



RELIGIOUS
TOLERATION
&
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

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ENGLAND

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PREFACE

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Religious pluralism is the great fact of religious life as the twentieth century comes to a close. Appearing in the nineteenth century, pluralism has blossomed in this century as a major item in the larger agenda for the rights and liberties of human beings. And religious liberty is among the best indicators of the general state of human freedom in any given society.

The growth of religious diversity has been allowed by the separation of religious structures from state control and favoritism. In turn the emergence of diversity has called into existence the secular state which can establish a rule of law while serving as a mediating force allowing different religious groups to exist side by side as neighbors. In an open society, religious differences can become the occasion for intimate dialogue, increased appreciation for one's own spiritual life and awareness of the diversity of human existence, rather than turned into an excuse for hostility or an agenda for misunderstanding and irrational hatred.

The growth of pluralism has been accelerated in the late twentieth century as communication and transportation have improved. In the last century, the Christian movement introduced most varieties of Christianity into the traditional religious cultures of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Since World War II, massive migration of people into the West has brought every conceivable form of Eastern religion into Europe and North America. At the same time the telephone, television and the personal computer have transferred the wisdom of experience of each particular culture (including its spiritual resources) into the homes of people around the world. Today, except in those few remaining places where laws inhibiting religious liberty are enforced, all modern urban centers, from London to Nairobi, from Tokyo to Rio de Janeiro, are home to significant minority communities of the world's religions.

The rise of religious pluralism has itself forced us to revise much of what we have believed about the social role of religion, especially its supposed necessary function as a cement holding the peoples of a nation together. Nations can be just as easily held together by their mutual desire for freedom and the good life it brings than by any need of sameness in culture and faith. We have now seen nations quite capable of existing in secular and multi-faith environments, and we have seen the social disruption that can occur when governments attempt to impose a religious uniformity upon peoples who have developed high expectations for personal freedom.

At the same time, our attitudes about new religions, largely developed from a perspective of commitment to the older religious communities, have had to undergo a significant change especially as Western religious establishments have faced a severe decline in public confidence and allegiance. A generation ago, we thought of the older religions as the repositories of time-tested truths destined to remain from generation to generation, while new religions were seen as ephemeral affairs. The latter were dismissed as small, shallow personal cults built around charismatic figures and destined to die with the passing of the founder. But as new religions, from the Baha'i Faith to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, have emerged and not only survived their founder but have gone on to become international religious communities attracting millions of faithful, we have seen the impulse to produce innovative religious forms as part of the natural ongoing social life of all peoples. People are constantly producing new forms of piety, reviving and giving new life to forgotten structures, developing personal variations on spiritual life and founding new religious organizations. Many of these forms become institutionalized as local variations within larger religious communities, revitalization movements, somewhat invisible private expressions of communal rituals and additional competing denominations and religious groups.

In the following essay, Bryan Wilson, the acknowledged dean of the study of new religions, provides a clear and concise overview of the development of a tolerant society and of the nature of the religious diversity which has emerged hand-in-hand with it. In the West, the rise of diversity has been accompanied theologically by a reevaluation (and discarding) of some claims for uniqueness formerly espoused within the Christian community, a process largely dictated by the expanding awareness of the world's religions. Within Christianity, generations of theological battles have produced several thousand denominations and a seemingly endless set of variations in theology, organizational forms, church life, worship and ethical commitments. As we compare Christianity to different religious communities, we soon become aware that the differences between theologies and styles of ritual within Christianity are almost as great as the differences between Christian thought and worship and those of other faith communities.

Also, as Wilson notes, and a generation of court tests verify, a major challenge to religious toleration is an expansion in our understanding of the phenomena and communities we can rightfully list under the term “religion.” Few today would banish Hindu and Buddhist groups to the outer darkness. Some of the newer emergent religions have had to contest for the right to exist as religions. Newer non-theistic and human-centered faiths amply illustrate that religion can and does exist even without any acknowledgement of a deity or revealed truth.

Finally, Wilson also implicitly argues that our ignorance of the diversity which probably already exists in our neighborhood is itself a great barrier to the spread of toleration and the extension of religious freedom. We tend to appreciate the familiar and to find reasons to denigrate those who follow practices we find different and whose inner logic we do not comprehend. We find it easier to caricature another’s religious life than expend the energy to locate aspects of resonance and appreciation.

Thus this essay is offered by the Institute for the Study of American Religion as an initial orientation map to the world of religious expression that surrounds each one of us. It provides some badly needed non-judgmental handles with which we can begin to understand the nature of different religious groups and spiritual communities, even those not mentioned nor singled out for discussion by name below, be they old established churches or modern new faiths.

J. GORDON MELTON

Institute for the Study of American Religion

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The Institute for the Study of American Religion was founded in 1969 as a research facility on religious groups and organizations in North America. In the 1990s, as some consensus on the integration of our knowledge on new religions has occurred, it has extended its area of concern to Europe, Africa and Asia. It supports the American Religious Collection at the Davidson Library of the University of California-Santa Barbara and publishes a variety of reference books and scholarly monographs on different religious groups and phenomena.

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I. HUMAN RIGHTS & RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Since the end of the Second World War the right of all human beings to freedom of religion has been proclaimed by resolutions of various international bodies, including the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and in the Helsinki Accord. Governments are charged not only to abandon any former policies of religious persecution, but also positively to act to protect religious liberty, so long as the religious practices of a particular sect or denomination do not contravene the ordinary criminal law or invade the rights of other citizens. Particularly in the absence of any scholarly consensus on the definition of religion, such resolutions do not, however, guarantee the elimination of all forms of religious discrimination. Governmental preference for one (or more) religions may still persist, as instanced in the establishment by law of particular religions in various European



countries. Such preference may confer economic, specifically fiscal, advantages on particular religious bodies as well as social and even political privileges denied to other faiths. Even where such discriminatory measures are not overtly maintained (by law, custom, or precedent), there may be diverse governmental or social attitudes which favour some types of religious body above others. In particular, there may be official or public suspicion of certain religious organizations, particularly where the teachings and practices of a religious group are generally unfamiliar—so unfamiliar that, by officialdom or public opinion, they may be regarded as being “not really religious”. The public, and at times the authorities, invoke a stereotype of what a religion should resemble and how religious believers should behave. Bodies which depart too radically from this, perhaps unconsciously hypothesized, model may thus appear ineligible for the extension to them of normal religious toleration. They may, indeed, appear to fall outside the category of what is to be considered as religion at all, or even have to face the charge that they operate in ways that contravene the law.

II. CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

In the past five decades, the diversity of religions in western societies has significantly increased. There has been a dramatic growth in the number of new religious bodies, some of them newly imported to the West, principally from the Orient. The earlier religious pluralism, which was almost entirely confined to variations within Christianity, has been extended to embrace new conceptions of spirituality and new movements derivative from other religious traditions. The orientations, teachings, practices and patterns of organization of these various bodies—whether indigenous or imported—are widely diverse, and often entirely different from the corresponding characteristics of traditional churches or sects. It should be made clear, however, that the coincidence of the call by international bodies for religious freedom, and the proliferation of new religious movements, was fortuitous. The resolutions of international agencies were not specifically directed to the issues of toleration of these new religions. Rather, they were primarily concerned with freedom of religion in the communist world, and for amity between the different major faiths in religiously pluralist societies. The emergence in the West of so many new spiritual minorities was incidental, and the spirit of toleration endorsed by international agencies—toleration for which they are certainly eligible—has not always been so readily extended to them.

III. TOLERATION IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Although toleration is today not infrequently preached by Christian authorities, it is important to recall that the tradition of Christianity is one of intolerance. Unlike most contemporary

religions, Christianity was, from Pauline times, an exclusivistic religion, forbidding its votaries to worship other gods or engage in alien practices. It was also a universalistic religion, proclaiming that it was the only true religion for all mankind. Whereas Judaism was also exclusivist, it was not universalist—it was not a religious choice normally available to those who were not ethnic Jews. Christianity, in contrast, taught that it was the only valid religion for anyone at all. It was a voluntaristic religion which men were free to choose, and *should* choose. Thus, Christianity was also a proselytizing religion, seeking to persuade people that all other religions were evil, and condemning them as such.

For centuries, the Christian church made its main mission the conversion of the heathen, among whom it included those of all other faiths. While the heathen were to be converted, those who were acquainted with “the true faith” but had, in some particular or another, come to challenge church teaching were to be not only excommunicated from the church but also exterminated by death (the authoritative demand of St. Thomas Aquinas).

Christian intolerance towards all other faiths was mitigated only at the Reformation, and then only gradually. The early manifestations of toleration in central Europe were initially applicable only to princes, whose subjects were required to adopt the faith, Catholic or Lutheran, of their ruler on the principle adopted at the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, of *cuius regio, eius religio* [in a prince’s country, a prince’s religion]. In the various territories influenced by the Calvinist Reformed Church, toleration was sometimes subsequently extended to Calvinists, but the sects of the so-called “radical” Reformation—Anabaptists and Hutterites—and later, the Socinians and Unitarians continued to be persecuted, whilst atheists were not to be tolerated at all according to theories of toleration advanced even by enlightened philosophers such as John Locke.

Eventually, the principles espoused by the Reformation of an “open Bible” and “the priesthood of all believers” led to the steady attrition of the dispositions of intolerance enshrined in traditional Christianity. Dissenting groups acquired limited rights to worship in their own preferred way, in England most conspicuously under the legislation of William and Mary in 1689. Restrictions remained and were only gradually relaxed and eventually abated in the subsequent two hundred years. Gradually the governing classes of Europe came to abandon the theory that social cohesion largely depended on the maintenance of religious conformity. The lesson was more pointedly realized in the United States, where a religiously diverse population (among whom were many refugees from religious persecution in Europe) had to be accommodated. The best guarantee against social divisiveness in such a religiously pluralist society was not to be found in an attempt to impose religious conformity but in the establishment of religious toleration as a principle transcending the doctrines and beliefs

of any one religion. In contrast to the old European assumptions of the need for religious coercion, in the United States it was recognized that a principle of toleration was indispensable for the social cohesion of an already religiously diversified population. Thus it was, that in the American context, toleration and religious freedom were invoked as principles superordinate to any particular religious system. The very creation of a secular state, in which the governing authorities were not to establish religion nor to show partiality for any one religion above another, became the first guarantee of religious rights.

IV. CULTURE-BOUNDEDNESS IN THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION

The range of religious variation to which principles of toleration and nondiscrimination were extended was initially quite narrow, embracing only a limited number of Christian denominations and, less equitably, the Jews. The conception of what constituted a religion was premised on this variety of Judaeo-Christian movements. Religion as such was conceived as being virtually synonymous with Christianity, and the experts in religion were theologians who were themselves committed Christians. It was they who traditionally provided the definitions of what constituted religion, and their concepts were inevitably cast in exclusively Christian terms. Theologians' definitions of religion may be regarded as largely academic, but they have their influence in other more practical spheres, not least in courts of law, sometimes with very unjust results. For example, the absurd result obtained from a legally-adopted narrow, culture-bound definition of religion may be instanced by a case in England as late as 1754, when a judge, Lord Hardwicke, ruled that, although religion was a charitable object, the teaching of Judaism was not, and he ruled that the funds left by a testator for instruction in Judaism should be applied instead to the provision of instruction in Christianity. For the courts at that time, the term "religion" did not include Judaism: it meant only Christianity.

V. MODERN DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION

Law and theology are both normative disciplines, and in consequence the bias of the normative perspective to which they are committed colours their definitions and assumptions. As modern scholarship has widened our acquaintance with other cultures, so it has been recognized that what is appropriately designated as "religion" often departs in many particulars relative to belief, practice and institutional arrangements from those which characterize Christianity. In consequence a more encompassing definition of religion has been sought, and one which recognizes that other societies espouse religious beliefs, engage in religious practices and maintain religious institutions, different as these are from Christian conceptions. Increased

acquaintance with numerous empirical cases rendered impossible the assumption voiced even by serious academic commentators in the nineteenth century, that peoples other than Christians, Jews and Muslims, had “no religion”.

VI. ETHICALLY NEUTRAL DEFINITIONS

Although religion itself is always normative, since each religion differs from others, modern specialists in religious studies (anthropologists, sociologists and comparative religionists) seek to discuss the normative without themselves becoming committed to it. Modern scholars seek to maintain objectivity and ethical neutrality. The development of a thorough-going neutrality in the study of religion has been achieved only slowly, however. Some contemporary studies in comparative religion still betray bias. Even in the social sciences, which are explicitly committed to value-free enquiry, certain prejudices are apparent in work done in the inter-war years. In particular, it was often gratuitously assumed that the course of religious change was analogous to the process of biological evolution, and that the religion of the most advanced nations was necessarily “higher” than that of other peoples. That assumption was readily acceptable to Christian scholars. For others (conspicuously Sir James Frazer) religion was believed to be an evolutionary step on the road from magic to science.

Today it is no longer assumed by scholars that belief in one deity is in some sense a higher form of religion than belief in several deities or none. It is acknowledged that a religion may postulate an anthropomorphic god, some other form of deity, a supreme being, a plurality of spirits or ancestors, a universal principle or law, or some other expression of ultimate belief, such as a “ground of being”. That religious concepts are likely to be more abstract in intellectually more sophisticated cultures and contexts, is not seen as a justification for designating such religions as “higher”.

As scholars became aware of the empirical diversity of religion in different societies, so their conception of what constituted religion had to change, coming increasingly to connote phenomena which had family resemblance rather than shared identity, and which manifested similarities of patterns of behaviour rather than identity of actual substance. The realization dawned that religion could not be defined in terms specific to one particular tradition. Thus, the concrete items that pertained to Christianity, and which, at any earlier stage, had been regarded as essential to the definition of religion were now seen to be merely examples of more general categories which a definition might include. The specification of such concrete elements was superseded by more abstract formulations that embraced a variety of types of beliefs, practices, and institutions which, although far from intrinsically identical, could be

regarded as functional equivalents. Once such a conceptualization developed, it was perceived that in every society there were beliefs that transcended known empirical reality, and there were practices designed to bring men into contact or rapport with the supernatural. In most societies there were also people who undertook the special functions associated with this goal. Together, these elements came to be recognized as constituting religion, regardless of the substance of the beliefs, the nature of the actual practices, or the formal status of the functionaries in their service.

VII. INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF BELIEF AND PRACTICE

What also came to be realized was that religions were by no means always internally consistent. Even in relatively small, tribal societies there are often rites and myths of considerable complexity which often fail to constitute one consistent, internally integrated and coherent system. Religion undergoes change, and accretion occurs in both myth and ritual as a society experiences contact with neighbouring or invading peoples. Different rites and beliefs may attach to different situations and exigencies (e.g. to induce rain; to ensure fertility of crops, animals and women; to provide protection; to cement alliances; for initiations for age-groups, etc.). All such activities are directed towards supernatural agencies (however defined) and they are recognized by scholars as religious. The codes of religious belief and practice in technically more advanced societies are generally more elaborately articulated, and display greater internal coherence and stability, but even in advanced systems, elements of diversity persist. No theological system or schematization of beliefs pertaining to the supernatural, in any of the world's great religions, is wholly coherent. There are always unexplained residues, and sometimes open contradictions. In most if not all societies there persist among the general populace remnants of earlier religious orientations such as folk religious elements. Superseded religious systems often leave their deposits on those which displace them. Thus, the practices of making votive offerings and organizing shrine processions characteristic of the pagan cults in the Roman Empire found their way into Christian performances, just as various earlier middle eastern myths had their echo in Christian teaching. In Roman times, pagan deities became lightly transmogrified as Christian saints, and more recently, a similar process has occurred in Latin America. Apart from these extraneous elements persisting from folk religion, the sacred scriptures of all the major religions manifest internal contradictions and inconsistencies. In the nature of religion, there are often ambiguities: religious language does not purport to be clinically scientific; it seeks to be poetic, evocative and at times emotive, rather than narrowly cognitive. Such language can often be re-interpreted, taken literally, allegorically, figuratively, or symbolically, thus producing divergent responses. These and other sources, particularly as religious specialists have sought to reconcile religious dicta with

empirical evidence, have given rise to differences among these scholars who have, at times, embraced opposed interpretative schemes and exegetical principles, which have sometimes fed different traditions even within what is broadly acknowledged to be orthodoxy. These issues, then, constitute one source of religious diversity: another arises from deliberate dissent.

VIII. THE INCIDENCE OF DISSENT

Quite apart from the development of distinct schools within the mainstream tradition, in advanced societies, deliberate and conscious dissent from orthodoxy has also been a common phenomenon. Christians, Jews, and Muslims are divided into the orthodox (of all schools) and dissentient groups which follow a divergent pattern of religious practice, subscribe to deviant beliefs, and create their own separate institutions. Dissent is most conspicuous in contexts in which religious exclusivity prevails: that is to say, in which the individual is required, if adhering to one religion, to renounce allegiance to all others—a pattern of commitment rigorously required in the Christian tradition. As some European governments ceased to prescribe specific forms of religion for their subjects, and as they have, at least formally, reduced in some degree even their discriminatory preferences for one religion above another, the situation in those countries has come more closely to approximate that prevailing in the United States. Thus, a situation designated as “religious pluralism” has come into existence. Yet, the formal equality of religions within a given society—equality, as is often said, before the law—should not conceal the fact that not infrequently discrimination often persists in one respect or another. In England, a variety of laws maintain the superiority of the Church of England, the church established by law, of which the monarch is temporal head. A number of Anglican bishops sit, as of right, in the Upper House of legislature, and episcopal appointments are made by the Prime Minister—among other indications of preferential treatment. In other European countries, various discriminatory arrangements favour one or more traditional churches, over and above other dissenting groups or new religious bodies. There is, generally, freedom of religious practice in Europe, but different religious bodies still experience differential treatment from the state, and have to contend with often hostile mass-media which work to promote public suspicion of whatever is unfamiliar in religion. Such differential treatment and the associated hostility arises at least in part from the persistence of normative commitment of most of those who have traditionally been concerned, as “experts”, with defining religion and specifying its character. There is, in all societies, an inheritance of learned language about religion which bears the normative stamp of religious commitment. Early definitions and descriptions of the essentials of religion frequently used terms borrowed from the religious traditions of those who formulated them. It is readily recognized by social scientists that the use of terms peculiar to one religion must distort the depiction of other religions, and may

frequently involve false assumptions about their character and dispositions. Concepts evolved within one cultural and religious tradition will misrepresent the functionally equivalent but formally distinctive elements of religion in another. Instances of such inappropriate usage include references to “the Buddhist church”; “the Muslim priesthood”; or (in reference to the Trinity) “Christian gods”. The very terms “church” and “priesthood” carry powerful specific cultural and structural connotations, and the phenomena to which they are applied are in many respects unlike their functional equivalents in other religious systems. The intellectual, ideological, moral, and organizational attributes which characterize them are specific to the Christian tradition and using these terms must lead to confusion, misrepresentation, and false expectations of other religions, and hence to suspicion and perhaps hostility.

IX. ABSTRACT DEFINITIONS

If religions are to be accorded parity by the state, it becomes necessary to adopt abstract definitive terms to encompass the diversity of religious phenomena. Such a use of abstract language, which may be regarded as “clinical” in the sense of not being contaminated by the particular traditions and preconceptions of any one religion, will necessarily fail to capture all the intrinsic qualities of any specific faith. It will exhaust neither the cognitive nor the emotional aspects of belief, ritual, symbolism and institutions. This social scientific approach makes possible objective comparison, analysis, and explanation, but it does not, and does not pretend to, convey the whole substance of the inner meaning or emotional appeal that a religion has for its own adherents.

X. THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF MODERN DEFINITIONS

No one definitive definition of religion has been accepted by all scholars, but a number of elements, set out in appropriately abstract terms, are frequently invoked in various combinations as the characteristics of religion. They include beliefs, practices, relationships and institutions relative to:

- a) supernatural forces, power(s), beings, or goals;
- b) man’s ultimate concerns;
- c) sacred objects (things set apart and forbidden) of spiritual devotion;
- d) an agency that controls man’s destiny;
- e) the ground of being;

- f) a source of transcendent knowledge or wisdom;
- g) the collective character of religious life.

The consequences and functions of religion are indicated as:

- a) conferring group and/or individual identity;
- b) establishing a framework of orientation;
- c) facilitating the creation of a humanly-constructed universe of meaning;
- d) providing reassurance and comfort about prospects of help and salvation;
- e) effecting human reconciliation and the maintenance of a moral community.

Whilst these features would be generally accepted by scholars as characterizing most if not all religions, they might prove to be too broad to admit of easy application in the practical sphere when, for example, modern governments or judiciaries are faced with the task of applying appropriate criteria to one or another of the many, highly diverse, new or newly-imported religions which now have adherents in western societies. To this end, a more refined catalogue of attributes might be needed, embracing categories each of which is presented not as a *sine qua non* of religion, but as features often to be found in the empirical evidence about any group which claims for itself the status of a religion. These features, then, are to be regarded, as we have already indicated, as recognizable “family resemblances”. Thus each item is to be seen as something that is *probably* evident in a religion, without its being suggested that it *must* be present for a movement or a system of ideas, to qualify as a religion.

XI. A PROBABILISTIC INVENTORY

What now follows is an inventory of items that are probably to be discerned in any movement, organization or system of teachings which might count as a religion. Not all of these items will usually be found in any given case, and one might decide what proportion of them would need to be present for a particular set of beliefs and practices to qualify for religious status. Given the very long span of human history over which religions have come into being, the inventory inevitably reflects diverse tendencies which reflect different degrees of sophistication in religious ideas, from, at the one extreme, highly specific quasi-magical orientations to, at the other end of the spectrum, relatively abstract, reified, or, as might be said, ethereal conceptions of major religious concerns and entities. In the nature of the case, and even allowing for internal diversity and divergent degrees of sophistication among its devotees, no one religion is likely to embrace

both these types of orientation in equal measure, if at all. Hence, it must be apparent that no one religion is likely to qualify as such by achieving a one hundred per cent affirmation of all the items of the probabilistic inventory. The probable features of a religion are as follows:

- (1) belief in an agency (or agencies) which transcend(s) normal sense perception and which may even include an entire postulated spiritual order of being;
- (2) belief that such an agency not only affects the natural world and the social order, but operates directly upon it and may have created it;
- (3) the belief that at some times in the past explicit supernatural intervention in human affairs has occurred;
- (4) belief that supernatural agencies have superintended human history and destiny: when these agencies are anthropomorphically depicted they are usually credited with definite purposes;
- (5) the belief is maintained that man's fortune in this life and in afterlife (or lives) depends on relationships established with, or in accordance with, these transcendental agencies;
- (6) it may (but not invariably) be believed that whilst transcendent agencies may arbitrarily dictate an individual's destiny, the individual may, by behaving in prescribed ways, influence his experience either in this life or in future life (or lives) or both;
- (7) there are prescribed actions for individual, collective, or representative performances—namely, rituals;
- (8) there are elements of placatory action by which individuals or groups may supplicate for special assistance from supernatural sources;
- (9) expressions of praise, devotion, gratitude, obeisance or obedience are offered by, or in some cases, required of believers, usually in the presence of symbolic representations of the supernatural agency(ies) of the faith; such manifestations of attitude constitute worship;

- (10) language, objects, places, edifices, and seasons that are particularly identified with the supernatural become sacralized and may themselves become objects of reverence;
- (11) there are regular performances of ritual or exposition, expressions of devotion, celebration, fasting, collective penance, pilgrimage, and reenactments or commemorations or episodes in the earthly life of deities, prophets, or great teachers;
- (12) occasions of worship and exposition of teachings produce for adherents a sense of community and relationships of goodwill, fellowship, and common identity;
- (13) moral rules are often enjoined upon believers, although the areas of their concern varies: they may be couched in legalistic and ritualistic terms, or they may be canvassed more as conformity with the spirit of a less specific, higher ethic;
- (14) seriousness of purpose, sustained commitment, and lifelong devotion are normative requirements;
- (15) according to their performance, believers accumulate merit or demerit to which a moral economy of reward and punishment is attached. The precise nexus between action and consequence varies from automatic effects from given causes to the belief that personal demerit may be cancelled by devotional and ritual acts, by confession and repentance, or by special intercession from supernatural agents;
- (16) there is usually a special class of religious functionaries who serve as custodians of sacred objects, scriptures, and places; specialists in doctrine, ritual and pastoral guidance;
- (17) such specialists are usually paid for their services, whether by tribute, reward for specific functions, or by instituted stipend;
- (18) when specialists devote themselves to the systematization of doctrine, the claim is regularly made that religious knowledge provides solutions for all problems, and explains the meaning and purpose of life, often including purported explanations of the origin and operation of the physical universe and of human psychology;

- (19) legitimacy is claimed for religious knowledge and institutions by reference to revelation and tradition: innovation is regularly justified as restoration; and
- (20) claims to the truth of teaching and efficacy of ritual are not subjected to empirical test, since goals are ultimately transcendent and faith is demanded both for goals and for the arbitrary means recommended for their attainment.

XII. RELIGIONS AS HISTORICAL ENTITIES

The foregoing inventory is set forth in terms of relatively abstract generalization, but actual religions are historical entities, not logically constructed systems. They encompass widely different organizing principles, codes of conduct, and patterns of belief, laid down in different historical epochs, each of which, within the same broad religious tradition, was characterized by distinctive and sometimes incompatible apprehensions of religiosity. Within one religion, divergent doctrines or interpretations of ritual practice are often simultaneously acknowledged by adherents of differing degrees of sophistication. Identical items of faith or worship may be seen as symbolic by some, intrinsically powerful by others, yet both are accommodated in religious systems in which there has been not so much a replacement of one contradictory idea by another as an accretion of conceptions and interpretations over the course of history. Reconciliation of divergent ways of comprehending belief and worship may occur over time, but whether this occurs must depend on the authority and efficacy of leadership as well as on the pattern of organization. Such diversity within a given religious tradition further complicates the wider picture of differences among the major religious traditions and their innumerable sub-divisions which have developed over time. The foregoing inventory seeks to employ sufficiently broad criteria to accommodate the effects of religious evolution, accommodating the more literal, concrete, even quasi-magical elements that persist at some levels even within religious systems which have come to express and justify their beliefs and activities in sophisticated, abstract terms. Some, more recently evolved, religions may have largely or even wholly escaped the influence of the primitive conceptions which survive within others, and may, in consequence, fail to meet one or another criterion of the inventory (which necessarily includes items that are found primarily in ancient religious systems, and which have not always survived as those religions have evolved). Thus, the historical and evolutionary character of religious thought and practice implies that few if any religions will qualify equally on all items on an inventory which sets out to include indicia which take account of the variety of the species embraced by the phenomenon of religion.

XIII. DIVERSITY AND GENERALIZATION

It follows that, at many points, generalization concerning religion is not easy: whilst a phenomenon, readily designated as “religion” is recognized, what has to be admitted is the considerable diversity, on many issues, among the numerous specimens within the genus. Westerners concerned with religion are not uncommonly victims of (often unconscious) prejudices derived from the Christian tradition, but once such prejudices are set aside, it becomes evident that many of the concrete items which, on the basis of the Christian model, might be supposed to be *sine qua non* of religion, are, in fact, not to be found in other systems. Thus, in the foregoing inventory, allusion to a supreme being is avoided, since for Theravada Buddhists (and for many Mahayana Buddhists) that concept has no validity. Worship, which is referred to above, has very different implications for Buddhists from those assumed by Christians, and even within Christianity there is wide diversity of apprehensions about worship among such different denominations as Catholics, Calvinists, Christian Scientists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. The inventory makes no reference specifically to creeds, which have been of peculiar importance in the history of Christianity, but of much less importance in many other religions, where orthopraxis had often been of greater moment than orthodoxy. There is no mention of the soul, central as is that item in orthodox Christianity, because that concept is of somewhat dubious applicability in Judaism, and has been explicitly denied by some Christian dissenting bodies (e.g. by Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses, each of which has now millions of adherents throughout the world, and by Christadelphians and those Puritans, including John Milton, who were known as “mortalists” i.e. as believers who denied the existence of an immortal soul). Nor does the inventory mention hell, since this is another item missing in Judaism. The abstract concept of afterlife is alluded to in both the singular and the plural as a way of accommodating the two variant conceptions within Christianity, namely of transmigration of the soul, and of resurrection of the body, as well as the somewhat different accounts of reincarnation in Buddhism and Hinduism. Thus, the inventory seeks both to indicate items at a high level of abstraction but also to be practical in facilitating the identification of concerns typically characteristic of what is comprised by a religion.

XIV. DIVERSITY AMONG RELIGIONS: BUDDHISM

Buddhism stands out as a major example of a religion which challenges the tacit assumption that a religion is necessarily monotheistic. Buddhism is not a system of monotheistic belief, and even in those branches of Buddhism in which there is an emphatic commitment to the idea of the Buddha himself as a saviour, for example in the Jodoshu and Jodoshinshu Pure Land

sects in Japan, this conception falls short of regarding the Buddha as a creator-god. Buddhism in general does not deny the existence and activity of a variety of gods, and whilst they may in some Buddhist sects be the object of veneration and propitiation, they are accorded no essential role in the scheme of things as set forth in Buddhist teachings, and are indeed, like humans, regarded as being subject to the laws of karma and reincarnation. To illustrate the character of Buddhism, a brief outline of the teachings of Theravada Buddhism, the Buddhism of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia, which is generally regarded by western scholars as the oldest tradition, now follows.

XV. THERAVADA BUDDHISM

The concern of Buddhism is with man rather than with the material universe. The phenomenal world is held to be without substance and to be in a constant condition of flux. Man himself is no less impermanent than the material world. He neither is nor contains a self, but is rather a bundle of phenomena whose body is part of the transient, physical world. Man is a union of a succession of mental and physical phenomena, always dissolving and disintegrating. He constitutes five ways of “grasping”: the body; perception; cognition; mental phenomena; and consciousness. He is subject to the cycle of becoming and passing [samsara]. His condition is one of suffering and this characterizes all existence. Suffering is occasioned by lust and by pleasure, and to liberate man from suffering is the impulse of all Buddhist teaching. Everything is subject to the cycle of birth and death. Rebirth is believed to occur in different hierarchically conceived realms, usually represented as five:—as gods, as men, as spirits, as animals, or in hell (and sometimes a sixth—as demons). Of these statuses, that of man is the one in which liberation is most readily attainable, even if still remotely. Animals are too dull to reach out for liberation, and gods are too haughty.

A law of karma operates as a neutral, incorruptible process according to which past deeds constitute causes which have consequences that become effective in subsequent lives. Thus, the condition experienced in present existence is regarded as having been caused by past deeds. Although karma is not totally deterministic, quality, circumstance, and physical appearance are determined by karma. None the less, actions remain free, and motives as well as actions give effect to karma. Good deeds are held to improve the prospects of future lives. Rebirth into future lives does not imply a belief in a soul, however, since man is not regarded as having any psychic continuity of being. Each life is the impulse for the next rebirth. Thus, there is a “conditioned origination”, and lives are like links in a causal chain. Each life has a conditioned dependence on previous lives, as one flame is lighted from another.

The idea of sin, as a central item in the Christian scheme of salvation and damnation, as an offence against god(s) is also lacking in Buddhism. Rather there are wholesome and unwholesome acts, leading towards or away from ultimate liberation from the chain of rebirths and suffering. Man is locked into the system of recurrent rebirths through desire (craving). Pleasure, lust, delight, attachment, the craving for becoming or destroying, must all result in suffering. Liberation from attachment and craving will cause suffering to cease. That liberation from the chain of rebirths is attained as Nirvana, the cessation of craving, and this is to be achieved only by enlightenment. Those who strive for it will attain it sooner or later, and so banish their ignorance. Total enlightenment, which brings Nirvana, must be attained by each individual for himself. Whilst he may be assisted by instruction, he must, none the less, tread the path for himself. In contrast to the teachings of orthodox Christianity, in Theravada Buddhism it is maintained that no heavenly being can intercede for the believer, nor render him any assistance in his quest for salvation, nor can this goal be attained by prayer. Nirvana itself is not nothingness, as it has sometimes been represented by Christians, but is seen as a state of bliss, deathlessness, purity, truth, and everlasting peace, reached by extinguishing all passion. It is the realization of “non-selfness”.

Practical endeavour towards achieving liberation consists in treading the eight-fold path of right views; right resolve; right speech; right conduct; right livelihood; right effort; right awareness; and right meditation. All of these injunctions are to be pursued simultaneously. To fail to do this is not to commit sins of omission, but merely to fail to act in accordance with enlightened self-interest. Adherents are also abjured to observe ten prohibitions; to renounce the ten bonds which tie men to the ego; and to renounce the immoral acts proscribed. But the emphasis is on practising loving-kindness rather than merely maintaining the canons of morality. The whole point of religious practice is to overcome suffering by overcoming the delusion of ego, and thus to thwart the cycle of rebirths and of transmigration.

Like other ancient religions, Buddhism has been the recipient of extraneous residues from the folk religions of the regions in which it has taken root, and thus among one of numerous alien “deposits” to be found both in its formal body of ancient teaching and in the actual practice of contemporary Buddhists in Theravada lands is acceptance of the idea of the existence of gods. These beings are not regarded as required objects of worship, fulfill no special role, and are altogether peripheral to the central themes of Buddhist soteriology, persisting merely as residues or accretions from other religious traditions which practical Buddhism tolerates and accommodates.

Finally, it may be noted that there is no traditional parochial organization in Buddhism. Monks have no pastoral obligations. Although in recent decades, some monks have sometimes taken up educational tasks or worked for social welfare, their traditional concerns have always been primarily if not exclusively with their own salvation, and not with community service or pastoral care of the laity. They afford the laity opportunities to make merit, and hence to create good karma, solely by providing laymen with the opportunity to provide alms for monks by replenishing the begging-bowl which each of them carries and which symbolizes their poverty and dependence.

This overview of Theravada Buddhist teaching makes clear the sharp contrast between this religion and Christianity. There is no creator-god, and hence worship is of a radically different kind from that prevailing in the Christian churches. There is no conception of original sin, no idea of a personal saviour or of divine intercession. The idea of an immortal soul with continuity of consciousness is absent, and Nirvana or unending rebirths contrast sharply with the traditional Christian idea of glory or eternal punishment. There is no dualism of flesh and spirit. By no means least important, the conception of history is not of the linear variety, such as is found in the Christian scheme of primeval happiness, the fall of man, the vicarious self-sacrifice of deity, global apocalypse, and an eventual resurrection of the saved elite to heavenly glory. The cyclical scheme of rebirths is an orientation which has profound implications for other facets of the Buddhist worldview, and one which differs from the western conceptions of time, progress, work and material achievement. Although, in the past, often condemned as an atheistic system, regarding an impersonal law as the ultimate power in the universe, and remote from traditional western preconceptions of what “true religion” should resemble, none the less, Buddhism is today universally recognized as a religion.

XVI. DIVERSITY AMONG RELIGIONS: THE JAINS

A no less radical challenge to narrow western conceptions of what constitutes religion is provided by Jainism, a recognized religion in India, and one that is normally included in the list of (usually eleven) great religions. Of it, Sir Charles Eliot has written, “Jainism is atheistic, and this atheism is as a rule neither apologetic nor polemical, but is accepted as a natural religious attitude.” Jains do not, however, deny the existence of *devas*, deities, but these beings are, no less than human beings, considered to be subject to the laws of transmigration and decay, and they do not determine the destiny of man. Jains believe that souls are individual and infinite. They are not part of a universal soul. Souls and matter are neither created nor destroyed. Salvation is to be attained by the liberation of the soul from the foreign elements (karmic elements) that weight it down. These elements gain admission to the soul by the

individual's acts of passion. Such actions cause rebirth among animals or inanimate substances: meritorious acts cause rebirth among the *devas*. Anger, pride, deceit, and greed are the main obstacles to liberation of the souls, and in resisting or succumbing to these, man is master of his own destiny. By subduing the self and by doing harm to no being, even to harmful insects, and by leading an ascetic life, a man may achieve rebirth as a *deva*. The moral rules for the devout believer are to show kindness without hope of return; to rejoice in the welfare of others; to seek to relieve the distress of other people; and to show sympathy for the criminal. Self-mortification is believed to annihilate accumulated karma. Jainism embraces an ascetic ethic, but this is asceticism of quite a different kind from that canvassed in the Christian tradition, being at once more passive and more fatalistic.

XVII. DIVERSITY AMONG RELIGIONS: HINDUISM

Hinduism is another religion which, in its extreme diversity, fails to meet the test of monotheistic criteria of religion that is to be found in various western countries. In its classical form, Hinduism may be represented as a form of non-dualistic pantheism, in which Brahman is the absolute but impersonal godhead, spirit, which is inherent in all being. Brahman is seen as transcending good and evil. He is presented not so much as a creator, as a pervasive force from whom all things emanate and to whom all things return. Not only is he omnipresent in all things but he is all things. The liberated soul becomes one with him and realizes that nothing else exists. However, this form of deity is remote from the conceptions of godhead as found in Christian monotheism. Furthermore, it is found alongside other representations of plural deities, which, changing and transforming themselves from one to another, represent the polytheistic aspects of Hinduism. Given the tolerance within Hinduism for propositions and assertions which, according to western logic, are internally contradictory, it would be impossible to affirm that Hinduism is specifically pantheistic or polytheistic: it is clearly both. In either case, it fails the test of being a monotheistic system which postulates a creator god, a dualistic cosmology, and the need for explicit worship of that god, such as are the preconceptions of what a religion should be like that might be advanced from those familiar only with the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic traditions.

XVIII. HINDUISM: THE SANKHYA SCHOOL

Hinduism is a religion of great internal diversity. Six ancient and divergent philosophical schools are acknowledged as orthodox. One of these, Sankhya, is neither theistic nor pantheistic. Like Jainism, Sankhya teaches that primordial matter and the individual soul are both uncreated and indestructible. The soul may be liberated by knowing the truth about

the universe and by control of the passions. In some texts, Sankhya denies the existence of a personal supreme deity, and in any case, any concept of deity is regarded as superfluous and potentially self-contradictory, since the working of karma governs man's affairs up to that point where he himself can determine that he should seek liberation. The four goals of Sankhya are similar to those of Buddhism: to know suffering, from which man must liberate himself; to bring about the cessation of suffering; to perceive the cause of suffering (the failure to discriminate between soul and matter); and to learn the means of liberation, namely, discriminating knowledge. Like other schools, Sankhya teaches the karmic principle: rebirth is a consequence of one's actions, and salvation is escape from the cycle of rebirths.

Sankhya embraces a form of dualism. This is not the Christian dualism of good and evil, but a radical distinction between soul and matter. Both are uncreated, infinitely existing items. The world results from the evolution of matter. The soul, however, is unchanging. The soul suffers because it is in captivity to matter, yet this captivity is an illusion. Once the soul is aware that it is not part of the material world, the world ceases to exist for that particular soul, and it is free. According to Sankhya theory, matter undergoes evolution, dissolution and quiescence. In evolving, matter produces intellect, individuality, the senses, moral character, will, and a principle which survives death and which undergoes transmigration. By being connected with soul, the physical organism becomes a living being. Only in this connection is consciousness realised: neither matter on its own nor soul on its own is conscious. Although the soul is a vitalizing element, it is not itself the life which ends in death, nor is it life which is transmitted from one existence to another. Although it does not itself act or suffer, the soul reflects the suffering that occurs, much as a mirror reflects. It is not the intellect, but is an infinite and passionless entity. Souls are innumerable and distinct from one another. The goal is for the soul to free itself from illusion and so from captivity. Once liberated, the condition of the soul is equivalent to Nirvana in Buddhism. Such liberation might occur before death, and the task of the liberated one is to teach others. After death, there is a possibility of total liberation without threat of rebirth.

Sankhya makes no objection to belief in popular divinities, but these are not part of its operative order. It is knowledge of the universe which produces salvation. In this sense, control of the passions, and not moral conduct, is central. Good works can produce only a lower form of happiness. Nor is sacrifice efficacious. The subordination of morals to a place of lower value than that of knowledge, and the derogation of good works amount to distinct differences from the demands of Christianity and represent a different form of religiosity. Neither ethics nor rituals are of great importance to the Sankhya scheme of things. Here, too, there is evident a sharp contrast with Christianity, in which ethics and rituals constitute, albeit in differing degrees in different denominations, vital parts of the overall system of belief and worship.

XIX. DIVERSITY AMONG RELIGIONS: POLYTHEISM

From the foregoing examples of religious belief systems, it is apparent that belief in a supreme being is an inadequate criterion of religion. Despite the lingering, out-dated prejudice of some Christian commentators, this point would generally be immediately endorsed by comparative religionists and sociologists of religion. Status as a religion would not be denied to Buddhism, Jainism or Hinduism, the absence of any conception of a supreme being or creator-god notwithstanding. If these examples of pantheistic and atheistic, but none the less indisputably religious, belief-systems present a contrast to Christian ideas of what a religion should resemble, so too do polytheistic beliefs, even though these are less easily presented in organized or coherent form. Taoism, now generally regarded as a religion in the textbooks of comparative religion, provides such a case. In contrast to revealed religions, Taoism draws on nature worship, mysticism, fatalism, political quietism, magic, and ancestor worship. For centuries it was officially recognized in China as an organized religion, with temples, worship, and clergy. It entertained conceptions of supernatural beings, including the Jade Emperor, Lao-Tzu, Ling Po (marshal of supernatural beings) and the Eight Immortals of Chinese folklore, the City God, the God of the Hearth, among others, together with innumerable spirits. Taoism lacks, however, a supreme creator, a saviour-god of the Christian kind and an articulated theology and cosmology. The case of Taoism illustrates the fact that religions do not arise fully-fledged as systems of belief, practice, and organization. They undergo processes of evolution in all these aspects, sometimes coming to embrace elements entirely at variance with earlier conceptions. Accretions of myth and ritual and changes in organization have been normal in the history of religion, and some of these new elements are at times only partially assimilated and are by no means always rendered compatible one with another.

XIXA. DIVERSITY AMONG RELIGIONS: A MODERN EXAMPLE

The variety of conceptions of godhead, worship, salvation, and other religious concerns becomes even more apparent when extended beyond the major ancient religious traditions to modern religions. New religious movements are not only numerous but also widely diverse among themselves. Some derive from Christian traditions; some have oriental origins; others seek to resuscitate mystical traditions; yet others embrace the spiritualistic metaphysics of “New Age” teachings. For immediate purposes, simply to underscore the range of expressions of religiosity, we may consider one particular new religion which differs from all of these—Scientology. In some aspects, Scientology appears not unlike Buddhism, Jainism and the Sankhya tradition in Hinduism, but the premise on which its soteriology rests is that of practical and systematic therapeutic techniques. It offers adherents a graduated path of spiritual enlightenment. It claims

to disencumber adherents of the untoward effects of past traumas, whether experienced in the present or in past lives. It is free from dogmas, and whilst, in abstract terms, as the “eighth dynamic”, Scientology acknowledges a supreme being, it draws short of attempting to describe his attributes. Nor is that being the object of supplication or devotion. Man is held to be a spiritual entity, a *thetan*, which occupies material human bodies in successive lives. Although not part of the physical universe, the thetan is said to have become entangled with it, and in the process to have acquired a reactive mind which responds irrationally and emotionally to anything that recalls painful and traumatic experiences. Salvation is the process by which that reactive mind is reduced and finally eliminated, allowing the individual to live to his full potential. Thus, whilst in the Buddhist karmic scheme of things, unrecalled past deeds are said irrevocably to determine present life experiences, the techniques of Scientology are held to enable the individual to recall, confront, and overcome the baleful effects of untoward events of the past. The ultimate goal is for the thetan to exist outside the physical realm and so outside the body—a condition which has analogies with the Christian conception of the saved soul, albeit a condition achieved by very different procedures and expressed in very different terms.

Scientology differs radically from both Christian and Buddhism soteriological schemes, in that it claims to standardize and rationalize the techniques leading to salvation. It applies modern technical methods to spiritual goals in the attempt to introduce certainty and a pragmatically justified system into spiritual exercises. Emerging in a period in which the secular world has been increasingly dominated by science, Scientology is also committed to the idea that man needs to think rationally and to control his disturbing emotions as a means towards spiritual enlightenment and salvation. It represents one important current in the contemporary diversity of religious expression in our pluralistic religious culture.

XX. DIVERSITY WITHIN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

The diversity among religions is complemented by diversity *within* religions, and this even within an authentically orthodox tradition, that is to say, without regard to the various manifestations of dissent to which we have already had occasion to allude. It has to be recognized that consistency is not a first desideratum for religion, and that even Christianity, which has enjoyed much more systematically structured patterns of both doctrine and organization than any other religion, none the less sustains imprecise formulations of doctrine, ambiguities, inconsistencies, and even outright contradictions. Indeed, traditional religious language even of Christianity does not always set out to eliminate ambiguities, but sometimes even seeks to sustain them. Such language functions not merely, nor necessarily primarily, to denote

properties. It has equally important functions in summoning emotional responses and in prescribing values and dispositions. The cognitive, emotive, and evaluative are inextricably intermixed in a way quite alien to scientifically-informed ways of thinking. In consequence of this multi-functionality, the language of religion, when viewed scientifically or forensically, is frequently lacking in clarity, definition and specificity. This may be taken as normal in religion, even when, as in the case of Christianity, sustained intellectual effort has been expended over centuries to articulate religious doctrines coherently.

XXI. DIVERSITY AND RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION

The fact that religions evolve contributes in some measure to the internal diversity of an orthodox tradition. Such evolution is directly evident in the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, and without acknowledgement of that process there is difficulty in reconciling the vengeful tribal deity of the Old Testament record of the ancient Israelites with the much more spiritually conceived and universal being in the writings of the later prophets and in the New Testament. Attempts to make compatible these divergent depictions of deity have given rise to disputes within and between churches and movements, and among theologians. The basic assumptions of Christian theologians have steadily shifted over the course of centuries, but there is nothing like consensus among them, whilst among lay Christians far more widely diverse attitudes can be found concerning all the fundamentals of faith. Some of those attitudes are characteristic of positions more generally held in centuries past, and their persistence among some lay people makes apparent the need for an appreciation of the phenomenon of religious evolution if the diversity within the one orthodox tradition is to be understood. Thus, to provide examples, most liberal, self-styled “enlightened” Christians, today no longer believe in hell or the Devil, but there are many Christians who do, and not only those described as “fundamentalists”. Or again, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries most Christians professed belief in the literal resurrection of the body, but today only a minority of orthodox believers appear to subscribe to this article of faith. Yet again, Christians have for centuries disputed the prophesied time of the onset of the millennium, whether it would precede or succeed the second advent of Christ, whilst many appear to have abandoned this prospect altogether.

XXII. THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF

If toleration of different religions has grown, one factor which has perhaps incidentally made tolerance of others difficult to withhold has been the growing disparity between the beliefs of theologians and those of some of the more committed laity of the nominally same religious persuasion. A section of the laity continue to affirm the literal inspiration of the scriptures,

whilst others, less sure of verbal inspiration, none the less believe in the authenticity of what they understand the scriptures to convey. Clergy, too, though often less remote from ordinary lay believers than are the academic and professional theologians, today often reject central tenets of the faith. Over the past few decades there have been Anglican [i.e. Episcopalian] bishops who have openly dissented from such basic items of Christian faith as the virgin birth, the resurrection of Jesus, and the second coming. Some lay people, within the same denomination, have been deeply upset and scandalized. Theologians have gone further, some of them disputing the existence of a supreme being of the kind traditionally acclaimed by the Christian Church. This current of opinion has been canvassed by some of the most celebrated and distinguished of modern theologians, in particular, it is to be found in the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Tillich, but may be most readily represented in its most popular and influential expression by J. A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich. In 1963, the Bishop summarized this trend in Christian thinking in his best-selling book, *Honest to God*. He set out the arguments for the abandonment of the idea of God as a personal being who existed “out there” and he challenged the whole idea of “Christian theism.” He cited Bonhoeffer:

“Man has learned to cope with all questions of importance without recourse to God as a working hypothesis. In questions concerning science, art, and even ethics, this has become an understood thing which one scarcely dares to tilt at any more. But for the last hundred years or so it has been increasingly true of religious questions also: it is becoming evident that everything gets along without ‘God’ just as before.” [p. 36]

From Tillich, the Bishop cited the following:

“The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God. That depth is what the word God means. If that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without reservation... He who knows about depth knows about God.” [p. 22]

For himself, the Bishop says:

“...as he [Tillich] says, theism as ordinarily understood ‘has made God a heavenly, completely perfect person who presides over the world and mankind’” [p. 39]

“...I am convinced that Tillich is right in saying that the protest of atheism against such a highest person is correct.” [p. 41]

“We shall eventually be no more able to convince men of the existence of a God ‘out there’ whom they must call in to order their lives than persuade them to take seriously the gods of Olympus.” [p. 43]; “to say that ‘God is personal’ is to say that personality is of *ultimate* significance in the constitution of the universe, that in personal relationships we touch the final meaning of existence as nowhere else.” [pp. 48–9]

Distinguishing, as theologians do, between reality and existence, the Bishop was asserting that God was ultimately real, but that he did not exist, since to exist would have implied being finite in time and space, and thus being part of the universe.

If the idea of a supreme being was challenged so too was the traditional understanding of Jesus. A reinterpretation of the New Testament and of the person of Jesus had also been in progress in the thinking in advanced twentieth-century theological circles. In 1906, Albert Schweitzer had published a work under the translated English title of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, in which he depicted Jesus as a Jewish prophet with somewhat misguided ideas and very much a creature of his time. A more radical and critical “de-mythologizing” was undertaken by Rudolf Bultmann who, beginning in the 1940s, showed how fully the Gospels were subject to the myths prevailing at the time at which they were written. He sought to demonstrate how few of the concepts employed in the Gospels could be accepted by twentieth-century man. The message for mankind of the New Testament he saw very much in the terms of German existentialist philosophy: Christianity became a guide for the moral life of the individual, but he saw it as no longer credible as a body of teaching about God’s creation and his governance of the world. Bultmann’s work raised new doubts about the traditional claim that Jesus was God in the flesh, and hence cast doubt on the entire Christological teaching of the Church. This historical relativism found further expression in a work entitled *The Myth of God Incarnate* (edited by John Hick) published in 1977, in which a number of the most distinguished of Anglican theologians disputed the orthodox traditional Christian doctrine, established at the Council of Chalcedon [451 AD] of the relationship of God to the man, Jesus. Modern theologians were finding it difficult to believe that God had become man in the way that the Church had taught for the previous fifteen centuries.

These various currents of theological argument: the considered rejection of the concept of a personal God; the relinquishment of theism; the new emphasis on the relativism of the Bible; and the challenge to accepted concepts of the nature of Christ and his relation to the godhead—all amount to a severe departure from the received understanding of Christianity and to the faith of most lay believers. In this way, opinions issuing even from Christian sources

concerning the nature of religion were now bringing into question the implicitly Christian criteria by which religion had previously been defined.

XXIII. RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Given the increased pressures for change in modern society, it would be surprising if any major social institution had proved immune from the consequences of the process. Although firmly entrenched in the voluntary sphere of social activity, religion has certainly responded, emerging in increasingly varied forms and with changing preoccupations. As the general populace of the western world has become more educated, modern religions have tended to emphasize less the concrete aspects of the literal historical episodes of religious history, and if invoking them at all, have done so as poetic or symbolic metaphors. There has been a diminishing emphasis, even within mainstream Christian traditions, on doctrines concerning God, creation, sin, incarnation, redemption or damnation, and a greater stress on a variety of different concerns. At the practical level, and particularly in the major Christian denominations these issues are anchored in the growth in pastoral care which developed from mid nineteenth century onwards, which is now manifested in many new forms of specialized pastoral ministry. Industrial chaplaincy (including the aborted worker-priest movement); ministry in hospitals and prisons; specialized counselling in marriage guidance; Christian therapy and healing; drug and alcohol addiction rehabilitation; sexual problems; and attitudes to work are all every-day indicators of the diverse practical concerns that stimulate contemporary religious and spiritual endeavour. At the more theoretical level they have been complemented by renewed encouragement of an ethic of personal responsibility; concern for social justice; the search for personal fulfillment and empowerment; and the application of religion as a source of positive thinking.

These new orientations have found expression in both orthodox and dissenting expressions within Christianity, but what has also occurred in western society has been the diffusion not only of some of the major faiths of the Orient, carried in large part initially by immigrants, but also of movements derivative from those religions, some of them specifically modified in form and expression to appeal to a western constituency. There are, additional to these, movements which draw on purportedly ancient paganism; others which invoke an eclectic range of mystical traditions as the inspirational sources on which they draw. Yet other movements seek to revive and disseminate the practice of occult arts. To all of this variety must be added new religions which share something of the scientific orientation of contemporary society, and which use their science for ends that can only be described as spiritual. In the background,

there are also those more traditional Christian sects, some of which once excited anxiety among orthodox Christians, and at times the hostility of the authorities, but which today have increasingly, and necessarily, come to be tolerated and accepted as part of the religious mosaic of contemporary society. That they are no longer so keenly the focus of attention or anxiety reflects the fact that, in the context of present-day religious diversity, they no longer appear as strange or as deviant as once they did.

XXIV. TRADITIONAL SECTS

Strictly speaking, movements to be counted as sects are those which constitute “separated believers”, that is to say, bodies which, because of differences of doctrine, practice, or organization, are in schism from the mainstream church(es), the broad tradition of which, however, they in large part share. It is this element of sharing, and the diminution over time of the significance of their differences, which permitted some erstwhile sects to graduate to the position of being regarded as denominations. Denominations generally share close parity of esteem one with another. They come to be recognized as such as the issues on which there is tension with the wider society—such tension being the typical circumstance of movements designated as sects—come to be resolved or dissipated. Thus, the Baptists, the Disciples of Christ, the Church of the Nazarene, and in some respects, even the Methodists, all exemplify bodies that have traversed the sect-to-denomination process. The gradual acknowledgement of denominational status of particular movements also indicates the growth of toleration in the wider society as, little-by-little, the legal restrictions (in Europe) on these movements and the social opprobrium which they suffered were eventually mitigated.

Not all sects evolve into denominations, however, and much depends on their circumstances of origin and the type of orientation towards the world which characterizes their teaching. Sects which, like Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Christadelphians, make the early second advent the primary focus of their beliefs, are likely to remain in sectarian tension with the wider society, particularly if they pursue a vigorous evangelistic programme. So, too, are sects such as the Exclusive (i.e. Plymouth) Brethren, who (although also endorsing belief in the early return of Christ) make their central concern withdrawal from the wider society, which is regarded as inherently evil, into their own exclusive community. The tension existing between sects like these and the authorities and, at times, between the sects and the general public has tended to be concentrated not on any issue of the criminal law, but on the sectarians’ refusal to participate in the civic responsibilities commonly required of citizens. Thus, they have typically made conscientious objection to military service, or, in the case of some sects, sought

exemption from jury service, or from membership of trade unions in countries (Britain and Sweden) where such membership was, in certain industries, actually or virtually obligatory. Over time, in country after country, such rights of conscience have gradually been conceded, as was the right of Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States to exemption from saluting the national flag or from participating in singing the national anthem in school assemblies or on other public occasions. Christian sects, in these and other instances, have fought and often won their cases in national or, at times, international courts of justice: in doing so they have enlarged the area of religious freedom. But, as with those sects which eventually graduated into denominations, they were, especially in their earliest days as new movements, often subject to persecution, discrimination and harassment.

XXV. THE OPPOSITION TO NEW RELIGIONS

Perhaps because those in authority as well as the public at large in western Christendom have so often narrowly defined religion according to the familiar model of the received tradition of orthodox Christianity, new religions have, over the long course of history, been subject to often fierce opposition. Of course, the case goes back beyond the establishment of Christianity itself. In the Roman world, the early Christians were themselves subject to accusations that are still familiar—Christians were alleged to break up families; were accused of mercenary motives; were said to engage in sexual orgies; and were declared to be trying to infiltrate social elites in pursuit of sinister political purposes. The exclusivistic character of Christianity attracted such allegations, but that same trait, together with its proselytizing zeal, made Christianity itself an unparalleled agency of religious intolerance, which persisted, in some countries and in greater or lesser measure, down to modern times. Thus the Quakers experienced savage persecution at the hands of the authorities in seventeenth-century England, when many of them were imprisoned solely because of their avowal of their religious beliefs. Methodists, as a new religion in eighteenth-century England, were mobbed and beaten and some of their chapels were pulled down, sometimes with the connivance or even at the instigation of local magistrates. In the late nineteenth-century, the Salvation Army was the subject of riots in which some of their members were killed in England, whilst in Switzerland they were publicly accused of deception and financial exploitation, and the Mormons, sometimes imprisoned when seeking to recruit new members in Scandinavia, suffered similar accusations. History makes evident the record of opposition to new forms of religious and spiritual expression even in the more democratic and supposedly more tolerant countries of the western world. Against that historical record, the recent resolutions of international agencies requiring states to exercise and encourage religious toleration stand in sharp contrast.

XXVI. THE TYPES OF NEW RELIGIONS

Whilst it is generally the case that greater hostility is often provoked by heretical sectarians than by those with whom no vestige of common faith is or has ever been shared, and in particular, that erstwhile co-religionists who have broken away experience the greatest opprobrium, none the less, contemporary society has also displayed remarkable and persistent intolerance towards some of the new religions that have emerged since the end of the Second World War. Whilst some of these movements may be grouped by broad “family resemblance”, radical differences are discernible among others. Sociologists have sought to establish some broad categories, less by virtue of shared bodies of teaching than by the similarity of the goals, assumptions and perspectives which different movements embrace. They have summarily and broadly distinguished between movements that are described as “world-affirming” from those that are “world-renouncing”. World-affirming movements are those which respond positively to the existing secular culture, and which offer to their adherents the prospect not only of spiritual blessings, but of material and psychic benefits by way of enhanced emotional security, therapy, heightened competence, and social and perhaps also economic success. World-renouncing movements, in contrast, seek, as far as practicable, to withdraw their members from any sort of involvement with the wider society and the secular culture, and offer prospects of reward either in the withdrawn community or in blissful afterlife(s), or sometimes in both. These broad categories do not, of course, do justice to the subtleties of any one movement’s theories or practice, but they do make evident a basic dichotomy of orientation among the several hundred new religious groups to be found in contemporary western societies.

These two fundamental orientations are not new in the history of religion, as is apparent from even a cursory acquaintance with, on the one hand, the goals of magical systems, and on the other, the ascetic world-renouncing ethic of mediaeval Catholicism or, in variant form, of seventeenth-century Calvinism. Both orientations can be found in contemporary mainstream Christianity, although world-renunciation has lately given place to a stronger current of a world-affirming ethos. Yet, despite orientations that they sometimes share with established religion, new movements of both tendencies have suffered opposition, hostility, harassment and even persecution in recent decades. Because, in the one case, they often differ so radically in matters of organization, monotheistic commitment, the character of worshipful practices, among other things, they are readily accused of not being religious at all; or, in the other case, because their religion persuades adherents to withdraw from ordinary secular involvements or to engage in esoteric mysticism, they are seen as enemies of society.

XXVII. WORLD-RENOUNCING NEW RELIGIONS

The new movements which renounce the world are principally, but not exclusively, variants or derivatives of Hinduism or Buddhism, in which religions this orientation generally prevails. Some (but not all) new Christian fundamentalist bodies also operate within the framework of an ethos in which world-renunciation predominates. Adherents of these religions typically abandon contemporary, material, western values. They may assume a communal and perhaps even a communitarian life-style, and in new religions which are of oriental provenance devotees typically adopt what, to westerners, are alien concepts. They may, in some cases, learn an oriental language for worship, and relinquish western mores and conventions in favour of other taboos and injunctions affecting sexuality, social intercourse, diet, and even wearing apparel. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (the Hare Krishna movement) is perhaps the most conspicuous movement of this type, but some of the same dispositions are to be found in the Divine Light Mission and, even though it claims to be Christian, in the Unification Church (the Moonies).

Some world-renouncing movements tend, in the nature of this orientation, to be “totalistic”, that is to say, they tend to expect that their adherents will give themselves completely to their faith and make it a total commitment, ordering all departments of their lives in accordance with the faith that they have espoused. This, is, of course, most easily effected where the movement expects adherents to adopt a communal pattern of living. In many respects, such a requirement bears a close analogy to that made of members of monastic orders (whether Christian or Buddhist). There are world-renouncing religions which stop short of advocating the total separation from the wider society which communal living achieves. These movements generally provide a comprehensive, and often complex system of metaphysics within which their votaries are directed to find intellectual answers to questions concerning the ultimate meaning and purpose of life. Not infrequently, the more advanced levels of metaphysical teachings may be secret and available only to adepts. Religions of this kind include Theosophy, Anthroposophy, and Gurdjieffism. The mystic strain may not always preclude activities for social benefit, however, even if an element of social withdrawal is also evident: the educational facilities for disabled children maintained by the Anthroposophists eloquently makes the point.

XXVIII. WORLD-AFFIRMATION IN NEW RELIGIONS

World-affirming religions encounter intolerance even though they tend, by and large, to endorse enlightened secular values. Notwithstanding their generally positive orientation to the world, they may also have a mission to promote social reform, particularly in those

departments of life such as healthcare, education, and religious liberty, which are the focus of their own distinctive values. The crucial point of the opposition which they encounter is that this kind of religion is presented as in itself a means of realizing benefits of the kind which are associated with everyday success, in health, competence, working efficiency, applied intelligence, and probably even in wealth—in general, a better experience of life in the world. For traditionalists such things are regarded as too mundane to be the proper concerns of religion—hence the charge that movements of this type are “not religions at all”. These religions generally discard the traditional and emotional aspects of mainstream Christianity. They are characterized by a more systematic and rational approach to the spiritual and see continuity between spiritual knowledge and everyday betterment of personal circumstances. Of course, as different religions, they employ different techniques by which to release spiritual energies, and explain their successes in different terms and with reference to their own body of doctrine. But sociologically, and certainly from the perspective of religious freedom and human rights, these religions offer people a distinctive interpretation of life and spirit. They commonly claim a pragmatic sanction in offering a method of attaining higher spiritual states the effect of which are manifested in practical everyday psychic and material benefits. Some of the early examples of world-affirming religion used a Christian overview in terms of which to propound their orientation—Christian Science and various New Thought bodies, such as Unity, and Divine Science, are examples. More recent religions that we may count as world-affirming are not derived from the Christian tradition. Among such might be included Scientology, whilst in other cases a world-affirming orientation has been derived from oriental religion, as in the case of Soka Gakkai (Nichiren Buddhism) and Transcendental Meditation of the Maharishi.

XXIX. THE ETHOS OF CONTEMPORARY NEW RELIGIONS

Recent decades have seen the growth in number of both world-affirming and world-renouncing religions (and of others less readily categorized in these broad dichotomous terms). The world-renouncing religions have arisen in protest against what they have tended to see as the growing materialism, consumerism, and hedonism of western society. Some of them owe their orientations to the ascetic tradition of Christianity, others have found some affinity with environmental concerns, yet others have drawn on the same climate of mood that gave rise to the “hippy” culture of the 1960s. In contrast, world-affirming orientations manifest strong continuities with contemporary secular culture, and with some of the changed dispositions evident in twentieth-century Christianity. As religious concerns have shifted from the preoccupation with the afterlife, which was the dominant focus of Christianity in previous centuries, so new religious movements have also come to emphasize the idea of salvation

in this world and in the present lifetime. Life-enhancement, the pursuit of happiness, the realization of human potential have become respectable and widely endorsed goals, and it is not surprising the new religions should have embraced them. In a world of scarcity, natural disaster, famine, and low levels of technology, religious asceticism was a congruous ethic. It complemented the needs of a producer society in which hard work and low returns had to be accepted, in which gratifications had to be postponed (often to a hypothesized afterlife) so that capital might be accumulated. But in a society oriented to consumption, in which technology has produced enhanced expectations of the wealth and benefit to be experienced, an ascetic ethic would run counter to the need to induce people to bolster the economy by spending, by seeking entertainment and material well-being. Just as the traditional asceticism of Christianity became outmoded, so the orientations of new patterns of religious spirituality came to reflect the new social ethos. The contemporary currency of hedonistic values in secular society has been increasingly reflected even in mainstream religion. The optimism and emphasis on unlimited benefit canvassed, outside the mainstream, by Christian Science, was followed, within the major denominations, by the advocacy of positive thinking by Norman Vincent Peale, a Protestant, by Monsignor Fulton Sheen, a Catholic, and by Rabbi Joshua Liebman. More recent decades have seen the development of Prosperity Theology as a legitimization of the benefits which Christians should expect from prayerful religion. Psychological techniques for heightened self-control, self-awareness, self-improvement, life-enhancement and a wider capacity for spiritual enrichment have become part of the repertoire of many religious movements as society has moved away from endorsement of sin-laden theologies that were once the central theme of Christian teaching.

XXX. RELIGION AND MORALS

Just as some of the new religions have endorsed the modern ethos of the consumer society, acknowledging the pursuit of happiness in this life as a legitimate, indeed, a laudatory goal for mankind, so commensurately they have set forth a changed relation between spiritual living and moral prescriptions. This is one of the facets of change in religion with which the authorities and much of the general public, still caught in the time-warp of traditional Christian moral thinking, have yet to come fully to terms. Yet, it must be obvious that different religions have maintained very different dispositions towards rules of comportment. Religions have varied widely in the nature of the moral rules which they have prescribed, in the vigour and consistency of demands for their application, and in the stringency of the sanctions attached to them. In orthodox Judaism, rules govern the minutiae of ritual and many contingencies of daily life that are totally unregulated in, for example, Christian tradition. In Islam, religious rules affect diverse situations and provide a system of legal regulation for society, at times

establishing social control far more stringent, and at other times more lax, than is encountered in Christianity. Thus, the Koran is invoked to sustain, on the one hand, the severe punishments sanctioned for crimes under Sharia law, and on the other hand, the relatively relaxed facilities for men to take up to four wives, and the ease with which they can obtain divorce.

Theravada Buddhism provides a further contrast. Here, there are prescriptions for monks, while a few general rules are enjoined upon the laity. A Buddhist layman's duty is not to kill, to steal, to lie, to commit wrongful sexual acts, or to drink intoxicants. Beyond this, the Buddha offered moral advice concerning household tasks, behaviour towards friends and care of one's spouse, but these are exhortations to what might be called social common sense. The individual is urged to be prudent, thrifty, industrious, to be fair to servants, and to choose as friends those who might restrain him from wrong and exhort him to right conduct. Such virtues are, however, enjoined as enlightened self-interest; they are not underwritten by a concept of sin such as is canvassed in Christianity. Disregard of these virtues does not attract special punishments except in the sense of producing bad karma. The religion prescribes no other sanctions, and there is no wrathful deity. Since actions are deemed to determine status in some future reincarnation, good acts are advisable as being in accordance with the eightfold path of enlightenment, since they will lead to re-births in better circumstances, and putatively to the eventual transcendence of all rebirths and the attainment of Nirvana. Thus, while Buddhism certainly teaches ethical values, the individual is left considerable freedom in his moral comportment, and is subject neither to the moral censure nor the threats with which Christian morality is reinforced. In other societies, moral regulation is not derived from explicitly religious roots: for example, the Confucian ethic and samurai code may have informed the moral quality of Japanese society as fully as, or more fully than the various schools of Mahayana Buddhism which function in Japan. One must conclude that there is no *normal* relationship between a system of religious doctrine and a code of morals. The conjunction of religion and morals in Christianity, the mechanisms by which moral behaviour is enjoined, and the consequences it predicts for the infringement of its moral rules constitute one pattern of relationship, but such a pattern is not typical for other religious systems, and it cannot be assumed, as members of Christian societies have sometimes been disposed to assume, to be a necessary or superior model by which other arrangements are to be judged.

XXXI. THE MORAL LEGACY OF CHRISTIANITY

The role of moral teaching in traditional Christianity stands in sharp contrast to what is found in other major religions. Among its various levels of ethical injunctions are included an elaborate code of prohibitions, transgression of which is indicted as sin. The basic commandments of

early Judaism respecting major offences, of the kind that are common to several religious traditions, were augmented in Christianity by exacting prescriptions of a more detailed character, particularly with respect to sexuality, and this from both Jesus and Paul. There were also counsels of perfection of a perhaps unrealizable kind (“Be ye therefore perfect”; and, more specifically, demands that one love one’s enemies; forgive others “seventy and seven” times; that one “turn the other cheek”, “take no thought for the morrow”, etc.). The concept of sin became central to the Christian moral code. Man was held to be inherently sinful and most of his natural desires, his search for gratification, fulfillment, enjoyment, and even for his own life-enhancement in this world were to be readily seen as sinful or as leading to sin. From his inherent sinfulness only the exemplary virtue and super-human sacrifice of Christ could redeem him. To Christ he would therefore owe a debt that, whatever he did, he could not properly repay. As a sinner, even if repentant and redeemed by Christ, he would carry a permanent burden of guilt. Guilt indeed, was the mechanism which sustained the whole moral economy. The institution of auricular confession, the development of an elaborate procedure for penances and, later, the mediaeval elaboration of the concept of Purgatory, are evidence of the severity with which the Church regarded sin, and the lengths to which it went to inculcate feelings of guilt. The spasmodic outbursts, in the Middle Ages, of self-flagellation indicate how far that sense of guilt had penetrated the consciousness of the more devout among the laity. Even today, self-flagellation is far from unknown in some organizations within the Roman Catholic Church. In pronouncing vigorously against sin, the Catholic Church did, none the less, also recognize the inherent frailty of humankind, and accommodated it by the institution of the confessional, which operated as a device to assuage some measure of guilt. Protestantism, in contrast, rejected such a mechanism for the relief of guilt feelings, becoming, particularly in its Calvinistic expression, a more oppressive system in which those who aspired to be the elect of God were required not to sin at all. In intensifying the personal anguish of sinners, Calvinism is credited with having developed a system of theology and a doctrine of salvation which led to a more intense internalization of moral control and to enhanced conscience formation.

Only in the nineteenth century did the Christian preoccupation with sin begin significantly to abate. Steadily in the course of that century, Christian concern with hell and damnation receded, but by this time, secular morality and the demand for civic decencies had acquired an autonomous influence in public life. In the twentieth century, the severity of the moral demands of the preceding period was steadily tempered, until in the 1960s the former moral constraints, particularly in the area of sexual conduct, gave place to moral permissiveness. That process was perhaps facilitated by the development of birth control techniques, and by the shift, in many other spheres of life, from dependence on moral constraints to reliance on

technological controls. Thus it is evident that the postulated model of the relationship between religion and morality is one that has been far from constant, even in the case of Christianity. Nor does this measure of variability arise only with changes that take place over time. It may also be exemplified among contemporaneous denominations. The moral attitudes found among present-day evangelicals continue to manifest a strong concern with personal sin in many areas of conduct, but the very idea of sin has come to be regarded almost as outmoded by many liberal churchmen, many of whom indict the deficiencies of the social system as responsible for the errant behaviour of individuals. Some of these liberal churchmen reject entirely the claims of an absolute moral code, preferring to commit themselves to situation ethics, the implications of which must often conflict radically with the received traditional Christian moral precepts. Another, quite different, orientation is to be met with in Christian Science, in which sin is regarded merely as error proceeding from a false apprehension of reality, and which, together with sickness, may be eliminated, so Christian Scientists believe, by a change from material to spiritual ways of thinking. Given this diversity of conceptions of sin within contemporary Christianity and the very varied moral dispositions to be found there, it is clearly inappropriate to expect to find mirrored in new religions moral injunctions supposedly similar to those of Christian churches. New religions have come into being in an epoch very different from that in which Christian denominations emerged and were formed. Society itself is radically different, and its social, economic, and above all the technological environment is subject to profound and accelerating change. What people know, what they want, and the realm of their personal responsibilities are of fundamentally different type and on a different scale from the norm of past centuries. New religions, if they are to attract the followings that they do attract, must inevitably fail to conform to traditional stereotypes. That does not make them any the less religious.

XXXII. WHAT MUST A RELIGION LOOK LIKE?

Religious beliefs and their attendant moral values usually find accommodation within organizational structures, set procedures, and their expression in particular symbols. In western society, the forms of Christian institutions have become so well-established that it is often easy even for secularized lay people to assume that a religion must have analogous structures and symbols to those of Christianity. The model of the separated worship building, a stable congregation, served by a resident priesthood which has power to mediate or counsel, are all items for which analogues are expected of other religions. Yet even a cursory review must make it clear that religion need not look like this model. The major religions of the world manifest a variety of diverse arrangements, from, on the one hand, sacerdotalism, the practice of sacrifice, and sacramentalism with profuse use of auxiliary aids to faith (such as incense,

dance, and imagery) to, on the other hand, keen asceticism and singular dependence on verbal expression and prayer. Both extremes may be encountered within one major tradition, in Hinduism or Christianity, while, in its orthodox expression, Islam is more uniformly ascetic—its ecstatic manifestations occurring at the fringes.

Religious worship differs greatly in form and frequency among the various religions. It has different implications and takes a distinctive form in non-theistic systems such as Buddhism. Since there is no transcendent deity, there is no point in supplication, no place for adoration, no need for expressions of dependence, humility, and subservience, no purpose in proclamations of praise—all of which form a part of Christian worship. Yet contemporary Christian worship is itself the product of a long process of evolution. The Judaeo-Christian tradition has changed radically over the centuries. Old Testament demands for animal sacrifice for a vengeful God are far removed from the devotional practice of, say, nineteenth-century mainstream Protestantism. The replacement of chanting and metrical psalm-singing by popular hymns gave a quite different appearance to Christian worship in the course of a couple of centuries. Today, the concept of an anthropomorphic God has waned in Christianity, and from the point of view of modern theology, contemporary Christian worship, in which anthropomorphic imagery is abundant, is distinctly anachronistic. It can hardly be surprising that some modern denominations, unburdened by old traditions (in which the patina of antiquity is easily mistaken for the aura of sanctity) should have reduced, if not altogether relinquished, traces of the anthropomorphism of the past. Even apart from such evolutionary trends, however, there is abundant diversity among Christian denominations to establish the point that any stereotyping of what worship implies betrays the many-sided diversity of religion in today's world. Thus, the Roman Church developed the elaborate use of auditory, visual, and olfactory sensation in the service of faith. Catholic liturgy, whilst abjuring the use of dance and drugs, which have been employed in other religions, has elaborate ritual, sacraments, and vestments, a great wealth of symbolism, and a profusion of ceremonies marking the calendar and hierarchy of the Church and the rites of passage for individuals. In sharpest contrast to Roman Catholicism stand the Quakers, who reject any concept of a priesthood, any enactment of ritual (even of the unsacramental commemorative patterns of ritual common in some of the Protestant denominations) and the use of imagery and vestments. Emphasis on the adequacy and competence of lay performances, the rejection of sacrality, whether of buildings, places, seasons or ceremonies, and such aids as talismans and rosaries, is a characteristic in greater or lesser measure of Protestant religion. Evangelicals reject the idea of a priesthood, and Quakers, Brethren, Christadelphians, and Christian Scientists function without a paid ministry. While most Protestant denominations retain a breaking of bread ceremony they do so often as a commemorative act in obedience to scripture, and not

as a performance with any intrinsic power. Thus, whilst in some instances different actions have similar purposes, in other cases, as with the breaking of bread, an apparently similar act acquires, in accordance with a denomination's teaching, a distinctive meaning. Where, as in Christian Science, the deity is regarded as an abstract principle, acts of worship, whilst having a familiar religious purpose of bringing the believer into rapport with a divine mind, take on a quite different complexion from the supplicatory practices of denominations which retain an anthropomorphic view of deity.

New religions—and all religions were new at some time—are likely to ignore or to jettison some of the traditional practices and institutions of older and established faiths. They are all the more likely to do so if they arise in periods of accelerated social and technical development when the life-patterns of ordinary people are undergoing radical change, and when assumptions about basic institutions—family, community, education, the economic order—are all changing. In a more dynamic society, with increasingly impersonal social relations, and the influence of new media of communication, and a wider diffusion of all sorts of information and knowledge, the increased diversity of religious expression is entirely to be expected. New religions in western society are unlikely to find congenial the structures of the churches that originated two, three, four or fifteen or more centuries ago. To offer one example, given the intensified degree of social, geographic, and diurnal mobility of modern population, it would not be appropriate to suppose that new religions would organize themselves congregationally as stable and static communities. Other techniques of communication have superseded the pulpit and the printing press, and it would be surprising, in this area of activity as in others, if new religions were not to embrace the enhanced facilities of the era in which they emerge. That they do things differently from the traditional stereotype of religion, that they look outside western society for their legitimation, or that they employ new techniques for spiritual enlightenment does not disqualify them as manifestations of human religiosity.

XXXIII. IN CONCLUSION

Just as scholars have come to recognize the contemporary diversity among religions in today's society, so, if basic human rights of freedom of belief and practice are to be maintained, it becomes essential that old stereotypes of just what constitutes religion should be relinquished. In a culturally pluralistic world, religion, like other social phenomena, may take many forms. Just what is a religion cannot be determined by the application of concepts drawn from any one particular tradition. Only a higher degree of abstraction, superordinate to each particular culture and each particular religion, can encompass within one framework of reference the range of diversity of actual religious movements. Just as the concrete phenomena of one

particular religion cannot be allowed to dictate the necessary style of other faiths, so, too, the language employed needs, as far as is possible, to be uncontaminated by specific cultural connotations. It is to this end, and in the interests of equity in transactions concerning religions, that the probabilistic inventory that is set out above [Section 11] was advanced. Only with such a device, consciously constructed both to recognize the evolutionary character of religion and to subsume under independent categories the various facets of thought and practice, is it likely that the wide variety of contemporary religion will receive the consideration that is its due.

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He holds the Degrees of B.Sc. (Econ) and Ph.D. of the University of London and the M.A. of the University of Oxford. In 1984, the University of Oxford recognized the value of his published work by conferring upon him the degree of D.Litt. In 1992, the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium awarded him the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa. In 1994, he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

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Commonwealth Fund Fellow (Harkness Foundation) at the University of California, Berkeley, United States, 1957–8;

Visiting Professor, University of Ghana, 1964;

Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies, at the University of California, Berkeley, United States, 1966–7;

Research Consultant for the Sociology of Religion to the University of Padua, Italy, 1968–72;

Visiting Fellow of The Japan Society, 1975;

Visiting Professor, The Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, 1976; 1982; 1986; 1993;

Snider Visiting Professor, University of Toronto, Canada, 1978;

Visiting Professor in the Sociology of Religion, and Consultant for Religious Studies to the Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand, 1980-1;

Scott Visiting Fellow, Ormond College, University of Melbourne, Australia, 1981;

Visiting Professor, University of Queensland, Australia, 1986;

Distinguished Visiting Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara, California, United States, 1987;

For the years 1971-5, he was President of the Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse (the world-wide organization for the discipline); in 1991 he was elected Honorary President of this organization now re-named as Société Internationale de Sociologie des Religions.

Council Member of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (United States) 1977-9;

For several years, European Associate Editor, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*;

For six years, Joint Editor of *The Annual Review of the Social Sciences of Religion*.

He has lectured on minority religious movements extensively in Britain, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Japan, and the United States, and occasionally in Germany, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.

He has been called as an expert witness on sects in courts in Britain, the Netherlands, New Zealand and South Africa and has provided evidence on affidavit for courts in Australia and in France. He has also been called upon to give expert written evidence on religious movements for the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee of the House of Commons.

Among other works, he has published nine books devoted in whole or in part to minority religious movements:

Sects and Society: the Sociology of Three Religious Groups in Britain, London: Heinemann and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961; reprinted, Westport, Conn., United States; Greenwood Press, 1978;

Patterns of Sectarianism (edited) London: Heinemann, 1967;

Religious Sects, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson; New York: McGraw Hill, 1970 (also published in translation in French, German, Spanish, Swedish and Japanese);

Magic and the Millennium, London: Heinemann, and New York: Harper and Row, 1973;

Contemporary Transformations of Religion, London: Oxford University Press, 1976 (also published in translation in Italian and Japanese);

The Social Impact of the New Religious Movements (edited) New York: Rose of Sharon Press, 1981;

Religion in Sociological Perspective, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982 (also published in translation in Italian; Japanese translation in preparation);

The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990;

A Time to Chant: the Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain, [with K. Dobbelaere] Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994 (Japanese translation in preparation).

He has also contributed more than twenty-five articles on minority religious movements to edited works and learned journals in Britain, the United States, France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Japan. He has contributed articles to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*; the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, and is currently preparing a commissioned contribution to the *Enciclopedia Italiana*.



