

Council on the Study of

Religion

REPORT FROM THE WINGSPREAD CONFERENCE
ON RESEARCH NEEDS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

PART ONE: BACKGROUND FACTORS



Not long ago, The Saturday Review presented a cartoon that pictured a man standing in front of a city map. On the map there was an arrow pointing, "You are here." Down in the bottom right-hand corner was another arrow over which was inscribed these words, "You are supposed to be here."

The cartoon captures the sense of the "Wingspread Conference," held February 16-18, 1978 at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin, sponsored by the Council on the Study of Religion, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Johnson Foundation, and organized by the Council, the Johnson Foundation, and the Institute of Religious Studies of the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California. The purpose of the conference was to create a perspective on where the academic study of religion is in relation to where it is supposed to be, where

it might beneficially be, and, perhaps, where it may be in the future.

Developments within Religious Studies

The project was given two titles. First, and in the language of the proposal submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the conference was designed to provide an "inventory of research needs" within the academic study of religion. The category of "inventory" was kept expansive and flexible. It was used to denote research needs in the literal and physical sense: research collections, book series, publications, technical innovations in gathering and disseminating the products of research, and the like. But it was also intended to function in a larger and broader sense, that is, to include whatever supports are required for the ongoing "caring and feeding of scholarship."

Secondly, the project also had the function of identifying "new directions" in the academic study of religion. This, too, has to do with the vitality of the undertaking, and requires that there be an assessment of scholarly durability.

Consequently, the two foci were approached as correlative dimensions of a single project. They were treated side by side, components of an integrated inquiry.

The Council on the Study of Religion became involved in these objectives through the work of a Task Force for Professional Development (now called Committee on Scholarly Develop-

ment) that was established three years ago. The members of the Committee have included: Leonard Biallas, Quincy College; M. Gerald Bradford, Bowdoin College; Donald Capps, Phillips University; Anne Carr, University of Chicago; Bernard Cooke, University of Calgary; Mary Gerhart, Hobart and William Smith Colleges; Wayne Meeks, Yale University; Douglas Sturm, Bucknell University; and James Wiggins, Syracuse University. In recent years, CSR has placed items on its work agenda rather systematically.

Following the Welch report on Graduate Education in Religion (1971) there have been attempts to analyze other areas of critical attention affecting the workings of religious studies as a whole. A concerted effort was made, for example, to identify publication needs and trends. This analysis, in turn, resulted in the inauguration of the review journal, Religious Studies Review, in 1975. It also became apparent that the time had come for a new, updated directory of departments and members of faculty teaching therein. The product of this effort, the Directory of Departments and Programs of Religion in North America appeared during the summer of 1978. But so far, nothing deliberate had been done about research needs and related matters pertaining to ongoing professional development.

One of the first activities of the Task Force was to submit a brief questionnaire to the constituency through the medium of the Bulletin of the Council on the Study of Religion. From the responses to the questionnaire, the Committee reached

certain general impressions regarding the present status of things in the academic study of religion. (A more detailed summary of findings is included as an Appendix to this report.) It learned, first, that there is widespread lack of clarity about how religious studies is integrated and what makes it cohesive. There is strong sentiment among many teachers and researchers in this subject area that the field is remarkably disparate, of enormous range and variety, always threatening to burst its very fragile and imprecise bounds. Consequently, there is a significant number of colleagues who believe that the work that goes on within the field should be more carefully integrated, and in terms that belong to the workings of the humanities and social sciences.

The questionnaire also disclosed a great need to clarify the relationship between the academic study of religion and the intended and/or actual outcomes of that study. The Committee recognized that this concern directs attention to vocational matters, as well as to ways in which personal interests and professional goals are both present, often in conflict, in the study of religion. This matter raises questions about the purpose and design of graduate studies in religion -- a matter, too, of increasing importance. And it points attention to the dynamics of the entire sequence of religious studies -- from the first undergraduate course through the content of doctoral studies. The questionnaire disclosed considerable interest in the subject of the "Introduction to Religion" course, that is,

the first course of study in religious studies that is offered in virtually every program. Apparently, there is interest in finding out what others are doing in this course. There is also widespread lack of satisfaction about what is known about what is being done.

The Committee recognized that these are issues that have been discussed and studied for at least the last decade and a half, or longer. Yet, their prominence today indicates that they have not been settled, at least not to the satisfaction of those most effected by them. Or their persistence may be an indication that they are being raised in a new way or in revised terms.

From this response, the Committee developed some rather specific impressions leading to the proposal responsible for initiating the Wingspread Conference. It seemed imperative, for example, that the time had come for a closer look at the overall development of religious studies. It was through this interest that the word "inventory" became attractive. "Inventory" was intended to be just that: the Committee was interested in being able to identify resources and to determine where things stand. It wanted to come to some overall reliable impressions. But the word "projection" also came into prominence more and more as a means of complementing "inventory." The Committee sensed that the constituency, or a significant portion of it, had become somewhat restive. It wants to meet the future responsibly, and is less willing than

before to leave the ongoing development of the academic study of religion to chance or circumstance.

The reason may be that in the situation that prevailed previously necessary changes and improvements were natural accompaniments of an inevitable ongoing process of growth. But now that growth is no longer automatic, alternative means must be found to bring about the changes and improvements that are necessary. In short, it is no longer responsible to link developmental aspirations to growth expectations. The former is a perennial need. The dynamics of the latter have been made complicated and constrained.

Therefore, there is compelling basis upon which to try to develop some deliberate developmental strategy. Consequently, one of the drafts of the proposal that was submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities stated that we thought it advisable or necessary to try to find a way "to take the future into our own hands," as it were. The drafters didn't mean this in any simplistic mechanical sense. Nor had they become victims of delusionary assessments of their abilities, power, and authority. They simply wanted to give attention to the possibility that a way might be found to strengthen the future development of the enterprise with greater deliberateness and self-consciousness. They desired to transpose the workings of religious studies into a dynamic anticipatory mode.

Thus, following the evaluation of the results of the questionnaire, the Committee, upon the request of the Council, understood that its mandate had been expanded and more sharply

focused. It needed to look at the matter of professional development in more depth and with greater systematic care. To do this, it had to come to terms with the overall development of the subject-field. It was necessary that the project come to focus on formative developmental tendencies. It needed to identify some of the dominant directions in which the venture seems to be moving, the obstacles that the academic study of religion, pointed in these direction, faces along the way. In turn, this led to interest in correspondences (and disjunctures) between the development of this particular subject-field of study and more comprehensive tendencies in higher education, particularly those tendencies that effect both the humanities and social sciences. Thus, in proposing that there be a look at the subject-field almost piece by piece, and area by area, the Committee wanted to be able to identify common interests, shared developmental tendencies, overarching themes, stresses, strains, strengths, weaknesses, new ideas, innovations, ventures that had become obsolete, et al.

Admittedly, there was a hint in all of this that what was desired, if a way could be found to do it, was to insert specific kinds of vitality into the developmental process. This is a disposition that has much in common with the dictates and dynamics of planning. Rather than leaving the development of the academic study of religion to develop as it will, there is interest in encouraging specific forms of motion, growth, depth, and quality to influence that process.

The Larger Academic Scene

So far in this report, in recounting the reasons and occasion for the conference, primary reference has been made to matters belonging to the internal, intrinsic development of religious studies. This is a portion of the background factors. In addition, however, there are urgent and compelling developments lying outside religious studies' direct control that prompted the project and conference.

It is for example, evident that the climate on the campuses is very different now from what it was a decade or so ago. That was the time in which many academic programs in religious studies were established. When such programs were begun, they were new and exciting. They created considerable interest on the campuses and within the profession. In most places, they were welcomed and well accepted. Religious Studies found a viable place in the colleges and universities. It achieved this status because it could be accepted on academic terms. In addition, it carried rapport with the sorts of social and cultural changes that characterized the time, yes, even with the dominant "faiths" and aspirations of the academic community itself. Furthermore, it possessed great resonance with the basic interests of students. The study of religion was supported by a large range of popular intellectual issues. The support it gathered from all sides was manifest.

It is apparent that some of these formative factors have been altered. Hence, religious studies cannot rely upon the same sort

of socio-cultural and intellectual support that it had during the time of its founding and flowering. Its supporting environment has changed dramatically. For, during the intervening years, there has been a veritable onrush of now, compelling, but shifting (and sometimes contrary) intellectual interests. One can cite the power of the counter-culture, new sensitivities regarding the relationship between eastern and western cultures, the apocalyptic mood of the former time, the climate then of "paradise now" expectations, the ability then of writers like Paul Tillich and Mircea Eliade not only to talk about religion, but to interpret human experience in a manner with which many thousands of students, faculty members, and persons outside the academy could identify. In the earlier situation, many of the most prominent comprehensive and compelling commentaries on the human condition were put in circulation through the workings of religious studies. Religious studies had both academic stature and a larger public utility. In Erik Erikson's terms, it had become "cultural work." At least, this is how the academic study of religion was received and perceived by many, and how those many interpreted the work to themselves. A large proportion of those persons most responsible for the venture's burgeoning were caught up, at the time, in the rather widespread exodus from theology (more strictly speaking) to religious studies. The new set of resources assisted this transition,

and provided those in exodus with someplace to go.

Indeed, the situation has changed. In many respects, the change has been dramatic. Much of the momentum coming from that larger range of social, cultural, and deep-seated personal interests has moved away from religious studies into other areas and fields, and, perhaps, to degrees not yet perceptible, beyond the academy itself. As a result, it is to be expected that religious studies is much less resilient now, and thus less inventive, perhaps less creative, and considerably more inflexible. All of this follows upon the achievement of having found a proper place within the academy. All of it can be taken as evidence that religious studies has been established effectively. But what could not be known then, but has become apparent since, is that the very context through which religious studies is being conducted -- the academy -- is suffering under very critical assessment. Thus religious studies lives and breathes within an environment whose health is subject to serious question.

There are other factors from outside which have influenced, or will influence, the development of religious studies. Here one need only refer to the vocational crisis, the paucity of vocational opportunities for persons with doctorates in most fields within the humanities, and particularly, for our purposes, in the field of religious studies. This forceful recent development is bound to effect the vitality of the entire under-

taking. It effects graduate studies markedly. And since undergraduate education is conceived in the image of graduate education, this development has also effected the substance of undergraduate work, and will continue to do so until something is done to alter the terms of the alliance between graduate and undergraduate education. There are a host of interdependent issues here that need to be re-examined. But the chief observation is that the vocational factor strongly effects the character of the entire undertaking. It also is good reason for a conference on both "inventory" and "future projections."

Finally, it is fitting that this is the time in which the inventory is being conducted. This suggests that religious studies' gestation period has already passed. In coming to terms with the needs of religious studies, the profession is not dealing with a phenomenon still in its infancy, but with an organism that has been alive and well for some time. There are some components in its present life (both of its own devising and in the educational network upon which it has been dependent) that make for hard going. But there is nothing in the picture, it appears, that can be used to frustrate goal-setting and direction-finding.

The time has come both for inventory-taking and projecting. And, as the profession tries to evaluate the trajectories that have been formed from the past, it is also in position

to be thinking of new possibilities. These might include the establishment of lateral relationships between religious studies and the workings of the professional schools. It may imply new forms of cooperation between the various disciplines, new alliances and altered combinations of sub-fields, and disciplines, as well as new and/or refurbished sorts of intellectual industry and creativity. It was to these tasks that the conference addressed itself.

The Mechanics of the Conference

The Conference itself occurred over a nearly forty-eight hour period in the Wingspread Conference Center, the multi-tentacled house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for the Johnson family, on the gently rolling land nearly adjacent to the waters of Lake Michigan, south of Milwaukee, near Racine, Wisconsin.

The moderator of all of the discussions of the conference was Jaroslav J. Pelikan, then Dean of the Graduate School, Yale University. And the participants -- some twenty-five in all -- consisted of persons selected to speak specifically about the needs and new directions of selected sub-fields and disciplines in the academic study of religion.

The process by which the participants were selected was governed by the intentions of the conference. In the first place, there were limits on the number of persons the grant could provide for and the conference facilities could accommodate. In addition, there were limits on the number of hours that could

be devoted to this form of corporate inquiry, and this influenced the number of participants. But there were principles at stake too. Above all, the planners wanted to avoid giving an impression that the participants had been invited simply on the basis of scholarly esteem or recognized high achievement within their respective sub-fields and disciplines. In no sense was the conference billed as a meeting of a star caste of the academic field. Neither could persons be invited to participate as delegates of the constituent societies of CSR, or as representatives of faculties, departments, or schools involved in the academic study of religion. And choices had to be made regarding the areas that could come under special scrutiny. This paring down required that the subject areas be reclassified in more inclusive groupings. The group assembled could not be expected to take on all areas of scholarly endeavor with systematic coverage.

The way in which the selection of participants was made was in keeping with the goals and temper of the conference. Persons selected were not asked to pose as authorities, or as spokespersons for academic, professional, or field-and-disciplinary constituencies. Rather, they were looked to as persons who work day by day in an area of scholarly research and teaching belonging to the academic study of religion. This meant that their most important role was to supply data and impressions from within that perspective, just as respondents to the questionnaire had supplied data and had reflected impressions. The goal was to create a reliable

composite perspective from which some significant overall impressions might be drawn. There was never the presumption that this group of persons would be deciding the fate of religious studies for everyone else. The goals of the conference were infinitely more modest and much more precise.

Once selected, each participant was asked to prepare a brief statement, one that could be presented in no more than ten to fifteen minutes, on the present state of things in a designated subject-area belonging to the academic study of religion. The planners recognized this to be an impossible assignment. Everyone present would have been able to talk for hours and hours (and some for days and days) about the needs, strengths, and weaknesses of their respective vocational areas. Yet the planners also understood there to be some strategic value in the demand for focus and concentrated attention. The challenge was to identify primary needs and subjects requiring concerted attention after hours and hours had been devoted to reflection on the issues. After hearing these capsule summaries, the attempt was made to gain some impressions and to develop some common insights.

In this respect, the planners of the conference were not disappointed. Some persons were better able than others to focus in the requested fashion. Others seemed to make their most salient points in the discussion periods following the brief presentations. Others gave evidence of not having been encouraged before either to focus in this way or to reflect on the totality of the enterprise. And others,

rather expectedly, found it impossible to keep to the fifteen-minute limit. In short, it was an interesting corporate intellectual exercise, one that appeared to hold the attention of all participants right up through the closing session.

The Johnson Foundation tape-recorded the entire proceedings, and turned the tapes over to the Institute of Religious Studies of UCSB. Following the conference, the papers were transcribed from the tape-recordings, edited lightly, then typed. The work of transcription and reproduction was effected by Mr. David Chidester, Research Associate in the Institute. Next, the manuscripts were read carefully and repeatedly, primarily by Walter H. Capps and Deborah Sills (Administrative Assistant in the Insitute and for the Council), and then also by various members of the Committee, various participants, and by others upon the request of the president of the Council.

The initial draft of the report has been written by Walter Capps, after consultation with others familiar with the contents of the transcripts, including Claude Welch, President and Dean of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Before the final report is completed, all members of the Committee will be given opportunity to make comments, offer amendments, additions, modifications, rebuttals, etc.

Regarding what will happen next, no one can be sure. The report will be made the focus of the CSR-sponsored departmental chairperson caucus at the New Orleans meeting of AAR, SBL, and ASOR in November, at which Professor

Burrell of Notre Dame University will offer a response, and various members of the Committee will participate. Some of the papers given in the conference itself will be published in upcoming issues of the Bulletin of the Council on the Study of Religion. Harold Cannon's and Bernard Spilka's papers will appear in the October issue, for example, and others are scheduled to appear in succeeding issues. (There are no present plans to publish all of the papers together, however, or to issue a comprehensive "proceedings of the Wingspread Conference" in this form.) Also, the final version of the report will be submitted both to the Division of Research of the National Endowment for the Humanities and to the Johnson Foundation. The extent to which it may also function as a guide in the future work and deliberations of the Council and/or in marking out directions for the fuller development of religious studies will depend entirely on the force it is perceived to carry.

PART TWO: FINDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE

In identifying some of the principal findings of the Wingspread Conference, care has been taken to list only those items that pertain to the complexion of the subject-field as a whole. The more particular and specialized insights and observations regarding the workings of the various sub-fields and disciplines have been utilized as the basis for these more comprehensive conclusions. But the insights and observations themselves are not identified in this report. However, some of this first-hand information will become accessible in other ways since edited versions of some of the papers will be published in future issues of the Bulletin of the Council on the Study of Religion, and, quite possibly, in other scholarly journals.

It must also be said that the items of interest have been identified in a somewhat impressionistic manner. The findings listed below have not been assembled on the basis of any deliberate or conscious intellectual consensus or via a polling of the participants in the conference. The findings stand as interpretations of the data. They are based on a composite reading of the papers and the transcriptions of the discussions of the papers. The entire interpretive process is regulated by an expectation that the findings will be discussed further in various forums.

Thus, it hardly needs to be said that the findings are not being presented as being either definitive or exhaustive of the present state of religious studies. Rather, they are

findings that can be presented in this stage of an ongoing process on the basis of methods that have been identified and described herein. They are intended to be stimulating, and, perhaps, provocative. And they are intended to serve as bases upon which specific recommendations can be made regarding the improvement of conditions and the ongoing strengthening of the academic study of religion and the well-being of the profession. In their present form, therefore, the findings are given a somewhat tentative status. They are organized here under five categories of interest.

Scope and Range Problems: Conceptual Issues

The first set of impressions pertains to the sense-of-the-whole by which those working within religious studies have identified their field of scholarly endeavor. And the largest impression here is that the sense-of-the-whole within religious studies is markedly tenuous and indefinite. It is tenuous, though perhaps not very flexible. It is indefinite, though not necessarily amenable to significant structural reconfiguration.

This observation is based on a recognition that religious studies consists of an amazing array of activities, ranging all the way from the most sophisticated and extensive sorts of linguistic, textual, historical, and critical training to courses in subject areas that might as appropriately be offered as general studies, interdisciplinary studies, general education courses in the humanities, or even in after-supper adult

education programs. Some take the phenomenon of variety-and-versatility as evidence of the subject-field's uncommon vitality. Others believe it to be a sign of a threatening, perhaps destructive over-extension, all deriving from a lack of clarity about fundamental intentions and a corresponding inability to distinguish priorities. Both opinions are agreed on the facts of the matter; both recognize that there is an enormous range and an unusual multiplicity of enterprises which occur under religious studies' auspices. It can be argued that both range and multiplicity are larger, grander, and more extensive than that of any other subject-field within the humanities and social sciences.

Accordingly, some present at the conference decried religious studies' penchant for incorporating so much within that range of things over which it claims responsibility and competence. They believed its miscellaneous posture to be detrimental to the academic respect it wishes to maintain. They contended that the longer-range vitality of the enterprise will become more and more dependent upon the cultivation of a capacity to refuse overtures, resist new possibilities, and close out ventures no longer useful. They also believe it imperative that those within the field learn to distinguish religious studies' proper sphere(s) of operation from those of others within the academy. They wished that the extent of the range of interest and competence might be demarcated clearly.

Others insisted that the scope of the enterprise is what it is because of the nature of the subject matter of the inquiry. They believe it important to recognize that religion is global in its scope, nearly as extensive as human experience itself, and social, cultural, and historical in its dimensionalities. It is understandable, then, that many tend to view the workings of religious studies as being something like the workings of a college of liberal arts in miniature, or like a combined humanities and social science program in microcosm. Conceived in this latter fashion, the enterprise has become unusually dependent upon the presence of effective cognate fields. Its very existence, in this form, requires an extensive supporting environment within the academy.

The prevalence of the liberal-arts model became evident at Wingspread when there was a request to identify the specific research needs of religious studies (the announced purpose of the conference). The group assembled seemed disturbingly incapable of (or disinterested in) listing specific concrete research needs. However, when such needs were talked about, cognate-field supports were mentioned most prominently and given top priority. In other words, when research needs are identified, they are defined more as support services than as intrinsic requirements. One can gain a strong impression that the existence of religious studies requires the existence of other academic programs; this seems to be true whether the supporting unit is some

combination of the humanities and social sciences, or, as is the situation in some colleges, the entire spectrum of undergraduate liberal-arts curricular offerings. This tendency, especially during a time of decreasing budgetary capacities and in an era in which a diminishing premium is placed on training in classical and foreign languages, has created frustrations that promise to become larger and may even become paralyzing.

There are more technical ways of arriving at the same impression. For example, religious studies currently exists without support or benefit of any reigning or even discernible overarching general theory. There is widespread lack of awareness, and very little use, of the general theories that were conceived by the classical researchers of the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. (Again, it may be less a lack of awareness than a lack of enthusiasm.) And there is diminishing regard for the prevalent modified Christian theological constructs that functioned in this capacity in the sixties and early seventies. To be sure, there are remnants from these previous mindsets, but they are functioning only in a manifestly piecemeal fashion. Generally speaking, the functioning overarching schematisms that seem to be on the ascendency are imports from other fields within the humanities and social sciences. The most prominent current ones have come from the more speculative and ideological sides of anthropology. There is great fascination, that is to say, with the theories and methodological stances of Mary Douglas, Victor

Turner, and Clifford Geertz. But this development can be taken as a sign that religious studies seems to have no effective general theories of its own.

It has become apparent, too, that there is as yet no comprehensive history of religious studies. There are histories of many of the components of religious studies, histories of many of the sub-fields, histories of the disciplines, but no history of the composite or totality. Neither is there a comprehensive tracing of the process by which the coordination of the various entities was achieved.

There is an important and discernible dispositional product of this lack of a sense of the totality. More and more, the sub-fields and disciplines are developing in a manifestly atomistic way. The past few years have seen them grow in strength as they have also achieved a greater independence. Increasingly, they are developing out of their own dynamics, frequently without reference to or correspondence with parallel developments in other sub-field areas. Such increased independence can be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be taken as indication that the sub-field has matured significantly, and has achieved both autonomy and effective identification. A frequent sign or confirmation of this is the inauguration of a scholarly journal. But it also threatens to transpose the subject area into a rather insular and isolating form of specialization. And there is danger that religious studies, left to develop in this fashion, will eventually consist of a loose collection of satellite enterprises,

lacking any coordinating consensus, no longer ordered by any specific or conscious principle of organization.

Perhaps it need not be said, for it may be all too obvious, that there are research needs implicit in each of these observations, even when they are not explicitly identified as such.

Principles of Inclusion and Exclusion: The New Areas

The second set of impressions is prompted by a large conflict, a conflict that can be stated in two ways. First, despite the enormous range and versatility of the subject-field, it seems unable to settle on principles of inclusion and exclusion. Said in another way, religious studies is currently marked by the birth of a large number of new or innovative areas (Native American Studies, Womens' Studies, Afro-American Studies, and Study of the New Religions, to name the most prominent). These, paradoxically, have experienced severe strains when seeking entry, acceptance, sanction, and legitimation. The difficulty can be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, it may be that implicit boundary principles operate within the field, even when these are not identified in explicit form. Or, perhaps the new areas that have been mentioned are regarded as belonging outside the specific province of religious studies, and are thus viewed as threats to whatever unity and coherence is manifest. Or, conceivably, the difficulty may be due to the fact that the present sub-fields and disciplines are unable, on their own terms, to welcome or accept the new enterprises.

Whatever the explanation, religious studies does not seem to have reached the point in its own intrinsic development which urges it to accept the new enterprises as factors necessary to a larger vitality.

There are a host of research needs implicit here. But so far, they are treated, in the main, as being marginal to the more proper interests and scope of the enterprise.

Influence of Increasing Cross-Cultural Sensitivities

The Wingspread conversations also demonstrated that religious studies is being effected increasingly and formatively by cross-cultural sensitivities. Such sensitivities are large, pervasive, and extensive. So forceful has this tendency become that some believe religious studies to have undergone (or to be ready for) a transformation via the dynamics of cross-cultural modalities.

However, despite the prevalence of cross-cultural aspirations and methodological intentions that are frequently cited as standard operating procedures, some gathered at Wingspread believe actual cross-cultural academic programs to be woefully inadequate, and exemplary ones few in number. There is strong feeling that this effort remains very embryonic, still lacking an adequate working vocabulary as well as effective means of communication.

perennial Conflicts and Tensions Still Unresolved

During the course of the Wingspread conversations, it became apparent that there are some perennial conceptual and operational distinctions, germane to the vitality of religious studies, that appear to require further clarification.

First, with respect to nomenclature and matters of academic identity in colleges and universities, there is large confusion, some border-conflict sniping, and considerable fear and suspicion about the relation of the humanities and the social sciences in the study of religion. The Wingspread conversations, in the opinion of some participants, illustrated that persons approaching the study from within one or another of these intellectual and methodological orientations have markedly imprecise and inaccurate ideas about the approaches of their counterparts.

Similarly, there remain large differences between the substance and intention of religious studies as supported by theological interests and the substance and intention of religious studies as supported from within the arts and sciences. Both forms of support remain strong within the enterprise, but the divergence between their respective intentions-and-expectations appears to be increasing.

Next, in the opinion of some of the participants at Wingspread, the inability to identify primary research needs is demonstration of the large bifurcation between theory and research. Frequently, research projects are conducted without

benefit of theory, for working theory remains tied to the work of the classical nineteenth-century researchers or to one of the ideological legacies undergoing increasing obsolescence.

Next , the status of the Christian religion has become increasingly problematical in the academic study of religion. This is due to the fact that expanding cross-cultural sensitivities have subjected the dominant religious tradition in the west to new kinds of inquiry. It is also a product of the growing recognition that many of the working analogies and conceptual distinctions that have functioned as accepted and standard methodology in religious studies have their roots and sanctions in Christian religious sensitivities. Their manifestly Christian derivation is being perceived more clearly. There is a developing tendency, still very embryonic in nature, to view the religious traditions of western culture via methodological sensitivities influenced by Asian religious traditions. There is increasing interest, too, in working with subjects which fall outside the range of that which Christian and/or western religions find interesting. This is a strong concomitant of increasing cross-cultural sensitivities, and can be employed to inspire wide varieties of useful research efforts.

Finally, there was an eloquent call during the Wingspread discussion that religious studies should fashion methodological access to the phenomenon of change. This is to be distinguished from its dominating preoccupation with matters of permanence (e.g., "essence" and "nature").

Professional Well-Being

With respect to the professional supports of religious studies, the consensus includes the following factors:

First, life within the professional societies in religious studies is active, energetic, and received by the constituency as being beneficial and necessary to the academic enterprise. The professional societies appear to be operating effectively and to be meeting actual expressed needs of the profession. There is also a good spirit of cooperation existing between them.

However, while the societies are strong and intellectual activity is high and intensive, the enterprise hasn't yet found a way to utilize teamwork effectively. There is some feeling, in this respect, that organization via the departmental framework, regardless of the necessary on-campus strategies and dictates that are involved, may have become a limiting research factor, and, in this sense, detrimental to the overall well-being of the enterprise.

Also, the acuteness of the vocational crisis reinforces the realization that the subject-field has not yet come to terms with "alternatives to growth." It has not yet devised strategies for improving the quality of the enterprise within settings wherein possibilities for growth have been foreclosed. This is an area of particular importance for religious studies in light of the fact that growth curtailment occurred early in the evolution of the subject-field, preventing the organism from following natural developmental pathways.

Finally, there are a number of serious discrepancies between the way in which religious studies is viewed by those working from within the subject-field and the way in which it is perceived within the larger academic environment. The stringencies of the years ahead may heighten the differences between the functions religious studies perform for its sponsoring institutions and the sorts of objectives it would pursue if allowed to follow its intrinsic development. The character of religious studies may be severely altered in the future as necessary economic measures decrease possibilities for intrinsic development and give the sponsoring larger formative influences.

These are the principal conclusions, and they can be made into reasons for both rejoicing and alarm. There is reason for alarm in the fact that some of the problem areas are of considerable magnitude and resist easy dissolution. But there is also reason for cheer for the subject area seems to have been well-established and in a significantly short span of time. Of course, the important matter is what the Committee on Professional Development, as well as the delegates to the Council, decide to do with the substance of this report. Their responses and recommendations will be included in the final completed draft.