fact of the everyday world forces a perennial system into the position of having to mediate between the two poles of its duality. The purpose behind formulating the status of the natural world is to set it into some kind of harmony with the One; and though the interpretations of this realm differ, there is one theme that remains constant in perennialism: the idea of time. The quality of time has a direct influence on perennial philosophy, whatever approach or interpretation it uses. In order to clarify this, one can first state the two main elements at work in the perennial view of the everyday world:[11] First, it has been reported above that although there are two realms of reality with varying levels of emphasis placed on them, the One is always considered far beyond the finite. Second, there is an attempt made by any perennial system to reconcile the duality by placing the natural world into some context with the infinite. From these two points, we can see that each alternative (illusion, reflection, or participation) is really a method for arbitration, a means of establishing a balance in reality. But the inherent difficulty in effecting this balance is one of definition: the One is Immutable (timeless), while the everyday world is restricted to operating within the laws of measurable time. This means that man exists on a totally different plane from the One; he is regulated by the motion of time through the finite and, consequently,

[11]Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," p. 1.

limited in his attempts to enter into contact with ultimate reality. In fact, it appears contradictory to assume that any contact can be made between a limited subject (man) and an unlimited object (the One). It is for this reason that perennial philosophy considers time to be an illusion or a series of cycles; man is caught on a kind of treadmill from which he cannot escape. History then is a record of change, and it is change that keeps man from reconciling himself to the One. An implication of this view is that man is conscious of his own finitude; he realizes that whatever has absolute reality must be changeless, but that his chances for entering a communion with that reality are severely impaired by his inability to escape the passage of time. The three alternatives for arbitrating between man and God have meaning only if they can resolve the question of time and change.

The status of the everyday world, therefore, can be classified within three general aspects: (1) it is an inexplicable disruption of unity which is the antithesis to the One; (2) it is directed by the attempt to escape imperfection and enter into some larger context with the One, either as a dream, a reflection, or by sharing in the One's reality; (3) the movement toward ultimate reality is blocked by the effects of time which produces the change that ties man to the finite. Finally, all of these motifs within perennial philosophy are products of the central duality inherent in

its logic. In fact, this same quality of two halves will consistently appear in perennial thought as an undercurrent that directs and shapes many of its conclusions.

Human Nature

The Two Selves

Man is an aspect of the finite. For perennial philosophy, he is affected by the laws of space, time, and matter just as any inanimate object. In considering human nature, therefore, Cherbonnier is aware of the same philosophic presuppositions that were applied to the status of the everyday world. Most of all, it should be clear in the beginning that perennial philosophy does not consider human beings as one, complete, finished product. Human nature continues the theme of duality and is a composite of two parts: the lower self and the transcendent self.[12]

The approach that a perennial system uses for human nature is very similar to its analysis of the finite realm. It makes a distinction between a "lower" self which is grounded in the conditions and laws imposed by time and space, and a "higher" self which is in harmony with the One. Of the two aspects of human nature, the first is the most readily apparent. From observation and experience, a

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[12] Cherbonnier, "Judaeo-Christian Sources," pp. 14-16.

perennialist can assert that man is completely a finite being; as a physical being he fulfills none of the requirements associated with the One; he is subject to limitations of time and space and, consequently, the antithesis of the One.

If physical man were left at this end of the perennial graph, i.e., in an illusory state devoid of any reality, then his nature would be singular. He would be completely finite. It is through the influence of the other two possibilities (reflection and participation) that perennial philosophy introduces the concept of another side to human nature. Like the world, these two alternatives give man more reality; they suggest that there exists in man some small element of the divine. Consequently, man is more than object. He is animated in a special way; he is the recipient of a minute portion of true reality that stands beyond the contradictions of his reason or ego. This portion of human nature is often referred to as the soul.

The fact that man can be credited with a "soul" is the positive counterbalance to his purely finite self. It is necessary, however, to make a distinction between human reason and the quality of the soul. Perennial philosophy does not necessarily equate the two. The individual characteristics of man, his personality, ego, intentions, mental processes, and reason can all be considered finite. They are each limited either by the external laws in the world or

by the effects of misjudgment and fallibility. Moreover, they are grounded in human experience which is itself imperfect and always subject to change. Consequently, when perennial philosophy speaks of a higher, transcendent element in man, it is referring to his soul.[13]

A definitive statement about the human soul is difficult to formulate. It lies somewhere in the context of participation, where man is endowed with a unique, divine spark that is totally alien to this world. The soul, therefore, is an external acquisition; it is not an inherent aspect within physical man, because as non-physical it is not subject to change or death. At least one distinction can be made about the soul: if it exists, it is universal. There are not different types of soul for different people; as a product of the One, the human soul has the same unity and all-inclusiveness as its source. The soul then is considered to be a small portion of the One injected into the physical body of the finite world. It is important to remember, however, that once again perennial philosophy has no final explanation as to why this occurred; it offers no general thesis to justify the One's dispensing portions of itself through the world, nor does it consider whether, by definition, this would even be possible.

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[13]Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," p. 1.

If the assumption is made that a soul does exist in man and that it is, in fact, a divine spark from the One, then we can begin to trace some of the concept's effects on the perennial view of human nature. It is interesting to consider what happens to the soul once the other "half" of man dies. Only the soul is connected to God; it alone directly shares the higher reality; the rest of man is perishable and restricted. It is an almost universal theme in perennial philosophy that the soul has the ability to escape the treadmill of time and history. But this places human nature in a curious situation: it has only one lasting quality, and yet that quality is, in fact, alien to man since its source is the One. The question this poses is simply, what intrinsic value does the soul actually have for human life? If at death the soul is released from the prison of the body, then man has forfeited what was really never his in the beginning.

Some schools of thought argued that the divine sparks are a reservoir for human life. They are eternal but enter the cycles of birth and death in order to make it possible for humans to exist at all. Other interpretations leave man behind at death; the soul enters the body at birth, animates it for the duration of its finite existence, and then at death flies back to rejoin the One. Either way, the question remains as to the real, substantive value of the soul beyond giving

man his relatively short life span. The One simply reclaims what it has given, and man is left on the treadmill.

Another question to consider from this viewpoint is the definition of man. Is man himself the finite while the soul is always part of the One? Or is there a closer connection where some part of our "self" survives with the soul? It would be unjust to presuppose any final answer for perennial philosophy, but there are some indications which would leave man in his finite state. The dualism of perennial philosophy prohibits any admixture of soul and self just as it restricts the ability of a merger between the One and the finite world. Our range of activity as humans, our freedom, is bound up by the laws of time and space. In the idea of karma, for example, man repeats those functions which promise him another birth into a higher level in the cyclical process of eternal recurrence. Yet his only hope is to escape this process and cease to be reborn. But this means that the atman (roughly, the soul) is released from the cycle of regeneration, and the idea of the soul alone returning to the One is raised again.

Various systems in perennialism speak to this issue with their own interpretations; in fact, they create a kind of philosophical language with terms such as "nisus," a movement toward the Deity, or "entelechy" which is the Aristotelian term for that which realizes a cause; but essentially it can

be said that the problem for perennial philosophy resides in the dual nature of man.[14] As indicated above, the problem of isolating a definition for man or for establishing a value for the soul is constant in any perennial system and should be kept in mind when reviewing any particular philosophy or theology.

Original Sin

There is, however, an additional motif used to explain the duality in human nature which may throw some light on the perennial view. This is the concept of "original sin."[15] At the core of this idea is the implicit understanding that man has lost something. It embodies the assumption that our nature was once fully in tune with the higher reality and is analagous to the concept of creation where an original duty was disrupted by the advent of space and time. In this context, man is viewed as having once been motivated and determined by the quality of the soul itself. In an almost mythical sense, man was in a state of harmony with the One.

The act or event which characterizes this loss of unity varies in its description, but the main point is that man's

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Cherbonnier, "Sin Misconceived as Intrinsic to Human Nature," in Hardness of Heart (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1955), pp. 68-84.

finite nature, his imperfection and fallibility, severed the ties with the One. Man, therefore, forfeited his claim as a part of higher reality. Like the world in which man lives, he became a product of time and matter. Our sense of ego and the expression of purely human reason, the two completely personal aspects of human nature, eclipsed the soul and left man outside the continuity between his "higher" self and true reality. The connection between man and the One was broken and the whole process of finite time blocking the path to reconciliation occurred. This breakdown in continuity carries with it a special significance: it means that man becomes dependent on his powers of reasoning, his experiential-theoretical knowledge. He is in a state of ignorance when compared to the perfect truth behind the One. Consequently, human ignorance places man on the treadmill of history as much as his corporal body or the laws of change.

The doctrine of original sin, therefore, is a consistent element in perennial philosophy. It is in keeping with the major aspects of duality that have played such an important role in the perennial view of reality, the finite world, and now of human nature. It is an explanation of <u>why</u> man is cut off from the One just as creation narratives attempt to explain why the world exists. And more importantly, it leaves man under the cloud of suspicion; his fallen abilities to apprehend the truth or to discover a method of

salvation are questionable. In fact, the only certainty available to man is the process of time itself; his hope is left in ideas such as transmigration, where man constantly enters the cycles of birth and death until he can reestablish the broken line between himself and reality.[16] It is significant that perennial philosophy leaves man with so many strikes against him: the gulf between the One and the finite, the division of human nature, and the serious doubts about human knowledge. These same indictments, the products of perennial duality, will carry over into the consideration of man's religious knowledge. In the final analysis, man will be forced to abandon his world and make a "leap of faith" to reach the One.

Religious Knowledge

Inadequacy of Human Reason

In perennial philosophy, man is a limited being. He is restricted to the definitions imposed by the finite; he exists in a closed set of abilities and alternatives and his actions are all contained within the boundaries of time. In short, man appears to be trapped by the natural world, cut off from the One, which is the only measure for truth. It is at this point that religious knowledge becomes important: it is

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[16] Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," p. 2.

the only method of escape open to man. It is in coming to understand the One that man releases himself from the tight patterns of the finite; religious knowledge is the instrument he can use to break open the shell of the natural world and come into contact with the source of being. Perennial philosophy, therefore, has a definite attitude toward acquiring knowledge of the One: it is a means to an end. It is a way to bring man into harmony with eternal truth. Religious knowledge is integrated into a perennial system in a functional manner; consequently, the thrust of perennialism will be toward discovering the best method for making contact with the One.

Individually, mystical systems have varying approaches to religious knowledge, but there is at least one point of common agreement: man cannot reason his way to an understanding of the One. What this means is that the resources available in the finite realm are insufficient. It should be apparent that this opinion is an extension of the perennial view of human nature wherein man is divided into a higher self and a lower self; what perennial philosophy implies is that the lower or purely rational nature of man is too limited to bridge the gap between the finite and the infinite. The reason for this is that man's knowledge is always relative: it depends on human experience and is hemmed in by the laws of time and change. Man, therefore, can have only an

imperfect understanding of imperfect things. Thus, Cherbonnier interprets perennial uses of reason as ultimately inadequate. Through the use of reason one seeks to grasp the infinite; however, the infinite is beyond reason. Therefore, reason is inadequate to grasp the infinite. Furthermore, assuming that the infinite is what is real, one does not know truth about the finite, inasmuch as finite categories cannot grasp the real and truth. All finite knowledge, being about that which is not ultimately real, is not true nor false, but instead relative.[17]

The perennial criticism of human knowledge, however, extends beyond practical events in the natural world. In a larger sense, it can indicate theoretical or abstract knowledge on the same basis--i.e., that the scope of human reason is equally limited. In perennial philosophy, reason is an aspect of the "lower" self. It is restricted to operating within the natural world. The function of reason, therefore, is to catalogue human experience; it labels events as either true or false and fits the pieces of man's action into one, consistent form. And yet, the problem of reason is the same as experience: when something is not open to empirical tests, when it cannot be measured by some law, then the product of human thought becomes relative, its validity is open to subjective interpretation. This has significant consequences

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[17] Ibid.

for perennial philosophy because it means that all systems of thought are placed on the same plane; there can be no final word in philosophy since there is no real test to establish truth. Philosophy, experience, and reason are all open to contradiction; they are purely human activities and cannot bridge the gap between finite man and infinite God.

Thus the case against reason has been constructed because of reason's inherent inability to grasp what is really real. The argument has been supported further by the observations that "reason divides, separates, (and) makes distinctions."[18] Inasmuch as the really real, in the traditional metaphysical sense, is Oneness (or a variation of this concept), and because reason forms concepts, even the concept of Oneness itself, unified reality is shattered, and reason falls short of true reality. Thus, though one reasons about God, for example, one's rational propositions fail to grasp that which by its nature cannot be apprehended. Even the finite concept "God" does violation to the "real" God beyond conceptualization.

The case is further strengthened by the realization that reason "depends upon the distinction between true and false."[19] The very fact that this distinction is bound up with reason documents the unreliability of this tool; Oneness

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

has again been shattered by the true-false classifications. Extending the argument, the really real is subjected through reason to a presupposed duality of subject and object; to know something involves a knower and the known, certainly not a state of Oneness. And, finally, "the divine unity is refracted into the various 'pairs of opposites'";[20] that is, reason results in a choice between opposite concepts--more duality.

One must transcend reason somehow to know the really real. To be bound to reason dooms one to ignorance of the real; this process is inadequate to the task of leading an inquirer to Truth in any ultimate sense. Cherbonnier submits, therefore, that an implication of this position is that "irrational creatures and objects have an advantage,"[21] inasmuch as they are not subject to the canons of rationality.

The Ladder of Ascent

It is at this point that perennial systems begin to introduce their method, the way to negate natural laws and open human consciousness to higher reality. The idea here is that man must somehow prepare himself for union with the One; he must block out the external pressures of the finite in order to understand the infinite. Man therefore must

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

abandon his association with and dependence upon the everyday world so that he can communicate with the One on a higher level. From this general approach, perennial systems offer various ways in which a person can attain religious knowledge. The practices of meditation and self-discipline are common methods; they intend to produce a specific state where the influence of the finite world, its desires, passions, and frustrations, are minimized and man is left in a type of suspended animation: his senses are focused only on the One; he is ready to receive divine wisdom.

For those who reject reason, the "ladder of ascent"[22] to the ultimate may be employed. The first step in this ladder is purgation, "the ridding of the soul of those practices which disperse it and prevent it from paying attention."[23] Second, contemplation, leads to "the final stage in which the presence (of the ultimate) penetrates the beholder."[24]

It is important to note that perennial philosophy conditions man to receive religious knowledge, not acquire it.

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Cherbonnier, "Jerusalem and Athens," p. 255.

[24] D. V. Steere, "Mysticism," in A Handbook of Christian Theology (New York: World Publishing Co., 1958), p. 237.

This means that the methods of contemplation of ascetics are designed only to cleanse the mind, to nullify the contact with finite reality to the point where true knowledge (union) can be accepted. None of these practices impart knowledge by themselves; they are only the preparations for it.

It is extremely difficult to describe this moment when knowledge is passed from one realm to another. It can be referred to as revelation, enlightenment, the moment of truth, or as a "mystical experience." These are descriptive words, however, and simply label that instant when man gains knowledge of the One. If we attempt to penetrate the feelings of the mystic, it must be done on the condition that none of the normal modes of thought that sustain us in this world are brought along. Perennial philosophy considers religious knowledge as the sudden introduction of the divine into the temporal; consequently, it is by nature a paradox. Wisdom from the One counteracts all of the limitations imposed on reason: man is the recipient of a truth that is absolute, not relative. He catches a glimpse of the totality of existence where there are no limits of time or space and where finite contradictions are resolved.

The Higher Level of Knowing

The mystic has transcended the natural world. In the moment of enlightenment, he has achieved union with the One.

Religious knowledge as described by the terms mentioned above is a vision of reality where man "steps inside" the One and sees truth. Consequently, he is released from the cycles of history because he knows their purpose; man becomes aware not only of his position in the universe, but the much larger reality behind it.

This "final stage" is what Cherbonnier calls "the higher, trans-rational level of knowing."[25] In its most efficient and effective stage, the experience of a mystic, one crosses the bounds of reason and the rational, beyond all particulars and duality. The mood is characterized by a turning inward to reach the "moment of truth," during which one has transcended the rational and experiences the One. Clark has described the mystical experience as follows:

> Mysticism is a definite but sporadic state of the religious consciousness partly active and partly passive, involving an experience so unusually personal as to defy description in any but the most figurative and cryptic language. It involves the apprehension of a transcental Presence which radically influences the individual's point of view and way of life. The consequent passionate devotion to this Presence tends to lead to an extremely unworldly value system. These values foster extravagant behaviour which nevertheless stimulates integration of the psyche centered on this devotion.[26]

The knowledge one attains during this experience is not rational, not about concepts nor expressible literally

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[25] Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," p. 1.

[26] W. H. Clark, Psychology of Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 275.

by concepts. Rather, it is beyond conceptualization; it is a knowledge in the sense of a union between the knower and the known. The mystery intrinsic to separateness is overcome. In a religious sense, salvation then is by this type of knowledge, the becoming aware of the eternal.

This concept of divine wisdom in perennial philosophy introduces two important implications. First, it implies that religious knowledge is not subject to empirical proof. The claims of a mystic cannot be evaluated by any criteria other than faith. Second, it tends to set up a kind of fraternity within mysticism; revelation is reserved for those individuals who successfully follow one method and that method can only be judged by those who have used it. Both of these aspects of perennialism keep its claims to religious knowledge outside the reach of criticism. Any attack leveled against a perennial system's view of the One is reduced to a circular argument: you cannot deny what you have not experienced and you cannot use any rational law as a yardstick to measure the validity of a mystic's claim. In the final analysis, it is accurate to say that a perennial system is insulated against contradiction; it can always fall back on the duality of existence and simply assert that its knowledge transcends the finite.

Religious Symbols and Language

There are, however, two more concrete expressions of religious knowledge that can be examined. In attempting to explain the content of its religious understanding, a perennial system may offer some indirect representation of its knowledge of God. This may take the form of a symbol, something that stands for the higher reality, or of religious language, the words used to communicate to man the special insight that any system has concerning the divine.

Cherbonnier has applied the following analysis to religious symbols:

> A specifically religious symbol is any word or object in space and time which stands in a special relation to ultimate reality. . . . A religious symbol does not establish anything about the nature of reality, but it merely points to what is believed on other grounds to be "really real" (even though these other grounds are not made explicit). . . . The specific nature of any religious symbol will therefore depend in part upon the "reality" it purports to symbolize.[27]

Within the perennial philosophy, all symbols point beyond themselves to the inexpressible; they evoke a religious mood more satisfactory a medium than speech or concepts. All things can be symbols:

> Since the everyday world, no matter how deeply infected with finitude, must have derived ultimately from the one underlying reality, any material

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[27] Cherbonnier, "Mystical vs. Biblical Symbolism," p. 33.

> object may upon occasion become a religious symbol; that is, it may become the bearer of its own 'divine ground,' a window through which the individual apprehends the infinite. Hence a modern exponent of this view can say, 'Symbolic does not mean unreal. It means more real than anything in time and space.' In the so-called 'ecstatic moment,' the symbol evokes a state in which the cleavage between knower and known is overcome, consciousness is suspended, and the self in any recognizable sense is left behind.[28]

Furthermore, symbols become ambiguous, both "revealing" and concealing simultaneously--thus, God is both hidden and revealed equally, to the extent that "God" points to but fails to conceptualize God.

The function of symbols in religion is to serve as a visual allegory for the sacred. Whether this takes the form of a single object or is an admixture of symbolism incorporated into a ritual, the main purpose is to draw man's attention to the higher reality. To do this, many of the symbolic ceremonies within religion are constructed so that they create a certain mood; their intention is to evoke a response from the observer, to place him into a frame of mind that is sensitive to receiving religious instruction. Within perennial philosophy, the mood that is set by religious symbolism is often "other worldly"; it is used to suggest the transcendence of

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[28] Ibid. Cherbonnier quotes this passage from Paul Tillich, "Religion and Its Intellectual Critics," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. XV, No. 3 (March 7, 1955), p. 21.

the One. In fact, perennial symbolism (in art, music, or architecture) is formulated to prick the conscience of the common man, to remind him that what is divine is far removed from this realm. This means that there is almost a dual purpose to religious symbolism: at the same time, it both represents the One and alludes to the transcendent, "wholly other" quality of higher reality. Consequently, the One is revealed to man, but with the reminder that man can never understand the One.

Silence is the most profound language in perennial philosophy. Because religious knowledge is the sudden revelation of truth, it is a very unique and singular experience. Just as the normal modes of thought cannot be applied to the mystical experience, so ordinary words fall short when trying to describe the encounter with God. In fact, silence is preferable. Cherbonnier observed that the etymology of "mystic" is found with the Greek word muein, "to be silent," thus illustrating the relationship between mysticism and the perennial outlook on religious language.[29] He remarked:

> It follows that to translate symbolic expressions into literal propositions is inherently impossible. Since the words of everyday speech are the product of the "subject-object structure" of the spatio-temporal world, they are inadequate to the "divine ground," and even do violence to it. The only way to avoid these paradoxes is to

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[29]Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," p. 1.

> be silent. The mystics, therefore, regularly insist that silence does far more justice to truth than does speech.[30]

Adapted to religious purposes, when it is "necessary" to speak about the unspeakable, the via negativa is the most helpful. One can say what God is not![31]

Consequently, some mystics or philosophers have contended that a person who has had such a vision can only remain speechless; he can never explain it through common language. There is, however, a special language that grows out of the perennial view of religious knowledge. Once a system has formulated its understanding into a doctrine (concepts about man and God in the framework of laws and ethics), then it can develop certain ways of referring to its religious knowledge without sacrificing the mysterious quality of the One. For example, such terms as "incarnation" or "resurrection" are part of a religious language; they describe a specific understanding in religious knowledge of some action between man and God, but they do not attempt to offer any definitive statements about how such things occur. The key to language in perennial religion is similar to its use of symbolism: it allows the perennialist to speak about his knowledge of the One, but it reserves a special mystery for the realm of God. Again,

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[30] Cherbonnier, "Mystical vs. Biblical Symbolism," p. 34.

[31] Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," p. 1.

religious references both represent the One and conceal its nature. This is especially true in the case of paradoxical statements about the One. It is common in perennial philosophy to have the One or knowledge concerning the divine expressed in intentional contradictions. The Tao, for example, both "is and is not." The reason for using this form of religious language is to suggest the all-inclusive nature of the One; by using obvious contradictions, a perennial system can represent its religious knowledge as having the same transcendent quality as higher reality itself.

Religious symbolism and language are similar: they both represent the One while consciously maintaining its mystery; they can be expressed either in one object (such as the cross) or in a single word (such as the Hindu word "OM"), or they can be amalgamations of symbols and words into rituals and doctrine. In fact, the relationship between religious symbolism and language is so close that the two elements of religious knowledge are combined to produce a myth. Correctly defined, a myth is a religious symbol expressed in words. Its function is the same as for its two components: it is designed to convey the understanding of the higher reality in human terms. It is representative of the One and points men toward a recognition of the divine. A myth, therefore, may seem fantastic when measured by rational standards, but it cannot be judged invalid as long as it manifests some

higher truth about the nature of the One. It is not sufficient to criticize perennial myths on the basis of credibility, as real events they may never have happened, but the essential fact at work in mythology is the verbal symbolism of religious knowledge.

Though the mystic would have no use for myth for himself, "as an accommodation . . . , he grants that myths are better than nothing" for those individuals lacking his insight.[32] Speaking for the mystic, Cherbonnier stated:

> Under no condition may their temporal structure be taken literally; that is, under no condition may their religious significance be tied to historical fact. For the more localized a given event in space and time, the more deeply rooted in history, the less divine truth it can disclose.[33]

The myth, then, is less than adequate for the true mystic, but if words must be used, the myth that points to the ineffable is the "best" medium; in a sense, it is "truer than history."[34]

There is another aspect of religious language that is particular to mysticism. We have already mentioned that placing divine revelation at the core of religious knowledge gives rise to a kind of secrecy among mystics; truth becomes a commodity available only to those who have practiced a certain method and found it to be successful. Now these

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[32]Cherbonnier, "Mystical vs. Biblical Symbolism," p. 41.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., p. 34.

"fraternities" in perennial mysticism often use religious language on two levels: First, they can speak in an esoteric sense, a kind of language designed for general consumption, such as the intentional contradictions in paradoxical statements. But they can also use esoteric meanings, special explanations reserved for the initiated few. This means that perennial philosophy is open to the formation of cults or closed societies where revealed truth is passed on through the modes of secret symbols and doctrines. These organizations have a long history in perennialism; they are direct products of placing religious knowledge in the context of a revealed secret and seem to have an almost universal appeal. The difficulty, of course, is that each cult claims a monopoly on truth and since none of them can be disproven on rational grounds, any conclusions about their sincerity must be made on completely subjective terms.

In the final analysis, mystical religion leaves the question of religious knowledge a great deal of latitude. In the very beginning, it removes the use of human reason from testing assertions about the One by restricting it to the finite world. This places man in the position of having to prepare himself for divine truth through the various methods of contemplation or self-discipline and then, when the moment of enlightenment comes, he can only refer to it through the media of symbols or symbolic language. The result is that

religious knowledge becomes a matter of faith: one must simply accept the validity of a revealed truth on the word of the mystic. There is no empirical proof available. This, in turn, fosters the growth of secretive cults which all claim to have the best method for achieving ultimate truth. In trying to trace the cause for this fragmented view of religious knowledge, the best source would appear to be the perennial view of knowledge as a means to an end; by making the acquisition of enlightenment a question of method, perennial philosophy opened the door for mysticism and its subjective wisdom.

Consequences for Living

The Tragic Sense of Life and its Consequent Attitudes

In its view of the physical world, perennial philosophy asserted that the finite has "less" reality than the One. The reason is that all contradictions are resolved in the unity of higher reality, but left in a state of tension in the natural world. This means that the duality inherent in the fragmented condition of the finite realm is active: it is motivated by the conflict between what perennial philosophy calls "the pairs of opposites."[35] The most concise example of these

[35] Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," p. 3.

elements or forces is the Oriental symbol of yin and yang; they are the polarities of good and evil, love and hate, light and dark. In one sense, they may be associated with the original duality between being and non-being. The essential quality for the pairs of opposites is that they are inherent in the finite world. They are constant "facts of life" for human existence and cannot be removed from the natural world. They stand on the sidelines of life, waiting to be brought into play by the movement of time. The cyclical process of history, the treadmill on which man is trapped, is defined by this flow of opposites through time. At any moment two opposites can come into conflict, each exerting influence over man like the pull of a magnet. And yet there is no way to calculate when this will occur: the nature of human life is uncertainty. What one calls chance or luck is the sudden change brought about by time; it is the introduction of one opposite to replace another. The finite realm, therefore, is not only blocked off by the limits of time and space, but subject to the active conflict between the pairs of opposites.[36]

The consequences for life inherent in this attitude held by mystical religion are manifest in its interpretation of human freedom and the concept of morality. In order to

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[36]Cherbonnier, "Biblical Faith and the Idea of Tragedy," in The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith, ed. Nathan A. Scott (New York: The Association Press, 1957), pp. 26-27.

clarify this, one can say that man has no ability to make qualitative judgments on the pairs of opposites. Taken individually, each life force is as valid as another; they are all in a state of existence, the given principles of the finite realm. It is impossible, therefore, to arrange them into any system of priorities. Love is as real and as necessary as hate; the movement of time is unconscious of any distinctions between these primary elements and may introduce destructive forces into life as readily as those that are creative. The labels, therefore, that man applies to any of the pairs of opposites are arbitrary. They represent a priori value judgments that have meaning only as a convenience for man. The names one uses for the pairs of opposites are descriptive; they are not definitive. Human thought has simply constructed artificial categories for the effects of time, but has not exercised any control over them. Consequently, man's action becomes a kind of wish fulfillment: he can hope for the effects of peace or love, but can never be certain of them. In perennial philosophy life is constantly in the hands of time, and time introduces change, and change can bring about any one of the possibilities contained in the pairs of opposites.

The result is that man cannot achieve permanence through his actions. He cannot work for the "good" and expect to succeed. His freedom is restricted to the realm of chance:

his actions may be constructive for a time, but they may also be reversed by the negative influx of change. Human action, therefore, is reduced to simple activity. It is not normative or absolute because it is always uncertain. The great imperfection of the finite world is its impermanence, and time is the only certainty in life. The problematic of action becomes a question of intention or will. If man cannot exercise control over the pairs of opposites, if he can never create any lasting condition within the limits of the natural world, then he cannot speak in terms of self will. To will something is to create it and mankind does not have that capacity.

The quality of permanence and certainty is reserved for higher reality; it is an attribute exclusive to the One. The moral codes or ethical standards employed by human society become man's last line of defense. They are functional within the confines of a closed set of existence, such as the finite realm, but bear no real significance in the larger context of eternal being.[37] Strictly speaking, perennial philosophy must admit to the validity of every effort that time can produce. Conversely, it must deny the claims of moral action under the indictment of impermanence and artificiality.

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[37] Ibid.

It should be clear at this point that mystical systems leave little room for hope. In recognizing the complete authority of change as the only certainty in life, they force men back onto the treadmill of history. This leaves human thought with only one alternative: resignation. It is not too broad a generalization to state that perennial systems all contain this sense of futility. They encourage an escape from the world simply because the world is beyond control and fundamentally "unreal." Man cannot halt the flow of time and change through the finite and must therefore resign himself to their effects. It is here, in this feeling of resignation, that perennial philosophy introduces its methodology for religious knowledge. In that the definitive quality behind religious knowledge is that it is a means to the end, the practices of meditation or self-discipline are also aspects of resignation. Since man is impotent to control his world, he must withdraw and assume a state of mind that is indifferent to the effects of time. In a sense, he escapes suffering by refusing to acknowledge it. The thrust of perennialism, therefore, is toward a kind of sublime unconcern, a conscious ignorance of what is taking place in the natural world. Supposedly, this leaves the mystic in a neutral state where he is receptive only to the divine. He stands in the midst of the human turmoil, unmoved and waiting for revelation.

One consequence for life in perennialism can then be expressed in a single word: it is egocentric. By adopting

resignation as a life style, the perennialist turns inward. He is not "human" because he does not engage himself in human activity; he remains aloof from the pressures of life, intentionally cutting himself off from any contact with the finite world. Consequently, the follower of a perennial method cannot accept the labels associated with the pairs of opposites. He can make no distinctions between the effects of life; just as he is neutral, so are the forces in life. This means that it is difficult to maintain a moral code in perennial methodology because such a code implies some value judgment on the effects of time. It is equally difficult for perennialism to justify "good works," since no action is inherently better than another. The extreme case for religious knowledge, therefore, is a total suspension of normal modes of human action or thought. It requires the mystic to become entirely egocentric and cannot admit to human freedom or morality.

The Way of Life

Before analyzing the question of morality or action in perennial philosophy, however, it is important to clarify again what is meant by the term "mystic." So far, it has been said that the connection between the perennial attitude toward life and its use of methodology is religious knowledge. It has also been asserted that resignation is a key factor in

the perennial life style. If we attempt to combine all of these concepts into one unit we shall get a close approximation of the logic that produces perennial methods. In fact, there are four alternative life styles within the perennial view of religious knowledge: the hermit, the ascetic, the martyr, and the cynic. In the case of the hermit, a man choses to remove himself bodily from any contact with the normal world. His purpose is complete isolation; his motivation is the same effort to become indifferent as we discover in the attitude toward life. By denying the usual patterns of social life, the hermit intentionally interrupts his association with the natural world and, therefore, the effects of the pairs of opposites in society. The second alternative, that of the ascetic, is similar: the purpose here is to so discipline the body that it loses any continuity with normal life. The ascetic attempts to force a state of consciousness on his mind. His aim is to suppress the desires and appetites that characterize the common man and become independent of the finite world. The martyr carries the practices of both the hermit and the ascetic to the extreme: he not only denies the body but also punishes it. Throughout these modes of living, there is a definite belief in the finite as the prison of the soul; the martyr simply actualizes this belief by sacrificing the body and giving up temporal existence in order to join with the One. He holds human existence in absolute disregard.

This extreme is amended in the life style of the cynic; he continues to function within the boundaries of communal society, but he does so as an indirect discipline for his own ego. It is the task of the cynic to maintain himself apart from the ordinary concerns of living; in a traditional sense, he is the self-exile, the man who is critical of human activity and indifferent to the consequences.[38] Taken together, these are the four alternatives in the methodology of religious knowledge.[39] They represent the practical application of perennial philosophy in human life. They each share the basic suppositions in perennialism concerning the need to escape the finite realm; they each place emphasis on the futility of struggling against the effects of time and chance; and they are each operative under the assumption that divine enlightenment is the product of a method.

The portrait of life drawn by perennial philosophy is one of uncertainty. Man exists in the lower realm; his goal is to attain religious knowledge and free himself from the cycles of history, but his path is blocked by the limitations of the finite world and by the endless conflict between the pairs of opposites. Consequently, his only alternative is

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[38] Cherbonnier, Hardness of Heart, pp. 68-71.

[39] Cherbonnier, "Perennial Philosophy," p. 3. (The remaining synthesis in this Chapter is an exposition from this source.)

resignation, an acceptance of the condition of the world and a subsequent withdrawal from it. This movement out of life he actualizes in one of four possible ways. There are two primary motifs at work in this process of escape from the consequences of life: non-action and self-sufficiency. These two factors correspond to the ideas of indifference and egocentric interest. The relationship, for example, between non-action and indifference is a subtle form of cause and effect. Because man can make no value judgments on the forces active in life, he can never be certain of choosing the "right" course of action. In fact, there is no real action, but only activity. By resigning himself to this, the mystic can consciously refuse to perform any action based on an intention; he does not attempt to complete any work in the finite realm as an extension of his self will; instead he concentrates his energies on fulfilling his own special escape plan so that he may be free of the contingencies of life. It is in refusing to act with purpose that the perennialist nourishes his indifference: he remains uninvolved. He allows the effects of time to wash over him, but he does not react to them. Ultimately, his concern is purely egocentric. By severing all ties with the finite, the mystic becomes self-sufficient; he becomes a cellular being. He has no purpose to shape his life in the natural world, no desires to hold him in check, and no concerns with the condition of mankind. In a sense, he attempts

to mimic the unity of the One. If he is successful, then the process is complete--he will have fulfilled the prerequisites for religious knowledge and will receive enlightenment. The consequences of life, therefore, have forced the perennial mystic into complete detachment from life where only the union with higher reality has any meaning.

It seems strange to move from the isolated mystic back into a consideration of morality. The thrust of perennialism appears to have left little room for moral codes or ethical systems. In fact, it is stated above that such things are considered artificial: they are the arbitrary labels applied to the pairs of opposites and have no definitive quality of their own. It is important to remember, however, that even mystical religion recognizes the functional necessity for some moral structure. At the very least, it is a cohesive element in society, a kind of band-aid solution to the effects of time in human life. Consequently, it is possible to speak of a code of morality within perennial philosophy if this is done under certain conditions. First of all, morality must be seen as a subset of religious knowledge. Enlightenment occurs as the end product of a method; the hermit, ascetic, martyr, and cynic are all working toward something. They reject this world in order to gain the reward of contact with the One. Now if morality can be fitted into the methodology of religious knowledge, then it is an acceptable part of perennial philosophy.

The mediation of morality, therefore, becomes a question of giving it a functional definition. This is accomplished in the following manner: Since union with higher reality is contingent on the successful completion of a method, then performing moral activities can be incorporated into that method as one of its prerequisites. This carries with it two important factors that keep morality consistent with perennial philosophy. First, it means that morality becomes a means to an end, just as religious knowledge. It sets up the criteria that if you do this, you will then receive your reward. Second, it retains the egocentric nature of perennial methodology. In the long run, right action will be reversed by the effects of change and the pairs of opposites, but by fulfilling the obligation to act ethically, a man is actually helping himself to gain favor with the divine. Consequently, although his deeds are all temporary, they tend to insure his chances of receiving enlightenment; it becomes more expedient to act morally than to do otherwise and run the risk of being trapped in history.

With this clarification perennial philosophy can easily incorporate morality into its systems. The mystic can, if he chooses, act with compassion, because by doing so he is really completing his method of religious knowledge. Moral conduct becomes a manifestation of his indifference; it is an almost

heroic act, since the results of morality in the finite realm are already negated by the movement of time.

The concept within perennialism that the finite and the One share reality leads some perennial mystics to believe that universal love is an indirect method for loving the One. Consequently, they can give up the lower self by allowing it to be swallowed up by the natural world; they embrace every aspect of life in order to lose their own identity. This form of perennial methodology stresses the careful practice of finite activity; its virtue is embodied in the "work ethic," where daily life becomes its own method for achieving religious knowledge. It is possible, of course, for the morality within perennial philosophy to be used in a totally different sense: it can be incorporated as a perversion of normal ethical codes in which the negative or destructive elements in the pairs of opposites are used. This can be justified under the suspension of judgment; if the forces of evil and hate are as valid as those of love and compassion, then a perennialist can engage in them freely. He cannot be called into account, since there is no criteria by which he can be condemned. This is another extreme case, but it indicates the pliable nature of perennial philosophy; when morality is only defined in a functional sense, the conditions of morality, or those acts which constitute moral action, are open to interpretation. Each method can shape its own use of morality, even into the extreme examples cited above.

Cherbonnier has drawn several conclusions about the perennial attitude toward life:[40] (1) It considers the finite world a trap from which man must attempt to escape. The walls that surround the natural world are time and space; together they limit human life to the realm of lesser reality. (2) Within the sphere of time and space there are the pairs of opposites. These elements are constant principles in life; they are always in motion, carried through the finite world by time and change. Moreover, man has no control over them; they are beyond definition or qualitative judgment. (3) Because of the effects of the pairs of opposites, life in the finite is in a constant state of uncertainty. Man's freedom of action is limited because he has no criteria that can absolutely justify any act he performs; he cannot work for the "good" and he cannot overcome the "evil." The only defense men have is their artificial codes of morality. (4) The initial reaction to the condition of finite life is despair; life appears to be what the existentialists claim--an absurdity. The only alternative left open is resignation. This sense of human impotence becomes formulated into the modes of religious knowledge which are designed as methods to create a complete indifference toward life. Morality is incorporated into this methodology under a strictly functional definition; it too becomes a

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[40] Ibid.

means to an end. (5) Ultimately, the goal of perennial philosophy is union with the One. Once man has become indifferent to life, he is ready to receive divine enlightenment. If it comes, this revelation sets him free from the confines of the natural world; man and God fuse into one unity and the effects of finite time are transcended. The goal of life, therefore, which is to achieve detachment from the fortunes of change, moves directly into the final goal of perennial philosophy, which is the blending of man in the One.

The cycle is complete. Mystical religion has moved from its original critique of higher reality through the status of the everyday world until it touched the nature of human life. It severed reality into two realms and left mankind floundering in the liquid world of time and change. The only lifeline available became perennial methodology, a means of escape through the application of religious knowledge. The consequences for life, therefore, become the mechanics for achieving freedom from the effects of time and ultimate union with higher reality. In its broadest interpretation, this is the nature of mystical religion.

CHAPTER THREE

CHERBONNIER'S INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL RELIGION

Biblical Religion as an Alternative

One of the main problems in the comparison of any two philosophical systems is to distinguish incompatible interpretations of common issues. Many systems are concerned with similar problems, such as the nature of reality. It is in approaching that issue and giving it a definitive interpretation that each philosophy lays down its own ground rules and blik. In the case of mysticism or perennial philosophy, the approach is based on a fundamental premise: the most universal is the most real. On this basis, perennialist thinkers adopt a kind of hierarchial structure in which every component of reality is grouped in ascending levels of reality, until only two major elements remain: being and non-being. Existence, therefore, is placed within a pyramid. At the top is pure, non-physical being; it is the most inclusive and most necessary factor of reality. On the lower levels, reality becomes increasingly fragmented and less real and significant; the Platonic "Forms" serve as a kind of blueprint for the vast multiplicity of objects and

ideas that populate the everyday world of man. It is possible to say, however, that they are only an illusion. What is really real in existence is being--the One, the Absolute, Unconscious, Immobile reality. Its nature is described by negative characteristics: it cannot be in ontological relation to any object external to itself; it is "wholly other." Its sole function is to exist; it is without cause, dependence, or purpose. From this perspective are drawn all forms of perennial philosophy. According to Cherbonnier, its influence on philosophical and religious thought has been overwhelming. From the age of Athenian philosophy until the present day, this type of worldview has colored and shaped an enormous number of attitudes toward the nature of reality. In Huxley's words:

> PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS - the phrase was coined by Leibniz; but the thing--the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being--the thing is immemorial and universal. Rudiments of Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditional lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions.[1]

The confusion inherent in comparing perennial philosophy with an incompatible approach is caused by the virtual monopoly enjoyed by perennial philosophy. It is a temptation to regard

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[1]Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 1.

perennial views as the norm, to use them as a measuring stick to be placed against rival claims, to accept them as being true without considering other possibilities. To conclude in this manner, however, is to run the risk of being totally partisan. There is no patented solution to the question of reality. Perennial philosophy offers some powerful arguments to support its position, but it is possible to offer equally logical and persuasive arguments from an entirely different perspective. It falls then to the critic of philosophies to uphold his responsibility, to weigh the ideas presented to him on their own merits and not to prejudge any issue. To make this possible, it is Cherbonnier's purpose to elaborate an alternative approach to the question of reality, to outline a second philosophical-religious system in contrast to mystical ones. This he refers to as biblical philosophy or biblical religion.

The Method

The Bible as Philosophy

Like perennial philosophy, the biblical approach is concerned with understanding the truth about reality. But, whereas perennialism rests on the foundation of its hierarchy and its conclusion that existence is a duality or non-physical, the biblical system draws on the world-view inherent in the Bible. Cherbonnier considers biblical writings as

containing by implication as valid and logical a philosophy as the works of the Greek thinkers.[2] This in itself is a radical concept, radical in the sense that it requires an evaluation of the biblical text not only as it speaks to man's religious or emotional sensitivity, but also as having something to say to his reason. Already the temptation is to dismiss the Bible as a philosophical work by placing it into the category of a "purely religious" (emotional) document; the almost immediate reaction is to consider the Bible as grounded in unreasonable faith, a work of the mindless heart; consequently, perennial authors become champions for the function of the mind. This is the first prejudice to overcome. The Bible is one of the great religious texts in history; as such, its presuppositions and many of its conclusions must find acceptance or rejection on the basis of human faith, but reasonable faith. To restrict the Bible to this single (emotional) approach, however, is to ignore a vast portion of its philosophical significance. It is the contention of Cherbonnier that the Bible contains a very rational and consistent thought system which is equal or even superior to any other philosophy. In words commenting upon the viability of a unique biblical philosophy, he has written:

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[2]Cherbonnier, "Is There A Biblical Metaphysic?", pp. 454-456.

> . . . the way to preserve the uniqueness of the Bible is not to deny its reasonableness. Such a denial merely absolves Christianity's competitors of the responsibility for philosophically substantiating their own gods as against the God of the Bible. The way to preserve the uniqueness of the Bible is precisely to demonstrate its superior reasonableness. Not, however, by urging that it agrees with Plato or Aristotle, but by showing that at points of divergence between their conceptions of the divine and the Lord of Hosts, it is the latter who holds the philosophical advantage.[3]

Biblical philosophy concerns not only the nature of God as the focal point of reality, but essential interpretations of human freedom, the status of the finite world, knowledge as a means to truth, and the whole network of morality as a consequence for living. What the biblical philosopher would ask is that his ideas be given a fair trial, that they be considered with the same seriousness as the assertions made by perennial thinkers. If this can be done, much of the confusion between the two systems can be eliminated, and the result will be that the critic will have not one alternative, but a choice of two, upon one of which he can base a faith.

A Common Origin

Both the mystical and biblical views share a common origin. They each stand in the finite world looking toward the mystery of ultimate reality. If those elements in both systems that can be labeled as individual revelations of

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[3] Cherbonnier, "Jerusalem and Athens," pp. 252f.

truth, such as ecstatic and revelatory moments, are removed, then it can be stated that both approaches share human reason as a vital ingredient. The statements they make, therefore, must be judged on the criteria of their logic and consistency. In its broadest application, this can be done by asking the simple questions, "Does that make sense?" or "If I accept this as being true, what follows from it?" A good example of this process is the initial question of logical priority. In either system, the embryonic stage of development originates in observation, the conviction that the perceived world is real and the assumption that it does not represent all of reality. It makes sense to both the perennial and biblical thinker that some truth is found distinct from the observable world. Both approaches begin, therefore, with a given set of variables: the nature of the world and human existence within the limitations of time and space.

It is from this basis that perennial thought accepts the principle of a duality. Its hierarchy begins with the assumption that the multiple objects of this world are only the clay models of higher reality, that their design and existence depend on the non-physical. From this line of reasoning, the pyramid of reality is constructed until it derives the nature of being as ultimate reality. This implies that there can be only one true reality and that all else was simply illusion or less significant. The finite realm, therefore, was cut off from the non-physical Real by

definition; it is impossible for any second reality to co-exist equally with the Real since it (the Real) must contain all of reality in one perfect unity.

With this type of perspective in mind, one can begin again with the condition of the world as only a given set of variables, something to be observed, and consider the result if a different approach were taken. What, for example, would be the result of assuming that the hierarchy did not exist, that the tangible objects of the natural world were really real, and not illusory, that whatever serves as ultimate reality was not the receptacle of existence but its personal architect? These questions begin to mark the difference between perennial and biblical thought.

The Nature of God

The movement of perennial logic leads to the One. Its impassive and perfect nature appears to be the definitive statement on the nature of ultimate reality. It is the necessary extension of considering the nature of reality as a derivative of the maxim "the most inclusive (universal) is the most real." It means that the One is all of being; it is an abstraction, a state of perfection. In the face of this conclusion, biblical philosophy offers an entirely different question: "What if ultimate reality is a being, not pure being itself, but an agent, a unique personality?"

The consequences of following this suggestion are entirely different from mysticism. They introduce the strange subject of reality as existing within the dominion of an "anthropomorphic" being. The term "strange" applies here because serious suggestions of anthropomorphism seem naive and archaic; to consider reality in the hands of a human-like god is the proper subject matter for historians, not philosophers. It seems that by committing himself to this idea, Cherbonnier has started up a blind alley. However, given his assumptions, the discipline of logic and consistency make it a necessity for him to do so; in accepting the biblical text as the source for the system, biblical philosophers must also accept the fact that the Bible speaks of God as an anthropomorphic being. Clarifying terms, Cherbonnier notes:

> By anthropomorphism I mean any theology that conceives of God in terms of those characteristics which are distinctively human: the capacity for discriminating judgment, the exercise of responsible decision and choice, the ability to carry out long-range purposes. Such a God is appropriately (and literally) described in the language of personal pronouns and transitive verbs, such as "possess," "love," "judge," "promise," "forgive," and the like.[4]

When the Bible was in its formative stage, the religion of Israel could be considered in competition with all of the traditions and cults then existing in the Near East. In general, these rival faiths each contained a pantheon of

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[4]Cherbonnier, "The Logic of Biblical Anthropomorphism," Harvard Theological Review, LV (1962), p. 187.

divine beings who were thought to be in control of the forces and events occurring in the natural world. The prayers made to the gods, therefore, were often prayers to do something, to make something happen. It was a worship that depended upon results. In some cases, it was believed that these results could be forced from the god by way of magic; in other instances, the faithful offered up sacrifices in order to induce the divinity to grant their special request. These gods were individual beings; they were gods of action. They had the power to affect the conditions of the natural world and the freedom to either accept or reject the appeals of their followers. In this sense, they were personalities; they were anthropomorphic. One can conclude that what made the early gods of the Mediterranean world "human-like" was their ability to act. Like man, they were conscious, active beings; they were superior in knowledge and ability, but similar in their modes of conduct. Zeus and Osiris were free agents in the same fashion man is thought of being free, with the important powers of creation and immortality reserved only for them.

A Unique Being

How did the Lord of Israel differ from the pantheons which were contemporary to the Hebrews in Canaan? The perennial-mystical answer is immediate: the Hebrew God was "wholly other." It is to the credit of the early biblical thinkers

that they perceived the essential difference between God and man, that they considered God as the One, absolute deity. In fact, there are references to this idea within the Bible that point in the direction of perennialist opinion: "For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst" (Hosea 11:9). It is the perspective of this attitude that is injected into the Bible by perennial philosophy, which attempts to make the Hebrew God at least complementary to the mystic's hierarchy of reality. Cherbonnier posits, however, that the God of Israel was never considered ontologically "wholly other." Like Zeus, He was a God of action; He had a personality which was grounded in the belief that He was a free agent. What separated the "Holy One" from other gods was not that He was somehow far removed from men, or that He was an abstraction from the world, but that He was capable of sovereign success. The condemnation leveled against the idols of neighboring peoples by the Hebrew leaders was not founded initially on the fact that they were anthropomorphic, but that they were impotent, that they could not fulfill their promises, that they were not to be trusted, that they were not anthropomorphic enough because they had fewer powers than the normal man. Cherbonnier notes:

> In this sense of the term, the God of the Bible is quite as anthropomorphic as any in the Greek and Roman pantheon. Logically, He has more in common with these Olympian deities than with Plato's "Being" or Aristotle's "Unmoved Mover." The difference between Yahweh and Zeus is not logical or

> formal, but factual and "existential." The prophets do not charge the pagan deities with being anthropomorphic, but with being insufficiently anthropomorphic. At their best, they are counterfeit persons. At their worst, they are frankly impersonal.[5]

It is in this sense that the Bible indicts them: "They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see; they have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell" (Ps. 115:5, 6). It is not that God does not share these same qualities, but that He is supremely a being of action who can exercise His power in the world and make things happen. The Bible, therefore, is boldly anthropomorphic. Even the passage cited from Hosea which seems to imply a feeling for the "other worldliness" of God through the analogy of a man whose wife has "played the harlot," is ascribing to the Lord a very personal and very human emotion.

There are, therefore, two distinct images of ultimate reality. In perennial systems, it is an unconscious, immobile state of spiritual perfection often enfolding all of existence in one huge cosmic dream. In the biblical system, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, the tangible elements of the finite world are not less real, insignificant, or illusory. All reality is in the hands of an active and free agent who imparts reality to both man and the world by giving them life. An essential difference can be described as a passive state

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[5] Ibid.

compared to an active one; whereas the perennial universe is only real in the dormant mind of Being, the biblical world is in a constant state of motion and change; it has direction and purpose.

The Anthropomorphic Challenge

It would appear to some that the biblical view is much more attractive, but less sophisticated. In fact, the reason that considerations of any anthropomorphic being have often been ignored is due to its seeming innocence; to many philosophers it seems absurd to speak of such a Supreme Being. That prejudice, however, begins to break down when placed in the light of objective criticism.

Assuming that the biblical image of God is valid, what objections can be raised to refute His nature on logical grounds? Generally, such objections have been offered only as blanket denials, asserting that such a being is impossible. There has been a curious lack of serious discussion of its validity. As Cherbonnier notes:

> There is no a priori reason why this metaphysical hypothesis should not receive the same consideration as any other. The present writer, however, has made a careful search for a single rational refutation of it. His findings are exhausted by a catalogue of phrases like "subjective," "projection," "wishful thinking," "narrow," "crude anthropomorphism," "primitive superstition," "beneath a philosopher's dignity," "a fog of absurd notions," and other similar

> epithets, none of which contributes a great deal to testing the Biblical answer to the metaphysician's question.[6]

If logical arguments are raised against it, they center around a main premise: that a single, creative, personal agent as the force behind reality lacks the power to be in charge of the universe; He is too human to be divine. This, of course, is based on the assumption that what is finite and what is divine are totally separated, that some disabling gulf exists between the two realms.

In answering this type of objection, however, biblical religion can match perennialism on the ground of logic. For example, a valid criticism of the anthropomorphic gods is that they can be controlled; like the gods of ancient times they can be manipulated by magic or sacrifice. Such gods forfeit claims to divinity since the real authority is in the hands of men. In meeting this criticism, biblical religion first answers that the indictment is true, insofar as it applies to the early pantheons of the Near East. In fact, it was this same conviction that allowed the Hebrew thinkers to reject the other gods as poor imitations of God. They could be controlled, but Yahweh could not. To make this interpretation clear, one can consider a very essential component to early Hebraic thought: the importance of names.

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[6]Cherbonnier, "Is There A Biblical Metaphysic?", p. 459.

In the centuries after the Exodus and before the birth of Christ, it was a common belief among the different racial groups around Mesopotamia that a person's name had special significance.[7] Great care was given to the selection of a name for a newborn baby, and the blessing passed on by the father to his children often involved invoking their names. In this same way, having the name of a god or spirit in your possession was to have some sort of power over him. By calling on his name one could force him to respond. Divine names therefore had a certain magic attached to them. It is interesting to note that the one exception to this practice was the religion of the Hebrews. Although other peoples used the names of their gods freely, the religious leaders of Israel strongly maintained the mystery of their God. The famous encounter between Moses and God at the burning bush embodies this concept for Hebrew thought. When Moses asked God for His name, the answer he received was intentionally evasive; God did not pronounce his name to Moses, for to have done so would seem to have given Moses some power over Him. However, the God of Israel was not in the hands of His followers. The idea contained in the Bible is that God cannot be manipulated. He can respond favorably to an appeal if He chooses to do so, but He can also react in an unexpected

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[7]Raymond Abba, "Name," in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. George A. Buttrick (New York-Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), Vol. 3, pp. 500-508.

fashion. Unlike magic, where results are guaranteed by the correct use of a formula, God is always uncertain; He is unpredictable. What is known about God must be knowledge after the fact, when the results of His action are visible, but nothing can be stated with certainty in advance. The mystery of God is preserved and biblical philosophy maintains this mystery as an assurance that God cannot be mistaken for a Zeus or an Odin.

God Is Personal

It has been established that, according to Cherbonnier, an essential difference between the mystical One and the biblical God is the difference between what is unconscious and passive, and an agent who is conscious and active. It can be stated as well that biblical philosophy considers God to be personal. This is a direct corollary to His nature as an anthropomorphic being. It means that He deals in the personal, that He has the ability to form judgments and act on them, to exercise a kind of mental process in confronting decisions. In short, God is human-like in character.

It is necessary to differentiate the term "personal" from some of its associated meanings. It is tempting to say that God is not personal in the same sense that men are personal, but that He is extra-personal, "supra-personal." The use of this qualification by perennial thinkers is an

attempt to maintain some ontological division between the natural world and God's nature. The difficulty is that this already admits to the divine anthropomorphic condition; it simply implies that God is more human than men. If carried to an extreme, this type of qualification process becomes absurd; it accepts the central fact of God's personality but is confused by the question of degrees. It is possible to say, however, that the influence of perennial philosophy encourages this kind of process, gradually transforming the personal nature of God until it bears no relationship to the world of man. To resist this process, biblical philosophy can call perennial thinkers to account for making God "sub-personal." If the divinity has no emotion, no reason, no consciousness, then He must be unthinking, He must be less than man, and more closely analogous in nature to a rock or piece of wood; He must be "sub-personal." The burden of proof rests on the critic to disprove the possibility of God's being truly personal. Supporting the biblical position are several statements which clarify the position that God is a personal being:

> The most appropriate word for such a God is the word "Person." Do not the doctrines of the "imago dei" and of the Incarnation proclaim from the housetops that "veritas" is not "esse," but rather a Person ("I am the truth")?[8]

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[8]Cherbonnier, "Biblical Metaphysics and Christian Philosophy," Theology Today, IX (1952), p. 368.

> Is God "wholly other" than man? If so, then only negatives may be applied to him. Or is he the most all-embracing essence? If so, we must call him "Being-itself," the "Absolute." Or is he a God who speaks? In that case, the truest words which can be applied to him, by analogy, derive from the only other realm of our experience in which we encounter true speech. Truer than anything else which might be said about a God who speaks, and certainly truer than saying nothing at all, is the frankly anthropomorphic conception of God as a free agent, a self, a Person.[9]

A Clarification of God's Nature

In the mystical tradition, the divine was always a contradiction. Because it was the "ground of being," its truth was diffused into every aspect of existence; it was diluted into equal portions of any contradictory situation. Consequently, the image of yin and yang, the light and dark, the good and evil, is especially powerful in perennial systems. It means that what man perceives as contradiction is only illusion, elements of the dream which ultimately become part of the greater One. It is impossible, therefore, for man to understand the nature of ultimate reality through his reason. He must simply accept the condition of the finite world and hope to receive enlightenment. If that expectation is fulfilled, then the mystic solves the mystery by becoming one with God; in fact, in the moment of ecstasy, he is God. The

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[9]Cherbonnier, "The Theology of the Word of God," The Journal of Religion, XXXIII, No. 1 (1953), p. 25.

sole purpose of the divine, therefore, is to exist, to keep the dream going and to permit revelation. The God of perennial thought is inactive; He cannot move by definition; He cannot enter into relationship or contact with anything external to Himself; He cannot violate His infinite and immutable nature as the "ground of being." "God," then, is a passive mystery that keeps the illusion in motion until the mystic has time to discover His secret.

With this interpretation in mind, one can conclude that the negative injunctions found in perennial philosophy are reversed in the biblical. Although the mystical One cannot do things, the biblical God is granted complete mobility. As in the biblical text, He is a God of active verbs--i.e., He judges, speaks, acts, and feels. As Cherbonnier states:

> As Creator, he exercises his dominion with an authority which is difficult to ascribe to a non-personal deity; as judge of the nations, he can cause the mighty to tremble at the day of reckoning. As free, purposive agent he is forever doing some new and unpredictable thing.[10]

The natural world is God's creation, His conscious act. It has its own reality. Because it is a product of God's will, it stands in a direct relationship to Him. There is a reciprocal activity passing between the finite and God. It is the function of God not just to exist, but to be active in the care

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[10]Cherbonnier, "The Word of God," in The Empirical Theology of Henry Nelsen Wieman, ed. Robert W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan Co., 1963), p. 269.

and management of His creation. His anthropomorphic qualities, therefore, take on new meaning when seen in the perspective of a single, active agent.

If God exists as the Bible portrays Him, and if the finite world is His creation, then His actions can be defined on a functional basis. For example, although reason is a hinderance to the mystic, it is essential to the biblical philosopher. Whereas the silent One can say nothing to the condition of man, God can speak directly to His situation. The Bible, then, becomes a partial record of His words and actions. Reason for mankind is preserved, because it is not directed toward the non-personal from which there can be no response; in the biblical sense, the words of God pass directly to the natural world as the reaction of God to the events of man. This does not imply that every word spoken by God is clearly understood or accepted, but it does mean that at the very least there is the possibility for communication between the world of men and the person of God.

A God of Moral Judgment and Historical Intervention

The contradictions inherent in and acceptable to perennial philosophy are rejected by the biblical approach, because God can judge. Like man, He can make a qualitative decision; He can place a value on something. Whereas in yin and yang opposite forces co-exist on equal terms, biblical

philosophy makes a distinction between those things that are good and those that are bad. To make this kind of statement runs the risk of calling up visions of "Christian" morality, which some people see as nothing more than an arbitrary code of ethical prohibitions. The biblical approach, however, goes much deeper; it means that in the chaotic condition of human life, where man appears to be at the mercy of constant change, there is some central core of values that is unchanging. In a strict sense, this would be impossible under a perennial system in which murder and compassion are accorded equal value within the encompassing One. Ethical codes, therefore, are more of an amendment to the perennial approach, while a sense of the moral is inherent in biblical religion; morality is a consistent extension of interpreting God as a being capable of making value judgments. The necessity for recognizing this attribute of God is part of seeing His full personhood. As Cherbonnier explains:

> By anthropomorphism I mean any theology that conceives of God in terms of those characteristics which are distinctly human: the capacity for discriminative judgment, the exercise of responsible decision and choice, the ability to carry out long-range purposes.[11]

The questions remain: How is it possible to assume that God's judgments are correct? Is it not an arbitrary decision on the part of biblical religion to elevate a moral

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[11] Cherbonnier, "Biblical Anthropomorphism," p. 187.

God over an immoral God? If God is anthropomorphic, can He be evil rather than good? These appear to be pointless questions, but they are important within the framework of logic and consistency. In the perennial system no real distinction can be drawn between good and evil. The fact that the biblical God communicates, however, removes man from the unstable state where one god is as good as another. The mystery of God is preserved in the biblical approach; nothing can be known about Him in advance, only after the fact, a posteriori. Within the biblical system, then, man has a kind of empirical evidence for the nature of God. This "evidence," however, is not absolute; it is not a way to know fully and hence to control God, but only a method by which man can come to understand the intentions of God.

The Bible records (within myths, legends, and history) words and deeds done by God in the world. From this information man begins to draw conclusions about the workings of God. He does not disclose all of Himself or set down magic formulas by which He can be conjured; He continues to affect the course of history, to cause things to happen to fulfill His purpose.

In perennial thought everything has a particular kind of certainty. One knows that the world is an illusion; one knows that man is trapped in the endless cycles of time and change; and one knows that, because the One is constant, things will continue as they have been ad infinitum. Man, therefore,

has no real freedom in mystical religion. He cannot alter the course of events; he cannot enter into communication with the divine except in a moment of ecstasy when he becomes united with the same process. The patterns in perennialism are fixed. What is known is known in the beginning, a priori.

In sharp contrast, the hallmark of biblical religion is that both God and man are free. The movement of God's hand through history is not heavy, it does not manipulate human events like pieces on a chess board (hence God's acts are often difficult to detect and subject to outside criticisms). This is true because of man's freedom. The biblical text, especially the prophets, are full of the conflicts between God and man. It is possible for human beings to choose a course of action that is directly contrary to the will of God. History, therefore, is a chronicle of the interaction between two sources of personal decision: God and man. Both are active and free agents; the fact that God allows man to operate with some autonomy means that His relationship to the world is not grounded in an impersonal process, but in the personal. History becomes much more difficult to predict; no decision is automatic or predetermined. Implied is that the course of events is left open, that things can happen to alter developing situations. Moreover, it means that man has a unique partnership with God in working out the future; and this is a partnership of two distinct personalities. This

partnership and personal interchange contrasts sharply, as Cherbonnier explains, with theologies that praise human or divine self-sufficiency:

> The Bible, by contrast, regards self-sufficient isolation as destructive and the desire for it as one of the means by which sin perpetuates itself. The pursuit of salvation in terms of independence or "unrelatedness" is something to be delivered from. Salvation consists precisely in a special quality of relation between men and between man and God. The structure of human freedom, which entails a relation beyond the self, is thus neither destroyed nor "transcended," but fulfilled. Even God himself, as triune, finds his own beatitude, not in self-sufficiency, but in love.[12]

There is no way for man to "become" God. Nevertheless, the movement between the finite and the divine is an active interchange, a dialogue, an activity which is either complementary or in opposition. In the end, any attempt to understand the intention of God is placed in the field of the personal. It is an attempt to understand motivation, to discover what God is trying to do. This is difficult, because God refuses to make all decisions for man. By leaving room for freedom He also leaves room for confusion, doubt, rejection, and misunderstanding. These are the necessary consequences of an open relationship between any two persons. Consequently, there are moments when everything seems perfectly clear, and other times when things appear confusing or unacceptable. Ultimately, biblical religion asserts that God is known only through His acts.

[12]Cherbonnier, Hardness of Heart, p. 127.

It is not sufficient to isolate a few events from the biblical narratives and hold them up as proofs. Seeing the destruction of Jericho as proof of God's blind anger is like citing a single instance when a person lies and then concluding that the person is essentially a liar; a single instance remains an example and not a conclusion. In this context, it is important to interpret the biblical God as a person; His words and actions are interpreted as aspects of a vastly complex life. That the Bible alludes to the emotions of God underscores His "humanity." It means that the personal, anthropomorphic God has feeling as well as reason.

God's actions and words indicate that His nature is directed consistently toward the betterment of mankind. He does not glorify strife, demand human sacrifice, or condemn men for being less than perfect. He has given men freedom; He allows them to reject Him; He offers them His friendship. It is difficult to avoid making long pronouncements on God's nature or essence; such an understanding of God is ultimately a personal matter and, consequently, there are many different views of His essential nature. What can be stated in general for biblical religion is twofold: First, coming to understand God is a discovery; it is an individual exploration into the narrative of the Bible and a personal decision on the best method of coming into contact with Him. Second, there is nothing static about the relationship between God and man.

Unlike the perfection of the mystical One, God is a personality that each man must come to grips with in his own way. That every man is free to deal with God as he chooses arises from the conviction that there is one truth, but many ways of searching for it. Man then is not trapped on a treadmill of history, but active in a real world with an undetermined future and a myriad number of possibilities.

Mystical versus Biblical

In establishing the perfection of ultimate reality, a perennial philosophy may speak of it as being Unknowable. It is common to both biblical and mystical approaches to speak of God as a mystery. In perennial philosophy, however, the One is a mystery because it is far removed from the natural world; it is other-worldly, out of reach for mankind. The strange thing is that it is not a perfect mystery; like some buried treasure, the One remains silently in its realm until discovered by the mystic. When this occurs, the mystery and the mystic dissolve into a single state of unitive knowledge; "God" falls into the hands of the seeker. In sharp contrast to this position, biblical religion understands the mystery of God as by choice, not condition. Through His personhood, God exercises freedom to hold something back from man; He does not choose to reveal everything at one time. This implies that the initiative rests with God; there is no way that He can be

found out, unless He freely decides to reveal Himself. The mystery, therefore, remains, so long as God intends it. Commenting on this issue, Cherbonnier states:

> For the Bible, mystery is correlative with freedom. Though free to withhold himself, God can also make Himself known. The mystery resides in the fact that what He will say or do remains absolutely unpredictable. The small voice that spoke to Elijah continues to confound human expectations.[13]

The perennial One is thought of as being a complete unity; it is therefore unlimited by definition. The essential point, however, is that the One must remain inactive. If it attempts to enter into any action, it admits the existence of something outside itself and forfeits its definition of perfection. The biblical God is unlimited not in ontological definition, but in action. There is nothing He cannot do, including the act of creation. This means that God shares reality with those things He creates, but preserves His ability to act on them.

Another contrast between perennial and biblical systems centers around the term Infinite. In a broad sense, this term can encompass most of the characteristics already discussed, but used in a more specific way it means "timeless" or "without change." This definition fits in neatly with the perennial philosophy; any concept of time implies change, temporality, and is, therefore, a direct contradiction to the One. The

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[13]Cherbonnier, "Biblical Anthropomorphism," p. 204.

influence of perennial thinking can be clearly seen in reference to God as being eternal and unchanging. The perspective of the biblical narrative, however, is different. It is true that passages do refer to God's immortality, that He can outlive His creatures, but they also carry another important quality beyond a question of life-span. For the biblical thinker, to be alive is to change, and to be active is to affect that change; God does this. What is "changeless" about God is His devotion and His love. God can be trusted; unlike the gods of Olympus, He is steadfast and reliable. Supporting this contention, Cherbonnier stated:

> Where the deities of paganism are fluid, fickle, schizophrenic, Yahweh is steadfast, constant of purpose, a definite, determinate personality. It has been said that of all the graphic portraits in the Bible, the most vivid and concrete is that of God himself.[14]

This kind of trust is impossible, then, for both the fickle Olympian gods and for the static, lifeless One.

In an effort to elevate the One beyond the reach of the finite, the mystic may refer to it as "transcendent." This implies that the One is outside of the context of space and time; it exists in an entirely different realm of its own. At the same time, it also means that the One is diffused throughout existence. By being transcendent, it can defy the natural laws of matter and space and filter into every element

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[14]Cherbonnier, "A. J. Heschel and the Philosophy of the Bible," Commentary, XXVII (1959), p. 25.

of the lower realm; therefore, mysticism speaks of God as being everywhere at once. This admixture of transcendence and pantheism is contradicted by the biblical use of the term. God is considered transcendent in His sovereignty and authority. He is not, however, alien to the conditions of space and time. God can move within their perimeters, but He is never restricted by them as is man. Unlike the diffused character of the One, God is "immanent" in the world through history. He does not somehow inhabit all of the finite world, but exercises His influence over it as its designer and caretaker. This makes His relationship to the world much less a matter of cold necessity and more of a free, personal involvement. Cherbonnier summarizes this point by noting:

> The God of the Bible is neither transcendent nor immanent in the mystical sense. Being anthropomorphic, He is quite compatible with spatio-temporal existence. If he can be called "transcendent" at all, it is only in the sense that he is sovereign over his entire creation. Having conferred existence upon all things, He can also take it away. Having granted freedom to men, He can also overrule them. He is Lord and Master.[15]

Summary of the Biblical God's Nature

Taking all of these factors into consideration, it should be possible to gain an insight into the kind of God biblical religion supports, according to Cherbonnier. On the traditions and chronicles of the Bible, it draws out

[15]Cherbonnier, "Biblical Anthropomorphism," p. 201.

those elements of thought, both explicit and implicit, as they pertain to the nature and function of God. In doing so, the biblical system makes a radical departure from perennial philosophy. It interprets God in clearly anthropomorphic terms. Its challenge to perennial thinkers is a criticism of bending the nature of God to fit their own, pre-conceived structure. By following the original vision of ultimate reality found among the early narratives of the Bible, biblical thinkers have discovered the essential truth about God in the form of freedom. They argue that God must be in the field of the personal and that He is a free and conscious agent. The state of existence, therefore, is not split into a duality with one realm distant and abstract and the lower world illusory and trapped into an endless cycle; rather it is the active relationship between the Creator and His creation, between two kinds of personalities. Therefore, the nature and purpose of God is to be discovered in history. It is a working out of an intention in the world of man. In this process, nothing is set down as an absolute for human beings; they are free to act on their own, to accept or reject the will of God and to interpret destiny as they see it. What is certain, however, is that God remains steadfast and constant. He will not betray any trust that is placed in Him. What He offers man is a chance to change time and space, to leave the endpoint of history open for development. To this

end, He reveals Himself to mankind without overwhelming them, as if He were supplying them with encouragement or direction. Ultimately, the result of this effort lies not just with God or man, but with both working together to make God's vision come to fruition.

Status of the Everyday World

Finite Reality

In perennial philosophy, the existence of the finite world is inexplicable. It is a direct contradiction to the supposed unity and perfection of the higher realm. It is impossible for mystical systems to supply any reason for the existence of the finite realm; in order to justify this lower realm, it is seen as an illusion, a dream, or a reflection. In each of these cases, perennial philosophy implicitly denies significant reality to the natural world. The thrust of its logic has given the perfect state of the One a monopoly on reality and abandoned the rest of existence to a kind of existential limbo. Creation is thus seen as sin, alienation from real reality.

Recognizing God as an active agent, biblical religion asserts that the finite world is real. Though it is measured by time and remains impermanent, while it exists it is as real as God Himself. It has reality by virtue of its conception as God's act. In forming the intention to create, God designed

man's environment; by the power of His action, God gave that intention substance, reality, and form. Creation, therefore, is no contradiction to the existence of God. Cherbonnier notes:

> Throughout the Bible there runs a single criterion of both truth and goodness, equally applicable "on earth as it is in heaven." This is the philosophical significance of the concept of God as Creator. It contradicts the tragic notion that the relation of God to the world is properly expressed as that of the infinite to the finite, the absolute to the relative, or the timeless to the temporal. Whereas tragedy regards this present world as the negation of the "divine," the Bible asserts that there is no necessary incompatibility between it and the very nature of God himself.[16]

To make this point more clear, the attitude held by each system toward the nature of life in the finite world can be contrasted. In the perennial view, human existence is an unfortunate evil. Man is trapped by his environment, held down by his physical body. In order to attain enlightenment, he must sever all contact with finite existence. He must suppress all urges to come into contact with the movements and issues around him. In this way, he affirms the illusion of the world and opens himself up to the only true reality, the spiritual state of the One. This approach is the necessary extension of perennial duality which makes it impossible to accept the common reality of the finite and the infinite.

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[16]Cherbonnier, "Biblical Faith and the Idea of Tragedy," p. 40.

The recognition of the world as a product of God's intention, inherent in the biblical system, generates an almost complete reversal of the perennial attitude. Rather than escaping from the world, man is forced into it. He is as much a part of the world as any other natural element in existence. Moreover, he has a direct stake in the events that affect his environment since they mark the passage of history toward its fulfillment. If those events impede the intention of God, then that fulfillment is set back, but if man can act to help God work out His intention, then the time when history will reach fruition is brought closer. The primary quality of this state is mutual cooperation. It means that both God and man share a common interest in the condition of human life. The universe is not split into two halves, but remains a single reality in which the divine and the finite share a mutual concern.

Creation

The justification of biblical religion in maintaining its approach to the relationship between God and man is inherent in the biblical idea of creation. The importance of creation as a philosophical concept should not be underestimated. It marks a significant difference between the perennial and biblical systems. As Cherbonnier explains:

> For the Bible, the relation of God to the world is that of Creator to creation. That is, he is related to the world as an agent is related to his act. Because his act is free, you can never deduce it from the "essence" of the agent (which is possibly one reason why this solution has not occurred to the Platonist). But once the act is given, it is perfectly reasonable to account for it as an expression of the agent's will. The famous problem of "the one and the many" is thus only a problem for a metaphysic from which free agents are excluded. In the Biblical metaphysic, for which free agents are central, the Creator is related to his creation by an act of will.[17]

Perennialism makes a pronounced distinction between the One and the everyday world. The relationship is indirect; the finite realm is a "subset," an included element, in the larger context of ultimate reality. Consequently, there is no conscious, purposeful connection between the two realms. The natural world is more of an afterthought. In the biblical system, on the other hand, there is a direct relationship between the status of the everyday world and the intentions of God. This idea is embodied in the Hebrew concept of a God who is involved in history. Unlike the cyclical patterns of time in perennialism, the Hebrew notion of time is linear; it moves from a point of origin, the creation, to some goal, the Kingdom of God. This means that creation is the introduction of God into history; it is, in a real sense, the beginning of history. Man, therefore, is not trapped by time; even though he is a finite creature, he has the ability to act,

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[17] Cherbonnier, "Is There A Biblical Metaphysic?", pp. 462f.

to cause things to happen, and by his actions to change events, to alter the course of history. The differences between God and man become more a question of degree rather than a rigid barrier between two mutually exclusive realms. God and the finite are compatible; their relationship is properly seen as that of the Creator to His work. Consequently, there is an implicit understanding in biblical religion of the inter-dependence of reality which is lacking in the duality of perennial thought. Regarding this point, Cherbonnier states:

> In the Bible, God certainly is conceived as "a being besides other beings." To the complaint that this implies that God is related, and therefore conditioned, the answer is that of course God is related. The doctrine of creation can mean very little if it does not at least mean that the world and man are distinct from the Creator. And from cover to cover the Bible testifies that God is indeed conditioned, in the sense of "influenced," by what man does--never of necessity, of course, but voluntarily.[18]

The Order of Existence

Once these two views of the relationship between the finite and the infinite have been clarified, then it becomes possible to draw other comparisons between the two systems. For example, there is the question of order. What orders the universe? What holds it in balance and measures the passage

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[18]Cherbonnier, "Biblical Metaphysics and Christian Philosophy," p. 363.

of time? These are valid philosophical questions which each system must answer. The answers given are dependent on the nature of the philosophy as a whole; the criteria of consistency and logic play a significant role in maintaining perspective. In the mystical religion it is possible to diagram the order of existence by reference to the hierarchy. Each element of reality is linked to its position by necessity; it includes some other elements and is, in turn, included by others. This is order by definition. It implies that reality is arranged into categories; the blocks are set one upon another until the whole structure of the universe is complete. Consequently, to remove one of these blocks or to alter it changes the entire nature of reality. The ultimate part of existence, the One, is the key part of this system. It must remain true to its definition; it must remain static, for any change in its condition would send vibrations all the way down the hierarchy. Perennial philosophy, therefore, must be very careful in handling the nature of the One; it must affirm the One's absolute status, but maintained in a kind of suspended animation. In this way, the larger body of its philosophy remains consistent and answers questions concerning order by reference to the hierarchy.

The biblical approach is much more fluid. The nature of God as an active agent, and His relationship to the finite world as the Creator, makes the question of order a matter of

intention, not definition. In speaking of God's character, biblical religion insists upon anthropomorphic qualities: God speaks, acts, judges, etc. Ultimate reality, then, is conscious. It lies in the mind of God, and what gives the diverse elements of reality their order and position is His plan. He wills order. Like an architect, God places those objects He has designed into balance; He arranges them, and He does so with two very important conditions: reality and freedom. The order of the universe is maintained by the natural laws which govern its function as a tangible, real substance. It is not illusory, or even "less real," it is only finite. Time, therefore, is the thread of order laid down by God to shape the reality of the finite. Decidedly open-ended, the finite world orders itself through its exercise of freedom. As Cherbonnier notes:

> Biblical categories are "unique" and "distinctive," not as compared to the "naive" language of ordinary men, but in contrast to the esoteric tendencies of most other philosophies. If freedom were established at the center of metaphysics, then the key words at the heart of the biblical thinking, words as close to everyday living as they are foreign to most metaphysics, would become decisive for philosophy itself.[19]

In biblical terms, when man is given "dominion" over the earth he is given his freedom to act within the limits of time and space. Consequently, man shares in the responsibility of ordering existence by his actions in the world.

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[19] Cherbonnier, "Jerusalem and Athens," p. 270.

The patterns can be broken. If God's intention is the framework upon which reality is placed, then man's freedom is its regulator. The unity and order of existence is dynamic; it is active. Reality, therefore, is not seen as a static arrangement of blocks in a hierarchy, but as something which is growing, something in motion.

The Nature of History

A good working model to use in clarifying the biblical view is the idea of history. That God's intention is the primary ordering factor in existence implies that God wills the reality of the finite; He supplies it with both form and meaning. If God is capable of doing this, He must necessarily be a free agent, i.e., anthropomorphic. In biblical religion, this interpretation is underscored by the nature of human life. In His capacity as the Creator, God imparts freedom to man. He makes man "in His image." In essence, this means that man has the same mode of action, though to a lesser degree, as does God. Consequently, human freedom is a corrollary to God's freedom. Cherbonnier states, regarding this issue:

> If the events of human history are at all meaningful, they must be performed by free agents. Conversely, if there is no such thing as the freedom to act voluntarily and responsibly in accordance with chosen purposes, then life is indeed a shadow play, and the entire biblical metaphysic a delusion. In addition to the reality and metaphysical importance of this

> world, then, the biblical metaphysic also assumes the freedom of God and man.[20]

When the two forces work in conjunction, when God and man share the same intention, then events are altered. When God and man are drawn into a unity of purpose and action, history is brought closer to realization. History, therefore, has a goal. It is not cyclical, but linear. This shifts from the emphasis found in perennial philosophy. It implies that the true quality of life, the goal of living, is not to sever the ties which join man to his environment, but to improve them. The impassive, mystical state of indifference is replaced with a concern for the nature and character of an active participation in the events of the world. Man becomes part of history; he moves it in a definite direction. This can either be in a positive direction, toward communion with God, or in a negative direction, impeding that fellowship. Consequently, matters of daily life and questions of what constitutes moral conduct become extremely important in biblical religion, because they have a direct bearing on the history of the world. The lines of communication drawn between the divine and the finite are of the utmost importance; the manner in which men conduct their lives is crucial.

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[20]Cherbonnier, "Mystical vs. Biblical Symbolism," p. 37.

Human Nature

Biblical Man

According to Cherbonnier, there are certain inherent understandings about human nature in the biblical view: (1) each person is a unique individual--he has the power to act under his own initiative; (2) as a whole, mankind is a creation of God, firmly tied to the finite world, but with the important qualification of dominion, a freedom to move within the limits of time and space and to affect the course of history; (3) the real criteria for the exercise of that freedom is its correspondence to the will and intention of God--there are right and wrong modes of conduct. In substance, these considerations make one aspect about man central to biblical religion: man is in relation. He is in relation to his environment, to God, and to the larger community of mankind. This is a natural consequence of his status as a personal being. In each case, man enters into contact with events, objects, and characters surrounding him. Reality, therefore, is animated; it is dynamic. The original nature of God as an active and conscious being filters throughout His creation. It is infused into the fibre of existence; it motivates reality and supplies it with energy.

The Human Soul

It is important at this point to distinguish between how the two systems value human activity. A key premise is that mystical religion encourages an escape from this world, while the biblical recognizes a full involvement with it. One significant factor which supports this motif relates to the concept of the human soul.

The image of the soul projected by perennial philosophy is of a "divine spark" trapped within the body of man. In this sense, each man carries a part of ultimate reality, of the One, inside himself. An implication, however, is that there is no real human claim on the soul; it is strictly a fragment of the One, which at death escapes the body and eventually returns to its point of origin. In human nature, there is a "higher self," the soul or spirit, which aspires to the perfection of the One; there is also the "lower" state of man which is associated with all of his physical needs and desires. Perennialism, therefore, is consistent in its approach to human nature, because ultimately it divides man into two internal realms, one part that is "wholly other" and one part that is finite. The primary motivation is to pull these two realms even further apart, to deny the body and the finite, so that the One can retrieve that small portion of Itself which is trapped in the natural world. At best, this makes man into a container, a package.

The biblical image of the human soul is distinctly different: it is God's gift. God has made man in His own image, i.e., with the ability to act, to make decisions, and enter into relation. The logical extension of this interpretation is that the human soul, although an act of God's grace, remains uniquely human. According to biblical religion, "The soul is not an entity with a separate nature from the flesh and possessing or capable of a life of its own. Rather it is the life animating the flesh."[21] The soul, therefore, is a functioning aspect of human nature and of behavior. It represents that part of man's consciousness which moves toward fellowship with God. This is not, however, a union of like parts, of the fragment returning to the whole, but rather two individual identities joining together in positive relation. The soul can then be spoken of as being active, not as the prisoner of the body, but as its animating conscience. It enters into man's activity, directing that action by offering up possibilities which correspond to the will of God.

Human Freedom

An essential feature of human nature, therefore, is freedom. It is the ability to form judgments and then to act accordingly. As Cherbonnier stated:

> . . . all human endeavor presupposes freedom, including the enterprise of philosophy itself. For the philosopher depends upon the distinction

[21] James Hastings, ed., Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 932.

> of true from false--that is, on the freedom to distinguish true from false. Take away freedom and you thereby preclude all thinking.[22]

Acting from this position of freedom puts man either with or against God's intentions.

Obviously, the biblical interpretation seems much less certain than the perennial. It appears that the idea of a divine spark makes man's union with God much more likely. Two points of clarification need to be made here regarding such a conclusion: first, union is not dependent on any condition of human nature; at death, the divine spark always returns eventually to the One. Second, the method by which that union is brought about is a kind of spiritual suicide; the mystic, recognizing the duality of human nature, represses the natural tendencies of the body to enter into relation with the finite, so that the divine in his own being can leave him and return to the One; that divinity, however, is unconscious by definition--it has nothing to do with a personal, human nature. Ultimately, no part of man as person ever comes into relation with the One, because the One cannot be related to anything external to itself; it is "wholly other."

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[22]Cherbonnier, "Jerusalem and Athens," p. 265.

In contrast, the biblical concept makes the eventual contact between God and man a possibility, but only a possibility. It cannot be brought about through the exercise of mystical disciplines or practices; there is no formula or method which can make it happen. Contact with God is grounded in the freedom of man to choose a course of life. It can be in direct opposition to God or in harmony with Him, and the nature of man's decision determines the destiny of his soul. If that portion of man which can be called his soul or spirit returns to fuller fellowship with God, it does so with two important qualifications: first, it does so not according to necessity, but by the quality of human nature--man can decide his own course of action; second, the soul retains the personal essence of the man himself--it is not an unconscious element in human nature, but is a vital, active part of man's character. The spiritual reunion between God and man is not the vision of the piece returning to the whole, but of two "persons" coming into a relationship. Biblical philosophy, therefore, allows man to be human, to have a range of action, alternatives and options. Among these is the ability to come into a mutual relation with God, a concept which is logically impossible for mystical religion.

Religious Knowledge

Understanding God's Purpose

The patterns set in motion by biblical religion make the question of religious knowledge of the utmost importance. In essence, man has been brought into a state of potential. Everything has been primed in advance: he has the ability to join with God, to match his actions with God's intention. It is possible to feel the momentum of this idea building; in the biblical system a man can make the decision to let his will work in unison with that of God, he can stand ready to act in accordance with the whole purpose of history. But how does he do so? How does he know if his actions are correct? How does he know what God's intentions are?

In trying to answer these questions, the biblical approach begins with a word of caution: no man is ever able to know God completely. He cannot "become God" in the same sense as can the mystic. At best, he can only gather the information about God, collect insights into the workings of God in history, and on this basis construct what he believes to be a close approximation to God's will. But there is always room for error. Man is a finite being; he can make mistakes, he can misjudge. There are, however, two things working in his favor: God's steadfast nature and His desire to have that fellowship brought about. There is no method

which guarantees perfect religious knowledge; man must act on trust. Consequently, the first step to such knowledge is the decision to will consciously to understand God, no matter how imperfect that understanding may be.

Rational and Emotional Understanding

The quality of knowledge of God, according to Cherbonnier, is both rational and emotional. It is a full response on the part of man to the character and person of God. The mystic must reject reason as an approach to religious knowledge. He asserts that his personal revelation into the mysteries of ultimate reality transcend rational modes of thought; they cannot be described or explained. Enlightenment, therefore, remains a singular experience.

In biblical religion, however, there is room for a rational approach to God, because man cannot know God except through the information he gathers. Nothing can be known about God in advance. In discussing this issue in Wieman's theology, Cherbonnier explains:

> Knowledge of such a God, like knowledge of any other person, would depend upon what he said and did. It would thus satisfy the requirement so stressed by Wieman: it would be radically empirical, even experimental. For knowledge of a person's words and deeds is obtained, not by abstract deduction, but altogether "a posteriori."[23]

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[23]Cherbonnier, "The Word of God," p. 272.

God is personal; He is anthropomorphic. And, just as with people, His personality is manifest in action. It is pieced together by the observer on the basis of what He does.

To clarify this point further, one might imagine that two strangers are brought into a room. One person has no knowledge of the other; he can only observe his actions and guess about his nature. The second, however, knows a great deal about the first. He has been fully briefed on his habits, background, beliefs, and personality. Such is the case with man and God in biblical philosophy. God has an intention; the complete nature of that intention is unknown, since God cannot be fully known; but there are clues. One can assume that God has placed trust in mankind by virtue of his creating persons with the freedom to act.

Any conclusions one can make about God are products of observation and intuition. They are based on knowledge after the fact (a posteriori). Consequently, human reason becomes an important device in helping men sift through the evidence to understand God. Moreover, the biblical narratives are a long chronicle of God's activities in history; the Bible pays so much attention to history because it is the recorded actions of God in this world that give men some clues about His nature. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Bible is an historical document. By piecing together

the actions of God in time, one can begin to interpret His intention. The relationship, therefore, between history as a series of events and knowledge about God is a significant aspect of biblical philosophy. Cherbonnier makes this point very explicit when he states:

> Knowledge of persons, of course, can never be attained by the methods of science and philosophy alone. In fact, if the person chooses to "clam up," it can be attained by no method at all. It is always dependent upon his own initiative. And this is all that is meant by revelation; one free agent voluntarily discloses something of himself to another by his words and deeds; that is, through particular, historical events. To say that the Bible is the revelation of God is simply to say that it records the words and mighty acts by which he made himself known to a particular people at times and places of his own choosing.[24]

Drawing Judgment

The biblical system admittedly uses human reason as the groundwork for gaining religious knowledge. It also accepts knowledge based on faith. Because human understanding of God is incomplete, man cannot make finalized assertions about His character or intention. After the process of observing His actions in history, however, certain key ideas and patterns appear. God acts with consistency; He does not betray mankind or work to negate human freedom. He does not take back what He has given, even if it appears to be misused.

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[24] Cherbonnier, "Is There A Biblical Metaphysic?", p. 465.

From this evidence, persons can make tentative judgments about God. Like a jury, men must come to terms with God; they must make a decision. It is impossible to know absolutely what occurred, although there are witnesses and testimony and information. But, because God is personal, there is always that dynamic quality that prevents one from saying, "Yes, I know him completely." In making a decision, therefore, one enters into what can be called faith. It is a difference between "I think" and "I believe." That distinction is often subtle and refined. It is certainly difficult; but in allowing room for both, biblical religion maintains the position that the essence of human life is in relation: relation to oneself, to others, and to God.

In using the image of a jury, the importance of decision-making is brought into focus as a part of religious knowledge. In the biblical view, it is impossible for a man to abstain from the balloting. Abstention is judgment by default. Although biblical religion is open to questions of interpretation, it asserts that religious knowledge can only be gained through active, conscious effort. It is possible, of course, for men to ignore willingly issues, to block them out or let them remain dormant. Hence, the biblical references to those "who have ears but do not hear, and eyes but do not see."

Knowledge Means Action

There is a strong emphasis in biblical thought, according to Cherbonnier, to actualize what is potential, to act on what has been seen or heard. A connection therefore exists between the information available in religious knowledge and how that information is used in practice. The two must be taken together. The nature of understanding God's intention is so constructed that it forces men into action; some response, even a negative one, is required by understanding God's role in history. Unlike the perennial system, where spiritual disciplines precede unitive knowledge, biblical religion calls for the one unified movement of knowledge and action. It makes the search for truth practical. Whatever a man understands to be God's intention, he must try to fulfill in his own life. The recognition of God's purpose, therefore, involves mankind; rather than forcing them out of the finite world, it increases their interaction with it.

The Word

The unique image of God found in biblical religion has a direct bearing on the idea of religious knowledge. As previously noted, religious knowledge must come a posteriori, but in accepting God as an anthropomorphic being, biblical philosophy allows one important factor: communication. The evidence left by God in history is intentional. It directs men

toward fulfilling the larger purpose which He wills. To this end, God also speaks to man. This is the essence of the biblical reference to "the Word." As Cherbonnier notes:

> . . . every man is confronted by the word of God, spoken directly to him in his own concrete situation, and demanding a response in terms of decision --a life-and-death decision for or against God himself.[25]

God is able, then, to interject His ideas directly into the flow of time; He is not silent or impassive. The figure of the prophets is therefore built around the Word of God. They are the media through which God talks directly to men. Communication passes from God to chosen persons, and from them to others. This implies that there is a system of checks and balances which prevents men from acting out of ignorance, and it makes it even more difficult to avoid an encounter with God. The image of the Hebrew prophet is always of a man who stands over against the idolatrous movement of history and declares that human freedom has been misused, that the wrong choice has been made. Biblical religion recognizes that wrong judgments can be corrected, and that God can intercede to help men shift direction.

Interpreting the Word

Although God manifests Himself in both actions and words, which cannot fully reveal God's complex nature, they

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[25]Cherbonnier, "Theology of the Word of God," p. 19.

do provide a clear indication of His purpose. There are elements in perennial philosophy which assert that the knowledge of God can be broken down into two categories: God as He is revealed, and God as He is in Himself. Biblical philosophy rejects this notion. It is another way of dividing reality into two realms, to propose one god-figure for this world, and maintain the reality of God for the higher realm. This shifts God's nature to fit the definitions imposed by the perennial concept of the One. It does, however, raise an issue which is pertinent to religious knowledge. If it is accepted that one-to-one contact between man and God is not likely, then any communication is secondary. This implies that religious knowledge is primarily a matter of interpretation. For example, if two men are watching a third person go through some action, they might each "see" the action differently. It is possible, then, for knowledge of God to be distorted through this process.

Biblical religion posits that there is a constant truth in which God operates; human interpretation of that truth may vary, but the real truth remains unchanged. The same claim can be made by perennial philosophers. The difference, however, is that while truth can be discovered by the mystic, it always remains external to the finite world. The static truth of perennial philosophy may go misunderstood, since it has no power to speak for itself; the only source of real information is the mystic who claims to have experienced it. But if

two mystics disagree, the whole process becomes even more subjective and impossible to resolve.

It is much more probable that the biblical God's truth will reveal itself to man, because the lines of communication are already established. It can be stated that the goal of the biblical philosopher is to finalize that process of sorting through the evidence, both in word and act, and then to bring human interpretation into harmony with the will of God.

Consequences for Living

Human Responsibility

It has been stated that the fundamental nature of man in the biblical view, according to Cherbonnier, is that he is in relation, that he lives in a real and changing world. This means that man has responsibility. He is not the impotent victim of time; he can make decisions and act on them without the direct interference of God. The qualitative fact behind this concept is morality. The biblical idea of morality is set against the backdrop of history: because man is created as a free agent, he has power to influence the conditions of the natural world; he can move history. But history is not endless or unconscious; it is the product of God's will, an intentional act with a definite purpose. Cherbonnier explains the significance of the biblical conception of time:

> The Bible has simply never heard that time, as distinct from many of the things that happen "in" time, is something to be redeemed "from." When it speaks of ultimate fulfillment, it uses definitely temporal terms: "Life everlasting," "world without end." The phrase "eternal life" means, in the original Greek, not a timeless state, but "the life of the age to come."[26]

Consequently, it is the responsibility of man as a caretaker of history to discover what God intends and to mold human action to match that purpose. Morality as an abstraction, then, is a judgment on how well that responsibility has been met. Biblical religion upholds the idea that a man can be held accountable for his actions and for his words. What is moral is for a man to hear the truth, to search it out, to come to grips with it, and then to act consistently to fulfill that truth.

Integrating Life Forces

One of the key elements that has constantly reappeared in Cherbonnier's interpretation of biblical philosophy is the importance of action, verbal and physical. It is the framework for gathering knowledge of God, understanding His actions in the world, and hearing His word. The same condition is true for persons; it is a pattern of integrated life that is vital to the biblical approach. Nothing is splintered or held apart.

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[26]Cherbonnier, Hardness of Heart, p. 80.

Knowledge, action, and morality work together in human existence; they each play a role in bringing man to fellowship with God. What defines morality for the biblical religion, therefore, is not so much the isolated codes on any given action, but how well a man balances off the forces in his life and keeps them working in harmony. To clarify this, one can say that for a man to hear the word of God and then not to act is immoral. It cannot be justified purely on the basis of abstract acceptance, because such a justification is incomplete. The weight of biblical morality requires that a man make the transition from the theoretical into the practical, that he bring religious knowledge into everyday life, and that he give it the strength and vitality of his own actions. This is what is meant by an integration of life forces, and it is a consistent theme in biblical religion to keep concerns of God and humanity grounded firmly in the reality of this world.

Man in Relation

It is a cardinal virtue in biblical philosophy that a man maintain the trust of God and of his fellow men. The fabric of biblical morality is strongly tied to the ideal of trust. The gift of freedom was an act of trust by God and this is indicative of the repeated references to Him as a God of love and compassion. In essence, it implies that the biblical view is a blend of the practical and the emotional.

It does not require that a man deny his passions, as the perennial mystic must, or that he sever all his contacts with other persons. On the contrary, biblical religion adheres to the ideal of community in which each man not only fulfills his individual responsibility, but acts to help other men meet their own demands. At the very least, the biblical view forces a man to be conscious of the condition of those around him, and to take into account their needs; he is always a person in relation to others as well as to God.

Community, then, is built on the principle that reality is personal; that each living thing is joined to the next not by a hierarchy, but by personal relations. Each person is a member of the world community. No one can be justifiably excluded and it is the responsibility of those within the community to make certain that everyone is given the opportunity to be included. The idea of brotherhood, therefore, is an integral part of the biblical world view. Ultimately, the Bible calls all men to respond with love (agape) toward their fellow men and toward God. As noted by Cherbonnier:

> For the Bible, creation is good because of who created it. The watershed which separates this view from pessimistic philosophies and religions reflects the difference between their respective gods. When knowledge, conceived in terms of immediate or demonstrable certainty, is deified, the derogation of the world follows. For the Bible, on the contrary, knowledge, though a very

> great good, is not an end in itself, and indeed is only made perfect when devoted to the right end, the service of "agape." Without love, it runs amuck.[27]

The Problem of Sin

The idea of such a caring community is an ideal. Having confronted his personal duty, one must also be aware that what is called evil and sin continues to exist in the world. Traditionally this is seen as the good person being tempted away from his chosen path. This concept, however, needs some explanation.

First, the notion of sin or temptation is different from morality; what constitutes sin is betrayal, a breach of trust. The contract which binds men together and mankind with God is founded in trust; when a man chooses to disregard that contract he acts against both mankind and God; he becomes idolatrous.[28] This is a general premise of biblical religion. Cherbonnier is careful to note the uniqueness of the biblical concept of sin:

> It is sometimes imagined that the idea of sin is peculiar to the Bible. Actually, nearly every philosophy and religion has its own definition of sin. They differ in their respective conceptions of what "constitutes" sin--hybris, as tragedy would

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[27] Ibid., p. 83.

[28] Cherbonnier, "Idolatry," in A Handbook of Christian Theology, ed. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958), pp. 176-183.

> have it, or misplaced allegiance, as the Bible maintains.[29]

In its broad sense, then, sin is breaking the bond of trust between the reality of men and of God. It seems strange to think that such an action could tempt the "good man"--i.e., the man who maintains the ideal of trust. It is not, however, the action itself which is tempting, but the removal of responsibility. It is more comfortable for a man to feel no obligation to anyone at any time; the burden of morality makes us feel involved, concerned, responsible. This idea of involvement and responsibility is a major thrust of biblical religion. A real temptation is to put aside the trust of men and God and set up a private universe in which there are no responsibilities. It is a comfort short-lived, for it demands the price of losing personal relations. If a man breaks his ties with other men, if he loses their trust, he sacrifices the personal relation which bound them together. Biblical religion contends that this process of destroying relations is responsible for sin and temptation. It means that an act of sin is inhuman because it denies its perpetrator the right to fulfill God's will. The logic of biblical thought underscores this concept by relating it to the ideas concerning human nature and religious knowledge.

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[29] Cherbonnier, "Biblical Faith and the Idea of Tragedy," p. 51.

The Aim of Biblical Philosophy

The ultimate aim of biblical philosophy as an existential system is to increase the flow of personal contact among men. It relies on the ideals of friendship, mutual trust, and common incentive to weld men into a community. In contrast with mystical systems, the biblical approach not only allows the finite world its reality, but also considers this world to be a joy, filled with opportunity. This life is the ultimate gift of God; it is to be taken seriously, but enjoyed. Whereas the mystic refuses any pleasure, the biblical view aims at refining pleasure to match God's intention as life's architect. As noted by Cherbonnier:

> The Bible . . . is never content to side-step an obstacle. It will settle for nothing less than complete victory. Its God wants, not the annihilation of unruly passions, but their conversion, for the greatest powers for evil may also be transformed into even greater forces for good.[30]

A theme of biblical thought, then, is external. It moves across the lines of communication among people in relation, and it attempts to cement them together, to strengthen human contact and understanding. Ultimately, this is designed not only to benefit the community of men, but to draw the individual, free human being into relationship with God, to make man and the divine enter a time of harmony and

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[30]Cherbonnier, Hardness of Heart, p. 82.

development. The end of history, therefore, has always been looked forward to as the beginning of a new age, a time when word and action become synonymous and mutual trust is commonplace. This, too, is an ideal, but it favors biblical philosophy with a feeling of hope and expectancy which is distinctive.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MYSTICAL RELIGION FOR A BASIC OBJECTIVE

Two Perspectives for Religious Thought

Cherbonnier's religious thought distinguishes two contrasting types of religious perspectives, mystical (or perennial) and biblical. His personal choice rests with the latter, not from the result of selecting one religion from two equally valid perspectives. For Cherbonnier, the biblical is a superior philosophy, testable by canons of evidence acceptable to logic, to experiment, and to public verification generally. Commenting upon the inadequate mystical, having its roots in Athens, as against the true biblical, with its heritage founded in Jerusalem, he wrote:

> "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?" Basically the answer will be the same as always: Jerusalem has everything to do with Athens. She has to save Athens from herself. First and foremost, she has to save men. One aspect of this primary task, however, inevitably involves the minds of men. Can Jerusalem challenge Athens in her own bailiwick, the realm of thinking? However unlikely the prospect might seem at first glance, the preceding pages have found some encouragement for the hope not only that biblical metaphysics need not take a back seat for academic philosophy, but that the sons of Athens herself may find that all roads are blind alleys except the one that leads to Jerusalem.[1]

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[1]Cherbonnier, "Jerusalem and Athens," pp. 270f.

Thus, his analysis of religious thought has two dimensions. The first concerns the clarification between two basic interpretations; the second is his judgment that one of these, the biblical, is the only true perspective.

In a reply to Cherbonnier's critique of his concept of God, Wieman offered praise for the analysis distinguishing mystical from biblical interpretations:

> The clarity of his thought is a joy amidst the theological blur now prevailing. . . . I agree with Cherbonnier in his powerful and cogent criticism of present-day theology when theology claims that God is the "mystery of being" beyond reach of definite and descriptive knowledge. . . . Cherbonnier's indictment of present-day theology is irrefutable.[2]

Though he agreed with Cherbonnier's indictment of contemporary theology as being a mixture of mystical and biblical elements, Wieman contended that his own interpretations did not fall clearly under Cherbonnier's understanding of mystical religion, for which Cherbonnier had criticized Wieman. However, his basic support of Cherbonnier's analysis is clear.

Also recognizing the Hartford scholar's analysis is Kirkpatrick, who wrote:

> Closely related to the search for a Christian philosophy but emphasizing more the character of Biblical motifs is the attempt by some thinkers to find a "biblical metaphysics." Although the school of "biblical metaphysics" has not received the

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[2]Henry N. Wieman, "Reply to Cherbonnier," in The Empirical Theology of Henry Nelson Wieman, pp. 280ff.

> attention that some think it deserves, it is at least one viable way of interpreting Biblical themes and perspectives. One exponent of the biblical metaphysics school, Edmond Cherbonnier, has said that there is a third alternative to an ontological philosophy of religion and no philosophy of religion at all which "would both provide a metaphysical basic for Biblical conceptions and also hold its own on the philosophical level."[3]

Referring to Cherbonnier's analysis of the perennial interpretation of the divine as standing in opposition to the superior biblical concept, Dilley notes, "There are those who hold that God is a Being, not Being-Itself' and who argue that a 'bold anthropomorphism' is the only adequate way to speak about God . . . ."[4] Dilley differs with Cherbonnier at the point when the latter claims superiority for the biblical; he criticizes Cherbonnier for attributing objective factuality to biblical thinking:

> It is certainly an oversimplification to claim, as he does, that the adequacy of biblical philosophy can be proved by simple reference to the facts of history. His claim is, correctly, that the truth of historical "symbols is wholly dependent upon the factuality of the events which they symbolize," but it is hardly justifiable to say that those who reject this God "can be refuted by objective evidence" because "Biblical theology does acknowledge objective standards of verification, both logical and factual." Such a claim seems to imply that non-Christians are making simple factual and logical mistakes when they reject Christianity, that they are denying obvious and easily verified historical facts.[5]

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[3]Frank G. Kirkpatrick, "The Idea of God in the Thought of John Macmurray: Its Basis and Some Implications" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis; Brown University, 1970), p. 13.

[4]Dilley, Metaphysics and Religious Language, p. 110.

[5]Ibid., p. 112.

The criticism leveled at Cherbonnier by Dilley is not, then, for the analysis of religious thought within two perspectives, but for Cherbonnier's claim of truth with objectivity for the biblical. With the support of Hare and Titus, that one's blik or philosophy is founded upon assumptions or postulates, Dilley implies that the alleged superiority of the biblical position rests upon the canons of adequacy and the assumptions of biblical religion itself. Clearly, perennial thought could also claim superiority, according to its own standards.

The strength of Cherbonnier's contribution to religious thought, as recognized presently, rests with his analysis of concepts and interpretations of mystical religion as distinct from biblical, rather than the claim of superiority of one perspective over the other.

A summary of his interpretation of mystical religion follows, and then implications for the basic objective of religious education is described.

A Synoptic View of Mystical Religion

With the assumption that ultimate reality is the non-physical, perennial philosophy interprets divinity as non-personal (e.g., Brahman) or analogically personal (.e.g., the "supra-personal"). The most philosophic forms of Asian

religions most clearly choose the former,[6] while Judaism, Islam, and especially Christianity, under the influence of Greek philosophy, have utilized the latter as a mainstream of their theologies.[7] Uniting both the Oriental and Hellenized Jewish, Christian, and Muslim systems of thought, the conviction is maintained that true reality (whether called "the One" or "God") is supersensible or non-physical. The shared ontology has been interpreted by Cherbonnier as a primary motif of mystical religion. For Cherbonnier, this perspective applied to Hebraic religions is a mistake.

With the establishment of the nature of ultimate reality as non-physical, the problem of the physical (visible and invisible) world requires a solution. Perennial philosophies have developed the following possibilities: (1) The everyday world is unreal, an illusion; (2) physical reality is a lesser reality than the One, separate from It; and (3) the world is a participating emanation of the non-physical, less real the further down the scale toward the physical it goes. History, in fact time itself, being an aspect of the physical, is insignificant, and, for some mystics, unreal.

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[6]Titus, Living Issues, pp. 398-416.

[7]Edwin Hatch, The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 116-138.

Man, trapped within an alienated existence, separated from the One, consists of body and soul. The finite body perishes at death, thereby releasing the soul to an eventual union with the One. In various forms, the "soul" has been utilized in most of the world's religions. Among Asian religions, however, the notion of personality as an attribute of the immortal soul was not an emphasis as it has been in religions of Hebraic origin.[8] To the extent that the physical is regarded as evil, the body is likewise judged; consequently, the separation from the One has been interpreted as involving the individual person in "original sin"; that is, he has been born into an inherently evil or alienated condition.[9]

Human reflection and language are limited to the finite world. Consequently, religious knowledge on the human level is limited to silence (for the pure mystic) or the use of analogical language. In either case, humans are incapable of using symbols that refer directly and literally to ultimate reality.

Because truth is known only when one finds union with ultimate reality (in ecstatic moments or possibly at physical death), words are at best poetic hints of the divine. The

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[8]James Robson, "Soul," Dictionary of Comparative Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), pp. 587ff.

[9]S. G. F. Brandon, et al., "Sin," Ibid., pp. 578ff.

paradox is acceptable, because eternal truth cannot be put into words, and the absurdity of the divine to the human intellect is illustrated well by the contradictory.[10]

Cherbonnier wrote:

> The pagan world, despite its vaunted humanism, regarded the very conditions of finite existence as a stigma. From Homer to Marcus Aurelius, it was haunted by the refrain, "Better never to have been born." Humility therefore consisted in the acknowledgement of the wretchedness of the human condition.
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> . . .
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> . . . The best known illustration is his [Augustine's] ascribing to citizens of the heavenly city a "love of God to the contempt of self."[11]

Consequently, perennial philosophy in its various forms regards human existence, the very process of living, as alienation and tragedy. Hope is rooted in the expectation of liberation through death, the gateway to union with ultimate reality. Until that union comes, one is able to be sustained by understanding the insignificance of the temporal, maintaining an orientation toward the non-physical, realizing that death will provide liberation of the real self from the physical, and yearning for union with Oneness.

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[10] Steere, "Mysticism," pp. 236ff. Also, Stanley R. Hopper, "Paradox," in A Handbook of Christian Theology, pp. 261ff.

[11] Cherbonnier, "Humility," Dictionary of the Bible, pp. 406-407.

The Mystical Concepts and the Basic Objective

God

It has been shown earlier in this study that the concept of God has implications for a basic objective for religious education.[12] Mystical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, with its concepts of ultimate reality, therefore sets a perspective for the basic objective.

One observer of mysticism and its implications has written:

> . . . mystical theology had always a practical end, a pedagogical purpose; for in tracing the stages of the soul's advance to higher spiritual experiences and to the end of all, union with God, it provided means for a systematic training of the whole spiritual nature.[13]

A central issue is brought to the foreground by this observation. Because union with God is the goal of life for perennial philosophy, the basic objective for religious education is likewise union with God. Mysticism's God, being the whole or the most important aspect of reality (whether interpreted within Oriental or Hebraic scriptures), is both the objective of life and of religious education.

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[12] See pp. 45ff.

[13] "Mysticism and Education," Encyclopedia of Education, ed. by Paul Monroe (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1914), p. 363.

Another clear example of the relationship between a mystical concept of God and a basic objective can be found in Hinduism or Buddhism. Liberation from the physical world, from one's own self, toward the non-physical Brahman or Nirvana is the goal of life and of religious education.[14]

In Platonic philosophy the non-physical realm of Forms or Ideas is ultimate reality. This form of perennial philosophy calls for the realization and appreciation of the Ideas as the goal of the good life. Knowledge of ultimate reality, the recollection of the universal and eternal Ideas known in a previous existence, is the most significant objective of all education.[15] As Brubacher noted, "The educational aims of the philosophers or guardians were naturally the highest since theirs was the duty of guiding the state in the light of the unremitting search for the metaphysically true and good."[16] Though not called "religious education," the orientation of this aspect of education was clearly supernatural, toward the Eternal. In the Republic (Book VII, 540), Socrates says of the guardian: "We shall require them to turn upwards the vision of their souls and fix their gaze on that which

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[14]Lee A. Belford, "Hinduism," Westminster Dictionary, pp. 311ff.; also, Robert H. L. Slater, "Buddhism," Ibid., pp. 66ff.

[15]Alden D. Kelley, "Idealism," Ibid., p. 329.

[16]John S. Brubacher, A History of the Problems of Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1947), p. 4.

sheds light on all. . . ." Thus, the non-physical again influences the basic objective of what can be called "religious" education, if one uses "religious" to refer to the supernatural. Dupuis wrote:

> . . . Plato considered the attainment of happiness, climaxed by final unity with God, to be the ultimate purpose of all human endeavors. Consequently the ultimate purpose of education, taken in its broadest sense, consists of assisting man to achieve this lofty goal.[17]

Within Christianity Augustine's concept of God clearly affects his basic objective for religious education. In this regard, Price wrote, "Augustine's philosophical reflections upon his theory of education stems from his conception of God."[18] In his interpretation, influenced by the classical Greek perspective,[19] Augustine too leans heavily upon a non-physical interpretation of God. Because of his biblical leanings, however, he does ascribe analogically personality to God. In any case, the gulf between the non-physical perfect God and finite sinful man must be overcome by change and sorrow in each person. Price observed further about Augustine: "The ultimate objective of education grows out of the corruption of human nature

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[17]Adrian M. Dupuis, Philosophy of Education in Historical Perspective (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1966), p. 39.

[18]Kingsley Price, "History of Philosophy of Education," Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 6, p. 233.

[19]Frank Thilly, A History of Philosophy (3rd ed. rev. by Lodger Wood; New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1957), p. 177.

and God's concern over it. Like the ultimate objective of the church, that of education is conversion and repentance."[20] Therefore, a mystical concept of God orients the basic objective of religious education toward the non-physical.

The World

Clearly, an implication of a perennial interpretation of ultimate reality and its consequences for the physical world as unreal or less significant leaves little room for worldly matters in religious education. Historical events as pivotal become subordinate symbols at best. Scriptures are utilized as tools toward contemplative wisdom.[21]

This is not to say that mystical interpretations of education ignore the world. Plato concerned himself very much with education for citizenship.[22] Augustine centered his religious educational curriculum upon the Bible.[23] But the basic objective, focusing upon the Union with the Eternal, sets the perspective for matters of the world as secondary.

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[20] Price, "History of Philosophy of Education," p. 232.

[21] Slater, "Buddhism," pp. 66-67.

[22] Dupuis, Philosophy of Education, pp. 39-41.

[23] Edmond L. Brunner, "Augustine," Westminster Dictionary, p. 40.

Human Nature

Because the soul is the primary aspect of man's nature in mystical thought, religious education of this sort implies as a basic guideline the nurture of the soul. One scholar, seeing "ethics" as such nurture, has written:

> The soul approaches God by purification of the heart; for one sees only as he is what he sees. In the case of God, he can know God only as he loves God. Therefore, by ascetic training a man frees himself from the external world and the life of the senses, with its passions and desires. He is trained in virtue, and here mysticism and theological ethics are one. This training differs from the popular ethics in being a preparation of the soul rather than a means of acquiring merit. The soul, thus prepared, by ascetic discipline intelligently directed, and by meditation upon the facts of divine redemption, attains the same result as in the intellectual training, which it must always accompany. In perfect union with God, the soul loves nothing less than God, loves all else than God only as they are seen to be included in the love of God.[24]

Consistent with the emphasis on the non-physical, this interpretation of human nature included reference to the body only as it is to serve the soul. Discipline of the body for the sake of the soul's nurture is a feature. As specifically related to the basic objective, another observer of mysticism has concluded:

> In general, the ultimate aim of monastic education was the same as the ultimate aim of monastic life--the salvation of the individual

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[24] "Mysticism and Education," Monroe (ed.), p. 363.

> soul. The primary idea of monasticism was asceticism, the disciplining of all bodily desires and all human affections and aspirations so that the mind and the soul might be devoted to the interests of the "higher life."[25]

Thus, in perennial philosophy the concept of human nature orients the basic objective of religious education to the soul and only to the body as subordinate, to be disciplined for the sake of the soul.

Religious Knowledge

The soul's salvation is clearly independent of cognitive data, since mystical union is beyond words. Religious education can make use of whatever symbols provide a feeling for the divine. Miller and Williamson have contributed studies to the issue of religious language and have pointed out well the various problems connected with religious knowledge.[26] However, both scholars take for granted the "otherness" of God common to perennial thought. Consequently, little clarity, beyond the continuing confession of the inadequacies of various kinds of language, is offered.

Implied within mystical religion is union with ultimate reality. The basic objective, therefore, is oriented to

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[25]Elmer H. Wilds, The Foundations of Modern Education (New York: Farrar and Rinehart Co., 1942), p. 174.

[26]Miller, Language Gap and God, and Williamson, Language and Concepts in Christian Education.

that experience beyond words that is knowledge itself. Thus, this perspective orients the basic objective toward religious experience, meaning the mystical oneness, as religious knowledge and not toward any type of information as such.

Consequences for Living

The primary value, according to Cherbonnier's interpretation of mystical religion, is liberation. Another word for liberation, as used within this perspective, is "love." An examination of "love" in the perennial sense assists in understanding further the relationship between the axiology of perennial philosophy and a basic objective for religious education.

In an analysis of the perspective which gives meaning to eros, Nygren has written of Plato's philosophy:

> The background is formed . . . by his teaching of the two worlds: above the world of the senses arches the world of eternal ideas, this world which at one time was the home of the human soul before it was bound to the body and with it bound to the prison of the world of senses. The soul, however, retains a memory of its pre-existing mode of being; this is the reason why the soul is conscious of its present misery and is grasped by the longing for a higher world.[27]

Nygren analyzed the eros of Plato in these words:

> The Platonic eros is desiring love. As such it is marked by two elements: the consequences of a

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[27]Anders Nygren, "Eros and Agape," in Handbook of Christian Theology, p. 98.

> present want, and the direction of this want toward the freedom of a higher and more blissful state. The first is the starting point, the latter is the aim. Eros is rightly called a "wanting to have." According to its structure it is egocentric; it circles around its own ego, its needs, and its satisfaction. Its desire is, however, not directed toward the nether world of the senses. Eros is love directed toward the higher regions; it is the longing upward toward the world of ideas, and in relation to the present world it assumes the form of fleeing from the world. But even in its highest and most sublimated form it never abandons its desiring, egocentric direction.[28]

In Aristotle as well, the Platonic notion of love "is given wider reference and applied . . . even to the physical world."[29] Fundamentally, the eros of Aristotle bears the marks of his teacher:

> The whole of existence becomes a continuous Stufenkosmos, in which the lower everywhere strives upwards towards the higher and the whole process of movement converges towards the Divine, which exercises its attraction on the lower while remaining itself unmoved. Everything in existence displays this upward tendency; there is in everything an iradicable longing for likeness to God.[30]

The word used most often in the New Testament for "love" is agape. Nygren claims that "eros and agape signify two principally different orientations of life, two fundamental motives which compete with each other."[31] He posits

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros (London: S.P.C.K., 1957 ed.), p. 183.

[30] Ibid., p. 185.

[31] Nygren, "Eros and Agape," p. 99.

further that "the history of the Christian idea of love is essentially the history of how these two perceptions of love . . . were first joined and then sundered again."[32] Nygren has observed:

> The process of amalgamation is found in its final form in the doctrine of caritas in Augustine. Here neo-Platonic perceptions of eros and New Testament perceptions of agape have undergone a peculiar union. Love is, according to Augustine, an elemental human drive. It is founded upon the essence of man which is always to desire, to seek his bonum. If he directs his desires towards perishable, temporal things, desire takes on the character of cupiditas, that is, false love. If man directs his desires upward and thus seeks his satisfaction in God and in the eternal, desire is called caritas--that is, the right kind of love, because only in higher things can man really find satisfaction for his needs. God is at the same time "the highest good and the good which cannot be lost." Thus the love directed toward God becomes the right kind of self-love. If Augustine moves entirely on neo-Platonic grounds, the element of Christian agape in his thought emerges in such a way that caritas can occur only through the fact that God descended to us in Christ and became humanly accessible to us.[33]

As seen through the foregoing analysis, Augustine's essentially Platonic perspective minimizes any major distinction between eros and agape (caritas). The significant difference seems to occur because of the "personal" nature of ultimate reality as revealed through the Christ; that is, caritas is different from eros in that it is mediated through Jesus Christ. Both concepts of love seem to encompass the characteristics of love in its Platonic form.

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

Aquinas "starts from the same point and goes a good deal of the way with Augustine," wrote Nygren, who goes on to say:

> For Thomas, as for Augustine, all love is fundamentally acquisitive love; love corresponds to the acquisitive will, and this latter to the natural quest for happiness. As surely as everyone loves himself and wants his own happiness so surely must everyone be exposed, by nature and in accordance with reason, to love God above all things. Self-love properly understood must drive us to love God who, as the highest good, includes all that concerns our happiness. The reason why we love God at all is that we need Him as our bonum; indeed, Thomas does not hesitate to say: "Assuming what is impossible, that God was not man's bonum, then there would be no reason for man to love him." He agrees with Augustine, that whoever does not love God does not understand how rightly to love himself . . . . The good know that the chief part of their nature is reason (ratio) and that this finds full satisfaction only in the blessed contemplation of God (visio Dei). The bad, on the other hand, live in the error that the body and the senses are the chief parts of their nature, and by this they evaluate things, by this the direction of their love is determined.[34]

Nygren concluded that "all the above is in closest agreement with Augustine." And, since Augustine seems to coincide so closely with eros in the Platonic sense, it would seem fair to conclude that this perennial conception of love is "marked by two elements: the consequences of a present want, and the direction of this want toward the freedom of a higher and more blissful state." This love is egocentric, directed out of the world of senses toward the "wholly other"

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[34]Nygren, Agape and Eros, pp. 624ff.

Divine, and "assumes the form of fleeing from the world." Only a unique "personal" quality of the love seems to differentiate the Christian from the Greek conception. Since the Augustinian-Thomistic notion finds its real distinctive meaning as it is mediated through the Christ, one could regard their interpretation as "eros incarnate."

In The Art of Loving, Fromm writes of love in these words:

> . . . mature love is the condition of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality. Love is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellow man, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, yet it permits him to be himself, to retain his integrity. In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two . . . . the active power of love can be described by stating that love is primarily giving, not receiving.[35]

At first glance this type of love seems to be quite different from eros. However, in an analysis of Fromm's basic perspective, which gives real meaning to his words, it can be concluded differently. Some insight may be had of the scholar's world-view by an examination of some key statements, such as the following:

> . . . [man] has transcended nature--although he never leaves it; he is a part of it, he cannot return to it; once thrown out of paradise--a state of original oneness with nature--cherubim

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[35]Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper, 1956), pp. 21ff.

> with flaming swords block his way, if he should try to return. . . . all this makes his separate, disunited existence an unbearable prison.
>
> Man--of all ages and cultures--is confronted with the solution of one and the same question: the question of how to overcome separateness, how to achieve union, how to transcend one's own individual life and find atonement.[36]

The concept of man, as implied in Fromm's writing, is reminiscent of certain mystical characteristics. Man is wholly involved in the natural processes, but is somehow transcendent over nature. His individuality confronts him with the unpleasant reality of being separate from that with which he is involved. It is love which helps man experience oneness, to overcome separateness. The type of love suggests an erotic tendency in which one yearns for oneness because of a lacking in his individual nature.

Traditional interpretations and understanding of "love" analyzed here are consistent with the perennial perspective. In other words, most ideas of "love" are variations on eros, variations entertained by great pillars of thought such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Fromm.

Cherbonnier has not focused his attention on an interpretation of love within a mystical perspective. Rather, as reported in our analysis of Cherbonnier's treatment of mystical or perennial consequences for living, the entire orientation

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[36] Ibid., pp. 7ff.

points to an otherworldliness, a tragic sense of this life, egocentricity, and resignation to finitude (at least for the time being). However, in a seminar offered by Cherbonnier at Trinity College during the 1958-1959 academic year, the nature of love within mystical and biblical perspectives was the topic.[37] That eros is a way of capsuling consequences for living in mystical religion, or perennial values, for Cherbonnier became evident. With reference to the self-centered style of love as foreign to biblical thinking, Cherbonnier wrote some years later: "Whatever else the word 'love' may mean, it surely means that the idea of a solitary goodness is a contradiction in terms."[38] Variations on eros consist of what biblical love is not; for an understanding of mystical types of love in Cherbonnier's terms, it is necessary to refer to characteristics of non-biblical values, love, or commitments.[39] These characteristics fit well within the interpretations of love proposed by Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Fromm, as discussed above.

That an interpretation of love is directly related to a basic objective of religious education is implied clearly

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[37] The Trinity College Catalogue, 1958-59, p. 89.

[38] Cherbonnier, "Self-Centeredness," a letter to the Editor, The Trinity Tripod (November 10, 1964), p. 6.

[39] See Chapter V of Hardness of Heart for an analysis of Christian love and mystical values.

by Tillich. Noting the necessity of accepting persons as persons in creative love as the way for the community to grow, he wrote: "A community which has grown in this way is a triumph of creative love and is the aim of all education."[40] Tillich's awareness of love as the highest value supports the contention that one's interpretation of love is an integral part of a philosophy that sets the perspective for the basic objective of religious education.

Therefore, eros as the perennial type of love, the axiological orientation for mystical religion, has a direct bearing on the basic objective. Because, as reported above, "one's relationship to God or Christ as the highest good was found to affect directly the goals of religious education . . .," the nature of this relationship as a kind of love requires careful examination. Eros, reflecting a mystical relationship, implies a supernatural, non-physical axiological base for a basic objective. Such an orientation is consistent with the non-physical direction of the previously examined ingredients of mystical religion, but yet applies this world-view to both the intellect and the emotions of the person. It illustrates further that a basic objective for mystically oriented religious education must emphasize the ontological "Other" in one's heart as well as mind.

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[40]Paul Tillich, "Creative Love in Education," World Christian Education (Second Quarter, 1949), p. 27.

Summary

The significance of Cherbonnier's interpretation of mystical religion or perennial philosophy for a basic objective of religious education is as follows:

1. Reality is, depending upon the school of thought within mysticism, only or most significantly, the non-physical; a transcendent God, conceived analogically as personal, or no god may be within this perspective. Consequently, the basic objective acquires meaning within a non-physical monism or a metaphysical dualism.

2. The temporal world, including the visible and the invisible, is either unreal or a transient reality: consequently, the basic objective is oriented to the eternal, non-physically conceived.

3. Man consists of a body and soul, the latter of which yearns for liberation from the world and union with the divine; consequently, the basic objective looks toward life after death in some form as central.

4. Scriptures are at best analogical interpretations of the relations between the infinite and the finite. The most accurate religious knowledge is union with ultimate reality; consequently, verbal materials are secondary to actual experiences of the divine and the basic objective must focus on such mystical experiences.

5. The primary value is an orientation to the non-physical, exemplified in *eros*. Consequently, nurture in some form of *eros*, even *caritas*, is significant for a basic objective.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BIBLICAL RELIGION FOR A BASIC OBJECTIVE

A Synoptic View of Biblical Religion

With the assumption that reality is found exclusively in the natural order, biblical religion interprets deity as a personal agent. For Cherbonnier, the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities are to be interpreted within this perspective, in order to understand truly their common heritage. Sharing this position on God is Kirkpatrick, who wrote: "God in our argument is conceived as a being beside other beings. He is a being who shares the general characteristics of all personal beings."[1] With him is Dilley, who noted:

> The categories which come to the fore in this interpretation of God's nature are person and the various qualities essential to personality, namely metaphysical separation from other persons (yes, God is a being alongside other beings, although their creator), mind, emotions, and the ability to act. God is literally related to his creation, affecting and being affected by it, is literally involved in space and time, literally suffers and literally intervenes in the historical order to bring about the accomplishment of his purposes so far as he can. God is a free, personal being with

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[1]Kirkpatrick, "Idea of God," p. 166.

> various super powers. . . . God has all the essentials which constitute personality.[2]

Contrary to the non-physical dimension of mystical religion, biblical religion is grounded in the physical (the visible and the invisible) with a God who acts. The primary distinction between atheistic naturalism and biblical naturalism is then not by the latter's appeal to anything or anyone supernatural, but by the latter's assumption that the physical is most adequately interpreted within a theistic perspective and commitment. In this sense, the common positions of the atheistic and biblical naturalists with regard to their physical monism bind them together more harmoniously in a philosophic sense, than would the conflicting ontologies of perennial philosophies and any form of naturalism. This implies a greater kinship between physical scientist and biblical theologian than between the latter and any classic Hindu or Buddhist philosopher!

Finite reality is sole reality, created by God. Though the process of creation is a scientific mystery, both the ex nihilo explanation held by Cherbonnier and the bringing-order-out-of-existing-chaos interpretation view God and world as compatibly existing in time and space. Because the biblical God is the Creator and His will is sovereign, history is not

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[2]Frank Dilley, "'Is Myth Indispensable?'", The Monist, L (1966), p. 589.

without purpose. Presided over by a Creator who confers freedom on His creatures, historical events have the overarching purpose of conforming to God's will of love. Though capable of frustrating the immediate goals of the Creator, a capacity which could be recalled, participants are--knowingly or not, willingly or not--under His ultimate sovereignty.

Each person is a unique child of God with the capacity to choose allegiance to the biblical God or an idol. Man's existence begins in the physical world as a visible person of a basically good body and soul, conceived as "flesh-animated-by-soul, the whole conceived as a psychophysical unity."[3] The total personality, minus the flesh after death, may continue normally invisible for all time, but yet physical (hence, the term "resurrection of the body").[4] The fulfillment of personality requires love, agape.[5]

Though one might construct a priori a theistic naturalism, biblical religion rests primarily upon a posteriori knowledge of God, His participation in the world. Religious knowledge is conditional upon God's choice to reveal Himself, particularly His intentions, purposes, or will through specific acts. Hence, revelation is a key motif in biblical thinking.

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[3]Robert McAfee Brown, "Soul (Body)," Handbook of Christian Theology, p. 355. Also, Cherbonnier, "Judaeo-Christian Sources," pp. 14f.

[4]Robert McAfee Brown, "Immortality," Handbook of Christian Theology, p. 184. Also Cherbonnier, ibid.

[5]Cherbonnier, Hardness of Heart, p. 188.

Revelation or "God's word" is communicated through literal language as well as myth. Through an encounter such as Abraham or Moses had, through prophesied outcomes of national idolatry, and through myths such as the Adam and Eve stories, God's will and relations with mankind are revealed but not always recognized by His community. Unlike the mystical experience of achieving Oneness with the Other through profound meditation, the biblical encounter with God, however communicated and portrayed, must await His initiative. The clarity of interpretation by man is dependent upon the right alignment of man's heart, not merely a sharpness of his intellect.

It is clear in Cherbonnier's writing that love, agape, is the basis for a biblical axiology. This kind of love is truly liberating: " . . . to live truly is to live in a relation of agape with one's fellows."[6] This kind of love, however, stands in direct opposition to its mystical counterpart eros.

Consequently, life within biblical religion regards human existence as an opportunity to live in agape. Though many persons, if not most, will choose to become idolatrous and others will know nothing but false gods, there is always hope that God's purpose for mankind, His intention of agape

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[6]Cherbonnier, Hardness of Heart, p. 48.

for all peoples, will become real. In the meantime, those persons choosing God's will as their life orientation will be fulfilled with the agape they experience, though they will struggle with their own lapses into idolatry and its consequences. Finally, there is the conviction that the true God is sovereign, regardless of the corporate condition of mankind at any given moment, and that forgiveness is available when agape is truly sought.

The Biblical Concepts and the Basic Objective

God

Unlike the ontological Other of the mystical religions, biblical religion seeks not essential union with divinity, but a relationship of agape. Man, while in the flesh or after death, does not seek absorption within God's being or a static presence with ultimate reality. Rather, each person has a goal of a love relationship not only with God, but also with his fellows.

Capturing this notion is Miller, who wrote concerning "relationship theology":

> It puts the primary emphasis on personal relations on both the human and the divine levels. . . . The goals of such an educational process are in terms of discernment and commitment. Teaching begins with the genuine concerns of the learner and the content of Christian teaching becomes a guide to living as a Christian in the world.[7]

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[7]Randolph C. Miller, "Relationship Theology," in The Westminster Dictionary, pp. 564f.

Because God is a being beside other beings, the basic objective of religious education within this perspective is relational. God is not ontologically other, so that He is not foreign to space and time, but compatible with the temporal. Consequently, God is not in a "perfect" realm, while man is cut off ontologically in evil finitude. Quite the opposite: though only God is God, man shares the very same realm with God. Thus, a biblical concept of God orients the basic objective toward a relationship with a personal Being who is sovereign creator and participant wholly in space and time.

The World

An implication of the biblical interpretation of the world, as proposed by Cherbonnier, is the significance and basic goodness of creation. Worldly matters, especially the actions of persons, are primary ingredients of reality. The truths of the Scriptures, whether clothed in mythological stories or recorded as actual events, are pivotal. Though man may not comprehend those events he labels disasters or evil, the biblical world is a creation of God that God calls good.

The basic objective, therefore, is oriented to the good, physical, temporal world in which God and man interact. Such an orientation is opposite to mystical religion, even in its Christianized forms, that calls for man either to flee

from the world or simply put up with its misery until death.

Human Nature

Because man is an organic unity, the whole person is the concern of religious education. Because he is basically good (though often jaded by inheritance and/or choice), it is not his very nature that needs changing, but rather his heart softened with agape. In this context, Miller has written:

> We live in community and experience loneliness, anxiety and sin. Loneliness and anxiety may or may not be the result of responsible moral action in relation to persons, but sin is seen as a free choice that separates us from God and from our fellows. But the result of sin is such that we remain in this broken relationship unless, by the grace of God, we are empowered by God, working either directly or through others, to heal this broken relationship.[8]

Implied for a basic objective is an orientation to the whole person, not just his soul, with a view toward the realization of agape in his life. Here Munro's words on nurture are helpful:

> Nurture means providing the conditions and resources that facilitate and promote the growth of any creature endowed with the capacity and tendency to grow. . . . The term "nurture" applied to the religious life usually implies a theological interpretation of human nature.[9]

Within Cherbonnier's biblically-based interpretation of human nature and the centrality of agape to human

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[8] Ibid., p. 564.

[9] Harry C. Munro, "Nurture," Westminster Dictionary, p. 471.

fulfillment, it is evident that the nurture of persons in agape is vital to a basic objective for religious education.

Religious Knowledge

"Revelation is God's activity."[10] The Christian community has authorized certain writings as canonical records of this activity. Though problems of interpretation are many and scholars differ radically in their approaches to and conclusions about the Bible, as do other possible authorities for understanding God's activity (e.g., the Papacy), Christian communities hold the Bible as normative for their members.

Because, according to Cherbonnier, revelation or religious knowledge can be captured literally in words, the data of God's activity are available to persons. Silence, human fellowship focusing upon man-to-man encounters, contemporary writings, and the contemplation of nature all fail to convey pivotal acts in God's activity. Instead, a focus of religious education is upon those events recognized by the biblical community and so canonized. Only with those events, the disclosures of God to man, is one able to attempt an interpretation of one's contemporary scene, his relations with others, the writings of his day, and nature itself. Therefore, any basic objective of religious education within

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[10]John E. Burkhart, "Revelation," Ibid., p. 572.

this perspective must take seriously the central place of the Bible as the primary source for religious knowledge.

Consequences for Living

The primary value of biblical religion, according to Cherbonnier, is love. Contrary to the liberation of mystical religion, true liberation is found through loving relationships. As he wrote, "The way to preserve and enhance human freedom is to love and be loved."[11]

Unlike *eros*, however, biblical love or *agape* affirms individuality in the world. Characteristics of *agape*, in his understanding, are illuminated by the following passages:

> If Biblical perfection has appeared to some as unattainable in this life, the explanation may lie in still another connotation imported from non-Biblical sources. Outside Biblical thought, it is nearly universally agreed that the highest perfection is completely sufficient unto itself. Since the Bible emphatically denies that a man can gain perfection by himself alone, it might seem to suggest an intrinsic weakness of human nature. The Bible's aim, however, is not to disparage human nature, but to redefine perfection. Biblical perfection is the opposite of self-sufficiency. It consists in a special kind of relationship between man and man, and between men and God, translated, for want of a better word, as "love."[12]

> It [*agape*] is not a unilateral relation but a reciprocal one; not something which I radiate in sublime independence of my neighbor but rather a relation of a certain quality between myself and

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[11] Cherbonnier, "Liberty," *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 583.

[12] Cherbonnier, "Perfection," *Ibid.*, p. 750.

> him. Where there is only one person there can be no agape.[13]

Love "fosters trust and respect"; "laws are subordinate--useful rules of thumb, but never absolute."[14] Its centrality is highlighted in these words: " . . . the purpose of life is that everyone should love you as much as he loves himself."[15]

Within the Hebraic naturalism proposed by Cherbonnier, therefore, agape in contrast to eros is a mutual relation between persons (including God) sharing time and space; it is the primary value for life.

Cherbonnier's interpretation of some implications of agape have not gone unrecognized. In a classic study in contemporary ethics, Fletcher refers to Cherbonnier's lecture, "Can There Be Morality without Rules," as an illustration of the use of rules as guides subordinate to love.[16] Pruyser cites Cherbonnier's recognition of certain idols as shifts from the proper concerns of normal religious persons.[17]

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[13]Cherbonnier, Hardness of Heart, p. 52.

[14]Cherbonnier, "Judaeo-Christian Sources," p. 20.

[15]Cherbonnier, "Can There Be Morality without Rules?" (mimeographed address from "The Senate Lecture Series" of Trinity College, delivered on December 14, 1964).

[16]Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 28.

[17]Paul W. Pruyser, "Some Trends in the Psychology of Religion," in The Psychology of Religion, ed. Orlo Strunk, Jr. (Nashville and New York: The Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 112.

Commenting on the same problems, Menninger wrote:

> Cherbonnier in his beautiful essay, Hardness of Heart, describes the forms of idolatry indulged in by the hardhearted. He lists the hidden gods of cynicism as nationalism, humanism, phallicism, promiscuity, the glorification of money, and the various euphemisms such as frugality, shrewdness, and sound economy. Cherbonnier also lists iconoclasm, existentialist despair, and a so-called state of "adjustment" and "relatedness" toward which some psychiatrists are believed to steer their patients.[18]

The concept of love, as noted earlier, is vital to a basic objective of religious education because of the focal point on relations with God and man as the highest good or value and the implications axiology has for the basic objective. Unexamined, the relations spoken of can be interpreted as a variation on eros or agape. Cherbonnier's agape implies a naturalistic, physical, theistic axiological base for a basic objective, different from the perspective of eros.

Summary

The significance of Cherbonnier's interpretation of biblical religion for a basic objective of religious education is as follows:

1. Reality consists of the physical world with a personal God compatible with the world as sovereign participant; consequently, the basic objective is within a theistic naturalism.

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[18]Karl Menninger, The Vital Balance (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), p. 375.

2. The temporal world, including the visible and invisible, is the good creation of God in which historical events are important; consequently, the basic objective must take into account the "here and now" positively and seriously.

3. Man is a part of the natural order with the capacity for agape, indeed the basic need for this kind of love; consequently, the basic objective must recognize that the nurture of persons in agape is central.

4. The Bible is a record of God's relations with man during a portion of man's history; consequently, the basic objective within biblical religion looks to this canonical literature as the primary source for interpreting religious knowledge, of receiving the revelation of God's will of agape.

5. The value that is primary for biblical religion is agape, the quality of mutual concern between persons, including God; consequently, nurture in this kind of love is significant for a basic objective.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

While avoiding a relativism that regards more than one philosophy as equally and ultimately true, this study has shown that a philosophic position is, in Dilley's words, a "confession of faith," or, to use Hare's term, a "blik." The adequacy of a philosophy can be judged according to its own canons and its ability to account for the totality of experience.

The model a given philosopher might choose to build a philosophy upon is likewise not a task of raw objectivity. Rather, he may select suitable categories and concepts that deal with the vast range of human experience. In this study the model used by Butler has been helpful, because it satisfies the basic standard of comprehensiveness and, further, with some variation in terminology but not in substance, Cherbonnier's religious thought is compatible.

In the development of a basic objective for religious education, recognized as a primary issue in religious education theory and practice, it has been argued that a philosophical orientation (the consideration of epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology) is essential and consequential.

This investigation has shown that Cherbonnier's writings sort out what he claims to be the two basic philosophies, mystical religion (or perennial philosophy) and biblical religion. That perennial philosophy has influenced many Western systems of thought is supported by Huxley and further extended to education by Dupuis, who wrote:

> Even though many of Plato's philosophical beliefs are not held by all conservatives, the educational theory and practices which they suggested became part of the warp and woof of Roman and early Christian education, the education of the Renaissance, and post-Renaissance eras as well as that of modern Europe and to some extent of America. The Platonic influence can be noted more or less directly in the following philosophical and educational beliefs. The major emphasis is placed on intellectual and/or spiritual goals . . . .[1]

That such perennial thought is at the heart of the Asian ideology is maintained by Cherbonnier, and its intrusion into biblical thought is a logical error.

Though Cherbonnier's loyalty is with the biblical, his explanation of this allegiance has not been the strong point of his analysis thus far. He is convinced that the biblical is true and the mystical is false, and that the former can be empirically supported. However, as Dilley pointed out, what is a supporting fact for Cherbonnier is not factual for a mystic. The canons he would use for

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[1]Dupuis, Philosophy of Education, p. 72.

testing the truth of a statement are unacceptable to the pure mystic.

However, Cherbonnier's analytical interpretation of mystical religion and biblical religion has been heralded by some recognized scholars cited in this study. The significance of his analysis rests both in the greater clarity of religious concepts and their implications; for example, for the basic objective for religious education.

In his essay, "Naturalism," Browning commented on "naturalistic theism."[2] The attempts of Wieman and others to view God within a naturalistic perspective reduces God to less than a personal being, and Browning has found no alternative. In Cherbonnier's thought, however, a biblical naturalism with a very personal being as God is at the heart. Clearly this is a significant departure from what has been offered thus far by philosophers of religion. Further, in an empirical age, the God of biblical religion as presented by Cherbonnier maintains both the awesome sovereignty of mystically based theologies and the reality of a temporal agent.

With the clarity offered by Cherbonnier's distinctions between mystical and biblical concepts, the philosopher as well as the lay person has a greater understanding of the choices

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[2] Robert W. Browning, "Naturalism," Westminster Dictionary, pp. 455f.

open to him, both intellectual and personal. The impact upon one philosopher is captured in his own words:

> It is difficult to write about someone's influence, what sort it was and how it occurred. When I went to Union it was as a student who was very good at assimilating the thoughts of others, but weak in critical analysis of problems. Dr. Cherbonnier "turned me on." I was ready to respond favorably to smashing attacks on muddy and inconsistent thinking, and in the two classes I had with Ed this is precisely what I got. His ability to demolish the classical synthesis because of its inconsistencies was impressive and I am still persuaded of the rightness of his claims about Platonism. What he was saying and what I was learning in biblical studies and from neo-orthodoxy all fit together exceedingly well.
>
> What has not stuck with me is his certitude about the viability of a biblical metaphysics. His claim is that this is the only view which can be responsibly defended, the only intellectual path free from inconsistency. He sees other positions as flat-out refutable and I think this is incorrect as my own book argues.[3]

This study sought to show that Cherbonnier's significance for a basic objective for religious education is with his distinctions between mystical and biblical perspectives and their respective implications for a basic objective. Though it is not the task of this investigation to develop a basic objective, it is clear that within a Christian perspective, the wording of a basic objective will focus upon relations between God and man and between man and his neighbor. If, for example, one were to propose that the basic objective of

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[3]Letter to the author from Frank B. Dilley, August 6, 1968.

religious education is to nurture persons in "their growing relationship to God in Christ so to live that they may glorify him and effectively serve others, in the assurance that they partake of eternal life now and forever,"[4] the real meaning of this statement will depend upon the philosophic context intended. What kind of relationship--*eros* (*caritas*) or *agape*? What kind of God--an ontological Other (analogically "personal") or a Sovereign Agent? What kind of life--one with a hope for release or a joy-filled present? What kind of glorification--solitary meditation or in assembled congregation of repentent celebration? What kind of eternal life--absorption into Oneness or personal fellowship with God and others? The philosophic and theological clarity with which one understands such a basic objective will shape the curriculum and methods employed.

Further studies in the implications of the philosophical distinctions Cherbonnier posits are possible and needed. A researcher might well investigate the Christological problem (the possible influences of perennial philosophy upon traditional formulations as contrasted to the Christ within biblical religion) and its consequences for a basic objective. In addition, implications of mystical religion as contrasted

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[4]Iris V. Cully, *The Dynamics of Christian Education*, pp. 29f.

to biblical religion for matters of curriculum and teaching methods would extend the significance of Cherbonnier's religious thought for religious education theory and practice.

This study has proposed that the answers to these questions are not merely for idle enjoyment of theorists, philosophical or educational; rather, the answers are pivotal for the development of a philosophy of religious education and its practice. Cherbonnier has offered in his religious thought clarifying distinctions, so that philosopher, theologian, and religious educator can understand more clearly available perspectives for nurture.

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