

I suspect we will hear more from Professor Yinger on these matters, and we might simply think of what he has done so far as a *prolegomenon*. The King is not finished yet.

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## Response to Professors Bouma, Robbins, Robertson, and Means

It is fascinating to see one's work put under a microscope by skilled and keen-eyed observers. Fortunately, they are generous-spirited as well as perceptive, so I find it easy to share many of the views of Professors Bouma, Robbins, Robertson, and Means regarding the incompleteness and the weakness of my work, along with its possible strengths. Because they are looking at my work in the sociology of religion as a whole, and not at a particular book or article, and because their statements are based on a panel discussion before a live (and lively) audience, one

has a sense of dialogue and conversation that seldom characterizes a simple book review or review essay.

In the hope of advancing the scientific study of religion, I would like to comment on some of their observations, using this opportunity to try to clarify several issues. It is a source of satisfaction to know that my doctoral dissertation, written some thirty-five years ago, has proved to be of interest and value to all the members of the panel; but my satisfaction is naturally dimmed a bit by the realization that they have had to look more intently to find work of equal merit in my subsequent research. I am not the one to argue the point, but it may be that the earlier study gained clarity by the somewhat simpler set of problems appropriate to a monographic work as contrasted with the more ambitious aims of some of my later books.

I am a little puzzled by Professor Bouma's judgment that "the subject of most of Yinger's sociology of religion is church oriented behavior." (He points to two recent papers as exceptions.) Perhaps the importance one assigns to a topic is not adequately represented by the length of the discussion of it; and I shall have to try to find a way to make clearer and more emphatic my own view—and I think Bouma's as well—that the sociology of churches is only one part of the sociology of religion. Among other things, my discussions of religion and social change, of protest movements, of the individual factors in religion, of religion and politics (as contrasted with comments on issues of church and state), and of religion as a quality, not a kind of structure, were intended to complement studies of the sociology of religious organizations. My recent explorations of the "substructures of religion" (1969, 1977a) do not represent a new perspective but were antedated by discussion, if not research, a quarter of a century earlier. Perhaps my first attempt to express ideas along this line was in *Religion in the Struggle for Power* (see pp. 4-11; see also 1963b: chap. 1), where I developed a distinction between intrinsic and traditional religion. A similar distinction was later elaborated by Gordon Allport, who used the terms intrinsic and extrinsic. Insofar as I can guess at the source of my interest in the distinction between "a religion" and "the religious," it goes back to the study of the continuing search for new religious orientations and to comments of John Dewey. It certainly is not "largely influenced by Luckmann," as Roof *et al.* have recently suggested (1977), although I find Luckmann's *Invisible Religion* valuable (see my review, 1968).

It was interesting to read Bouma's comment that the explanations generated in my work are usually of the "empirical generalization," not of the functional variety. He is right in this assessment, although I would argue that when carefully used, these are not mutually contradictory approaches. Functional interpretations are particularly useful in the study of long evolutionary sequences, but for that reason they tend to seem problematic, because it is difficult to make definitive statements about the sequence of events. Bouma's remark furnishes me the opportunity to comment briefly on the place of theory in scientific work. Theory appears, or should appear, at every stage of research, but for different purposes at each stage. Empirical generalizations stand "in the middle"; they serve to bring order to a limited range of carefully observed facts and relationships. Their descriptions or order are subject, of course, to continuous revision and correction. Empirical generalizations are bracketed on one side by general theory, which is designed to consolidate and codify

a wide range of empirical generalizations and to state them in as parsimonious a way as possible, and on the other side by preliminary generalizations, which are efforts to *imagine* the structures of nature, to make tentative sense out of conflicting, paradoxical, and incomplete observations, thus to *guide* empirical work. Bouma's statement that "scientific explanations do proceed inductively" is perhaps incomplete; they are also "logico-deductive."

Much of Professor Robbins' paper deals with problems associated with typologies of religious groups. Although I have spent a great deal of time designing such typologies, I make no brief for the outcome, even in the "third generation" form expressed in *The Scientific Study of Religion*. I do argue, however, for the necessity of some system of classification that systematically takes account of the *different* ways in which religious groups relate to the society of which they are a part. Robbins is quite right that I stress the dilemma of religious organizations (or of any organization) as one valuable starting point for the analysis of group differentiation. In my dissertation, I noted the relevance of the problem to political and economic organizations (1946: 230-231), and I examined it briefly with reference to race relations in *Racial and Cultural Minorities* (Simpson & Yinger, 1953: 696-701). There has been an enormous amount of criticism of "the church and sect typologies," and I keep expecting, and hoping, while reading such criticisms, that when I turn the page the first line will read: "And therefore we propose . . ." When this happens, the dilemma of organizations will be there and will be a powerful fact to deal with by any new classificatory scheme. Subdivisions may also be renamed, but the underlying social dynamics will not have changed. It is not by accident that literature on religion deals with prophets, ascetics, and mystics, and their corresponding forms of religious protest movements, because they represent fundamental ways of struggling with a social reality deemed inadequate. It seems to me to be an impressive fact that modes of protest or adjustment equivalent to these three basic varieties of sects are found in many other arenas: race relations (Johnson, 1943), collective behavior (Turner & Killian, 1957), neurotic illness (Horney, 1937), and the experience of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

Robbins observes that I think that " . . . when a group remains extremely strident and uncompromising, it alienates most people and exerts little influence." I must not have expressed myself well, because this is not what I thought I was writing on the topic of sectarian influence. It is in the dialectic between the churchly and sectarian principles that maximum influence is likely to be found. Gunnar Myrdal observed that a minority race maximized its influence when there were several different kinds of organizations, with different strategies vis-a-vis the dominant society. The same is true, I believe, of religious organizations.

Professor Robertson's thoughtful commentary also deals extensively with the problem of a basic organizational dilemma and with the typology that rests on the range of responses to that dilemma. He is quite right in noting my neglect of mysticism, particularly in my earlier work. Like Weber, I am perhaps "religiously unmusical," a failing that seems especially likely to express itself in the study of mysticism, as contrasted with the study of organizational theory or prophecy or asceticism. The relative neglect of mysticism may stem from the radical cast of my mind, which makes investigation of the interaction of religion with social

stratification, political and economic systems, and social change of particular interest. I am willing to accept the possibility that my "attempt to distill the work of Troeltsch for modern sociological purposes in part accounts for the long neglect of Troeltsch's conception of mysticism," as Robertson puts it, although I suspect that that neglect rests on much more substantial grounds. For example, persons sensitive to the mystical dimension of religion are perhaps not likely to be drawn into social science, and therefore, are unlikely to correct my interpretations if they happen to examine my work. However that may be, it is to be hoped that continued study and the persistent impact of contemporary religious events have led to some correction on my part, as in *The Scientific Study of Religion*, and on the part of others.

I am glad that Robertson called attention to my effort to combine attention to the dilemma of organizations with attention to the way social status influences religious values and "strategies." I have always thought that "the social sources of denominationalism" are as important as the strategic sources of denominationalism (that is, the different kinds of attempts to resolve the dilemma), and that the two sources are thoroughly entwined. It would never have occurred to me to hold that there was some basis for believing that one form of religion is, by its very nature, more religiously pure than another; hence I not only tacitly, as Robertson suggests, but quite readily agree with him that all religious expressions are socially located and affected by their locations

Robertson also examines my typological statements carefully and notes various inadequacies and inconsistencies. At least some of these are the result of my apparently not having succeeded in making various distinctions clear. Robertson suggests that I have developed the idea that "religious experience (religious individualism) is necessarily a form of alienation from 'the world.'" It would be more correct to say that the experience of meaninglessness, suffering, and injustice is alienating and that religion is an attempt to deal with that alienation in the face of the intractable nature of its sources. Because of his interpretation, Robertson believes that I hold all forms of religious experience to be somehow sectarian. Rather, they become sectarian, according to my view, when one of the forms takes on unusual salience, the central focus of group activity and individual sensitivity. Churches, thinking of them typologically, do not thus become "specialized" in their concerns. This does not make their involvement less real or somehow less "truly religious."

It perhaps ought to be emphasized that the types that I have tried to describe are not attempts to isolate empirical clusters, with the expectation that most religious groups would fall rather neatly into one or another category. Rather, they are abstract scales or yardsticks by which various groups can be compared as having more or less of a set of critical factors (see, e.g., 1970: 146-148). One does not go around hunting for and hoping to find things with "pure yard" dimensions; one uses such measures in an attempt to make comparisons more reliably and objectively. Failure to distinguish between these two kinds of typologies has often resulted, in my judgment, in significant misunderstanding.

Robertson is certainly correct in noting that I depart to some degree from Weber's conceptualization of prophecy, asceticism, and mysticism. This is not at all inconsistent with my "numerous positive references to Weber." He is certainly a major figure, probably *the* major figure, in the sociology of religion; but I deplore the

tendency in sociology to construct authority figures out of past masters, the "classical writers," and to argue points in terms of degrees of correspondence with their interpretations or usages. (I am not implying at all that Robertson has done this, but am using this remark to make a point that seems particularly relevant to the sociology of religion.) It is amazing how much Marx, Weber, and Durkheim have learned since they died. There are significant issues on which I disagree with Weber—his interpretation of the interaction of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, for example—and there are terms which he used with less than full clarity and consistency. We ought to try to stand on the shoulders of our giants, not sit at their feet.

I am surprised—startled may be the correct word—to read Robertson's appraisal that I tend to regard "societalism and individualism as standing in a zero-sum relationship." Having been brought up on Mead and Cooley ("self and society are twin born"), it is nearly instinct with me to study them as a unit. I have written a book (1965) which says in many different ways that any attempt to understand human behavior must take the individual and group dimensions into account simultaneously.

Professor Means emphasizes the need to study the effects of philosophical premises, both his own and mine, on one's approach to the study of religion. In this connection, I confess to a desire to contribute to "an almost brittle Lundbergian positivism," to use his somewhat loaded phrase, in the study of religion, because I believe that such tough-minded study has much to offer and has been seriously neglected. This in no way detracts, however, from my interest in less "positivistic" approaches—historical, ethnological, and configurational. I see these not as oppositional but as complementary to one another. It is hoped that they stand in fruitful dialectical relationship, within some of us as individuals and in the scholarly community.

In these rather "schoolish" days, it is stylish to come down hard for one set of methods as the "real" road to truth. This may reduce our anxieties or it may simply reflect our preferences. My preference is for a variety of methods. A problem that one approach may fail to enlighten, another approach may help us to see in a new light. This is sloppy eclectism to some persons, or an impossible goal, as Means suggests. In my judgment, however, a multi-leveled set of methods expresses more accurately where we are in our knowledge of how to study religion and responds more effectively to the complexity of the phenomena with which we deal. That part of nature we call religion (doubtless a great deal of my unexamined ontology is expressed in that phrase) will not easily give up its secrets. The various approaches, rather than being competitive, can greatly reinforce one another. Thus I believe that functional studies run serious risks of teleological assumptions until they are based on relatively well tested empirical generalizations; the latter run the risk of describing a pattern that is only poorly understood because it has been abstracted from the larger whole of which it is a part, until its relationship to that whole is also examined. In a Kantian vein, I applaud the continuous interaction between a more analytical and a more synthesizing set of methods.

Perhaps I should repeat at this point what I have tried to emphasize many times, that the scientific study of religion is only one of many ways to study religion. It is

not quite clear to me what Means is saying when he suggests that students may be misled by my "notion of science as: SCIENCE." That only quantitative approaches are acceptable? That only science can say anything meaningful about religion? Neither of these statements corresponds with my view. Fifteen years ago I noted that science makes certain assumptions about religion, but does not regard these assumptions as ultimately true. Rather, the scientist asks: "Can one, starting from these premises, say anything interesting and valuable about the subject under study? "There is no pretense that this is the only way in which the data can be studied, no claim that all that can be said about a subject can be said by science. There is simply the affirmation that the methods of objective science can be applied to religious phenomena. This means that religion, when it is being examined within the framework of science, is dealt with as part of the natural world, subject to the laws of cause and effect and the rules of logic. There is no reason to be a halfhearted scientist here, looking upon the analysis of religion as somehow different in kind from other scientific work. One needs, to be sure, to be a modest scientist, for the subject is one of great complexity. "What one can say confidently about religion on the basis of present knowledge is not a great deal, and what can be said about religion from nonscientific perspectives may well be more important" (1963b: 12-13).

I also do not recognize the "insistant sociologism" that Means sees in my thought. To me, sociologistic means a one-sided emphasis on structural factors, much as explanations of behavior that rest on some model of "economic man" disregard non-economic factors. My field theoretical approach, which Means also emphasizes, runs counter to sociologistic explanations, although it does hold that sociological factors must continuously be taken into account as a part of a field of forces that include, as well, biological, psychological, and cultural factors. Thus an adequate examination of religion must, in my judgment, study the "transactions" between individual tendencies and sociocultural influences.

It is perhaps inevitable in this kind of symposium that more attention should be given to the way the person under review thinks than to what he thinks—that is, to the substantive issues which most concern him. In the statement by Means, as in the others, I would have welcomed a careful examination, for example, of my intensive review of Weber's interpretation of the economic impact of the Protestant ethic. My interpretation of the issue is embedded in a systematic theory of social change—a theory which picks up some of the strands of Weber's interpretation, but weaves them into a more complex fabric. I am inclined to believe, not surprisingly, that I have stated a more powerful theory of the relationship of religion to social change than has Weber or, oppositely, than have his more unrelenting critics; but I cannot tell from this set of papers how idiosyncratic my belief may be. In a similar vein, I have tried to correct and refine earlier uses of functional theory, showing the ways in which it tends to slip over into ideology. At the same time, I have tried to avoid the rather rigid antifunctionalist stance of other critics by suggesting the ways in which functionalist interpretations can be incorporated, when carefully used, into a larger theoretical statement. It would have been of great benefit to me, and doubtless to other students of religion, had Means and the others systematically examined this effort to rescue functionalism both from its most ardent friends and from its enemies.

Means is quite right when he notes that the typologies I have designed are, as he

puts it, language matrixes, ways “of constructing an adequate symbolic system to talk about religion, and not just another esoteric empirical exercise.” Having already made that point, I want here only to underline it, because I believe the distinction between the two ways of looking at typologies is vital. (It is interesting to imagine how many papers in this Journal, and elsewhere, would not have been written had that distinction been grasped.)

Finally, I have failed to develop my philosophy of language further partly out of lack of time and certainly out of lack of talent, but partly also because I think an excessive attention to language runs the risk of transposing the data under analysis into epiphenomena—language itself becoming the only reality. Having said that, I want only to applaud Means’s attention to the great importance of linguistic analysis in helping us to understand the ways in which the world comes to us, the ways in which experience is perceived and interpreted. Such analysis, I believe, is of particular importance to the study of religion.

In reading all of these papers, I have sought to follow them in their explorations of my epistemological and metaphysical assumptions. Much of the time they have been on the mark—that is, I recognize myself in their appraisals. That is not always the case, however. Rather than being primarily in “a German tradition [Lutheran, primarily, as Robertson says] which has been greatly preoccupied with the social distortion of pristine, individually-held ideas,” I would suppose that a “Durkheimian” emphasis was equally apparent. Indeed, Means states that he has always thought of me “as more of a Durkheimian than a Weberian.” This latter judgment I would presume is based on my interest in tribal religions, in the place of religion among minorities, and in my explicit attempt to combine individual and group processes. These kinds of “field theoretical” interests go back, it should be noted, to my earliest work in race relations (the first publication being in 1946) and are not a modification of views that took place some time after the publication of *Religion, Society, and the Individual*.

In truth, I am not uncomfortable with either of these designations, but know of no way to measure comparative influences. Having roamed quite widely, however, through anthropological, psychological, historical, and to some degree philosophical and theological literature, as well as the sociological, I can’t identify in myself any single overwhelming influence. By temperament, I have been neither a good disciple (despite my last name), dedicated to explicating and elaborating on the work of a master, nor an ardent critic, convinced of the need to expose the weaknesses and fallacies of the misguided. For better or worse, I have found jewels in many places and stimulation even in works that seemed to me to be, on the whole, misdirected.

Not recognizing myself in that part of Robertson’s paper where he develops the description of my “Lutheran” inclinations, I am led to wonder what combination of poor self-knowledge and imprecise writing on my part, imprecise reading on his part, based on assumptions regarding my views of the world, and—to turn the issue around—Robertson’s own epistemological and metaphysical assumptions, produced this gap in our perceptions.

I am grateful to Professors Bouma, Robbins, Robertson, and Means for their thoughtful and stimulating observations. I have profited by these papers as much

when I disagreed with interpretations as when I agreed. One is seldom compelled to be thoroughly self-conscious about a series of one's own works, and thus one tends to miss inconsistencies. It is essential to know what is read—a book has about as many versions as there are readers—and not simply what one thinks he has written. Composers often complain that they have too few opportunities to hear their own music played by first-class orchestras, and thus find it difficult to grow musically. I have “heard” a number of my works played by talented scholars, and I hope that my scholarship will be strengthened as a result.

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