

Grading Religions

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Abstract This essay develops standards for grading religions including various forms of spiritualism. First, I examine the standards proposed by William James, John Hick, Paul Knitter, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, and Harold Netland. Most of them are useful in grading religions with or without conditions. However, those standards are not enough for refined and piercing evaluation. Thus, I introduce standards used in spiritualism. Although those standards are for grading spirits and their teachings, they are useful in refined and piercing evaluation of religious phenomena. The spiritual standards complement James's, Hick's, Knitter's, and Netland's standards. Although most of the spiritual standards are rationally unjustifiable, they have practical value.

Keywords Religion · Spiritualism · Evaluation · Grading · Ranking · Criteria · Standard

Introduction

This essay develops standards for grading religions including various forms of spiritualism. First, I examine the standards proposed by William James, John Hick, Paul Knitter, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, and Harold Netland. As we will see, most of them are useful in grading religions with or without conditions. I show, however, that those standards are not enough for refined and piercing evaluation. Thus, I introduce standards used in spiritualism. I argue that although those standards are for grading spirits and their teachings, they are useful in refined and piercing evaluation of religious phenomena. Finally, I show that although most of the spiritual standards are rationally unjustifiable, they have practical value.

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James's Standards

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James mentions the following three standards for evaluating religious opinions: immediate luminousness, moral helpfulness, and philosophical reasonableness. According to James, immediate luminousness is 'judgments based on our own immediate feeling.' Moral helpfulness is judgment based 'on what we can ascertain of their experiential relations to our moral needs.' Philosophical reasonableness is judgment based 'on what we can ascertain of their experiential relations...to the rest of what we hold as true.'¹

James's classification of mysticism shows what the immediate luminousness is like. According to James, mystical experience has the following four characteristics: First, ineffability—'no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others.' Second, noetic quality—mystical states 'are states of insight into depths of truth.' Third, transiency—'[m]ystical states cannot be sustained for long.' Fourth, passivity—'the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power.'² Then James claims that 'religious mysticism is only one half of mysticism.' Another half is 'a *diabolical* mysticism, a sort of religious mysticism turned upside down.' He says, 'The same sense of ineffable importance in the smallest events, the same texts and words coming with new meanings, the same voices and visions and leadings and missions, the same controlling by extraneous powers; only this time the emotion is pessimistic: instead of consolations we have desolations; the meanings are dreadful; and the powers are enemies to life.'³ Thus, a pessimistic or negative tone in mystical experience is a sign of the diabolical mysticism. Mystical states include 'certain definite phenomena of secondary or alternative personality, such as prophetic speech, automatic writing, or the mediumistic trance.'⁴ So, revelation and inspiration with a pessimistic or negative tone would be diabolical as well. On the other hand, revelation and inspiration with an optimistic or positive tone would not be diabolical. There are different degrees of pessimistic, negative, optimistic, and positive tones. Thus, the more optimistic or positive revelation or inspiration, the less it is likely to be diabolical.

Later scholars have developed especially the standard of philosophical reasonableness, but not much that of immediate luminousness. Yet for refined and piercing evaluation, it is necessary to develop especially the standard of immediate luminousness. I will do it later.

¹ James (1982), 18.

² James (1982), 380–381. W. T. Stace divides mystical experiences into two types—extrovertive and introvertive ones—and lists characteristics of each type, many of which are common between the two types. The common characteristics include sense of objectivity or reality, blessedness, peace, holiness, paradoxicality, and ineffability. Stace (1960), 131–132.

³ James (1982), 426.

⁴ James (1982), 381.

Hick's Standards

In the article 'On Grading Religions,' John Hick recognizes that religions phenomena are not 'all on the same level of value or validity...Thus some kind of assessing of religious phenomena seems to be a corollary of deep religious seriousness and openness to the divine.' Hick thinks that 'within our own tradition, even without attempting comparison with others, different aspects have to be regarded as higher or lower, better or worse, even divine and demonic.'⁵

Hick mentions two tools for grading religions: reason and conscience or moral judgment. The former grades religious beliefs, while the latter 'the historical out-working of those beliefs.'⁶ Hick holds that reason is incapable of grading religious experiences. He says, 'it is clear that the character of the universe and our place within it will become known to us, if at all, by experience and observation, not by reasoning; and so it does not seem that the tool of reason can enable us to test and assess the different basic religious experiences and their associated visions of reality.' Hick knows that 'around each basic vision subsequent generations of thinkers have built interpretative systems of thought...Rational scrutiny of these systems is clearly in principle possible. We can try to assess such a system in respect of its internal consistency and its adequacy both to the particular form of experience on which it is based and to the data of human experience in general.' Yet Hick points out that 'the great enduring systems of Thomas Aquinas, al-Ghazali, Shankara, and Buddhaghosha' seem 'equally massive and powerful systematisations of different basic visions.' And 'any grading of them...has to fall back upon a grading of the basic visions which they articulate; and this...cannot be achieved by any intellectual test.' Thus, Hick concludes that 'we cannot grade the great world traditions by means of the tool of reason.'⁷

Let us see what other scholars say about internal consistency. Harold Netland says, 'for a set of defining beliefs of R to be all true they must be consistent. This is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for their truth. Lack of consistency entails that not all the defining beliefs are true; at least one is false. But lack of inconsistency in itself does not guarantee that all the beliefs are true, for a set of false beliefs can also be internally consistent.'⁸ Dan Cohn-Sherbok claims that internal consistency is not a proper standard for grading religious beliefs and practices.

[T]here is no self-evident reason why internal consistency should necessarily be regarded as a central virtue of a religion. It may well be that religious experience transcends ordinary categories of logical reasoning; furthermore, even if it were shown that a religious system is coherent in terms of belief and practice, this would not necessarily imply that it was in fact based on a true encounter with Divine reality.⁹

Religious beliefs are either normative or descriptive. Internal consistency is a useful standard for grading both. First, internal consistency is crucial for normative

⁵ Hick (1981), 451.

⁶ Hick (1981), 461.

⁷ Hick (1981), 462.

⁸ Netland (1997), 184.

⁹ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 379.

beliefs. There should not be inconsistency in normative beliefs—even a seeming one—because we cannot know what to do before inconsistent norms. Next, let us think about descriptive beliefs, such as the nature of God and our existence. Logically, Cohn-Sherbok's claim holds for descriptive beliefs. A seeming inconsistency in descriptive beliefs does not necessarily entail that the religion is false because religion may transcend 'ordinary categories of logical reasoning.'¹⁰ Also, a seeming inconsistency may be due to an incomplete language which cannot fully express religion. However, in reality, it is unlikely that a high-quality religion would leave its believers puzzled about its seemingly inconsistent beliefs. Thus, if religious beliefs contain a seeming inconsistency, they either contain an error or fail to explain the seeming inconsistency. As we will see, from a spiritual perspective, internal consistency is an important standard for grading spirits and their teachings, from which I infer that it is also an important standard for grading religious phenomena including divine mediators and sacred writings. As Netland and Cohn-Sherbok point out, internal consistency does not guarantee the truth of a religion. Yet, given the above, internal consistency is a useful standard for grading religious beliefs, whether normative or descriptive.

As we saw, Hick claims that we can assess a religious philosophy on 'its adequacy both to the particular form of experience on which it is based and to the data of human experience in general.'¹¹ Yet Cohn-Sherbok writes,

it is unclear how one is to determine whether a theology or philosophy within a religious tradition is adequate to the originating religious vision or successful in interpreting that vision to a new age. There is no doubt that the theologies of Thomas Aquinas, al-Ghazali, Maimonides, Shankara, Buddhaghosha are intellectually impressive, but are they true to the original vision on which they are based? Are they successful interpretations for subsequent believers? There is no obvious way to deal with these questions, and any answers will inevitably be based on subjective reactions and interpretations.¹²

As Cohn-Sherbok says, it is difficult to assess the adequacy of a religious philosophy to the original experience on which it rests. But we can still assess its adequacy to our experience in general.

As mentioned before, according to Hick, conscience or moral judgment is another tool for grading religions. The moral judgment has two objects for grading: 'the ideal fruit, visible in the saints of a given tradition' and 'the ordinary life of millions of ordinary people as it takes place within the actual history of that tradition.'¹³ Yet Hick argues that we cannot grade religious civilizations by moral judgment.

[I]t is entirely possible in principle that there is an ethical ranking of religious civilisations, with one rightly appearing at the top of the list. But...we are not in fact able to make the comparative assessment which might lead to such a result. Thus if we consider the case, widely accepted within our own society, for the moral superiority of Christian civilization over the Muslim, Hindu and

¹⁰ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 379.

¹¹ Hick (1981), 462.

¹² Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 379.

¹³ Hick (1981), 463.

Buddhist civilizations, we find that for each evil that the Christian can point to in one of the other streams of religious history, there is an equally evident evil within his own history; and that it is impossible realistically to weigh these often incommensurate evils against each other.¹⁴

Cohn-Sherbok criticizes Hick's moral assessment, saying that he does not provide 'a systematic framework for ethical decision-making.' According to Cohn-Sherbok, it is not clear whether Hick adopts a teleological, deontological, or some other framework for moral judgment.¹⁵ Hick needs to specify the framework.

It would be inappropriate to grade a religion by simply looking at the moral quality of its believers. Since those who are joining religions are different in their moral quality, each religion has believers with varying degrees of moral quality. Some in a religion may do good, while others may do bad. Even if we find good or bad moral quality in them, that may be due to their original moral quality, not to the religion. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to grade a religion by simply looking at the moral quality of its believers. Instead, we should grade a religion by how much it improves the moral quality of its believers in a given time period. This is a pragmatic standard, which we will see below.

On the other hand, the moral quality of divine mediators is a useful standard for grading religions. According to Hick, the coherence between a divine mediator's moral character and his teaching is important.¹⁶ But Cohn-Sherbok says, 'it does not necessarily follow that when such coherence is found in the life of a religious leader, that person has in fact had a true encounter with God.' Also, an incoherence does not necessarily show 'the falseness of a religious leader's claims—when such a figure does not live out his message, this may well be the result of human weakness, temptation, and sin.'¹⁷ Logically, Cohn-Sherbok's claims seem right. Yet, spiritually speaking, a mediator's moral character is important. As we will see, it is unlikely that divine teachings of high quality come from a morally poor mediator.

Concluding, Hick says, 'religious phenomena—patterns of behaviour, experiences, beliefs, myths, theologies, cultic acts, liturgies, scriptures, etc—can in principle be assessed and graded; and the basic criterion is the extent to which they promote or hinder the great religious aim of salvation/liberation.' Here salvation or liberation is 'the realisation of that limitlessly better quality of human existence which comes about in the transition from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness.'¹⁸ This is a goal common to all religions. Thus, Hick claims that we can grade religious phenomena by their success or failure in the soteriological mission. This is a pragmatic standard. Yet Hick writes,

whilst we can to some extent assess and grade religious phenomena, we cannot realistically assess and grade the great world religions as totalities. For each of these long traditions is so internally diverse, containing so many different kinds of both good and evil, that it is impossible for human judgement to weigh up and compare their merits as systems of salvation. It may be that one facilitates

¹⁴ Hick (1981), 465.

¹⁵ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 380.

¹⁶ Hick (1981), 458–459.

¹⁷ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 380–381.

¹⁸ Hick (1981), 466–467.

human liberation/salvation more than the others; but if so this is not evident to human vision. So far as we can tell, they are equally productive of that transition from self to Reality which we see in the saints of all traditions.¹⁹

It is possible to question Hick's claim that whether some religion 'facilitates human liberation/salvation more than the others...is not evident to human vision.'²⁰ We may find some religion more effective in liberation or salvation than others. Since those who are joining a religion are different in their moral quality, it is inappropriate to rate the effectiveness by simply measuring the average moral quality of its believers. Yet it is possible to rate the effectiveness by how much in average a religion helps its believers make the transition in a given time period.

Cohn-Sherbok questions Hick's pragmatic standard. Cohn-Sherbok says, 'Religious systems provide different and varied spiritual fruits—it is certainly plausible that other spiritual attitudes and concerns are of equal or even superior value than ego-renunciation and self-giving to the Real.'²¹ But Cohn-Sherbok does not mention any other religious goal more important than this. The transition from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness can take multiple forms including 'a voluntary renunciation of ego-centeredness and a self-giving to, or self-losing in, the Real—a self-giving which brings acceptance, compassion, love for all humankind, or even for all life.'²² There seem no other religious goals more important than this.

Knitter's Standards

Paul Knitter proposes three 'general guidelines or criteria for determining the truth-value of any religion or religious figure.'

1) *Personally*, does the revelation of the religion or religious figure—the story, the myth, the message—move the human heart? Does it stir one's feelings, the depths of one's unconscious? 2) *Intellectually*, does the revelation also satisfy and expand the mind? Is it intellectually coherent? Does it broaden one's horizons of understanding? 3) *Practically*, does the message promote the psychological health of individuals, their sense of value, purpose, freedom? Especially, does it promote the welfare, the liberation, of all peoples, integrating individual persons and nations into a larger community?²³

Let us think about Knitter's standard of personal feeling. Cohn-Sherbok thinks it problematic. He writes,

the answers to these questions will inevitably involve subjective interpretation and personal judgement. For example, the life and teachings of Jesus evoke a spiritual response on the part of Christians but have little meaning for Jews. Similarly, the Buddha is of profound significance for Buddhists but has little relevance for Muslims. Again, the legal system of Islam has no significance for

¹⁹ Hick (1981), 467.

²⁰ Hick (1981), 467.

²¹ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 380.

²² Hick (1981), 463.

²³ Knitter (1985), 231.

Hindus. In all these cases, it is simply impossible to make an objective evaluation of the truth claims of the world's religions on the basis of an existential response.²⁴

This criticism would be right where religious ideas differ from religion to religion. But it is unlikely that no idea in a religion moves the heart of those with different faiths. Religions have overlapping ideas, which would move people's heart regardless of their religious affiliation. Even if some idea in a religion does not overlap with those in other religions, it may still move the heart of those with different faiths. Thus, we can employ the standard of personal feeling for grading universally applicable features of religions.

Let us think about Knitter's standard of intellectual coherence. Cohn-Sherbok finds it problematic. He says, 'Jews for example find the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation irrational and incoherent. For Christians the Theravada Buddhist's rejection of a supernatural deity undermines the spiritual life. Muslims regard Hindu polytheism as religiously abhorrent.'²⁵ Cohn-Sherbok mentions only the seeming intellectual incoherence in belief between religions.²⁶ But, as we saw, we can still assess internal consistency in belief within a religion. Although internal consistency does not guarantee the truth of a religion, it is a useful standard for grading religious beliefs.

As another intellectual standard, Knitter proposes the standard of intellectual knowledge. It is possible to grade a religious philosophy by how much it expands our mind or by how much it broadens our horizons of understanding. Yet, as we will see, I use the standard of intellectual knowledge as a secondary standard.

Lastly, let us think about Knitter's standard of practicality. Cohn-Sherbok thinks it problematic. He writes,

How is one to assess whether particular religious beliefs promote psychological health and liberation? Orthodox adherents for example (such as Orthodox Jews, Roman Catholics, traditional Muslims) regard liberal movements within their own faiths as misguided; liberals on the other hand argue that certain traditional elements of their faiths are psychologically constraining and hinder personal and communal growth.²⁷

Here Cohn-Sherbok suggests that psychological health and liberation can be desirable or undesirable depending on one's assumptions. If this is the case, it seems problematic at least for some to grade religions by how much a religious idea, belief, action, or experience promotes psychological health or liberation. Yet there are cases where psychological health or liberation is desirable regardless of one's assumptions. There are also cases where other psychological or social states are desirable regardless of one's assumptions. We can employ the standard of practicality to assess how much a religious idea, belief, action, or experience promotes or hinders those universally desirable states.

²⁴ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 381.

²⁵ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 381.

²⁶ I say 'seeming' because, as we will see, there may be no real incoherence in belief between religions.

²⁷ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 381.

Cohn-Sherbok's Standard

Criticizing Hick's and Knitter's standards, Cohn-Sherbok introduces a standard of viability for grading religions. The standard judges 'whether the religious system is practiced and believed in by the majority of its so-called adherents. The process of grading religions is therefore essentially a sociological rather than a philosophical or theological exercise. The concern is not with inherent value, truth or validity, but with the capacity of a religious system to function effectively in the lives of its adherents.'²⁸ Cohn-Sherbok admits that the standard 'does not reveal what is of crucial importance—the relative inherent merits of the world's faiths.' The standard does not test the truth-claims of a religion. But he says, 'ranking religions in terms of truth appears to be an impossible task since the criteria for judging religions in this manner are ultimately based on subjective judgement and personal predilection. Ranking religions on the basis of viability, however, would overcome this impasse by providing an objective procedure for evaluating religions on the basis of effectiveness.'²⁹

As we saw, to some extent we can test religious truth-claims. Also, as we will see, Netland develops various standards for testing them. Thus, Cohn-Sherbok's claim that grading religions by their truth seems impossible would be inadequate.

The standard of viability has the following problem: what if a religion orders something like suicide or terrorism, and most adherents follow it enthusiastically?³⁰ According to the standard, the religion will receive a high grade. This problem arises because the standard does not consider the inherent value and truth in a religion. From the fact that a religion is viable, it does not necessarily follow that it is inherently valuable or true. Thus, grading religions only by their viability would be inadequate.

Netland's Standards

Netland questions Hick's assumption that all religions have the common soteriological goal: 'the realisation of that limitlessly better quality of human existence which comes about in the transition from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness.'³¹ As we saw, Hick's pragmatic standard grades religious phenomena by their success or failure in the soteriological mission. But Netland writes,

the major religions offer very different answers to two fundamental questions: What is the nature of the human predicament? and What is the nature of salvation/enlightenment? Is the human predicament brought on by sin against a righteous and holy God, or is it due to *maya* (illusion) and *avidya* (ignorance)? Is salvation to be thought of in terms of justification before God or in terms of liberation from *samsara*? It is highly misleading to speak as if all religions share a common soteriological goal and simply differ on the means to reach it.

²⁸ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 384.

²⁹ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 385.

³⁰ For example, Peoples Temple and Aum Shinrikyo would be such religions.

³¹ Hick (1981), 467.

Since the analyses of the human predicament in the major religions differ, it is only to be expected that the soteriological goals in the respective religions will differ as well.³²

However, from the fact that ‘the analyses of the human predicament in the major religions differ,’ it does not follow that ‘the soteriological goals in the respective religions will differ as well.’³³ Netland thinks that Hick’s pragmatic standard does not work unless we first settle the question of truth in religions.³⁴ Netland assumes that truth-claims made by various religions are mutually exclusive.³⁵ But this assumption does not prove to be true. Multiple truth-claims made by multiple religions can be simultaneously true. Even if those truth-claims are seemingly incompatible, this may be because, as Cohn-Sherbok says, religion may transcend ‘ordinary categories of logical reasoning.’³⁶ Also, a seeming incompatibility may be due to an incomplete language which cannot fully express religion.³⁷ Therefore, from the fact that ‘the analyses of the human predicament in the major religions differ,’ it does not follow that ‘the soteriological goals in the respective religions will differ as well.’

Netland holds that ‘the most important basis upon which to evaluate various religions is the question of truth.’³⁸ He proposes the following standards for testing the truth of religious claims:

- D1: p is a defining belief of R if and only if being an active participant in good standing within the religious community of R entails acceptance of p.
- D2: A religion R is true if and only if all of its defining beliefs are true; if any of its defining beliefs are false, then R is false.
- P1: If a defining belief p of a religion R is self-contradictory then p is false.
- P2: If two or more defining beliefs of R are mutually contradictory at least one of them must be false.
- P3: If a defining belief p of R is self-defeating it cannot reasonably be accepted as true.
- P4: If the defining beliefs of R are not coherent in the sense of providing a unified perspective on the world, then R cannot plausibly be regarded as true.
- P5: Any religious worldview which is unable to account for fundamental phenomena associated with a religious orientation or which cannot provide adequate answers to central questions in religion should not be accepted as true.

³² Netland (1997), 160.

³³ Netland (1997), 160.

³⁴ Netland (1997), 160–162. Netland makes a similar critique against Knitter’s standard of practicality, saying that it ‘is entirely useless apart from first settling the question of truth.’ According to Netland, we first need the answer to the following question: ‘What is the ultimate nature of the human predicament and how can one attain release from it?’ Netland (1997), 164.

³⁵ Paul Griffiths and Delmas Lewis also assume this when criticizing Hick. Griffiths and Lewis (1983), 79–80. For Hick’s reply to their criticism, see Hick (1983).

³⁶ Cohn-Sherbok (1986), 379.

³⁷ I suggest the possibility that Cohn-Sherbok’s remark and the incomplete language thesis may apply to external inconsistency between religions. But, as we saw, I do not apply them to internal inconsistency within a religion when grading the religion.

³⁸ Netland (1997), 166.

- P6: If a defining belief p of R contradicts well-established conclusions in other domains, and if R cannot justify doing so, then p should be rejected as probably false.
- P7: If a defining belief p of R depends upon a belief in another domain (e.g., history) which there is good reason to reject as false, then there is good reason to reject p as probably false.
- P8: If one or more defining beliefs of R are incompatible with widely accepted and well-established moral values and principles; or if R includes among its essential practices or rites activities which are incompatible with basic moral values and practices, then there is good reason for rejecting R as false.
- P9: If the defining beliefs of R entail the denial of the objectivity of basic moral values and principles; or if they entail the denial of the objective distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, then there is good reason for rejecting R as false.
- P10: If R is unable to provide adequate answers to basic questions about the phenomena of moral awareness this provides good reason for rejecting R as false.³⁹

Netland's standards include Hick's standard of internal consistency and Knitter's standard of intellectual coherence (P2). They include Hick's standard of adequacy of a religious philosophy to our general experience (P6). They also include Knitter's standard of intellectual knowledge (P5, P10). In general, I have no objection to those standards. Let me remark on P9. As Netland points out, it rejects certain forms of Hinduism and Buddhism as false.⁴⁰ But they have their own world views which explain and justify their moral beliefs. Unless their world views prove to be false, it is too simplistic to reject them as false. Therefore, I would revise P9 as follows:

- P9r: If the defining beliefs of R entail the denial of the objectivity of basic moral values and principles; or if they entail the denial of the objective distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, *and if R cannot justify doing so*, then there is good reason for rejecting R as false.

Netland says, 'Each religion should be evaluated primarily on the basis of its best ideals, not its failures in practice.'⁴¹ Yet the practice of a religion is also a useful standard for evaluation. Since those who are joining religions are different in their moral quality, each religion has believers with varying degrees of moral quality. Some in a religion may do good, while others may do bad. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to grade a religion simply by its success or failure in practice. Its success or failure may be due to the original moral quality of its believers, not to the religion. Still, religions often have some tendencies, such as that to produce hostility and violence toward other religions. We can grade religions by their tendencies.

Max Weber's theory of objective possibility is useful for knowing the tendencies of a religion. To evaluate causal significance of an event, imagine a sequence of events excluding it and ask what would have occurred without it. If the final event

³⁹ Netland (1997), 192–193.

⁴⁰ Netland (1997), 190–191.

⁴¹ Netland (1997), 190.

would have happened anyway, the excluded event probably played merely a minor role. Yet if the following events would have been different, the excluded event probably played a decisive role.⁴² We can conduct this thought experiment to evaluate the causal relevance of a religious belief or action to a certain historical outcome. In this way, we know the tendencies of a religion.

Spiritual Standards

Most of the standards that we have seen are useful in grading religions with or without conditions. I classify those standards into the four categories. The first category is for standards of commonsense rationality. It includes James's standard of philosophical reasonableness, Hick's standard of internal consistency, Knitter's standard of intellectual coherence, Hick's standard of adequacy of a religious philosophy to our general experience, and most of Netland's standards (D2, P1–4, P6–9). The second category is for standards of intellectual knowledge. The standards grade a religious philosophy by how much it expands our mind or by how much it broadens our horizons of understanding. Knitter's standard of intellectual knowledge and some of Netland's standards (P5, P10) belong to this category. The third category is for pragmatic standards. The standards grade religions, for example, by the extent to which a religious idea, belief, action, or experience transforms human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness, or by how much a religious idea, belief, action, or experience promotes or hinders psychological health, liberation, or other desirable states. James's standard of moral helpfulness, Hick's pragmatic standard, and Knitter's standard of practicality belong to this category. The fourth category is for standards of immediate luminousness. The standards grade religions by our immediate feelings or intuitions toward religious phenomena. James's standard of immediate luminousness, Hick's moral assessment of divine mediators, and Knitter's standard of personal feeling belong to this category. Most of the useful standards that we have seen fall into the first three categories. The standards in those categories are seemingly objective.

According to George Galloway, religion has two sides: inner and outer ones. The inner side 'is a state of belief and feeling, an inward spiritual disposition.' The outer side 'is an expression of this subjective disposition in appropriate acts.'⁴³ According to this distinction, sacred writings themselves belong to the latter. Thus, for example, to assess internal consistency within a sacred text is to assess the outer side. On the other hand, for instance, to assess an inner spiritual disposition behind a sacred text is to assess the inner side.

The standards in the first three categories evaluate only the outer side of religion. This makes those standards seemingly objective. But since they do not evaluate the inner side of religion, they are likely to miss deceptive religions whose ostensible teachings seem noble, but whose hidden motives are vulgar. An evil deity or spirit may make some religion seemingly noble to deceive people. Even pragmatic standards are not enough to detect them. A deceptive religion can produce some desirable outcomes, while, for example, deceiving its believers into offering huge

⁴² For Weber's theory of objective possibility, see Weber (1949), 164–188.

⁴³ Galloway (1925), 181.

amounts of property for its private interests. To detect deceptive religions, it is necessary to evaluate not only the outer but the inner sides of religion carefully. The standards in the three categories are not enough for this.

For refined and piercing evaluation, standards in the fourth category are important. Yet the standards of immediate luminousness that we have seen are so rudimentary that they in themselves are not so useful for refined and piercing evaluation. As we saw, Hick says, ‘whilst we can to some extent assess and grade religious phenomena, we cannot realistically assess and grade the great world religions as totalities. For each of these long traditions is so internally diverse, containing so many different kinds of both good and evil, that it is impossible for human judgement to weigh up and compare their merits as systems of salvation.’⁴⁴ The impossibility is rather because Hick’s standards are not enough for refined and piercing evaluation. It is possible to grade religions by points not specified by Hick and other scholars. For this, it is necessary to develop especially the standard of immediate luminousness.

Thus, I introduce standards used in spiritualism. I appeal to spiritualism because, as far as I know, it provides the highest standards that can be of use in grading religions. Although those standards are for grading spirits and their teachings, they are useful in refined and piercing evaluation of religious phenomena. Most of the spiritual standards belong to the fourth category and to none of the four categories. The spiritual standards evaluate not only the outer but the inner sides of religion. They know the characteristics of bad spirits. We can use them to detect deceptive religions.

As we saw, logically there seems no necessary connection between a divine mediator’s moral character and his teaching. Yet, spiritually speaking, a mediator’s moral character is important. It is unlikely that divine teachings of high quality come from a morally poor mediator. William Stainton Moses, a distinguished medium, receives the following message through automatic writing: ‘Inspiration...is not different in kind in different ages, but only in degree. The words in all cases are the words of the inspiring spirit conveyed through a human medium; and in proportion as the medium is pure and elevated are the utterances trustworthy and the conceptions sublime. The plane of knowledge of the medium is the plane of revelation through him.’⁴⁵ Also, Silver Birch, a wise spirit guide, makes the following replies to some questions through the medium Maurice Barbanell:

Is it necessary to live a spiritual life in order to become a good psychic?

The better the life you live, the greater the instrument you become for the Great Spirit, for the higher your life, the more the Great Spirit that is within you is expressing itself. Your soul, as it unfolds through the expression of the life which you live, makes you a greater instrument always.

Would it be correct to say that, however good a medium may be, he would be better still if he were more advanced spiritually?

Always. The higher the life, the greater the mediumship. There is nothing worth while to be achieved unless you are prepared to sacrifice.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Hick (1981), 467.

⁴⁵ Moses (1898), 201.

⁴⁶ Austen (1998), 137–138.

Austen asked Silver Birch what should be the attitude to spiritual or divine guidance received by individuals who sit alone in the silence...

...Only those who have reached a certain standard of spiritual attainment can be sure of the prompting that comes to them in the silence.⁴⁷

Thus, only mediums of high spiritual development can mediate or identify high-quality teachings. Spiritual development is to have and strengthen such characteristics as altruistic love, gratitude, endurance, self-control, modesty, humility, and calmness, while reducing or discarding such characteristics as anger, vengefulness, malignance, dishonesty, complaints, laziness, greed, selfishness, envy, vanity, arrogance, pessimism, and worry. The more one has the former characteristics, and the more one lacks the latter, the higher his level of spiritual development. Thus, for example, a medium who has greed for wealth, power, fame, or sex cannot mediate or identify high-quality teachings. We can evaluate a medium's level of spiritual development by examining each of those characteristics mentioned.

Drawing on experience and spirits' teachings, Allan Kardec, the father of Spiritism, mentions various standards for distinguishing between good and bad spirits in spirit communication. He says, '*the language of the spirits is always in accordance with the degree of their elevation...*The language always betrays its origin, whether by the thought it renders, or by its form.'⁴⁸ 'The spirits are judged by their language and by their actions. The actions of spirits are the sentiments they inspire and the advice they give.'⁴⁹ Thus, according to Kardec, we can grade spirits by their language and the sentiments inspired by them.

Then by what principle should we judge their language and the sentiments inspired by them? Kardec says, 'Good sense is the sole criterion by which to discern the value of the spirits. Every formula given for this purpose by the spirits themselves is absurd, and cannot emanate from superior spirits.'⁵⁰ It is unclear whether Kardec himself advises this or a spirit does. If the latter is the case, the advice becomes 'absurd.' This is not what the advice intends. So, I rephrase the second sentence as follows: 'Every *other* formula given for this purpose by the spirits themselves is absurd, and cannot emanate from superior spirits.'

In Kardec's view, good sense judges not only character but commonsense rationality. Silver Birch also advises us to use our reason to judge a spirit's teachings.

There is no spirit, however exalted, in my world who would desire you to accept his teachings without consideration, without pondering and without reflection...We do not desire automatons who will mechanically perform all that is said. Our mission is to increase your own sense of responsibility, to stimulate the divine that is within you, to enable you to have even greater command over your reasoning faculties. God speaks to you through your soul, but He also speaks to you through your mind. Whilst it is true that the kingdom of heaven is within, the mind is also God's kingdom—or should be.

⁴⁷ Ortzen (2000), 111–112.

⁴⁸ Kardec (2007), 335.

⁴⁹ Kardec (2007), 337.

⁵⁰ Kardec (2007), 337.

Never do anything which your reason rejects. Enthroned reason as your guide. We would never suggest to you that you perform tasks that are foreign to your common sense.⁵¹

Here reason does not mean examining whether a spirit's teachings have an ultimate rational ground, which will always turn out that they do not.⁵² Reason means using James's standard of philosophical reasonableness, Hick's standard of internal consistency, Knitter's standard of intellectual coherence, Hick's standard of adequacy of a religious philosophy to our general experience, and most of Netland's standards (D2, P1–4, P6–9). Broadly, reason also means using pragmatic standards. For example, reason evaluates how much a spirit's teaching helps or hinders our spiritual development. In pragmatic reasoning, however, we must accept a rationally unjustifiable assumption, which may be our common sense or some religious, spiritual, moral, or philosophical belief. To use the previous example, for evaluation we must assume that spiritual development is important. Strictly speaking, such an assumption is rationally unjustifiable. But from the fact that we have to accept a rationally unjustifiable assumption, it does not follow that pragmatic reasoning is improper. When Silver Birch advises us to use our reason, he does not mean that we should examine whether a spirit's teachings have an ultimate rational ground. He means that we should test the teachings by those standards mentioned.

Kardec advises using good sense to test spirits because 'good spirits can say and do only good, nothing bad can come from a good spirit.'⁵³ Thus, if a spirit's language or action is bad according to good sense, we know that the spirit is not a good one. In fact, Kardec says as follows: 'Any maxim, any advice, which is not *strictly conformable to pure evangelical charity*, cannot be the work of a good spirit.' 'Good spirits advise only perfectly rational things. Any recommendation which departs from *the right line of good sense, or from the immutable laws of nature*, shows a narrow spirit.'⁵⁴ 'Any digression from logic, reason, and wisdom leaves no doubt of their origin, whatever may be the name under which the spirit is disguised.' 'Any notorious scientific heresy, any principle that shocks good sense, shows fraud, if the spirit pretends to be an enlightened spirit.'⁵⁵

According to Kardec, we know the quality of spirits by how they express their ideas. He says, 'We must not judge spirits by the material form and the correctness of their style, but probe its inmost sense, scrutinize their words, weigh them coolly, deliberately, and without prejudice.'⁵⁶ Kardec mentions the following differences between superior and inferior or ordinary spirits:

The superior spirits have a language always worthy, noble, elevated, with not the least tincture of triviality: they say everything with simplicity and modesty,

⁵¹ Ortzen (2000), 112.

⁵² It is impossible to find an ultimate rational ground for a spirit's teachings because the search for it leads to either infinite regress, circularity, or an arbitrary stopping point (Agrippa's trilemma). The trilemma originates from the Five Modes of Agrippa in ancient Pyrrhonian skepticism. See Diogenes Laertius (1991), book 9, sections 88–89; Sextus Empiricus (2000), book 1, sections 164–177.

⁵³ Kardec (2007), 337.

⁵⁴ Kardec (2007), 340–341.

⁵⁵ Kardec (2007), 338.

⁵⁶ Kardec (2007), 338.

never boast, never make a parade of their knowledge or their position among others. That of the inferior or ordinary spirit has always some reflex of human passions; every expression that savors of vulgarity, self-sufficiency, arrogance, boasting, acrimony, is a characteristic indication of inferiority, or of treachery if the spirit presents himself under a respected and venerated name.⁵⁷

The language of elevated spirits is always identical, if not in form, at least in the inmost. The thoughts are the same, whatever be the time and place; they may be more or less developed, according to circumstances, to the needs and to the facilities of communicating, but they will not be contradictory.⁵⁸

The superior spirits express themselves simply, without prolixity; their style is concise, without excluding the poetry of ideas and expressions, clear, intelligible to all, and requires no effort for its comprehension; they have the art of saying much in a few words, because each word has its signification. The inferior spirits, or false savants, hide under inflated language and emphasis the emptiness of their thoughts. Their language is often pretentious, ridiculous, or obscure, by way of wishing to seem profound.⁵⁹

The language of superior spirits and that of inferior or ordinary spirits have contrastive characteristics. The former features worthiness, elevation, modesty, consistency, simplicity, clearness, and poetry. On the other hand, the latter features pettiness, vulgarity, self-sufficiency, arrogance, boastfulness, bitterness, wordiness, pretentiousness, ridiculousness, and obscurity. Those characteristics can be different in degree. Thus, we should evaluate them accordingly.

Kardec mentions other differences between good and bad or imperfect spirits:

Goodness and benevolence are the essential attributes of purified spirits; they have no hatred, neither for men nor for other spirits; they pity weaknesses, they criticise errors, but always with moderation, without anger and without animosity.⁶⁰

Good spirits never command; they do not force themselves on any one; they advise, and if they are not listened to, they withdraw. The bad are imperious; they give orders, wish to be obeyed, and remain, whether or no. Every spirit who forces himself on any one betrays his origin. They are exclusive and absolute in their opinions, and pretend that they alone have the privilege of truth. They exact a blind belief, and make no appeal to reason, because they know that reason will unmask them.

Good spirits do not flatter; they approve when we do well, but always with reserve; the bad give exaggerated eulogiums, stimulate pride and vanity, while preaching humility.⁶¹

We recognize good spirits by their prudent reserve on all subjects that might prove compromising; they dislike to unveil evil; light or malevolent spirits are

⁵⁷ Kardec (2007), 337–338.

⁵⁸ Kardec (2007), 338.

⁵⁹ Kardec (2007), 339.

⁶⁰ Kardec (2007), 335.

⁶¹ Kardec (2007), 339.

pleased with displaying it. While the good seek to smooth over injuries and preach indulgence, the bad exaggerate them, and stir up discord by perfidious insinuations.⁶²

[B]ad or simply imperfect spirits betray themselves by material signs which cannot be mistaken. Their action on the medium is sometimes violent, and provocative of sudden and jerking movements, a feverish and convulsive agitation, totally opposed to the calm and gentleness of the good spirits.

Kardec also points out that imperfect spirits employ ‘sophisms, sarcasms, insults,’ and ‘excite distrust and animosity against those who are antipathetic to them.’⁶³ In those passages too, good and bad or imperfect spirits have contrastive characteristics. Good spirits are benevolent, reassuring, and calm, never command, nor flatter, ‘dislike to unveil evil,’ and ‘preach indulgence.’ On the other hand, bad or imperfect spirits are violent and imperious, ‘pretend that they alone have the privilege of truth,’ ‘make no appeal to reason,’ flatter, like to unveil evil, exaggerate injuries, and cause disharmony, distrust, hatred, and uneasiness. In sum, the more benevolent, reassuring, humbler, and calmer a spirit is, the higher his level of spiritual development. On the other hand, the more imperious, irrational, flattering, disturbing, and violent, the lower.

How much spirits’ teachings focus on our spiritual development is also an important standard for grading spirits. Kardec says, ‘The good spirits are very careful as to the steps they advise; they never have any but a *serious and eminently useful* aim. We should, then, regard with suspicion all motives that are not of this character.’ The ‘*serious and eminently useful* aim’⁶⁴ means our spiritual development. The more a spirit’s teachings focus on our spiritual development, the higher his quality. On the other hand, ‘the inferior spirits, themselves ignorant, treat with frivolity the most serious questions.’⁶⁵ In other words, their teachings are mostly trivial matters which have nothing to do with our spiritual development. For example, those matters include certain predictions. Kardec says, ‘we recognize trifling spirits by the facility with which they predict the future and material facts not given us to know. The good spirits may presage future things when that knowledge is useful for us to know, but they never fix dates; any announcement of an event at a fixed date is indicative of mystification.’⁶⁶ Some predictions might contribute to our spiritual development. But those with a fixed date do not, although they may arouse our curiosity. Therefore, teachings which include a prediction with a fixed date do not come from good spirits. It is not just predictions. In general, we should beware of any over-particularity in spirits’ teachings. Kardec says, ‘The superior spirits are above the puerilities of form *in everything*. Only ordinary spirits attach importance to petty details, incompatible with truly elevated ideas. Any *over-particular prescription* is a certain sign of inferiority and treachery on the part of a spirit who takes an imposing name.’ Thus, teachings which include ‘petty details, incompatible with truly elevated ideas,’⁶⁷ do not come from superior spirits. We should examine every

⁶² Kardec (2007), 340.

⁶³ Kardec (2007), 341.

⁶⁴ Kardec (2007), 340.

⁶⁵ Kardec (2007), 342.

⁶⁶ Kardec (2007), 338–339.

⁶⁷ Kardec (2007), 339–340.

part of a spirit's teachings from a viewpoint of spiritual development. Also, it is important to look at the teachings as a whole for their overall goal. Even if a spirit's teachings have many points which contribute to our spiritual development, their overall goal may be something else, such as worldly interests, human worship, or preservation of an organization. Thus, when examining a spirit's teachings, we should look at both their parts and their overall goal from a viewpoint of spiritual development.

Kardec cautions us as follows: 'The odd and ridiculous names some spirits take, who wish to impose on credulity, should be distrusted.' 'It is also necessary to distrust those who present themselves easily under extremely venerated names, and to accept their words with the utmost reserve; in this case a severe censorship is indispensable, for it is often but a mask they assume to gain credit for their pretended intimate relations with spirits beyond them.'⁶⁸ Thus, it is necessary to beware of odd, ridiculous, and venerated names some spirits take. We should judge spirits not by their names but by what they say and how they say it.

Some may want to grade spirits by their knowledge. However, Kardec says, 'Good spirits tell only what they know; they are either silent or confess their ignorance of what they do not know. The bad speak of everything with boldness, without caring for the truth.'⁶⁹ Therefore, '[t]he learning that some spirits display, often with a kind of ostentation, is not a sign of their superiority. Unalterable purity of moral sentiment is the true touchstone.' Kardec also says, 'Virtue alone, in purifying him, can bring him nearer to God and extend his knowledge.'⁷⁰ These do not mean that we should not grade spirits by their knowledge, but that assessing their levels of spiritual development has priority over assessing their knowledge. When some spirits are on the same level of spiritual development, we can grade them by their knowledge for thorough grading. But a knowledgeable but arrogant spirit can never receive a higher grade than a humble but not knowledgeable spirit because the latter is higher than the former in spiritual development.

Finally, Kardec points out that self-criticism is crucial for grading spirits. He writes,

In order to judge spirits, as in order to judge men, one should know how to judge one's self. There are, unhappily, many men who take their personal opinion as exclusive measure for good and bad, for true and false; all that contradicts their mode of seeing, their ideas, the system they have conceived or adopted, is bad in their eyes. Such persons evidently lack the first requisite for a healthy appreciation—rectitude of judgment; but they do not suspect it; in the very defect is their greatest delusion.⁷¹

I do not rule out the possibility of revising the spiritual standards. Yet to avoid corruption, I open the possibility only to those of high spiritual development who can judge themselves. Only they can evaluate spirits and the spiritual standards

⁶⁸ Kardec (2007), 340.

⁶⁹ Kardec (2007), 338.

⁷⁰ Kardec (2007), 341–342.

⁷¹ Kardec (2007), 342.

accurately. Of course, there are different levels of spiritual development. The more one develops spiritually, the more accurate his evaluation becomes.

As we have seen, spiritualism provides various standards for grading spirits and their teachings. First, a medium's level of spiritual development decides the quality of the teachings he mediates. We can grade spirits by their language and the sentiments inspired by them. For evaluation, we should use good sense, which judges not only character but commonsense rationality. The language of superior spirits features worthiness, elevation, modesty, consistency, simplicity, clearness, and poetry, while that of inferior or ordinary spirits features pettiness, vulgarity, self-sufficiency, arrogance, boastfulness, bitterness, wordiness, pretentiousness, ridiculousness, and obscurity. Besides, good spirits are benevolent, reassuring, humble, and calm, while bad or imperfect spirits are imperious, irrational, flattering, disturbing, and violent. How much spirits' teachings focus on our spiritual development is also an important standard for grading spirits. It is necessary to beware of odd, ridiculous, and venerated names some spirits take. We can grade spirits by their knowledge, but assessing their levels of spiritual development has priority over it. Finally, self-criticism is crucial for grading spirits.

There is no reason to think that the spiritual standards are only for grading spirits and their teachings. They are useful in refined and piercing evaluation of religious phenomena including divine mediators, sacred writings, ideas, beliefs, actions, experiences, and spiritual development of believers. As mentioned before, those standards can detect deceptive religions. Some religions deny the reality of any spiritual beings. Still, those religions have most of the religious phenomena mentioned. It is possible to grade those phenomena by most of the spiritual standards since those standards can stand on their own without spirits. We can grade, for example, religious leaders and sacred writings by good sense, examining each of the characteristics mentioned. We can also grade those religions by how much their teachings focus on our spiritual development because the spiritual development does not necessarily presuppose the existence of spirits.

It is possible to incorporate the spiritual standards into Hick's philosophy. As we saw, Hick does not specify the framework for moral judgment. If Hick defines morality as characters achieved by spiritual development, his moral assessment becomes close to most of the spiritual standards. A remaining difference is that while Hick applies the moral assessment only to divine mediators and the ordinary life of believers, I apply the spiritual standards more broadly to religious phenomena including divine mediators, sacred writings, ideas, beliefs, actions, experiences, and spiritual development of believers. Also, as we saw, Hick assumes that all religions have the common soteriological goal: 'the realisation of that limitlessly better quality of human existence which comes about in the transition from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness.'⁷² It is possible to rephrase the goal as spiritual development.

The spiritual standards complement James's, Hick's, Knitter's, and Netland's standards. Before, I made the four categories of standards. Some of the spiritual standards belong to the standards of commonsense rationality. But most of the spiritual standards belong to the standards of immediate luminousness and to none of the four categories.

⁷² Hick (1981), 467.

As we saw, Knitter and Netland propose the standards of intellectual knowledge for grading a religious philosophy. According to the spiritual standards, the knowledge that a spirit displays is not a sign of his superiority. Yet the standards of intellectual knowledge would be useful as a secondary standard. As said before, when some spirits are on the same level of spiritual development, we can grade them by their knowledge for thorough grading. I apply this to grading religions. Only when religions are otherwise of the same quality, can we grade them by the extensiveness of their philosophies for thorough grading. The standards of intellectual knowledge grade a religious philosophy by how much it expands our mind or by how much it broadens our horizons of understanding. Some religions explain that all religions come from the same source, solving the alleged incoherence between them.⁷³ They provide an answer to one of the most important questions in religion. When religions are otherwise of the same quality, having eye-opening knowledge like this is a plus in grading.

Some might argue that some of the spiritual standards, such as those of worthiness and pettiness, are subjective. They would claim that since people have different goals in life, what is worthy or petty varies across people depending on their goals. But in spiritualism the most important goal in life is spiritual development. Thus, whether something is worthy or petty depends on how much it promotes our spiritual development. Similarly, it is important to think about the meanings of other spiritual standards from the viewpoint of spiritual development.

Most of the spiritual standards belong to the standards of immediate luminousness and to none of the four categories. Those standards are rationally unjustifiable. Yet they have practical value. First, according to spiritualism, a mediator's level of spiritual development decides the quality of the teachings he mediates. Even if this is not the case, a divine mediator of high spiritual development would be more effective in educating the believers than that of low spiritual development because the former can serve as a role model. Second, some might ask why such standards as modesty, reassurance, humbleness, and calmness are important for grading religious phenomena. They might think that if a religion has truths and a mission to spread the truths, there is no need to be modest, reassuring, humble, or calm. Practically, I point out the following: if a religion is opposite, that is, self-sufficient, arrogant, boastful, pretentious, imperious, and disturbing when spreading its alleged truths, it would cause negative results such as hatred, conflict, and uneasiness. This tendency is the opposite of spiritual development. On the other hand, a religion with modesty, reassurance, humbleness, and calmness would not cause such negative results. Rather, it will lead to peace and harmony. The more reassuring, modester, humbler, and calmer a religion, the more it will lead to peace and harmony. Peace and harmony are the results of our spiritual development. Thus, adopting the standards of modesty, reassurance, humbleness, and calmness is more desirable and proper than otherwise. Third, adopting the standards of simplicity and clearness is more desirable and proper than otherwise. Simpler and clear teachings are more accessible than wordy or obscure ones. The accessibility enables more people to practice the

⁷³ The idea of Bankyo Dokon in Oomoto and similar ideas in its derivative religions are such an example. Also, Hick's religious pluralism suggests that incompatibility between various religions is more seeming than real. On his religious pluralism, see Hick (2004).

teachings. Thus, practically, the standards of simplicity and clearness are important. Fourth, one of the spiritual standards cautions us to beware of odd, ridiculous, and venerated names. It prevents us from being deceived by deceptive religions. It also makes us grade religions not by their appearance but by their essence. Fifth, I use the standards of intellectual knowledge only as a secondary standard. Even if a religion has an extensive philosophy, the philosophy becomes useless when the religion does not use it for a good purpose. It even becomes harmful when the religion uses it for an evil purpose, such as to justify violence and to justify exploiting believers for private interests. Thus, there is practical value in using the standards of intellectual knowledge only as a secondary standard. Finally, self-criticism is crucial for grading religions because it enables one to make a correct evaluation. Thus, those spiritual standards have practical value. Those who object to them need to present better alternatives.

Conclusions

Most of the standards proposed by James, Hick, Knitter, and Netland are useful in grading religions with or without conditions. However, those standards are not enough for refined and piercing evaluation. Thus, I introduced the spiritual standards. Although those standards are for grading spirits and their teachings, they are useful in refined and piercing evaluation of religious phenomena. The spiritual standards complement James's, Hick's, Knitter's, and Netland's standards. Although most of the spiritual standards are rationally unjustifiable, they have practical value.

I do not intend to reject an entire religion as false simply because it has a few false claims or a little tendency toward an undesirable outcome. Some religions may have more true claims or stronger tendencies toward desirable outcomes than others. These are matters of degree. The standards introduced in the essay grade a religion in various points, making it possible to calculate its overall grade. This opens the possibility of revising false or undesirable parts of each religion. Religions will improve if they learn true or desirable parts from one another.

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