

Introduction



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I

Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916–2000) left a deep impression on the study of religion, and his influence has only grown with the passage of time. The Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University, of which he was once a member, held a symposium on November 6, 2009, to honor and assess this legacy. This volume is the precipitate of that symposium.

II

The legacy of Wilfred Cantwell Smith is of course only further proof of his continuing impact on the academic study of religion, an impact that was already obvious during his teaching and writing career. It may not be out of place to reprise the contribution he made while alive, to help pave the way for assessing his legacy.

Smith received a BA (honors) in Oriental Languages from the University of Toronto in 1938 and went on to pursue higher studies at Cambridge University, where he worked under the famous Islamicist, H. A. R. Gibb. Smith at the time was inclined toward Marxism, and was critical of the British and their approach to the “communal problem,” as Hindu-Muslim tensions in India were called at the time. His thesis was therefore rejected. He thereafter taught Indian and Islamic history

at the Forman Christian College in Lahore from 1941 onward, and was an eyewitness to the Independence and Partition of India in 1947. His days in Lahore are discussed in detail in this book, in the chapter by Sheila McDonough. He then obtained a PhD in Oriental Languages from Princeton University and began teaching at McGill University, where he founded the Institute of Islamic Studies. Subsequently, Smith served as the director at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University (1964–73), and then founded the Department of Religious Studies at Dalhousie University in Halifax. He returned to Harvard University in 1978, to work with the Harvard Committee on the Study of Religion. After retiring in 1985, he became a senior research associate of the Faculty of Religious Studies at Trinity College, University of Toronto, and was awarded the Order of Canada in 2000, the year he died. John Carman's essay in this volume explores these various dimensions of Smith's legacy.

III

Smith's influence radiated in pedagogical circles through his numerous students (many of whom have contributed to this volume), but it was in his role as a writer that he exerted his influence over larger academia. In this regard, two broad phases can be discerned; in one, his primary focus was Islam, and in the other, it was religion as such. Smith's early career and his work in Cambridge and Lahore concentrated on Islam; the establishment of the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University was perhaps the most visible manifestation of this aspect of his work. The emergence of the next phase is represented by the publication, in 1959, of an essay, "Comparative Religion: Whither—and Why?" in a volume entitled *History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, edited by Mircea Eliade and J. Kitagawa.¹ According to Frank Whaling, this essay "represents a kind of watershed between Smith's greater concentration on Islam, during his work in Lahore in Muslim India from 1941–49 and his leadership of the McGill Institute of Islamic Studies which he founded in 1951, and his global concern for the total religious situation of mankind which became a feature of his later years."²

It is worth recalling that Islam as a religion, and Islamic studies as a branch of academia, did not enjoy the profile in Smith's time that it does today. In fact, when Smith was pursuing Islamic studies, one rarely spoke of the Abrahamic tradition, an expression that places Judaism, Christianity, and Islam under the same umbrella. One spoke, rather, of

the Judeo-Christian tradition, and stopped at that. Islam was considered an “Eastern” religion for all practical purposes. Smith’s commitment to the study of Islam thus precedes, by several decades, the attention being bestowed on it now. It is not often recognized that it was only after the oil crisis of 1973 that Islam earned the dignity of being bracketed, along with Judaism and Christianity, as a member of the Abrahamic tradition.³ The public profile of Islam became more prominent after the Iranian revolution in 1979, and even acquired a spectral dimension after the events of September 11, 2001. An Islamic presence is now an inescapable feature of the international landscape, but such was not the case when Smith embarked on its study, almost intuiting the role Islam was destined to play in world affairs.

The nature of Smith’s contribution to the study of Islam is equally significant, apart from the fact of his having presciently engaged in it, and is best dramatized by the fact that there is not a *single* reference to Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith in the book that created such a sensation in Islamic studies, Edward Said’s *Orientalism*.⁴ This book brought about a seismic shift in the meaning of the word *orientalism* itself. Before this book, *orientalism* meant “scholarship or learning in oriental subjects.”⁵ It had a neutral connotation. After the publication of the book the word acquired a pejorative connotation, as a result of the book’s claim that such a study of the Orient is inescapably tainted by the ruler-ruled relationship that obtained between the Occident and the Orient. It is perhaps not unfair to assume that Said did not, or would not, or could not, refer to Smith, because he did not find his scholarship of the Orient to be tainted in this way. William Graham’s essay in this volume bears on this issue.

That Smith could, even when writing during the age of imperialism, escape its intellectual consequences could well be the outcome of the attitude that Smith espoused toward the study of religion itself, which remains to this day a powerful element in his legacy. Smith discusses the evolving attitudes to the study of religion in his seminal essay referred to earlier, which has been summarized by Frank Whaling as follows:

In this essay, Smith traced the progress in the study of the History of Religions in various stages. The first stage saw the accumulation and analysis of facts. At first there was the impersonal accumulation of facts about “they,” the people of a religion, by scholars still personally uninvolved. The next

stage saw the personalization of the work so that scholars as people, as “we” were investigating “they” who were also seen to be people. Not only was it the glory of the scholar to “study not things but qualities of personal living,” the investigator’s own personal qualities were also seen to be relevant. A further step came when it was seen that personal relationships with people of other traditions were important so that dialogue was no longer a merely conceptual matter conducted from a study at Oxford, Harvard or Edinburgh with “they” but an actual discussing with other people who through this relationship became “you.” A final stage involved not merely the inter-dialogue and study of two people or traditions on the basis of “we-both” are doing this together, but that “we-all” should do this together.⁶

Frank Whaling then goes on to say:

The scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith has argued in his book *The Meaning and End of Religion* that the notion of monolithic world religions is a fiction that should be abandoned. He even argues that, ultimately, the only religion is that of each individual. Other scholars have enlarged his critical approach. Some have pointed out that the religious experience of women within a religious tradition may be quite different from that of men. (In Islam, for example, women’s religious experience takes place at shrines and in the home, whereas men’s religious experience is more centered on the mosque.) We should also recognize that within a single world religion, the personal religious experience of an individual will be quite different for a child, a teenager, or an adult. And the meaning of being a “Buddhist” or “Christian” or “Hindu” will differ, depending on the culture or historical period that the individual inhabits. (Think of the difference between being a Christian in the Roman Empire of the first century and being a Christian in North America in the twenty-first century.) Lastly, there is the fact that individuals in some societies, such as in China and Japan, practice forms of religion that effortlessly blend elements from several major religions.⁷

One can also see the legacy of Smith’s “personalist epistemology” in the way people have begun to think of how the dialogue, which such

religious diversity demands, is to be conducted. Leonard Swidler has produced the “Dialogue Decalogue” for the purpose of providing guidelines for engaging in such dialogue. His fifth commandment reads as follows:

FIFTH COMMANDMENT: *Each participant must define himself.* Only the Jew, for example, can define what it means to be a Jew. The rest can only describe what it looks like from the outside. Moreover, because dialogue is a dynamic medium, as each participant learns, he will change and hence continually deepen, expand, and modify his self-definition as a Jew, being careful to remain in constant dialogue with fellow Jews. Thus it is mandatory that each dialogue partner define what it means to be an authentic member of his own tradition.

Conversely, the one interpreted must be able to recognize herself in the interpretation. This is the golden rule of interreligious hermeneutics, as has been often reiterated by the “apostle of interreligious dialogue” Raimundo Panikkar. For the sake of understanding, each dialogue participant will naturally attempt to express for herself what she thinks is the meaning of the partner’s statement; the partner must be able to recognize herself in that expression. *The advocate of “a world theology,” Wilfred Cantwell Smith, would add that the expression must also be verifiable by critical observers who are not involved.*⁸

The recognition of this point pertaining to dialogue in the oeuvre of Smith is a useful corrective to the popular and somewhat misleading statement of his position that the believer is always right. Smith is totally with Panikkar in insisting that the participant must recognize himself or herself in what is being said, but adds that this should not be taken to mean that what the participant says about himself or herself is always right, a point dealt with later in more detail.

The fact that one may undergo change, or change one’s position in certain respects, as a result of participating in any dialogical process, personal or historical, should remind us that Smith emphasized not merely the *diversity* that characterizes a religious tradition, but also the *dynamism* that characterizes it, that is, its ability to change over time. Willard Oxtoby identifies this element of Smith’s legacy with remarkable clarity in the context of Christianity when he writes:

What, then, has modernity meant for the Christian tradition? Modernity has brought new outlooks on the nature

and possibilities of thought and knowledge. It has offered new insights into the nature of the physical universe, living creatures, and the structure of personality. And it has meant new outlooks on the character of human culture, history, and society. It has meant change. *As the Canadian religion scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith (b. 1916) has said, to be modern is to be self-conscious about the fact of change and to take an active hand in shaping change itself.*⁹

It is the interweaving of diversity and dynamism, in the context of Christianity in the modern world, which lends such force to the following remarks by Alan Segal and Willard Oxtoby:

Thus Christianity has largely ceased to play a significant official role in the public life of these secular societies. Many Christians remain convinced that the truth of their gospel leaves no room for other beliefs. Nevertheless, Christians have no choice today but to live as one faith group among many. And even if that were not the case, Jesus' commandment to love our neighbours as ourselves would demand full openness to the identities of our fellow human beings. The plural nature of religious life today is a fact that must be accepted. To see that fact as desirable is to embrace what has come to be known as pluralism.

They go on to say:

Pluralism presumes a human community whose common values may yet override the particularism of traditional Christian theology. An early proponent of pluralism was the Canadian scholar of comparative religion Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916–2000). Smith suggested that to be modern is to be self-conscious about change and to take an active hand in shaping it. This chapter's overview of the Christian tradition makes it clear that change has been a feature of Christian history in every age. One would be ill advised to rule out the possibility of dramatic and creative change in the future.¹⁰

Others have utilized Smith's plural legacy to enrich the discourse of religion in a globalizing world. One widely used text on the subject of globalization and religion has this to say:

Although at first glance, the religious worlds of humankind seem to have grown up largely independent of one another, a closer look will reveal that hidden threads from different religions and cultures have, for centuries, been woven together to form a new tapestry, one that contributes to the sharing of religious insight in an *age of globalization*. In *Toward a World Theology*, Wilfred Cantwell Smith traces the threads of this new tapestry, and the story he tells is quite amazing. Smith notes, for example, that to fully appreciate the influence on Gandhi of Tolstoy's understanding of the Sermon on the Mount, it is important to know that Tolstoy's own conversion to Christianity, which occurred in a period of midlife crisis, was deeply influenced not only by the Sermon on the Mount but also by the life of the Buddha.¹¹

The last few lines allude to a series of interlocking facts, some well known and some less so, to which Smith drew pointed attention. These are (1) Gandhi, the Indian, influenced Martin Luther King, Jr., the Christian, as a votary of non-violence. (2) But Gandhi, the Indian, himself became a votary of non-violence under the influence of Tolstoy, a Christian. (3) Tolstoy himself underwent a religious experience toward the end of his life, as a result of which he became a pacifist. His pacifism influenced Gandhi. (4) But Tolstoy's religious conversion experience came about as a result of reading a story on the life of saints. (5) The story is that of Barlaam and Josaphat. The Christian monk, Barlaam, narrates the story to Prince Josaphat, which contains the account of a person helplessly trapped in a well, who is clinging to a vine gnawed at by two mice, one white and one black (representing day and night). He can hope to gain release from his precarious condition not by clinging to life but by surrendering it to God, which is what Tolstoy did. (6) This story, however, has Indian roots, and the word *Josaphat* is ultimately traceable to the word *Bodhisattva*. Thus (7) "Tolstoy's conversion was brought about in large part by the story of the Christian saint, Josaphat, who was, so to speak, really the Buddha in disguise."¹² From these facts

We can see that the practice of passing over and coming back, of being open to the stories of others, and of coming to understand one's own tradition through these stories is in fact very ancient. Therefore, when Martin Luther King, Jr., embraced the teachings of Gandhi, he embraced not only Gandhi but also Tolstoy, and through Tolstoy two of the

greatest religious leaders of non-violence: Jesus of Nazareth, whose committed follower King already was, and Siddhartha the Buddha.¹³

Another dimension of Smith's legacy, which some view as problematic, has to do with his emphasis on the perspective of the insider. Scott T. Kline, for instance, writes:

The Canadian scholar of religion Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916–2000) is widely known for privileging the perspective of the insider in the study of religion. He writes, “no statement about a religion is valid unless it can be acknowledged by that religion's believers.” In effect, Smith is proposing a rule that insiders are the final authority in determining whether or not a scholar's statement about their religion is correct. This rule, however, creates problems for researchers who are interested in studying why insiders act and believe differently. Which insider should be the final arbiter? Or what happens if (or more likely, when) the researcher finds that an insider's claims contradict his or her behaviour? Does the researcher then make a judgment based on criteria outside those of the insiders?¹⁴

Douglas Cowan reinforces this point while discussing the study of new religious movements. He writes:

Though new religious adherents are quite happy to take advantage of scholarly findings when they serve the needs of the group, this misunderstands the social function of scholarship; many members consider research that challenges their beliefs an egregious breach of trust. How do we balance the well-known concern of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, that religious adherents should be able to recognize themselves in our academic re-description, with the reality that re-description will in many cases significantly challenge the adherents' worldview? The Church of Scientology, for example, advertises itself as the fastest-growing religious movement on earth, yet there is very little empirical evidence for that claim. Pointing this out to Scientologists, though, often leads to charges of misrepresentation and bias.¹⁵

On this point the legacy of Smith seems to have been misunderstood. Smith says quite clearly that although “Anything I say about Islam as a living faith is valid in so far as Muslims may say ‘amen’ to it,” yet “*The reverse is not true*. Not every statement *about* Islam that is acceptable to Muslims is *ipso facto* true: one can flatter or beguile.”¹⁶

Smith’s desire to in some sense privilege the perspective of the insider is perhaps rooted in his deep humanism, as reflected in the following statement he made:

We have not understood any action or any saying in another century or another culture until we have realized that we ourselves, had we been in that situation, might well have done or said exactly that. Not that we would have done it; that would mean denying human freedom. We must simply appreciate, must feel and make our readers feel, that of the various possibilities open to us at that point, this particular thought or move or comment would have seemed attractive to us, and perceive the reasons why that would be so. (Smith, unpublished paper)¹⁷

An interesting direction in which Smith’s legacy has been developed is to link it positively with the study of folk religion. Thus, John Morreall and Tamara Sonn write regarding folk beliefs and practices:

Many scholars of religion view such beliefs and practices as part of lived religion. The study of lived religion de-emphasizes organized religion in favor of less formal expressions of people’s spiritual concerns. One of the major proponents of the study of lived religion was Wilfred Cantwell Smith (d. 2000). He taught that religion should not be thought of as an abstract set of beliefs and practices but as the lived experience of individuals in their relationship to the transcendent.¹⁸

Thomas Coburn’s essay in this volume discerns the role of Smith’s legacy in a new development, the rise of “contemplative studies.” This naturally follows from Smith’s concept of religions as living traditions and from his critique of the word *religion* itself. Scott Kline notes, for instance, that “Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the Canadian scholar and former director of the Harvard Center for the Study of the World Religions, recommended using the language of ‘traditions’ to include both religion and

secular humanism.”¹⁹ Similarly, “Ninian Smart (1927–2001), who helped pioneer secular approaches to the study of religion, suggested using ‘world-views’ as the common term for nationalism, socialism, and religion.”²⁰

The critique of the Western notion of religion, which is such an important element in the thought of Smith, has been pursued by scholars after him with great vigor and constitutes one of his lasting legacies, even though the field is still fumbling for a word with which to replace the word *religion*.²¹

IV

One may suspect, on reviewing the way people have assessed Smith’s legacy, that at times, they may be crediting him with more than is justified. For instance, the discussion of primal religions remains largely marginal to Smith’s concerns. He focused, despite his commitment to pluralism, not on the world’s religions but on *world religions*, when we use the latter term to denote the three religions of the West (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), the four religions of India (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism), and the two religions of China (Confucianism and Taoism). And all of them have their scriptures, the study of which interested Smith so much. But these *world religions* do not exhaust the religious heritage of humanity, the most obvious omission being that of primal religions, which are oral in character but surely deserve to be included in any roster of the world’s religions. Some would consider this a fair criticism of Smith’s work, but here again we might wish to recognize that although Smith himself may not have turned his gaze toward the primal religions, the ripple effect of his legacy of recognizing the plurality and vitality of religions seems to be at least partly responsible for the fact that the gaze of the academic study of religion no longer overlooks primal religions. This is dramatically illustrated by comparing two editions of Huston Smith’s famous work on world religions. The book, when it first appeared in 1958 under the title *The Religions of Man*, did not include a chapter on primal religions. When a new edition appeared in 1991 under the title *The World’s Religions*, it did.²²

The point nevertheless has some force, when one considers that the *other* great figure in the study of religion in the twentieth century was Mircea Eliade (1907–1986). He mainstreamed the contribution of archaic religions and “primitive” societies in the study of religion. Smith and Eliade represented the two poles in the field, as it were, at Harvard and Chicago respectively, each associated with one primary orientation to the study of religion, Smith representing the historical approach and

Eliade the phenomenological one. From this it does not follow that their positions were necessarily antipodal,²³ but there was a significant difference of emphasis. While Eliade focused on heirophanies, Smith focused on scriptures. And the focus on scriptures continues to be part of Smith's legacy. As Mary Pat Fisher notes:

The absolute authority of scriptures is being questioned by contemporary scholars who are interpreting them in their historical and cultural context and thus casting some doubt upon their exclusive claims to truth. Some liberal scholars are also proposing that there is an underlying experiential unity among religions. *Wilfred Cantwell Smith, for instance, concluded that the revelations of all religions have come from the same divine source.* Christian theologian John Hick suggests that religions are culturally different responses to one and the same reality. The Muslim scholar Frithjof Schuon feels that there is a common mystical base underlying all religions, but that only the enlightened will experience and understand it, whereas others will see the superficial differences.²⁴

Purushottama Bilimoria's essay in this volume examines this point further.

In one respect, however, Smith's legacy may not have quite worked out exactly as he had hoped or predicted. Smith wrote in 1963: "I seriously suggest that terms such as Christianity, Buddhism, and the like must be dropped, as clearly untenable once challenged."²⁵ He argued

that the world had Buddhists, but not Buddhism, Christians but not Christianity, and so forth. Smith suggested that the word "religion" be dropped as well, claiming that monolithic terms such as "religion," "Christianity," "Hinduism" obscure the dynamic and personal quality of religious traditions.

"'Hinduism' refers not to an entity; it is a name that the West has given to a prodigiously variegated series of facts. It is a notion in men's minds—and a notion that cannot but be inadequate. To use this term at all is inescapably a gross oversimplification. There is an inherent contradiction between history and this order of idea."

One day W. C. Smith even wrote, "I am bold enough to speculate whether these terms will not in fact have disappeared from serious writing and careful speech within twenty-five years."²⁶

Smith wrote this in 1963. However, as Victoria Urubshurow goes on to point out, “Now over forty-five years after W. C. Smith called for an end to the word ‘religion’ it shows little sign of expiring, and ‘-isms’ are as convenient as ever.”²⁷

Nevertheless, Smith’s challenge has not been in vain. As Victoria Urubshurow herself notes:

Due to problems with the “-isms” and monolithic terms that sanitize the messiness of culture, the terminology of this book minimizes their use. Thus “Judaic tradition” generally is used in place of “Judaism” and so forth. Here the word “tradition” should carry a *holistic* sense that conveys the fact that traditions are ongoing with multiple strands that intertwine with many aspects of people’s lives. A religious tradition may be thought of as a cultural heritage that is both: (1) kept alive through participation (what W. C. Smith calls “faith”), and (2) continually challenged by ongoing cultural circumstances. At this point it is still not practical to dispense with the word “religion.” Thus stuck with the word, one is advised to think of particular religions as dynamic cultural complexes, not as static monolithic entities.²⁸

V

Already in 1984, Frank Whaling had hinted at eight concepts potentially embodying the legacy of Smith:

1. His stress upon persons
2. His concern to understand the worldview of others
3. His notion that religious truth must encompass the data of faith as well as the data of the ongoing tradition
4. His global awareness of the total human community
5. His perception that the Transcendent Reality (however defined) is part of the subject matter of the study of religion
6. His emphasis on dialogue and more importantly colloquium as involving corporate critical self-consciousness
7. His conviction that the study of religion although crucial is part of the greater whole of humane knowledge, and

8. His insistence that the views of non-Westerners and persons of other religious traditions must be given due seriousness within this greater whole²⁹

These concepts continue to constitute important elements in Smith's legacy. In this volume, for instance, Harvey Cox continues the exploration of belief and faith initiated by Smith, and John Stratton Hawley continues this exploration, along with the exploration of other antinomies in Smith's work. Peter Slater focuses on the issue of verification in particular in the thought of Smith, while K. R. Sundararajan probes the study of religion as the study of religious persons and the transformations it might entail. The contribution by Donald K. Swearer on the moral imagination of Smith is particularly valuable, when we consider that he also, like Smith, served as the director of the Center for the Study of World Religions. Finally, Jonathan Herman explores Smith's views on the role of the public intellectual, a role which Smith himself played with such distinction.

VI

One may conclude this introduction by placing the legacy of Smith in a history-of-ideas framework. It is important, for this framework to work, to realize that the academic study of religion is a relatively recent development in the intellectual history of humanity. Many, in fact most, religions of the world possess a long, even hoary, history of the study of their own religion and even of religious phenomena, from what we now identify as a "confessional" point of view. By contrast, the academic study of religion is of recent vintage; some scholars would date it as commencing securely only in the 1860s.³⁰ It was one of the consequences of the expansion of European political dominance over the rest of the world, an expansion that had the effect of willy-nilly bringing the peoples of the world together by breaking down their relative isolation. This fact of relative isolation of religions and cultures in premodern times can be exaggerated, but it needs to be clearly recognized before Smith's legacy can be assessed in a history-of-ideas framework. As John Hick explains:

Until comparatively recently each of the different religions of the world had developed in substantial ignorance of the others. There have been, it is true, great movements of expansion which have brought two faiths into contact: above all, the expansion of Buddhism during the last three centuries B.C.E. and the early centuries of the Christian era, carrying

its message throughout India and Southeast Asia and into China, Tibet, and Japan, and then, the resurgence of the Hindu religion at the expense of Buddhism, with the result that today Buddhism is rarely to be found on the Indian subcontinent; next, the first Christian expansion into the Roman Empire; then the expansion of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. into the Middle East, Europe, and later India; and finally, the second expansion of Christianity in the missionary movement of the nineteenth century. These interactions, however, in the cases of Christianity and Islam, were conflicts rather than dialogues; they did not engender any deep or sympathetic understanding of one faith by the adherents of another. It is only during the last hundred years or so that the scholarly study of world religions has made possible an accurate appreciation of the faiths of other people.³¹

It was then that the foundations of the academic study of religion were laid, and central to them was a West in relation to the Rest. Thus, from its very inception, the study of religion was cast in an outsider-insider framework, with Europe, the outsider, looking at the rest of the world.

If we accept this insider-outsider dichotomy as a basis for further examining religious studies, which also emerged with the rise of the West, then one may use this dichotomy to identify four directional models of communication between the insider and outsider, as follows: (1) from insider to insider, (2) from outsider to outsider, (3) from outsider to insider, and (4) from insider to outsider.³²

It is now possible to argue that:

In the study of religion, these four combinations represent not merely logical combinations but chronological phases as well. While “the religion of study,” which finds a prominent place in each religious tradition, was basically carried out between insiders and insiders, the initial phase in the study of religion was characterized by the opposite: it was carried out among outsiders. With the educational penetration of the colonies by the West, however, the situation acquired an additional dimension: it came to involve communication from outsiders to insiders about the insider’s own religion. Western orientalist, for example, explained at least to Westernized Hindus

what Hinduism was. This dominance began to recede with the end of the age of imperialism and the need to engage the perspective of the insider came to be increasingly felt. The mode of communication from the insider to the outsider now came into play.³³

In such a context, the legacy of Smith can be identified as two-fold: (1) although Smith's own age was dominated by the "outsider to outsider" mode of discourse, he clearly saw, or rather foresaw, that the "insider to outsider" phase was about to commence; (2) Smith equipped the field of religious studies conceptually to deal with this situation when it arose.

Smith has foreseen what his Australian colleague Eric Sharpe would later identify as the "response threshold."

A "response threshold" is crossed when it becomes possible for the believer to advance his or her own interpretation against that of the scholar. In classical comparative religion this was hardly a problem since most of the scholar's time was spent in investigating religions of the past. Interpretations might be challenged, but only by other specialists working according to Western canons and conventions. Today, by contrast, a greater proportion of study is devoted to contemporary, or at least recent, forms of living traditions. . . . The response threshold implies the right of the present-day devotee to advance a distinctive interpretation of his or her own tradition—often at variance with that of Western scholarship—and to be taken seriously in doing so.³⁴

We meet Smith already standing on this response threshold long before anyone got there.

Notes

1. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, eds., *History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 31–58.

2. Frank Whaling, ed., *The World's Religious Traditions: Current Perspectives in Religious Studies: Essays in Honour of Wilfred Cantwell Smith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), pp. 4–5.

3. Personal communication from Professor Alwi Shihab.

4. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).
5. Merriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2002), p. 818.
6. Frank Whaling, *World's Religious Traditions*, p. 5.
7. Michael Molloy, *Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, Challenge, Change*, 4th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008), pp. 22–23.
8. Leonard Swidler, "Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1983), pp. 2–3, emphasis added.
9. Willard G. Oxtoby, "The Christian Tradition," in *World Religions: Western Traditions*, ed. Willard G. Oxtoby (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 343, emphasis added.
10. Alan E. Segal and Willard Oxtoby, "The Christian Tradition," in *A Concise Introduction to World Religions*, eds. Alan E. Segal and Willard Oxtoby (Dun Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 192, emphasis added.
11. John L. Esposito, Darrell J. Fasching, and Todd Lewis, *Religion and Globalization: World Religions in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 547, emphasis added.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 548.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 549.
14. Scott T. Kline, "The Study of Religion," in *World Religions—Canadian Perspectives: Western Traditions*, ed. Doris R. Jakbosh (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013), p. 10.
15. Douglas E. Cowan, "New Religious Movements," in Doris R. Jakbosh, ed., *World Religions*, p. 248.
16. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Comparative Religion: Whither—and Why," in Eliade and Kitagawa, eds., *History of Religions*, p. 43, emphasis supplied.
17. John Morreall and Tamara Sonn, *The Religion Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Religious Studies* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), p. 13.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
19. Scott T. Kline, "Study of Religion," p. 11
20. *Ibid.*
21. See S. N. Balagangadhara, *The Heathen in His Blindness: Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994); Harjot S. Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); W. H. McLeod, *Who Is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology*, trans. William Sayers (Baltimore, MD; London: John Hopkins University Press, 2003); Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Arvind Sharma, *Problematizing Religious Freedom* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011). Also see Mitch Numark, "Trans-

lating *Dharma*: Scottish Missionary-Orientalists and the Politics of Religious Understanding in Nineteenth-Century Bombay,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no. 2 (May 2011), pp. 471–500.

22. Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), chapter IX.

23. See Arvind Sharma, *To the Things Themselves: Essays on the Discourse and Practice of the Phenomenology of Religion* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), p. 5.

24. Mary Pat Fischer, *Living Religions*, 8th ed. (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2011), p. 511, emphasis added.

25. Wilfred C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991 [1963]), p. 194. Cited by Victoria Kennick Urubshurow, *Introducing World Religions* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. xix.

26. *Ibid.* The two citations are from pp. 144 and 195, respectively.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. Frank Whaling, ed., *op.cit.*, p. 6, numbering added and sentences rearranged.

30. Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Company, 1986) pp. 27–28.

31. John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), p. 109.

32. Arvind Sharma, *To the Things Themselves*, p. 5.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Eric J. Sharpe, “Study of Religion: Methodological Issues,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, editor-in-chief Mircea Eliade, vol. 14 (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 81.

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