

RELIGION AND CULTURES*

By Eric J. Sharpe

The question to which I propose to refer is one which has been with us for some time, and which I assume is going to be with us for some considerable time to come. It exercises the minds of historians, students of literature and human geographers, as well as specialists in my own field, and, one might fairly say, cuts into virtually every area of study in the humanities. Put in the form of a question: how is what we call religion related to what we call culture? In view of the observable plurality of both religions and cultures in the world, does this mean that religions should be evaluated, not in terms of their "truth" or "falsehood", but in terms of the cultures of which they appear to be part? And can there ever be anything which can fairly be called "universal religion", or is this merely a mirage, a form of words and an abstraction?

One ought not to underestimate the trouble which is caused by the mere asking of such questions as these. They have, of course, been asked, and asked repeatedly, during the past century or so. Where they have not been asked, or where they have received inadequate or partisan answers, considerable confusion has resulted. Probably we have not altogether forgotten the example of Mahatma Gandhi, who was a politician of extraordinary subtlety (or at least seemed to be so, by the flatfooted standards of the Britain of the 1930s) and yet was acknowledged by many, not all of them Hindus, to be a saint. But do we recall that apparent contradiction in terms, the "militant Buddhism" of Sri Lanka and Vietnam? No one of our generation is ever likely to forget the face, or the voice, of Rev. Ian Paisley; but who is there who is genuinely prepared to try to analyse that extraordinary combination of cultural, political, economic and religious allegiances and antipathies which feed him and his kind? And amid the welter of denunciation which has poured over the Republic of South Africa during the past few decades, who really understands the precise role of religion in the racial and cultural conflicts of that unhappy country? Of non-South African English-speaking scholars of my personal acquaintance, only one seems to have taken the trouble to try to find out.

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Anyone who comes, like a celebrated world traveller, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it", sees the conflicts, the tensions and the lack of human understanding everywhere. The more the idealist holds forth on the subject of "humanity", the "global village", and universal solutions to universal problems, the more separatist movements spring up — in Scotland, Wales, the Basque country, the Moluccas, Québec — all saying, in effect, "A plague on your big battalions; give us our own culture, our own language and our own traditions." And sometimes one has the horrific vision of a world culture presided over by Colonel Sanders and marked out by chains of ever larger international airports and Hilton Hotels, attempting to crush the life out of a multitude of ever tinier local cultures, each drawing its life from ancient wells, and each insisting more and more shrilly (and sometimes violently) on its own right to exist according to its own vision and its own standards. Often enough, both the vision and the standards are shaped as much by religious as by political considerations, or rather by a complex amalgam of the two.

And then there is what we are by now accustomed to calling "the counter-culture". It has followed the West like a reverse shadow for decades, denying what it affirms and affirming what it denies. You may think of it what you will, but it is not altogether irreligious. It has experimented with altered states of consciousness through drugs and through meditation; it has sought and found gurus, some worthy and some unworthy; for one thing only it has shown supreme contempt — the understanding of religion and culture which the West has built up over the centuries. If God appears to it in the light of the chairman of some cosmic multi-national corporation, then this may be no more than some conventional religionists deserve.

But I am anticipating. I hope that we can see that there is a sizeable problem here; but before we can examine it more closely we ought to pause for a moment and define our terms.

I shall not be rash enough to try to produce a watertight definition of either "religion" or "culture". I doubt whether this is possible. But I shall try to outline the general area within which each of these words operates. By religion, I mean every type of belief and behaviour, which has reference, at some point or other, either at first or second hand, to an order of being outside or beyond the range of the normal senses. Call that order "supernatural" or "supernormal" if you like: the point is that for the greater part of human history and in most parts of the world even now, human beings have actually believed such an order to exist. Its nature is as a rule hierarchical, extending all the way from the highest and most remote deities and powers of the sky and atmosphere, down to the departed spirits of the dead and the uneasy ghosts and demons who curdle the milk and bring you out in spots. Ever since classical times, the tendency has been to draw a line across this hierarchy at some point or other, to call whatever is above the line "religion" and whatever is below it, "superstition". However, this particular rule of thumb was first conceived with the needs of the "official" religion of the ancient city

state in mind. Religion was what furthered the wellbeing of the body politic; superstition was its fear-ridden substructure, which did not. In my opinion, this is no longer a workable distinction. There is no reason for the student to divide up mankind's commerce with the unseen in this way. Religion and superstition are not irreconcilable opposites, merely levels of human awareness, some more universal, some more local. But remove the idea of the supernatural from the scene, and whatever you have left may be moral, inspiring, comforting, or what you will — but it will not be religion.

I need hardly add, I hope, that in a university department it makes not the slightest difference whether the student actually shares any or all of these beliefs. All that is necessary is to take seriously the observable fact that other people have them. To say, in effect, that because a student (or for that matter a professor) believes religion to be an outgrown illusion, born of fear of the unknown and nourished by generations of cunning priests, therefore there is nothing in it worth studying is simply silly. What would a Faculty of Medicine say to a student who refused to study pathology, on the grounds that he believed himself to be perfectly healthy? Or how would the university react to the assertion that it should shun the study of politics, on the grounds that politics have occasionally been divisive?

“Culture” I take to mean (more in a Germanic than an English sense, I must admit) the sum total of all those factors which give a group of people their own full collective identity. I do not mean merely those hobbies and pastimes which prevent the refined from getting bored on long winter evenings. Culture in this fuller sense includes elements of geography, history, language, music, art and architecture; it expresses itself in ways ranging from ethical and moral values to jokes. A culture may be said to exist whenever and wherever these things combine in such a way as to give some people a common identity, and to identify others as “outsiders”. It may be large or small; it may be something you are simply born into, or something you spend half your life trying desperately to get into or escape from; it may attract the attentions of cultural anthropologists, or it may not. But whatever its size and its rules (for it always has rules and conventions, some of them written and some unspoken), it will characteristically mark off the world into “insiders” and “outsiders”, Greeks and barbarians, Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers. It is this last point which is of the most immediate concern to us, since a culture may choose to identify itself by its attitude to the supernatural world, as well as by the language it uses and the town halls it builds.

It tends in these days to be widely assumed in fact that religion is, if not absolutely identifiable with culture, at least capable of being analysed on much the same terms, and subject to very similar rules. For if religion expresses, so to speak, a supernatural point of reference for a particular community, a fellowship in which the dead and the guardian spirits have their place as well as the living, then religious ideas will be able to come to full expression only within the culture which gave them birth. Only within its proper culture will religious language, religious ideas and religious symbols make sense. This was what the German theologian Ernst Troeltsch meant in the early 1920s when he said that “. . . our

whole Christianity is indissolubly bound up with elements of the ancient and modern civilisations of Europe . . . It stands or falls with European civilization . . . We cannot live without a religion, yet the only religion that we can endure is Christianity." What applies to Christianity applies by the same token to the other great religions, each of which fits (or appears to fit) into a cultural unit, from which one attempts to separate it at one's peril.

Equally, to attempt to transplant a religion (any religion) into alien soil is, on this view, doomed to failure – like trying to persuade coconut palms to grow in the suburbs of Stockholm. A religion grows only in a certain soil and a certain climate. Separate it from that environment, and it dies. To quote Troeltsch once more, "There can be no conversion or transformation of one [great religion] into the other, but only a measure of agreement and of mutual understanding." Had he lived half a century later, Troeltsch would have been an enthusiastic advocate of what we now call "inter-religious dialogue".

There is no doubt that an argument of this general kind is fairly common currency in our day. But there is something slightly peculiar about it nevertheless. Buddhism, for instance, originated in India, and was nourished on Indian soil for many centuries. Today it flourishes rather more in, say, Thailand and Japan than in its motherland, where it is now a slightly exotic import. Islam, with its romantic image of *Arabia Felix*, the vast spaces and the loneliness of the vast desert, has actually owed very little to Arabia proper, but has left its mark upon some very remote places indeed, not least China, East and West Africa and South-East Asia. And what of Christianity? Might one be permitted to ask precisely *when* Christianity assumed its (according to Troeltsch) total identification with the cultures of Europe and America? I hope we remember that it originated in Palestine, was shaped in the Hellenistic world by a combination of Jewish fervour, Greek thought and Roman law, and assumed only its modern shape in Europe – with considerable differences even then between north and south, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox. To which of these cultural patterns is Christianity therefore supposed to correspond? It is all very well to write, as Robin Boyd has done, about "the Latin captivity" of the Christian Church, but that is only a fraction of the picture. At least, his argument rings a little hollow from the perspective of Athens or Atlanta, Georgia.

From the historical evidence, it is perfectly obvious that religious traditions have in the past been remarkably geographically mobile. From the same evidence, it is clear that very few traditions are intellectually static for long at a time. Under the pressure of changing circumstances, each of what we call the great religions has changed its character, has learned some things and unlearned others, has had its scriptures translated into new languages and seen newer and subtler commentaries written, has made new images of deity and built new places of worship. Alliances with rulers have been made and broken. The world has been wooed, manipulated, rejected. Religions on the move have absorbed elements from existing local patterns of belief in what Wilfred Cantwell Smith calls the process of "cumulative tradition", and they have shed other elements. No historian would want to claim that the "original" Buddhism of India is identical with the developed Buddhism of Japan, or, for that matter, that the "original" Christianity of the New

Testament is identical with the Christianity of New England or, for that matter, New South Wales.

It is also important that we should remember that, particularly in our modern world (say during the last three hundred or so years), religions and cultures have been meeting one another with increasing frequency. Once upon a time, you could live tucked away in some small corner of the world, and you would never need to give a thought to what "foreigners" did or said or thought. Your culture would be something of which you were, as likely as not, unaware. You would follow the eternal pattern of seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, birth and death, because you knew of no other. Time would be measured out and punctuated by festivals, public and private, which you accepted and in which you took part because again you knew of no other. Custom was the king of your everyday society. Perhaps from time to time there would be wars, storms, droughts, famines, disease and sudden death. But these were no more than temporary disturbances of a pattern which you had not invented, and which would long outlast you. As far as the supernatural world went, the stone circles, the temples, the mounds, the sacred sites had (as far as you knew) always been there, and would always be there. Religion and culture were simply opposite sides of the same coin, which no one could even begin to consider devaluing.

How far away this world seems today! Not only has the simple agricultural economy of, say, the European middle ages collapsed under the hammer-blows of the industrial revolution. Our modern world is mobile as never before. Geographically and ideologically, we are living in one another's pockets. Students in chromium-plated northern European universities a few years ago were rather more likely to be found reading *The Thoughts of Chairman Mao* than the life of Luther, Bismarck or de Gaulle; religiously, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and handbooks of Zen sold better than *The Imitation of Christ*. Events in south-east Asia outweighed in their immediate impact anything that was happening in the West. The intellectual foundations of Western society suffered a terrible shaking, from which in some ways they may never recover. From being opposite sides of the same coin, religion and culture had in the meantime been transmuted into two blurred and twisted faces, scowling at each other across a gulf of misunderstanding and acrimony.

Under the old pre-industrial dispensation, there was often slow but significant mobility. Regularly, it seemed, significant cultures collapsed under the pressures of invasions of one kind or another. But in a sense, the simpler the culture, the more easily it was able to survive. The gods of many an ancient city state found the virility of barbarian war-gods more than they could withstand, and it was many centuries before scholars rediscovered that Marduk had once been the all-powerful god of Babylon; the identity of the god of the city of Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley we may never know. But the agriculturalist could cope. Let me give you an example.

Christianity reached northern Europe during what we call the Viking age, between about 800 and 1200 AD. Before this time the chief Germanic deities had been the triad of Thor, Odin and Frey, all of whose images stood side by side in the famous temple of

Old Uppsala, north of Stockholm. Thor was of course the god of thunder and lightning, the storm and rain, giver of fertility and the bane of giants. Huge, fierce, red-bearded, a mighty eater and drinker, he was in a sense the Desperate Dan of the divine world. Frey was the god of agriculture and procreation, of the earth earthy, with an image one would not show to one's maiden aunts. Odin was the mysterious and terrible god of the great frontiers, unpredictable arbiter of the outcome of battles, haunter of the gallows and master of the runes. But these were merely the aristocrats of the divine world. Beneath them were formless hosts of lesser supernaturals, ghosts, giants, elves, trolls and guardian spirits, who looked after the northern peasant's everyday concerns, and who took part in his seasonal festivals, particularly that at midwinter (Yule). Not surprisingly, Christians in those parts of Europe in which Christianity had long been well established (for instance in Britain) feared and hated the marauding Vikings as the enemies of true religion and true culture. Alcuin put it this way in 793, after the sack of the monastery of Lindisfarne: "Never before has such terror appeared in Britain as we have now suffered from a pagan race . . . Behold the church of St. Cuthbert spattered with the blood of the priests of God, despoiled of all its ornaments; a place more venerable than all in Britain is given as prey to pagan peoples." And to show that old images die hard, G.K. Chesterton wrote this in 1911:

The Northmen came about our land
 A Christless chivalry:
 Who knew not of the arch or pen,
 Great, beautiful, half-witted men
 From the sunrise and the sea.
 Their souls were drifting as the sea,
 And all good towns and lands
 They only saw with heavy eyes,
 And broke with heavy hands.
 Their gods were sadder than the sea,
 Gods of a wandering will
 Who cried for blood like beasts at night,
 Sadly, from hill to hill.

The point of both these outbursts was, of course, that the Vikings shared neither in the religious nor the cultural patterns of the English, and that what they could not comprehend – the books, the architecture, the values, temporal and spiritual – they simply destroyed. Beautiful they may have been; culturally half-witted they certainly were – or so Chesterton thought. But then he was not a Viking, and knew nothing of the personal and social values, or of the ideals of valour, fortitude and honour which made up the Viking ethos. Nor, for that matter, did Alcuin.

And yet a few centuries later the Scandinavians were almost all Christians – Norway and Denmark first, Iceland in AD 1000 and Sweden some time later, all accepted "the white Christ" as their new God (they did not draw close distinctions between Christ and

God, incidentally). They had been brought within the sphere of European Catholic culture, but did that mean that the Viking ethos had been transmuted into something strange and exotic? Not really. The old gods retreated, grumbling, and their temples came to be replaced by churches. But on the lowest level, that of popular piety connected with the rhythm of the seasons, day and night, life and death, surprisingly little changed, save perhaps a few names. As Georg Sverdrup once put it, although the Scandinavian peasant changed his gods, he did not change his religion. New gods – and one might perhaps reckon the saints and the kings among the gods – carried out the functions of the old. And the fundamental concepts, ideas and actions remained virtually undisturbed. The old festivals continued to be observed, the old cultural priorities maintained. Even after the conversion some Scandinavian codes of law, for instance, continued to lay down that at the midwinter Yuletide festival, each householder should brew a certain measure of ale, which should be consecrated to Christ and Saint Mary for a good year and for peace – precisely the formula with which horns were previously drained to Thor and Odin.

A Norwegian Christian law contains this remarkable passage: “Further, we have promised to brew ale, the householder and his wife the same quantity, and to bless the ale on the holy night to Christ and Saint Mary for a good year and for peace. But if this has not been done, the guilty one shall pay instead three marks to the Bishop. But if he sits for three winters without holding ale-drinkings and this be proved . . . then he has forfeited every penny of his property. Half goes to the King and half to the Bishop . . .” In other words, the landowner, now a Christian, was told (even ordered) to maintain the old customs and observe the old priorities – a good agricultural year and a peace which was less the absence of conflict than the ability to win through – in precisely the same way in which his pagan forefathers had done so for generations. Yes, there was a difference, since the Bishop now took half of his property if he were rash enough not to fill his barrels. Otherwise the cultural pattern remained virtually undisturbed at this vital time of the year. In many ways it still remains so.

These days it is a matter of concern to some Christians to learn that what is being celebrated at Christmas (at least in the northern hemisphere) is the midwinter festival of the Germanic peoples, a remembrance of light in the midst of darkness, life in the midst of death, interpreted in terms of the Christian drama. And that the very name of Easter appears to derive from an Anglo-Saxon goddess of fertility, Eostre. Certainly the terms of the drama are now entirely Christian, but one would have to look long and hard at the Christian source material before discovering any reference to Easter eggs, or to *påskris*, the bunches of twigs decorated with dyed feathers, which brighten every Swedish household at Easter. Again, what is “religious” and what is “cultural” in this and similar celebrations?

The trouble is, that we have often known too little about the conditions governing custom and belief to be able to answer questions like this. “Religion” we have imprisoned within a verbal and conceptual straitjacket so narrow as to exclude practically everything which falls outside the area of conventional piety. Like Plutarch, we call the rest

“superstition”. “No disease,” he wrote, “is so full of variations, so changeable in symptoms, so made up of ideas opposed to, nay, rather, at war with one another, as the disease called Superstition. We must therefore fly from it . . .” But I have already said that in my view, religion and superstition are not irreconcilable opposites, and that we merely store up trouble for ourselves by acting as though they were. I might even go further, and say that it is in what we are (or at least some of us are) most liable to dismiss as superstition that we have most to learn about the links between religions and cultures. Theologies and philosophies may, or may not, keep their feet on the ground. Often they will make a determined effort to rise above the temporal, the grass-roots level, to escape from one or other “cultural captivity” and to state their case in terms of “universals” – justice, truth, love, humanity and so forth. The odd thing is, that the more they move in the direction of these universals, the harder they seem to find it to communicate with ordinary mortals. Let me give you another example.

A great deal has been written during the past hundred years or so about the encounter between East and West in the parallel areas of religion and culture. It began rather with the Western involvement with China than with the British acquisition of India, but it was the Indian connection which gave the West most food for thought, reflection, and ultimately, recrimination. From the mid-18th to the mid-19th century, India was virtually controlled by a British trading company; from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, by the British crown. From the 1830s on, English was India’s official language, and after 1833 Christian missionaries of all nations had virtually free access to the country. I do not have time on this occasion to consider all the incredibly complex stages through which this particular East-West encounter passed, but there was one apparently petty squabble which took place in the 1850s, and which sums up the kind of problem which it produced.

The focus of the problem was the institution of caste – that division of Hindu society into classes, trades and ritual functions which the West has always looked on with mixed feelings. On the one side of the controversy of the 1850s were the German missionaries of the Leipzig Mission, hard-line confessional Lutherans; on the other, mainly British missionaries who were beginning to learn about revolution, chartism, the rights of man, and democracy. On the Leipzig side, it was argued that caste was an element in Indian culture, and therefore to be tolerated as part of the essential Indian way of life; on the Anglo-Saxon side, it was argued that caste was religious through and through, though with cultural overtones, and that it must at all costs be eliminated in the interests of true religion. I do not propose to give a blow-by-blow account of this unedifying controversy. It is, however, extremely suggestive that what one might call the pro-caste side in the discussion was occupied by Germans, whose awareness of the cultural dimension was far more sensitive than that of the Anglo-Saxons, who had scarcely begun to analyse human experience in this way. It led to some bizarre situations – for instance that in which a prospective Indian ordinand was invited to take tea with a missionary before ordination, as a mark of his freedom from caste prejudice. His reply to the invitation is worth

recording: "Preserve me from your ministry and your teacups. I don't want either of them, and I shall be quite happy to remain a catechist."

It could be argued – and it has been argued – that in taking this hard line against caste, the Anglo-Saxon missionaries in India were cutting themselves off with determination from one of the most important of Indian cultural institutions. And that in order to be capable of being transplanted into Indian soil, Christianity would have had to show greater social and cultural flexibility. As it was, many a potential Christian turned aside from the Christian message, not on account of its truth or falsehood, but because it seemed to be demanding of him that he part company with his own cultural heritage. Whether, as Mahatma Gandhi at one time supposed, becoming a Christian meant that the Hindu would have to eat beef, drink liquor, speak English in all situations, revile the faith of his fathers, and wear funny clothes, we may be permitted to doubt. But it certainly appeared to the Hindu in that light for a great deal of the time. The Christian might well object (and did object) that this was to refuse to read a book because of the colour of the dust-jacket: what they all too often failed to realize was the extent to which *their* religion had come to be identified with the intrusive culture of the West. Or the extent to which the more obviously cultural manifestations of the Western presence – the schools, the hospitals, the railways, the radio programmes – could be separated from the missions and the churches, and accepted with gratitude.

India is perhaps not quite the focus of Western interest that it once was. But it is all too obvious that in the eyes of the modern world, Western religions (and especially Christianity) have come to be viewed widely in the light of the spiritual arm of an industrial, capitalist establishment. Primal religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, on the other hand, because they for the most part belong to the "third world", and because they have not as yet been eroded to the same extent by the process of secularization, retain a popular integrity which Christianity (except perhaps the Salvation Army) seems to be in the process of losing. There is an irony here. Over the past couple of hundred years, no religious tradition has tried, through its intellectuals, to shake itself free more determinedly from its cultural frame, in the interests of universality. No tradition, it would now seem, has failed more spectacularly to convince the world that it has succeeded. Of course, there are by now other forces at work, attempting to convince the world that the opposite is true, and Neo-Marxists (for whom the class struggle is now very much a matter of rich versus poor nations, and not merely rich versus poor classes) have a more energetic following than the Neo-Orthodox, or Neo-Thomists. But even propaganda issues ought to be accessible to investigation, one feels.

And that is perhaps the point at which a department of religious studies finds, or ought find, its justification – in the area of investigation for the purposes of closer and more intelligent understanding of the issues involved in the area of religions and cultures, in the encounter of religions and the encounter of cultures. Perhaps we shall not be able to find too many answers, but if we can at least begin by asking the right questions,

something is bound to be achieved. Personally, I believe that there is no more pressing task confronting the academic student of religion than that of attempting to penetrate to the inner recesses of human motivation and human belief. But I trust that we shall all remember that because our field of study is that of mankind's encounter with the transcendent, we are very much part of that which we are investigating. To be sure, we cannot be members of an indefinite number of religions or cultures simultaneously. We are, on the other hand, members of the human race. Pope's injunction, "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan, The proper study of mankind is man" is curiously appropriate to a department of religious studies, at least in the sense that *until* we know a good deal about ourselves, anything we might want to try to say about God or Ultimate Reality is going to sound hollow to any but ourselves.

Because we are part of the human race, we are caught up in that terrible tension between the particular and the universal, between ourselves-as-citizens and ourselves-as-humans, between the boundaries which give our lives shape and the wide vistas which give our ideals staying power. We are part of what we are trying to observe, and the only known ways of stepping outside the human race bring to an end our chances of communicating with it. There was a time when the testimony of ghost was acceptable in certain courts of law: such testimony would scarcely be acceptable to the Senate of this University, one feels.

We are human, and we possess a complex religious and cultural heritage. In setting ourselves the task of attempting to understand the heritage of others, are we not crying for the moon? We can never "be" ancient Egyptians or Manichaeans, or for that matter modern Hindus, Muslims or Mormons, save by birth or conversion. Does this not mean that the study of religion ought to remain strictly mono-cultural, or at least that the student ought to be discouraged from the wider comparative enterprise until he or she has a certain grasp of affairs on home ground? Certainly, there are those who think so. I respect them for their convictions, but I believe that they are wrong. Certainly we have a cultural heritage of our own, derived largely from Europe, but a university ought surely to be attempting to educate for world citizenship; and to do so while at the same time insisting that religious beliefs should be either ignored altogether or placed firmly on the sidelines, seems to me to be simply wrong-headed. Let me emphasize that a department of religious studies in a secular university exists for the purpose of a better understanding of human belief and behaviour, and not in order to reinforce any particular community of belief, by imposing a particular concept of authority.

Another type of argument insists that without a religious experience of one's own, one cannot even begin to appreciate this type of experience in others. Again, I allow the force of this argument. After all, one can, after a fashion, understand a Beethoven piano sonata in terms of the iron and the wood and the wire out of which the piano is made. But what would satisfy a tone-deaf carpenter would not satisfy the music critic of *The Times*. True — and that is why the present-day phenomenologist of religion must above all accept the integrity of religious belief and cultural belonging in others, even when his

own may not exactly correspond to it. No two listeners hear a sonata or a symphony identically, but is that a valid argument for measuring them only in terms of paper and ink, or of the materials out of which the instruments are made? And even the tone-deaf carpenter might at least be imaginative enough not to condemn out of hand, or poke fun at, what he knows he cannot enter into imaginatively.

The quality of imaginative sympathy, of attempting to place oneself in the shoes of another person, to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, is the quality which every good university department (particularly within the arts subjects) should be trying to communicate. There may or may not be a "method" by which to do it. Some pretty crude methods can achieve this end; some pretty sophisticated ones can entirely fail to do so. In a department of religious studies we are free to try any and every method which lies within our competence — historical, sociological, psychological, phenomenological — in order to attempt to achieve this end. This is more than merely to communicate information, though it may have to start with the simple transmission of bread-and-butter knowledge. Should it stop there, then I am not sure that it will have achieved very much. That is why elementary undergraduate teaching cannot be the be-all and end-all of our department. By their graduate schools shall ye know them! For it is out of the graduate schools that future teachers come — teachers in schools, colleges and universities — and unless we are able to continue the succession, nothing we can do will have lasting value. Mules are useful animals in the short term; but their pedigree is not anything to be proud of, and they do not establish dynasties.

I hope that in time, this University will discover that it has created a department capable of coping with, or at least of tackling, some fairly intractable problems, and a department which will be able to exercise an influence far beyond the boundaries of this campus. I hope that we shall be able, in time, to open some windows and to break down some useless dividing walls. I hope that we shall be able to cast light on religions and cultures, past and present, not as targets but as companies of living and breathing human beings, who are never more alike than when they are most different, each exercising that marvellous human quality to go his own way, by ones, twos, by companies and by cultures. And let us not forget, by religions.

I hope that you will not think me irreverent if I end with part of a poem by the unregenerate John Donne.

To live in one land, is captivitie,
 To runne all countries, a wild roguery;
 Waters stincke soon, if in one place they bide,
 And in the vast sea are more purifi'd:
 But when they kisse one banke, and leaving this
 Never looke back, but the next banke doe kisse,
 Then are they purest; Change'is the nursery
 Of musicke, joy, life, and eternity.