

- On My recovery from Religion –

My parents were Christians. From childhood my weekly life revolved around the life of the church. This was especially so in the formative years of my early youth, when, including my involvement with its youth organisations, I would be at the church as much as five or six times a week.

As the process of my social conditioning was well in hand by my early teens, it will not surprise that at the age of seventeen I approached my Clergyman with a view to becoming as Minister. He discouraged me because I have a stammer. After a fairly tortuous but religious route, social conditioning won and I was ordained in to my first church. I was a true believer then. It certainly wasn't just a job. It was to be my life's work. I intended to give "My utmost for His highest".

However, being a conscientious student I kept reading. Eventually, with profound regret, and no little sorrow. I came to the conclusion that the story was not true.

It broke my heart. My religious beliefs had failed to bear intellectual and moral weight that I wanted to put on them.

I left the faith; and found I stepped into a howling wilderness. There was no God; there was no God and Father of mankind. I was on my own. Like MacNiele Dixon I discovered that "The truth is not always angel's bread when found". The comfort and the assurances of the faith dissolved. "The exceeding great and precious promises" of the faith disappeared.

However the loss all these thing proved to be a release into freedom. It meant that I was no longer bound to propound Christian doctrines from the pulpit about which I had serious misgivings.

Indeed, It was only after some years in my a new profession, when I found myself running up the steps to my home shouting; free at last ... free at last... that I realized my psyche was recovering from religion.

My sense of freedom was premature. One does not escape years of social conditioning so easily! There was the schizophrenic phase which still lingers on. The Heart still wants the story to be true, the intellect knows that it is false. Recovery from Religion, like physical of recovery from a protracted illness, takes time and leaves its psychological scars; sloughing off years of religious conditioning takes years.

Fortunately I was not alone in making my journey. I discovered that there were multitudes who had made a similar journeys out of religion and who, to my solace, confirmed my direction of travel. I discovered that I was not alone, nor on my own. All round the world People were realizing that humanity needs to "Recover from Religion". When they looked out on the world they realized they had... "had it..." with religion. After several thousands of years it certainly has not healed the nations.

It is for our comfort than in one of his most recent books the Dalai Lama steps out of the boundaries of his own religion and tells us that he now believes that humanity must, get "Beyond Religion". He writes "The reality of the world today is that grounding ethics in religion is no longer adequate" he continues..."I believe that the time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics that is beyond religion".

Thankfully World recovery from religion is already a work in progress; just as some deserts explode spontaneously into flower after long awaited rains, so also, in the ethical and spiritual aridity our times we find that “Sunday Assemblies without God” are bursting out like flowers all over the world.

It has been part of my recovery to realize that across the world there is the collective dawning that we do not need religion. In the midst of an inscrutable universe, all that I require, in words of Paul Tillich is “the courage to be”. At the end of the day it is not theology that makes my life meaningful; it is my relationships with others that gives it content and invests it with significance.

Without relationships my life loses its content; it dissolves and fizzles out. It is my relationships and “being” and “living” in them, which make my life a worthwhile experience.

It was also part of my recovery to recognise that the vestments of religion are falling from the shoulders of humanity. I have come to realize, that in midst of an inexplicable cosmos, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer puts it, “Man has come of age” and that it was time for me to stand on my own two feet, be mature and take responsibility for my actions. God has nothing to do with it. I can be spiritual without God.

Having made my own journey, I have become able to join with those who, like the Dalai Lama, Paul Tillich and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, have recognised that humanity has already started on a new spiritual project. It is nothing other than the Globalisation of Ethical and Spiritual Secularism.

Coming toward the end of my life, it is a thrill, and solace to a once broken heart, to play a minute part in the emergence of new kind of spirituality.

We live on an evolving planet. We are an evolving species. Evolution is not done with us. Our Spiritual evolution is no less a process, as that of our biological evolution. Human Spirituality is an evolutionary process. It is currently a privilege for you and I to be part of it because, the Global Age of Ethical Spiritual Secularism has come.

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