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RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF MAN

We are presently creating the multiform human tradition as the effective and encompassing society in which each person and each particular society finds a comprehensive context for existence in the human order of being. Within this universal society of mankind each human person becomes heir to the fulness of man's past cultural achievements, participant in the convergent cultures of the present, and, according to capacity, maker of the future. This convergence of the present, the consequence of scientific and technological improvements in travel and communication, has not so far been characterized by any dominant religious or spiritual motivations. Yet it can be seen that exterior convergence does not bring about interior communion, nor does it necessarily lead to cultural enrichment. An effective human development that could preserve and enhance the human quality of life requires a sensitivity to the deeper forms of communication between subjects. For these reasons an understanding of the interior and religious life of man and reconciliation of traditions with each other become matters of urgency.

A vast amount of literature is being produced concerning the religions of every continent of the world. The literature of religion among the tribal peoples of Africa, South America, the Pacific Islands and elsewhere throughout the world is great indeed. So too are studies of the religious traditions of Asia and the European world. It can be said, however, that this literature is still governed more by the methods of positivistic social sciences than by the more humanistic disciplines. Competent humanistic studies of the larger religious life of man using this material are rare. Western theologians have given little attention to the interpretative problems that emerge from this meeting of spiritual traditions, despite the urgency of the work and the benefits to be derived for understanding the basic issues of divine-human presence to each other.

For such reasons these studies are not at present bringing

about a desirable communion of peoples or enabling the various societies to provide for each other the interior nourishment that each needs so much. What is being done to enable these various religious traditions to be present to each other in a truly human manner is often done by devotees with little intellectual background but with intense drives toward personal and emotional contact with these traditions. To strengthen and make these associations more effective, it seems desirable that those engaged in religious and spiritual studies be more creative in the larger cultural order. The documents that they deal with, the religious and spiritual events they observe, the spiritual disciplines they describe so well, all these are associated with profound interior experiences that should flow forth as serious cultural influences within our society. Yet there is an amazing capacity of scholars to "defend themselves against the messages with which their documents are filled" (Eliade, *Quest*, p. 62). Since these documents were composed in the context of a most profound realism, an intimate life involvement, in a struggle with the most destructive aspects of the human condition, even with demonic forces, they function best and become most intelligible within the context of a cultural realism rather than in the context of academic discussion. If such be the case, then this is the time *par excellence* when the deepest meaning of these ancient traditions should emerge, for all humanist traditions are presently in need of renewal.

Since at present students in the social sciences are generally not comfortable in the humanist phase of their study, the tendency is to encompass the human order of things within an empirical science. At least this is one way of seeing the present situation of anthropology, the social sciences generally, and even, at times, the religious sciences. These studies have derived their method, their mood and their objectives from the social sciences; which in turn derived their method from the objectivist physics of the Newtonian period. Within this context the human quality of life, as this was previously known is considerably diminished; the intuitive experience of the real is stifled, the will and capacity for grandeur is lost. Man loses his place at the centre of the real: eventually he ends up in the ash-cans on the stage of Beckett. This question of the humanistic and scientific dimensions of man constitutes a rather crucial issue even as regards the physical survival of man. Scientists themselves realize that scientific achievements so grand in their outreach into space have not enabled man to deal with the full magnitude of the human order.

This dominance of the social sciences is a powerful influence even on religious studies. Because his vigour is exhausted by research, the scholar often finds it difficult to push his study on to the level of a comprehensive humanist interpretation. Possibly he is too close to the material for a deeper type of reflection; while the professional humanist, philosopher or theologian is too far from it. Thus many of the great scriptural texts of the world, which have been available for a long while, remain without a desirable depth of interpretation or cultural influence. They seem not to have the vital impact such as existed in the movement of Buddhist texts from India to China, in the movement of Buddhist and Confucian texts into Japan, in the meeting of biblical texts with Hellenic thought in the Patristic period, or in the medieval meeting of the Christian tradition with the Aristoteléan teachings. So with the present; insufficient thought is now given to such levels of cultural creativity. One reason, perhaps, is that many western scholars have no vital relationship with the deeper cultural currents of their own traditions. Their scholarly life is without relation to any experiential roots. Although much excellent work is done in translating and explaining religious literature, we do not produce men of the Erasmus type, although this is what we might eventually hope for. Creative personalities of such dimensions are rising more effectively out of a scientific background than out of a background of religious studies. This situation is not due primarily to limitations in the work of research scholars, it is due rather to the failure of those supposedly in vital contact with the spiritual and humanist currents of the west, the philosophers, theologians, cultural historians and those in religious studies.

What is needed is an interaction of textual study and research with true humanistic insight and imagination. Present limitations in interpretation are rather in the limitations of the imaginative and emotional order than in any lack of technical skill or research data. In the words of Eliade,

It is not necessary to let oneself become paralyzed by the immensity of the task; it is necessary above all to renounce the easy excuse that not all the documents have been conveniently collected and interpreted. All the other humanist disciplines, to say nothing of the natural sciences, find themselves in an analogous situation. But no man of science has waited until all the facts were assembled before trying to understand the facts already known. Besides, it is necessary to free oneself from the superstition that analysis represents the true scientific work and

that one ought to propose a synthesis or a generalization only rather late in life. One does not know of any example of a science or a humanist discipline whose representatives are devoted exclusively to analysis without attempting to advance a working hypothesis or to draft a generalization. The human mind works in this compartmented manner only at the price of its own creativity. There exist, perhaps, in the diverse disciplines some scholars who have never gone beyond the stage of analysis—but they are victims of the modern organization of research. In any case, they ought not be considered models. Science does not owe any significant discovery to them (*Quest*, 59).

These statements quoted from Eliade can be paralleled by similar statements concerning scientific insight by Rene Dubos:

Many great experimenters in all fields of science have described how their ideas were determined in large part by unanalytical, visionary perceptions. Likewise, history shows that most specific scientific theories have emerged and have been formulated gradually from crude intuitive sketches. In this light, the first steps in the recognition of patterns or in the development of new concepts are more akin to artistic awareness than to what is commonly regarded as the scientific method. I have purposefully used vague terms such as 'visionary perceptions' and 'artistic awareness' with the knowledge that this terminology will cause accusations of antiscientific and even anti-intellectual mysticism. In reality, however, I do not believe that my attitude is based on a naive acceptance in intuition as a sort of second-class revelation. Instead, it is determined by the belief that scientific questions have their origin deep in human consciousness, often below the analytical level (*Dreams of Reason*, 123).

As all other studies whether scientific or humanistic have this need, so the religious sciences also have a need of visionary perceptions, artistic awareness and cultural creativity, as well as ability to respond to that depth of human consciousness "below the analytical level", especially at this time when the global community of scholars and the global complex of cultures come into existence to establish the final and abiding context within which human life is to be lived and humanistic studies are to be done throughout the indefinite future. Whatever the magnitude of this task, and however vast the new imaginative range that is required, we cannot really say that this task is proportionately so much greater than, or its objectives so much different from, the task fulfilled and the objectives sought at the beginning of the classical civilizations. There was always the prob-

lem of awakening to, responding to, and humanly organizing the universe. The most primordial intuitions of mankind, as expressed in man's mythical projections and in his spiritual disciplines, communicate to us across the ages, at least in outline, the cosmic context for this new cultural development. The comprehensive world order in which the divine, the cosmic and the human were intimately present to each other, is the very context in which the Chinese lived from the beginning, as we see from the opening passages of the *Book of History*. Here we see portrayed in extensive detail the quest of man for integration of the heavenly and the earthly, the effort to encompass the earth in its full extent, to order human existence in its total meaning. There is, of course, a much greater complexity to the present cosmological, historical and cultural process than was dreamed of by these ancient civilizations; creation of the future world order will require new ways of integrating the cultural complex of mankind in historical time and global space. But it should help to know that man has generally, from the earliest neolithic period, functioned on a comprehensive cosmic plane, as can be seen from archeological remains as well as from living tribal societies, as well from the American Indians as from the classical societies of India and China.

Here we observe that this work of ordering the world within its human context has, ever since this early period, been largely the function of hermeneutics, the most ancient function of human wisdom, interpretation. The great civilizations first read the text of the real from the cosmic phenomena and gave interpretations based on an interior response to this experience, a response which led to the composition of those scriptural texts that have been handed down through the ages as communicating a primordial revelation to mankind. Men ever since have sustained and developed the greater cultures by constant reinterpretation of these ancient scriptures in the light of new historical experiences. The constant renewal of civilizations, their very life process, has been associated with, and largely governed by, interpretation of these texts. Contemporary man must once again interpret these texts, this time in a complex that embraces them all in the multiform human tradition that reaches from east to west on a globe-encompassing scale, also in a historical time sequence, wherein we see the various civilizations within the converging movement of cultural development throughout the centuries. This historical-cultural convergence must be seen as the primary context in which these cultural traditions and religious studies now become aware of themselves.

What must be sought for in the new hermeneutics is the recovery, through critical processes, of a second naivete, an earlier interior experience of an harmonious and luminous universe associated by the Chinese with the "lost mind" or "the mind of the child." The manner in which this is achieved must, to a large extent, be through language; this is why language studies are of such great importance and why language and its most ancient literature must be made to yield up their full original luminous meaning. The religious scholar is dealing with the greater part of the world's most sacred literature in an age which is becoming the supreme scriptural age so far in the history of man. The ultimate achievement of scriptural scholarship is the recovery of what Paul Ricoeur designates as the "fullness of language." We do not awaken to consciousness in a blank universe. We awaken in a universe wherein the cosmic script is already written, a universe in which the written scriptures have already been composed, a universe in which we discover, with Wang Yang-ming, a third scripture, written within man's own being. Each of these scriptures, the cosmic, the verbal, and the interior awareness, responds to the others, evokes the reality of the others, and is interpreted in the light of the others. These three together guide man in his self-creation, his humanization. Out of these three the higher cultures of mankind have been born; out of these three they have been sustained; and when these cultures have declined, it is out of these three sources that they have been called back to life and renewed from century to century. Once more they face a challenge of severe proportions. In the overall view this is perhaps the special period of the third of these scriptures, which, however, can come to life only with some vital contact with these other two scriptures. The period prior to the composition of the early verbal and written scriptures is the period of individual development of these humanistic and scriptural traditions so familiar to us in the last three millenia. Now we are into the third period, the period of reading the scriptures within man's own being, and also that of scriptural convergence on a universal scale.

Meanwhile there is a crisis to be faced, the period of demythologization, the period of man's alienation from his scriptural foundations, the period in which the scriptures survive by objective, analytical type study more within an academic context than within the realities of man's existence. This period of demythologizing is perhaps coming to an end at the same time as the period of cultural isolation is at an end and also at a time when the inherent limitations of the technological achievements of man are

being recognized. At such a time the interior scriptures awaken to the need for renewed contact with the other two scriptural traditions, the verbal and the cosmic. A new period of scriptural vitality is born. This is the meaning of the new humanistic movements that are emerging at the present time and which give to this generation a sense of hope that a new humanism is in the process which will be the context also in which religious studies will be done in the future. For the first time since its emergence in the historical process, western culture has an opportunity to establish itself within a functional global complex of cultures in a spiritually cooperative rather than a spiritually antagonistic or competitive attitude.

This traditional antagonism has been largely the result of ignorance on the part of western religious thinkers concerning the real nature and intent of religious thought and practice of other peoples. But now, due to the new types of religious studies that have come into existence, an extensive range of man's religious development has been investigated in all its variety, in its simplest as in its most complex forms. What emerges from this is that the various religious traditions, with all their differences, have much to say to each other; the beliefs and practices of each illumine the beliefs and practices of the others. This becomes evident in the case of Christian thought which has a new range of data in the scriptural traditions of the world upon which it can draw for deepening its own understanding of the divine and human orders and the relations between them. This data must now be incorporated into discussion of the divine reality in itself and in its relation to the phenomenal world, in discussions of the human condition, revelation, redemption, incarnation, the saviour personality, faith, grace, sacrifice, rebirth rituals, interior spiritual disciplines, experience of divine union, sacred community, communion with the cosmic order, final beatitude. None of these can any longer be studied satisfactorily without this additional data. In such studies the Christian finds not only that his own traditions can be further identified in their distinctive characteristics but also that his understanding of his own traditions can be considerably broadened, perhaps even more than biblical understanding was clarified and extended by contact with Hellenic thought.

Yet all of this needs the development of a new and more satisfactory hermeneutics. That is where religious studies of the present experience their greatest need. There exists an extensive volume of research materials that has not yet been given the inter-

pretation that is needed. This can come about only by producing a greater number of scholars with adequate cultural-historical background along with the intellectual insight and imagination needed to incorporate the existing data into a more meaningful context. Students of religion who work from a philosophical or theological basis are generally not acquainted with actual religious beliefs and practices on a sufficiently broad scale, nor do they have the type of interpretative skills that are needed. On the other hand those involved in research frequently are unable to go beyond their data and even consider that "subjective" appropriation and interpretation of research data is a contamination of pure scientific knowledge. This transition from scientific knowledge to subjective human meaning is indeed a big step and needs to be managed with extreme care. Yet any study of man should be recognized from the beginning as being a subjective affair as regards the knowing person, the reality known, the means of knowing and the purpose of knowing. The "scientific" process in the acquiring and organizing the data does an invaluable service in enabling man to become the more clearly aware of the human mode of being, but only when the construction of scientific methods and scientific categories do not minimize the basic human quality of the process. If as regards the studies that are made of the religious life and literature of one people by another a subjective communication is not taking place, if religious personalities cannot speak to each other in terms that are mutually helpful in managing the human condition, if traditions cannot clarify for each other what it is to be human and assist each other in carrying out a redemptive or liberating transformation of the human subject, if the sacred space of the one is so completely impenetrable to the other; then, it would seem, the study of man's religious and cultural traditions comes to an abortive conclusion. Yet we must admit that we have not really learned this art of inter-religious communication to a satisfactory degree.

While history indicates extensive inter-religious and inter-cultural conflicts and tensions in the past it also presents extensive achievements, of religious and cultural influences that passed from one society to another. An intercommunion of traditions has taken place so widely that it seems to be almost universal. It would be difficult to identify any spiritual or cultural tradition as a "pure" tradition, as an absolute self-creation. What has not yet been done and what is so much needed is an understanding of how this religious-cultural process can be carried out more effectively in the specific conditions of the late twentieth century. As models of

the past we have such great periods of spiritual communication as that which existed in the patristic period of Christian development in the mediterranean region, also the period of assimilation of Buddhism into the Chinese world, also the spiritual and cultural interaction that has taken place in the development and spread of Islam across a large part of the world. The difficulty is that now the situation has grown extremely complex with the impingement of all traditions on each other in a flood of religious data and influence on the one hand and a lack of really human and spiritual communication on the other. There is no proportion between the amount of data and the amount of real religious process that is taking place. This disproportion is due to secularist indifference, to vigorous fundamentalism at times, and, at times, to professional neglect, especially by Christian theologians.

Still the entire dynamics of the modern world is to an ever-increasing degree throwing men and societies together in close exterior proximity but without the capacity for interior communication. This is the difficulty that we face. Formerly the meeting of societies was the meeting of men and human traditions on a limited scale and with limited personal contact but within a fundamentally human and religious order of life. Now the communication has been intensified on the exterior without a satisfactory deepening within. Thus the reduction of human relations to the economic, the political and the social order, with an overlay of the aesthetic and the spiritual. It may seem rather distant to speak about inter-religious hermeneutics in such a context but certain it is that men will in the future need to interpret their deeper selves to each other if the human venture is to meet the challenges of the future in any phase of man's life.

Of course much has already been accomplished in the spiritual order. If we look to the larger cultural context of the present we can observe a powerful gravitation of traditions to each other; this can be observed in the popularity in the west of a variety of religious cults and spiritual disciplines from various parts of the world. There is a return to religious symbolism, participation in rituals, engaging in difficult and demanding meditation exercises, a quest for the guidance of spiritual masters, extensive reading in the various scriptures of the world. It should be remarked, however, that this is mostly a matter of personal interest, unrelated to the traditional religious establishments or to official teaching. We seem to have, in America at least, no theologian of recognized competence in this type of discussion, although among Asian scholars and among cultural anthropologists there is an extensive volume of

material concerning the various religions of man. It appears that our theologians have concerned themselves entirely with the challenge of secularism and the prevailing philosophical currents of more recent western derivation. Thus if these participants in a variety of spiritual traditions are often without proper guidance, if they do not lead to any substantial religious or cultural development, they at least witness to the basic spiritual attraction that the various traditions have for each other and offer some indication of the forms of future spiritual development that may take place in western society. From this we can see that if there is on the part of some a spiritual immobility in the face of this meeting of peoples, there is also a trend toward intimate participation. The difficulty of the one is that their spiritual traditions are not developing according to the historical dimensions that are needed in this exciting period of man's development and thus do not contribute to the communion of peoples and traditions that is needed. The difficulty of the other is that it makes too little distinction in responding to the religious phenomena and thus finds no sustaining life programme, nothing that can be elevated into a movement capable of the cultural renewal that must be carried out at this moment of history.

Here is the task of hermeneutics, the task of interpreting traditions to each other, while keeping each distinctive in itself, to bring them into the creative presence of each other. The traditions can be helpful to each other only on condition that each remains inviolably itself. If there is a falsification of traditions, if there is overly facile identification in an undifferentiated religious or spiritual context, then the entire movement loses its effectiveness. Both continuity and discontinuity must be preserved. Diversity of traditions must be renewed while a common spiritual space is established. Each tradition in its larger implications will have a meta-phase or a macro-phase; this will be the larger meaning or the higher resonance that it evokes in the larger human tradition within which it now begins to function. This distinction of a macro-phase and a micro-phase might very well serve as a way of designating the larger, more universal phase of a tradition and the particular, limited phase of a tradition. So with Christianity, it has its specific institutional phase, its community of the baptised; yet there is beyond this the larger community of man with which it is somehow associated not simply in a purely spiritual manner but by way of observable Christian presence. So with Buddhism. So also with the Yogic spirituality which has its specific phase in which it is associated with the *Samkhya* dualist doctrine and also its larger phase in

which it functions as a spiritual discipline associated with a wide variety of religious traditions throughout the world. So we might speak of the micro-phase and the macro-phase of many significant terms that are used in the various traditions, terms such as *Brahman*, *Māya*, *Nirvana*, *Tao*, *Dharma*, *Li*, *Karma*, *T'ien*, *Jen*. All of these terms have their origin and primary significance within a certain context, yet they are now being universalized and used on a more extensive scale to enrich the religious and spiritual vocabulary of the global human community. Thus, for indicating a "final term of reference" in the order of the real or in the order of man's consciousness we have already an extremely rich variety of terms from a complex of traditions; each of these tells us something which is not quite the same as that told us by the other terms, indicating that the experience itself is not quite the same, yet also indicating that a variety of terms from such a complex of traditions is of significant assistance to man in his efforts toward identification of a final reality. Proper use of such a complex of terms will require a special skill; a skill that men are now acquiring. It must also be added here that when such a complex of terms is brought together they all become changed and begin to enunciate things that they never enunciated before. The linguistic or theological purist is liable to resent such "abuse" of sacred words. Yet the answer must be given that neither history nor culture nor language knows the type of permanence or the type of constancy that is sought by those who would isolate language or thought from the stream of time, from the temporal conditioning to which all things are subject; nor can we accept the position that languages are ultimately opaque to each other; nor can we accept the attitude that thought systems or religious traditions or spiritual disciplines are incommunicable with each other.

Precisely here is where the creative intuition or visionary perception begins to assert itself. The horizon is open, extensive linguistic materials are available, the larger vision is beginning to emerge within the global community, past traditions have all made their contribution, the present has brought about a convergence of spiritual currents and their modes of expression; now is the creative moment, the moment on a global scale such as the moment within western civilization when Paul came upon the scene, or when Augustine enunciated his vision of a Christian historical order, or when Thomas brought the new Aristotelean terminology into Christian theology so that it could say things that Aristotle never dreamed of saying. There are no laws for such

moments, there is no way of indicating the direction which the religious insight should take. This is determined by persons of superior religious insight who understand the complex of past traditions as well as the opportunities of the present moment and who can construct a comprehensive religious vision adequate to the historical need. Such persons choose and shape language suited to this purpose. Following generations of scholars fill out the details within the context established until another period of major transformation arrives. Lacking such a resolution of the present problems of religious hermeneutics, the rise of religious thinkers of this magnitude, those in religious studies can only proceed within the limits of their ability toward creation of a truly functional religious vision.

If we indicate, then, the need of Christian thinkers incorporating the data of the religious traditions of mankind into their study as a first step to be taken, and the development of a new science of hermeneutics as a second step that can be taken, we might indicate as a third possible development the need for studying Christianity according to the norms and methods of the History of Religions. In recent centuries Christian tradition has been dominated by biblical expressions or by its theological exposition that came into existence in the medieval period and which has since established itself as the basic method for explaining and defending the essential beliefs that constitute the Christian life orientation. If this theological tradition has been a remarkable achievement and an immense help in sustaining and developing Christian thought and culture, it has also been a severely limiting instrument of Christian expression. Since its thinking is grounded in biblical texts and in traditional explanations of biblical texts, it has already placed itself within a very limited range of man's religious experience. The only extensive cultural, religious or thought influence on this theological tradition so far has been that of Hellenistic philosophy from Platonic, Neoplatonic and Aristotelean sources. More recently there have been influences from such sources as Phenomenology, the Existentialism of Heidegger, and lately the Process thought of Whitehead. But there has still been almost no influence from any of the non-biblical religious traditions of the world. Christian theological tradition has of set purpose alienated itself from cooperative association with other traditions. Thus at the present time one of the most effective ways of invigorating Christian thought might be to observe the Christian tradition from the wider anthropological perspective of the History of Religions. In this manner we can expect the major out-

lines of the biblical and Christian traditions to emerge in a much clearer light. The terms and norms of comparison have thus far been too limited. Such a study of Christianity has already been begun in general studies in the History of Religions and the Phenomenology of Religions, but these have so far only projected some basic orientations. There is need of more thorough study from this viewpoint.

A fourth need is for increased study of the nature and limitations of symbolism, especially the archetypal symbolism set forth so extensively by Carl Jung. The religious life of man in recent decades has recovered from a devastating period of rationality and scientific analysis. The limitations of the strictly rational processes of the mind are, however, once again recognized as well as the inability of rational demonstration to evoke emotional response or sustained application of human energies. The more profound aspects of man's awareness come from a depth of his being to which even the person himself has only limited access in the interior sensitivity of his feeling life. He only knows this depth from the symbols that emerge in his dreams or which arise spontaneously in his consciousness. Cultivation of this capacity for understanding and responding to these intuitive faculties of the mind constitutes the basis of creative genius whether in the intellectual or aesthetic life of man. But this is especially important in the spiritual and religious life of man which, in its essential qualities, involves a communication not only with the transrational but with the transhuman modes of the real. Both from the standpoint of understanding and from the standpoint of efficacy in the spiritual, social and historical orders, the recovery of contact with the imaginative processes is of supreme importance. Also in the renewal of the religious and humanistic phases of contemporary life and in evoking a greater intercommunion of traditions hardly anything is more helpful than this new appreciation of the imaginative, the symbolic, the mythical.

Of the various scriptures that we have mentioned, the cosmic, the verbal and the interior awareness, we might say that all these come together in the common world of symbols. Rebirth symbolism, which is impressed upon man so powerfully by the sequence of the seasons, and by the periodic death and rebirth of living things, has entered into the myths, rituals and sacred literature of peoples so extensively that it must express a common interior awareness of the mind. The specific manifestation and meaning of this symbolism differs from one people to another, but the awareness that man, to achieve human status, must undergo a

death-rebirth experience does have far-reaching implications. Another symbol that is of importance in the spiritual intercommunion of peoples throughout the world, is that of mythical narrative wherein human existence is seen as a story or drama, especially as the dramatic or narrative account of a journey where the human personality encounters obstacles to be overcome, demonic powers to be thwarted, and even death to be undergone, before with the aid of superhuman powers, the true self, the divine presence, the grail, the jewel of great price, or everlasting life is attained. This journey motif can be seen in the journey of Gilgamesh, in the Homeric epics, in the Exodus legend of the Hebrew people. It is found also in the wanderings of Buddha, in the fictional account of the pilgrimage of Hsuan Tsang, in the account the Hopi Indians of America give to their origin and destiny. It is further found in Augustine's story of the rise, progress through history and termination of the City of God; in the journey of Dante in the *Commedia*. In all of these, external pilgrimage is the symbol of the journey of the individual soul, the particular society, and the human order itself, into those interior depths wherein the sacred presence shines forth, all peril is surmounted, final security is attained.

A fifth area of study that deserves consideration is the religious experience known in biblical and Christian terms as "revelation". At least so far as the west is concerned a more comprehensive study of divine revelation to man remains a most important need for establishing a wider religious perspective. This will require both further research and greater insight into the data that emerges from the research. This will provide the basis for at least an informal world scriptural collection out of which new thinking of the religious order can be done. If, so far, only a few minor efforts have been made in this direction we may believe that much more will be done in the future. While this seems at first to be primarily a Christian concern it is also a universal concern, although in many instances the communication that takes place between the divine and the human is so intimate that it is simply not a problem that occurs at the conscious intellectual level. Still, the manner and variety of divine communication to man is one of the most fruitful points of religious discussion, at least for theistic religions. Within this collection the various "scriptures" will not equate in any univocal sense. The scriptures of the Hindu world or the Buddhist world will be in form something other than the biblical scriptures, but they cannot be totally unrelated. They will be the basis on which the thought of the future must build and a mutual validation of various scrip-

tural traditions must be considered. Religious personalities communicating the major religious or spiritual teachings to a people might also be given mutual recognition.

What can be seen from these suggestions is that after the weakening of the spiritual and cultural consensus that we have witnessed in recent times, the former isolated situation can hardly be reestablished. The various religious traditions are irrevocably altered in their individual and collective significance. The entire spiritual situation of man, the very mode of his religious consciousness is changed. Suggestion that the sources of revelation be broadened for the Christian theologian, that multicultural and multi-religious hermeneutics is now a central question, that Christian tradition be studied according to the norms of the History of Religions, that a comprehensive study of divine revelation and consideration of a world scriptural collection might be among the most significant issues to occupy our thinking in the future; all of this is to shift the entire content of western Christian awareness into a new context, the multiform global religious tradition of man. If formerly Christianity was studied from the inside out, it should now be studied from the outside in.

In this situation the historian of religions becomes one of the foremost religious creators of the twentieth century. He is the one primarily responsible for evoking a consciousness of the universal religious heritage of man in all its diversity. Also he is responsible for creating the conditions in which an extensive interaction of religious traditions and cultures is begun which will be continued indefinitely into the future. Of all the religious forces at work in the present it is doubtful if any other force is so powerful in awakening the ancient traditions to new phases of their development. For none of the traditions are complete. Although for long periods these traditions seem to remain unchanged they are now awakened to change and renewal as seldom before in their history. The traditions begin to realize that they are not entirely stable forms of life but that they are developmental processes that have changed considerably in the past and are destined, perhaps, for even greater change in the future. Yet we should not exaggerate the newness of the changes being brought about at the present, since these traditions have all undergone extensive interaction with other traditions over the past several thousand years. This is only a more heightened intercommunion of traditions because of the definitive nature of the intercommunion, its comprehensiveness and its all-pervading nature due to the modern means

of communication which are bringing the peoples and traditions of the world into the presence of each other to a degree never before thought possible. Strangely enough those very forces that are moving the various cultures and religions out of the traditional into the modern world are exactly the forces that are enabling each of these traditions to recover contact with their most ancient forms and their most ancient literature. Thus these traditions live more deeply in the past even as they move into the present and the future. Each tradition is made more complete within itself, more integral with its primordial moments. From this earliest period the historical movement of religions and cultures has been convergence toward a multiform global tradition in which each finds its place and each is in some manner present to the entire society of man.

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