

and all else, between the creator and his creation, between God and man.

Even Western thinkers who recognize their cultural bias find it hard to escape, because the assumptions of theism permeate the linguistic structures that shape their thought. For example, the term *holy* comes from linguistic roots signifying wholeness, perfection, well-being; the unholy, then, is the fragmentary, the imperfect, the ailing. Sacredness is the quality of being set apart from the usual or ordinary; its antonym, *profane*, literally means “outside the *fané*” (ME, “sacred place”). Thus every sanctuary—synagogue, church, mosque—is a concrete physical embodiment of this separation of the religious from all else. So too, in a more general sense the sacred is what is specifically set apart for holy or religious use; the secular is what is left over, the world outside, the current age and its fashions and concerns. This thoroughgoing separation has been institutionalized in a multitude of forms: sacred rites including sacraments; sacred books and worship paraphernalia; holy days; sacred precincts and buildings; special modes of life and dress; religious fellowships and orders; and so on *ad infinitum*.

Many practical and conceptual difficulties arise when one attempts to apply such a dichotomous pattern across the board to all cultures. In primitive societies, for instance, what the West calls religious is such an integral part of the total ongoing way of life that it is never experienced or thought of as something separable or narrowly distinguishable from the rest of the pattern. Or if the dichotomy is applied to that multifaceted entity called Hinduism, it seems that almost everything can be and is given a religious significance by some sect. Indeed, in a real sense everything that is divine; existence *per se* appears to be sacred. It is only that the ultimately real manifests itself in a multitude of ways—in the set-apart and the ordinary, in god and so-called devil, in saint and sinner. The real is apprehended at many levels in accordance with the individual's capacity.

The same difficulty arises in another form when considering Daoist, Confucian, and Shintō cultures. These cultures are characterized by what J. J. M. de Groot termed “universalism”: a holiness, goodness, and perfection of the natural order that has been misunderstood, distorted, and falsified by shallow minds and errant cultural customs. The religious life here is one of harmony with both the natural and human orders, a submersion of individuality in an organic relationship and in an inwardly experienced oneness with them. And Buddhism in all its forms denies the existence of a transcendent creator-deity in favor of an indefinable, nonpersonal, absolute source or dimension that can be experienced as the depth of human inwardness. This, of course, is not to forget the multitudinous godlings, *bodhisattvas*, and spirits who are given ritual reverence in popular adaptations of the high religion to human need.

There is one other important result of the Western concept and practice of religion, here alluded to in passing: the religious community, distinct and more or less set apart from

RELIGION [FIRST EDITION]. The very attempt to define *religion*, to find some distinctive or possibly unique essence or set of qualities that distinguish the “religious” from the remainder of human life, is primarily a Western concern. The attempt is a natural consequence of the Western speculative, intellectualistic, and scientific disposition. It is also the product of the dominant Western religious mode, what is called the Judeo-Christian climate or, more accurately, the theistic inheritance from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The theistic form of belief in this tradition, even when downgraded culturally, is formative of the dichotomous Western view of religion. That is, the basic structure of theism is essentially a distinction between a transcendent deity

the environing society. This is not absolutely unique to Western religiosity, for in almost every culture there are those individuals believed to have unusual capacities and powers—the soothsayers, shamans, witch doctors, medicine men, and other specialists who are set apart from all others by their powers and who use them in a professional manner. Likewise in most cultures there are those temporary and voluntary groups of initiates into secret or occult fellowships who take upon themselves prescribed special obligations, diets, psychosomatic disciplines, and the like.

But none of these achieves the form or distinctive qualities of the congregations of synagogue, church, or mosque. There is more and other here than the geographical togetherness of worshipers at a Hindu or Buddhist temple or the cultic togetherness of a tribal society. In one sense, a Western-style congregation is a “gathered people,” a group of persons who have been divinely called to and have consciously chosen to follow this particular faith rather than other possible faiths or nonfaith. (That geographical, historical, and social factors greatly modify the actuality of the factor of choice is to be understood, but being chosen and choosing remain the ideal model.) Such groups have their chosen leaders, carry on joint worship periodically as well as other corporate activities, and evangelize for their faith among others. Thus, being a member of a body of believers—a term that betrays the Western theistic emphasis upon doctrine—separates individuals to some extent from others in the environing society. And the professional teachers and ritualists—rabbis, ministers, priests, and to some extent mullahs and imams—are by their dress and mode of life even more separated from “the world” than the devout laity are.

Again, this special type of grouping, though produced in part by many other factors as well, is a distinctive product of the Western theistic dichotomous conception of religion as a set of beliefs and practices that are different from surrounding beliefs and practices and that embody a special relation to deity, that transcendent other. The very term *religion* originally indicated a bond of scruple uniting those who shared it closely to each other. Hence *religion* suggests both separation and a separative fellowship. How, then, is religion to be conceptually handled for the purposes of thought and discussion, since the very term itself is so deeply ingrained with specifically Western cultural presuppositions?

DEFINITIONS. So many definitions of religion have been framed in the West over the years that even a partial listing would be impractical. With varying success they have all struggled to avoid, on the one hand, the Scylla of hard, sharp, particularistic definition and, on the other hand, the Charybdis of meaningless generalities. Predictably, Western-derived definitions have tended to emphasize the sharp distinction between the religious and nonreligious dimensions of culture and sometimes have equated religion with beliefs, particularly belief in a supreme being. Obviously such definitions exclude many primitive and Asian religions, if we still wish to use the term.

Such definitional usage has had its critics in the West. As early as the late eighteenth century an attempt was made to shift the emphasis from the conceptual to the intuitive and visceral in defining religion. In a very influential statement, Friedrich Schleiermacher defined religion as “feeling of absolute dependence”—absolute as contrasted to other, relative feelings of dependence. Since that time there have been others who have sought to escape formalistic, doctrinal definitions and to include the experiential, emotive, and intuitive factors, as well as valuational and ethical factors. These factors seemed to be truer to the religious person’s sense of what religion is like from the inside, to include what William James called “the enthusiastic temper of espousal.” Such definitions appear to be more universally applicable to primitive and Asian religions than belief-oriented ones.

This is surely the case with primitive religion where, as noted, the religious is scarcely distinguishable from the sociocultural, where custom and ritual are abundant while belief structures are scarce, where emotional realities carry more weight than storable ideas. The Asian religious traditions, too, characteristically place their prime emphasis upon the inner states of realization rather than upon the merely instrumental rite or doctrine. Indeed, this is so much the case that in some of the more radical expressions, such as Zen Buddhism and Hindu *bhakti* (devotional faith), creed and tradition are purely secondary or even valueless hindrances. Of course, it should be added that this is not quite the case in actuality. For feeling-based experience never subsists on its own exclusive resources: feeling (and love as in *bhakti*) is always feeling *about* or *toward* some object or other. Experience never happens in a complete ideational vacuum. In all these cases, be they primitive, Buddhist, or Hindu, there is an underlying conceptual context of some sort, and its implicitness or verbal denial does not indicate its total functional absence.

With the rise of the sociological and anthropological disciplines, another factor has been projected into definition making—the social, economic, historical, and cultural contexts in which religion comes to expression. Sociologists and anthropologists rightly argue that religion is never an abstract set of ideas, values, or experiences developed apart from the total cultural matrix and that many religious beliefs, customs, and rituals can only be understood in reference to this matrix. Indeed, some proponents of these disciplines imply or suggest that analysis of religious structures will totally account for religion. Émile Durkheim, a pioneer in this societal interpretation, asserted in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York, 1926) that “a society has all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the divine in minds, merely by the power that it has over them” (p. 207). Thus the gods are nothing more than society in disguise. Since Durkheim’s time, sociologists have refined their methods of analysis, but some still maintain the essential Durkheimian view.

The various forms of psychology come out of the same scientific-humanistic context as the social science disciplines.

The central concerns of psychology are the psychic mechanics and motivational forces that result from human self-consciousness. In some sense, psychological interpretations of religion are more akin to those that stress experiential inwardness than to those that accent intellectual and societal aspects. In the final analysis, however, psychology is more akin to the social sciences in its treatment of religion than to any intrareligious effort at interpretation. It tends, like social studies, to dissolve religion into sets of psychological factors.

It should be observed in passing that the religious person would not be satisfied with such analyses. That person's sense of what is happening in religion seems always to contain some extrasocietal, extrapsychological depth-factor or transcendent dimension, which must be further examined.

Among Western religion scholars there have been attempts to define religion in a manner that avoids the "reductionism" of the various sociological and psychological disciplines that reduce religion to its component factors. A prominent one has been the analysis of religions of varied nature in terms of the presence of an awareness of the sacred or the holy. First proposed by Schleiermacher, this approach found its most notable expression in Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1917). Analyzing the biblical accounts of the experience of the prophets and saints in their encounters with God, Otto defines the essence of religious awareness as awe, a unique blend of fear and fascination before the divine. Thus Isaiah, upon becoming aware of the presence of the living God (Yahveh) in the temple sanctuary, cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" Isaiah's response expresses both creaturely fear of his creator and his own sense of sinfulness before God's absolute righteousness. Yet he does not flee but remains to worship and to become the bearer of a prophetic message to his people. In Otto's terms, Isaiah and others like him sensed the *mysterium tremendum*, the "wholly otherness" of the divine being. And for Otto this was the prototype of all truly religious experience.

Otto's conception of the essential nature of religious experiences may be acceptable in the context of Western theism, though this type of religious experience seems relatively rare or else is smothered by the religious apparatus that envelops it. But even in Otto's own writings the application of this concept to primitive and Asian religions seems difficult. In primitive religions any sense of the divine in the mode of Isaiah seems missing despite the early attempt of Andrew Lang to find a "high god" tradition in primitive antiquity. Here religion is scarcely distinguishable from magic; rites seem primarily used for the fulfillment of physical needs; and fear rather than awe predominates. *Sacred* and *profane* are inappropriate terms to apply to this cultural continuum. Of course, it must be said that the powers that are feared, placated, and used, in turn, do have their invisible and esoteric dimensions with which some rites attempt to make contact.

Nor does this definition of religion as the experience of the awe-inspiring wholly other seem to fit Asian religions. To

be sure, at the popular level much religion consists of placation and use of spirits and superhuman powers and various rituals reminiscent of theism. But in their own self-definitions Buddhism and Hinduism, for example, seem to have little or no sense of a radically other and ultimate being. In fact, the basic thought and action model here is that of man's oneness with his environing universe. He seeks to live religiously in organic harmony with the ultimate, and the highest level of religious experience tends toward a mystical monism, though with Eastern qualifications. Immanence of the sacred rather than its transcendence is emphasized. Thus Hinduism, Buddhism, and Daoism characteristically find the truly transcendent within the human self itself. The divinized, exteriorized forms given to the holy in theistic religions—and in the popular forms of their own faiths—are viewed as temporary and practically expedient but essentially false means for the final enlightenment of the ignorant.

The most recent and influential formulation of sacredness as the unique and irreducible essence of all religious experience has been that of Mircea Eliade. He has refined and expanded Otto's use of the term extensively. No longer is the sacred to be sought almost exclusively in the God-encounter type of experience; it is abundantly exemplified in the symbolisms and rituals of almost every culture, especially the primitive and Asian cultures. It is embodied as sacred space, for example, in shrines and temples, in taboo areas, even limitedly in the erection of dwellings in accordance with a sense of the *axis mundi*, an orientation to the center of the true (sacred) universe. Indeed, structures often symbolically represent that physically invisible but most real of all universes—the eternally perfect universe to which they seek to relate fruitfully. This sense of sacredness often attaches to trees, stones, mountains, and other like objects in which mysterious power seems to be resident. Many primitive rituals seek to sacramentally repeat the first moment of creation often described in myth when primordial chaos became recognizable order. Sacred time—that is, eternal and unfragmented time—is made vitally present by the reenactment of such myths. In *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York, 1951) Eliade writes, "Every religious festival, every liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, in the beginning" (pp. 68–69).

It is a matter of opinion whether Eliade's portraiture of the experience of the sacred, much more elaborate and extended than here stated, escapes the limitations of Otto's view and represents a viable way of defining and describing the religious mode. Sociologists and anthropologists question its verifiability in actual cases as well as Eliade's interpretation of his data. To them sacredness is an ideal construct, not a genuine cultural or experiential entity. Linguists, psychologists, and philosophers also question the identifiability of such a distinctive entity in patterns of language, experience, and thought patterns. For all of these critics the religious experience is a compound of cultural entities and experiences, not a separable thing in and of itself.

Is there no alternative to such reductions of religious experiences and structures into congeries of easily identifiable and nonmysterious psychological, social, political, and economic factors? Conversely, is there no alternative to the definition of the religious as a mystical essence that can be located in every culture by the proper methodology, like the detection of uranium by a geiger counter? The truth in the former views is that a religious awareness, wherever found, occurs in the context of and is given tangible form by cultural, economic, and social factors. Traditionally, these factors condition members of a society to perceive and experience the world in ways given as religious.

On the other hand, it is also true that there is something of a sacred otherness about religious experiences that cannot be easily dissolved or given no weight. Even though an unanalyzable, unqualifiable factor called "the holy" or "the sacred" cannot be isolated from its varied components and contexts, almost every known culture displays elements that, if not wholly other from their context, do show a certain discontinuity with it. When these discontinuous elements are spoken about or related to, there occurs at least a slight shift to another perspective, another realm of discourse, which concerns the more mysterious and indefinable areas of experience and expectation. Or these elements might be discussed in terms of a depth dimension in cultural experiences and customs that hints at the more central, serious, or ultimate concerns and values. Perhaps religions could be seen, then, as the attempt to order individual and societal life in terms of culturally perceived ultimate priorities.

It should be noted, of course, that the form, clarity, and degree of such an ordering of life vary immensely from culture to culture. Thus primitive man adds enhancing rituals and magic incantations to his tool-making and hunting skills, without clearly conceptualizing why he does so. He does not confuse the two means to his end, never substituting religio-magic for good weaponry, or chants for physical skill. Rather, he adds the magic and ritual elements to the humanly possible means in order to ensure their success; the magic and ritual elements are efforts to deal with the powerful and mysterious dimensions of existence that cannot be controlled or affected by ordinary means. This quality of other-than-ordinary also resides in the ritual paraphernalia, in the ritual specialists, and often in the secret content of the rites themselves and certain special localities. Thus even in primitive society there is a vaguely felt and inarticulate awareness of transcendence as strange, more, and different.

In Asian traditions that emphasize immanence rather than transcendence, characterized by continuums rather than discontinuities both of theory and of experience, gradations of both understanding and of experience exist nonetheless. Recognized levels of practice and attainment are buttressed by texts and incorporated into systems of praxis. "Lower" levels of attainment are not considered totally false or wrong but as less than fully true or ultimate. There is, then, a kind of transcendence by degree or stage; the highest

is "other" to the lower states, and in some Buddhist and Hindu traditions (i.e., Zen and meditative Advaita) there is a breakthrough experience (*satori* and realization of *brahman*) that experientially is wholly other than or wholly transformative of ordinary awareness.

In summary, it may be said that almost every known culture involves the religious in the above sense of a depth dimension in cultural experiences at all levels—a push, whether ill-defined or conscious, toward some sort of ultimacy and transcendence that will provide norms and power for the rest of life. When more or less distinct patterns of behavior are built around this depth dimension in a culture, this structure constitutes religion in its historically recognizable form. Religion is the organization of life around the depth dimensions of experience—varied in form, completeness, and clarity in accordance with the environing culture.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. If religiousness is a depth-awareness coming to distinctive expression in the forms we call religion, how is religiousness distinguished from various other types of awareness such as the aesthetic and ecstatic—what Abraham Maslow (1964) calls "peak experiences" and Marghanita Laski (1961) terms "non-religious ecstasy"—and the states of "altered consciousness" produced by various psychosomatic techniques or drugs?

Indeed, there are those who would equate all such states with the so-called religious variety. For example, Maslow urges that all peak, that is, highly emotional and ecstatic, experiences should be recognized as equally valid and valuable, whatever the conditions of their occurrence or production. He criticizes religions for preempting the quality of genuineness as proof of the truth of their respective doctrines. Laski likewise fully equates the structured religious experiences of mystics with the "natural" experiences of ecstasy, transcendence, and aesthetic intensity that occur in the presence of some natural wonder, in sexual experience, in childbirth, or by other means. In the case of mystical experiences, she argues, religious "overbeliefs" have gratuitously attached to them and are erroneously considered to be causal.

There have also been many experiments, with and without drugs, in the achievement of a nonindividualized or transpersonalized consciousness. In these experiments the subject is lifted out of the usual narrow, self-oriented awareness into an awareness of the overpowering beauty of ordinary objects, colors, and sounds and of unity with the boundless infinitude of space, time, and being. Some subjects have reported the fusing of all the senses so that color has sound as well as the converse. Others report a sense of oneness with all other beings. Aldous Huxley equated these experiences with those of Christian, Muslim, Daoist, and Hindu mystics. Some practitioners have deliberately fused the use of psychosomatic techniques and drugs with religious practice—Zen, Hindu, American Indian.

However, the true significance of these experiences, misinterpreted in such views, is not found in the likeness of psy-

chosomatic character in all such experiences, whether religious or not. That they can occur in nearly identical forms in a variety of contexts and with varied stimuli (or are they really identical?) indicates at most the similar psychosomatic nature of all human beings. The truly significant element is precisely that ideational and emotional context discarded by Maslow, Laski, and others as dispensable "overbeliefs." Such experiences in and by themselves are anonymous, miscellaneous, and trifling emotional flashes, unless they are connected with some system of ideation that interprets them in terms of meaningful concepts or other like experiences. In short, the ideational system gives the experiences an identity. And by thus having a traditional religious identity, these experiences also have power to affect the whole life—a power denied them as anonymous feeling. Thus the mystical ecstasies of Teresa of Ávila remolded her spirituality and propelled her into a life of strenuous activity in the cause of Roman Catholic Christianity. The same could be said of a *Zen satori* experience, even though it is not expressed in doctrinaire terms. *Satori* dynamically activates the total man because it validates the *Zen* context of tradition, thought, and values in which it occurs. It is oneness with the absolute Buddha essence; it is an experience of the Buddha mind, of organic harmony with the entire universe, of the felt unity of outer and inner worlds. These experiences are of revolutionary significance to the experiencer because of their contextual religious meaning.

In summary, it may be said that while ecstatic, transic, and intense aesthetic experiences are found both within religious and nonreligious frameworks and have many features in common psychologically, the religious experience is religious precisely because it occurs in a religious context of thought, discipline, and value.

CHARACTERISTICS AND STRUCTURES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE. As previously suggested, religions adopt their tangible historical forms as matrices of cultural and social elements about the depth-centers of culture. Hence the beliefs, patterns of observance, organizational structures, and types of religious experience are as varied as the matrices that give them birth, and that they in turn help form and reform. Even in the midst of this variety, however, we may distinguish certain characteristic elements and categories of structures distinctively religious.

Traditionalism. All attempts to find a primitive religion embodying the primordial form of all subsequent religions have encountered two insurmountable problems. The first is the sheer arbitrariness of seeking the origin of all types of religion in a single form. The second is that wherever religion is recognized—if one uses the above definition of religion as a depth-dimensional structure—one also encounters an existent tradition comprising stylized actions related to the pursuit of cultural goals, however meager or closely geared to survival needs. Present modes of religious activity always seem to look backward for origins, precedents, and standards. As cultures become more complex and literate,

these traditions of ancient thought and practice become more elaborate and stylized.

Whatever the degree of elaboration, two things seem to be taken for granted. First, the beginnings—the original creative action, the life and words of an individual founder, even the authorless antiquity of a tradition's scriptures, as in the case of Hinduism—are taken as models of pristine purity and power, fully authoritative for all members of the group or adherents of the faith. Second, no matter how great the actual changes in a particular historical religious tradition—and sometimes this means the entire cultural tradition, more or less—the basic thrust of traditionalism is to maintain itself. Typically, religious reformers speak about a reforming of the religion in terms of its more holy past. Thus *Zen* seeks to go back directly to the mind of the Buddha, bypassing all historical forms and scripturalism. Revivalist Islam speaks of returning to pure Qur'anic faith and practice. Protestantism sought a return to New Testament Christianity, eliminating all the Roman Catholic "accretions"; and the Roman Catholic church responded that its doctrine and ritual and authority were demonstrably older than anything in Protestantism, going back to Christ himself.

Myth and symbol. Religious traditions are full of myth and replete with symbol. *Myth* in most contemporary use simply means "false"; myths are the fanciful tales of primitives spun out as explanations of beginnings. Hence creation myths are rationalizations of what prescientific cultures cannot understand through other means. Though this explanatory function of myth has been important, an even more basic function has been that of symbolic source. Apparently, even the writers of myths recognized the impossibility of expressing the fundamentally indescribable nature of absolute beginnings and ultimate realities. Hence poetry and symbol were their metier. In this way, religious myths have become modes of action, mankind's way of relating to physical and environmental realities. Thus does religious man seek to grasp the actionable significance of the world and relate to it emotionally. In passing, it should be noted that all disciplines of thought and life have their mythology of guiding images and unproven assumptions.

Symbol is the language of myth. When the crucially important but mysterious nature of ultimate reality—the basic concern of religious man—can only be seen through a glass darkly, how else can one speak of it except in symbolic forms? Ordinary language will not serve for the fullness of either the question or the answer here. Therefore religious language is rich in analogies, metaphors, poetry, stylized actions (ritual), and even silence ("Be still and know that I am God"). For the symbol stands for something other and more than itself; it is only a finger pointing at the moon of reality.

In seeking to deal with man's ultimate concerns, religions are prolific in the production, use, and elaboration of symbolic forms and objects; thus it is not surprising that religions have been the inspiration of an overwhelmingly large and diverse body of art. Indeed, in most cultures of the past,

religions have been the central cultural fountainhead. To realize the importance of symbols in religion one need think only of the immense variety of rituals; of the stylized dress, manner, and speech of ritual officiants; of artifacts used in rituals; of paintings and sculptures, of shrines and sanctuaries of all levels and types.

Finally, the tremendous tenacity of symbolic forms and their ritualized vehicles must be emphasized. Many a symbol outlives its parent religion and culture, as the lotus, for example, has lived through centuries of symbolic existence, first in Hinduism and then in Buddhism. Symbols are more lasting than their explanatory doctrinal forms because they speak to the human imagination and to human feelings, not merely to the rational sense. Religious symbols often embody what is felt to be the central religious reality involved; they are its sacramental form, which must be preserved at all costs.

Concepts of salvation. Salvation is but another name for religion. That is, all religions are basically conceived as means of saving men at one level or another. And there are always two aspects to salvation: what men are to be saved *from* and what they are to be saved *to*. It goes without saying that what men are saved from and to varies immensely from culture to culture and from religion to religion.

At the primitive level of religion, salvation both "from" and "to" is achieved mainly in the realm of physical dangers and goods. The primitive seeks by his rituals to save himself from starvation, from death by storm, from disease, from wild animals, and from enemies and to sufficiency of food and shelter, to freedom from danger and disease, and to human fertility. Implicit in this context, and in the realm of mental and emotional malaise, is salvation from mysterious and even malign powers and forces of evil. The achievement of salvation in all these areas is striven for by all possible physical means with the superadded power of ritual, charm, and magic.

Of course, the development of environing cultures implies a change and expansion in the nature of religious salvation. Group values come to play a larger and more conscious role. The group—whether tribal kinship-clan or nation-state—comes to be a sacred entity in its own right, perhaps the preeminent one in some cases. Roman religion, for example, was essentially a state religion whose major purpose was the preservation (salvation) of the state in prosperity and power; a triumphal conquest was a triumph of the Roman deities. In time the emperors themselves were considered incarnate deities, as were the Egyptian pharaohs of an earlier era. Later, inner values, relatively unimportant to primitive and early nationalistic cultures, became matters of prime religious importance. Inner states of mind, the cultivation of ecstasy, and concern about the personal survival of physical death became important, sometimes almost paramount in times of social and political turmoil.

In time, this area of inner development, experiences, and values became the impetus for religious development.

The "great" religious traditions of Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam are all oriented toward the inner life. Their doctrines, texts, religious disciplines, and even organizations aim to cultivate the inner life of prayer, faith, enlightenment, and purity of character.

Yet the development of the inner life in religion does not completely exclude the lower level of physical-material goods. They remain as the object of perfectly acceptable religious hopes so that prayers are still made for health, safety, rain in times of drought, and sufficiency of food. And in some instances the final higher goods represent only the absolutizing or infinitizing of the physical-material ones. Thus eternal life maximizes the desire for deliverance from death—that primary human desire for survival toward which so much of primitive religion is directed. Indeed, the Greek religion of ancient times seems almost alone in portraying life after death as an unsatisfactory shadow existence. Most pure lands, heavens, and paradises are described as the perpetual enjoyment of life without pain, sorrow, or unhappiness of any sort. Similarly, the indescribable *nibbāna* of Theravāda Buddhism is conceived as the final, absolute end of the emptiness, impermanence, and pain of all embodied existence.

But even given the continuing presence of the lower-level goods sought by religious means in the higher-level religions, it is still true that the inner goals of peace, self-sacrificing love, purity of heart, and awareness of absolute goodness increasingly become central to the religious quest. When they are sought for themselves with no ulterior motives, the possibility of saintliness comes into being.

It is, of course, obvious that religious salvation is as responsive to and expressive of human needs and desires as any secular scheme of salvation. For salvation in religion is a means of fulfilling needs and desires, even when the needs and desires are revealed from "above." Yet the forms fulfillment takes express specially religious values, supplementing and sometimes opposing other, nonreligious values. And it is also evident that the varied cultural contexts of religions each represent a variant perspective on the human situation—its goods and goals, its dangers and evils. These varied perspectives greatly influence the form of religious salvation. Thus the Hindu Advaitin, the African San, the Sunnī Muslim, the Orthodox Jew, the Zen Buddhist, the Protestant, and the Greek Orthodox Christian would define religious needs and goods quite differently.

Is there then any appreciable difference between the ways in which religious and nonreligious modes of need fulfillment proceed? In other words, are there distinguishing characteristics of religious salvation? The first is that religious salvation tends to concentrate on the needs a culture defines as most fundamental, neglecting needs that a culture defines as less important. Religious means of salvation, often indirect and extrahuman, seek to use supersensible forces and powers either in addition to or in place of ordinary tangible means. The second distinguishing characteristic is that religious salvations tend to aim at total, absolute, and sometimes tran-

scendent fulfillment of human needs. As defined by the cultural context, this fulfillment ranges all the way from the fullness of physical satisfactions to the eternal ecstasy of union with the Absolute.

Sacred places and objects. One of the striking features of historically observable religions is the presence of special religious areas and structures set apart from ordinary space by physical, ritual, and psychological barriers. Precincts, churches, mosques, synagogues, and shrines are the highly visible manifestations of religious discontinuity with the surrounding world. Various physical actions are often required of those who enter sacred areas to indicate this separation: ablutions, removal of footwear, prayers and incantations, bowing and kneeling, silence, preparatory fasting, special garb, and preliminary inward acts of contrition.

Further, particularly within the more spacious precincts, there are grades of sacredness that enshrine specially sacred objects or relics in their supremely holy areas. A classic example is the last of the Jewish temples in Jerusalem, in which there was a spatial progression from the outermost court of the Gentiles to the women's court to the men's court to the court of the burnt offering to the priests' enclosure to the Holy of Holies wherein was the Ark of the Covenant and, in some sense, the special presence of Yahveh. In synagogues today the ark containing a copy of the Torah is the most sacred part. In Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, the altar supporting the sacramental bread and wine is the focal point of sacredness. Protestant churches display a weaker form of the same principle, centered around the Bible or pulpit. Buddhist shrines in Southeast Asia commonly are pagodas containing sacred relics and/or consecrated Buddha images, which are honored by removing footwear, circumambulating with the central spire to one's right, and presenting floral offerings and obeisances. Japanese Buddhist temples usually contain large Buddha images at the rear of ornately decorated altars. Hindu temples vary somewhat in this respect; some have a holy inner sanctum into which only the ritually pure devotee may enter, while others provide relatively open access to the revered god images. Perhaps the Islamic mosque is the least set apart of religious places. Yet even here ablutions are required before entry, nonbelievers are scarcely welcome, and the semicircular alcove set in the rear wall (*qiblah*) must project toward the Muslim holy of holies, the Ka'bah in Mecca, so that praying believers always face in that direction.

Quite logically, many of the furnishings and objects used in temples and shrines, particularly in their most sacred rituals, partake of the sacredness of the shrine itself. One thinks here of altar furnishings and utensils, sacrificial paraphernalia, baptismal water, the special garb of temple officiants, special words and gestures, incense, candles and the like. These furnishings and objects are less holy than the shrine and revered relic, which are intrinsically sacred.

But in the final analysis sacred places are sacred because of what has occurred there or may occur there. Their essence

is sacramental. Sacred places are cherished and revered because they offer the possibility of directly encountering and partaking of the real in the given tradition. An unusual power has manifested itself in a natural object or taboo place either for good or ill. Or tradition tells that some primordial creative act once took place here and that power still lingers. So in both more and less developed religious traditions, past sanctity and present hope characterize sacred places. The shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe appears to have been first a center of pagan deity worship before its adoption by the Christian faith; its religious power is centuries old, transfixing past and present devotees. This same quality is found at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, from which Muḥammad reputedly made his ascent into heaven; at the places of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and death in India; and at the legendary birth and death places of Jesus in Palestine.

Other sacred places and objects (images) particularly emphasize the hope of present and future blessing. The shrine at Lourdes is venerated not simply because a French peasant girl reputedly once saw a vision of the Virgin there but because of the hope of present healing. Similarly, many Buddhists expect to gain merit by praying and making offerings before Buddha images or to reap tangible benefits in the here and now by touching *bodhisattva* images. The Shintō practitioner rings the bell to summon his chosen deity and petition him or her for a specific boon. A Roman Catholic church is made sacred because of its consecrated altar at which the life-giving miracle of bread and wine transformed into the spiritual body of Christ occurs at every mass. The Protestant pulpit is the space where the word of the living God is expounded; at the very least the devout parishioner hopes for some sense of empowerment and renewal for daily living. Every functioning shrine embodies such living and sacred hopes.

Sacred actions (rituals). Just as it is impossible to think of living religions without their sacred places, so is it impossible to conceive of a religion without its rituals, whether simple or elaborate. The forms of ritual are familiar, involving the stylized saying or chanting of certain words, bowing or kneeling, offerings of various kinds including animal sacrifices, dancing and music making.

Several features are prominent in most rituals. One is the element of order. Indeed, an established ritual pattern is the ordered performance of sacred actions under the direction of a leader. This order usually develops early in the history of a given tradition. Initially the sacred actions are more or less informal and spontaneous, then, step by step, become ordered and standardized procedures, and in the end may become elaborate ritual patterns requiring a considerable quantity of equipment and personnel (ritualists, priests). In Christianity we see the beginnings of this in Paul's exhortation to the church in Corinth to conduct their worship "decently and in order" (*1 Cor.* 14:40). He had heard reports of chaotic gatherings at which all participants were under the "inspira-

tion of the Spirit." From this order developed the classical Christian liturgies. However, perhaps the maximal degree of ritualization was achieved in another tradition, for the *Brahmanic* Hindu sacrificial rituals involve an almost unbelievable complexity and rigidity of pattern.

Rigidity of pattern, requiring the utmost care and precision in use of word, action, and material, points to another feature of ritual, maximized in the Hindu sacrifice but more or less present in all fixed rituals: meticulous performance. Analogies may be drawn to magic formulas and scientific experiments, and the resemblance is indeed meaningful. Just as in magic and science, where success depends upon meticulously faithful following of the given formula, so too in religious ritual the desired healing, fertility, safety, prosperity, or inward state will not result if the ritual is improperly performed. Ritual words are words of power. The Hindu sacrificial ritual mentioned above involved priests specifically appointed to cover any lapses (wrong words or incorrect actions) by ritually speaking charms. Of course, cases such as this and some primitive rituals are the extreme manifestation of this quality. In other ritual patterns aesthetic concerns and inner-personal aspirations are important; ritual uniformity also has the practical advantage of giving the worshiper or user a sense of familiarity and ease as well as identity with a given tradition and group.

Yet deep within ritualism there is inherent the concern for accuracy and faithfulness. This is the essentially sacramental nature of ritual that arises from its nature as an ordered symbol system. Thus both symbol and ritual are perceived as intrinsic embodiments of the sacred essence, the supersensible and indescribable ultimacy of a religion. Thus ritual and symbol bring the real presence of the religious depth-dimension into the lives of its experients and in so doing become incredibly precious. This seems to apply across the religious spectrum to magic prayer rituals of the primitive, the Voodoo dance, sacrificial rituals, repetition of the Pure Land Nembutsu, Tibetan mantric *maṇḍala* rituals, and the Roman Catholic Eucharist. The preciousness of myth and symbol explains why religious groups tend to cherish and preserve their rituals more jealously and zealously than any of their doctrinal statements and why ritual patterns often survive longer than their parent traditions.

One final observation is required: ritualism in religion often produces an antiritualistic expression. Many examples could be given. Zen Buddhism was in one sense antiritualistic, as were Hönen's and Shinran's Pure Land Buddhism. These latter substituted the easy, simple repetition of the name Amida for elaborate and often esoteric rituals. Devotional Hinduism, in which one is saved by love (*bhakti*) wholeheartedly given to a deity, protested against excessive Brahmanic ritualism. And Protestantism, in particular its radical forms, sought freedom from Roman Catholic ritualism. In all cases the motifs were simplicity and ease of access to the sacred.

Sacred writings. In literate societies writings are often of considerable religious importance. (Christianity calls sacred writings scriptures.) Typically sacred writings comprise the reported words of the holy men of the past—prophets, saints, founders of faiths such as Zarathushtra, Moses, the Buddha, Muḥammad, Christ, or Nanak. As such they are of prime importance as statements of the truth and expositions of the right way for believers to live. (Of course, nonliterate societies have their oral traditions that serve the same purpose.) The Hindu Vedas are considered to be without human author or known human channel of transmission.

When scriptures exist, interpreters must also exist. Successive interpretations vary greatly, for interpreters are caught between their desires to be faithful to the original sacred word and to make its exposition relevant and meaningful to their own age. A multitude of sectarian divisions based on variant scriptural interpretation is found in all the major religious traditions. Perhaps the number of writings in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions give interpreters an advantage in this regard, but Christian and Islamic sectarians have been nearly as successful with a smaller scriptural base.

Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintō can scarcely be said to have scriptures in the above sense of a corpus of inspired utterances. Their revered writings—the sayings of Confucius and Mengzi, of Laozi and Zhuangzi, and the *Records of Ancient Matters*—are studied more as the wise counsels of sages than as inerrant statements of truth. (In the latter the apothegms are considered precedent setting.) In general, Buddhist and Hindu scriptures can be interpreted much more flexibly than Western ones because of their greater variety and their emphasis on truth as dependent on the level of the hearer's understanding.

The sacred community. Every religion has some communal sense and structure. Ritual is essentially a group exercise, except for magico-religious rituals geared to personal desires. Hence ritual nearly always involves professional ritualists and a group bound together by its experience. But the communal bonds vary greatly in nature and extent.

Some ritual groupings are quite temporary: one thinks of the occasional, selective, and experience-based spirit groups found among some Native Americans. In other primitive cultures, the religious-ritual grouping is hardly separable from the general clan or tribal social structure and indeed might better be called a social subculture with religious elements centered on certain particular occasions and activities. In many Buddhist and Hindu contexts the religious community is little more than those in the vicinity who attend various religious ceremonies in the local temple and often come on purely personal quests. In such situations the only sacred community seems to be the priests and ritualists at a religious shrine, persons qualified for such functions by character and training.

To be sure, in most of these societies there are special groupings of a secret or semisecret nature open only to initi-

ates. Such are the Native American spirit groups. Late Greek religion developed its "mystery" rites that sought goals and experiences beyond those offered by the ordinary temple and priesthood. Hinduism abounds in such special-interest, special-ritual groups bound together by a particular god, common pilgrimage points, and distinctive rituals; sometimes members live in separate communities built around a leader.

Buddhism and Christianity institutionalized such special-interest groups in their monastic orders. Men and women for a variety of reasons retire from the world to seek a more intensely religious way of life than that possible in ordinary secular pursuits or even as priests having everyday dealings with the laity and major liturgical duties. Some Sūfi communities in medieval Islam approximated the monastic life of a community apart from the wider community of believers.

Perhaps it is only in Islam and Christianity, and somewhat limitedly in Judaism, that the concept of a holy fellowship of believers, called a church in Christianity, has been created to express religious faith and practice. The prevailing ethnic qualification in Judaism prevents its description as a purely faith-gathered group. Islam represents a near equivalent to the Christian church, especially as Islamic groups have spread out into other areas than those totally Muslim in nature. Muslims, like Christians, consider themselves members of one sacred group, called out from among others by the faith and practice of their religion, ideally a unity stronger than any other bond. In the early days of Christianity, the apostle Paul could speak glowingly of the Christian community as a universal one in which there was neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor freeman, for all were equal in a new Christ-like humanity. Of course, in actuality both Christians and Muslims have divided along lines of race and nation. Both faiths, however, continue to cherish the ideal of the universal fellowship of faith.

It may be observed in passing that such a definition of community comes more naturally and more easily to Islam and Christianity than to most Asian religions. To a large extent this is because of the strong emphasis on doctrinal belief in Islam and Christianity: believers and nonbelievers can be clearly distinguished because religion is seen as a deliberate choice by the individual. In Asian religions, inclusive and naturalistic values predominate: experience rather than doctrine receives emphasis, rendering exclusivist religious formulations almost unknown. It may also be that the underlying Asian patterns of social organization have emphasized the group to such an extent that individual religious decision is nearly impossible.

The sacred experience. The question of whether all depth experiences, experiences of transcendence, or unusual mind-body states should be considered on a par with religious experiences, or are intrinsically religious themselves, has already been discussed. Here are considered only those experiences that occur within a declared religious context and are therefore doubly set apart, both as designatedly reli-

gious and as of special clarity and intensity even within that context.

These special experiences represent a continuum from the comparatively mild and frequent experiences to those commonly termed mystical. At the less intense end of the continuum are those instances of a sense of awe in the sacred precincts, a sense of humility before a felt presence, an unusual degree of joy or peace suddenly coming upon one, or the deep conviction of a prayer answered. Then there are those of a much more intense nature such as physical sensations of fire, electric shock, or a strong and sudden conviction of the forgiveness of one's sins such as John Wesley's "warming of the heart" at Aldersgate. Indeed, in some Christian groups special conversion or purification-of-heart experiences are made a matter of explicit emphasis and a condition of church membership. In Pentecostal groups a sudden and unexpected experience of speaking in unknown tongues is considered a sign of the "baptism of the Spirit." There are classical instances of the same phenomenon: Muḥammad hearing the voice of the angel Gabriel commanding him to recite (resulting in the Qur'ān) and Isaiah seeing the Lord high and lifted up with his train filling the temple (resulting in Isaiah's call to prophesy).

At the further end of this experiential continuum are the mystical experiences found in Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Daoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Those who have had such experiences (especially in Christian, Hindu, and Muslim contexts) insist that they differ in kind from all other religious experiences, including the less intense ones just discussed. Their distinctive qualities seem to be these: (1) their suddenness and spontaneity (without warning or overt preparation), (2) their irresistibility, (3) their absolute quality of conviction and realistic authority, (4) their quality of clear knowledge, not strong emotion, which is asserted even when the mystically received knowledge is conceptually indescribable. Perhaps the true and basic content of such moments is an assurance of the absolute reality of God, Kṛṣṇa, Brahmā, Dharma, or Buddha nature, that is, the ultimate reality as envisioned by the given faith. Also rather uniformly experienced is the overpowering conviction of knowing directly, climaxing in a felt encounter with the ultimate one or with the basic oneness of the universe.

In any case, these special experiences of prophets, saints, and enlightened persons have played an important role in many religious traditions. Though beyond the reach of ordinary religiosity, they have given a kind of reflected authenticity to faith at all levels, have encouraged the creation of various spiritual methodologies of devotion and meditation, and have vitalized traditions in difficult times. Mystical experiences have kept alive a sense of the reality and availability of religious power and have constantly renewed the whole corpus of ritual, doctrine, and organization.

RELIGION AND MODERNITY. The question whether religion, at least in its traditional forms, will survive the ongoing cultural changes of modern times is often discussed. Certainly

many traditional and current formulations, and perhaps entire traditions, will radically change or even disappear. Yet it also seems that as soon as one form of religion disappears, another rises to take its place. Without asserting a religious instinct in mankind, it may perhaps be said that man is incurably religious in one way or another and that the human situation and human nature make it inevitably so. The immense mysteries and uncertainties of the world and man's own inquiring and evaluating self-consciousness make inevitable a reaching out for some sort of ultimate values and realities—which is but another name for the religious quest.

SEE ALSO Architecture; Community; Iconography; Mysticism; Myth; Orthopraxy; Philosophy; Religious Experience; Ritual; Sacred Space; Scripture; Soteriology; Study of Religion; Symbol and Symbolism; Truth.

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