

LETTER 87
1948

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

Dear Dr MacRae,

Anthropological research has of late, brought forth an interesting and, what is believed, a most important question:

What should be the orthodox Christian's concept of the phenomena called Culture: what is it, how did it begin, and are there men today with no culture?

Your consideration of, and views concerning this question would be greatly appreciated and aid us in the formulating of a stronger, more consistent polemic on this subject, to the intellectual non-Christians of today.

Dear ...

You asked for my opinion on certain matters connected with anthropology. It is something on which I have neither read nor studied and consequently any opinion that I give is purely off-hand. At the same time it might be worth while to express the ideas that occur to me on the subject. You asked whether there might be a nation without culture. To my mind culture would be a term used to express those habits or skills which a group of people pass on from generation to generation. It would not refer to any type of innate ability but to customs, manners of behaviour or ways of doing things which are taught from one generation to the next. From this viewpoint, while it might be conceivable that there would be children somewhere in the world who would be left alone by the death of their parents and still be in a region where the climate was pleasant enough and the natural food available in sufficient quantities that they would grow up without having anything from their parents, such circumstances would be extremely unusual. Ordinarily any group of children growing up would have learned a good deal from their parents and this would