SCIENCE OF RELIGION: STUDIES IN METHODOLOGY

Religion and Reason 13

Method and Theory
in the Study and Interpretation of Religion

Science of Religion
Studies in Methodology

Proceedings
of the Study Conference of the
International Association for the History
of Religions, held in Turku, Finland
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Edited by
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Preface

This volume contains the proceedings of the study conference of the International Association for the History of Religions on 'Methodology of the Science of Religion' held in Turku, Finland, August 27-31, 1973. The Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion, a member society in the I. A. H. R., was responsible for the organization of the conference. I would like to express my thanks to the Committee of the Society for their interest and support. My special thanks are due to my colleagues on the Organizing Committee of the Conference, Haralds Biezais (vice-chairman, Turku), Åke Hultkrantz (Stockholm), Juha Pentikäinen (Helsinki), Helmer Ringgren (Uppsala) and Eric J. Sharpe (Lancaster), whose expertise was of great assistance. The practical arrangements for the conference were taken care of by an efficient team of junior staff, mainly drawn from the Department of Comparative Religion and Folklore at the University of Turku. The able secretary of the conference, Aili Nenola-Kallio, devoted a great deal of time to the correspondence and preparations necessary. I would like to express my warm thanks to all of these staff.

It was my task to edit the proceedings of the conference into some kind of documentation of those methodological questions which dominated the conference and have been to the forefront in comparative religion in general. The papers of the eighteen main speakers and thirtyone commentators, together with the summaries of the subsequent discussions, printed in this book should achieve this purpose, and also represent the results of highly successful cooperation. A complete list of all the participants can be found in the report on the technical arrangements for the conference in *Temenos* 9, Turku 1974, pp. 15-24. The good atmosphere which prevailed during the conference was the result of the contributions of all the participants.

The editing of this book, and in particular of the taped discussions,

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Introduction

by
LAURI HONKO

THE ORIGINS OF THE CONFERENCE

Every five years the world's historians of religion meet for the General Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (I.A.H.R.). These are stimulating occasions, but what happens is what always happens on congresses with several hundred participants and a dozen sections meeting simultaneously: you end up in the cafeteria, simply talking to someone you've always wanted to meet. It is no accident that people so often refer to 'informal contacts' in their reports from large-scale conferences. It is also symptomatic that this kind of comment does not occur in reports from workshops with 10-20 participants, despite the fact that these are as a rule organized in a more informal way: workshop reports always speak of 'efficient and intensive work'.

When in Stockholm in August 1970 the I.A.H.R. Executive Board entrusted the Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion, and the University of Turku, with the organization of a study conference in 1973, we immediately recognized that the size of the conference and the choice of theme would be decisive factors for the conference's success. We decided to try to achieve an ideal size and mode of work by limiting the number of active participants to 50 and by maximizing the proportion of discussion, thus aiming at something both of the representativeness of the large-scale congress and of the inventiveness of the small workshop. The idea of parallel sections was rejected; and all the participants should be able to follow everything that might be said in the papers, commentaries, and subsequent discussion. Since the programme was to consist of three subtopics, each comprising three sessions, it seemed feasible to offer each active participant one formal contribution, by inviting two participants per session to present a paper (18 in all)

and inviting the remaining two thirds of the participants to act as com-
mentators. It seemed important to ensure that none of the sessions
should include only one formal paper, and that the formal commentaries
should act as stimuli for discussion. With the time for each session re-
stricted to two hours, and in view of the importance attached to dis-
cussion, it was clear that the formal contributions must be distributed
to the participants in advance. Despite the time of the year (the confer-
ence was held in Turku from 27 to 31 August 1973) the participants
cooperated splendidly and the conference secretariat was able to dupli-
cate and send out by post approximately 50,000 pages of material in
advance.[1] In the sessions themselves there was a careful balance in the
use of time between main speakers and commentators: the main speak-
ers were only allowed briefly to summarize their major points, while
the commentators were permitted a few minutes more. The general
principle was that at least 45 minutes must be left for open discussion
in each session. These arrangements worked rather well, not least due
to effective chairmanship, and instead of more or less passive listening
to papers being read, the conference was dominated by energetic dis-
cussion. What in fact resulted was a five-day continuous methodological
debate, in which the different research traditions and theoretical ap-
proaches were in constant confrontation.

   In choosing 'Methodology of the Science of Religion' as the theme of
the conference we were conscious of the fact that research into religions
has undergone marked division into diverging schools, partly on the
basis of methodology, and partly by language and culture area. In prac-
tice it is extremely rare for these schools to encounter each other face
to face. The absence of a common body of theory has allowed students
of religion to pursue their research under a variety of orientations, e.g.
historical, phenomenological, philological, psychological, sociological,
anthropological, and ethnological, without any very concrete need to
maintain contact or to cooperate with each other. The fact that com-
parative religion is variously located within faculties of humanities,
theology, or social sciences, on the one hand, and the continuity of
national or culture-area schools of research, on the other, have both con-

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1. See the conference secretary's report on the technical administration of the
conference: Aili Nenola-Kallio, 'Report on the Study Conference of the I.A.H.R.
on "Methodology of the Science of Religion", held in Turku, Finland, August 27-31,
1973', *Temenos* 9 (1974), pp. 15-24.

tributed to the emergence of widely contrasting research environments. In these environments the nature and development of comparative religion has been far more powerfully influenced by locally defined objectives for teaching and research than has generally been openly admitted.

It would hardly have been necessary to arrange a conference, however, merely to establish the fact that the situation in comparative religion is characterized by a kind of disparate poly-methodology. There were, however, other factors. At the turn of the 1970s it was becoming clear that Western science, not least in the humanities and social sciences, was undergoing a profound process of self-examination, which seemed to be leading to the breakdown of certain older paradigms and even, possibly, to the emergence of new ones. This process was part of a wider social and cultural development which no community exposed to the influence of the Western industrialized world could completely escape. For science this breakdown shattered the belief in the necessity of a cumulative acquisition of knowledge, undermined naive optimism about research, aroused greater willingness to take part in interdisciplinary cooperation, and gave rise to totally new fields such as 'science of science'. Self-sufficient and insular sciences emerged as open-minded interested partners in the exchange of experiences and opinions with their neighboring sciences and in the search for new possibilities for integration and a new identity. In other words, the splendid isolation of the academic world was coming to an end, and the demand for socially relevant research was penetrating deep into both internal discussion within the sciences and the choice of topics for research by individual scholars. In the background there was the profile of the Third World and the problems of global development, which were leading to the on-going revision of the Eurocentric world picture.

With this background in mind it seemed interesting to direct the conference's work towards defining the methodological status of and potential new lines of development in the scientific study of religion. There were a host of questions to which we could not know the answers in advance. What are the dominant metatheoretical trends in comparative religion at the moment? What traces of personal theory would come to the surface in methodological discussion among a representative gathering of historians of religion? Which specific theories — old or new — would attract most attention? What is the position of the well-established methodological schools, and what new approaches are arising?

What are the current burning questions in history of religions, i.e. questions to which people would constantly recur even in the space of a short conference? How would the different schools of research regard each other, at a time when it was particularly difficult to point to any one dominant paradigm?

These were the questions to which we expected to obtain answers; but in order for the answers to have significance, it was necessary to select a representative sample of scholars from the field and a set of relevant themes. The Organizing Committee set about solving these problems collectively. Most of the Committee's members were from Finland and Sweden. The institutionalized study of history of religions has long been established in Sweden, while in Finland it is not yet two decades old as a university subject. Turku is in an interesting position in this regard, with its two universities — one Finnish-language and one Swedish-language — each with its chair in history of religions (both of which are attached to the humanities faculties). Åbo Academy, the Swedish-language university, does have a Faculty of Theology, to which the Professor of History of Religions from the Faculty of Humanities belongs as an 'adjunct member', whereas there is no theological faculty in the Finnish-language University of Turku, though teaching in theology is provided on a limited scale within the Faculties of Humanities and Education. The University of Turku's chair has been heavily oriented in the direction of empirical cultural research, fieldwork, and a folkloristic-anthropological approach to methodology. In conjunction with the chair at the Åbo Academy there is also an important special library, the Steiner Library at the Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, which has made it possible to provide both teaching and research over a very wide range of the various fields within history of religions. An extremely important link between students of religions throughout Finland has been the Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion, which has from the beginning been multidisciplinary in nature and enjoys good overseas relations, especially with the Scandinavian countries. The Society publishes the joint Nordic yearbook, *Temenos*.[2] It therefore should be said here that the choice of Turku as the venue for the conference represented both challenge and recognition for the youngest of

2. Lauri Honko, 'The Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion in 1963-1973', *Temenos* 9 (1974), pp. 5-14.

the comparative religion schools in the Nordic countries. It is also signif-
icant that while the majority of chairs in history of religions within
Europe are located in faculties of theology, the members of the Organiz-
ing Committee represented the research environment of the humanities.

The Organizing Committee picked three themes around which the
study conference was to be built. 'Oral and written documentation of
the religious tradition' was a topic that had stimulated workers over a
wide range of research fields, e.g. exegetes of the Bible and Koran, arche-
ologists and historians of religions investigating the remains of prehis-
toric cultures, philologists working in text and source criticism, anthro-
pologists using techniques of interview and observation, and folklore
scholars interested in genres and contexts of tradition. 'The future of
the phenomenology of religion' implies a question both about the
past and the future: what is the value of the phenomenological research
traditions which have dominated comparative religion for so many
decades? Are they still usable, and if so, in what form? Have there
arisen new approaches to research which might be attracting increasing
attention? Two possible examples of relatively new approaches which
were mentioned were ecology of religion and anthropology of religion.
'Religion as expressive culture' concentrated attention on those theories
and approaches applicable in the analysis of the widest and most varied
topic of investigation, i.e. the cultural forms and meanings of religious
expression. Ritual behavior, the language of religion, and the depth
structures of religious expression were selected as areas within which to
examine the validity of theories and their need for development in the
attempt to explain largely unique cultural realities by means of more
general scientific categories.

It should be pointed out that the organizers selected the themes for
each session but that the speakers were free within the context of each
theme to choose the title of their paper themselves. They were thus able
to define the theme more closely in accordance with their own areas of
interest. The commentators had to be invited, however, at a stage when
the themes for the sessions, and the names of the main speakers, were
known, but not the final titles of the papers. In addition to commentary,
the commentators were encouraged to put forward other points of view
on the theme of the session. This arrangement was intended to ensure
a comprehensive treatment of the various themes, but it also helps to
account for the fact that many of the commentaries read more like

independent papers. Since the themes for the sessions had been left rel-
atively broad, matters were also raised in discussion which had not been
the subject of detailed treatment in the papers or commentaries. Con-
sequently the discussions (which have been summarized below on the
basis of taped recordings) should reflect the main points of current inter-
est among historians of religions extremely well.

The main language of the conference was English, though both Ger-
man and French were also used. In editing this volume all the contri-
butions have been put into English. It was tempting during editing to
cut certain of the rather lengthier contributions which had had little in-
fluence on the subsequent discussion, but the editor has opted instead
for documentation; accordingly, this volume depicts the conference as
it actually took place. All the contributors have had the opportunity to
examine their texts, but only on two cases did this lead to significant
changes (Bianchi shortened his paper and Spiro partly rewrote his). Four
of the commentators (Ghosh, Jackson, Kamstra, and Petzoldt) were
unable to be present in person at the conference, but their commentaries
were distributed in the appropriate sessions. The documentation of the
discussions took far more time than one would have expected, and the
transcriptions of the tapes and summarizing of the discussion necessi-
tated the assistance of two qualified staff members.

THE RESULTS OF THE CONFERENCE

If one assumes that teaching, fieldwork (or equivalent study of primary
material), the writing of books, and participation in conferences consti-
tute the cornerstones of academic work, then it is clear that conferences
are of importance both for the individual academic and for the research
community which any particular branch of science constitutes. The
research community, especially, takes shape most clearly on conferences,
which represent the social manifestation of scholarly work. Apart from
some possible decisive, and usually inchoate, youthful experiences,
conferences are not to any great extent events of socialization. The
majority of speakers arrive on a conference with their opinions already
formed, and few people can resist the temptation to expound (possibly
at length) their pet ideas, which have usually already been published
elsewhere in one form or another. Despite all this, a conference is more

than people talking past one another, or the mere repetition of what has been said before. For a few transient days the research community becomes a reality. Processes of adaptation are set in motion. The participants begin to react to the situation, to a topic, or to each other, in a manner that can only be described as creative, critical, and unique. They are prepared to communicate with each other, but unprepared to surrender much of their scholarly identity, with the consequence that a conference's basic mode of action is polite confrontation. Even if the debate rarely leads to unanimity, it does provide a cross-section revealing the status and strength of differing schools of research. And often — as on the Turku conference — there arises a feeling of unity and a liberal atmosphere which makes possible open and constructive criticism, and interaction between different schools. Something at least of what one has learnt is taken home afterwards.

What then did we learn from this conference? I do not wish to go into the special points raised by each session or paper; the reader can trace these for himself with the aid of the Table of Contents and the Index, and by reading the book itself. Nevertheless it may be appropriate to present some general findings about the methodological profile of comparative religion on the basis of the evidence provided by this conference.

Part of any methodology remains unformulated, and implicit. Every discipline, indeed every scholar, holds certain fundamental assumptions which have not been expressed explicitly but which profoundly influence the strategy of research and its scientific conclusions. If only scholars were capable of recognizing and making explicit these fundamental assumptions, there would be no need to speak of metatheory or personal theories. As it is, however, these terms are necessary both on the individual level ('personal theory') and on that of the discipline ('metatheory') in order to distinguish those unstated but influential fundamental assumptions from explicit claims and assumptions relating to recognized theory and special theory, e.g. functionalism, Van der Leeuw's phenomenology of religion, Bellah's theory of religious evolution, or Steward's cultural ecology. Often scientific debate is concerned with special theories, but it can be very valuable to compare the same speaker's opinions on a variety of topics. A certain consistency can then be traced, which does not originate in the research problems under investigation but in the scholar himself. What is involved here is as it were a

methodological 'stance' or personal bias, which can often be better la-
belled by reference to some key expressions or favorite concept than by
the stricter and more demanding term 'theory'. The key expression for
one person may be 'historical investigation', for a second 'tradition', for
a third 'empiricism', for a fourth 'context', and so on. Personal theory
usually includes a number of favorite concepts, which can partly be read
between the lines. Bias may occur either in a general theoretical starting
point or in the choice of research techniques (interview or observation?
a qualitative or quantitative approach?), and it can be equally dominant
in the presentation of one's own hypothesis or in the critique of some-
one else's theses.

A further methodological critique is implied in the terms 'general
theory', 'middle-range theory', 'low-order proposition', 'modes of ob-
servation', and 'the real world of things and events' ('raw data'). These
constitute the steps on a ladder of transformation by means of which an
investigator can move either upwards, inductively, towards higher ab-
stractions, or downwards, deductively. This zigzag movement has its
own rules; information cannot be transformed arbitrarily. What was
noticeable on this conference was the lack of a general theory, and the
poor success of methodological imperialism. There is a view that history
of religions is not really a branch of science at all, but a collection of
scholars who happen to be working on religion. Many participants ex-
pressed the wish to achieve clarification of the recurrent basic assump-
tions on the basis of which religions are studied: in other words people
were wanting metatheory, in the hope that it would provide elements to
unite historians of religions. For at the moment comparative religion has
the appearance more of a multi-disciplinary and poly-methodic field,
in which a number of middle-range theories can be found, though not
even these are commensurable or compatible with each other. Method-
ological problems emerge already at the grass-roots level, where the raw
data of a religion are subjected to classification. Modes of observation
and the arrangement of data were seen as especially problematic. Con-
sequently comparative religion can be seen as being more closely related
to cultural research in the humanities than to sociology or psychology,
even in the case of empirical research. The zigzag movement of induction
and deduction is located on a lower rung of the data-transformation
ladder in history of religions than in sociology or psychology. Whereas
the sociologist makes a single, planned grass-roots expedition to gather

data and then returns to the plane of middle-range theories to relate his data to the existing corpus of knowledge, the historian of religion is as it were at the mercy of his raw data, and constantly has to return to this, ready to revise his hypotheses if new material gives cause to do so. From some points of view this may appear a weakly formalized research procedure, but in fact it need not represent weakness at all: on the contrary, it is precisely in this way that the historian of religions is able to elicit information about a phenomenon which the sociologist or psychologist, trapped in his own frame of reference, would probably not even recognize.

I referred to methodological imperialism. Father Wilhelm Schmidt, Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade no longer rule (if they ever did). There is no theory or method in existence which can predominate over the others, within comparative religion at any rate. The most convincing demonstration of this fact on the conference was Ugo Bianchi's heroic attempt to integrate anthropology of religion, for instance, into his own research approach, which is that of historical investigation. The attempt was tolerated, but failed to win support.

There were three disciplinary 'clusters' — history of religions, phenomenology of religion, and anthropology of religion — which formed a triangle within which the major methodological discussions were carried on. Naturally the internal contradictions of these disciplines also cropped up, but these were of secondary importance or belonged to the sphere of personal theory. Both psychology of religion and sociology of religion in the strict sense of these terms were absent, though concepts from these fields were employed by the anthropologists of religion. A theological element occurred in various contexts but never at any stage succeeded in gaining control of the discussion. The research into folklore and oral tradition, on the other hand, did occasionally come to the fore, especially due to Swedish and Finnish contributors.

The debate between the phenomenology and the history of religions has been part of the programme of symposia in comparative religion for decades; and the conclusion that both phenomenology and history are essential and that they complement each other is also familiar. On this conference, history had the more effective protagonists of the two. The phenomenological front was scattered: there were a few unconditional supporters of the old phenomenology à la Van der Leeuw, but in general this approach was labelled as intuitive, metaphysical, or non-

empirical, and it found little support. It is significant that none of the newer hermeneutic modes of investigation has, as yet, found acceptance in phenomenology of religion either. It became clear, however, that some people wanted to save phenomenology by creating a balance between positivism and hermeneutics, or rather between an empirical approach to research and an interpretative understanding. It was especially interesting that the reformers and supporters of phenomenology viewed the possibility of an alliance with anthropology of religion favorably, while the strongest defenders of a historical approach went into the attack against anthropology.

Cultural anthropology still enjoys a strong position within the scientific study of religion, not least due to its fieldwork techniques and methodology of cultural comparison. A kind of bifurcation appears for instance in the significance which anthropologists investigating religion accord to the relation 'man—the "otherworldly" (god, etc.)' in comparison with the relation 'man—society'. It is the latter relation which has always been central both for cultural and social anthropology. Religion has often been seen as a tool by means of which people and communities can be subjected to real influence in a practical and functional manner. Discussion arose at the conference as to whether religious symbols are manipulative in nature or not; and the dominant trend appeared to support the opinion that the existence of a symbol cannot be explained anything like exhaustively in terms of economic, social, or similar causes. If symbols are tools, they are so only in a very general sense — i.e. tools of language, thought, and living. The man—'otherworldly' relation continues to hold an important position in the metatheory of religious studies, despite the fact that some anthropologists do not consider it capable of operationalization (cf. the discussion of the term *numen*), while for some historians of religions this appeared to be a question to which different religions would in an inductive approach provide different answers. On the whole it seems that it was precisely the anthropologists and folklorists who most often came in for criticism, sometimes on the grounds that their methods of investigation were those of the natural sciences, sometimes because of their objective typologies, which were even seen as a threat to humanist scholarship. On the other hand it was a known anthropologist, De Waal Malefijt, who returned the humanist ball with the observation that the word 'man' had been rare on the conference (not to mention 'woman' or 'student'). The conference, a

gathering of people considering abstract problems, very much reminded her of Harris or Lévi-Strauss, who leave man out of the picture. She left it to her audience whether this was a compliment or not.

If ecological thinking and linguistic structuralism are currently the central movements in cultural research, a word or two about these will not be out of place. Structuralism came up rather less than had been expected. It would appear that traditional philologists are closer to the majority of historians of religions than are the supporters of general linguistics. There were not very many people interested in the applications of Lévi-Strauss' structuralism, nor even in the latest communication theories. It was indicative that the term 'depth structure' (which had been adopted as the title for one of the sessions mainly from syntactical theory) turned out to be unproductive when applied to the study of religion. The discussion of the language of religion was perhaps most worthwhile on the subject of the problems of translation; neither of the papers on this topic took up the link with general linguistics.

Ecology was more strongly represented, though it was not accepted uncritically. There are no doubt various reasons for this caution towards the possible applications of cultural ecology in comparative religion. One was probably the fact that those who most profoundly supported Bleeker's appeal 'Retournons à la philologie et à l'histoire' are equally cautious towards ecology of religion as they are towards sociology, psychology, or anthropology of religion. A second cause for caution lies in the fact that Steward's ecology of religion can be seen as an anthropological variant of historical materialism. There was however more constructive criticism: the hope was expressed that ecology of religion would come down from the generalizing heights of the macro-level to actual villages and towns in order to carry out empirical, holistic investigation of the role of religion in various environments. A limitation in this respect to natural economies, e.g. hunting and fishing cultures, would be too narrow. (Geography of religion does not limit its investigation of the relation between religion and the environment in this way.) It was somewhat paradoxical that the critics of ecological determinism fell in a sense into the same determinism when they put the question how social organization and religion can be the same in differing natural environments, or how communities living in the same natural environments can have differing religions. Anyway, it appears that if a static functionalism and to some extent also structuralism are on the way out, then the ecological

approach and the related set of problems concerning social development and cultural change are on the way in. Problems relating to evolution and to the process of development came up in the sessions on both ecology of religion and ritual processes. It is conceivable that the processual approach characteristic of anthropology may come to form a valuable counterbalance to the purely behavioral or purely historical approaches.

It is perhaps scarcely surprising that problems of comparative work emerged as one of the most important themes of the conference. Comparative religion has repeatedly been driven to consider the validity of its comparisons and their methodological basis; but this time there was the same profound polarization in evidence which characterizes all cultural research. Many other fields, and especially cultural anthropology, present researchers with paired concepts such as emic and etic, intra- and inter-cultural, particular and universal, idiographic and nomothetic, real and nominal, etc. These oppositions have in fact been sharpened in proportion as the weakness of the categories and classes of traditional phenomenology is recognized. A class such as 'sacred stone', for instance, may be dismissed as empty, since the examples, collected from around the world, are incompatible. The fact that one is unquestionably dealing with a 'stone' and with 'something sacred' does not offer any guarantee that one can make an intelligent comparison; on the contrary, the speculative generalizations built up on material gathered in this way can sometimes appear metaphysical, and sometimes quite simply wrong. In these comparisons the context of the phenomenon has often unavoidably or deliberately been ignored; if it had not been, then many of the classes would have disintegrated. It is no coincidence that students of religion nowadays lay such stress on the importance of context, irrespective of whether they are philologists practicing textual analysis, historians investigating various kinds of documents, philosophically oriented phenomenologists, psychologists and sociologists investigating the relation between the individual and the community, or anthropologists, folklorists and ethnologists, constantly refining their fieldwork techniques. Once it was the functionalists who stressed the importance of context; but it is worth noting that although functionalism has lost support, the significance attached to context is not diminishing in the slightest.

The frustrations occasioned by phenomenological comparisons are not enough in themselves to explain the orientation towards particular-

ism and intra-culturalism. A highly decisive role has been played by the development of techniques, especially in fieldwork, to the point where they far more effectively register the informant's own sense of reality and the way in which the community under investigation perceives the world. The development of interview and observation techniques, especially of certain participant techniques, has turned the investigator into a marginal being in a new sense, operating in the (often temporary) field of interaction between two cultures. It easily happens that empirical cultural research leads one into conflict with the conventions of the academic community. The human knowledge and experience which are jointly created in personal contact with the representatives of another culture are no longer as closely bound to the predetermined categories as they used to be. There is, naturally, more to this than the mere development of research techniques. Countless cultures have been transformed from being passive objects into being the active determinants of their own universe, and in interactive research the investigator is as much the object of investigation as his informant. Nor is the audience for research limited to the European academic community. In cultural research, as it frees itself from Eurocentrism and asymmetry, the comparison of cultures and of religious phenomena occurring in them is all the more essential as an encounter between new spiritual fields where, previously, passive primitives underwent discovery.

This trend became apparent at many points on the conference, although one might also have expected to encounter outspoken opponents of it. For example, the question was raised as to where the concepts needed in cultural research could be obtained from; and there was anxiety that the concepts used in research do not do justice to the reality of the culture being investigated. Some supporters of traditional phenomenology went so far as to consider recognizability to be an essential test, i. e. that the representatives of a religion should not be alienated by the picture of their religion which science draws.

This does not mean, of course, that comparative religion should give up being comparative. There were also those on the conference — perhaps the majority — for whom it would be quite unimaginable to present the data at the core of religious studies other than comparatively. Accordingly, the discussions on taxonomy, classification, and definition were lively, with the focus on, for instance, the typology of religion, the classification of rites, and the comparison of various higher religions. An

examination of the criticism put forward against generalizations reveals three main types; (1) some participants did not believe in religious universals, but emphasized uniqueness; (2) there were those who wished to refute some generalization based on comparison, by reference to empirical material — usually to one or two counter-examples; (3) there were those who preferred to avoid committing themselves to definitive conventions and generalizing hypotheses at the outset of an investigation, and to preserve most of the object of investigation as *terra incognita* to be cautiously explored by means of induction, e.g. historical methodology. It is probably significant that there was no demand for the quantitative verification of generalization; this probably indicates that comparative religion is still dominated by the older qualitative phenomenological approach to comparison rather than the methodology of modern cross-cultural research. Nevertheless, neither historical nor hermeneutic particularism is adequate for the study of religions; besides these we shall continue to need flexible universal categories (though not such as to exclude exceptions or borderline cases) in order to make the transfer of results from one investigation to another possible. Research into development, ecology of religion, and structuralism all presuppose generalization, reduction, and comparison. Nor are the drafting of cognitive maps or the investigation of symbols and meanings likely to prove very fruitful without an empirical and comparative approach to the investigation. In general any investigation of 'rules' or 'systems' presupposes a comparative approach, whether one is dealing with micro- or macro-systems, or with intra- or inter-systemic comparisons.

If various methodologies are considered along the 'hard'—'soft' dimension, on which a 'hard' methodology is characterized by its reliance on quantitative methods where applicable and by the strict operationalization of the basic terms of the investigation, while a 'soft' methodology is recognized by the absence of these features, then it would seem that the Turku conference was open towards 'soft' methodologies but that a need was felt to close ranks around a more strictly defined terminology, which ought to be specific to comparative religion and not merely a collection of more or less ill-assorted concepts from different disciplines. The conference was unable to meet this need, nor will other conferences in the near future be able to do so. The situation can be seen as in some ways typical of a science which depends for its existence on an interdisciplinary spirit and poly-methodological liberalism. Although this situa-

tion undoubtedly has its good sides (intellectual flexibility, interaction between different schools of research, freedom from methodological imperialism), it does seem — on conferences at least — inevitably to lead to a sort of 'defensive' methodology. Since the scholars present have little in common except the fact that they are investigating religion, concentration on religion comes to the fore. But at what cost? Astonishingly enough, at the cost of concentration on man, or on society, and even on culture as a whole. Consequently we are left with the question whether the science of religion could in future afford to progressively redefine its boundaries so as to include not only religious systems, and their internal, central, i.e. 'religious' phenomena, but also the relations of religious systems to other social, cultural and economic systems. This is a crucial question; for there are many uses for religious traditions, every individual belongs to other systems as well as religious ones, and every religious community is involved in a wider process of social development. The history of the academic study of religions to date has shown that this form of scholarship in itself cannot provide information about the 'otherworldly' — god, etc. — except in an indirect manner. It is the empirical investigation of religious traditions, of man and his community, which alone can open the road, not to the 'otherworldly', but to those realities of which the concept of the 'otherworldly' is an inherent part. It is the task of the academic study of religions to describe, understand, and explain that part: not in isolation or independence, however, but in its context, against the background of cultural symbol systems and socio-economic structures.

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Oral and Written Documentation
of Religious Tradition

Preliterate Stages and Formation of the Canon in Book Religions

HELMER RINGGREN   *Problems of the Formation and Function of a Canon*

The principle of canonical scripture is well expressed in the Biblical book of Deuteronomy (4:1f.), where it says: 'And now, O Israel, give heed to the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you, and do them... *You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it'*. This passage refers to the Law, given by Yahweh through Moses. Other Biblical passages refer to the words of prophets or to the word of God in general. Jeremiah receives the injunction: 'Speak to all the cities of Judah ... all the words that I command you to speak to them; *do not hold back a word'* (26:2). In the Book of Proverbs (30:5f.) we read: 'Every word of God proves true... *Do not add to his words...'*. This latter passage may be late, but the idea that all three passages express is the same: there is a divinely revealed word, to which nothing should be added and from which nothing should be taken. In other words: the divine word is normative and should not be changed, either by addition, or by subtraction.

The existence of canonical writings in many religions involves two main problems of methodological interest, namely: (1) the origin of the canon, and (2) the function of the canon in the life and belief of the religion in question.

As for the origin of the canon, the problem is really a double one. Two questions should be asked: (1) What is the generally accepted theory of its origin? and (2) What can be ascertained with the aid of historical criticism? The first question is closely tied up with the problem of function, and the second one is of considerable interest for the historian of religion.

I shall illustrate my point by referring to the Biblical material, primarily the Old Testament, and then proceed to some comparative viewpoints.

The accepted theory concerning the Old Testament canon receives its earliest known expression in Flavius Josephus' book *Against Apion* (ca. 95 AD) (I, 8). Here the writer discusses the trustworthiness of historical writings and states that the Greek writers often contradict one another. Then he goes on to say: 'We have not an innumerable multitude of books among us disagreeing from, and contradicting one another, but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. As to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.

Josephus adds that history has also been written after the time of Artaxerxes, but these works do not have the same authority attributed to them, 'since there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time' and he further comments that 'no one has been so bold as either to add anything to (these books), to take anything from them, or to make any change in them'.

A somewhat different account of the origin of the sacred books of Judaism is given in the 14th chapter of the Ezra Apocalypse (also called 2 Esdras or 4 Ezra). Here we find Ezra lamenting the disappearance of the holy books: 'Thy law has been burned, and so no one knows the things that have been done or will be done by thee'. Thereupon he receives the instruction to prepare writing tablets and take with him five men, well versed in the art of writing, and withdraw with them to a certain place. This done, he receives from God a cup to drink, and his heart is filled with understanding and wisdom, and he is able to dictate the contents of the sacred books to his secretaries. So, within forty days, 94 books were written, and Ezra was told to make public 24 books, while the remaining 70 should be kept secret 'for the wise among your people'. These 24 books obviously correspond to the 22 books of Josephus and constitute the existing canon.

The essential thing in these two accounts seems to be that the books of the canon are inspired by God and therefore reliable, maybe even

infallible. Divergent as they are, they cannot also represent the historical truth, and as a matter of fact, none of them does. The historical truth, as far as it can be ascertained, is considerably more complicated.

The various writings of the Old Testament do not seem to have been written with the intention of producing a canon. The Law (i. e. the Pentateuch) is the result of a long process of growth. The historical books were obviously written for no other purpose than to relate historical events. It is interesting to observe that the author(s) of the Books of Chronicles feel(s) free to make changes in their sources, to correct them by adding material or by omitting certain passages. The books of the prophets, of course, had the authority of the prophetical word: it was the word of God through the mouth of the prophet. But prophetical words could be enlarged or applied to new situations by means of slight changes.

The first part of the canon to obtain such status was obviously the Pentateuch; the earliest documentation is our quotation above from Deuteronomy, the final collection of the whole Pentateuch is somewhat later. The 'praise of famous men' in Eccls. (Ben Sira) 44-49 also presupposes the collection of 'the former and the later prophets', including the twelve minor prophets, as one book (49:10). The introduction to the Greek translation of this book refers to 'the law and the prophets and the others that followed them', which seems to allude to the three parts of the present Hebrew canon. The literature of Qumran seems to have contained the same collection of canonical writings. The same is true of the New Testament. There is however, evidence that the Book of Psalms in certain manuscripts from the beginning of our era contained a number of psalms which are not found in the canonical book and some of the canonical psalms in a different order. A final decision on the contents of the canon was reached at a meeting in Jabne about 100 AD.

The canon thus fixed was normative for all aspects of Jewish religion. Its divine origin gave it authority. Questions of belief and practice were discussed and solved according to Scripture. The Mishna treatise Sanhedrin states (10,1) that 'he has no part in the world to come who says: There is no resurrection of the dead (in the Torah), and: The Torah is not from God (literally: Heaven)'. The second statement emphasizes the divine origin of Scripture; the first statement, according to the variant reading of some manuscripts, reminds us of Jesus' argument

with the Sadducees, Mt 22:22-33, in which he shows by a reference to Ex 3:6 that the resurrection of the dead can be deduced from the Torah.

The method used in the quotation of support from Scripture is especially interesting, in so far as little attention is paid to the context in which a scriptural passage appears. Very brief passages are separated from their context and made to carry the burden of proof by themselves. Examples abound in the rabbinical literature. One example might suffice to illustrate the point. Mishna Sanhedrin 10,3 says: 'The people of the flood has no part in the world to come and they will not arise (*qūm*) in the judgment (*dīn*), for it says (Gen 6,6): "My spirit shall not 'judge' (*jādōn*) man forever". (The verbal form *jādōn* has probably nothing to do with *dīn* 'to judge'; more probably it means 'reign' or 'remain in', but the similarity in sound suggests the idea of 'judgment' (*dīn*)). The people of Sodom have no part in the world to come; but they will arise in the judgment. R. Nehemiah said: Neither the first, nor the latter will arise in the judgment, for it says (Ps 1:5): "Therefore the wicked will not stand (or: arise) in the judgment, nor the sinners in the community of the righteous". 'Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment', that is the people of the flood; 'nor the sinners in the community of the righteous', that is the people of Sodom. Then they said to him: 'They will not arise (stand) in the community of the righteous, but they will arise in the community of the wicked.' (The text of Ps 1:5 has no specific reference to the people of the flood, not to the people of Sodom; but the use of the verb *qūm* 'to stand', 'to arise' suggests some connection with resurrection, and the word *mišpāṭ* suggests the idea of judgment.)

This, and numerous other examples, show that the authority of canonical Scripture is such as to permit far-reaching conclusions on the basis of the mere association of ideas.

On the other hand, this very method implies considerable freedom in the application of a scriptural passage. The Habakkuk commentary from Qumran quotes Hab. 2:16 'You are sated with ignominy instead of glory. Drink, you yourself and stagger (*harᶜel*)!' The last word of this text appears in the Massoretic text as *hēᶜārel* 'show your foreskin', but the Qumran text prefers another variant reading, changing the order of two consonants. It goes on to say: 'This means the priest, whose ignominy was greater than his glory, because he did not circumcise the

foreskin of his heart, but walked in the ways of drunkenness'. In other words, the commentary applies both the variant readings: *hēᶜārel* suggests that the heart of the priest was uncircumcised, *harᶜel* suggests his drunkenness.

The use of the Old Testament canon in the New Testament follows the same rules. Mt 2:15 quotes Hos 11:1 'Out of Egypt I called my son' in order to prove that the flight into Egypt was predicted in the Old Testament. But the context in Hosea proves beyond doubt that the words refer to the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt. Variant readings are often used in order to make the scriptural proof clearer as is discussed at length by K. Stendahl in his dissertation *The School of St. Matthew*.

In some cases two Old Testament passages are combined, e. g. Mt. 21:5 'Say to the Daughter of Zion: Lo, your king comes, humble and riding on a donkey and on the colt of an ass'. This is an obvious combination of Is. 62:11 'Say to the daughter of Zion: Lo, your salvation (LXX your saviour) comes...', and Zech. 9:9 'Rejoice much, o daughter of Zion; exult, o daughter of Jerusalem; lo, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, he is humble and riding on a donkey, and on the colt of an ass'. Both texts are canonical and can be combined without difficulty. On the other hand, the quotation from Is. 62 is not literal, and the quotation from Zech. 9 is considerably abridged. That is, the text is normative as a proof text, but there is a certain freedom in its use as far as the exact wording is concerned. But the gospel makes Zech. 8 refer to two animals, because it sticks strictly to the wording of the Hebrew text, against the real meaning of the text (the words used in parallellism refer to one and the same animal which is also the usual rabbinic interpretation).

Another interesting example is Paul's argument in Gal. 3:16f., where he says that the promises were given to 'Abraham and his seed', not to those who come from this seed; consequently the promises refer to one single person, that is, to Jesus Christ. The main point is that the Hebrew singular *zaeraᶜ* 'seed' must refer to one person since it is singular. This argument runs counter to Hebrew grammar, since *zaeraᶜ* is a collective noun and practically never refers to one person. Nevertheless, Paul's use of this argument shows that even grammatical details of the canonical text are considered as important for the correct use of the text.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from these examples is that there was no formulated principle for the use of the canonical text. It was taken for granted that the text was sacred and normative and reliable, but in spite of this the exact wording of the text was not always observed. We might ask if this could possibly be due to the fact that the authors of the New Testament quoted from memory, but it is doubtful whether this explains all cases. The main point is, however, that whatever the methods of exegesis applied are, both Jews and Christians regarded the canonical text as normative and as the true basis for the discussion of questions of belief and religious practice.

What, then, was the function of the Jewish canon in Judaism and in early Christianity? It was used, first of all, to establish correct religious practice. This is in accordance with the fact that religious practice was extremely important in Judaism. But, as we have seen, it was also used to deduce the correct doctrine of Judaism. Questions of belief (e. g. the belief in resurrection) were solved on the basis of Scripture. This use of the canon becomes natural as soon as doctrinal questions come to be regarded as important. Thirdly, Scripture was applied to present events as prediction. This is true in the community of Qumran, where events in the life of its founder, the Teacher of Righteousness, and other events in the life of the sect, were interpreted with the aid of Scriptural passages. It is also true of early Christianity in so far as Jesus Christ was regarded as the fulfilment of prophecy and scriptural passages were adduced to prove the Messianic claims of Jesus.

Christianity thus accepted the Jewish canon, but in addition it gradually developed a canon of its own, i. e. the New Testament. Jesus accepted the Scriptures but claimed an authority of his own for their interpretation ('But I say unto you...'). Gradually, the letters of Paul and the Gospels came to be regarded as fundamental to the Christian faith. But as late as ca. 150 AD Justin the Martyr denotes the Gospels not as sacred Scripture, but as the 'remembrances' of the apostles. In the Christian church the authority was first of all Christ himself, then the apostles as eyewitnesses of his work, but also the witness of the Holy Spirit.

In the second half of the 2nd century AD, the conflicts with Gnosticism and with Marcion necessitated the establishment of a normative collection of documents of the Christian faith. And so gradually, in the course of the 3rd century, a specifically Christian canon was developed.

The criteria, e. g. as set forth by St. Augustine, were three: (1) the book should derive from an apostle, (2) it should be in general use in the church, and (3) its doctrine should be in accordance with the apostolic teaching. There were discussions as to whether certain books should be regarded as canonical or not, but in the main the New Testament as we have it was established as normative for the Christian church.

It is interesting that the main interest seems to be the establishment of Christian doctrine as against other doctrines that were rejected as heretical. This ties in with the general interest in doctrine in the early Christian church and is certainly due to the philosophical interest current in the environment in which the church grew up.

This doctrinal interest has remained in the Christian church. Though no theory of the canon and its inspiration seems to have existed from the beginning, various such theories were developed in the course of time. The most elaborate of these is perhaps that developed by protestant orthodoxy in the 17th century, which can be characterized as that of verbal inspiration. A text that is verbally given by God can be used as the infallible basis for the formulation of the Christian faith. Any article of faith must be proved by a reference to one or more scriptural passages (*loca probantia*).

However, the last centuries have brought about a considerable change in the attitude towards the canon in many Christian quarters. It was the acceptance of historical criticism of the Biblical documents that brought about this change. The Biblical books were not regarded as dictated by God word by word but as human documents containing the witness of human beings to the acts of God. These documents should be interpreted in the same way as other historical documents, using historical criticism, and taking into account the general cultural background of their times. The consequence was that the canon had only a relative value as the basis of Christian faith. Isolated passages could not be used as *loca probantia*, and a historical development was traced within the Bible. As a result of this, the situation with regard to the authority of the canon is rather confused. While the churches officially recognize the Bible as canonical, theologians feel that they have considerable freedom in using it for the establishing of what is Christian faith. For these theologians it is rather the spirit and general tendency of the Bible that are normative than separate passages. In a way this situation is rather unique. No other religion possessing canonical scrip-

tures has developed such a freedom in its attitude to its normative documents. It should, however, be emphasized again that this attitude is not accepted by all the Christian churches. Nevertheless, it constitutes a special problem when the function of the canon is concerned.

The situation in Islam is altogether different. From the very beginning it was the ambition of the Prophet Muhammad to give his people a sacred Scripture corresponding to the holy books of the other book religions. Even if the Qurʾan was colllected and given its first shape only after Muhammad's death, this fact must be taken into account. There was also a theory of inspiration from the beginning. Muhammad refers to a Heavenly book and to revelation sent down from Heaven. Thus every word revealed to Muhammad was literally the word of God.

Thus the authority of the Qurʾan was established beyond any doubt, and any controversy, be it in matters of religious practice or of doctrine, could and should be settled on the basis of a passage from the Qurʾan. In cases of doubt, recourse was had to the Prophet's *sunna*, i. e. traditions relating what he had done or said in various situations. Collections of traditions were made and gradually assumed a kind of half-canonical significance. It is interesting to note that these collections contain material regarding both religious practice and questions of doctrine. Probably the latter became more significant as the interest in theoretical or theological questions grew in Islam.

The use of the Qurʾan reminds us to some extent of the use of Scripture in Judaism. Even very brief isolated passages can be used as prooftexts, and they can also be applied to things that are completely alien to their original context. This method of quotation reaches its climax in the exegesis of Islamic modernism, where brief sentences from the Qurʾan are applied to modern conditions that are completely alien to their meaning in the original context. This seems to be done on the tacit assumption that the word of God is infallibly correct however brief the quotation may be and whatever the context in which it is used.

There are scattered instances of a reaction against this way of using the Qurʾan. One is Daʾud Rahbar's book *God of Justice*, in which the author tries to harmonize the contradictory passages concerning free will and predestination by placing them into the context of Qurʾanic teaching as a whole. A few attempts have been made to interpret the Qurʾan against its historical background. But from this to the attitude

of historical criticism in Christianity there is a long step. The verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Qurᵓan remain undisputed.

The formation of a canon is a historical problem. Whether it is a gradual process, as in Judaism and Christianity, or a conscious creation, as in Islam, it seems to be a function of what people expect from their religion, what kind of questions it is supposed to settle. Or rather, there is a kind of reciprocal influence: the formation of a canon is religion's answer to the questions people ask, but at the same time the canon influences the questions and contributes to the formation of a special type of religion. In a way the problem of the function of the canon is bound up with that of its formation. On the other hand, the use of the canon may change in the course of time: when the canon of Judaism was developed, its use as prediction was probably not foreseen; and the modern Christian interpretation of the Bible was certainly not in the mind of those who established the canon. The function of sacred scripture in different environments is a topic well worth phenomenological study.

M. HEERMA van VOSS   *Methodology and the Egyptian* Book of the Dead

The importance of the New Kingdom *Book of the Dead (BD)* as a primary source for the knowledge of ancient Egyptian religion is generally recognised. On the methods of exploring it, however, comparatively little[1] has been said.

My paper is meant to contribute to a discussion on this topic. In presenting it I would like to stress three points arising from my experience:
1. sources other than papyri are regularly neglected, to our disadvantage;
2. pictures ('vignettes' and others) should be examined for their own sake: they often lead to a better or a fuller understanding of the corresponding spell;

1. E. g. by de Buck: *Jaarbericht ... Ex Oriente Lux* III/9 (1944), pp. 9-10; *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 2 (1945), esp. p. 44; *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 35 (1949), pp. 87-8.

3. hieroglyphic mss. of the creative XXIth Dynasty lie under an un-
   deserved doom due in the first place to Naville.[2] One may compare
   my observations on the Leiden Papyrus T3.[3]
These three remarks could be well illustrated in the case of spell 161,
which is offered here as a model.

Naville[4] knew only the version in his Pb, my Document No.1. The
same applies to the most recent authors.[5] In fact, quite a number of
New Kingdom sources can be quoted. The following list is meant to
give characteristic examples, not to be exhaustive.

A. Papyri
Doc. 1. Owner: Neferwebenef.
         Paris, Louvre, Pap. III 93 (Inv. No. 3092; Naville's Pb).
         Edition: S. Ratié, *Le papyrus de Neferoubenef (Louvre III 93)*,
         Le Caire, Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 1968, pl. XIV.
         Period: Dyn. XIX.
Doc. 2. Owner: Hori.
         Cleveland, Ohio, Cleveland Museum of Art, 21. 1032.
         Two details: J. D. Cooney, *The Bulletin of The Cleveland Muse-
         um of Art* 55 (1968), p. 266, Fig. 9.
         Period: Dyn. XXI.

B. Coffins and sarcophagi
Doc. 3. Owner: Meh(u).
         Moscow, Pushkin Museum II a 5249.
         Edition: I. A. Lapis, *Vestnik drevnej istorii* 4/56 (1956), pp. 157-
         160, pl. 2 and 3, 2 pp. hand-copy.
         Mummiform; wood.
         Period: Dyn. XVIII.

2. E.g.: *Das aegyptische Todtenbuch der XVIII. bis XX. Dynastie.* Einleitung,
Berlin, 1886, p. 35.
3. Cf. 'Preliminary report' in: D. Sinor, *Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Inter-
national Congress of Orientalists, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 13th-19th August 1967*,
Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1971, p. 48; *Zwischen Grab und Paradies*, Basel, Morf,
1971; *De spreuk om de kisten te kennen*, Leiden, Brill, 1971.
4. Publication of note 2, p. 184.
5. E.g. S. Ratié (see Doc. 1), p. 47.

Doc. 4. Owner: Thothhotep.
Paris, Louvre D 3.
Photograph: Breasted und Ranke, *Geschichte Aegyptens*, Wien, Phaidon (1936), T. 8.
Mummiform; granite.
Period: Dyn. XIX.

Doc. 5. Owner: N. N.
London, British Museum 66654.
Edition: Bimson and Shore, *The British Museum Quarterly* 30 (1965/6), pp. 105-8, pl. XXI.
Mummiform model; glass.
Period: Dyn. XVIII (?).

Doc. 6. Owner: Yuya.
Cairo 3668 (No. of 'Brief Descr.').
Edition: Davis, Maspero, Newberry, and Carter, *The Tomb of Jouïya and Touïyou*, London (1907), pl. VI.
Rectangular; wood.
Period: Dyn. XVIII.

Doc. 7. Owner: Wabset.
Khartum 14408.
Edition: J. Leclant, *Kush* 11 (1963), pp. 141-158, pl. XXXVI; cf. *Soleb II. Les nécropoles*, Firenze, Sansoni (1971), pp. 125-132 (T 5 c 2).
Rectangular; sandstone.
Period: Dyn. XVIII.

C. Shrines

Doc. 8. Owner: Tutankhamon.
Cairo 239 (Carter's No.).
Edition: Piankoff and Rambova, *The Shrines of Tut-Ankh-Amon*, New York, Pantheon Books (1955), pl. 19-22, Fig. 20/5; shrine IV.
Wood with gold foil.
Period: Dyn. XVIII.

D. Tomb walls

Doc. 9. Owner: Nefertari.
In situ, Valley of the Queens, Tomb 66, West Side Room (= IV).

Edition: Thausing und Goedicke, *Nofretari*, Graz, Akademi-
sche Druck- und Verlagsanstalt (1971), Fig. 114/6.
Period: Dyn. XIX.

It is clear that *BD* 161 refers to the physical intactness of the deceased.
The text of Pb (Doc. 1), however, is difficult to translate.[6] One of the
crucial passages is the final phrase. A papyrus from Dynasty XXI (Doc.2)
now corroborates an emendation in the orthography. The corrected
reading says that the mummy-bandages have been unrolled (thus allow-
ing free movement in the hereafter).

The mention of Kebehsenuf, one of the four sons of Horus, is natural
because of their indispensable function in the preservation of the body.
He does not occur in the vignettes; they show no god except Thoth,
the principal character. According to the title and the late rubric, Thoth
is engaged on breaking open heaven in order that each of the four winds
may enter the deceased's nose. The latter is to be seen in Doc. 2,
mummified and facing the former. Curiously enough, Categories B-D
usually depict not merely Thoth, but the four brothers and Anubis,
the chief divine embalmer, as well. Why are these always absent from
the papyri?

Once again, Doc. 2 throws light on a problem. Our spell figures there[7]
point to one absent in Doc. 3-9, viz. *BD* 151 A dealing with the sarco-
phagus-room in the tomb and portraying all five gods full-sized. Appar-
ently, there was no need to repeat them for a designer who had to
cope anyway with four big figures of Thoth opening the sky (and of
the deceased) as against only a few lines of text. This must also apply
to Doc. 1, where the vignette of 161 adjoins one serving as a combined
(albeit abridged[8]) illustration for *BD* 151 A, 155 and 156.

This explanation presents itself again in the case of Isis and Nephthys.
That they (well known for their funeral cares and mentioned in the

6. Cf. P. Barguet, *Le Livre des Morts des anciens Égyptiens*, Paris, Les Éditions
du Cerf (1967), p. 227. The rubric is found in late papyri only, but makes a reli-
able impression: see below.

7. Unpublished. My colleagues in the Department very kindly provided me with
photographs (these were shown at the Turku conference).

8. The complete picture of 151 A ranks with those of the burial (*BD* 1) and the
opening of the mouth (*BD* 23) in Pb; they precede all other spells of the ms.: Ratié,
op. cit., pl. I-III.

rubric) accompany the gods is certain in Doc. 9, and may be so in many other instances.[9] These goddesses, too, occur in the picture of *BD* 151 A (Doc. 2). The same could be said concerning the udjat-eye(s).

To sum up: without Doc. 2 (text and vignettes) and categories B-D, many details, indeed the very import and impact of *BD* 161, would have escaped us.

Commentary   by Jan Bergman

To start with I would like to give some general remarks on the main theme, 'Oral and written documentation of religious tradition'.

A concentration on 'Pre-literate stages and formation of the canon in book religions' covers some moments of the complicated interaction between oral and written tradition, which can coexist for long periods of time, some traditions being transmitted orally, others by scriptures (e. g. in Rabbinic Judaism[10] and in Iran[11]). But even when the written canon has been established, some processes of the oral transmission are of great importance, viz. listening to the read tradition and memorizing by heart. (It is a matter worth considering, that the two most consistent book religions (the Jewish religion and Islam) are the most eager ones to stress the importance of learning the holy tradition by heart!). Thus these later stages of the typical book religions are also of methodological interest even for those working only with oral traditions.

Within these religions, however, one may find an obvious ideological trend towards stressing the original book-form of the canon, to the disregard of any oral tradition (e. g. the conception of the Torah as pre-existent before the creation; that of the Koran as a heavenly book in the care of Allah; cf. also the statement of Dēnkart, that Zoroaster himself had written the 1,200 chapters of the original Avesta).

Many typical features of oral tradition can exist in written tradition

9. E. g. on head and foot in Category B.
10. See the brief outline: B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, Uppsala, 1961, Chapter I.
11. Summary: G. Widengren, 'Holy Book and Holy Traditions in Iran', in: *Holy Book and Tradition*, ed. by F. F. Bruce and E. G. Rupp, Manchester, 1968, pp. 36ff.

without justifying the conclusion that the text contains an actual oral tradition, for diverse reasons, of which I will mention two: (a) the copy may have been written from dictation, which causes mishearings etc.;[12] (b) the text can have been originally intended for reciting and thus appeal more to the ear than to the eye.

When thinking of formation of canon, the particular case of the Veda's — not only compared with the Torah, the Bible etc. but also with the Tipitaka — must be kept in mind: No historical revealer, no 'concilia' etc. — but mythical statements about their divine ever-existing character — guarantee their canonical status.

In many religious cultures the fixation of the traditions, let us call it 'canonization', is not attained by means of scriptures but by drawings etc. (That is why it would be better to speak of 'drawing cultures' etc., instead of the negative expression 'illiterate cultures'.) Here the interaction between oral tradition and drawings etc. needs to be studied.

In the ancient Egyptian civilization the representations of statues and reliefs are more 'canonic' than are the reproductions of the texts (cf. below on the vignettes of the *Book of the Dead*).

SOME COMMENTS ON THE PAPER OF PROF. HELMER RINGGREN

First of all I would like to agree with H. Ringgren that the questions about the function(s) of the canon — original or intended function, changes of function, actual function(s) etc. — are of great importance and cannot be separated from the questions under discussion.

It is an interesting fact that the O. T. formulae quoted on p. 3 as excellent expressions of the principle of canon seem to have originated in a quite 'uncanonical' context, viz. Egyptian wisdom literature[13] without any claim to divine origin or inspiration. Thus, the formulae *in se* are not witnesses of canonicity.

12. Cf. for the Egyptian wisdom literature A. Volten, *Studien zum Weisheitsbuch des Anii*, Copenhagen, 1937-38, pp. 8ff.

13. For the often supposed Egyptian background see Z. Žába, *Les Maximes de Ptahhotep*, Prague, 1956, pp. 169f. (vv. 608-609) and S. Morenz, *Gott und Mensch im Alten Ägypten*, Heidelberg, 1965, pp. 26f. (M., commenting upon the new interpretation, wants to retain the usual translation, at least for a passage in *The Teaching of Cheti*, 10:3.)

As an example of the principle of 'sticking strictly to the wording of the Hebrew text' H. Ringgren cites Mt. 21:5. Another well known instance of this is Jn 19:23-24 (referring to Ps. 22:18). In the first case, however, I think we can add a special reason why Mt. makes Zech. 8 refer to two animals; I see here an application of Hab. 3:2 (according to LXX): ἐν μέσῳ δύο ζῴων γνωσθήσῃ 'You will be recognized between two animals'. (Its application to the Bethlehem event is well attested, and its application to other 'epiphanies' seems very plausible.) This suggestion is made not principally to throw some light on the passage in question but to illustrate a very important principle in interpreting canonical texts: *Scriptura per Scripturam explicatur.*[14]

The example from the Habakkuk commentary from Qumran is illustrative of the appreciation of the Divine Word. According to my view, both the variant readings are kept not for fear of making a bad choice but in the conviction of the inexhaustible richness of the Divine Word, which cannot be exhausted by one single word or one single interpretation (cf. also the *quadriga* interpretation of the Scripture, ascribing four different senses to the biblical wordings).

The special liturgical use of only parts of the canon in fact evidently limits the text mass of the canon (cf. the fixed text series in some churches *contra* a *lectio continua* of the whole Torah in the synagogues). When parallel traditions exist, the liturgical preference of one of these tends to make the other(s) obsolete: How many Christians consider the Lord's Prayer according to Luke 11 as canonical?

So the liturgical texts can, in fact, function as a sort of canon for the canon. In the formation of the N. T. canon a *regula fidei* or *regula veritatis* had the function of deciding whether scriptures were to be considered as canonical or not. Further, the N. T. functions as a canon for the (understanding of the) O. T. and Christ for the whole Bible (cf. 'was Christum treibt' of Luther). In studying and interpreting Holy Scriptures an acquaintance with such regulative 'canons' is necessary, if one wants to have a relevant idea of this or that book religion.

As a concluding remark I want to point out some canonic materials which could be dangerous for the persistence and the definitiveness of the canon in question. In the Koran we have the problematical abroga-

14. Cf. the well known saying of Hillel (or of a pupil) about the Torah in Ab. V, 22: 'Turn it this way and turn it that way, for all is therein'.

tion formulae: S.2:106 'If we abrogate an *āya* or consign it to oblivion, we offer something better than it or something of equal value'; S.16: 101 'If we put an *āya* in the place of another — and Allah surely knows best what he sends down...'; cf. further S.13:39 'Allah blots out, and he establishes whatsoever he will, and with him is the Original Book (*umm al-kitāb*)'. These formulae are evidently in conflict with the canonical formulae discussed above. Dissenssion about what is *nāsikh* (the abrogating) and what is *mansukh* (the abrogated) and disagreement regarding the number of verses to which the rule must be applied (the extremes are: more than 250 verses — 5 verses) are bound to cause exegetical problems.[15] Also S.3:7 is worth mentioning in this connection: 'He it is who has sent down to you the Book, of which there are some verses that are of themselves perspicuous (*muhkamāt*) — they are the Original Book (*umm al-kitāb*) — and others are ambiguous (*mutashābihāt*).'[16]

Another type of canonical saying, which threatens to surpass the limits of the canon in question, is that represented by the Messianic prophecies in the O.T. and the promises concerning the Paraclete in John. These passages naturally play a most important role when the religion in question encounters new prophetic religions (e. g. Dt.18:18, adopted by Christians — and after many others by the Ahmadiyya; and Jn 16:13, applied by Mani to himself and later on by a series of other prophets).

A SHORT REMARK ON PRE-LITERATE STAGES AND ORAL TRADITION IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Old Egyptian religion is certainly no book religion in the strict sense of the word, but a religion with many books and an appreciation of writing and of scribes which is quite outstanding.[17] The general background

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15. For the abrogation see *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 275 (F. Buhl) with further references; J. M. S. Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation*, Leiden, 1968, pp. 48ff.; R. Wielandt, *Offenbarung und Geschichte im Denken moderner Muslime*, Wiesbaden, 1971, pp. 38f.

16. See Baljon, *op. cit.*, pp. 51ff.

17. See S. Morenz, *op. cit.*, pp. 19ff.; C. J. Bleeker, *Religious Traditions and Sacred Books in Ancient Egypt* (in the collection above, note 11) pp. 20ff.; J. Leipoldt und S. Morenz, *Heilige Schriften*, Leipzig, 1953, passim.

for a 'book religion' was, in this respect, a most advantageous one. And
I am convinced, that, if Echnaton had succeeded in bringing his person-
al mission through, his written 'teaching (*sb3*)', mentioned in some
contemporary texts, would have been established as canon in the strict
sense of the word. The conspicious dominance of writing, inaugurated
according to the Egyptians by the god Thoth himself,[18] puts the oral
tradition totally into the shade. The unexpected appearance of the
imposing text mass in the Pyramid of Unas, which in later periods was
considered as the standard text, presupposes a long and complicated
period of transmission, in which oral tradition must have played a
considerable role. Unfortunately, we are not able to give any details
concerning the procedure of this transmission.[19] References to records
in some chapters of the Book of the Dead — and in some medical papyri
— which tell us about the finding of the text in question in the times
of Usaphais (1st dyn.) or of Mycerinus (4th dyn.) are of little value as
they are, probably, fictions.[20] As regards the rich Egyptian wisdom
literature, learning by heart is well attested, but the role of writings is
always stressed, so that conclusive proofs of oral tradition are lacking
even for this genre. No Egyptian record is known to me where one
finds a strict order not to commit this or that to writing (as is often
the case in the Indoeuropean civilizations).

SOME COMMENTS ON THE PAPER OF PROF. M. HEERMA VAN VOSS

Prof. M. Heerma van Voss' paper is evidence of the sort of painstaking
studies which are very necessary in order to get a better understanding of
the utterly confused and complicated traditions that form the Egyptian
book of the Dead. In discussing methodological matters one always

18. Some instances: D. Müller, *Ägypten und die griechischen Isis-Aretalogien*,
Berlin, 1961, pp. 22f. (Thoth, however, is also the lord of the spoken words.)
    19. Cf. the cautious remarks by H. Brunner, *Grundzüge einer Geschichte der
altägyptischen Literatur*, Darmstadt, 1966, pp. 11f. The hypotheses of Sethe need
to be revised on the basis of the results of the researches of S. Schott and others
(see J. Spiegel, 'Die religionsgeschichtliche Stellung der Pyramiden-texte', in *Orien-
talia* 22, 1953, pp. 129ff.).
    20. See D. Wildung, 'Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige im Bewusstsein ihrer Nach-
welt I', *MÄS* 17, Berlin, 1969, pp. 21ff., 217ff.

runs the risk of forgetting the fact that our progress basically depends on such research.

As an Egyptologist I can not refrain from giving some detailed remarks, from which, however, methodological points can be drawn.

The vignette adjoining that of 161 in Doc. 1 is interpreted as 'a combined (albeit abridged) illustration for BD 151A, 155, and 156'. The abridgement, however, only concerns chapter 151 (NB: the accompanying text is that of 151B), not 156 and 155 (this is the order of texts and vignettes in Doc. 1). In his note 8 the author refers to 'the complete picture of 151A' in the beginning of the papyrus (Ratié, *op. cit.*, pl. I-III). In this picture, however, we find only two of the four figures of the 'summary' in the illustration discussed (the Djed and the jackal/Anubis). For a complete picture we have to look at PapBM 10010 (= Naville, *op. cit.*, T. CLXXIII): here we recognize all the four protecting symbols of the sides of the sarcophagus, which have entered Doc. 1 as a sort of 'summary' of the comprehensive scene of the sarcophagus-room in the tomb. The selection of one of the many protecting quartets is well understandable as a counterpart to the adjacent Thoth-quartet illustrating chapter 161 (which is also one of many possible quartets). The number four symbolizes the cosmic totality, which — according to the macrocosmos-microcosmos ideology — is represented by the four walls of the sarcophagus-room and reflected on the four walls of the sarcophagus itself. Especially categories B and C in the author's inventory, being three-dimensional, help us to read the two-dimensional vignettes of the papyri. Thus, the shrine of Tutanchamon (Doc. 8) provides a good illustration of the important fact that even the comprehensive picture to 151A in PapBM 10010 (referred to above) is not complete: Isis and Nephthys are both connected as well with the east as with the west; together with the four Horus children appears another divine quartet, and so on.

The important lesson to learn from this observation is the following: Even if the vignettes of the papyri are, at least sometimes, more reliable than the accompanying texts, they only give a limited approach to the actual ceremony. What is 'canonic' are the basic funerary ceremonies, in the view of the ancient Egyptian; the texts and the vignettes in the Books of the Dead give merely selections of important moments. In the current state of research we know very little about the principles for these more or less different selections. Careful collection and detailed

registration of the immense materials concerned could give us some clues to understanding these principles.

One detail ought to be underlined. The mention of Kebehsenuf in 161 is, as far as I know, the only instance in the Book of the Dead where he appears alone (elsewhere — one can find 10 cases[21] — he is always accompanying the other three Horus children). In 151A, however, his importance according to the text seems to surpass that of his brothers. His connection with the West, the most important cardinal point in the funerary context, and his special care of the mummy (*s3ḥ*), mentioned in 161, could help us to explain why he — and not one of the others — appears alone here. As the concluding member of the quartet he can, however, also stand for the whole quartet.

Commentary   by Carl-Martin Edsman

'In India, from the oldest times, up till the present day, the spoken word, and not writing, has been the basis of the whole of the literary and scientific activity', M. Winternitz emphasizes in his classical *History of Indian Literature* (Engl. transl. 1927-33, I, 33). Mainly with the help of this solid scholar I should like to draw the attention of this Study Conference to some other book religions than those treated in the two opening lectures and, with reference to the subject of the 1st session, concentrate on the pre-literate stages. As further both folklorists and anthropologists are well represented among the hosts and the members of the Conference they may perhaps also be interested in the interrelation between their methods and those of biblical scholarship, not always known among non-exegetes. I leave phenomenological-comparative and terminological questions aside as well as the history of the formation of any single canon. The last restriction also excludes a description I had originally intended to give of how a canon is established in our own days, namely the three sacred books of one of the older Japanese 'New Religions', Tenrikyo.

The oral teaching of the *guru*, the spiritual leader, is not the source

21. See P. Barguet, *op. cit.*, the index p. 290 (s. v. Qebehsenouf).

of all learning, in ancient and modern India alone. This method has to a certain extent survived also in the university teaching of Western Europe. A Swedish undergraduate in Berlin and Paris just before the Second World War made the following remark, when he observed how his foreign fellow-students spent their days listening to the lectures of their professors and were busy in the evenings rewriting and copying their notes: 'In our country we have discovered the existence of the art of printing and read books instead of hearing lectures, and so we save a lot of time.' The latest, supposedly progressive, university reforms in Sweden have in fact reintroduced the pre-Gutenberg times and made such a statement impossible.

There are at least two answers to the question why ancient India did not make use of the art of writing, already well known at that time. Certainly the priests were interested in the very profitable privilege of teaching the higher castes: 'If a Shudra hears the Veda, his ears shall be stopped with molten tin or lac, if he repeats the sacred texts, his tongue shall be cut out, if he stores them in his memory, his body shall be struck in two', it says in an old law-book (I, 35f.). But conservatism in religious matters has also contributed to the preservation of the old method of oral transmission of the texts, well established before the Indians learnt the new art of writing. So the unique prestige of the teacher is very understandable: he is equal to or superior to the physical father of the pupil, he is regarded as an image of the god Brahman, whose heaven is open to the faithful disciple. This high position of the guru finally depends on his transmission of a holy tradition. The sacred texts required, moreover, quite a different method of learning from the secular ones. 'Word for word, with careful avoidance of every error in pronunciation, in accent, in the manners of recitation, the pupil had to repeat them after the teacher and impress them on his memory' (I, 37). The result of this accuracy was that the correctness of the texts was better guaranteed by oral transmission than by written manuscripts, which, incidentally, only date from later times, most of them from the last few centuries (I, 38 ff.).

The Veda ('knowledge') is, in contradistinction to a single work such as the Muslim Koran or a definitive collection of books such as the Christian Bible and the Buddhist Tipitaka, a whole literature. It consists of hymns, prayers, incantations, benedictions, sacrificial formulas and litanies, commentaries on sacrifice and philosophical meditations on

God and man. It has been from the oldest times considered as divine revelation and designated as *shruti* ('hearing'), 'breathed out' by the God Brahman, and 'visioned' only by the ancient seers. Nor do the opponents of Brahmanic religion, the Buddhists, deny the divine origin of the Veda. But they accuse the Brahmans of falsifying the texts, which therefore in their present form are full of errors (I, 52 ff.).

The oral transmission of the texts explains two opposing impressions gained by the Western reader from the later written and printed manuscripts: some commentaries contain indeed many repetitions, but at the same time the sentences may be so short and aphoristic, that they now need completions to be understandable (I, 270 f.; cf. 203). Perhaps one might compare the last characteristic with the peculiarity of university lecture-notes in our days: only the writer himself can comprehend them, as long as the oral presentation remains in his memory; when it is lost, they are incomprehensible to him too. As a matter of fact, Vedic texts were also written down when they were no longer understood (I, 302).

With Buddhist sacred writings we are on firmer historical ground than in the case of the almost prehistoric Vedic literature. The preaching of the Buddha falls into the decades before and after 500 B.C. His speeches and sayings have been faithfully preserved in the oral tradition of his disciples, since Gotama himself did not write down his words. What the Pāli canon of the Buddhists puts into the mouth of Buddha might in some famous cases really be original utterances, especially the metrical verse aphorisms (*gāthā*) with their stable form (II, 1 ff.; cf. II, 117).

According to Buddhist tradition a canon was established by three councils, the first immediately after the death of the Buddha, the second a hundred years afterwards and the third at the time of the famous king Ashoka about 250 B.C. The learned monk Tissa Moggaliputta, who organized the last one, which is historically the best testified and most important, sent his pupil Mahinda, the younger brother or son of Ashoka, as a missionary to Ceylon. He brought with him the Buddhist texts, which, according to the Ceylon chroniclers were first transmitted orally and two hundred years later written down (II, 4-8).

It is significant that no manuscripts of sacred books are mentioned in the Buddhist canon, although the art of writing was well-known at that time and regarded as a distinguished branch of learning. If we nowadays

call a person well-read, the corresponding attribute of the Buddhist brethren was 'rich in hearing'. The memory of the monks played the same role in the first four hundred years of Buddhist history as later — as also in the history of Christianity — the monastic libraries. Still living oral tradition could also be incorporated into already existing scriptures (II, 185), and, like written texts, it could inspire artists (II, 254).

The coexistence of oral and written tradition is confirmed by the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien, who travelled in North India at the beginning of the 5th century A.D. He found the first 'basket of the discipline of the order' (Vinayapitaka) of the Buddhist canon only in oral transmission, without any manuscripts, until he came to Pātaliputra, where a Mahāyāna monastery possessed a copy of the Vinaya (II, 8). To warrant the continuation of the doctrine and the rules of the order the monks constantly had to memorize, recite and expound the different texts. They got special epithets according to their concentration on different parts of the canon and on different practical duties (II, 11, 17). One of the dangers which threaten the existence of Buddhism in the future, says a recurring prophecy, is that the monks will not any longer be interested in hearing and learning (*not*: reading!) the texts (II, 76 f.). There are also instructions to prevent such a development. If, for instance, the important confession formula, which must be regularly recited in the assembly, is in danger of being forgotten, the ancient rule prescribes: 'From amongst those monks one monk shall without delay be sent off to the neighbouring community. To him shall be said: Go brother, and when you have memorized the confession formula, the full one or the abridged one, then return to us.'

A peculiarity belonging to Buddhist scriptures, namely the many repetitions, is also explained by their oral origin. If a Westerner hears that the New Testament parable of the Prodigal Son has got a striking parallel in Buddhism, he is disappointed when he goes to the Buddhist version, which is very prolix. But in this and other cases the intention of the Eastern storyteller was a double one: firstly to help the memory of the listener, and secondly to obtain a rhetorical effect. The late Danish indologist P. Tuxen has compared the impression which the recitation of the repetitions brings about on the ears of a Buddhist audience with the delight which the recurring motifs in the musical compositions of Bach or Wagner gives to a Western concert hall public (II, 68).

Every folklorist reader of H. Gunkel's famous commentary on Genesis, published in 1901, must say to himself: This sounds quite modern. The different types of oral tradition (*Gattungen*) correspond to, for instance, the *Einfache Formen* by Jolles. The emphasis on the 'situation in life' (*Sitz im Leben*), to which the special kind of story belongs, can be compared with the importance laid on the function of myth by Malinowsky. Where did Gunkel get his points of view from, so revolutionary in Old Testament scholarship? One of his pupils, W. Baumgartner, has given the answer in his foreword to a facsimile edition of Gunkel's Genesis commentary published in 1964 and 1966. There he clearly traces the germanistic (E. Schmidt), ethnological (W. Wundt) and folkloristic (A. Wuttke, K. Bücher, O. Böckel) inspiration of his master.

The Uppsala Orientalist H. S. Nyberg also underlined the significance of oral transmission in his *Studien zum Hoseabuche* (1935) and initiated a lively discussion on this subject among Nordic scholars. One of them, the late Norwegian O. T. nestor S. Mowinckel, who himself was a pupil of Gunkel's at Giessen, has given a balanced synthesis of the whole question in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (s. v. 'Tradition, Oral', 1962). As evidence of the reliability of oral tradition compared with written documents, he points to old Norwegian family traditions. The bibliography includes, among other works, A. Olrik, 'Epische Gesetze der Volksdichtung' (*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 51, 1909); H. Ellekilde (ed.), *Nogle grundsaetninger for sagnforskning* (1921); K. Liestøl, *Norske aettesogor* (1922); Idem, *The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas* (1930); K. Krohn, *Die folkloristische Arbeitsmethode* (1926).

One of the last contributions to the combination of exegetical and folkloristic methods comes from a countryman of Mowinckel's, Th. Boman, *Die Jesusüberlieferung im Licht der neueren Volkskunde* (1967). The last paper I have seen on the same subject is written by P. Gaechter, 'Die urchristliche Überlieferung verglichen mit der irischen Gedächtniskultur' (*Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 95, 1973). Cf. also A. Schoors, *I am God Your Savior. A Form-Critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. XL-LV* (Supplement to *Vetus Testamentum*, 24), Leiden 1973. In his monograph *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, transl. by H. M. Wright (1965, 1969), J. Vansina takes up the relation of oral tradition to written history, and makes the following remark: 'Few historians have gone into the methodological problems

raised by oral tradition'. This statement does not apply so much to Biblical scholars; and among others their work on this field seems to be a good legitimation of the subject of this session.

Discussion   Chairman: Th. P. van Baaren

The first session was opened by the chairman of the conference as a whole, Lauri Honko, who extended a welcome on behalf of the Organizing Committee to all of the participants. Replying, the chairman of the first session, Th. P. van Baaren, thanked the Organizing Committee for their work in arranging the conference, and then invited the first speaker, Helmer Ringgren, to present his paper.

Ringgren began by identifying two problems, namely the formation, and function, of a religious canon. He drew a distinction between canons which had emerged gradually, such as the Jewish and Christian, and those written with the express purpose of creating a canon, such as the Qurʾan or the Book of Mormon. In addition, he pointed to the existence of a third type, not dealt with in his paper, such as the Sumerian religious literature or the Egyptian Book of the Dead, where a selection, maybe involving redaction and even recomposition, is carried out (e. g. at the time when the language in question ceases to be spoken) in order to establish a normative text. Turning to the question of function, he suggested that a canon could be defined as having religious authority, and also as being a definitive text, which nothing may be added to or taken away from. It might have several uses: as the correct ritual text in liturgical use; as containing rules for the correct behaviour of the believers; or as the basis for the establishment of true doctrine. The last two functions often occurred together. Finally, he read the closing paragraph of his paper, in which he emphasized the possibility of change in the use of a canon, and urged the desirability of the phenomenological study of these uses.

The second speaker was M. Heerma van Voss, who wished first to explain how it came about that his paper mentioned neither 'canon' nor 'book religion', the two topics of the first session: the paper had originally been written with session 1c, Literary Source Criticism, in

mind, and had subsequently been transferred to 1A. Hence he would like to add a commentary to the paper, with reference to the question of canons and book religions.

It was difficult to speak of a canon in the case of ancient Egypt: the Pyramid Texts, the Coffin Texts, and finally in chronological order the Book of the Dead, showed a progressive selection and fixing of texts; yet even in Ptolemaic times, c. 300 B. C., it was only possible to state that the texts in the Book of the Dead were more or less fixed; the Book of the Dead was still perhaps in the stage preceding a canon proper. Nevertheless, he thought it possible to speak (as Helmer Ringgren had done) of Egyptian religion as a book religion, even if not in the usual sense of the term. Turning then to his paper, he said that too often in scholarly literature the Book of the Dead was identified with the papyri alone, to the exclusion of other texts and of the important 'vignettes', i. e. pictures; whereas in fact both the vignettes and the wall pictures from the tombs could make an important contribution to the under-standing of the text. His paper was intended to illustrate this point, taking spell 161 from the Book of the Dead as a model, and he supplemented this by showing and commenting in detail on some slides of Document 2, the Cleveland papyrus, especially since it was not repro-duced in the available literature. What emerged from a study of the non-papyrus material was that false conclusions could easily be drawn on the basis of the papyri in isolation: e. g. that in this spell 161, the only gods who were important were Thoth and one of the sons of Horus, whereas the other materials clearly indicated that all of Horus' children were involved. It was therefore highly misleading to limit the sources studied to the papyri.

The first commentator to speak about the two papers was Jan Berg-man. Picking out some points from his commentary for special em-phasis, he said that one should not confine the consideration of oral tradition to preliterate phases, since it was quite possible for written and oral traditions to coexist, with some material being transmitted orally and some by scriptures. He then went on to add an extra point about the formation of a canon, with special reference to the Vedas: i. e. that they had not been defined as canonical by any special councils, etc., as was the case in some other religions; nor could this be seen as a difference between East and West, since in the case of Buddhism 'canonization' had in fact taken place. This distinction in canon for-

mation should also be borne in mind when considering the question of function.

Reading for the most part from his prepared text, Bergman also however added an extra point about the distinction frequently made between 'book religions' and 'cult religions', arguing that in most cases 'book religions' were 'cult religions' as well, involving the liturgical use of their books within their cults. The final point in his paper, he said, was intended for M. Heerma van Voss, as from one Egyptologist to another: he agreed entirely on the inadequacy of restricting consideration to the written papyri, but would like to widen the perspective even further, so as also to include some of the three-dimensional pictures on the coffins.

The second commentator to speak was Carl-Martin Edsman, who remarked on the applicability of the considerations about written and oral transmission to the delivery of conference papers. His own contribution, he said, was more of a supplement than a commentary, and relied on Winternitz' work to emphasize the coexistence of oral and written traditions, e. g. in Hinduism and Buddhism. His second point was to emphasize the importance of an interdisciplinary understanding of comparative religion, especially in the cooperation between the humanities and theology. This could be illustrated by the important work being done on Old Testament and New Testament studies by means of the methodology and terminology of folklore studies. In addition to Gunkel and Mowinckel, who were mentioned among others in his paper, he would also like to refer to the Norwegian scholar Thorlief Boman's monograph, *Die Jesusüberlieferung im Licht der neueren Volkskunde* (1967).

He went on to present an illustration which reasons of space had excluded from his paper, about one of the older new Japanese religions, Tenrikyo, where it was possible to study the actual process of formation of a canon in progress. Tenrikyo had originated in 1837, when an itinerary priest had come to carry out a ritual to cure a woman, Miki Nakayama, her husband Zembei, and their son Shuji, of sudden attacks of pain. During the ritual, Miki, who had been acting as the medium, suddenly went into a trance, in which she spoke as follows: 'I am the True and Original God. I have been predestined to reside here. I have descended from Heaven to save all human beings, and I want to take Miki as the Shrine of God, and the mediatrix between God and men'

(H. Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan*, 1963, p. 34). According to the historians of Tenrikyo, Miki had 'endeavoured to teach them by Her words, by Her writings, and by Her life, always putting Herself in the place of others, and performed wonders before their eyes, so that She might convince them of the authenticity of Her being His Temple' (*A Short History of Tenrikyo*, 1958, p. 3); but she had then also written down the revelations she had received in a book called *Ofudesaki*, i. e. 'The tip of the writing brush' (C. B. Offner and H. van Straelen, *Modern Japanese Religions*, 1963, p. 58). This book was deliberately written in poetry, partly in order to assist memorization, and using the relatively simple 99-character phonetic Japanese alphabet (supplemented by a few Chinese signs); but it also used many metaphors, which the Tenrikyo authorities stress are not always easily explained. In Miki's original manuscript (preserved at Tenji), the legitimation of the book is as follows: 'What I have spoken hitherto was forgotten by you, so I have decided to commit it to writing by the tip of Her pen' (*A Short History*, pp. 53ff., 5).

The chairman then invited the speakers to reply to the commentators, adding what he called the 'ritual request' to keep the answers short. Ringgren declined; Heerma van Voss wished only to say, in reply to Bergman, that while he agreed on the importance of the Egyptian tomb figures, in the case of spell 161 they had not been of assistance; and that in some cases (e. g. Tutenkhamun's tomb) the sculptors had taken artistic licence to include the figures of gods who definitely did not belong there. Otherwise he was in agreement with the points raised in the commentary.

Before opening the discussion to the floor, the chairman interpolated the observation (which he thought had largely been overlooked) that it was possible to study the contemporary process of canon formation in the many small religions continually springing up all over the world. The first speaker from the floor was Zwi Werblowsky, who stressed the distinction between the emergence of sacred scripture or literature, and the conscious or semi-conscious process of canonization. The texts in question might have been in existence for a long time before the latter process took place: it was a response to a new historical situation, and it necessitated the formulation of criteria for the selection of the canon, which in turn modified the notion of holy scripture. Many canonical texts clearly were definitely literary compositions — e. g. the

Qurᵓan, the Book of Mormon, and many late Mahāyāna Buddhist Sutras — in contrast to the crystallization of oral traditions, e. g. of what the Founder had said. He suggested that one should also distinguish between the concepts of sacred scriptures, on the one hand, and canonical scriptures on the other (a point reverted to later by Ninian Smart). It would have been valuable to look at the 'sacred' (in quotation marks) books of the Chinese tradition: Confucius, etc.; authoritative works, whose 'sacredness' or 'canonicity' were very different from those of the traditions discussed. He recalled that Max Weber had specifically used the term 'book religion' of the Chinese tradition. Similarly, picking up van Baaren's remark, he suggested (not facetiously) that comparative religion also ought to look at the current process of formation of secular canons, e. g. the works of Chairman Mao. Finally, he turned to the question of the use of canonical scriptures as a locus on which to anchor authority. From a sociological point of view, the question how authority was legitimated was a very important one, and he suggested that this use of the sacred literature (which often resembled an inkblot test, in that anything could be projected onto it) was a far more significant question than that of the liturgical use of canonical literature in rituals, for instance.

G. C. Oosthuizen reported the phenomenon of religious movements in Africa in which tremendous authority was attributed to the canonical literature, which was however kept locked up by the prophets, so that the people in the movement had never read it.

Hans-J. Klimkeit questioned the definition of the word 'canonized'. Two of the criteria which had been mentioned were divine authority, and being a criterion for religious doctrine or behaviour; but it seemed to him that these could not be applied to all religions, e. g. Mahāyāna Buddhism, where it was in any case difficult to say which texts were canonical and which were apocryphal. He suggested that comparative religion still needed to arrive at a definition of the canonical which would be applicable to all religions. Replying, Carl-Martin Edsman said that for southern Buddhism, this question had been solved: the Council of 54-56 had recited, and thus definitively laid down, the canon. Klimkeit said that the problem arose more in the case of Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially in Tibet. Despite the real differences between the Tandjur/Bstan-hgyur and the Kandjur/Bkah-hgyur, the Tibetan canon was vast, and included virtually everything written which could

have significance for Mahāyāna Buddhism. Ringgren suggested that the concept of 'authoritative literature' varied between religions, and that phenomenology should take this into account.

The next contribution was by Carsten Colpe, who said that the descriptions and investigations of the formation and functions of canons presented so far had been good, but he suggested that at a conference devoted to problems of methodology this was not adequate. Methodology would require the setting up of some general rules, the *logos* of the method; and it should also be applicable to other things besides the canon. He turned for an analogy to classical scholarship, which illustrated the secular yearning for an authoritative text; there might be 20 or 30 editions of a particular author, each one changing a word here and there, although this might not add anything to our understanding of the author beyond what had been known 100 years ago. Maybe this secular analogy suggested a psychological connection between the aim of an authoritative text, as something that could be leant on, in a secular context and in religion.

Ringgren disagreed. He did not think that the student of a classical text such as Plato or Aristotle or Livy would use this text in order to establish a doctrine or correct behaviour. Such a text ought to be 'authoritative', but would not be used in the same way as that of a religious canon. He also argued that the study of religious canons did not require a specific methodology, but used the methods of history, literary history, literary criticism, sociology (as Werblowsky had suggested), and so forth. Bergman countered, however, by pointing out that the role of authors such as Homer was sometimes very like that of a religious canon: the Gnostics, for example, while they did not quote from Aeschylus, did treat quotations from Homer, Hesiod, etc., in very much the same way as they treated quotations from the Old and New Testament prophets.

Colpe agreed that there was an important difference between the authority an editor was looking for and the authority a believer was looking for. The first point he was thinking of, however, was that the editor of a text could become so personally committed to 'his' text, and to its authoritativeness, that it could serve as a locus for rules of personal behaviour and for a *Weltanschauung*; and secondly, a good philologist who had edited a text would insist on rejecting interpretations or readings based on words or motifs not strongly stressed in the

text (sometimes to the embarrassment of historians of religion). In this way, it seemed to him, the 'authority' of secular and of religious texts was partly analogous, e. g. in its function of guaranteeing a security of conscience (religious or non-religious).

Ninian Smart reverted to Werblowsky's distinction between sacred and canonistic authoritativeness, which he thought had been implicit in the papers, but had been brought out much more clearly by Werblowsky. The distinction would have methodological implications; and it raised the question whether sacredness or canonicity could exist without each other. He thought it could. There was no doubt about the possibility of non-canonical sacred texts, which might be quite non-authoritative, with reference to both belief and practice. It was on the other hand difficult to see how a canonical text could avoid being authoritative: authoritativeness and canonicity were closely related concepts. He compared this to the concept of the guru. In the pure form of the 'guru syndrome', the guru's authority was total: he must be believed, no matter what he said. From a theological point of view, therefore, the question of canonicity was one of authoritativeness in religion: and it posed the question why a written source of authority might be preferred to other forms of authority, institutionalized or non-institutionalized.

The chairman offered a summary of the main points which had been put so far. It was clear, firstly, that texts should be differentiated from each other, e. g. as (1) canonical, (2) authoritative, and (3) other sacred texts, or rather, with decreasing authoritative value (reading for edification, etc.); and secondly, the important question was why in some religions a written text should be used, and in others an oral transmission or some other form.

The concept of 'canonicity' was questioned at a fundamental level by Michael Pye; he stressed that it was a term which had originated in one specific culture, and which comparative religionists were now attempting to apply more generally, although it carried overtones quite inapplicable in other cultures. He referred to the terms used in Buddhism, and in China and Japan (*sutra, ching,* and *kyō*), which denoted both the extended 'canon' of Mahāyāna, and also the Confucian 'canon'; and he wondered how the concept would have developed if comparative religionists had started from 'ching' instead of from 'canon'. The methodological problem involved was: how could a concept be developed

for use in comparative studies which would be free from the initial definitions implicit in one culture?

Van Baaren suggested that since it was necessary to make use of words, it was better to start from those one was familiar with, than to borrow those from another culture (which one usually misunderstood). This point was followed up by Werblowsky, who compared the situation where one takes a familiar word from one's own culture and gradually 'polishes it up', with that where one might borrow a loanword and only discover after thirty years of hard scientific work how wrong one's understanding of it had been. As long as people did not speak an ad hoc special scientific metalanguage, they must start from the cultural limitations of their existing languages. He suggested that doing comparative religion was (to quote Mussolini) 'vivere pericolosamente', and that one constantly had to stick one's neck out. While it might be misleading to try to apply the Christian term 'canon' to Mahayana Buddhism, this was probably preferable to the way in which terms such as 'mana' and 'tabu' had been appropriated and misused. There were methodological dangers, however one acquired one's terminology, but they seemed to be less by lopping off the misleading associations from a term from one's own tradition than by starting with a completely unknown term from another tradition.

Ugo Bianchi agreed with Pye. What was important, he believed, was to be conscious. Comparative religionists did not have the right to start from definitions (not even comparative definitions), nor to proceed by deductive procedures. In the question of religious terminology, he felt that it was justified to proceed dialectically between what was known (i. e. scientifically experienced), and that which needed to be clarified by means of philologically- and historically-minded research.

The concept of 'inspiration' was then questioned by William Klassen. He suggested that one perhaps ought to draw a distinction between inspiration where the deity was deemed to have dictated the text directly, and where it was written by a human instrument. Christianity and Judaism differed on this point. He also questioned what the term 'canon' had really meant historically in Christianity. In the 16th or 17th centuries, it had referred to authoritativeness; but he suggested that in the 2nd century it had meant simply the 'rule of truth'. In the light of recent Gnostic findings, it seemed likely that the canonical collection had in any case been in existence earlier than had been thought; but what