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Is Christianity a Religion, Part 1

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Is there such a thing as religion of which Christianity is one manifestation?

The question is important for two reasons. Its answer will influence and reveal what a person believes Christianity to be and by the end of the chapter we're going to give a definition of Christianity. I did not ask that question in the introductory discussion but you can be thinking about it. Maybe if you care you can come up with a definition of Christianity. Don't simply say it has something to do with historical events period. That is not a sufficient definition of Christianity.

Well the question is important for two reasons. Its answer will influence and reveal what a person believes Christianity to be and on a broader scale it will determine the method that ought to be used in formulating a philosophy of religion. Therefore, let us ask the question a second time in a slightly different form. Is Christianity a species or a genus? Whether this is answered affirmatively or negatively, certain further problems are introduced. If Christianity is a species of the genus religion, how is religion defined? And what are Christianity's differentiating characteristics? If it is not, what sort of philosophy of religion can there be and what sort of philosophy of Christianity can there be? Apparently the first step in examining these questions must be the definition of religion. What is religion? Now there is a question mark that comes at the end of this sentence but I am not sure any of you want to try to answer it; though if you are inspired why don't you just shout out, interrupt at any time but the end of this paragraph is question, What is religion?

Well I guess most of you were asleep so I'll go on. Religion is familiar to the common man in every age and nation. He performs its simple or complicated rites, he believes its doctrines. However, justified may be the orthodox complaint or the atheistic exaltation that a particular religion is losing its hold on the people, the ineradicable experiences still remain a familiar force. Among the learned too it is a familiar subject of discussion. Of the making of many books on the general subject of religion, the psychology of religion, the philosophy of religion, the history of religion, there is no end. But although religion is a phenomenon as multiform as it is familiar, both these characteristics contribute to the difficulty of understanding it. No one denies the multiformity. There is Christianity, there is Mohammedanism, and further there are Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, the religions of the interior of Africa and of the isles of the sea. Yet

notwithstanding their differences, they are all popularly unified under the single term religion. Can such a unification survive scholarly analysis? Is it really possible to gather all these under one definition so that they can be discussed together as one subject? In botany, for example, the nightshade, the indian cucumber root, didn't know you had to know botany to do apologetics didn't you? Have you all had courses in botany?

Student: Not here.

Well maybe not here but you all are college graduates aren't you? So you had two or three years of botany in college haven't you? You know what the internal phloem of the uh what do you call it? . . . lycopersicon esculentum is don't you? Sure, beg your pardon?

Student: ???

I wouldn't be surprise if you did in other terms.

[Audience Laughter]

Do any of you know what the lycopersicon esculentum is? I don't suppose you know what internal phloem is, but you certainly know what the esculentum. . . uh whatever I said. . . Lycopersicon esculentum.

I think you ate it last night for supper or dinner whatever you call it. Tomato.

Student: Ah, nooo.

Yeesss.

[Audience Laughter]

But I appreciate your enthusiasm. But I am not talking about the lycopersicon esculentum. In botany for example the nightshade, the indian cucumber root, the bellwort, the lily of the valley, solomon's seal, asparagus, and the star of bethlehem are all gathered together and discussed under the lily family. All the members of the lily family have certain characteristics in common. Characteristics which tie them together in one family and at the same time differentiate them from other families. Cannot the same thing be done for religions? You know out west in Arizona, in Southern Arizona, in the deserts there are cacti and at this time of year or within a few weeks now the desert will not merely blossom like the rose it will much out do the rose. Therefore, cacti flowers are far more beautiful than any roses are and they are simply gorgeous. If you go out

there at the proper time you will see a plant that goes about twelve to fifteen to twenty-feet tall, it's name is the ocotillo and it has beautiful red blooms on it.

Well one day I went into a ranger station and looked at the exhibits there and in one of the rooms on the wall there was a painting an oil painting of an ocotillo and of course there were ocotillo growing outside and underneath amongst some other little bit of information on a placard it says the ocotillo is not a cactus. There is something an easterner wouldn't guess you know, because the ocotillo has thorns you better be careful about touching it and to the unaided eye it looks very much like the other cacti. As I went to the ranger desk and there was a man there I said, "You have a picture in the other room there, a nice painting of a ocotilla and underneath it says it is not a cactus." He said, "Oh, yes that is right; ocotilla is not a cactus." I said, "Would you please tell me what is a cactus?" He looked at me, "Nobody has ever asked me that question before." Guess not many philosophers got there. He says, "I don't know. But the head ranger is coming back in just a few minutes. If you can wait why, we'll ask him." I said, "Why, yes i'm not in any hurry and very beautiful and I just enjoy the view and all." Well the main ranger did come back and so I said "would you kindly tell me sir, what is a cactus?" He said, "I don't know, but I will look it up for you." And so he got out some of these books and then he gave me a pretty fair statement of what cactus is. I later found a better statement than the one. But, he made a try.

So you have to define your terms you know. And in particular when you are doing apologetics you have to understand botany and know what a cactus is as oppose to an ocotillo which isn't a cactus. I wish you can all go to Arizona this summer and see some ocotillos and some cacti. Uh let's see. You might even, you might even, get so disgusted with this course that you might leave early and get there in the middle of May. And I think you might find more blooms in the middle of May than - you'll still find some around the first of June. But, early May and middle of May is the best time to visit Arizona and pull this joke on the rangers because they don't know what cacti are.

Now you know what a tomato is don't you? No you don't. To tell the truth neither do I. But asparagus is the same as an easter lily. Not the same but it's the lily family.

And now is Christianity a species or a genus - a species of religion? Religion would be - what is your question?

Student: My question is has deal with species genuses in the family. Family come between ???

No it family is hi... I wasn't using it in that very strict sense. I simply mean a lower class or a higher, is Christianity a subclass of the class religion? Now religion may be a subclass of some higher class or some more extensive class. What now wouldn't that be some way of getting going

in this subject? We talk about religion don't we and we say Islam is a religion, Judaism is a religion, Christianity is a religion, but if you know what religion is then you can add the specific characteristic of Christianity and we get a definition of Christianity. Isn't that a good way of going about it? . . . Sure not.

Student: . . . ???

Beg your pardon?

Student: ???

Is it? Write down what you said and think about it tomorrow.

Class: laughs

As may be expected this way of looking at her has been tried. Not only so but it is the usual method of procedure. It seems to be only common sense. For example, Winston L. King in his introduction to religion and incidentally if you read my books and if you generate sufficient enthusiasm I would recommend that you look up my references to these various authors. It is very useful to have specific authors in mind and specific quotations, rather than to give just general statements somebody believes or a lot of people believe. If you say Winston L. King said this and put quotes on it then nobody can come back at you. You have it definitely there. You can't be accused of being sloppy or otherwise. Winston L. King, in his introduction to religion, writes that religions are one as well as many. Although, he makes the obscure denial that they have any common denominator of a neutral sort, there is "some sort of unity" and there are "actual likenesses." At the end of 80 pages he concludes "we have been trying to use the term religion as well as religions with the confidence that it has some distinguishing meaning." Such phrases as these in an 80 pages attempt to define religion indicate the present of difficulty. apparently botany is an easier subject than religion but another author showed more confidence. You don't need 80 pages to define lycopersicon esculentum or even uhhh... cactus.

Professor William E. Hocking in living religions and world faith commences by asserting that "in its nature religion is universal and one." As a matter of fact Hocking means more to this assertion than that religion is one in the sense that all the members of the lily family are one family. For he goes further and complains that the plurality of religions is a scandal to the religious man himself. I suppose you heard that objection time and time again it is very common. The plurality of religion is a scandal to the religious man himself. To the philosopher and to the statesman who wishes to unify his community.

But why should it be a scandal? The plurality of lilies is no scandal to the botanist. Should the plurality of religions be scandalous to philosopher? And however scandalous the plurality of religion may be to the statesman who wishes to unify his community, this very plurality may seem a blessing to freedom of the individuals who think that some society has been too thoroughly unified already.

What can religion be? If it is a more perfect unity than the generic unity of botany why should the unity of religion exclude specific differences? In a later volume *The coming of world Civilization*, in a later volume, professor Hocking repeats his vigorous assertions of unity. In the fifth section of the book, to justify the unification of all religions in essence, he argues that “affirmation is not exclusion,” (pg. 137). “The Christian faith and a priori the Buddhist doctrine do not offer themselves as hypothesis competing with other hypothesis. Each one says this is a way to peace.” All quotations from Hocking, “Each one says this is a way to peace and such an affirmation does not exclude other ways. In a sense that there is an only way but is not the only way of a particular religion, it is a universal wa the essence of the precept and doctrines that mystics and all religions have discerned is the same. The agreements are not even mere similarities. They are identities. Thus, the only way is not the way that marks off one religion from another, but, it is the way already present in all. The several universal religions are already fused together so to speak at the top.” The last few words he has italicized namely that they are already fused together so to speak at the top. Do any of you know anything about Professor Hocking? He was quite well known back in the 30s or 20s. What, what very definite results happen from some of his writings?

Well wasn't he the man that pretty well smashed up the evangelical missionary enterprise?

Student: I don't know anything about him.

Wasn't he the author of *Rethinking Missions*? And hence he. . . Pretty much wrecked the preaching of the gospel in foreign nations?

All right, all right, all right. Can't know everything.

Naturally such a view stimulates many questions. For example, it may be asked does Hocking based his statements on an empirical study of several religions? Is this what the religions assert or admit? How does Hocking obtain the conclusion that the doctrine of all religions are essentially identical? If this is only what some mystics in every religion say, can the student of religion accept the mystical evaluation and disregard what other members of the same religion assert? It is undeniable at least that Hockings principal “affirmation is not exclusion” is in conflict with the explicit teachings of some religions. Christ's statement in the gospel, “no man

cometh unto the Father but by me” is decisively exclusive. Similarly the Apostle said “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Hocking would have to hold that Christ is not essential to Christianity. But of course this criticism is premature for at the beginning it seems reasonable, especially for one who is writing a book on religion, to assume that there must be some sort of unity either a generic unity or some still deeper kind that makes religion a single subject of discussion.

Now we come to a subhead: The previous subhead was unity and multiplicity: that is is there such a unitary thing of religion of which there are multiple examples? Now then this problem which is briefly surveyed raises a disconcerting disjunction. Promising and even necessary though this principle may appear, its application may already be attended with great difficulty. Perhaps the very familiarity of religious experience is one cause of its stubborn defiance of analysis. At any rate a comparison of the many volumes on religions poses a disconcerting disjunction. Either, in spite of the similarity of titles, the author's are not writing about the same subject or in spite of the length of the books and their learned vocabulary, they do not know what they are writing about.

The first half of this disjunction reflects those authors who like King, who I quoted a couple of pages ago, frankly, courageously, and commendably formulate an explicit definition of religion. A frank attempt is reasonable because one expects a writer to state what subject he intends to study. But a quick survey, of these definitions shows that the more definite the authors are the more obviously they are not talking about the same thing. King virtually includes a belief in God in his definition. At least he spells “object of devotion” with a capital O and further emphasizes it in the following chapter, Pg. 74 and following. So King regards God as an element in the definition of religion.

Julian Huxley on the other hand in *Religion Without Revelation* says that the essential religious realities is not God but the sense of the sacred which like the feeling of hunger or the emotion of anger is irreducible. Although this latter definition is not so definite in its affirmation as it is in its denial, it is still definite enough to see that King and Huxley are not talking about the same thing when they use the term religion. There are other humanistic definition of religions that may be taken as vague or definite depending on how one looks at them. The *Humanist Manifesto*, that's the original one back in the 30s not the more recent one that came out - in the 60s or was it in the 70s? The *Humanist Manifesto* constitutes religion of those actions purposes and experiences which are humanly significant. Now this may be vague and meaningless, but if it is taken at literal face value and assigned an intelligible meaning an interesting question comes to the floor. Is not an appendectomy humanly significant? Then it follows that appendectomy are religious exercises. It is evident therefore what the humanist call religion is not the same that other authors are discussing.

Once more William James was definite enough when he spoke of religion as the experiences of man in their solitude. But other writers are definite in defining religion as social. And the devout worshiper in any of the several religion might not like any of these definitions. Clearly what one man calls religion, another does not recognize as such. The more definite the definition is, the more clearly the writer is not writing on the same subject.

This difficulty gives rise to the second half of the disjunction. Some writers do not know what they are writing about. They recognize the impossibility of defining religion and rely on its familiarity to satisfy the reader. L. W. Grindsted in the psychology of religion and though there must be 100s and 100s of books on the psychology of religion. Grindsted remarks in the forward that the subject is nebulous and ill defined. No one part of it has any clear logic or scientific priority. "There is always a lurking doubt that whether a religion is a proper study to psychology at all." And a few pages too later he adds "the definition of religion is impossible. Thus the only means of saying what we mean by religion must be empirical, descriptive, and accumulative. We must in fact return to what ordinary folk understand by religious behaviour." (Pg. 15) This initial admission of failure however does not prevent the gentlemen from writing his book. A humorous paradox that he himself seems to enjoy. Every so often he acknowledges that he does not know what he is writing about and he says that is fun.

Now there are powerful reason to accepting the position that religion cannot be defined. In fact such is the main conclusion of this chapter. One of the . . . criticisms that some of my students make of me is that they can't tell whether I am giving my own opinions and when I'm giving the opinions of other people. That's because they don't listen carefully; that seems to be a occupational hazard of students. But, I'll warn you now I'm giving my own opinion in these two or three lines any how.

There are powerful reason for accepting the position that religion cannot be defined. Such as the main conclusion of this chapter. It will be shown definitely that we cannot with confidence, to repeat a phrase from King, we cannot assume that religion as a distinguishable meaning. This conclusion sometimes leads to the clear sighted muddleheaded of Grindsted. There is, however, another alternative to be mentioned later. but for the moment and particularly the open to the discussion, one should not merely assume the impossibility of defining religion. It is better to examine the two chief methods use in attempting to frame a definition and if in doing so we are fairly convinced that the problem is insoluble, we shall have learned the precise reason for the failure.

So I am going to give two different methods that have been used to define religion and show why both of them fail. The second method based on examining the multiformity of Muhammadanism

and Shintoism, Buddhism, and so on may be named the comparative method. But the first to be considered is the psychological approach based on the intimate familiarity of the experience. And now there are some subheads under the general title of the psychological approach. The first subhead is emotion vs. intellect. There are many persons, both scholars and others, who believe that the essence of religion the common factor in all religions is some sort of emotional experience. In one way or the other they minimize the intellectual content. Although Hocking speaks of the search for righteousness, and righteousness no doubt is something other than emotions, Hocking's stress falls on the passionateness of the search rather than on the contents of righteousness. Now what famous author can you think of who . . . depends a great deal on passion?

Student: Kierkegaard.

Yes... I am glad you heard of Kierkegaard dear old fella. We will have something to say about him too. Nothing commendatory of course.

He stresses the passionateness of the search rather than the contents of righteousness. He does not make an outright denial that there are intellectual factors in religion, but he has assert that no theoretical is true apart from feeling. This seems to imply that even the truth of mathematics depends on feeling. Uhh $2+2=4$ is quite an emotional experience you know. Perhaps he would not say that all passion is religious or commendable but passion is so much the medium of religion that whatever is of passion tends to be religious. King also emphasizes the emotional nature of religion and disparages the intellectual. That is King as opposed to Hocking. In his forward he refers to "The bare bone of the intellectual statement of religious dogma." As opposed to, and this the rest is in quotes, as opposed to "the vital phenomena of breathing and moving religion themselves."

Student: When you said or when you mention that he asserts the ???? What is he limiting that too ???

Well no I don't think so because you see, he, after he talks about passion in the matter of religion then he realizes that there are some people might say that there are some passions that are not very religious. He does not exactly deny that but he tries to minimize it by saying ALL passion is so much the medium of religion that whatever isn't passion and this might be some very nasty angry plot... whatever is of passion tends to be religious. So he does not want to say outright that all passions are religious but he does say all passions at least tend to be religious and this is a modification of his first statement, to take care of some instances of passion where most be would say its not religious. And he well no it really isn't religious but it tends to be. It's on the

way of becoming religious. No I think he meant it that way of course you can interpret it as you please but that is the conclusion that I came to.

And then King says . . . he makes the comparison or the contrast between the bare bones of the intellectual statements of religious dogma, as opposed to the vital phenomena of breathing and moving religion themselves. And I can show you lots of so called devotional books that follow that line. I guess you all read them and get rather tiring and boring after a while.

Or consider a little more at link the views of another well known scholar who places the emphasis on emotion. James Bissett Pratt. I don't suppose many of you heard of him but he was very well known scholar at the beginning of this century or early in this century and his book had tremendous influence. The book title is *The Religious Consciousness*. Pratt aware of the difficulties in framing a definition admits that in many respects his own definition is probably as bad as any other, but he holds that one word in it hits the marks pretty accurately. Religion he says is a serious attitude toward those powers which people believe control their destinies.

It is the word attitude which he stresses and by which he plays down the intellect. In his study of conversion he states "the essential thing about conversion is the unification of character." And that this is "the really important and only essential part of it." The unification of character is the important and only essential part of religion. Pg. 123. And continuing verbatim quotation, "This involves will emotion and thought but it is primarily moral." Continuing the quote, "Nor is the intellectual side of the process to be neglected though it is frankly the least noticeable of the three." "In most cases," this is still verbatim quotation, "in most cases it seems to play a negative part." He does not rule out intellect completely but he says it is a negative part it's not very important doesn't make any importance what you believe you have to believe but it does not make much difference. The thing is to believe it passionately. Which is somewhat similar to, but not completely the same as Kierkegaard.

Now we have a little subhead on preconceived notions

At the risk of anticipating too much of the later argument, it might be best even at this point to question whether all unification of purpose or character is religious. As one example of conversion Pratt chooses the experience of a certain ardigo who renounce the roman catholic priesthood to become a positivistic scientist. This no doubt is no doubt a conversion of a sort but is it a religious conversion? Of course the answer to this question depends on one's definition of religion. Pratt defends his choice of example on the ground that he has not permitted preconceived notions derived from Christian theology to influence him. Presumably to choose as examples of conversion only those instances which accord with Christian theology to do that would be to forfeit the claim to scientific objectivity.

At the same time although Pratt may not have selected the material from the standpoint of any one of the well known world religions, he nonetheless makes his selection on the basis of other preconceived principles. Which can be thought of as his private religion from a logical standpoint, it is equal whether one's assumptions are philosophical or theological, Christian or not. If it is reprehensible to operate on Christian presuppositions is it any best so on other presuppositions? The only difference would seem to be that the writer with Christian principles is probably more aware of the fact, while the scientific writer sometimes claims he has no preconceived notions at all. In other words, Pratt attempting to avoid the bias of a Christian view of conversion, does not seem to be aware of his own bias in assuming ardigo's conversion was a religious conversion and the essence of religion is the unification of character.

I'm trying to get across to you the idea of the definition of terms is important. You ought to know what you are talking about. Of course that sometimes restricts the conversation to a very little bit, but to make any real progress you have to know what you are talking about. Whether it is out, sevey, or bell, otherwise you don't say anything clear enough for other people to understand and I guess you might say you are not thinking clearly enough for you to understand what you are saying yourself. And so I am working up to a definition of Christianity in the...

Student: Ummm.... you said that Pratt considers that he avoided the problem of preconceived notion that Christian theistic basis but do you think he also had some preconceived notion...

Obviously...

Student: Ok what do you classify them as?

Well he has a notion of conversion which allows him to say that ardigo's conversion is a religion conversion. Now most people at any rate would not suppose that a man that left the Roman priesthood to become a positivistic scientist was converted, they won't use that language they would say he changed his mind or something rather he gave up religion and became a scientist something of this but they wouldn't call it a conversion. But Pratt's definition of conversion includes that. Now then, he has a certain presupposition in his notion of what conversion is. And he rejects the Christian concept of conversion he has a different concept of conversion which allows him to include ardigo. And so he is using certain presupposition, certain bias although he rejects a different bias. But he thinks he has no bias.

Yes?

Student: Was it not be the case that any definition is I mean like for instance we apply criteria are they not just essentially arbitrary...

Yes...

Student: Unclear

Yes... because a four inch nail on a four inch worm belongs to the same species.

Student: What do you mean?

I thought we talked about four inch nails a little bit ago.

Student: ???

Well?

Student: Ok. I think that maybe biology would be easy to apply certain characteristics. But those characteristics are essentially chosen by somebody in commonly agreed in the same way couldn't we... just assuming that... Pratt has a definition. But if everyone were to agree that the essence of religion is conversion as he understands would that not then define religion?

That would be his definition of religion... So you see botany and zoology are essential to Christian apologetics. And you have to know the difference between a tomato and a whale.

Student: So in your own presuppositional worldview would you ever refer to such systems as Islam and Judaism as religion?

O I might used the word... we talk colloquial all the time you know but if you want technique no because one of the working up of the definition of Christianity, one of my points is that there is no such thing as religion.... Of course that sounds sort of queer. But I am queer.

Student: Alright, I want to ask a further question then. ??? being provincial sorta like a ???

My reply is the basketball player is just as narrow as the baseball player because the basketball player says baseball isn't a sport. To put it more generally as I'm working up to it, you can't avoid presuppositions. You probably, a good many of you have heard some of my views and you understand of course that I am a presuppositionalist, but I am trying to show why I am and part of that is to show that everybody else is too, even though they say they are not.

Student: The basketball player ???

But he has a different definition of sport.

Student: ??? Common sense view ????

Yes and from a common sense view Judaism is a religion. But when you come down to being technical and accurate you cannot define religion and make it fit. Well I am working up the reasons why you cannot define religion.

Student: ??? Christianity

And I am going to give my definition yes. But the Roman Catholic will give his definition and his definition of Christianity is not the same as mine. He has his presuppositions, I have other ones. As for not defining religion, I am analyzing the two methods that have been used to define religion. One psychological, and the other comparative religions. I want to say that both those methods fail and since they fail you have to start some other way. And of course I start the way I prefer it to. So does everybody else.

Yes?

Student: When you say the definition . . . I mean the use of the word religion . . . if it has no valid definition. . . .

Please don't use the word valid when you're talking about something that can't possibly be valid. Proper, if you wish. Appropriate.

Student: If there is no appropriate definition, if we can't even formulate the definition of religion, then are you saying that we shouldn't use the word religion?

It's very hard to avoid it. But as I go on to point out, the colloquial use is confused and one of the things I am coming to if you ask people in general without being technical in a classroom, ask people whether Communism is a religion. Most people say no it is antireligious. But, then you can point out factors in Communism to say 'O yes it is a religion' and this indicates the confusion in the popular usage of the word. But, I don't think that anyone can stop the English speaking people from using the word religion.

Student: Wouldn't make sense to begin from the fact that people use it to try to communicate it individually on the basis of how they use that word?

You may start there but when you find out that they do not mean the same thing and their usage conflicts with the usage of other people that there are many inconsistent usages of the word then you are forced to say what you mean and when you say what you mean then you are going to exclude some usages.

Student: So the burden is what you are trying to say is to push people to clarify what they mean by their term of religion.

For instance Shintoism is that a religion or politics? Same thing Communism but there are other things too.

Student: it seems to mean that it depends on how you use the word. If you choose to use the word a certain way...

If you would take the trouble to look up words in Merriam-Webster unabridged dictionary, you would find that most words in the English language have four or five different meanings, and in that case, unless a person makes clear what he means the other person does not know what he is talking about. That's why I said the fast horse is tied fast. Here you have the same word with completely opposite meanings.

Student: It seems to mean that the point should be just to clarify what we are saying rather than not to use the word?

If you can, yeah. . . . But, I am going to argue that you can't use the word religion no matter how you clarify it so that you can include say Judaism, Christianity, and Communism, or Judaism, Christianity, and exclude Communism.

I want to show that these two methods, and there really these two methods are the only methods used, these two methods fail.

Yes?

Student: ???

Well in the case of Cactus . . .

Student: ???

No but anything that has those five is a cactus.

Student: ???

That makes it a cactus.

Student: ???

Yes, I want to get five or some number. To define religion you have to get five characteristic which are found in everything you call religion. Now of course there may be other characteristic in various religion because there various types of cacti, but anything that has those five is a cactus whatever other characteristics they may have and if you could define religion you would have to put down a certain number of criteria and anything that would fit those criteria would be a religion. And I wish to show you what the trouble is if you try to do that.

Student: what is the minimum number of characteristic you need to show? If there is one common characteristic could you make that?

That would give a very wide genus, I guess.

Student: ???

Well, that sort of artificial but yes it's possible.

Student: Are you saying that many times you can't give necessary and sufficient condition for use of the word

Those two words are very good, Necessary and Sufficient . . . Yeah!

Student: So if we can't give the necessary and sufficient condition of a proper definition of a term that there is no way we can use that term?

That is right.

Student: But how?

If you don't have those necessary and sufficient conditions then you don't know what you are talking about.

Student: Let's say for example part of the necessary and sufficient condition of the definition of the word chair?

Well I really don't know.

Student: I guess I am saying that I have been in situation where we kick that around and nobody has come up with anything that doesn't break down somewhere and yet we very meaningfully use the word chair and people seem to know what you are talking about.

No they don't have a very accurate idea of what you are meaning...

Student: In a specific context.

Well of course you have unexpressed meanings that you take for granted that often happens of course but I quite agree with you that it would be exceptionally difficult to define chair. The nearest you could come to is that it something you sit on but that includes a rock. Well no you would have to define something you sit on so that your legs could be bent right angles. So the beach wouldn't do.

Student: ???

You mean like a deck chair.

Student: that's a chair.

Deck chair does not raise up so that . . .

[Audience Laughter]

That is the difficulty.

Student: ???

I am glad you now recognize that linguistics is an essential part of Christian apologetics. Just like Einstein's relativity is.

Student: ???

Well you remember I said some people want to restrict apologetics to a relatively narrow field and my notion whether you accept it or not, that's something else, but my notion makes it rather wide. That is I want to include Einstein and the matter of language.

Now wait there was one here somebody... Yes, was it you?

Student: Well I am still having trouble in seeing what it . . . the way I understand genus is that genus is not supposed to be . . . you know, getting back to the chair, if we thought genus chair . . .

Never mind visualizing it, I don't think you can.

Student: or see. . .

No understand, or state.

Student: What the idea of a chair is. Genus is in general category. If I say ???

Well I don't know enough botany to answer that question correctly. But I am guessing, and I rather think my guess would be technically incorrect, I would say that genus lily is a subclass of the general notion of plant. Now I rather suspect that there is some intervening definitions in there but I don't know them. You see you have the star of Bethlehem and that is one under the genus lily and lily is something under a higher group which may be plant but I suspect there is some intermediate terms in there too.

Student: When you said earlier when you talked about my other question that you presuppose Christianity or prefer Christianity to define Christianity. Why do you prefer it? Do you have reason to prefer Christianity?

I will take up that question in detail as we go on. I am not dodging your question at least I am dodging it for the moment, but, I am not going to forget it. But I want to be very specific and state the criteria is.

Student: I guess that so much of the question does it have to do with the exclusiveness of Christianity.

Yes, that's right.

Student: ???

I will try to give you an answer. But if you see if I am so persnickety is to require strict definitions I have to impose that limitation on myself and to do so I have to take things up technically one at a time and I can't say everything in fifteen minutes. But you are on the subject and yeah that is fine. Only I am not ready to answer that question yet. I am not dodging it eventually in fact I want to make it as clear as I can but I have to produce a certain amount of background.

Student: do you use the word religion this morning as any meaningful communication taking place?

Oh, it is only vague. When you use the term religion in colloquial language you mean Judaism, Buddhism, and few things like that and that certainly colloquial and not very definite. As I said take the word conversion and most Christians would not say that Ardigo changed from Roman priesthood to positivist science was conversion in any religious sense. But, this fella does.