

# Introduction

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It may be a happy accident that this effort of defining religion converges with the liberal demand in our time that it be kept quite separate from politics, law, and science – spaces in which varieties of power and reason articulate our distinctively modern life. The definition is at once part of a strategy (for secular liberals) of the confinement, and (for liberal Christians) of the defence of religion. (Asad 1993: 28)

I would go even further than this: the very concept of religion as such – as an entity with any distinction whatever from other human phenomena – is a function of these same processes and historical moments that generate an individualistic concept of it (in fairness, Asad 1993: 29 hints at this [1]). (William Arnal 1999: 31)

## INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM SITUATION

“A matter of power, not religion” is the title of a two-page interview with Fred Halliday (2005). Halliday, who is Montague Burton Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics (LSE) and a fellow of the British Academy, and author of books on Islam, was interviewed about the “war against terrorism” by Adam Holm of the Danish weekly political magazine *Opinion*. Halliday is an interesting writer, but here I draw attention to the implications of the title: that religion and power are distinct and separate alternatives – a matter of power, not religion. In the late seventeenth century, the Quaker William Penn (1680) pursued what in his day was the dangerous heterodox position that religion *ought to be* understood as distinct from the magistrate, with different ends and purposes, against the prevailing view of the meaning of religion at the time. Now this contentious ideological reformulation has become a matter of unquestioned assumption: what ought to be in the minds of a few seventeenth-century radicals has become the uncritically accepted assumption of what is the case. Religion [2], rather

than being one or another conflicting interpretation of Christian Truth [3], have become generic things in the world, having some problematic relationship with a distinct sphere of power called “politics”.

The logic of “A matter of power, not religion” allows in principle for the reverse: a matter of religion, not power. Whatever anyone thinks religion may be, the idea that it is not a matter of power seems counter-intuitive. Yet it follows the same logic as the ideological separation of religion and politics.

In his second question to Halliday, Holm asks “What is required to stop, or minimise, the religiously motivated terrorism that we are now witnessing in parts of the west and in many places in the Arab world?” In this question, the idea of a distinct form of terrorism – *religious* terrorism – is introduced effortlessly into the discussion. This usage, which is widely dispersed throughout the media and academic publications, implies that some terrorism is religious but some is non-religious or secular. In part of his reply, Halliday underwrites this when he says, “I would not say ‘religiously motivated’ because the main issues are nationalist and anti-imperialist ones if you read the statements of Al Qaida ... the main issues are eminently understandable, even conventional, political ones”. For Halliday “religion provides a means of expressing” these conventional political motives. And in his answer to Holm’s third question about Islamic terrorists, Halliday at one point says, “it is not the religion that determines the political means ... it is the political groups of today who select and use religion”.

The essential distinction between religion and politics is embedded in this interview by both scholars. Politics is secular, not religious: “terrorism ... is a product of modern, secular, politics”, Halliday asserts. “It has long had no relation to religion at all.” And he gives as examples of secular (non-religious) political terrorism Palestinian Marxist-Leninists of the 1970s, Kurdish far-left-wing fighters, Tamil Tigers and Peruvians in Sendero Luminoso.

An interview is not the same as an academic paper, yet these published usages are unsurprising since they are part of our common discourse and trip off the tongue effortlessly. They seem entirely natural to us. The assumption, never questioned in this discussion between two distinguished writers, that religion is not about power or politics, and when it becomes so then something is wrong, reflects a wider media and academic discourse about religion in which “it” is defined as essentially distinct from the secular, and thus as having a problematic relationship to it. The implication is that religion is essentially non-political, and politics is essentially non-religious.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1962; 1983 [4]), is rightly famous for his attempt to critique the reification of religions, but as I have argued elsewhere (2000; 2003: 27), he was never able consistently to purge his own writing of essentializing usages (see Fitzgerald 2000: 43–8). For example, in the introduction to his *The Meaning and End of Religion* he writes, “Yet religion itself continues, and in many parts of the world appears to be resurgent” ([1962] 1978 [5]). Writers on the subject “religion” manage to blow life into a category as though it were an autonomous reality in the world, and often take its distinction from “politics” as both a fact and a value. It simultaneously *is* the case and *ought to be* the case. In his comments on the book *The Desecularization of the World* (1999), edited by Peter Berger, Robert Wuthnow of Princeton University says:

The myth that religion has become irrelevant dies hard – especially among university faculty who consider themselves too enlightened to be bothered with religion.

The essays in this provocative volume prove that religion has not only survived; it is flourishing. From Peru to Guatemala, from China to the Sudan, and from barrios in Los Angeles to temples in New York City, we see the evidence of this resurgence. And in all of these places religion is having an impact on political life. Whether we like it or not, religion must be reckoned with by any serious student of human affairs.

In these comments by Wuthnow (found on the back of the book and designed by the publisher to increase sales), and also in Berger's introduction, "religion" is spoken of as though it is a thing in the world: religion "dies hard"; religion "has not only survived, it is flourishing". Also, the separation of religion and politics as distinct domains is implicitly assumed: "religion is having an impact on political life". In most publications across the humanities, whether by historians, sociologists, anthropologists or religionists, the categories "religion" and "politics" are taken as unproblematic, as though it is self-evident what is meant by these complex, contested and ambiguous terms. They are treated as generic and ahistorical, as though their meaning and the distinction between them is a natural aspect of the world. We all know what "religion" is and we all know what "politics" is; the problem is to see how they interact and "impact" in various places around the world today.

And yet it seems obvious that there are many beliefs and practices in our own Western cultures that might normally be categorized as "secular" but that could equally be called "religious". Nationalism, for example, is a kind of worship of a transcendental imaginary entity that undercuts the supposed distinctions between religion and the secular state. Consider an image that appeared on British television recently in a news report of the inaugural address of the new president of a recently autonomous central Asian state (More4, 12 January 2006 [6]). We saw him finishing his solemnly delivered address; he removed his right hand from the sacred book (it could have been the Koran, it could have been the Bible, it could have been the Constitution), dropped to one knee, and with bowed head reverently gathered up the folds of the national flag and kissed it. Is this not a form of spiritual communion: a public commitment to a transcendental form of life?

Mark Juergensmeyer (1993; 2000) might be tempted to agree. At one point in his provocatively titled *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (1993) he argues that secular nationalism and religion are equivalent in terms of both structure and function within their respective contexts. For example, one characteristic that they share is that:

>They both serve the ethical function of providing an overarching framework of moral order, a framework that commands ultimate loyalty from those who subscribe to it ... For this reason I believe the line between secular nationalism and religion has always been quite thin. Both are expressions of faith, both involve an identity with and a loyalty to a large community, and both insist on the ultimate moral legitimacy of the authority vested in the community. (1993: 16)

Unfortunately he then proceeds to discuss a whole range of different kinds of movement in the world by placing them uncritically into two large conflicting boxes, the religions and the seculars, the religions and the non-religions, claiming to be able to make a significant analytical distinction between religious and secular nationalisms, for example, or

religious and secular terrorisms, or religious and secular ideologies. The result is analytical confusion (see Fitzgerald, 2000: 106–18 for a detailed analysis). When a highly perceptive scholar of Juergensmeyer’s standing grasps such a critical point and then backs away from it, reverting to the discourse on the essentialized religion–secular dichotomy, one is surely justified in trying to identify unacknowledged and indirect motives and interests that may be driving this entrenched discourse that pervades public rhetoric.

Nationalism is one example. But there are others. In his book *Holy Terrors* (2003), Bruce Lincoln points out that the chief actors in the English, American and French revolutions “saw such doctrines as the rights of man, popular sovereignty, and the social contract as no less sacred – in fact, much more so – than the divine right of kings”, and he goes on to quote Christopher Dawson that the revolutionaries in France “dreamt of a spiritual republic based on moral foundations” (quoted in Lincoln 2003: 87). And in a footnote he points out that the secular ideologies of Marxism, anarchism and psycho-analysis possess powerful mythic, ritual, and soteriological dimensions, whatever their position towards ‘religion’ per se” [7] (*ibid.*: 129n10). Unfortunately the expression “religion per se” is one of the indications that Lincoln cannot follow this important insight about the so-called secular foundations of the modern state through to any satisfactory conclusion, because the overall intention of much of this and other books he has written is to embed the religion–secular dichotomy – into an ahistorical transcendentalism of its own.

For one thing Lincoln never questions the status in this regard of the ideology of liberal capitalism, which finances our scholarly English-language productions and makes ideologically hegemonic the belief in Euro-American standards of scholarly objectivity. That Lincoln’s intention is more in the direction of essentializing and naturalizing the religion–secular dichotomy can be seen from something he says near the beginning of the book, where he indicates that he is still searching for “the nature of religion”, as though religion has a nature, as when he writes in the preface: “This book represents my attempt to think through the nature of religion, to identify its core components (discourse, practice, community, institution), and to specify its historically changing relation to other aspects of culture (particularly the ethical, aesthetic, and political)” (2003: ix). Why should we assume that religion has a nature distinct from the aesthetic, the ethical or the political? Do all these categories refer to things with natures? If discourse, practice, community and institution are what constitute the core components of the nature of religion (its essence), how does religion differ from secular history, or from secular politics, or from secular anything you like? Do they not all have discourse, practice, community and institution? We come back to this point, because Lincoln claims quite explicitly in his “Theses on Method” (1996: 225–7) to be able to specify the essential differences between religion and the secular, but it is an illusion generated by the mystifying effects of his own brand of transcendentalism.

One finds the assumption of an essential difference between “religion” and “the secular” embedded in the writing of perhaps the majority of scholars in religious studies and more widely.<sup>1</sup>

But in the English-language scholarly rhetorics cited above, there are implications that may not translate well into Arabic (see Chapter 9), or Japanese (see Chapter 4), or Tamil (see Chapter 6), or indeed into many non-European languages. In typical English-language press reportage, some imams might be described as “genuine religious leaders” whereas others are *really* “political” and therefore by implication not genuine, but only pretend-

ing to be “religious”; in Halliday’s terms religion is used by people whose real motives are political: “it is the political groups of today who select and use religion”. This kind of reporting shows that (a) it is already assumed that religion and politics are distinct, mutually exclusive categories not only in the English language but also in the minds of people who speak in Arabic (or Urdu, Persian, Japanese, Chinese, Tamil and so on); or, if it is not in their minds, then it should be; and (b) it is assumed that imams are “religious”, and are therefore not genuine if they are involved in “politics”. But if the imam does not make the same assumption, what kind of communication or miscommunication may be occurring? The essays in this book represent attempts to unravel the illusions generated by these categories to show how they operate and how they originate in colonial or colonial-related situations.

#### BACKGROUND TO THE PRODUCTION OF THIS BOOK

This book grew out of a conference, “The Religion–Secular Dichotomy: Historical Formations in Colonial Contexts”, held by the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Stirling in July 2003. The general theoretical concern was with the ideological function of the privatization of religion and its separation from politics and other forms of secular discourse, with especial reference to the dominance of Western capitalism and the colonial relationship. One of the central aims was to theorize the religion–secular dichotomy from both the imperial centre and as many of its peripheries as possible, given the expertise available.<sup>2</sup> As with “religion” and “politics”, so with imperial centre and colonial periphery, it is the *relationship* between categories that is fundamental. Only in this way can we question the assumption of dominance in this formulation.

The theoretical assumptions out of which the idea for the conference grew can be summarized in the following generalizations. It should be stressed that these are not theses to be promulgated so much as generalizations that we hope the papers in this book go some way towards substantiating:

1. An initial analytical distinction must be made between: (a) religion as a category in general uncritical use for talking about what is assumed unproblematically to be found in the world, namely, religions, religious traditions and religious experiences; and (b) “religion” as an English-language category in our own and other peoples’ actual usages that we find to be problematic and that therefore needs critical analysis in the different texts and contexts of its use. For us the dominant context, and the one least attended to with the exception of a few writers mentioned earlier (such as Talal Asad [1993] and David Chidester [1996]) is the colonial one.
2. The concept of “a religion” and its pluralization “religions” is a modern category, has a specific set of historical conditions for its emergence, most clearly and unambiguously in the second half of the seventeenth century (although see Chapter 11), and is a fundamental part of modern Western ideology. Various important consequences flow from this. One would be that to talk about medieval Christianity as “a religion” would therefore make no sense, or at least be a distortion suggesting a lack of historical awareness. Even when Samuel Purchas was talking about the religions of the

world in the early seventeenth century, he would not have thought of Christianity as one example of a generic type (Purchas [1613] 1625 [8]).

3. Religion did not emerge alone, but in conjunction with other categories, one of them being “the secular” (non-religion). The conceptualization of “religion” and “religions” in the modern sense of private faith, or the related sense of a personal adherence to a soteriological doctrine of God, was needed for the representation of the world as a secular, neutral, factual, comprehensively quantifiable realm whose natural laws can be discovered by scientific rationality, and whose central human activity is a distinct “non-religious” sphere or domain called “politics” or “political economy”. Although the modern meaning of “secular” as “non-religious” did not emerge clearly in actual usage until well into the nineteenth century, it is tacitly present in the seventeenth-century developments in the idea of scientific knowledge as authorized by natural human processes in contradistinction to revelation, and in a new idea of the polity, the magistracy, indicated by a new word “politics” (also late seventeenth century) conceived as a distinct arena of rational *non-religious* activity. The further idea of political economy, and from this of economics as a distinct sphere, developed in the second half of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. To read a distinction between “religious” and “secular” – in the sense of “non-religious” – spheres into earlier European formations, or into formations articulated in non-European languages, is to muddy the waters before immersing in them, that is to say is to commit a category mistake.
4. An implication of this is that the assumption that “religion” or “religions” can be researched, analysed and compared scientifically as though they are species of a genus is an illusion created by the elision of the function of “religion” in the construction of “the secular”, and in the construction of so-called non-religious domains such as politics and economics. In this book we propose the necessity of this dichotomy in conceptualizing capitalist markets as universally rational but obscured by the irrational practices of natives and savages in the non Euro-American world. But we do not claim that the construction of capitalist markets was the only motive for colonization. It may be that no one, probably not even Adam Smith, knew they were constructing capitalist markets until Marx and other nineteenth-century theorists told them so. As part of the enlightenment project the classification of “religions” and “religious phenomena” was also driven by the desire to dominate the world through the imposition of Euro-American knowledge. To claim that capitalism was the fundamental driving force risks assuming that economic motivation could precede the very idea of “economics”, which was itself a result of this process. The more subtle suggestion must be that the processes of colonialism were profoundly important both in explaining the changes in the categorical structures of European consciousness and in creating a dominant space for “politics” and “economics” conceivable as distinct arenas of human action.
5. There is no assumption here that the idea of a world divided between religion and non-religion was a simple act of Euro-American imposition on subordinated peoples. Although the general implication of the research and argumentation in this book is consistent with Edward Said’s thesis in *Orientalism* (1978), it would also want to accommodate the arguments of postcolonial critics of Said, who have suggested that his argument focuses too exclusively on what the imperial powers did and gave

to colonized societies, but argue, for example, that subaltern peoples appropriated hegemonic colonial discourse for their own ends in the struggle for freedom (see Chatterjee 1986; 1995; Guha & Spivak 1988; Breckenridge & Veer 1993; King 1999). Charles Hallisey (1995) has used the term “intercultural mimesis” to refer to this kind of process.

It follows from these general principles that the religion–secular distinction is a historically unstable product, put together by complex and contested forces, and is not a static binary with two simple and unchanging meanings. It seems obvious – especially after reading the essays in this book – that what constitutes “religion” and what constitutes “the secular” is highly contested and requires historiographical and ethnographic deconstruction. Indeed a central point of this book is that when contemporary sociologists and historians talk about religion and secularization, or the process of secularization, or the separation of religion and politics, or the separation of church and state, they tend to talk as though the meanings of these terms is self-evident, and they refer relatively unproblematically to things or processes that actually exist in the world, and by implication have always existed, at certain times in history being covered up and disguised by the dominance of one domain or the other, but essentially pre-existing in various degrees of relationship with each other.

It is worth considering here that, as late as 1815, the entry on secularization in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* described it as:

the act of converting a regular person, place or benefice, into a secular one. Almost all the Cathedral churches were anciently regular, that is, the canons were to be religious; but they have been since secularized. For the secularization of a regular church, there is required the authority of the pope, that of the prince, the bishop of the place, the patron, and even the consent of the people. Religious that want to be released from their vow, obtain briefs of secularization from the pope.

(*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 5th edn, vol. XIX)

The use of the word “regular” here is the same as the use of the word “religious”. The regulars or the religious were, and still are, those who belong to special orders – the monks, nuns and friars – who had taken special vows of obedience. These orders were disbanded in England in the sixteenth century as part of the creation of the Protestant Nation State. The seculars were the priesthood who had not taken special vows. Obviously the secular and the process of secularization described here has an entirely different nuance from the modern concept of the “non-religious” as being the opposite of religion. Yet this article was written 40 years after the publication of Adam Smith’s *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* in 1776 and the posthumous publication of David Hume’s *The Natural History of Religion* in 1777<sup>3</sup> (both in Edinburgh, the city in which the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was published).

The point I am making here is that while these two authors were major contributors to what came to be called secularization, or at least to the naturalization of the emerging ideological configuration of the “non-religious” secular, the one in constructing political economy, the other in constructing generic religion, the older usages of “religious” and “secular” were still powerfully present and arguably dominant nearly half a century later.

I believe that this small piece of evidence, which indicates that profoundly different meanings are being attributed to the same word at the same historical time by different interest groups, in combination with much else, makes apparent for us today the importance of critically historicizing and deconstructing reified terminology.

Influential authors of the kind I cite and quote embed in an uncritical, taken-for-granted manner highly contentious aspects of modern ideology as though they represent the natural order of things. This rhetorical habit is not merely misleading but surely dangerous. Such a procedure, and the assumptions on which it is based, seems to constitute a category mistake of sufficiently serious implications to require explanation. For under the guise of neutral and objective description and analysis of highly volatile movements and ideologies, which spring from widespread misery and inequality in the world, such authors reproduce and reconfirm a network of assumptions as though they constitute objective descriptions about what is, rather than ideological discourses that are intentional and persuasive, in the sense that they urge us to believe in what ought to be. They are, if you like, objects of faith that, through chant and ritual repetition, have become clothed in an aura of factuality.

Categories such as religion, nation, sacred, secular, politics, economics, law and civil society are English-language ones, with very close relations in a number of other European languages, but often very distant approximations in many non-European ones. The history of these modern concepts can be traced. Most have a degree of continuity with earlier words and ideas. This superficial appearance of continuous meaning has misled historians and others into thinking that it is acceptable to talk about, say, the religion and politics of virtually any society at any time in history as though it is self-evident what is meant. This pitfall is especially easy to fall into when no actual translation into non-European languages is required. Yet even in the English language, the difference in meaning between modern and late-medieval or even early modern usages of terms such as “religion”, “secular”, “church” or “state” is profound. It is easier to notice the incommensurability of categories when translation is at stake, especially into a non-European language. The evidence is that few non-European languages contain semantic equivalents, and that the demand of colonial powers for the constitutional separation of church and state, or of religion and politics, and of the “right to freedom of religion”, has turned out to be a demand for the virtual reconstruction of the self-representations of indigenous societies in line with Western ones.

It follows that this book is concerned with the hegemony of English-language, and tacitly other European-language, categories that organize knowledge of the world in a particular way. The colonial aspect is crucial because the idea of a “secular” realm of natural reason, scientific knowledge, civil society and the nation state is inseparable from the development of constitutions, world trade and capitalist markets. These in turn have a symbiotic relationship with the development of a generic concept of “religion” and “religions” based on Protestant Christian origins but projected universally. The imperial powers, missionaries, trade organizations and other agencies have often facilitated the institutionalization of these categories into cultures and languages where they did not previously exist. It is assumed that this was not a one-way process, that is, a process from metropolis to periphery, but that the developments in Europe were partly the result of what was happening in the colonies and under the influences of overseas trade generally.



## THEORETICIANS, HISTORIANS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In this book we seek to question critically the ideological functions of the religion–secular distinction that so many scholars apparently seek to re-affirm, either consciously or unconsciously. Yet it is important to acknowledge the painstaking and exact analysis of the historically changing usages of “religion” that we are given by historians and contemporary theorists interested in the emergence of the modern category, such as W. C. Smith (1962), John Bossy (1982; 1985), Jonathan Z. Smith (1982; 1998); Peter Biller (1985), Louis Dumont (1986), Michael Taussig (1987), Fritz Staal (1989), Peter Harrison (1990), Michel Despland and Gérard Vallée (1992), Asad (1993; 2003), S. N. Balagangadhara (1994),<sup>4</sup> Bill Cavanaugh (1995; Ch. 12), Chidester (1996), Russ McCutcheon (1997), Daniel Dubuisson (1998), King (1999), Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2000), *Derek Peterson and Darren Walhof* (2002)<sup>5</sup> [9] and Tomoko Masuzawa (2005).<sup>6</sup>

One problem here is that in many of these studies of the vast field of the usages of “religion” over several centuries in Latin and several other European languages, there is a tendency to confine the historiographical enquiry to the way the term “religion” appears in texts, as though an isolated category, or one that is only incidentally connected with others. Because of the enormity of the historiographical project we do not always get the illumination that might come from placing those texts in the wider-angled vision, such as the relationship of religion to other evolving categories.

The expansion of Europe into Asia, Africa and America has been a fundamental aspect of more general changes in European self-representations and cosmology, and we are interested here particularly in “religion” as an interconnected part of those wider changes. The essays in this book are a contribution towards the exploration of that wider colonial context, and that categorical relational network. These two methodological problems are not identical, but they do coexist. By treating “religion” as though it is a category in its own right, its function in the legitimation and construction of other categories, in particular the idea of the “non-religious”, is missed. Critical studies that focus exclusively on the history of “religion” as though the issue of “what religion is not” is *secondary*, miss the importance of the ideological configuration without which we cannot see what “religion” is “doing”.

Jonathan Z. Smith was one of the first writers to expose, in a series of seminal essays (1982), the fallacies behind the essentialization of “religion”. And in a more recent justly famous article (1998), he draws the reader’s attention to the colonial and imperial context with which we are concerned in this book. Yet he claims that “‘Religion’ is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define” (1998: 281). I find this a strange argument considering Smith initially locates his own in many ways brilliant historiography of the category in the colonial context. The essays in this book should make it clear that “religion” is a native English term that for centuries meant *Christian Truth* [10]; and that it was not only “scholars” who created its different modern nuances, but people engaged in serious struggles of power who, since the late seventeenth century, wished to redefine current usages in order to make possible a revolution in the dominant paradigm (see Chapter 11). The idea that scholars can choose to mean what they like by “religion”, as though we can simply say that “this is what we intend to mean by ‘religion’ for analytical purposes”, seems surprisingly naive, and yet it is a widespread rhetorical ploy. One only has to consider the usages of the term

in the media, in politics and in popular discourse to realize that no one has control over its meanings. What scholars can do is to reflect critically on these usages and meanings, subvert them, and refrain from using their authority to legitimate [11] this ideologically weighted language game. This includes critically questioning how religious studies and associated disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy and sociology of religion are framed and taught in the academy and the schools.

W. C. Smith and some of the other contributors to the important Despland and Vallée collection (1992) say little about the wider contexts of the formation of “religion”, but they inadvertently construct the field in the very act of historicizing it.<sup>7</sup> In this work historians of profound knowledge get to grips with actual textual usages from different centuries and in several languages. In this sense they are problematizing the category in historical detail. Yet let us take Vallée’s introduction. Vallée says that the book (and the conference from which the book emerged) was concerned with “determining the turning point in the emergence of the modern concept of religion” (Despland & Vallée 1992: 5). He points out that Smith (an inspiration for the conference and also a contributor to the book) “was haunted by the question: How are we to understand that many cultural worlds are religious without having a distinct idea of religion, still less our modern idea?” But the way this question has been formulated here by Vallée encapsulates the problem of circularity that I want to draw attention to. If a cultural world has no distinct idea of religion, then what does it mean to propose that it is religious? Vallée is presumably trying to avoid essentializing “religion” as though it is a thing, and this would be consistent with a central part of Smith’s argument in *The Meaning and End of Religion* ([1962] 1978). The problem is that by attributing personal lives (or cultural worlds) with a “religious” dimension, and assuming as Smith does that such personal religious consciousness is ubiquitous and universal in place and time, the problem of reification and essentialization has merely been placed one step further back.

Smith’s seminal work *The Meaning and End of Religion* ([1962] 1978) has been much discussed and analysed, for example by Asad (1993; 2003) in his own outstanding contributions to the field and its critical deconstruction. But a few words here will connect Smith’s problematic to the orientation of this book (see my discussion in Fitzgerald 2000; 2003). I have argued elsewhere that *The Meaning and End of Religion*, while giving us a brilliant *historiographical* account of the categories “religio” [12] and “religion” as they appear in historically significant texts, is essentially an ecumenical *theology* and as such a foundation text for the twentieth-century myth of “religion”, a myth that has been in the making for about 400 years but now has special academic departments, such as the World Religions programme at Harvard, to ensure its irrefutable respectability. Smith wished to problematize “religion” and abandon its use in the academy, but he also thought that the adjectival form “religious” can still be used loosely to talk about any period of history, even at the very point that he is demonstrating the historical and cultural relativity of the concept. In his chapter 2, “‘Religion’ in the West”, Smith shows with impressive learning that at different historical times the word “religio” has had different meanings and nuances, and that the emergence of the modern meaning(s) can with scholarly sensitivity be traced through its historical vicissitudes.

Of Latin *religio*, which is frequently cited by many authors as the origin of the English-language term “religion”, he writes:

To say that such and such a thing was *religio* ... meant that it was mightily incumbent upon me to do it (alternatively, not to do it ...) ... Oaths, family proprieties, cultic observances and the like were each *religio* to a man ... Also the ritual ceremonies themselves were designated *religiones*. Throughout Latin usage right to the end of its development, the sense of rite, the outward observance of a particular practice, is to be found. This is, perhaps, related to a Roman tendency to perceive what we would call the divine or the holy not so much, or not only, in the form of a figure of “god” as in that of a series of standardised acts. (Smith [1962] [13]: 20–21)

Here Smith gives us a potentially revolutionary idea in the field of religious studies. Instead of legitimating [14] the English-language term “religion” as “belief in God or gods” by claiming descent from Latin *religio*, he suggests that *religio* and its derivatives have always had an important, perhaps fundamental, nuance of ritual practice, which would presumably include state ritual, household rituals, clan rituals and other standardized acts of collective identity. I am not an expert in the field of Roman history but Smith has raised the issue in a potentially fruitful analytical shift. This would involve moving away from the assumption that Roman *religio* was fundamentally about “belief” in “gods”, a retrospective abstraction perhaps overlaid with Protestant Christian intellectualism and much less clear in meaning than it may seem, and see *religio* more in terms of collective, standardized practices of *civilitas* that confer Roman (or Roman Christian) identity as distinct from those categories of “other” such as *barbaroi*, *paganus* and *superstitio*.

King (1999), drawing partly on Balagangadhara (1994), has argued that *religiones* in the pre-Christian, Roman Latin context “were simply the ancestral practices of particular communities” (King 1999: 37).<sup>8</sup> Like others King derives an etymology for the word from Cicero relating it to *relegere*, meaning to retrace or reread. He writes:

... *religio* involves the retracing of “the lore of the ritual of one’s ancestors”. This understanding of the term seems to have gained provenance in the “pagan” Roman empire and made *religio* virtually synonymous with *traditio*. As such it represented the teachings of one’s ancestors and was essentially not open to question. Primarily *religio* involved performing ancient ritual practices and paying homage to the gods. (King 1999: 36)

One aspect of this understanding of *religio* is that it is not about truth or falsity of beliefs in any propositional sense. It is fundamentally about the customary disciplines of civility [15] of different groups of people who represent themselves as having a collective identity. There was no clash of belief claims. One could honour someone else’s gods as a mark of respect to that community on the appropriate ritual occasion without offending one’s own.<sup>9</sup>

This line of thinking, initiated by W. C. Smith and added to in the work of writers such as Balagangadhara and King, prompts me to suggest a further thought, although always deferring to those with more expertise in Roman Latin than me. In such a methodological revision, we might look at the practice of those virtues that confer civility (*civilitas*), for *religio* would come to look like a minor term in a larger and more significant discourse on Roman identity, a sense of superior cultivation (*civilitas*, *romanitas*) as against the barbarians (*barbarus*), especially those Germanic and Celtic tribes and their barbaric, uncultivated

*superstitio*. It would, I suppose, be legitimate to ask whether anything was more ultimate and sacred to the Romans than Rome itself; and whether it was not *religio* to practise the civic virtues that made one Roman and civilized.<sup>10</sup>

This is, of course, a question for the experts in Roman Latin culture. But there is a potentially large methodological pay-off in thinking of *religio* as about something more interesting than the cliché “belief in gods”. “Belief” is itself a multivalent word that has become overdetermined by Protestant enlightenment intellectualism, which posits belief as a kind of imperfect propositional knowledge. Religion defined as belief in gods and thus as an essentially explanatory construct has been persistently challenged in ethnography, and also by some historians.

John Gould (1985: 7–8) has argued about “Greek religion” that it was as different from a Christian idea of religion as the “religion” of the Dinka in South Sudan. Gould argues that “the central Greek term, *theous nomizein*, means not ‘believe in the gods’, but ‘acknowledge’ them, that is, pray to them, sacrifice to them, build them, temples, make them object of cult and ritual ...” (*ibid.*: 14).

By rendering “belief in gods” differently, as “acknowledging the gods” or “honouring the gods”, we can move the semantic weight from a propositional concept of belief to [16] as a kind of imperfect knowledge to a notion of practice. Acknowledging the gods means performing what W. C. Smith meant when he referred “to a Roman tendency to perceive what we would call the divine or the holy not so much, or not only, in the form of a figure of ‘god’ as in that of a series of standardised acts” (Smith [1962] [17]: 20–21); also see Chapter 7 on “performance” in the context of Indian “politics” and “religion”).

If *religio* is taken as referring to those collectively recognized, self-identifying performances and cultivations whereby one’s own *civilitas* is symbolically constructed as against the barbarity of various others, there would be a methodological pay-off. The pay-off would derive from the well-established interconnectedness of Greek, Roman and medieval Catholic conceptions of *civility*.<sup>11</sup> The ways that the literate male elites of these different phases of European civilization expressed and policed their collective and individual sense of salvation from the hell of barbarism and madness had important differences, but just as the Romans consciously derived many of their standards of *civility* from the Greeks, so the Christians derived many of theirs from both the Romans and the Greeks. The importance in Christianity of orthodox confessional practice, which later Protestants reified out as “belief”, might, from a methodological viewpoint, benefit from being re-embedded in the matrix of civilizing disciplines.

If *pietas* and *religio* in their Latin forms could be strongly linked to a concept of ritual observance, “a series of standardised acts”, as W. C. Smith put it, or what I would also describe as disciplines of *civility*, then we would at least have a possibility of theorizing these terms in an anthropologically useful way, and avoid the modern reification of religion and religions, and their supposed essential difference from power, politics and economics.

Talking about “ritual” in general and also more specifically referring to the Japanese context, Jan van Bremen writes:

the bipartite division of society into sacred and secular domains is progressively being abandoned by anthropologists studying industrialised as well as non-industrialised societies ... There is no essential or qualitative shift between the categories and relations of the everyday world and those used in rites. Rites must not be taken

as events which are essentially different in form, quality, and substance from those which constitute and inform the so-called routine of daily life. The study of ritual is not a search for the essential qualities of a peculiar and qualitatively different event; it is a way of examining how trivial elements of the social world can be elevated and transformed into symbols, categories, mechanisms, which, in certain contexts, allow the generation of a special or extraordinary event ... Rites, in other words, are an aspect of social ties, which explains the use made of ordinary articles ... such as fingers, rings, or even towels ... brooms ... and foodstuffs ... (1995: 2–3)

This de-essentializing approach to the history of the category “religion” cannot be defended in any detail here, but it can be taken to signal an intention to find other productive ways of deconstructing the reified religion–secular dichotomy.

This is not, of course, to claim that Roman “*religio*” and Christian “*religio*” amount to the same thing, for the discourses of their use need to be analysed historically.<sup>12</sup> Clearly the nuances of “*religio*” in Roman and medieval Latin were different, and the latter different from those of the English word “religion” in the early modern period (Bossy 1982; 1985), and these changed again as part of the Enlightenment reconfiguration of European values. It is these acts of historicization that show us that a category has many nuances with significantly different outcomes, and that the meanings we take as given may conceal a history of alternative and even contradictory implications.

If we agree with the historians Despland and Vallée (1992) that the modern category of religion did have a “turning point”, did have an “emergence”, then we cannot assume that fifteenth-century Europe had “religion” or was “religious” in the modern sense. Religion was all-encompassing Christian Truth. No one would have described Christianity as “a religion” until fundamental changes in our ideological constructions of the world had occurred. As the quotation from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* indicates, the expression “religious”, or rather “the religious”, along with “the secular”, referred to a status of persons and institutions within Christendom well into the nineteenth century. They were not simply and univocally standing in a mutually exclusive opposition as in religion: non-religion, and there are still many areas of Western cultures where this is still true.

In the medieval and early modern periods, secular courts, although organizationally distinct from ecclesiastical ones, were not “non-religious” in the modern sense. (Who would ever have described the secular Thomas More as “non-religious” in the modern sense?) These are not nit-picking points about mere semantics. They go to the heart of our modern confusions, where multivalent terms are used in simplistic ways by scholars in prestigious institutions, and beg important questions about how we construct and reconstruct our world order (or disorder) on the basis of such category mistakes.

When tracking the genealogy of religion, W. C. Smith and other historians fail to keep a critical eye on what is happening to those other categories without which we could not think of religion in the modern sense at all – “the secular” as the “non-religious” in various constructions such as: the secular nation state; secular politics and law; economics and markets; scientific naturalism and materialism. It is as though the ability to imagine these discursive spaces is merely a contingently related matter outside the vital focus of concern: “religion” (but see Asad 1993; 2003). But what counts as “religion” and what counts as “the secular” are mutually delimiting and defining concepts, the distinction between them continually shifting depending on the context.

In this book we want to place these changes and processes in the context of the beginnings of capitalism with the search for American colonies from the fifteenth century. We wish to stress the importance of colonial sites and interests, their influence on the thinking within the metropolitan centres, and the connection between the flexible ideology of the religion–secular dichotomy and the development of a hegemonic world economic system that makes capital markets look like unavoidable natural occurrences, the highest point of rational exchange.

Thus one theoretical claim here is that “religion” cannot be treated as a category in isolation, what McCutcheon has referred to as “*sui generis religion*” (1999 [18]), but must be analysed in its historical emergence as part of a network of categories. The religion–secular dichotomy (in its various forms) is a fundamental part of this network, since it holds together, and is in turn sustained by, a number of other dichotomies, such as nature and supernature, body and soul, spirit and matter, private and public, and inner and outer.<sup>13</sup>

#### THIS BOOK

The poignant essay by Anna Blume (Chapter 1), located in Guatemala at the Central American end of the colonial relationship, is in several ways an ideal introduction to some central themes of this volume. I therefore introduce it to the reader at rather greater length than the other chapters. Her essay is divided into three parts. The first two parts deal with history, that is, the history of the initial Spanish colonization, the biography and interventions of Bartolomé de las Casas and the debates that he engendered among his contemporaries and fellow Catholics. This is history based, in the European manner, on texts. The third part of Blume’s essay is an ethnography of contemporary Mayan uses of the old colonial churches. Blume shows how these imported and planted symbols of foreign domination have become transformed into sites where local people remember their own history, renegotiate and make sense of the violence and the hierarchies that have been inflicted on them, and reconstruct their own identities and sense of continuity with the sufferings of their ancestors.

This essay reminds us not only of the violence involved in the very early colonization by the Spanish from 1498, but also of the recent violence perpetrated by the Protestant dictator Rios Montt, who in 1982 massacred Maya people in his desire to break up their indigenous forms of land-holding and production and to introduce modern capitalist values, markets and forms of production and consumption.

In these ways Blume’s essay marks out the historical period of modern colonialism, and gives us a picture of the postcolonial continuity with the colonial past, as well as the changes. The initial violence of the Spanish in the late fifteenth century was not the violence of “religion” in the modern sense, that is, the violence frequently attributed to religion as contrasted with the rationality of the non-religious, secular state (see Chapter 12). The Religion [19] that hit the indigenous people of Central America in the late fifteenth century was itself a state, the pope himself also a prince; the Spanish Christian king required the pope’s blessing for his colonization of the New World. This was all-encompassing Religion, Christian Truth. The early colonization was a confrontation between a previously unknown people and a feudal European polity that itself recognized no modern

distinction between church and state, and whatever or whoever subsisted outside of its cognitive borders could not properly *exist* except as irrational barbarians, demons or savages, marginal beings arguably fit to be slaves (Pagden 1982).<sup>14</sup> It was Las Casas who, in shock and misery at the suffering inflicted by his own people upon the indigenous people, went into a monastery for eight years to seek solace from God, to emerge with the inspiration of *congregación*. It must, however, be remembered that, while Las Casas praised the human attributes of the Indians highly, he also sought to convert them to Christianity and thus to save them from perdition. He thus made them dependent on the Roman Church, its rites, language and ideology of order. His organization of *congregación*, so well described by Blume, reproduced much of the Spanish feudal order, with the church building at the centre of the town, and all activities and relationships subsumed under Christian Truth. Furthermore, while personal devotion was a central part of Las Casas's practice and motivation, he was in the service of God, the pope and the king, as well as the Indians.

The second part of Blume's essay (contained in section 3) brings the reader into the contemporary world of the Maya in the hills of Guatemala. One difference in the conception of "religion" can be made by contrasting the totalizing Christian world of Las Casas, and the violence it inflicted, with the modern Protestant form of internal colonial violence of Rios Montt, the dictator who as recently as 1982 inaugurated massacres in an attempt to destroy the indigenous forms of life. Rios Montt was committed to the Protestant ethic of individual religiosity, opposed to the indigenous collectivization of the Maya, seeking to break both their communal beliefs and their anti-capitalist economic base of discrete milpa farming. It is in Rios Montt that the fully formed capitalist state finds its true warrior: a dictator willing to use all means necessary to impose a religious and secular individualism that would benefit both his desire for absolute power and the absolute power of the market.

Blume approaches the consciousness of contemporary Maya through ethnography of ritual performances within the colonial churches of the isolated highland town of Concepción Sololá in the Guatemalan highlands. Four hundred years after Las Casas, colonial churches are still significant sites of memory and places where the legacy of the past is negotiated in subtle ways. As Blume describes it, the infrastructure and artifacts of that process of forced conversion continue into the present as the Maya themselves still contend with the often violent economic and social domination reasserted from the West in the form of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or other foreign policies written for the benefit of first world global expansion at the expense of local economies and cultures. The rituals that the Maya women perform, well described by Blume, disrupt the imported hierarchy of stressed authority by displacing the dominance of one central representation of Christ in the church, the meanings of which have been historically controlled by the Roman hierarchy, and replacing it with a multiplicity of Christ figures. Each sculpted figure is a Christ that, when looked at closely, is slightly different from the next. With no single source of eminence, spirituality and hierarchy are fragmented and dispersed. Spirituality is visualized not as a single sacrifice for all time, whose spilt blood legitimates the centralization of power by the papal hierarchy, along with the act of violent colonization in the first place, but as a cacophony of ongoing sacrifices. This conscious repetition of the image of the crucified Christ places the passion in motion, evoking the moment of the death of Christ as if he had not died yet or

did not die once, as if the moment kept repeating itself out of the past into the present, over and over again. This kind of repetition of sacrifice is for Blume much more like the Maya's pre-Columbian concept of the Maize God, God of Corn, who dies each year with the harvest and returns again each spring. What Blume describes here is an example of the appropriation of colonially imposed power structures and their symbolic representations by the indigenous people, who then re-represent and recast them according to their own sense of identity.

Stack (Chapter 2) focuses on the dichotomy of secular and religious knowledge. Specifically, he looks at histories told and written of a Catholic icon in twentieth-century west Mexico, the Virgin of Defence. He distinguishes between secular and non-secular histories of the Virgin and asks why some narrators chose to produce secular histories. In fact, he also finds different kinds of secular narrative and argues that there was no single reason for choosing secular narration. One of the reasons was that secular knowledge gave narrators a kind of higher ground: narrators claim to look in from the outside on the religious devotion of their narrative subjects. This higher ground gives them authority, although even this varies from one narrator to another. Stack focuses on the twentieth century, but he still places secular knowledge within a broader history that he terms "modern-colonial": just as people continue to be ranked in terms of race, civilization and so on, people who take a secular perspective are set above people judged incapable of this. He also finds that some secular histories are produced under the auspices of the Church and argues that secular knowledge was developed partly *within* the Church. He even suggests that Spanish missionaries had already sown the seeds of secular knowledge by the late sixteenth century. Throughout his essay, Stack contrasts west Mexico with the highland Guatemala described by Blume.

James Cox (Chapter 3) is concerned with the direct impact of capitalism on the conceptual world of the indigenous people of Alaska, and the function of the distinction between religion and the secular in this form of neo-colonialism. He argues that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 "must be seen as the culmination of over a century of concerted ... US government efforts to assimilate the Alaskan natives". This policy of assimilation began in earnest with Sheldon Jackson, who was head both of the Protestant Mission and the US Government Education Agency at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. His aim was to completely change the traditional life and collective values of the indigenous people to produce American-style individualism. This included a policy of suppressing the native language and only allowing English to be used in the mission schools.

Jun'ichiro Isomae (Chapter 4) discusses the impact of the threat of colonization on Japan, the imposition from the outside of an American-style constitution guaranteeing the separation of religion from politics, and the problems of translating these concepts into Japanese. He follows the vicissitudes of the public debates about how a Protestant Christian concept of religion, and its corollary "religious freedom", could be made sense of in Japanese, and how this led to the reformulation of the Japanese state, with the cult of the Emperor's divinity at one stage being classified as the equivalent of *secular* morality, and at other times as state religion.

Thomas Pearson's essay (Chapter 5) focuses on the invasions and manipulations of the tribal "Montagnard" in highland Vietnam by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), missionaries and anthropologists. French colonialism in the early twentieth century led to



the involvement of the American military and the Vietnam War. The people who belonged to different ethnic and linguistic groups were lumped together under the French rubric “Montagnard”. The colonizing groups – missionaries, anthropologists and the military – all claimed their own distinctive roles, and while on the one hand they distinguished themselves by classifying their activities as either “religious” or “secular”, in reality their activities overlapped to such an extent, and they aided and abetted each other in such a way, that the religion–secular distinction takes on an appearance of ideologically motivated rhetoric rather than substantial reality.

Will Sweetman (Chapter 6) locates his research in India, and on documents written in Tamil, German, French and English. He focuses on an important debate in Indology that includes a theoretical discussion of [20] Dirks, who has argued that it was the British colonialists who reified caste as a central Indian institution and that before India became a British colony caste was configured quite differently. The British classification of caste as a “religious” rather than a “political” institution was an instrument of colonial policy designed to strengthen the Brahmin castes at the expense of kings and princes. Sweetman discusses this in the context of German missionary documents and analyses the language of the missionaries. Sweetman shows that the nuance of terms such as “religious” and “civil” used by the missionaries changed over time, especially after around 1820.

John Zavos (Chapter 7), writing about nineteenth- and twentieth-century India, tries to get at (or “cut across”) the colonial division of the religious and the political by thinking about modern “politics” in India as *performance*. In a sense the invention of “religion” is also the invention of “politics”, but in typical rhetoric they are placed in a relationship of mutual exclusion; religion is defined as being private and non-political, whereas politics is ideally defined as public and non-religious. Wherever these separated domains are brought into contact problems of an analytical and even a legal kind result. But the problem may be created by the assumption that these are distinct domains in the first place. Performance as an analytical category can be simultaneously “religious” and “political” and as such problematizes the distinction itself. Zavos looks at major examples of anti-colonial and postcolonial indigenous movements and suggests that the English-language word “performance” can help us to get closer to an indigenous idea of meaningful collective action, which we tend to try to categorize as being either “secular” or “religious”.

David Chidester (Chapter 8), from his location in southern Africa, sees a different aspect from the perspective of African colonial history: savages who live in open spaces without boundaries or any civilization do not have “religion”, but once subjugated as colonial subjects within externally imposed boundaries they do have “religion” (or superstition), which becomes a classificatory term for different kinds of (primitive) social orders. He shows how some of the metropolitan theorists who invented comparative religion based their mistaken theories on third-hand information wrongly translated.

Abdulkader Ismail Tayob (Chapter 9) questions the classification of Islam as a “religion”. He also questions W. C. Smith’s distinction between the noun “religion” and the adjective “religious”, in Smith’s claim that, while the reification of “religions” is invalid, personal “religious” experience is a reality. Tayob examines the uses made of the English-language concepts of religion and religious within Islamic discourse, and then abandons them on the grounds that they do not represent clearly identifiable aspects of human life. In particular he studies the modernizing rhetoric of two important Muslim scholars, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, both of whom played an influential

role in the translation of “religion” and the reinterpretation of Islam in the context of modern discourse.

Some of the essays presented here are concerned with the metropolitan end of the colonial relationship. In his essay on Rudolf Otto (Chapter 10), Gregory Alles explores the relationship between German cultural colonialism and Otto’s experience of the Holy [21], which has been a major influence in twentieth-century renditions of comparative religion. From a close reading of contemporary German texts, including Otto’s correspondence, he reveals the inventions and even mythical elements in the narrative of Otto’s definitive “religious experience”, and the way its retelling has disembedded [22] it from a context of colonial ambitions and relocated it as a pure mysticism guaranteeing a *sui generis* reality called “religion” separated from power and politics.

Timothy Fitzgerald (Chapter 11) follows the emergence of modern concepts of religion, politics, the secular and other ideological categories in English and North American historical documents since the sixteenth century, relating this genealogy to colonial processes, especially the formulation of American Constitutionalism and the construction of a central category of the secular state and politics, and the definition of religion as a separate, non-political and private relationship with God. He shows how this process reified “religions” and “the secular”, and acted as a model for colonial nation states. He suggests that colonial travel writing, as exemplified by the books of Samuel Purchas, and constitutions both authorized a higher ground of secular rationality in which the practices of Christians and non-Christians alike could be turned into “religions”. He proposes a distinction between encompassing Religion as Christian Truth based on an organic analogy with the human body in which all stations in life are hierarchically included in the totality, and privatized religions, whose invention was required for the conceptualization of modern politics and the state as secular in the sense of “non-religious”. He argues that religion in modern discourses carries both these semantics: one a totalizing concept virtually indistinguishable from a holistic concept of “culture”, and exemplified by the quotation from Cooper at the beginning of this chapter – that is, religion as a total system; the other a notion of religion as privatized, essentially non-political, a special domain distinguishable from the non-religious world of natural reason. Both of these fundamentally different nuances plus various hybrid constructions are today embedded in public rhetoric and are consequently creating insurmountable divisions in public understanding that serve unacknowledged ideological interests.

William Cavanaugh’s reading (Chapter 12) on the ideological formation of the modern distinction between religion and politics since around the seventeenth century is close to Fitzgerald’s. In this critique of the widely held rhetorical convention that “religions” cause violence, and that therefore the secular state had to be invented to keep the peace, he argues that “religion” was invented as a by-product of the violent emergence of the nation state, which in turn was developed to allow princes to wage war in the newly competitive competition for lucrative colonies.

The topic is a vast one, and this book can only attempt to open up a line of enquiry that it is hoped other specialists in specific cultures and languages will develop in the same critical manner as we have tried to do here. We hope that this book will open up a wider debate, not about the definition of religion, which, if the arguments here are correct, is inherently circular and question-begging, but about the ideological function of the idea of religion and religions in the formation of an imagined domain of non-reli-

gious politics, economics and the liberal capitalist ideology generally. The topic demands interdisciplinarity, which invites dangers as well as gains. There is bound to be a degree of arbitrariness in the approaches that each individual author has taken within the broad theoretical parameters that I have outlined. But while the variety of subject matter, and the approach taken to it by each writer, may be to some extent arbitrary, I believe that most readers will clearly discern a common thread of theoretical cohesion that can be fruitfully applied to aspects of this huge topic not analysed here.

## NOTES

1. I have analysed a number of these in *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (2000).
2. Let me make one admission of failure. Although through sheer good fortune I have contributions from a range of outstanding scholars, I had always hoped for a larger participation from women and from people from non-Western cultures in general. There were a large number of women at the conference, but I have only been fortunate enough to get one contribution from them, from Anna Blume. Jun Isomae and Abdulkader Ismail Tayob are the only two non-Western scholars; the talented Chinese scholar Ivan Hon, who is a PhD candidate at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), contributed what will become important research on the nineteenth-century debates over the meaning of "religion" in China, but unfortunately was unable to put it into shape for this book in time. However, what we have here are a number of outstanding individual contributions and a serious methodological proposal for the future of the study of "religion". It was never imagined that this could be anything more than a beginning, an attempt to open up a field of such studies concerned with the multiple colonial sites in which the religion-secular dichotomy has been negotiated in a vast number of languages and the problems of translation involved, in the imposition of Western style constitutions, in the pressures placed on indigenous elites to re-represent their own traditions in ways that accommodated this essentialized dichotomy [23]. The importance of this book we believe lies in the method and the approach: seeing "religion" not as a *sine qua non*, a part of the furniture of the world, but as a category that has ideological work to do in the service of complex colonial interests.
3. There were earlier editions, such as the first in 1757, but according to H. E. Root's notes on the text (Hume 1957) the 1777 edition was definitive.
4. S. N. Balagangadhara's "*The Heathen in His Blindness*" (1994) has many interesting arguments on the problems with "religion" as a category, and deserves more attention than I can give it here. Various symposia have been held to critically discuss this important work.
5. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for pointing out the existence of this book by Peterson and Walhof, which I have not seen, and for pointing out that this book is close to the present volume in terms of its approach, its inter-disciplinarity, and its varied content deriving from studies of different colonial sites. The anonymous reader suggested that the book had not been well publicized by its publisher. I therefore regret not being able to discuss it here.
6. I have only recently received a copy of Tomoko Masuzawa's valuable book, and my feelings about it are based on a very cursory reading. Clearly it deserves more than that, since it is full of interesting discussion and detailed information, and Masuzawa's style is subtle and inventive. However, while it is an important and informative new contribution to research on the origins and history of the field of religious studies, it is different in a number of ways from this book: it is single-authored, it is centred mainly on northern European intellectual developments, it is basically concerned with discourses on "religion" and "world religions" but not with the wider categorical context. Nor could I see much specific focus on the development of institutions and practices outside the immediate context of textuality and intellectual history. Methodologically, the book seems in the final analysis to be a fairly standard history of ideas.

7. I have discussed this volume in more detail in my essay “Playing Language Games and Performing Rituals: Religious Studies as Ideological State Apparatus” (2003).
8. Cf. Balagangadhara (1994: 46). This approach would also arguably be consistent with Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977) fruitful idea of practice.
9. I do not think that it is a stretch from this to Bourdieu’s (1977) notions of practice and habitus. Bourdieu uses these ideas in the sense of individual and collective practices that are learnt and passed on from one generation to another within given sets of relations, which mark out an identity and a living space, and from which observers, both indigenous and outsiders, can derive structure. The structures are embedded in the practices, and the practices organize and generate representations that are shared and understood by the **collectivity [24]**, but that do not presuppose *explicit* beliefs or worldviews or sets of rules in the minds of those who do the practices.
10. Similarly, one might ask the same about ritualized representations of modern America, its Constitution, its founding myths, and its idea of “manifest destiny”. These symbolic representations of American power and *civility* as against those unenlightened barbaric others who only know terror and violence might in this sense be taken as collective “*religio*”.
11. See Jones (2003). I believe it is at least arguable that this reading of *religio* would not be incompatible with Anthony Pagden’s *The Fall of Natural Man* (1982.)
12. An interesting case in point that I mention not as conclusive proof of anything but as an indication of changing usages are the Richard Hakluyt translations (1599) from Latin into English of the travel diaries of two friars, Iohannes de Plano Carpini and William de Rubruqui, who were sent as emissaries by Pope Innocent IV and the French king Louis IX respectively in 1246 and 1253, to gather information about the Tartar/Mongol leadership and customs, to open diplomatic communications and ideally to convert to Christianity. Hakluyt has published the Latin original and his English translations side by side. These fascinating travel records are in many ways an attempt by the writers to record factual observations about virtually entirely unknown peoples, their customs and superstitions, in order to enlighten their masters in Europe. And yet in neither of the Latin accounts could I find a single mention of *religio* (although *superstitio* does appear). On the other hand, in two places and two places only Hakluyt has translated from William de Rubruqui “the religion of Mahomet” (Hakluyt 1599: 94, 120). However, this is not a translation from *religio* but in both cases from “*legem Machometi*”, which I believe would now be translated as “the law of Mahomet”.
13. This theoretical claim, namely, that it is an illusion to treat “religion” as though it stands alone in a simple one-to-one relationship with things that exist in the world, was a basic part of the argument of my *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (2000), and can be found for example in the Preface, chapter 1 and subsequently in my criticisms of writers such as Juergensmeyer.
14. Pagden (1982) has shown with great interpretative skill how the application of the Aristotelian categories of “barbarian” and “natural slave” to the American Indians was debated by theologians in the sixteenth century as a way of **legitimizing [25]** the *de facto* conquest and enslavement of the people. That these debates about the correct classification of the indigenous people may have been a source of “secular” discourse would fit well with Stack’s argument in Chapter 2.

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