

THE IDEA OF THE HOLY-INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

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Abstract. In this paper, I have attempted to interpret and analyze the concept and picture of God as has been propounded in 'The Idea of Holy' by Rudolf Otto. This book was written 1923, yet still it is acknowledged as one of the authoritative treatises on the conception of God. The author has mainly focused on the monotheistic paradigm model of the transcendent reality which he calls the wholly other. His approach is well knitted in accordance with the ethos of modernity which started in religion with Protestant religious movement. Therefore, his approach is experiential not evidential. He is more concerned with the experience of the dreadful encounter with God which he calls numinous experience. But this view presents a one sided approach to God. Religion is not simply a matter of feeling it is also a form of life - a tradition we live in.

Knowledge of God could be achieved through many sources. It is a mistake to base the talk of God merely on numinous experience. This problem has been examined in this article with sympathy and better appreciation of the issues related to the numinous consciousness as has been discussed in this book.

Key Words: Numen, Numinous, Magesta, Overpoweringness, Awfulness, Energy, Fascination, Urgency, Wholly, Supramundane, Salvific

Rudolf Otto was a German expert in theology and history of the religion who devoted last ten years of his life to the comparative study of living faiths of the world. He was mainly interested in such questions as to how did the idea of God evolve in the annals of Hebrew history. How it has taken the present shape within the frame work of the Christian theism. What were the

earlier manifestations of the Sacred and how did they appear in primitive times in the cruder phases of daemonic and mythic experiences? What are the rational and non-rational components of the 'Holy'? How does a religious impulsion grow and attain its goal? What are the elements of psychological response to the emotional encounter with the Numen? In his book, "The Idea of the Holy", he not only has taken account of these questions but also has examined the paradigm model of the divine transcendent otherness. His research is mainly focused on the psychological emotions that take place when one goes through the numinous experience of the Divine as has been underscored in Old and New Testaments. Since Otto was mainly concerned to see religious ideas in evolutionary process and taken up the task to develop a comparative approach to the numinous consciousness, it seems essential to inquire how he perceives as to what precisely are the characteristics of the Hebrew God - Yahweh and the Christian God – the Heavenly Father. First, we shall look at those attributes which Otto has pointed out as characteristics of the Hebrew God in the chapter on 'The Numinous in the Old Testament'. Otto is of the opinion that the 'holiness' of Yahweh is related to such expressions as His 'fury', His 'jealousy', His 'wrath', 'the consuming fire' and the like.⁽¹⁾ The Hebrew Bible - from Genesis to Habakkuk - provides us with a picture of God who is awful, frightening and dreadful, whose wrath is earth trembling. He is the God of terror and dreadful. The ruthlessness of this avenging God is displayed in almost appalling image of the treader of the wine -press. (Isa. Ixiii), 'It is fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb.x.31).

In Karen Armstrong view, the Hebrew God has favorites and 'teaches his protege to behave in an equally unfair manner ... ' that only a few people are elect and vast majority of human race is condemned⁽²⁾ He is a God who enjoys the smell of the roasted meat offered to him on the altar of the Sacred Temple in Jerusalem. He allowed Joshua to subjugate and slaughter the native Canaanite People with impunity. The Hebrew Bible described him as an earth-shaking warrior god of storms and battle ⁽³⁾. His robes are red with the blood of his enemies. In the story of exodus, he is shown as revengeful Deity who enjoys sending plague, famine flood and thunderbolts to the Egyptian cities in order to save his choicest race -a particular ethnic group. Therefore, it would be very difficult to

agree with the proposal that Yahweh could be presented as a universal, benevolent and merciful and compassionate God. The Hebrew religious history is full of hatred and fury for the neighboring nations who practice worship of deities other than Yahweh. Thus the sacred history is replete with dreadful picture of deity, which, in Armstrong's view is fearful and repelling (4).

The attributes of God in the New Testament are clearly value and reason based. Here, the dreadful picture replaces with loving and perfectly good and gracious God. In chapter on 'The Numinous in the New Testament' Otto emphasizes that in the Gospel of Jesus culminated the process of rationalizing, moralizing and humanizing the Idea of God". This process began with the earliest period and continued as a living factor in the Prophets and the Psalms, bringing the apprehension of the numinous to a richer fulfillment. The result was the faith in 'the fatherhood of God' in the unsurpassable form in which it is peculiar to Christianity (5). Jesus claimed, He who is 'in heaven 'is yet our father'. That the 'heavenly' Being of marvel and mystery and awe is Himself the eternal, benignant, gracious will. The this view has the resolved contrast that first brings out the deep-felt harmony in true Christian experience...(6). Ewert Cousins, a process theologian, contends:

"For the Christian God is concerned with the world: he is involved in its suffering and its tragedy. The world, man and human events make difference to him. The deepest reality of God is seen not in his detachment or his power but in his love. In contrast with the Static Absolute and the all powerful monarch, the Christian god is the persuasive love revealed in Jesus Christ." (7)

Thus the Christian theism is based on the Fatherhood of the God whose very nature belongs to the essence of goodness to communicate (8). For the Christian believer "God's love not only shines forth from Genesis to the Book of the Revelation, but is often declared to have existed from all eternity (9). It is claimed that God incarnated himself in history to redeem humanity from the evil. He temporarily turned himself into a man and suffered a horrible death on the Cross in order to make it possible for sinful man to be redeemed from the punishment. Thus the Christian idea of God implies mercifulness, kindness, love and redemption for all humans who respond in penitence, whether they are Jews or gentiles. If we want transformation of the self, we need to establish

an obedient, loving and loyal relationship with the living God. These apparently two conflicting statements lead us to a paradoxical situation. We find ourselves in a Wittgensteinian jigsaw puzzle. We have before us two different pictures and we have been asked to correlate them in a coherent way. How could we place these incompatible and contradictory faith claims within one coherent theory. One picture shows us a God who is full of wrath, dread and is wholly other, beyond conceiving and comprehension. The other picture is that of a God who loves human being. He allows himself to be apprehended. He is a loving, caring, redeeming and morally active deity. Intellectually, it is mind boggling exercise to figure out a coherent picture out of these paradoxical statements about God. Either we are dealing with absolutely two different ideas of God belonging to different socio-cultic religious tradition, or we are dealing with the same God though in a different cultural, creedal context and social perspective in which the history of struggle for rationalization and schematization has also played crucial role. Thus emergence of Christianity in Hebrew history can also be considered as both negation and confirmation of Judaism.

In view of these difficulties, Schleiermacher confronted in the Biblical literature, he diverted his attention from the sacred Texts which he thought very much flawed to the experiential aspect of religious epistemology. In order to remove these flaws he, like Martin Luther, took upon himself to promote a spirituality based on an experience fundamental to religious faith. Instead of founding the knowledge of God on history and mythology and cultural variations, he insisted, one should focus on the higher and divine religious activity of the mind. Schleiermacher in his 'Speeches on Religion to its Cultured Despisers' has marked the beginning of modern theology by focusing attention on immanent God and giving religious experience a privileged position in religious epistemology. William James also took the cue from this approach and wrote his famous book 'The Varieties of Religious Experience'. Though James in the final analysis does not necessarily presuppose God, he has laid emphasis on experience as an effective way of understanding the mysteries of religious faith. Schleiermacher's God is immanent in the cosmos. "Every finite thing," he insists, "is a sign of the infinite, and so these various expressions declare the immediate relation of phenomena to the infinite and Whole"⁽¹⁰⁾. He defined religious experience as "the feeling of absolute

dependence⁽¹¹⁾. The feeling of dependence creates in us the sense of reverence and awe before the mysterious sense of the Divine. In his religious epistemology, Schleiermacher is averse to such words which may be termed as cognition, knowledge, thought and reflection because of their theoretical imports. He has centered his attention on the faculty of absorbed contemplation and intuition, the apprehension. As a result when one is absorbed in contemplation, one arrives at the glimpse of an Eternal apprehension of a ground and meaning of things beyond the empirical and mundane. Schleiermacher has refocused attention from transcendent God to human experience⁽¹²⁾. For him, God is inconceivable and incomprehensible, yet those who are gifted with proper disposition hidden in human soul could experience the Presence of God.

Rudolf Otto, while taking account of Schleiermacher's approach, has pointed out that his view of feeling of dependence in faith psychology is lower type of experience as it ranges over a limited experiential area of the feeling of dependence. The feelings or emotions, which the believer goes through, are qualitatively broader and intrinsically deeper. Schleiermacher's notion of psychological dependence fails to express any thing which is beyond itself. As a state of mind, it involves some thing more than and something other than merely a feeling of dependence⁽¹³⁾. Instead, Otto has proposed to call it 'creature consciousness or creature feeling. The psychology of this feeling works in broader spectrum of emotions such as the feeling of submergence into nothingness before an overpowering reality which is supreme above all. The second defect noted by Otto is that the religious category discovered by Schleiermacher is merely a category of self-valuation in the sense of self-depreciation ⁽¹⁴⁾. This exercise of coming upon the fact of God through self-valuation is the result of an inference. Otto argues that this exercise means reasoning to a cause beyond my self to account for my feeling of dependence. The third objection raised by Otto is that Schleiermacher eludes the primary question whether the feeling of objective presence is there; whether the object being referred to is an object outside the self. Otto calls this state of the Presence as the experience of the Numinous. This experience is basically irrational. If we take the feeling of a numinous object objectively as a primary and immediate datum of consciousness, then the feeling of dependence

is accepted as a consequent. According to Otto, the feeling of something numinous is not a mere subjective category of the mind; it is felt as objective and outside the self. It is an experience of something bearing the character of a 'Numen', to which the mind turns spontaneously. And it is encountered as a numen praesens. This is what happened in the Case of Abraham when he ventures to plead with God for the men of Sodom (15).

From Otto's point of view, the numinous consciousness utterly transcends the mundane, finite and the anthropomorphic realm of things. Religion for Otto centers on the idea of Deity as a mystery inexpressible and above all creatures, in the presence of whom, one can express nothing except speechless humility, fear and trembling. Otto derives the term numinous from the Latin numen, which means "god", "spirit", or "divine". It stands for that aspect of deity, which eludes comprehension in rational or ethical terms. It denotes the awe-inspiring element of religious experience. This term is employed to reject the humanizing conception of the divine.

This term needs to focus on the severance between the divine as immanent and as transcendent, between God as rational and moral Person and God as Majesty and Mystery and superhuman Otherness (16). Otto speaks of 'numinous feeling' for the emotive apprehension of the divine presence. The word feeling here does not mean to convey the idea of subjective emotions. It means a form of awareness that is neither that of ordinary perceiving, nor of ordinary conceiving. What Otto is concerned with is to describe as precisely as possible, by hint, illustration, and analogy the nature of the subjective feelings which characterize this awareness. These subjective feelings are necessary because it is only through them that we can come to an apprehension of their object. The word feeling can be easily explained to have objective reference by comparing it with such statements as feeling the beauty of a landscape or feeling the presence of a friend. In these statements we have used 'feeling' not merely as emotion engendered or stimulated in the mind but also as recognition of something in the objective situation awaiting discovery and acknowledgement. Otto's first concern is to explain the nature of the Numinous and to analyze religious emotions it causes as 'mysterium tremendum' and then to explicate as to what is the elemental experience of apprehending the numinous itself. About the numinous

apprehension, Otto says,

"we are dealing with something for which there is only one appropriate expression, *mysterium tremendum*. The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its "profane", non-religious mood of everyday experience. It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasm and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitement, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy. It has its crude, barbaric antecedents and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious. It may become the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of the creature in the presence of whom or what? In the presence of that which is a Mystery inexpressible and above all creatures." (17).

When the religious man happens to encounter the Numinous, he, according to Otto, in that peculiar moment of consciousness generally undergoes the psychological experience of a group of emotive feelings. These emotive feelings are, "the feeling of the 'uncanny', the thrill of awe or reverence, the sense of dependence, of impotence, or of nothingness, or again, the feelings of religious rapture and exaltation. More systematically these emotive feelings can be presented under two aspects: (1) that of "daunting awfulness and majesty", (2) "as something uniquely attractive and fascinating." From the former develops the sense of the uncanny, of divine wrath and judgment, and from the latter the reassuring and heightening experience of grace and divine Love. In this way Otto remains closer to the scheme of original Christian epistemology, which includes three elements: experience of religious dread, personal encounter, and participation in God's acts. Otto's analysis of feelings and emotions related to man-God encounter presents a classical treatment on the subject. The first thing one feels in a moment of deeply felt religious encounter is the feeling of creature-consciousness or creature-feeling.

CREATURE-FEELING

Otto describes the 'creature-feeling' in the following words:

"It is the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures."(18).

When someone experienced the presence of something bearing character of a 'numen' the first thing arises in his mind is the spontaneous emotion of dependence and feeling of nothingness. Otto defines it as an experience of the presence of something objective and outside the self, having the character of overpowering might and absolute power. He gives this feeling of overwhelming and mysterious presence the name of *mysterium tremendum*. First he explains as to what is meant by the expression 'tremendum' His close analysis of this expression shows the presence of such elements as horror, shuddering, dread and awe in the experience of this deep-emotion. This emotion leads one to trembling and speechless humility and 'cold blood' feeling.

1 The Element of Awfulness

In the numinous experience what accompanies the feeling of creature-consciousness is the moment singularly daunting and awe-inspiring. The element of awfulness is wholly distinct from that of being afraid. It is more than fear proper, a feeling of peculiar dread not to be mistaken for natural and ordinary fear. It erupts up from the depths of the soul with spasm and convulsion and leads to an almost grisly horror and shuddering. The special example for this feeling in the Old Testament is the expression 'emah of Yahweh ('fear of God') -a kind of fear which seizes upon a man with paralyzing effect. In Exodus, xxiii.27, Yahweh says: "I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people whom thou shall come..." In Job, the prophet is presented as saying: "Let not thy fear terrify me; let not thy dread make me afraid" Job ix. 34; xiii.21). In Otto's words: Here we have a terror fraught with an inward shuddering such as not even the most menacing and overpowering created thing can instill ⁽¹⁹⁾. It has something spectral in it. It invades the mind mightily and leads one to the reality to which the title 'augustus' can fittingly be applied. The title '*augustus*' cannot be given to any creature, not even to the emperor. In the Holy Scriptures the expression used for the numinous terror is the 'wrath of Yahweh' that is clearly analogous to the idea occurring in many religions as mysterious *ira deorum*. It is apparent in many passages of the Old Testament that this 'wrath' has no concern whatever with moral qualities. There is something very baffling in the way in which it is manifested. It is like hidden force of nature, like stored-

up electricity, discharging itself upon anyone who comes near. It is incalculable and arbitrary.

Anyone who is accustomed to think of deity only by its rational attributes will describe this 'wrath' as a mere caprice and willful passion. But a religious person from Jewish community will emphatically reject such a view. For them the wrath of God appears as natural expression of Godhead. It is quite an indispensable element of the 'holiness' itself. Otto contends: "It cannot be doubted that, despite the protest of Schleiermacher, and Ritschl, Christianity also has something to teach of the 'wrath of God'. For instance, Jesus is presented in Mathew's Gospel as saying: "But fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. X.28). The same vibrating awe and dread rings out again clearly in the saying in Hebrew x. 31: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God", and in the Hebrew xii. 29: "Our God is a consuming fire." The Old Testament God of 'vengeance' recurs even in the teaching of Jesus himself. For instance, in the Matt Jesus says: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men" (xxi. 41). Finally, the experience of weird awe and shuddering dread can be viewed in the events of the night of Gethsemane. That is the experience of sore amazement and heaviness. The soul was shaken to its depth. What is the cause of 'exceeding sorrowful even unto death', and 'this sweat that falls to the ground like great drops of blood'? Otto asks a pertinent question: "Can it be ordinary fear of death in the case of one who had death before his eyes for weeks past and who had celebrated with clear intent his death-feast with his disciple? No there is more here than the fear of death; there is the awe of the creature before the *mysterium: tremendum*, before the shuddering secret of the numen." (20)

2 The Element of 'Overpoweringness' ('majesta')

There is a further element, which is an important part of the numinous experience, namely, 'absolute over-poweringness'. The term *majestas* or *majesty* readily explains the feeling related to the emotion caused in the experience of being overpowered by an extremely great power. The *tremendum* may be rendered more adequately *tremenda majesta* or 'awful majesty'. The idea of awful majesty serves the purpose of preserving the greatness of the experience of the presence of God. It is especially in relation to this element of majesty that the creature-consciousness comes upon the

seen as a sort of shadow or subjective reflection of it. Thus in contrast having the experience of an absolute reality, one feels the submergence of being as 'dust and ashes' and nothingness. In mysticism, this kind of evaluation of the transcendent object of its reference as that which through plenitude of being stands supreme and absolute, leads the finite self when contrasted with it to become conscious even in its nullity that 'I am naught'.⁽²¹⁾

3 The Element of 'Energy' or 'Urgency'

This element comprises the third emotion along with the emotions of 'awfulness' and 'majesty' in having the tremendous experience of the 'living God. It is particularly vividly perceptible in the experience of the wrath of God. Otto describes it with the help of such symbolical expressions as 'vitality, passion, emotional temper, will, force movement, excitement, activity and impetus.' These are typical features of the numinous experience that recur again and again from daemonic level up to the idea of the 'living God.' These features are the expressions of energy of the numen. In the mysticism, this element of energy is a very living and a vigorous factor. Especially, the 'voluntaristic' mysticism or the mysticism of love is the glaring example. This element can be clearly seen as 'consuming fire' of love whose burning strength the mystic can hardly bear, but begs that the heat that has scorched him may be mitigated, lest he be himself destroyed by it. And in this urgency and pressure the mystic's love claims a perceptible kinship with the wrath itself, the scorching and consuming wrath of God. It is the same 'energy' only differently directed. 'Love', says one of the mystics, 'is nothing else than quenched wrath.'⁽²²⁾

4 The 'Wholly Other'

Mysterium means a secret or a mystery in the sense of that which is alien to us, uncomprehended and unexplained. Analysis of the idea of 'mysterium' shows that it is the experience of a supernatural and transcendent object, something beyond the grasp and understanding of the experiment. It signifies blank wonder, an astonishment that strikes us dumb, amazement absolute⁽²³⁾. Taken in the religious sense; the mysterious is that which is wholly other, that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible and the familiar, and that which fills the mind with blank wonder and astonishment. It implies an encounter with a being whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own. This feeling of

being in the presence of wholly other is the fourth element that belongs to the sphere of the numinous consciousness. The consciousness of the wholly other can be understood to begin with the daemonic experience. Its higher mode of manifestation is the experience of the numinous object in contrast to everything wonted and familiar and in the end to everything in general that belongs to this world. Finally, the experience exalts to the 'supermundane', that which is above the world-order. Otto explains the experience of the wholly other by giving examples from mysticism. He clarifies his point of view thus:

"In mysticism we have in the 'beyond' again the strongest stressing and overpowering of those non-rational elements which are already inherent in all religions. Mysticism continues to its extreme point of this contrasting of the numinous object (the numen) , as the 'wholly other', with ordinary experience. Not content with contrasting it with all that is of nature or this world mysticism concludes by contrasting it with Being itself and all that 'is', and finally actually calls it 'that which is nothing'. By this 'nothing' is meant not that of which nothing can be predicated, but that which is absolutely and intrinsically other than and opposite of everything that is and can be thought. But while exaggerating to the point of paradox this negation and contrast - the only means open to conceptual thought to apprehend the *mysterium* mysticism at the same time retains the positive quality of the 'wholly other' as a very living factor in its over brimming religious emotions."(24)

5 The Element of Fascination

The strangest and most noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion is the dual character of the numinous consciousness. On the one hand its quantitative content is daunting 'awful' and 'majestic' and on the other its qualitative content is fascinating and uniquely attractive. If the divine object appears to the mind as an object of dread and horror, it is at the same time no less something that allures and fascinates. It is not merely something to be wondered at. It is not merely an object, which bewilders and confounds. The mystery of the religious encounter is such that the experient also feels something that captivates and transports to the level of intoxication. According to Otto, it is the Dionysiac element in the numen. (25) The ideas, which arise with the experience of the numinous on a more schematic plane, are love, mercy, pity and comfort. When the elements of joy reach their climax, they lead to the mysterious experience of bliss and

beatitude, graciousness and the presence of that which is august and Holy.

We have already seen that the wholly other in the element of mystery leads to the supernatural and transcendent and to the beyond of mysticism. In the same manner, the element of fascination has the possibility to end up in a mystical state. At the highest point, the fascinating becomes the 'overabounding', 'exuberant', the mystical moment, which exactly corresponds with this line of approach. While the 'feeling of the 'over-abounding' is a special characteristic of mysticism, a trace of it survives in all truly felt states of religious beatitude, however restrained and kept within measure by other factors. Otto contends: This is seen most clearly from the psychology of those great experiences - of grace, conversion, second birth - in which the religious experience appears in its pure intrinsic nature and in heightened activity,..."The hard core of such experiences in their Christian form consists of the redemption from guilt and bondage to sin..."⁽²⁶⁾ Such experiences ultimately may pass into blissful excitement, rapture and exaltation. The nature of these fascinating and blissful experiences has been vouched for by the autobiographical testimonies of a great many God enamored people, especially Saints and Sufis.

Concluding remarks: Otto's Idea of the Holy is unmistakably based on strict Semitic parameters of monotheism. It means his picture of the God is deep rooted in Old Testament religious tradition. It is beautifully painted and well knitted in accordance with the ethos of religious modernity which accepted historical critical method for understanding Biblical concepts. Therefore, some of its arguments are still relevant and being quoted in recently written books on God. In his conceptual web, Otto is indebted to Lutheran views on faith and epistemology. According to Eliade, Otto's notion of the Holy derives from Luther's account of the terrible power manifested in the divine wrath ⁽²⁷⁾ Like Luther, he is more concerned to elements of feeling, will and grace, love and affection. He, in the same vein, refuses to accept the evidentialist approach of Thomas Aquinas. He insists that knowledge of God comes through feeling and emotion not through reason or critical inquiry. But, as Professor Keith Ward has rightly pointed out, religion does not consist primarily in having certain feelings whether of absolute dependence or of numinous awe ⁽²⁸⁾. Religion is

not all about feeling of awe, wonder, mystery and dread of the numen, it is rather a form of life which is more concerned with the betterment of this mundane world, liberation from evil and suffering. God himself, by virtue of the logic of his concern shown in the Holy Scriptures for justice and righteousness, belongs to this world rather than the supramundane and supernatural world. It will be a mistake to claim that knowledge of God comes only through feelings and emotions. Knowledge is arrived at through a mixture of sources such as intuition, thought, reason, feeling and sensation. Knowledge of God, through whichever source it comes, is sacred.

Certainly, Otto has nicely fulfilled his vocation to explain how the mysterious awakening of numinous consciousness occurs which leads to terrifying uncanny feeling in man. But mostly his analysis is centered around the awful experience of the encounter with the Unseen-the *Mysterium Tremendum*. But his analysis fails to take account of positive results of the fascinating experience of the Holy, which appear in the transforming feelings of grace, reconciliation and liberation, forgiveness and deliverance. Otto also ignored another aspect of religious experience of 'I Thou encounter' which is an important dimension of the religious experience which many of the saints, Sufis and mystics claim to have gone through. There are some other aspects of religious feelings in believer's life which he expresses in the form of gratitude, trust, love, reliance, humble submission and dedication. It is quite natural to experience such feeling as one solemnly prays to God. Here, one may inquire: what does Otto mean to imply by feeling and emotion. Is it the fact that he is emphasizing purely a subjective and unreliable object? If it is the case, it means that the picture of the deity he has drawn is simply a figment of his subjective imagination which has no objective grounds to stand on. Otto himself has raised this question in his criticism on Schleiermacher when he inquires whether the feeling of objective presence is there; whether the object being referred to is an object outside the self. Therefore, a Cliffordian detractor can very easily reject it as something nonsensical, declaring it a groundless but a beautiful piece of fiction. Certainly, his fascinating characterization of the deity shows a strange resemblance with Rider Haggard's central character of his Novel 'She' who is also supramundane and exalted, but filled with demonic wrath and surrounded in mystery. But the fact is that fiction always remains fiction. Recently,

Professor Richard Dawkins has refuted the theistic argument on scientific grounds in his Book 'The God Delusion'. Further, it is pertinent to note that Otto's belief in God does not conform to the narrative of salvific pluralism propounded in the Post Colonial period. Since he flourished in the colonial era, his sense of superiority of Christian religion does not allow him to adopt a balanced approach in comparative study of religions. His approach towards other traditions is unduly negative and ultimately exclusivist. For example, his remarks that Jewish and Islamic conceptions of God are based on some hasty generalization. Intellectually, it is always objectionable to give judgments about other belief traditions conveniently ignoring the fact that all the three religious traditions operate within their own frameworks built on many mutually contradictory faith-claims. All religions claim finality and exclusiveness. Since no one claim to have some neutral and rationally well justified criteria a to adjudicate between religious beliefs, it is absolutely mistaken to claim that my picture of God is unique and perfect and the others' are not. D' Costa has rightly given the verdict, "It is unintelligible to think that one could decide between religious beliefs (29).

End Notes

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