THE MEANING OF GOD IN RELIGIOUS THINKING

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IN A recent article published in this journal, attention was called to the analysis of religion into three elements: Function, Reinterpretation, and Techniques. It was stated in conclusion that the problematic aspect of this analysis was reinterpretation. All religions presumably have some function or they would not continue to hold human interest. Likewise, all religions include some form of overt behavior or motor responses, or what we call techniques. But there is some question whether or not all acknowledged religions include God-concepts or their functional equivalents. It is believed by some that religious persons may dispense with God, and do so with profit to themselves and to others. This, then, is the question before us: Is the concept God, or its functional equivalent, an essential factor in religious experience.

I

It will doubtless be granted that when primitive man dealt with mana, he was engaged with the early beginnings of divinity. Mana, according to the Melanesians studied by R. H. Codrington, denoted a non-human physical power or influence of unusual nature which conditioned human existence, and which had to be given serious consideration if one wished to remain safe and achieve power. It was essentially extra-natural and resided in or was associated with personal beings of some type.[1] According to E. Durkheim, whose conclusions are based primarily upon his studies of Australian life, the term mana denoted every power which affected man and with which he had to live.[2] Paul Radin, after distinguishing the view of the priest-thinker from that of the laymen among primitives, considers mana to be a potency, in some men and in the gods, which can produce various effects.[3] S. A. Cook suggests that "the widespread conception of Mana emphasizes the fact that man's attention is commonly directed first to the strange, mysterious, and abnormal phenomena; a cause is demanded primarily for them, and only later, as it seems, for those more regular, but vital or impressive."[4] Mana, then, is the term used in primitive or savage civilizations to designate certain powers or influences believed to be more or less mysterious and quite potent. As such, they conditioned human living, and if one were to remain safe and become successful, he must appropriate them cautiously.

When one moves to higher cultural levels, he discovers that the gods are normally personifications or individuations of natural powers, or what we may consider natural powers. Thus Jupiter was the ancient Roman god of the sky — the light-giver and the rain-giver. Tellus Mater was the ancient earth-goddess, that is, the fecund and productive earth individuated and perhaps personified. In the ancient Roman and Greek worlds, every significant phase of human life to which ignorance and lack of skill proved menacing, was either individuated and deified, or was related closely to some individuated and deified aspect of the environment. God, or the gods, for the ancient Greeks

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1 Marett, R. R., "Mana" ERE, VIII, 375 ff.

2 Durkheim, E., *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Eng. translation by Joseph W. Swain, London and New York, 1915, pp. 192ff.

3 *Primitive Religion: Its Nature and Origin.* New York, 1937, pp. 12 ff.

4 Cf. Cook's additional notes to Smith, W. R., *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 3rd ed., New York, 1927, p. 553.

and Romans, were deified powers or phases of the world about them.[5]

As one contemplates the emergence of belief in gods among primitive or savage peoples, and traces the process into more highly developed areas such as ancient Greece and Rome, the following hypothesis concerning the nature of God appears to be worthy of consideration: The concept God designates that character, aspect, phase, or behavior of one's environing medium to which man appeals or upon which he depends for religious values. More specifically, God is the religious name for the dominant phase, or the controlling power in reality as a whole, the power to which we submit ourselves, with which we ally ourselves, or with which we identify ourselves in our search for religious values. God is, to use James Bissett Pratt's interesting phrase, "the Determiner of Destiny."

II

When one examines contemporary discussions of God, he discovers that this hypothesis finds much support. We shall begin with a form of theism which was rather widely held by Protestant thinkers in the United States. This form, popularly known as "Personalistic Theism,"[6] may be defined as that specific type of philosophy of religion which uses the concept **person** as its organizing principle; which conceives God to be essentially personal who not only transcends the world as its creator and sustainer, but who also dwells within it as its guide and energizer in the development of ideal persons in an ideal society.

Theistic personalism was introduced and popularized in the United States toward the close of the nineteenth century by two men, Borden Parker Bowne and George Trumbull Ladd. Bowne approached the problem of God through epistemology or theory of knowledge. He believed it was impossible to understand the world about him so long as he confined himself to the categories of this world. This led him to approach the world of experience from two divergent points of view: first, from the viewpoint of the uniformities of coexistence and sequence which make up the natural order, as does the scientist; secondly, from the point of view of nature's final casualty or purpose, as does the philosopher. According to Bowne, almost every problem connected with the world as viewed by the scientist leaves one either in contradiction or confusion. He found no solution to such problems as the relation of permanence and change, of unity and patricularity, of casualty, or even of the nature of a given "thing" such as the scientist examines, so long as one remains in the phenomenal realm. Only when these questions were raised to the ontological level, to the level of Being, could one obtain an answer which left him with "clear notions."[7] Furthermore, on the ontological level, the only metaphysical system which left him with "clear notions" was that

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5 The Roman religion has not been studied as widely as some of the other ancient religions. Its influence upon Christianity has been given much less consideration than other religions of the time. It is probably true that more careful research in this area will mean some serious revision at this point. The following books provide an excellent introduction to the field: Bailey, C., *Phases in the Religion of Ancient Rome*, Berkeley, 1932; Fowler, W. W., *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, London, 1911; Altheim, F., *A History of Roman Religion*, Eng. trans. H. Mattingly, New York, 1937; Rose, H. J., *Primitive Culture in Italy*, New York, 1926.

6 Cf. Knudson, A. C., *The Philosophy of Personalism*, New York and Cincinnati, 1927, p. 62.

7 Cf. Cunningham, G. Watts, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, New York and London, 1933, pp. 315 ff. for a sympathetic discussion of this phase of Bowne's thought. Edgar S. Brightman, in his recently published *Nature and Values*, New York and Cincinnati, 1945, approaches this problem much as Bowne did years ago.

in which Being was conceived as active and personal. So Bowne concluded that "a world of persons with a Supreme Person at the head is the conception to which we come as a result of our critical reflections."[8]

It is evident that the conception of God which Bowne reached as a result of his critical reflections was quite different from that which he had learned in his childhood. In fact, it was so different that he was subjected to trial for heresy in 1904, six years before he died. This means that the conception of God which he finally accepted was a product, not so much of his religious experience as it was of his critical reflections, that is, of his philosophy. His mature conception of God emerged in his thinking, based of course upon previous study of philosophical systems, as he sought for a satisfactory understanding of the world in which he lived. He was not satisfied with the scientific theories concerning man and nature offered him as philosophy by Herbert Spencer and others. He was convinced that an intelligible or clear view of reality was impossible so long as one remained in the realm of the phenomenal. It was only as he lifted his thought to the ground of the phenomenal, to the realm of final causes, that he arrived at "clear notions."

The word "phenomenal" was very important in the thinking of the late founder of Personalism, and must be examined carefully if one is to understand his thinking. According to the Idealistic tradition, to which Bowne adhered, the world is always the world-as-experienced, never the world-in-itself. Furthermore, objects enter the cognitive experience of persons by means of an active rather than a passive process. This active and creative character of the cognitive process changes the objects-as-they-are-in-themselves into objects-as-experienced. And this is more than a verbal difference, as the following example will show. In one of his latest books, Bowne used the figure of a symphony to prove that the perceptible world was phenomenal. A symphony, according to Bowne, consists of sound-waves of various length integrated in a specific manner. If these sounds were played by an automatic phonograph in the absence of all rational or appreciative beings, they would have no meaning. They achieve meaning only when an audience hears them and, by means of the creative activity of its rational and aesthetic processes, understands and appreciates what the composer, the conductor and the performers are seeking to convey to them. Thus a symphony is phenomenal in that it achieves meaningful reality only in the experience of persons.[9]

Bowne believed that every object of our experience belonged to the same phenomenal category. Space and time become articulate and intelligible only when viewed in relation to personal experience. Bowne used the terms articulate and intelligible as tests of reality. The term "articulate" means, among other things, joined. Today we should say "organic" rather than articulate, but the meaning is not essentially different. "Intelligible" as used by Bowne, meant perceivable or comprehensible by rational beings. The physical universe, viewed apart from a personal creator and personal experients, was neither articulate nor intelligible. It was only as part of the experience of God as Supreme Person and men as finite persons that it had meaningful existence. The world was thus dependent upon divine and human experience for its being. When Bowne spoke of it as "phenomenal" he

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[8] Bowne, B. P., *Personalism,* Boston and New York, 1908, pp. 277f.

[9] Bowne, *Personalism,* pp. 113 ff.

meant precisely this.[10] And in his thinking, that which may become articulate and intelligible in the experience of persons must itself be the product of the activity of some other intelligible Person, namely, God.[11]

Disregarding for the present the logic involved in Bowne's reasoning to this point, it is evident that God was for him a necessary Being whose reality was required if one was to achieve a rational explanation of the world-as-experienced. From this he developed his conception of the specific nature of God by means of an analysis of man's religious needs.[12] God was for him the religious name of the Reality required by the demands of man's rational and religious nature. He was unpicturable and unperceivable; nevertheless, He was the most important factor in all reality.

The same process may be observed in the thinking of a group which is theologically poles removed from Personalistic Theism. I refer to the leaders of what we shall call Ecclesiastical Humanism in the United States. This name is proposed for two reasons. In the first place, the term Humanism has at least three different meanings. This makes it non-designative when used without modification. Secondly, the men who belong to this school of thought are church-centered in their interest. They believe that the present type of religious behavior is socially inutile, and that they are obligated to do what they can to capture the church and use it more directly for ethico-social purposes. Thus the name, ecclesiastical Humanism, would appear to be appropriate.

The distinctive feature of this movement is the tendency to shear religion of its metaphysical elements and to subsume it under an ethico-social idealism. By the metaphysical elements we mean those which cluster about the God-concept. The ecclesiastical Humanists profess themselves unable either to find grounds for belief in God or for the necessity of such belief. They are convinced that it is socially useful to drop the search for God altogether, at least for the present.[13]

This conclusion is the result of an attempt to find some factual basis for the constellation of beliefs which they insist religion requires. In his "Preface to Morals," Mr. Lippmann has summarized very well the structure of traditional theology. Its main tenet was belief in the existence of an omnipotent God who created and controls the earth. The Divine Creator likewise created men and planned careers in time for them. Furthermore, men were required to fulfill the plans which God had made for them. Knowledge of His plans was given in divine and final revelation. The Catholic found this revelation in the church; the Lutheran in the Scriptures; recent Ritschlians found it in the mind of Christ, whom they

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[10] The meaning which Bowne attributed to phenomenal must not be confused with the terminology of a recent school founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and based, in part, upon the prior work of Franz Brentano (1838-1907). The phenomenological school here referred to is interested in epistemology rather than ontology, which was Bowne's primary concern at this point. Those who are interested in the phenomenological school may consult Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology,* translated by W. R. Boyce Gibson, New York, 1931. The school publishes a quarterly journal, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* which may be ordered through The University of Buffalo, Buffalo, New York, for $4.00 a year.

[11] *Personalism,* pp. 118 ff.

[12] Cf. his *Studies in Christianity,* Boston and New York, and *The Divine Immanence.*

[13] There are many who are in general agreement with the movement as defined above. The better-known books include the following: Auer, J. A. C. F., *Humanism States Its Case,* Boston: The Beacon Press, Inc., 1933; Haydon, A. E., *The Quest of the Ages,* New York and London, 1929; Smith, T. V., *The Philosophic Way of Life,* Chicago, 1929; Lippmann, W., *A Preface to Morals,* New York, 1929; and the contributors to *The Humanist.*

believed had the value of God to men. The apparent difficulties which people found in this scheme were met with two types of argument. In the first place, if one found difficulty in believing this complex ideology, this unbelief was attributed to lack of faith, and this lack of faith was attributed either to immorality or neglect of the means of grace — church attendance, prayer, Scripture reading, tithing or other prescribed forms of worship both public and private. The second argument was that man was not made for happiness, at least, not here upon earth. He was meant for service and sacrifice. If one is faithful and obedient here, God will reward him in the hereafter.[14]

When Lippmann viewed this conception of God and human destiny in the light of historical research and present scientific information concerning man and the cosmos, he was compelled to admit that such factual data did not justify its acceptance. He found little if any objective data which supported the theory that the cosmos, made up of millions of suns in numerous galaxies, was either earth-centered or man-centered. Furthermore, he rejected the view that supernatural revelation was an adequate substitute for objective facts. The cosmos and man as understood by modern science and psychology simply failed to provide support for the constellation of beliefs which constitute traditional Christianity.

When the Personalistic Theists examined the universe and man, they believed that they found support for their view of God as dynamic and personal. But Lippmann called attention to the fact that their reasoning was based upon Kant's metaphysics, and "Kant's proof of the existence of God was nothing but a plea that God ought to exist, and the whole temper of the modern intellect is to deny that what ought to be true necessarily is true."[15] The Humanist, according to Lippmann, cannot accept his needs as justification for beliefs unsupported by more objective data.

Ecclesiastical Humanism is in agreement with Personalistic Theism in that God it a reality of some type involved in the medium in which humanity exists. God is the religious name for that larger environment to which we relate ourselves in our quest for religious values. The Personalistic Theists are certain they find evidence to support their confidence in the actuality and friendliness of that larger environment; the ecclesiastic Humanists are not. Both, however, investigate the same hypothesis — God is that character, aspect, phase or behavior of one's environing medium upon which we depend for religious values. They differ in their conclusions concerning its presence and character.

The third and last of these contemporary philosophies of religion we shall investigate to determine whether or not the hypothesis before us may be valid is Absolute Immanence. It is called Immanence because God, no matter how conceived, is believed to be within the cosmic totality; it is an absolute immanence in that it denies the possibility of any transcendence to the cosmic process as a whole.[16] For the men who adhere to this position, the term God admittedly symbolizes some phase, character, structure or behavior pattern of the Environing Medium, namely, that in which we live and move and have our being; or more technically, that environing medium in which man exists, including everything which af-

[14] Cf. Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals*, pp. 115 to 144.

[15] *A Preface to Morals*, pp. 136 ff.

[16] E. Thamiry, in the article "Immanence" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York, 1910, VII, 682 ff., used the term Absolute Immanence to denote not only the position we are here discussing, but also that of the Absolute Idealists who hold that the world is wholly or absolutely immanent in God. We are using the term Absolute Immanence to denote those views only in which God is wholly immanent in the cosmos.

fects him directly or indirectly. One of the more popular statements is found in a college text-book in philosophy: God is "the soul of the world, an indwelling spiritual presence, a creative, organizing and perfecting power, the source of our moral, religious, and aesthetic ideals."[17] The concepts of such men as Shailer Mathews, Gerald Birney Smith, H. N. Wieman, B. E. Meland and many others are included in the philosophy of Absolute Immanence.

These men believe that man's religious needs must find their satisfaction in better and more intimate adjustments to the Existential Medium itself, not by seeking some supernatural or extra-natural reality known only through revelation. They believe that there are resources within the cosmos which are only imperfectly and inefficiently utilized, and that the task of contemporary religions is that of exploring the cosmic environment more carefully and creatively than has ever been done before. God, then, is the religious name for the creative and productive phase of one's total environment, and religion consists in the attempt to understand it more fully and to relate oneself to it in more adequate fashion.[18]

V

After this long excursus into the problem of categories, we are in position to attempt to answer the question with which we began: Is God necessary to religious behavior, or more technically, is the reinterpretative phase essential in the analysis of religion? This may now be answered by asking the further question: Do any of the world's recognized religions operate without reference to that larger Environment which in Christianity we call God? This question may be so interpreted as to include every religion which ever came into being, no matter how obscure, or it may be restricted to the standardized religions which have attracted a considerable following and have persisted through the centuries. It would appear justifiable to adopt the second interpretation, and say that what is characteristic of the main religions of the race may be considered essential to religious behavior as such. This is the method we shall adopt.

Of the world's great religions, early Buddhism is perhaps the only one which has been considered an "atheistic" religion. At least, some historians of religions have so interpreted it.[19] But this judgment is subject to serious question when one defines God in categorial rather than conceptual terms.[20] In the light of the preceding discussion, we may rephrase the question: Did early Buddhists operate without reference to that larger Environment which in Christianity we call God? And the answer to this is a decided negative. As A. N. Whitehead stated it, "Buddhism is the most colossal example in history of applied metaphysics."[21] This generalization may be validated by an examination of several important early Buddhist concepts.

According to the four Noble Truths attributed to Gotama, the basic problem

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[17] Patrick, G. T. W., *The World and Its Meaning*, Boston, 1924, p. 176.

[18] It should be observed that the foregoing discussion is not presented as a valid argument for the hypothesis under investigation. It should be considered more as a clarification rather than a verification. The technical epistemological problems involved in the attempt to validate this hypothesis are presented in two articles in *The Journal of Religion*, April and October, 1943.

[19] Cf. Moore, G. F., *History of Religions*, New York, 1920, Vol. I, p. 300; Hume, R. E., *The World's Living Religions*, New York, 1925, p. 14. Others, like Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism: A Study of the Buddhist Norm*, New York, undated, pp. 53 ff., note that good Buddhists believed that the gods existed, but that they were bound even as were men.

[20] By categorial we mean the most inclusive or generic terms as opposed to conceptual or specific. When men speak of early Buddhism as atheistic, they usually have a specific God-concept in mind.

[21] *Religion in the Making*, New York, 1926, p. 50.

which disturbed him was suffering. His system then consisted in the attempt to understand the origin of suffering and to discover the methods whereby it could be removed. The first of these four truths affirmed the complete union of natural human existence and suffering: To be is to suffer. The second noble truth stated that suffering was the direct result of desire, thirst, or craving. To be a normal human being is to desire and consequently, to suffer. The third truth concerned the destruction of suffering: To destroy suffering, one must destroy thirst or desire. The fourth truth consisted in specific directions for the destruction of desire, and was stated as an Eight-fold Path.[22] This Eight-fold path consisted in a series of instructions concerning right living. It may be summarized quite briefly by the injunction: So live that desire is continually reduced. This may be done by the adoption of the attitude of apathy, namely, of insensibility to desire.

Thus far there is little more in early Buddhism than an ethical system designed to remove from its adherents all possibility of positive suffering. If one withdraws from all positive relations to the social and physical environment, and lives passively with reference to both, he will doubtless escape the suffering characteristic of those whose wants are deep and inclusive. Thus far we have a "doctrine of salvation to be found here, in this life, by an inward change of heart, to be brought about by perseverance in a mere system of self-culture and self-control."[23] But there was more to ancient Buddhism than this ethical system, important as it was.

The more metaphysical phases of the thinking of Gotama are reflected in the Buddhist Suttas,[24] translated by Rhys Davids from Pali texts. These texts are presumably more nearly representative of the more primitive Buddhist thought than the Sanskrit texts. Of particular interest, so far as the metaphysics of early Buddhism is concerned is the conception of transmigration or continuous rebirth of the soul in other bodies. The second noble truth, that which teaches that desire or craving is the factor responsible for the origin of suffering, contains the statement that it is "thirst (or craving)" which causes the renewal of existence.[25] Other references suggest the methods whereby Gotama predicted the character of the destiny of those who were reborn after having lived righteously in this life.[26] Again, as the "Dhammapada," Chapter 18 (238), states it: "Make thyself an island, work hard, be wise! When thy impurities are blown away, and thou art free from guilt, thou wilt not enter again into birth and decay."[27]

The conception of transmigration, of a continuous round of rebirths continuing until by means of the strict observance of the Eight-fold Path one escaped from this chain or wheel of rebirth, removes early Buddhism from the category of non-metaphysical ethical systems and transforms it into what Whitehead called a "colossal example in history of applied metaphysics." There was reference to a wider Environment in the thinking of early Buddhism, even though this more inclusive En-

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22 *Dhamma-Kakka-Ppavattana-Sutta,* 1-8.

23 T. W. Rhys Davids, in the introduction to the "Dhamma-Kakka-Ppavattana Sutta," *Sacred Books of the East,* ed. by F. Max Mueller, XI, Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1881, p. 143.

24 The Suttas are a collection of important discourses or teachings selected from the sacred literature of Buddhism. We are using those translated from the Pali by T. W. Rhys Davids as source materials for this analysis.

25 *Dhamma-Kakka-Ppavattana Sutta,* 6.

26 *Maha-Parinibrana-Sutta,* (Book of the Great Decease, ii, 6 ff.)

27 The *Dhammapada* is another of the canonical books of the Pali Buddhist canon. According to Mrs. Rhys Davids, the Pali canon was reduced to writing beginning about 80 B. C., more than 200 years after Buddhism had been introduced into Ceylon. Cf. her *Buddhism,* pp. 18 ff.

vironment was not interpreted in personal terms. The term normally used for this purpose is karma or karman. Its original meaning was "performance" or "work done," and referred specifically to the sacrificial acts performed by priests.[28] Later, its meaning was extended to include every activity of human beings which had moral connotations. By the time Gotma appeared, it meant "the influence of human action, which may remain long in suspension before it is realized in its results."[29] Karma thus meant the consequences of personal conduct. Every act has consequences, and the sum-total of such consequences constitutes the individual's karma. Furthermore, karma was not limited to any one life-time. It was the causative factor responsible for the presence of all who were then living, and also for all who would later be reborn on earth. Thus karma explained not only the present status of a given individual; it explained his existence and served as the clew to his future destiny.

Each individual, according to early Buddhist theory, consisted of the temporary combination of a group of five skandhas: "(1) corporeity, (2) feeling, (3) perception, (4) judgment, (5) consciousness."[30] So long as these five skandhas were conjoined, the individual existed; when they separated, he ceased to be. This is but to say that the principle of continuity may not be found within the individual himself; he has, at best, but a temporary existence. The enduring factor is karma; it is that which continues. Therefore, it appears obvious that karma was more than an attribute of a given individual; it was a metaphysical principle by which one explained the continuity of a given increment of consequences of deeds throughout the combined life-time of a number of individuals—that is, through a continuous line of individuations all of whom share in the suffering involved in a given quantum of deeds. Since the principle of continuity is not found in the individual, it must be sought elsewhere. There is little evidence that early Buddhism attributed to the social group the basis for continuity; instead, they apparently explained it in terms of karma defined as a cosmic principle. The numerous karmas — each the primary and enduring constituent of a continuing line of individuals made up of the five skandhas, imply that the moral cause-effect sequence is a cosmic principle as well as a fact of ethical significance. Karma may thus be defined as an absolutizing of the moral life raised to cosmic status.

Early Buddhism, in the light of the preceding investigation, may be analysed into the same three phases characteristic of other religions: It had its function, that of releasing men from the suffering inherent in existence; it had its techniques, the Eight-fold path outlined in the fourth noble truth; it had its reinterpretation of man and the cosmic medium in which he existed. And, in this reinterpretation, positive use was made of the larger Environment. The early Buddhists used the term karma to denote what more recent philosophers call the moral order of the universe, that which some Christians call God.

This should be sufficient to indicate that the major religions of mankind include belief in and utilization of generic or categorial equivalents of the God-concepts of Christians. This conclusion is valid in so far as the category for Deity which we have suggested is itself valid. That category may be stated as follows: Deity is the generic name for that larger Environment upon which men depend, or in relation to

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[28] Strauss, Otto, "Indian Religions," in *Religions of the World,* ed. by Carl Clemen, New York and Chicago, 1931, Eng. trans. by A. K. Dallas, p. 101.

[29] *Ibid,* p. 102.

[30] Cf. Hackmann, H., "Buddhism," in Clemen, *Religions of the World,* p. 304.

which they seek religious values. The instances cited in the preceding discussion suggest the possible validity of this view. From this tentative conclusion, several inferences of more immediate significance may be drawn.

The first is that the specific nature of this inclusive Environment may be defined variously so far as its functional values are concerned. The first of these functional values is philosophical or metaphysical. Religious behavior results primarily, from the presence of insuperable perplexities in individual and social existence. The term God, meaning by this term the larger Environment drawn upon for religious purposes, has always served as a clew to a rational and meaningful understanding of individual life and social existence. God, therefore, no matter how defined specifically, must provide the structural ideas about which a rational and meaningful view of existence may be built. The second of these functional values of the God-concept is more directly related to techniques. The late Shailer Mathews stated this quite definitely: "Ideas of God help give content and direction to religious behavior."[31] Thus God as King provided intellectual justification for such techniques as kneeling in submission, and the bringing of gifts in the form of tithes; God as Personal makes communion and fellowship understandable and meaningful; God as Integrative Process justifies various types of integrative behavior at both individual and group levels.

The second inference follows logically from the first. It is that no one definition of God can be considered the only religiously valuable one. Any definition which serves the two ends indicated above is, to that extent, religiously adequate. God as personal has provided (i) the basic structural ideas of a satisfactory metaphysical system; and (ii) has justified a list of religious techniques of ethico-social nature. At the same time, God defined in heteropersonal terms, that is, other than personal, has also served the same ends. If one will examine the philosophies of religion developed by such men as H. N. Wieman, Jan C. Smuts and F. S. C. Northrop, he will discover that the God-concepts suggested by them meet the above needs adequately. Since this is the case, it is evident that religious bodies should seek to find such working agreements among themselves that religion serves to unite rather than to divide peoples. Since the beginning of the Atomic age in August of 1945, intolerance with reference to our specific definitions of God becomes a dangerous thing, at least in so far as it divides us into antagonistic groups.

The third inference to be drawn at present is that every minister and teacher of religion is necessarily involved in metaphysical thinking. If he is to meet the religious needs of people, he must understand that larger cosmic Environment which we call God. This means that he must examine the great philosophies whose roots were planted in the fertile soil of Greece in the fourth century B. C., or produce his own synthesis from more recent materials. Then he must work out its implications in terms which are utilizable both for himself and those whom he serves. Until he does this, he will not contribute as fully as he might to the religious needs of today.

Finally, I would suggest that a minister or teacher of religion today will make his largest contribution to those whom he serves if he takes this task seriously. The complexities of the modern world, the enormous increase in available knowledge, the varied opportunities to invest one's time and interest all combine to produce mental indigestion for many who walk the streets of our cities and towns. They need des-

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[31] *The Growth of the Idea of God,* New York, 1931, p. 208.

perately to find some intelligible meaning both for their own lives and for this vast universe, and most of them lack the philosophical training required for this task. They need to discover a conception of God and a set of regulative ideas which will enable them to incorporate the specific knowledges and experiences which come to them into a meaningful synthesis. They need, in other words, an adequate conception of God which will introduce meaning into their lives and will provide them with a reasonable basis for religious living.