

# TEMENOS

STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE RELIGION  
PRESENTED BY SCHOLARS IN DENMARK, FINLAND, NORWAY AND SWEDEN

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VOLUME 37-38

HELSINKI 2001-2002

SUOMEN USKONTOTIETEELLINEN SEURA  
RELIGIONSVETENSKAPLIGA SÄLLSKAPET I FINLAND  
FINNISH SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Temenos 37-38 (2001-2002), 241-261

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## The Psychology of Religion and the Problem of Apologetics

From its beginnings, the psychology of religion has been pursued by scholars who bring to the field a personal religious agenda. This tendency is so commonplace, in fact, that one can virtually take it for granted. Most famously, William James wrote his monumental work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1985) primarily to defend the religious point of view. In a letter he wrote to a friend in the midst of preparing these lectures, he remarked that

The problem I have set myself is a hard one: first, to defend... 'experience' against 'philosophy' as being the real backbone of the world's religious life... and second, to make the hearer or reader believe, what I myself invincibly do believe, that, although all the special manifestations of religion may have been absurd (I mean its creeds and theories), yet the life of it as a whole is mankind's most important function (H. James 1920, 2: 127).

Twenty years earlier, shortly after his father died, he appealed in a letter to his wife for her help in understanding

a little more the value and meaning of religion in Father's sense, in the mental life and destiny of man. It is not the one thing needful, as he said. But it is needful with the rest. My friends leave it altogether out. I as his son (if for no other reason) must help it to its rights in their eyes. And for that reason I must learn to interpret it aright as I have never done.... (Perry 1935: 323).

The fruits of the religious life, James would declare years later in the *Varieties*, convinced him that, on the whole, religion is 'an essential organ of our life, performing a function which no other portion of our nature can so successfully fulfill' (James 1902/1985: 49).

If James's interest in religion was in some measure an expression of filial piety, as Perry (1935) maintains, for other American psychologists of religion at the time their work was a manifestation of their commitment to the Social Gospel movement. This movement was part of a complex of

national reform efforts, collectively known as progressivism, that arose late in the nineteenth century in response to the profoundly disruptive social and economic changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization. Sweeping through the liberal Protestant churches at the turn of the century, the Social Gospel movement sought 'to make Christianity relevant to this world, not the next' (Link and McCormick, 1983, p. 23). For psychologist of religion Edward Ames (1959: 117f.), that meant 'liberating religion' from dogmatic authority and transforming it into 'the religion of the social gospel,' 'a nontheological, practical faith' that is 'scientifically intelligent and experimentally adventurous in dealing with social problems.'

George Coe, who was to become a leading influence in the highly popular religious education movement, was likewise caught up in the Social Gospel movement, and he, too, set about to reinterpret religion. The son of an orthodox Methodist minister, Coe studied and then abandoned theology because of its seeming incompatibility with scientific method and historical criticism. His early, conventional view that good and evil are a problem of individual character gradually gave way to the conviction that human goodness is shaped by social relations and the wider social order. Among the factors prompting this momentous shift were the writings of Social Gospel advocates and his active engagement in settlement work and political reform. The new social psychology, which, like the other social sciences at that time, implicitly embraced environmentalist and interventionist assumptions and was deeply animated by ethical concerns, offered Coe a scientific foundation for his new perspective. The function of religion, he was to argue in writings that spanned more than forty years, is the development of personality in the context of social relations (Wulff 1997, 1999a).

The story is similar for others of the early psychologists of religion, including G. Stanley Hall, Edwin Starbuck, James Henry Leuba, and James Pratt. Furthermore, like Coe, whose final book, *What is Religion Doing to Our Consciences?* (1943), fervently calls attention to the deep social concerns that drew him to the psychology of religion, most of these others left behind a last work testifying to their personal hopes for religion. Hall's was *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology* (1917), in which Hall argues that it is psychology's task to reveal the true meaning of Jesus—a projection, he thought, of intrapsychic processes of transformation—and thereby bring about a radical reconstruction of the world. Leuba's last, posthumous work, *The Reformation of the Churches* (1950), lays out his vision of reformed 'religious societies' that will promote 'spiritual hygiene and culture' by drawing on the 'empirical wisdom' of the great religious traditions, including their understanding of the power of art, pageantry, and ritual but not the overlay of mythic content that modern science and ra-

tionality make untenable (p. 124). And in his *Eternal Values in Religion* (1950), Pratt argues for finding new forms of faith and new methods of spiritual cultivation, in order to conserve our spiritual heritage, which he characterizes as both invaluable and irreplaceable.

The impulse to defend, reinterpret, critique, or revise religious tradition was evidenced among European psychologists of religion as well. Jean Piaget, to illustrate, distinguished between two fundamental types of religious attitude, transcendence and immanence, the former representing a God of incomprehensible causes who transcends this world, and the latter, a God of values who lies within us. Piaget concluded from his research group's findings that children who are taught unilateral respect for adults, especially ones with authority and prestige, are inclined toward the transcendent attitude, whereas those taught mutual respect in a context of equality and reciprocity tend toward the contrasting, immanent one. Judging the transcendent God of traditional theology to be an illogical product of the infantile imagination, and ascribing to the doctrine of sin and expiation the qualities of moral realism, Piaget gave his imprimatur to immanentism and its God and morality of love (Wulff, 1997, pp. 45-46).

Like Piaget, Swiss pastor Oskar Pfister identified the spirit of Jesus with love. And he, too, employed psychology to comprehend what he saw as distortions in the Christian tradition. But as a psychoanalyst long associated with Freud, he chose a dynamic approach rather than Piaget's cognitive-developmental one. By means of individual case studies and a review of the history of the Christian tradition, Pfister argued that neurotic trends in religion, traceable at least in some cases to pathological distortions in early childhood relationships, lead to an overemphasis on dogma and the displacement of love by hate. Depth psychology likewise offered Georges Berguer, the first to hold a chair in the psychology of religion, a framework for a critique of the Christian tradition. More willing than Hall to conclude that Jesus actually lived, Berguer argued that regrettable mythic elaborations of the life of Jesus have covered over the underlying psychological truth: we are called not to dutiful belief in Jesus's death and resurrection but to a dying of our own selves and a re-birth in the life of the Spirit (Wulff, 1997, pp. 33, 43-44).

On both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, then, psychologists of religion were disposed to use psychology to promote a vision of a more genuine and constructive understanding of religion. Overwhelmingly, these writers were highly liberal in their religious views, as an examination of their definitions of religion makes plain (Wulff, 1999b). These definitions, first of all, were nominal instead of real; rather than aspiring to identify some essential, unchanging features of religion, they settled for definitions that they constructed for their own specific purposes. They recognized, ac-

cordingly, the essential arbitrariness of their definitions. James's is best known: Religion 'as I now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine' (James 1902/1985: 34; emphasis altered). 'Divine,' James then carefully notes, should be understood broadly enough to include nontheistic religious views.

Others, too, declined to equate religion with theistic belief, and believing itself was commonly rejected as what it is that religious people most fundamentally do. Pratt, who stands out for his thorough and sympathetic acquaintance with Eastern religious traditions, preferred the word 'attitude' over 'belief,' in order to suggest something far more than a sheer cognitive response. Thus religion was for him 'the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies' (1920: 2). Angus Woodburne, who as a professor at a Christian college in India was likewise well acquainted with Eastern religious traditions, saw religion as 'the habitual disposition to seize upon the spiritual elements in the environment, the effort to organize and conserve them in the interests of the larger life. It originates and functions within the field of social relationships, having for its reference the cosmic environment' (1927: 18).

Rather than referring to the divine or to powers or spiritual elements, terms that readily call forth traditional associations, still others preferred the notion of value. Most famous in this regard is Danish psychologist Harald Höffding's influential definition: 'In its innermost essence, religion is concerned not with the comprehension, but with the valuation of existence[;]...religious ideas express the relation in which actual existence, as we know it, stands to that which, for us, invests life with its highest value' (1901/1906: 6). So also Edward Ames: Religion 'is the consciousness of the highest social values,' which 'appear to embody more or less idealized expressions of the most elemental and urgent life impulses....In all stages the demand is for "daily bread" and for companionship and achievement in family and community relationships' (1910: vii). And likewise Coe: Any action may be considered religious 'to the extent that it seeks "life" in the sense of completion, unification, and conservation of values,' whatever they may be (1916: 70-71).

In the first two or three decades of the twentieth century, this liberal-leaning and revisionist psychology of religion became enormously popular in American divinity schools, threatening to eclipse the study of theology (Smith, Handy, and Laetscher 1963: 429). But the devastation of World War I and its aftermath, including the collapse of progressivism and the resurgence of fundamentalism, sent the psychology of religion in America into a steep decline (Wulff 1998). The remarkable success of be-

haviorism in the second quarter of the century, along with its ban on the study of subjective experience, was another factor in the field's loss of status. Only with the gradual loosening of behaviorism's grip on psychology, beginning in the 1950's, did the psychology of religion and other fields centering in human subjectivity undergo a revival of interest.

Yet it was only the theory or ideology of behaviorism that receded into the background. The positivistic outlook that was integral to it, including its commitment to rigorous, empirical, and quantitative science, remains dominant in psychology to this day. For the psychology of religion that has meant a longstanding commitment to 'operationalizing,' or measuring, religiosity, the outcome of which is a large inventory of scales and questionnaires (Hill and Hood 1999). Whereas the early psychologists of religion constructed definitions out of their own, often widely informed, understandings of what religion most fundamentally is or ideally should be, empirical psychologists of religion have sought to solve the problem of definition by means of their measurement devices and thus by asking ordinary religious persons. Questions were written to reflect common variations in religious outlook and expression—common, at least, among the American Protestant Christians who were almost always the participants in these studies. The investigators were usually Protestant Christians themselves, frequently of a conservative bent. With the advent of high-speed computers, it then became the usual practice to factor-analyze the questionnaire responses, to identify the underlying factors, or dimensions. Some looked to these procedures as a means of finally settling the debate over whether 'religion' is a single entity or a multidimensional domain, and if the latter, as a way of determining what the essential aspects of religion are. These procedures, in other words, promised them a real definition of religion at long last. Others viewed such 'operational definitions' merely as a pragmatic way of getting around the apparently insoluble definitional problem (Wulff 1999b).

Religion thus became, for example, a matter of certain beliefs, especially in God; of engaging in ritual practices; of possessing certain knowledge (e.g., of scriptures); of experiencing certain feelings; and of manifesting certain consequences or effects, all in varying degrees (Faulkner and DeJong 1966). With such scales, then, researchers could set about to identify the correlates of religiosity, to establish an inventory of what else might be true of religious, or irreligious, persons and perhaps also to find leads to the causes of varying religious views. Such scientific methods promised to raise the psychological study of religion above the level of speculation and reflection exemplified by the early, armchair researchers and thus finally to establish it as a reputable and disinterested science.

Empirical methodology remains a human enterprise, however, with individual subjectivity unavoidably entering in at many points, from the initial construction of the questionnaires to the statistical analyses and

final interpretations. Some critics have objected to the lack of sufficient alternatives for responding to the questions, especially for respondents of more liberal or sophisticated outlooks. Thus Richard Hunt (1972), for example, argued for adding a mythological alternative to questionnaires that allowed only literal affirmation or disaffirmation of creedal statements. More recently, Dirk Hutsebaut (1996) and his associates have developed a questionnaire that includes a scale of 'post-critical belief,' which was inspired by philosopher Paul Ricoeur's concept of the second naïveté. Critics have also noted the difficulty, if not impossibility, of creating questionnaires that are usable with participants associated with varying religious traditions. Certainly many of the existing scales will not entirely make sense to persons other than Protestant Christians.

Scale construction, then, became a crucial point at which the personal religious views and commitments of researchers reentered the psychology of religion and gave shape to much of the research that followed. The problem was compounded when it became evident, mid-century, that among the correlates of the existing religiosity scales was a cluster of negative social attitudes: authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, dogmatism, and prejudice towards various types of person. Among the religiously committed psychologists disturbed by these findings was Harvard personality and social psychologist Gordon Allport, who grew up in a pious Midwestern home and eventually associated himself with the Anglo-Catholic Episcopal tradition. Theodor Adorno and his associates had observed that the conventionally religious, those who 'view religion as a means instead of an end,' are the ones to exhibit authoritarian tendencies, whereas persons who 'take religion seriously,' for whom religion is 'a system of more internalized, genuine experiences and values,' are likely to oppose them (1950: 310). Choosing the terms 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' to label these two religious orientations, Allport set about with his students to develop a scale to measure them and then to test out Adorno's observations.

The resulting *Allport-Ross Religious Orientation Scale* (Allport and Ross 1967)—which proved not to be a single, bipolar scale, as Allport had expected, but two, only slightly (and negatively) correlated scales—became in time the measure most frequently used by empirical psychologists of religion. Indeed, translated into several other languages, it became so prominent in the literature that Kirkpatrick and Hood (1990) declared it to be a paradigm. But the unanticipated independence of the Intrinsic and Extrinsic subscales was only the first of a variety of psychometric problems: factor analyses yielded as many as six factors, the scales broke down when factor-analyzed with other scale items, and correlations with other variables, including social desirability, raised doubts about what the two scales actually measure (Wulff 1997: 236). Dittes (1971) remarked

early on that the intrinsic-extrinsic typology was more useful to those concerned for the purity and good reputation of religion, as Allport was, than to scientific investigators. Likewise noting the value judgment implicit in the distinction between intrinsic (good) and extrinsic (bad) religious orientations, Kirkpatrick and Hood (1990) joined Hunt and King (1971) in recommending that the scales be abandoned in favor of more sophisticated and psychometrically defensible measures.

The persistence of their popularity prompted Daniel Batson and his associates to develop a third religious orientation scale, the Quest scale, which was designed to measure 'the degree to which an individual's religion involves an open-ended, responsive dialogue with existential questions raised by the contradictions and tragedies of life' (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993: 169). The Quest scale was intended to assess three aspects of Allport's (1950) mature religious sentiment that were thought missing from the Intrinsic scale: complexity, tentativeness, and doubt. Thus the scale was designed to tap what Batson 'considered a more mature, flexible type of religiosity than the other two' (Batson 1976: 207). Batson's Quest scale has yielded predicted positive correlations with cognitive complexity and tolerance—the latter notably more than the Intrinsic scale when the indicator of prejudice was a subtle, behavioral one (Batson, Flink, Schoenrade, Fuitz, and Pych 1986). Yet we are once again confronted by a measurement device that, beyond being challenged on both conceptual and psychometric grounds (see Wulff 1997: 239-243), represents the promoting of a certain religious outlook. Just as Allport's Intrinsic scale is reminiscent of the church-going and Bible-reading Midwestern Christian piety of his childhood, so Batson's Quest scale reintroduces Social Gospel theology (Derks and Lans 1986), which Batson had championed in an earlier, theological work (Batson, Beker, and Clark 1973). Curiously, he and Ventis later denied that they had represented the quest orientation as more mature than the intrinsic and extrinsic orientations (1985: 400).

Personal religious views, it is apparent, play a major role in setting the agenda for a psychology of religion and in establishing how religion will be defined. Put another way, psychologists of religion rarely pursue their subject from a disinterested perspective. The farther goals that animate a particular contributor's research or reflection are sometimes obvious, as they almost always were early in the twentieth century. In our day, however, an investigator's or author's personal views and ultimate goals are seldom explicitly stated. Rather, the scholarly ethos demands the studied appearance of scientific objectivity. Personal religious perspectives and goals nevertheless remain present, silently working beneath the surface.

In 1994, when two colleagues approached me for ideas for a major panel on the psychology of religion at the next meeting of the Society for the

Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR), I suggested putting together a group of four or five prominent contributors to the field and asking them to answer three questions: (1) Why do you do what you do—that is, what are the ultimate goals of your work in this field? (2) What do you hope the psychology of religion will have become in 25 years? and (3) How would you change the psychology of religion if you could? These are questions, I said, I would be eager to hear my colleagues answer. My suggestion apparently struck a chord and the panel was duly constituted. Batson declined to participate, but Pat Schoenrade, one of his collaborators, was there, along with Bernard Spilka, Ralph Hood, and Richard Gorsuch, the authors of a major work in the field (Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, and Gorsuch 1996). I was cast in the role of respondent.

The double-session panel discussion took place in front of a large, expectant audience. At long last, I thought to myself, I will hear my colleagues reveal why they are in the field and what they would like to see it become. Somewhere along the way, however, my three questions had become transmuted into ones that were much safer and less interesting. The crucial one—‘Why do you do what you do, or what are the ultimate goals of your work?’—had utterly disappeared. The question ‘What do you hope the psychology of religion will have become in 25 years?’ became the impersonal ‘Over the next 25 years, where is the psychology of religion headed?’ Only the last question remained more or less as I had proposed it: ‘How would you change the direction [of the field] in view of your own?’ The third, new question they were asked was ‘Does (or can) the psychology of religion inform religious practice?’ Most of the participants responded to these questions extemporaneously and indirectly, and they tended to focus on general or methodological issues, not the personal ones that I had had in mind (Nielsen 1995). Even when, as respondent, I rephrased the question of *why* we individually do what we do, the discussion remained implacably impersonal.

Subsequent events in the life of one of the participants, however, bring home not only the role that personal views can play in the psychology of religion but also their potential for dramatic change. Patricia Schoenrade, a professor at William Jewell College, a Missouri-Baptist institution in Liberty, Missouri, noted at the 1995 SSSR meeting that psychologists who study religion are inevitably personally involved in their work. To ensure the replicability of such work and an appropriate weighting of the research evidence, she argued, they must discipline themselves with scientific values and rigorous research methods. She also advocated a cross-cultural perspective on religion and an active seeking out of opportunities for broadly sharing the field’s findings, which she said were at risk of being ignored. Her own liberal commitments at that time were reflected not only in her continuing collaboration on the Quest scale but also in her

involvement as an officer in an area AIDS project and her advocacy for non-discrimination (Starnes, 2002), the latter reflected in a journal article she co-authored in 1997. She and her collaborator reported that gays and lesbians have more positive organizational attitudes when they disclose their sexual orientation at work, when the company they work for has an anti-discrimination policy, and when management is supportive (Day and Schoenrade, 2000).

In 1998, however, during a period of personal crisis, Schoenrade underwent a religious conversion and ‘came to know Christ’ (Starnes 2002). Over a period of a year, she wrote in an e-mail to her students, ‘a powerful, living God made it clear that He deeply desired our relationship to include all facets of my life. This God could no longer be compartmentalized as a mere component of my life’ (Schoenrade 2002). Repudiating her research on gays and lesbians, Schoenrade became prominent in Baptist and other internet news media in December, 2002, for opposing efforts at William Jewell to add sexual orientation to the anti-discrimination section of the school’s student bill of rights. Such a move, she declared, threatened to put ‘the spiritual and intellectual souls of our students...at risk.’ Having given her life to Christ, she said, helped her to see that she was to teach psychology ‘for his glory’; ‘any data I read, any research had to be subordinated to his direction.’ It became increasingly clear to her ‘how our Maker is involved in psychology and how far [the psychology of religion] has wandered’ (Starnes 2002).

Although other psychologists of religion have likewise made public the dimensions of their own religious faith (Malony, 1978), most have not, preferring to keep their personal commitments apart from their public record. Yet, as Beit-Hallahmi (1989: 36) notes, ‘most psychologists of religion are religious, and in their cases personal involvement overrides disciplinary norms.’ For the psychology of religion, the norms were laid out a century ago by Theodore Flournoy (1903), who put forward two fundamental principles to guide the conduct of the psychology of religion. According to his *Principle of Biological Interpretation*, an adequate psychology of religion will be (1) *physiological* in its concern for the organic processes that condition religious phenomena; (2) *genetic* or *evolutionary* in its attentiveness to the internal and external factors that shape the development of these phenomena; (3) *comparative* in its sensitivity to individual differences; and (4) *dynamic* in its recognition of the complex interplay of a great many factors in the religious life. According to the *Principle of the Exclusion of the Transcendent*, psychologists of religion should abstain from either affirming or denying the existence of the religious object, though it is certainly within their province to document the *experience* of transcendence and to trace out its permutations. Unfortunately, over the years, neither principle has been consistently applied, so that the

psychology of religion has in many hands become a rather narrow enterprise that commonly exceeds the boundaries of psychology and undertakes theology or religious apologetics as well.

The response of psychologists of religion to the 'new spirituality' might be taken as a case in point. Historically, the adjective spiritual was essentially a synonym for religious; in Latin translations of the New Testament, the 'spiritual' person is one who lives under the influence of the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God (Principe 1983). The virtual equating of 'spiritual' and 'religious' is still common today, but for many persons they have become terms with distinctly different referents. 'Religious' is often taken to refer to involvement in an authority-based system of shared beliefs and obligatory practices, whereas 'spiritual' is reserved for making reference to something within that is deeper, more complex, and more individual. It is not uncommon for persons to claim that they are spiritual but not religious, the latter term often having taken on for them largely negative connotations. Furthermore, 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' no longer automatically imply a relationship to some divine force or transcendent object outside the self, but often sum up, rather, certain desirable possibilities of the human spirit, including awareness, perspective, integration, detachment, courage, optimism, wonder, and love (Beck 1986).

Early in the twentieth century, psychologists of religion used 'religious' and 'spiritual' as essentially synonyms, following common usage. Leuba increasingly distinguished them, however, and used 'spiritual' only hesitantly, for 'too often, it carries a load of imaginary meaning.' When the word does appear in his writings, he emphasizes, it 'does not imply anything supernatural. It designates the higher reaches of the mental life, the mental activity referring to the good, the beautiful and the true' (Leuba 1950: 4n; see Wulff 2000). To be religious, in contrast, means subscribing to belief in one or more divine beings with whom one may have social relations, a belief that Leuba thought to be increasingly insupportable.

But Leuba was an exception. In a society that is overwhelmingly theistic, at least by declaration, American psychologists with an interest in religion tend themselves to be theistic and to work with research participants or psychotherapy clients who likewise believe in God. Moreover, they are likely to treat 'religious' and 'spiritual' as closely related. In their book *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy*, published by the American Psychological Association, Brigham Young University psychologists Scott Richards and Allen Bergin (1997) take 'spiritual' to refer to experiences that tend to be 'universal, ecumenical, internal, affective, spontaneous, and private' whereas 'religious' refers to manifestations that tend to be 'denominational, external, cognitive, behavioral, ritualistic, and public.' The religious, they say, is 'a subset of the spiritual'; the religious, in other words, is the observable, expressive side of the spiritual. Both are

grounded in a 'Western, theistic worldview' (13, 49), which is explicitly the foundation for their counseling strategy.

Kenneth Pargament (1997), whose research group found that a large majority of their diverse respondents considered themselves to be both religious and spiritual, likewise treats these terms as closely related. In his view, however, religion is the more encompassing term. Spirituality is 'a search for the sacred,' or the holy, whether referred to as God, the divine, or the transcendent, and hence that which is set apart from the mundane and treated with reverence (Pargament 1999: 12). Religion, if I understand Pargament correctly, represents a broader 'search for significance,' a search aimed not directly or perhaps exclusively at the sacred but somehow carried out in relation to it. We should carefully note that Pargament's 'search' does not have the same connotations as Batson's 'quest,' even though the two terms are ordinarily synonymous, for 'search' here entails at the outset both an identified object or destination and an established pathway toward it. 'Sacred pathways' include corporate worship, beliefs, prayer, ritual, dance, fasting, and so on—the nearly infinite means offered by the historic religious traditions. When the search is a spiritual one, the destination is the sacred itself, however it may be conceived; a religious search, on the other hand, may be aimed at a variety of objects of significance, so long as they are somehow related to the sacred. As more and more of these objects become 'sanctified'—that is, come to be seen as sacred themselves—spirituality and religion become increasingly congruent (Pargament 1999).

Pargament's (1999) insistence that the spiritual be related to the sacred reflects his concern over the problem of establishing the boundaries of the psychology of religion and hence preserving its self-definition. 'A spirituality without a sacred core leaves our field without a center' (11). That core, we may infer from the wording of Pargament's religious-coping measures, is explicitly God. Indeed, Pargament and Maloney (2002: 649) declare that 'God is central to any understanding of spirituality.'

This return to an explicitly theistic understanding of religion, one deliberately avoided by most of the early psychologists of religion, may be understood in part by Pargament's (1997) exclusively relational conceptualization of 'religious coping.' Such coping, he has concluded, can take one of three forms: '(1) the self-directing approach, wherein people rely on themselves in coping rather than on God; (2) the deferring approach, in which the responsibility for coping is passively deferred to God; and (3) the collaborative approach, in which the individual and God are both active partners in coping' (180). Thus even though meditation has long been integral to the religious traditions, it is classed by Pargament as a nonreligious form of coping and hence receives only passing mention in his book (308). Religious coping is epitomized, then, not by the broad

and age-old notion of a spiritual quest, but by the eternal and childlike cry of persons in deep distress: 'God Help Me!' (Pargament 1990).

More fundamentally, however, we see here once again the impulse to preserve a traditional religious outlook. The concept of the 'sacred,' although widely accepted by social scientists in the twentieth century, has been variously criticized as elusive, theological, culture bound, overly inclusive, and oppressive; its intuitive appeal in Western societies, Guthrie (1996) suggests, testifies to its correspondence to the stratification found in such societies and the related experience of otherness, especially of persons of high social status. Pargament's element of 'search,' we have already noted, is not the open search of Batson's existential questers, but the adoption of traditional forms of religious practice aimed at a traditional Western god. More recently, however, Pargament and Mahoney (2002) have called for a study of 'the full variety of spiritual pathways and destinations,' including those of 'smaller, newer, culturally diverse, and nontraditional groups....As psychologists we must respect the full range of worldviews, practices, and communities that people form in their spiritual journeys' (655, 656). Acknowledging that spirituality also has a dark side to it, Pargament and Mahoney nevertheless see it as an irreducible 'process that speaks to the greatest of our potentials' and that serves important psychosocial functions.

The defense of religion in terms of its positive fruits, an approach inaugurated by William James, continues apace to this day. Whereas mid-twentieth-century concern focused mainly on the social attitudes that tended to be associated with religion, researchers now are largely preoccupied with what appear to be the individual health benefits, both mental and physical, of religious orientation and association. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and medical doctors have, individually and together, carried out hundreds of studies looking for relationships between religious faith and health (Koenig, McCullough, and Larson 2001; Plante and Sherman 2001). In an earlier meta-analysis, Allen Bergin (1983) found that 47 percent of the studies he reviewed reported a positive relationship between religion and mental health, 23 percent a negative one, and 30 percent no relationship at all. Gartner, Larson, and Allen (1991) likewise make note of this inconsistent pattern, but they point out that the relationship tends to be positive when behavioral measures (e.g., drug use) are employed whereas it tends to be negative when more elusive and hypothetical intrapsychic constructs (e.g., rigidity) are measured by questionnaires, which these authors claim are not only less valid but also more biased than the behavioral assessments.

As these literatures have grown, the reviews of them have become less measured and more polarized. On the one hand are the enthusiasts who have concluded that the relationships are overwhelmingly positive, suf-

ficiently so to begin recommending that physicians and therapists encourage their patients to increase their religious involvement. Most conspicuous among the enthusiasts is physician Harold Koenig, who recently wrote a popular book, *The Healing Power of Faith* (1999), to sum up the research as he sees it. The chapter titles leave an unequivocally positive impression: Religious People Have Stronger Marriages and Families; Religious People Have Healthy Lifestyles; Religious People Cope Well with Stress; Religion Offers Protection from Depression and Helps Those Afflicted to Recover Quickly; Religious People Live Longer, Healthier Lives. In a far more personal volume, in which Koenig (2000) confesses his own commitment to Jesus Christ and his belief in the power of prayer and the reality of supernatural healing, he is careful to note that health benefits will follow only from genuine religious faith.

On the other hand are researchers such as Richard Sloan, Emilia Bagiella, and Tia Powell (2001; Sloan and Bagiella 2002), who find this area of research to be rife with serious methodological problems. To examine the growing number of claims about the relation of religion or spirituality to health, they sought to determine, first of all, the proportion of articles indexed in Medline under the terms religion and health that were actually relevant to the assertions about health benefits; only 17 percent were. When Sloan and his colleagues then examined the articles pertaining to heart disease and hypertension that were referenced in Koenig et al. (2001) and another comprehensive review, they found that half the cited articles were irrelevant to reviewers' claims, and that many of the others were either misrepresented or suffered significant methodological flaws (e.g., failure to control for multiple comparisons). Sloan and Bagiella conclude that 'there is little evidence to support claims that health benefits derive from religious activity' (2002: 19).

If there is a systematic religious bias operating here, as it seems indeed there is, it is hardly new in the psychology of religion literature. What is truly unprecedented is another factor, adumbrated in the dedications of two of Koenig's books: 'To Sir John Templeton' (Koenig, et al., 2001; Koenig and Lewis, 2000). Sir John Templeton, who made a fortune through astute management of his Templeton Mutual Funds, left the investment world in 1987 to devote himself to funding research in science and religion. Through the Templeton Foundation that he established that same year and the some 40 million dollars that it awards annually, Templeton aspires to increase 'over one hundredfold' the amount of 'spiritual information' that the world possesses (Templeton 2000). The most generous of the Foundation's awards is the annual Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, which, at 1.3 million dollars, is the largest award given in the world. The Foundation has funded much of the research to date on spirituality and health, and it also sponsors conferences and research on unlim-

ited love, character development, maxims, and such virtues as humility, gratitude, and forgiveness. It has provided the financial impetus for the emerging new field of positive psychology, which proposes to use modern empirical research methods to illuminate human strengths. The Foundation also publishes books under its name, including ones authored by Sir John.

One naturally hesitates to raise questions about such generous support of research that otherwise would surely go unfunded. But there are important ramifications that should be addressed. One is the degree to which Templeton's personal vision is reshaping the landscape of the psychology of religion, by encouraging research on topics that, like the virtues, have not traditionally been part of the field, while leaving topics of central theoretical significance unacknowledged and unsupported (Murken, 1999). In time, that vision could reshape the very language and categories that psychologists of religion use if not also their assumptions and the goals they pursue. Another matter pertains to how the research is carried out. The Foundation's support is naturally not disinterested: it funds research that it judges will lead to new spiritual knowledge. Applicants will naturally find it difficult to resist shaping their proposals if not also their final reports to accord with Sir John's and the Foundation's thinking and expectations.

Early in 2003, a special issue on Religion and Psychology of the journal *Psychological Inquiry* was widely distributed to nonsubscribers through generous funding from the Templeton Foundation. An e-mail explaining these circumstances was posted on the Society for Personality and Social Psychology listserv, for members of the Society were among those receiving copies. In due time someone asked in a thoughtful way how SPSP members felt about a foundation's sponsoring of an issue of a respected academic journal. One need be concerned, wrote an early respondent, only if the sponsoring agency intruded into the issue's content.

Did the Templeton Foundation intrude? Roy Baumeister (2002), the co-editor of the journal and guest editor of the special issue, concludes his introduction with the following acknowledgment:

Last, and most important, I am especially grateful to the John D. Templeton Foundation for its support for this project. They made resources available that have helped us make this much more than just another issue of *Psychological Inquiry*. The Templeton Foundation has done much to bring the scientific study of religion into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and up to the level of quality that befits a profoundly important topic. (167).

What is not mentioned is that three of the five authors of the 'target articles' are or were on the Foundation's Board of Advisors, and a fourth

author is co-recipient with editor Ray Baumeister of a major grant from the Foundation. These two researchers won the grant for a study of the victim role in relationship to humility and forgiveness, two conspicuously Christian virtues that are classically defined foremost in terms of the human relationship to God. The topic of the articles in the special issue of *Psychological Inquiry*, spirituality and health or well-being, is likewise one of the Foundation's leading concerns.

On this, the one-hundredth anniversary of the publication of Flournoy's classic principles, it seems it is time to revisit them, recalling the imperatives to remain agnostic about the transcendent and to place religion in the broadest possible framework. It may ultimately be impossible to approach religion with a wholly disinterested attitude, especially when funding becomes a critical variable, but surely we must aspire to it if the psychology of religion is to be a scholarly and scientific discipline worthy of trust and respect.

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