

## *De Religione*

"Unlike science, art, morality, and politics, religion cannot be adequately accounted for simply as one more form of life among several others. For all the obvious specificity of its beliefs, rites, and social organizations, it presents itself as having to do with the ultimate basis of our entire existence and therefore as fundamental to, not merely coordinate with, all the other cultural fields. In other words, religion in general is the primary and most direct reflection of the basic existential faith that constitutes human existence. Although its doctrines, for instance, have their origin in a quite particular occasion of insight or 'special revelation,' they are invariably put forward as having a general application and, in the case of the great world religions, as being universally valid. This is why Whitehead observes that 'the doctrines of rational religion aim at being that metaphysics which can be derived from the supernormal experiences of mankind in its moments of finest insight.' . ." (*On Theology*: 79).

"[R]eligion in its various expressions is the primary and most direct reflection of the basic existential faith by which we all live simply as human beings. As such, it never exists in general, any more than art or science does, but always exists as *a* religion which has its origin in some particular occasion of insight or special revelation. Correlative with such revelation as the response through which it is received is a particular form of faith, which in turn provides the foundation for a whole structure of beliefs, rites, and social organizations. In many cases (although, admittedly, this is a variable which happens to be especially pronounced in Christianity), this religious structure is eventually subjected to reflective understanding, whereupon a theology of the religion appears on the scene. Naturally, since even the most direct and spontaneous religious expression is itself the product of understanding, it is already to some degree reflective and to that extent theology. But theology strictly so-called is the more sustained, deliberate, and therefore specialized reflection whereby the primary expression of religion is subjected to critical analysis and interpretation" (84 f.).

"'[F]aith' and 'religion' are not simply equivalent. In the relatively strict sense . . . , religion is not identical with our basic existential faith in the