CHAPTER-II

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN RELIGION

Religion plays a very important role in the life of mankind. It is one of the earliest institutions of mankind. Religious consciousness in man has distinguished man from animals. As a rational being, man thinks about his life, future life and what is in store for him in the life after death. He assumes that there is power or powers superior to him. So all religions from the most developed down to the least developed assume the existence of power superior to him, on which he is dependent, and which influences his activities. Many people have held that this power is called God. Swami Yogananda said, "If religion does not influence our daily conduct, if it does not inspire every day life, then it is useless." Different religions have expressed views about God in different ways. David A Brown says:

We should not be surprised by the great variities of religion in different parts of the world. Many different patterns of life have evolved in human society through the ages, and many civilisations and nations have been important at different times. It is not surprising that the relation between God and human being have taken different forms. Each particular religion has a particular character because of the particular people who practised it.  

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11 Quoted by Dr. Bali in Introduction to Philosophy (New Delhi: Sterling Publisher, 1989), p. 162.

The theory of the origin of religion has been very important for scholars these days. It is quite difficult to say the exact genesis of religion. Let us discuss some theories about the origin of religion. Nobody knows about the exact origin of man’s religious consciousness. But it may be said that religion is as old as the beginning of human society. There are some important theories about the origin and development of religion.

A brief account of the prominent theories is given below:

(a) **The Theory of Animism**

The eminent anthropologist E.B Taylor in his monumental work *Primitive Culture* (first edition 1871; third edition 1891) has maintained that at the early stage of the development of their culture men everywhere attributed a kind of soul to the phenomena of nature, eg. to trees, brooks, mountains, clouds, storms, stars. Primitive man regarded all he saw as possessing a life like his own. He instinctively projected his own experience into the objects in his surroundings and attributed spirit or will to them. To the primitive people and to the savage who settled in remote undeveloped areas, nature was alive filled with innumerable spirits. According to Taylor, religion developed out of this animistic view of the world.

“Religion had its origin in the attempt of man to establish a relationship between him and certain of the spirits with which the world around him
was peopled, and this would lead him to seek to propitiate the powerful spirits and to exorcise the evil ones."\textsuperscript{13} Although there are certain anthropological evidences for Taylor's theory, the theory of animism cannot be regarded as the most satisfactory theory due to some reasons: (i) The concept of soul or spirit is one which has been developed in a later stage of man's culture; it cannot be attributed to man at the earliest stage of his living. (ii) In religion, in the true sense there should be a unique relationship of reverence on the part of the worshipper or devotee to the object of his worship, viz the deity and such relationship cannot be based on the feeling of wonder or fear. However, inspite of its limitations, Taylor's theory serves as the philosophical basis for the origin and development of religion.

(b) The Ghost Theory

According to Herbert Spencer, the origin of religion has to be traced to the worship of ancestor appearing in the form of ghosts. The savages were afraid of some ghosts of their departed ancestors and offering of sacrifices was made to appease their spirits. Spencer believed that this is the beginning of religion. The fear of the dead who passed beyond the control of the living has been taken by spencer to be the motive behind the religious practices. As F.B. Jevons said, "It never happens that the spirit of the dead are conceived to be gods, but the spirits of his dead ancestors are dependent on him... The fact is that ancestor

known to be human were not worshipped as gods, and that ancestors worshipped as gods were not believed to be human.”

(c) The Theory of Totemism

Some scholars have regarded the theory of Totemism as the most ancient and primitive form of religion. Edward said:

A totem is a species of animal or plant, or more rarely a class or inanimate object, to which a social group (a clan) stands on an animate and very special relation of friendship or kinship- frequently it is thought of as the ancestor of the clan- and which provides that social group with its name. The totem is not exactly a god, but a cognate being and one to be respected.”

The totemistic theory was popularised by W. Robertson Smith in his Religion of the Semites and F.B. Jevons in his Introduction to the History of Religion. It may be maintained that although totemism is ancient, its universality has not been scientifically proved. It is not known among some of the primitive people. However, the French Sociologist Emile Durkhaim regards totemism as the most simple and primitive religion which is possible to find. In his book *elementary form of Religion* (English Translation, 1915) Durkheim maintained that totemism is the earliest form of society and of religion everywhere.

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Durkheim's interest in totemism is determined by his sociological theory of religion as essentially and wholly a social phenomenon.

(d) The conception of Mana as Pre-Animistic Religion

Some anthropologists have traced the origin of religion in pre-animistic period by a sense of awe in the presence of an indefinite mysterious power of powers not regarded as personal. This mysterious power is designated a large group of languages. Mana is an all pervading supernatural power or influence that operates in unexpected ways or appears in natural objects of striking character. It is a mysterious or magical quality or power permeating in all things, but often concentrating in individual persons or things on which man can dream for good or evil. It is this mysterious power that manifests itself in extraordinary things and persons and unexpected events.

It may be pointed out that in Mana we have the common root of magic and religion. In Manna, there is an attitude of mind, involving awe, mystery and wonder, which supplies religion with its raw material. The relation between magic as religion is a matter that needs further inquiry. In his famous book, *Golden Bough* (London 2nd edition, 1911 vol. I) Sir James Frazer wrote, "In the evolution of thought, magic as representing a lower intellectual stratum, has probably everywhere preceded religion". But religion cannot be identified with magic. They have different purposes and goals. As Durkheim says, "There is no church of magic... the magician has a clientele and not a church... Religion, on the other hand, is inseparable from the idea of church." 16 However, though religion

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16 E.Durkheim opcit p. 44 f.
and magic are different, they have a common root in the primitive man’s emotional reaction to his environment and experiment with the unseen forces of the world in man’s struggle for existence. The above theories on the anthropological origin of religion have thrown light on the nature and function of religion in human society in the early days of human history. Yet none of the above theories taken singly cannot be regarded as the most satisfactory theory explaining the origin of religion. There are certain elements of the truth in each one of them. But they cannot be taken as the final words on this subject. It may be said that the development of man’s religious consciousness is a continuous process. We may quote the view of M.Jastrow:

Religion is too complex a phenomenon to be accounted for the growth and spread of a single custom. Worship, however primitive character, is not the expression of a single thought or a single emotion, but the products of thoughts so complex, so powerful as to force an expression in the same way in which a river, swollen by streams coming down the mountains from various directions, overflows its banks.17

The concept of god in different religions

The idea of god has been conceived in different ways. The idea as conceived in some of the world’s religions is discussed as follows:

(1) The concept of God in Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion based on firm faith in the existence of God and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. It teaches spirituality, unity and personality of God or Allah. To the Muslim, Allah or God is unique. Nothing resembles God. The Muslims believe that everything in

nature as well as human birth, growth and death are governed by the all pervasive law of God. The Quran says:

He, Allah is one, Allah is eternal,
He begets not, nor is He begotten.
And none is like Him.\(^{18}\)

All Muslims believe in the existence of God who is unique, and who has no equals. To say he has a partner is regarded as the greatest sin. To Muslims all others are idolaters. They say that Allah’s attributes - the terrible attributes (Al-asmau’l-jallaiya) and the gracious attributes (Al-asmaul-jamaliya), the glorious attributes may be discussed based on His relationship with the world. The important attributes of God or Allah may be listed as follows:

(i) **Life (Hayat):** Allah’s existence has neither beginning nor end.
(ii) **Knowledge (lim):** Allah is omniscient.
(iii) **Will (Irada):** Allah wills whatever he wants.
(iv) **Power (Qudrat):** Allah is omnipotent.
(v) **Sama (Hearing):** Allah hears all sounds, without ears.
(vi) **Seeing (Basar):** Allah sees all things, even the steps of a black ant on a black stone on a dark night with no eyes.
(vii) **Speech (Kalam):** Allah speaks but not with a tongue. He spoke to Moses and then to Gabriel.\(^{19}\)

\(^{18}\) Quran Sura 112.
\(^{19}\) Ps. Daniel et.al, Religious Traditions of India (Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), p.270.
It is said that orthodox Muslim scholars do not want to have a close enquiry into these attributes of Allah. They are divided regarding the said attributes. Some of the scholars held that the attributes are eternal, whereas some say that they are not. But they all agreed to the 99 names attributed to Allah. Muslims believe that Allah is in control of the universe and thus acknowledges him as the Lord of the whole universe. They praise God and say:

Praise be to God, Lord of all the world,
The compassionate, the merciful,
King on the day of reckoning!
Thee, we only worship, and to thee we cry for help.

The Quran thus acknowledges the Lordship of Allah, his compassionate love, and his mercifulness as God and king on the date of reckoning. Allah is said to have at least 99 names to his credit. Muslims do not believe that Allah is in his creation, but is distinct from what he has created, and is thus eternal. God has appointed man as his agent on earth. So, he gave the earth for man to live in. He gave rain to water the land. He deserves praise for all that he does and for what he is, and for all his kindness to mankind. If a Muslim dies unrepentant of his sins before his death, he will go to hell, where his soul will be tormented for eternity. But, if the prophet is kind enough to intercede for the sinner, he will eventually pass on to paradise, a place said to be made by Allah for the overcomers or believers. The Muslims believe in the resurrection of the

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20 Ibid.
21 Quran Sura 1.
dead. The Quran specifically mentions the resurrection of the dead in 17: 51; 36:78. Muhammad will be the first to raise and enter paradise.  

(2) The Concept of God in Hinduism

Hinduism is said to be the oldest among the great religions of the world. Hinduism, ancient and modern, believes in the existence of God or gods. It is difficult to give a brief account of Hindus view of God. There are various religious sects among the Hindus who profess and practice in many ways. For instance, the Rigveda, in common with Iranian tradition, recognizes 33 gods or devas connected with heaven, earth, and the waters of the air, but also mentions others while the lists given by Brahmanas vary in certain details. The chief attributes of the Vedic devas is said to be their power over the lives of men and women. Anderson says:

Most of the gods are personifications of the powers of nature, such as the celestial bodies, fire, storm, air, water and rain. It is significant that the theological concepts of propitiation and expiation are most clearly and frequently emphasized in these early Veda.

The teachings of the Upanishads centres around the concepts of Brahman (that which is ultimately or absolutely real and Atman (self). The search for Brahman eternal reality or eternal being or reality is the preoccupation of the Hindu mind. In order to achieve this goal, they do not mind renouncing the world, give up family and all physical comforts, undertake pilgrimages to sacred rivers and to the Himalayas, and to live alone in dense jungles. Each household has its own god or gods from

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22 Ps Daniel et.al opcit p. 273.
23 Ps Daniel Ibid p.80.
25 Anderson Ibid. p. 140-141.
the many gods’ worship by the Hindus. Many people worship Siva, Shakti, Brahman and Vishnu. In addition to these gods, Hindus worship local gods. As D.R. Bali says:

Hinduism as a religion does not consist of a set of ceremonies, beliefs, dogma or intellectual abstractions. It is more a way of living or experiencing the world. The World’s Religious Hinduism implies a specific attitude of life, to the self and to the world. Hinduism refers to a complex religious tradition, which includes beliefs, norms of life, religious faith, various forms of worship and rituals, ethical principles and cultural features.  

Hindus believe that God is *Nirgun* and *Sagun* (this literally means without attributes and ‘with attributes’ respectively. In philosophical terms, this may be called conditioned and unconditioned. He is conditioned when he manifests himself in the world and mind. Unlike Islam and Christianity, the goal of man’s life is the realisation of God. This is possible in fulfilling oneness with God. This state can be earned in three ways: Bhakti- by loving devotion to one’s personal deity; Karma-by works and Jnana-by knowledge. Many Hindus have characterised God in many ways. For instance, Mahatma Gandhi wrote:

God is that indefinable something which we all feel but do not know. To me God is truth and love, God is ethics and morality, God is fearlessness. God is the source of life and light, and yet he is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. He transcends speech and reason. He is a personal God to those who need his presence. He is embodied to those who need his touch. He is purest essence. He is all things to all men.”  

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26 D.R. Bali opcit p. 171.  
27 Young India, 5 August, 1925.
Here Gandhi clearly states the Hindus' view of God. To him God is both personal and impersonal. He used to say, "Truth is my God, and non-violence is the way to reach him." 28 Gandhi allows certain projections of God as a person. Gandhi emphasised the horizontal aspect of religion. In his view, religion must not be separated from life. He said, "I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality." 29 He further said that a believer in God must love his fellow human being. The reputed philosopher Dr. S. Radhakrishnan goes further than Gandhi and said, "The believer in God loves his fellow men as he loves himself, seeking their highest good as he seeks his own by redemptive service and self sacrifice." 30 Again, Radhakrishnan, in his address to the World Congress of Faith in London, in 1936, said,

When the incarnation of God is realised not only a few individuals, but in the whole humanity, we will have a new creation, a new race of men and women, mankind transformed, redeemed and reborn, and a world created a new, this is the destiny of the world, the supreme ideal. 31

In Hinduism, there has been a movement to accommodate the ideas of God as seen in different religions of the world by making Hinduism a universal religion. Hinduism can accommodate the concepts of God found in other major religion of the world because of its pluralistic worldview.

4. Concept of God in Judaism

Judaism is a monotheistic religion. It is based on the teachings of the old Testament of the Bible. It is not mainly an intellectual belief or

28 As quoted by David A Brown opcit p. 77.
30 Quoted by David A Brown opcit p. 77.
31 Quoted by Aleyamma Zechariah ibid p. 138.
pursuit of God, a personal conviction in which the importance of religious practice is clearly evident. Due to this reason, many scholars opined that the two monotheistic religions of the world-Islam and Christianity have their origin in Judaism. The concept of God in Judaism may be discussed as follow:

According to the Jews, God is a living person. They believe that Yahweh or the Lord is there everywhere they go, at all times. Anderson says, “To the Jew, God is full of personality, free from all limitations and imperfections, pure spirit, and the life of the universe. While Judaism that nature and all its phenomena points to the existence of a creator, and that philosophy and science may provide an indirect knowledge of God, it insists emphatically that only religion reveals a direct, personal and complete knowledge of the divine character, will and purpose.” 32 It is impossible for the Jews to conceive of a power and authority superior to Yahweh, the Lord, who is God. They also held that God is invisible. No human being should make a picture of God since he is the greatest one can think of. It will be unwise to equate God with an image. God is said to have chosen Israel to be his own people. They believe that God has a special plan and purpose for Israel because they are his chosen people. God gave them Palestine as their homeland. They also believe that God is the sole ruler and king of the whole universe. God also asked Israel to show compassion to others, especially to widows, orphans, and foreigners.

So, the basic importance of the thought of the living God is believed to have a great impact in the lives of its people. Their belief has its foundation in the Torah, which says, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one." Writing on the significance of the belief in one God. Houston Smith says, "The significance of this achievement in religious thought lies ultimately in the focus it introduces into life. If God is that to which one gives to oneself unreservedly, to have more than one God is to live a life of divided loyalties." Micah, the prophet also emphasized the importance of dealing with others fairly and justly since God is the God of all people—rich and poor. Micah said, "He has showed you, O man, what is good, And what does the Lord require of you to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?" 

Micah emphasized the horizontal aspect of religion. If they are (the Jews) to obey God, and are to serve him, they have to act justly, to love the helpless widows and orphans and also to walk humbly before Yahweh, the almighty Lord. All this would be possible if and only if they fear Yahweh, the Lord Almighty God, who chose them to become his own people. Anderson say, "Man is to see in God his heavenly father and companion who is concerned in his fate and does not leave him alone in apparently friendless universe. As Man is made in the image of God it

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33 Deuteronomy 6:4.
35 Micah 6:8.
follows that all human beings are creature of the same creator and meant
to live as brothers. All share in God’s eternal spirits.”\(^{36}\)

(3) **The conception of God in Christianity**

In the New Testament, Paul gives a very simple, but effective
definition of God. He says,” God did this so that men would seek him and
perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one
of us. For in him we live, move, and have our being. As some of your
poets have, “We are his offspring.”\(^{37}\) Many Theologians have attempted
to define God, but have failed to offer satisfactory definition. So, it is very
difficult to give a definite and acceptable definition of God. For instance
Anselm said, “… than that which nothing greater is conceivable.”\(^{38}\)

There is another definition of God, which is more complete. G.R. Lewis
says,

> God is invisible, personal and living spirit, distinguished
from all other spirits by several kinds of attributes: metophysically God is self existent, eternal and unchanging, intellectually God is omniscient faithful and wise; ethically God is just, merciful and loving; emotionally God detests evil, is long suffering and is compassionate; relationally God is transcendent in being, immanent universally in provident activity, and imminent in his people in redemptive activity\(^{39}\)

According to Scripture, God is invisible, personal, living and active spirit.
Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman that God should be worshipped
in spirit and in truth.\(^{40}\) Although, some thinkers used the word, ‘Spirit’ to

\(^{36}\) Anderson opcit p.59.
\(^{38}\) As quoted by Elwellin, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology(Grand
\(^{39}\) Elwell opcit p. 451.
\(^{40}\) Elwell opcit 451
designate an impersonal absolute, in the biblical sense, the devil spirit has personal capacities of intelligence, emotion and volition. Christians believe that God is self sufficient and self-existent. Other spirits are created and thus have their beginnings in the spatio-temporal world. God has no beginning and an end. The psalmist says, "The Lord is enthroned forever". The Lord is believed to know all things visible and invisible. David says this in the Psalms:

O, Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and I rise, You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 43

Christianity is a religion centred in and on the person and work of Jesus Christ. God manifested himself in human form in the person of Jesus Christ. John says:

The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the father, full of grace and truth. 44

Here the word or logos is Christ, sent by God. In this regard many people have expressed their views of Christ. For instance, D.R. Bali commenting on the Christians view of Christ says,

The Christians view Jesus as the most lovable personality and he is painted as extraordinary in humility, benevolence and forgiveness. Ignoring the intricacies of ritualism and theology of the traditional religion, Jesus set forth the idea of God, which appealed to common man. His teachings may be
summed up as the supreme love of God and love of fellow men.\textsuperscript{45}

In Christianity the teaching of Jesus has a great impact on the lives of his followers. The four books of the Bible known as the Gospels recorded the full and complete teaching of Jesus Christ on various topics. For instance, Jesus gives importance to peace when he says, "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the sons God."\textsuperscript{46} Christian faith is a monotheistic religion. It believes in three things: fatherhood of God, Divine dignity of Christ and Religious experience of Christians. Christian have faith in the Father, Son and Spirit. God is believed to act in many ways for the good of man and nothing happens without the will and knowledge of God.

Christianity does not speak of God in metaphysical and abstract terms, but in concrete and creative terms. God is the creator of all things that exists, and in that sense God is related to the world. But God’s relation with the world is most evident in his relation with human beings because here a personal relationship is involved. M.V. Abraham gives the difference of the conception of God in Christianity and says,

According to Christianity, the ultimate destiny of man is not to become Godlike or God himself, but to become truly human, to that level of ideal humanity that was seen in Jesus Christ. In Christ man discovers his true self, and the Christian does not wish to be anything more than that model.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{45} D.R.Bali \textit{opcit} p.193.
\textsuperscript{46} Matthew 5:9.
\textsuperscript{47} PS Daniel et.al. \textit{opcit} p. 352
Christian also emphasized the importance of the life to come. Life does not end with death, the person continues to live as a personality. The next life to come is given and known by different names such ‘eternal life’ or everlasting life’ that life to come is a blessed hope.

**Religious experience**

All world religions have attached great importance to religious experience. So, religious experience plays a vital role in initiating Christian belief, and it performs a similar function in sustaining and supporting that faith. Religious experience in the context of Christianity has two aspects: the numinous experience in which one feels the presence of God or the healing touch of Jesus. D.J Jung writes:

No matter what the world thinks about religious experience the one who possess has a great result of a thing that has provided him with source of life, meaning and beauty and that has given a new splendour to the world and to mankind. He has *pistis* and peace. Where is the criteria by which you could say that such a life is not legitimate, and that such experience is not valid and such pistis are mere illusion? 48

In every part of the world irrespective of the actual religion preached and followed, there have been individuals who have claimed to have direct communion with God. Bergson explains this mystic experience as follows:

> Then come a boundless joy, and all absorbing ecstasy or an enthralling rapture. God is there, and the soul is in God, Mystery is no more. Problems vanish, darkness is dispelled, and everything is flooded with light. 49

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49 As quoted by Masih opcit p. 160.
Bergson is right in saying that the mystic experiences a thing, which the common people do not experience at all. The nature of mystic experience is the same in all religions including that of Christianity. Paul, the great apostle said:

Whoever has the spirit is able to judge the value of everything, but no one is able to judge him.\textsuperscript{50}

It is difficult for others to judge the experience of a religious person. Even modern scientists agree with these kinds of experiences although such experiences cannot be proved scientifically. William James in his book entitled \textit{Varities of Religious Experiences} gives an example of mystical experience, the experience of a man named John Nelson, whose experience is said to be a genuine conversion and spiritual experience. He said:

Mr. Nelson writes of his imprisonment for preaching methods; ‘My soul was a watered garden, and I could sing praises to God all day long; for he turned my captivity into joy, and save to rest as well as on the boards, as if I had been on a bed of down. Now I could say, ‘God’s service is perfect freedom’ and I was carried out much in prayer that might enemies might drink of the same river of peace, which my God gave so largely to me.\textsuperscript{51}

There need not be reason to doubt that religious people experience religious experience. The experience of Mr. Nelson is an example. Though chained in jail, he was free emotionally. He wants his enemies to experience the same experience. The scientists have no hesitation to

\textsuperscript{50} I Corinthian 2: 15.
accept the saint and holy man but what irritates them is the apparent impossibility of verifying the nature of what they claimed to have experienced. So, we have to agree with Paul who said:

No one can judge him or is he able to judge him.  

II. Different conception of God: A survey

The idea of God cannot be separated from religion Emmanuel Kant held that man could not live without faith in God although existence of God cannot be proved through rational arguments. It is quite natural for man to presume that there is supernatural power, say, God, who is distinct from nature, and is supposed to control nature. He is the controller of all things. The conception of God based on his relationship with the whole universe is discussed as follow:

1. Deism

Deism was the predominant philosophy of the British thinkers. This was introduced by Herbert Cherbury and was popularized by Isaac Newton. Later, Charles Darwin accepted it. Deism teaches that God is perfect, infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, personal and the absolute reality. As God is perfect, he has created the world as a perfect machine. He is the creator of the universe, but he is said to have no relationship with man. Though God is said to be the creator of the world, he is keeping himself aloof from his creation, and will interfere only in times of emergency. At no stage in history of philosophy has deism been

52 I Corinthian 2: 15.

53 D.R. Bali opcit p. 164.
regarded as a great philosophy. It has never been part of Indian philosophy in its purest forms. In western philosophy, John Toland, Matthew Tyndale and Thomas Chubb have supported it during sixteen and seventeen century. Deism maintains the following points:

(a) God is transcendent to the world. The world is a perfect machine and it does not need supervision and divine interference.

(b) God is transcendent, which makes him exclusive.

(c) The transcendence of God makes him worshipful.

(d) It stresses the natural light that is in man.

D, R. Bali says,

In modern age, deism strong and critical reaction. Carlyle ridiculed the view of God sitting idle outside the world. With the acceptance of the evolutionary theory by the scientist, the deistic conception of God was rejected as wholly unconvincing. 54

Masih also criticized deism’s conception of God and says: “A God fully understood is no God at all. A fully understood God becomes a mere concept of human intellect.” 55

2. **Pantheism**

Pantheism literally means seeing all things in God and God in all. So, God and the world are identical. It identifies God with the world but denies the transcendence of God and makes him entirely immanent in the world. In simple language, it identifies God with everything and everything with God. However, JN Sinha criticized and said:

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54 D.R. Bali *ibid* p. 165.
Pantheism gives inadequate conception of God. It makes him an abstract unity without plurality. It makes him an impersonal, non-moral sustain, which cannot satisfy our moral obligations or aspirations. It denies the reality of the world, and leads to ascismism and illusionism. It identifies God with the world process, and so, tends to lapse in to naturalism. It denies the reality and freedom of finite souls and undermines morality and religion. Abstract monism is philosophically unsound.\footnote{JN Sinha, Introduction to Philosophy (Calcutta: Central Book, 1998), 252p. 252-253.}

Pantheism denied the freedom of will. It also portrays that God inherits all evils of this world. Since, God is seen to be devoid of personality, it also denies the devotees the reward of his religious labour. So, the God of pantheism cannot be the object of love and devotion.

3. Panentheism

Panentheism simply means God is not all and God in all. Panentheism reconciles the conflicts among all types of monotheism. According to panentheism, God is above the world, and in the world, above the finite spirits and in the spirits. God is imminent in the world. He is manifested in it, and sustains it by his will. But he is not exhausted in the world. He transcends as an infinite spirit. Hegel’s theory is one example of panentheistic theory as part of the western philosophical tradition. God is omnipresent in the world, yet at the same time, He is absolute, perfect and transcendent.
4. Theism

Theism is that form of religious belief in which God is taken to be a supernatural person and the creator of a value-evolving world. He is transcendent in the world, as well as immanent in the world. In monotheism, the worship of one God is stressed. A theist cannot believe that the world exists independently of God. God is believed to be present everywhere and all things happen according to his will. DR Bali says:

God is infinite, as he is complete and sufficient. He is himself the sufficient cause and ground of all finite existence. God is also associated with attributes of omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. 57

It is held that God as a person or possessing personality can hear and answer the prayers and supplications of his devotees or followers and can help them at the time when they need his help. The history of Indian philosophical and religious thought is full of religious sects who have contributed to theism. Such religious thinkers as Ramanuja Charya, Madhava Charaya, Valla Bhahava Charya, Nimbarkaracharya and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu have contributed to the literature of theistic thinking. Many of the poets who wrote in Hindi have also been theistic in their tendency. In addition to what has been discussed, DR Bali says:

A theist cannot believe that the world exists independently of God. For him God appears to be present everywhere and whatever happens is due to his will. There is continuous revelation of God in the spirit of man. God is immanent in the world, yet he is not subjected to ordinary limitation which characterise the phenomenal world. To a theist God in his operation is continuously present in nature. God transcends

57 D.R. Bali opcit p. 166.
the world of things and selves, as he is not identical with them. He is not dependent on things.  

The attributes of God in Judaic-Christian theism

Theism literally means belief in the existence of God. This term is generally used as the opposite of atheism. In order to understand God, one has to study his attributes God must have attributes on account of which he must be worshipful. It is good to define what really is important in God’s attributes. God’s attributes may be define as ‘ qualities of God’s essential nature that are found wherever God becomes revealed. They are those character patterns that belong to God.’ Here, the root meaning of the verb to attribute is to ascertain, to designate the distinguishing qualities or characters of something. The quality intrinsic to God are one in God, yet many in our perception.

Thomas Aquinass said:

The diverse name we give to God are not synonym for they convey diverse meaning, though everything is one in his reality.

In this regard, Masih while commenting on theism says:

Religously speaking, God is conceived to be a person, creator, eternal, omnipotent, infinitely wise and good, transcendent-immanent and holy

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58 D.R. Bali opcit p. 166
59 Masih opcit p. 253
61 ibid.
For our discussion of attributes of God, the researcher feels that theological concepts concerning the attributes of God are more to the point, and therefore, discusses some of these divine attributes as follows:

1. **God as a person**

   God is to be understood as a person. Though God has many attributes, when it comes to worship, the person of God is the most important. Spinoza, for instance, felt that it was enough for him to know that he loved God. It matters very little to him whether he loves God or God loves him. To him, this kind of love is unselfish and selfless. But on close examination, he believes in an impersonal God. The personhood of God is clearly seen in the Scripture in the words of the psalmist, who declared:

   When I consider the heaven, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son that you, care for him.\textsuperscript{63}

Jews and Christians held that God is a person, who hears the prayers of his children. When a believer prays to God, he is confident that God would certainly hear him. It is believed that God took the initiative in establishing his relationship with man and the world. Masih says:

This concept of God as a person follows from the very nature of logic of worship. He must be an infinite being with surpassing excellence. Hence, if he is a person, he must be an all-comprehensive and perfect person. His thinking, willing and feeling must be infinite and yet he must be unified experience of his entire act, ideals, obligations and purposes.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{63} Psalm 8: 3-4.
\textsuperscript{64} Masih opcit p. 254-255
God is not only a person, but also a holy God. As a holy person, the highest form of holiness is attributed to God. Mankind in all generations realized this attribute of God and humbled themselves before this awful God.

2. **God as immutable and eternal**

   In religion, one of the most important things is the clarity of man’s existence as ephemeral and that of God as eternal. David, the psalmist confessed this and said, Lord you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the earth or the world, from an everlasting to an everlasting you are God. For a thousand years in your sight are life an evening gone or a day that has gone by or like watch in the night.  

   A question may be asked regarding God’s eternity. If God is eternal, how can we understand his eternity? To answer this question, classical theologians like Anselm, Augustine and Aquinas said it should be understood to mean his existence without beginning or end. It means God exists totally out of time. The timelessness doctrine of Plato matured in the system of Neo-Platonism, entered Christian thought of Augustine and held sway throughout the middle ages. It was challenged in the late middle ages by Don Scotus and William Occam, but regained influence in Catholic and Protestant theology. In this regard theologians prefer to use the word everlasting than eternal when speaking about God’s attributes. By the word everlasting, they mean to convey the idea of God not as divorced from the process of

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65 Psalms 90:1-2,4.
time. The word eternity has been used in different ways. It is discussed as follows:

(a) Timelessly logical and mathematical truth may mean that timelessness or which is independent of time. In logic this can best be illustrated by the law of identity or non-contradiction: A is A cannot be B or not B.

(b) Enduring through the time is how Judaic- Christian tradition conceives of God as everlasting or who endures forever. In this regard, the psalmist says, "Praise the Lord, all ye nations, extol him all ye peoples. For great is his love towards us and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever." 66

(c) Time is retained and yet transcended as total simultaneity. This view says, real time is duration, eternal creativity without beginning or end. Bergson says, Duration is the continuation and progression of the past which grows into the future and which swell as it advances. 67 Many philosophers donot agree with Bergson. The main contention is that it is too blind and aimless for Bergson to take creativity for the purpose of worship. A God for the theist is dependable person, a rock of ages, a shield and sword in the face of trouble. 68

(d) As a fulfillment of value in the best way. Here value is not la mere thing but eternal. In this sense. God is looked upon as creator of values through the mutation of the time. God’s activity is to be seen as the

66 Psalms 117
67 Masih opcit p. 259
68 Ibid
quality or value creation. There are many people who held that God’s time is not our time. For instance, Moses, the great law giver of the Jews said:

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has gone by, like a watch in the night.69

This is to say that God is not limited by our time. He is completely unrestricted by our time. Since God is eternal, his worshippers can fully depend on him. Many philosophers have changed their positions on the issue of time. Swinburne changed his mind, stopped defending the timelessness of God, and thus doubted the coherence of the theory. Paul Helm has changed his thinking into the other direction. He was sceptical about the timelessness theory, but in his recent article argues for the timelessness of God as important to theism as divine spacelessness.

3. God as omnipotent God

God’s omniopotence means he has the power to do all things. This attribute of God should not be taken independently of other attributes of goodness, justice, love or consistency.

Indeed the failures to realize the attributes of God must not be seen in their togetherness have been the source of many misunderstanding and has led to the creation of false problems.70

Though God is powerful, his power should not be understood as a monopolistic concentration of power. To those who believe in God, they believe that God has created free will. Here God has voluntarily delegated his power to human being. This sharing of power has serious meanings for

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69 Psalms 90: 4.
70 Masih opcit p. 263.
the parties involved. As to this delegation of power, the American preacher and writer of yester years AW Tozer writes:

God has delegated power to his creatures, but being self-sufficient, he cannot relinquished any of his perfections, and power being one of them. He gives them but he does not give away. All that the gives remain his own and returns to him again. Forever, he must remain what he has been, the lord God omnipotent.  

To philosophers this omnipotence can mean two things: Physical possibility and logical possibility. Certain thinkers have followed Thomas Aquinas in holding that logical possibility which is a necessary condition for divine omnipotence. Aquinas realized that nothing could be gained from analysing omnipotence in terms of physical possibility. Aquinas said:

Everything that does not imply a contradiction that numbered among those possibilities in respect of which God is called omnipotent, where whatever implies contradiction does not come within the scope of divine omnipotence because it cannot have the aspect of possibility. Here, it is more appropriate to say that such thing cannot be done, then God cannot do them.

Thus to Aquinas logical possibility is necessary though not sufficient condition for any exercise of God’s power. Rene Descartes and others have rejected this view and said that the law of non-contradiction limits God’s power. Descartes believed that an omnipotent being should be able to do anything absolutely, which is self-contradictory. The law of logic

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72 Masih ibid p.
does not limit God’s actions. He feels that Aquinas view dishonours God by making God subjected to the law of non-contradiction. Descartes said:

God freely decreeds the logical and mathematical truth that obtain in our world and could have created a different world in the principle of non-contradiction or proposition like two plus two equal four are necessary false. 

We should in no way conclude with Aquinas. The scripture is also not silent about these things and say that there are things God cannot do. For instance, the writer of the book of Hebrews says:

God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

Philosophically, the relationship between God’s omnipotence and logic makes it clear that omnipotence does not include the ability to do everything. They wondered if God could sin. Sinning is an act both physically and logically possible. We human are doing it all the time. Anselm suggested that the inability to sin does not result from power but lack of power. Aquinas said:

To fall short of inaction, which is repugnant to omnipotence. Therefore, it is that God cannot sin because of his omnipotence.

God cannot sin and this inability to sin does not mean that God is imperfect. Rather, it would be an imperfection if God could sin.

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73 Nash ibid p. 38
74 Hebrews 6:18; 6:18
75 Nash opcit p. 41
God cannot sin because he is omnipotent, because his omnipotency is necessarily enjoined with moral perfection. Jerome Colman said, To be powerless to perversity, to imperfect, but to be unable to lie is perfection.  

4. God's omniscience

God is an omniscient being for he has created all things that are there in the world and outside of it. According to philosophy, God's omniscience mean God holds no false beliefs. The scripture teaches us that God has never learnt from any one. Isaish, the prophet said,

Who has understood the mind of the Lord, or instructed him as his counsellor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him? And who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him the way? Who was it taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?  

God's omniscience can be understood from other perspectives apart from the scriptures:

God perfectly knows himself, and being the source and author of all things; it follows that he knows all things that can be known. And this he knows instantly with a fullness of perfection that includes a very possible item of knowing concerning everything that existed or could have existed everywhere in the universe at anytime in the past or that may exist in the future or in centuries or ages yet unborn.  

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76 Nash ibid p. 43
77 Isaish 40:12-13
78 Tozer opcit p. 67
Philosophers combine God's omniscience with his foreknowledge as if they are inseparable. God is supposed to know everyone individually and corporately. John records the discussion of Jesus and Nathaniel:

When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching, he said, 'Here is a true Israel in whom nothing is false, How did you know me Nathaniel asked. Jesus responded, “I saw you while you were under the fig tree before Phillip called you. 79

There are two kinds of view regarding God's foreknowledge to those who hold on to God's omniscience God foreknows even the decision of an individual in advance. 80 But others such as Jonathan Edwards, Henry Bergson and others refuted God's foreknowledge of free decisions. For Jonathan and others human being is free and a free decision cannot be foreknown. Augustine admits that an individual is free and his decision can be foreknwon. His arguments that free knowledge do not affect the nature of the act itself. 81 Philosophers divided human freedom into two: the liberty of indifference, which explains human freedom, as either to do something or not understood in this sense. Jones’s decision to watch TV news on channel four rather than five is free if and only if it is completely indifferent with channels he returns to. 82 In order to be genuinely free in the sense of indifference, a person must have the ability either to do something or not. The liberty of spontaneity, on the otherhand, explains human freedom as the ability to do whatever a person wants to do.

80 Masih ibid p. 261.
81 Ibid.
82 Nash opcit p. 54.
Philosophers believe that God is not bound by time, but is outside of time. There is no future for God; there is no past for God. St. Augustine argues:

'We will that we will' even when it is foreknown. He said, 'By the fact of his (God) foreknowledge power is not taken from me - a power which therefore is more certain to be because he whose foreknowledge is not deceived has foreknown the power will (be the future mine!).' 83

Here the main issue is on whether a free act can be foreknown at all. A free act can be explained as having nothing of the already made consist in the creative throw of the new. Philosophers like Alexander and Bergson hold that the future of its very nature is unpredictable. They said,

Human nature is a growing thing, and with the lapse of real time may throw up a new character of which only be known to him who experiences them. 84

Alexander believed that voluntary action is determined and yet unpredictable. On the other hand, A.J Aiyer, A Flew and J.L. Mackie hold that the willed act is free, and yet wholly foreseeable. But Bergson holds that only the repeatable is foreseen. Lastly, if God knows what I am going to do, does that take away my freedom? Thomas Oden gives a clear-cut answer to this question given below:

Although it may first seem so, the consensus of classical Christian teaching is to answer no. Human freedom remains freedom, self-determining, even if divinely foreknown. God’s knowledge of events does not destroy the reality of other influencess than the divine influence. God knows whether a marigold seed will bear flower, but that knowledge does not take the place of natural forces and levels of causality and other than God’s immediate action. God knew that Napoleon would be defeated, but no one imagine that

83 Masih ibid p. 262
84 Masih ibid p. 262
foreknowledge in itself directly, unilaterally caused the defeat without historical or human or natural forces or influences at work.⁸⁵

So, the problem of God’s omniscience and foreknowledge is full of difficulties. Many have tried to solve the problem, but failed to do so. Perhaps, we are less advance than philosophers of the Middle Ages in this very issue are. Thomas Aquinas said:

Hence this proposition, *Everything known by God necessary be*, is usually distinguished, for it may refer to the thing or the saying. If it refers to the thing, it is divided and false; for the sense is, Everything which God knows is necessary. If I understood of the saying, it is composite and true, for the sense is this proposition, ‘That which is known of God is necessary.’⁸⁶

5. God as loving:

The apostle John writes, “God is love.”⁸⁷ Many have misunderstood and misinterpreted this, and thus equate love with God. Equating love with God is a grave mistake that produced unsound philosophy or religion. The words ‘God is love’ means that love is an essential attribute of God. Love is something true of God, but it is not God. Oden says, “Love expresses the way God is in his unitary being, as do the words holiness, justice, faithfulness and truth.”⁸⁸ The primary purpose of creation is that God wishes to bestow love and teach love, so that creature can share in the blessedness of divine love, of loving and being loved. No

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⁸⁵ Oden picit p. 65.
⁸⁶ Oden ibd. P. 73.
⁸⁷ I John 4: 8.
⁸⁸ Oden opcit p. 73.
other purposes of creation transcend this one. 89 A.W.Tozer has a very beautiful way of saying about God’s love He says:

The love of God is one of the realities of the universe, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rest, but it is a personal intimate thing too. God does not love population he loves people. He loves not masses, but men. He loves us all with a mighty love that has no beginning and can have no end.90

6. **God, the creator**

In Judaic-Christian concept of God, God is believed to be the sole creator of the whole universe, and all things visible and invisible. In the Bible, it is written, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”91 John Hicks says:

In this doctrine creation means more than fashioning forms from an already given material (as a builder makes a house, a sculptor a statue); it means creation out of nothing creation exnihillo. The summing up of the universe into existence when otherwise there was only one God. 92

For Christian thinkers exnihillo is special since they want to show the peculiarity this concept from that of Plato’s account of the origin of the world. Plato held that a godlike being, the craftsman had brought the world into being by fashioning an eternal stuff of matter after the pattern of eternal ideas that existed independently of the craftsman. The problem with Plato’s concept of creator was his creator was finite and limited. In

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89 Tozer opcit p. 118.
90 AW Tozer opcit 124.
91 Oden opcit 119.
the creation account of the Christians nothing exist before creation except God, Nash says:

The existence of the world is like a brute fact; nor is the world a purposeless machine. The world exist as a result of a free decision to create by a God who is eternal, transcendent, spiritual, omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent loving and personal. Because there is God ordained order of creation, human beings can discover that order. It is said that order that makes science possible; it is that order scientists attempt to capture their laws.  

In Judaic–Christian concept of God, God is the real creator and the Lord of history. He is perfect and no amounts of creation add or subtract the perfect being of God, though there can be more of being or things as a result of divine creation. In this regard John Hicks says:

...The created realm is absolutely dependent upon God as its maker and is the source of its continued existence. Here we find that this radical notion of creation ex-nihillo expresses itself in prayer and liturgy as a sense of dependency upon God from moment to moment. We have apart in the universe, not by some natural rights, but by the grace of God and each day is a gift to be received in thankfulness and responsibility toward the divine giver.

Looking at the world and its order and magnitude, this implies that God is there. The psalmist exclaimed the glory of the creator and says, "The heavens declared the glory of God; the skies proclaimed the works of his hands." Here is another mystic who beautifully explains the importance of creation reveals great wisdom of God in these words:

\[93\] Nash Ibid
\[94\] John Hicks, Ibid. p. 9.
\[95\] Psalms 19: 1.
Without creation the wisdom of God would have remained forever locked in the boundless abyss of the divine nature, God brought his creature into being that He might enjoy them and rejoices in them.  

7. **God as Holy**

Holiness of God is most distinctive and important attribute of God in Judaic-Christian concept of God. When Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up; he also saw the angels praising God saying “Holy, holy is the Lord almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory.”  

Theologically speaking, when Isaiah saw the Lord and the holiness of God; he suddenly realized his personal depravity and says, “Woe to me I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the king, the almighty.”

God is holy. His ways, too, is holy. To be holy, God does not need to conform to any standard. As he is holy, he has made holiness the moral condition. The Lord said to Moses, the leader of the Jews, “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: Be holy because I the Lord am holy.”

God is holy; so he is the standard of holiness. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because he is holy, all his attributes are holy; that is, whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy.

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96 Tozer Ibid p.
97 Isaiah 6: 3
98 Isaiah 6: 5
99 Leviticus 19: 2
In closing, we should not treat God as a worldly reality, we are called into the partakers of God’s holiness in faith. As is seen in the book of Hebrews, Chapter 12 restored to our natural state or primordial capacity to reflect, like a mirror, the radical holiness and purity of God, even though our mirroring is inadequate.\(^\text{100}\)

\(^{100}\) Oden, Ibid p. 104