

Introduction

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James A. Beckford: Sociologist

James Arthur Beckford is one of the foremost sociologists of religion in the world today. His writings have been influential throughout the world, not merely in academia, but also in informing policy in a number of practical fields ranging from new religious movements to the prison service. On first acquaintance, Jim Beckford might seem rather quiet and unassuming – as, indeed, he is. One does not, however, have to spend all that much time with him before recognising his unusual strengths and his depth of character. He has gained the widespread respect and affection of both students and colleagues throughout the globe both as a visiting scholar and as a frequent participant, speaking and serving as an officer at international conferences. Although quintessentially British, Jim is completely at home in France and in French; he can read scholarly works in several other languages – and has recently been adding Japanese to his linguistic accomplishments.

Having begun his academic life by obtaining a First Class Honours degree in French Studies from the University of Reading in 1965, Beckford decided to move into sociology and turned his attention to a doctoral study of the British Watch Tower movement. He was determined to combine both theoretical analysis and empirical investigation from the outset. As well as conducting extensive interviews and distributing numerous questionnaires, he spent four years observing Jehovah's Witnesses in their homes, in congregations, in large assemblies and in public evangelism. In this endeavour he was greatly helped and influenced by Dr Bryan R. Wilson of All Souls College, Oxford, whose sociological perspective on the study of sectarian organisations was to remain with him throughout his career. In 1972 Beckford was awarded a PhD from the University of Reading, and his thesis was published three years later as the now-classic monograph, *The Trumpet of Prophecy: A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*.

Beckford's teaching career started while he was still pursuing his doctorate – from 1966 to 1973 he taught as a Lecturer in Sociology at Reading. He then took a similar post at Durham University, being promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1978. Ten years later he left Durham for an appointment as Professor of Sociology at Loyola University in Chicago, returning to England in 1989 to take up a Chair as Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick, where he remained until his retirement in 2007. Around the world there are literally thousands of men and women – be they professors, researchers, politicians, journalists, business men, housewives or nuns – who owe an enormous debt to Jim for all he taught them and the concern he showed for their welfare while they were students. They, like all who know him, will

remember his reliable scholarship, his enthusiasm for the subject, and his quiet, but truly delightful, sense of humour.

Beckford's international career had begun with an invitation to be a Visiting Associate Professor at Carleton University in Ottawa in 1974. Since then, he has been a Visiting Scholar at Tsukuba University in Japan (1978), a Fulbright Senior Visiting Fellow at the University of California, Berkeley and the Graduate Theological Union (1982–83). He has also lectured at numerous universities and other institutions around the world, particularly enjoying the time he has spent in Paris at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* (2001) and the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* (2004).

Beckford's honours and achievements include his being awarded a D.Litt. in 1985 by the University of Reading and, in 2004, his election as a Fellow of the British Academy. He was the founder and first convenor of the British Sociology Association's Study Group for the Sociology of Religion in 1975 and its Chairman from 1978 to 1983. He has held various offices in the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (SISR), serving as Vice-President from 1995–99, and President from 1999–2003. He also has served in several posts with the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR), and was President from 1988–89. For someone to have served as President of both the SISR and the ASR, one centred in Europe and the other in North America, is an indication of the esteem in which Beckford is held by his colleagues around the world. He has, furthermore, been active in the International Sociological Association, being a delegate to its Research Council from 1982–86, editor of the Programme for the 1986 World Congress of Sociology in New Delhi, and a Vice-President from 1994–98. He was also President of the ISA's Research Committee (RC22) for the Sociology of Religion from 1982 to 1986. Advisory posts that he has held in other countries include membership of the Irish Research Council's Assessment Board and of the *Conseil Scientifique* of the *Observatoire des Religions* in Switzerland. More recently his ground-breaking research on religion in prisons has led to his being a member of the Race and Diversity Training Advisory Group of the Prison Service of England and Wales, and a member of the scientific council of the national research programme on *Enjeux sociologiques de la pluralisation religieuse dans les prisons suisses*, funded by the Swiss National Research Council.

The quantity of editorial work that Beckford has done over the years for his profession is prodigious. He edited *Current Sociology*, the journal of the International Sociological Association from 1980–87, and has been a member of the Editorial Board for *Sage Studies in International Sociology*, chaired the Editorial Committee of the SISR, and served as an associate editor for *Sociological Analysis*, *Review of Religious Research*, and *International Sociology*. He has also served on the editorial boards of numerous other scholarly endeavours, including *Religion, Identity and Culture*, *The Journal of Contemporary Religion*, the *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, *Arxius*, *The British Journal of Sociology*, and *Religion – Staat – Gesellschaft*. He has, moreover, been a member of the Steering Committee of the *Dictionnaire des Faits religieux* since 2004.

Beckford has also been in considerable demand as an external examiner for both Bachelor and higher degrees, mainly in Sociology but also in Religious Studies and

related fields. He has served in such a capacity in well over a dozen British and numerous overseas universities, including the National University of Singapore, the University of California, Berkeley, Loyola of Chicago, Paris, Florence, Copenhagen, Århus and Florence.

The international flavour of Beckford's work is once again evident in the research funding that he has received over the years. Apart from several UK grants from such bodies as the Nuffield Foundation, the Leverhulme Trust, the Social Science Research Council, the Church of England and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, he has received funding from the European Centre for Social Welfare Training and Research, the United States-United Kingdom Educational Commission, UNESCO's Division of Human Rights and Peace, UNESCO's Division of International Development of the Social Sciences, the Agnelli Foundation, and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

The list of Beckford's publications is impressive by any standard. He has five single-authored books to his credit, all of which demonstrate his intellectual prowess and research abilities. These are his classic study of the Jehovah's Witnesses, *The Trumpet of Prophecy* (1975), *Religious Organization* (1975), the much-cited *Cult Controversies: Societal Responses to New Religious Movements* (1985), *Religion and Advanced Industrial Society* (1989), and *Social Theory and Religion* (2003). He has also co-authored two books: *Religion in Prison: Equal Rites in a Multi-Faith Society* (with Sophie Gilliat, 1998) and *Muslims in Prison: Challenge and Change in Britain and France* (with Danièle Joly and Farhad Khosrokhavar, 2005), the 1989, 2003 and 2005 volumes having been translated, respectively, into Italian, Polish and French. Add to these a number of edited and co-edited volumes and special issues of journals, including *New Religions and Rapid Social Change* (1986), *The Changing Face of Religion* (1989) with Thomas Luckmann; *Secularization, Rationalism and Sectarianism* (1993) with Eileen Barker and Karel Dobbelaere, *Challenging Religion: Essays in Honour of Eileen Barker* (2003) with James Richardson, *Theorizing Religion: Classical and Contemporary Debates* (2006) with John Wallis, and, most recently, with Jay Demerath, the impressive 746-page *Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (2007).

We shall not attempt to discuss the nearly 150 journal articles and chapters in edited works that Beckford has produced over his long career, starting in 1972 with his first publication in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*. However, a selection of these is included at the end of this volume as an appendix to which we would refer readers. We shall, however, now try to illustrate just a few of the major themes running through his work, especially those that are taken up by the contributors to this volume.

Major Themes in Beckford's Work

James A. Beckford can be described as both a sociologist of religion and as a social theorist. He has, in fact, stated on more than one occasion that his life's work has been an attempt to draw those too often distinct fields of study together, and to integrate the sociology of religion more fully into the corpus of sociology with its many sub-

disciplines. He laments that sociology of religion scholarship is so often devoid of any ties with other areas of sociological study and with classical sociological theory, and that developments in these other areas seldom refer to that ubiquitous area of human experience, religion. In most, if not all, of his publications, he has warned that sociologists ignore religion at their peril, and that a comprehensive understanding of contemporary society cannot be acquired without an understanding of the complexities of religious expression in today's world. His introduction to *Religion and Advanced Industrial Society* opens with the following statement.

The modern sociology of religion is remarkably self-contained. It has its own concepts, theories and general problematics But its links with other fields of sociology are, at best, tenuous. As a result, it is rare for studies of religion to be based on, or to influence, broad ideas about the dynamics and problems of today's societies. The main aim of this book is to show how the estrangement between sociology of religion and other fields of sociology has taken place and what its consequences are for sociological studies of religion.

.... modern religion presents sociologists with *theoretical* problems. It challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about their models of modernity. (1989: xi, his emphasis)

This theme is reiterated fourteen years later in the opening words of *Social Theory and Religion*:

This book begins at a point where my *Religion and Advanced Industrial Societies* (1989) ended. My main argument there was that religion had been at the very centre of the first generation of sociological and anthropological classics, but that, over the course of the twentieth century, it had moved into a marginal position ... [of] insulation against, and isolation from, the principal currents of social scientific thinking. (2003: 1)

In this major book Beckford adopts a social constructionist approach to examining modern-day religion, and presents us with a series of chapters deconstructing concepts, such as secularization, pluralism, and globalization, that are central to the sociology of religion. In these chapters he is understandably critical of the many definitions used sometimes too casually by scholars. He takes issue with the major thrust of traditional secularization theory, and describes in considerable detail the evidence that counters any notion that religion is losing a role in human affairs, arguing that '... debates about secularization are a dialogue of the deaf. The antagonists talk past each other and cannot agree on ways to resolve their differences.' (ibid: 68)

The 'vagaries of pluralism' are also subjected to Beckford's critical assessment. He examines some simplistic uses of the term 'pluralism' that refer to various types of religious diversity, and urges that the focus should be on levels of acceptance of the diversity that exist in most modern societies. He argues that pluralism should be considered from a normative perspective – in short, pluralism should be a value sought in the diversity of contemporary societies. His treatment of the term globalization is notable primarily for its severe critique of most globalization theorists for ignoring the obviously important role played by religion in the modern world. He also offers a convincing discussion of how certain types of religion have profited from and promoted certain aspects of globalization.

But, as already intimated, Beckford's work embraces empirical studies as well as theoretical commentary. Through his exploration of societal reactions to new religious movements (NRMs) in the United States, Britain, France and Germany, he demonstrates comparative sociology at its best. The basic conclusion he reaches in his influential and frequently cited *Cult Controversies* is that the controversies reveal more about the societies in which they are occurring than they do about the movements themselves:

... today's NRMs are significant mainly for being indicative of several tendencies emerging in contemporary western societies. The movements may be relatively unimportant in themselves, but their limited success and modes of operation can throw light on the social conditions which facilitated them. At the same time, however, it is essential to keep in mind that ... the *opposition* to NRMs is in itself no less indicative of prevailing social and cultural conditions. 'Cult controversies' are very revealing about taken-for-granted notions of normality. And anti-cult campaigns in particular have brought to light some interesting cross-national differences in ideas about the nature of perceived threats to the social, moral, and religious fabric of western societies. (1985: 282, his emphasis)

More recently, Beckford's research has been concerned with ground-breaking scholarship on the place of religion in prisons. The work has resulted in his being involved in significant ways in policy-making in both the United Kingdom and France. The first such book, *Religion in Prison* (1998), is a careful study of the way that the religious experiences of prisoners in the UK are handled in a society that is becoming ever more religiously diverse. The domination of the Church of England in the Prison Chaplaincy Service is examined, and the Church's role in 'brokering' the access of other religious representatives is criticized as being out of step with the changing social context. Again, there is a strong comparative emphasis in the research, comparisons being made in particular with how growing religious diversity is dealt with in the United States.

The second and more recent book on the subject, *Muslims in Prison* (2005), compares how the disproportionately growing numbers of Muslim prisoners are treated in French and British prisons. Despite, or perhaps because of France's *laïcité*, Muslim inmates find themselves discriminated against – because all are officially treated equally as part of a single, indivisible culture, they are unable to receive halal food and have few opportunities for collective worship. Britain, however, has tended to favour the integration of religious and ethnic minorities into a 'community of communities', fostering diversity as a basis for social cohesion. As a result, British prisons are more likely to facilitate and, to some extent thereby, control the practice of Islam, while, by attempting to discourage the practice, French prisons can sow the seeds of extremism.

The significant differences between the two nations found by Beckford and his co-authors have given rise to fresh insights and further reflection about what Western societies can do to deal with this escalating problem. The volume, simultaneously published in French and English, is having an impact not only in France and Britain, but elsewhere throughout Europe and North America. It promises to be another classic that will provide a major reference for understanding not only the dynamics

of prison life for Muslims, but also for providing insight into the much wider issues related to the challenges of multi-religious societies.

The policy implications of Beckford's work are evident, but his contributions to 'making a difference' in society are not confined to the ivory tower of academia. For almost twenty years he has served as the BSA's Sociology of Religion Study Group's representative on the Board of Governors of Inform, an NGO supported by the British government and mainstream Churches, which provides information about minority religions that is as objective and up-to-date as possible.¹ He is also one of Inform's Vice-Chairs and the Chairman of its Management Committee, a responsibility that involves frequent (often daily) contact with other members of the Committee and the office staff. His work for Inform exhibits just one example of both his dependability and his generosity in being prepared to give time and consideration to ensuring the results of research based on social science methodology can be utilised to the best advantage – particularly in preventing unnecessary suffering through actions arising out of ignorance and/or misinformation.

Off Duty

Despite the prodigious amount of work Jim has undertaken throughout his career, it would be a great mistake to think of him as the 'dull boy' of all work and no play. While he may be internationally known in academic circles as a scholar of renown, he is also known to his friends as an enthusiastic grower of leeks, an impressive runner, and a voracious tourist, whose delight in discovering the hot tub in California can be matched by the awe he experienced on seeing the carvings in Khajuraho and his pride at having observed a black mamba at perilously close quarters while on safari in the Kruger National Park. And, like most proud grandparents, Jim requires little encouragement to produce the latest photograph and relate the miraculous achievements of his young grandchildren – and some may be surprised to learn that one of his more challenging retirement preoccupations is mastery of the skills of unicycling.

In an environment that is frequently charged with rivalries, resentments and backstabbing, Jim's popularity is exceptional and unquestionable. It would not have been difficult to have invited twice the number of scholars to join this venture. The sixteen (drawn from eight different countries) who have contributed are all internationally acclaimed academics, and all of them know Jim both as a colleague and as a friend – all have enjoyed both intellectual exchanges and the occasional cup of coffee, glass of wine and/or tot of Glenturret with him in some foreign clime. They were asked to provide a chapter that would add to our understanding of the centrality of religion in contemporary society, which, as we have seen, is a subject that Jim has forcefully and repeatedly insisted needs far more attention within social science than it has received. Exactly how the contributors interpreted this challenge

¹ For further information about Inform (Information Network on Religious Movements), see www.Inform.ac.

was left for them to decide, and each of them has responded in his or her own way to Jim's *cri de coeur*.

The French Connection

Grace Davie took on the task at a personal level, explaining how Jim's work has affected and, indeed, provided a point of reference for her own research and teaching. She combines the point that Beckford made so clearly over twenty years ago in *Cult Controversies* that an understanding of the place of new religious movements in any society depends as much on the society as it does on the new religions themselves, with his point that one needs to understand both its religious history and its current situation to recognise the way any particular society functions. Sharing with Beckford an interest in the situation in France, Davie takes that country to illustrate the point, comparing it to Britain and other countries and drawing on the conceptual clarity offered by Beckford in his analysis of the different meanings of pluralism, she directs us to the apparent paradox that while France is both constitutionally and institutionally a more democratic society than Britain, Britain is a more tolerant one than France.

Davie's chapter is followed by three French scholars who provide us with further insights into the French situation. Danièle Hervieu-Léger sketches an intellectual history of European religiosities, demonstrating the interconnected developments of two conflicting notions – a close God and a distant God. It is, she concludes, necessary to study the diverse configurations of the relationship between modernity and spirituality over the past four centuries if we wish to refine our understanding of the 'new religions', which, it can be shown, do not embody completely new ways of being individual, but emerge as a logical consequence of 'the incorporation of the spiritual quest in a psychological modernity characterised by the individual concern for self-fulfilment'.

Jean-Paul Willaime addresses the tensions that underlie *laïcité*, a concept that has long confused many a non-French scholar – and can also present a challenge for the French. In institutional and legal terms, *laïcité* stands for a separation between church and state that respectfully protects the freedom of the religious and the non-religious alike. It has, however, been manifest in certain times and places as a secularist suspicion of religions, the new religious movements and Islam being, in recent years, a particular focus of tension. Having traced the historical grounds of French *laïcité*, Willaime guides us through the ways in which the religious diversity increasingly found in contemporary France has engendered both secular tensions and, more recently, a more broad-minded regulation in the form of 'a benevolent neutrality' toward religious belief. A generation after Beckford's *Cult Controversies*, Véronique Altglas provides further empirical illustration for Willaime's analysis of the 'paradox of *laïcité*' by presenting an account of the controversies surrounding what are now referred to as *les dérives sectaires* or 'sectarian deviations'. Starting with the murders and suicides perpetrated by the Order of the Solar Temple in the mid-1990s, and the French parliamentary Report with its notorious list of 172 'dangerous' movements, Altglas guides us through the intricacies of French law and

the organisations set up by the French government to combat sectarian deviations – and some of the tensions within the government arising in response to these organisations. Concurrently, we learn about the activities of the French ‘anti-cult movement’ and, as yet another part of the ongoing controversies, the emergence of an ‘anti-anti-cult movement’.

The next chapter is written by the Belgian scholar, Karel Dobbelaere, who compares the *laïcité* found in Belgium with that in France. Dobbelaere starts from the stance that, while Protestant countries tended to undergo a process of ‘latent secularization’, when religion and internally related social sub-systems occurred simultaneously, in Catholic European countries there was a process of ‘manifest secularization’ with conflict and tensions arising between the Church and the institutions over which it had wielded authority – this being as a result of the conscious and intended process of functional differentiation. However, although the term *laïcité* can be applied equally to both France and Belgium, in France the term refers as a constitutional and legal principle to the nation-state, the *République Laïque*, while in Belgium it refers to a particular group, the *culte laïque*, which, alongside the Catholic Church and other recognized religions, offers the public services such as education and health.

Religious Insertions in Society

In *Cult Controversies*, Beckford suggests that a useful way of approaching new religious movements is to ask how they are inserted into their societies. In this section, we start with an examination of how an older religion that is new to a particular society adjusts to the new society *without* controversies. Enzo Pace asks how it is that Sikh immigrants manage to be so successful in adapting to European society, and reaches the conclusion that the inner-worldly mysticism of the Sikh conception of religion and ethics has an ‘elective affinity’ with ‘the spirit of adaptation to the social and economic order of this world’. Sikh inner-worldly mysticism, while mobilizing the individual to act in *this* world, links the meaning of such action to a transcendental, yet immanent, purpose. Because worship involves working in the world, Sikhs can uproot themselves from their original environment and adapt to the rules and regulations of the host society.

There is a sense in which the next chapter turns the theme of the previous one on its head. For Jay Demerath, ‘a movement without a crisis is a movement with a crisis’. Not all crises are functional for a movement, but, he persuasively argues, some undoubtedly are. Movements and organisations sometimes exploit and often depend on crises both as a source of their basic missions and as aids in pursuing these missions. Crises can, Demerath suggests, be conceptualised into four main types, depending on whether they are external or internal on the one hand, and cultural or structural on the other. His argument that movements sometimes require enemies more than friends sheds an interesting light on the earlier discussions about the controversies in France and elsewhere, and on the conclusions of the following chapter by James T. Richardson and Jennifer Shoemaker, who focus on decisions concerning minority religions in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which they see as the most important court of human rights in the world

and, since the *Kokkinakis* case in 1993, a major constructor of religious freedom in contemporary society. Richardson and Shoemaker take us through a number of recent ECHR cases relating in particular to France and to Russia, using the comparison to re-examine an earlier hypothesis posited by Richardson and Garay concerning a possible double standard in the Court's decisions, with Russia being dealt with 'in an almost perfunctory manner' compared to France, an original member of the Council of Europe. Their conclusion is that although France has now received some negative decisions, they remain undecided as to whether these are of the same 'weight' as those found against Russia. In other words, they consider that the jury is still out on exactly what messages the ECHR is sending to societies with minority religions inserted in their midst.

David Voas examines the relative lack of success that Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) have experienced since the early 1980s in inserting their religion into Europe and the Americas. His analysis of the statistical data leads him to question the 'supply-related' propositions proffered by Stark and Iannaccone, offering instead a demand-related explanation. He suggests that each society has a particular niche but, once this has reached a saturation point, there will be no more 'customers' to which the 'religious product' is likely to appeal. Of interest in the light of Demerath's chapter is an exchange between Voas and Beckford, the issue here being the extent to which the relative failure that JWs experience in their missionising efforts can be given a positive spin. How far, they debate, might failure be interpreted as a sign that the end time really is imminent, and how far does it lead to discouragement? And to what extent could 'a modest dose of martyrdom ... help to build solidarity'?

Margit Warburg's chapter also considers processes involved in joining a minority religion, but from a micro rather than a macro perspective. Having reviewed a number of sociological approaches to conversion, she points to the usefulness of Beckford's depiction of JWs' 'conversion accounts' as constructions (which can, nonetheless, give us valuable information), and of George W. Brown's distinction between 'situational causality' and 'distal causality'. Warburg then illustrates how the researcher might analyse conversion accounts, providing examples from her own study of conversion among the Baha'is of Denmark, and finally suggests that a useful comparison can be made between conversion and conversion accounts on the one hand and the process of falling in love and the construction of courtship stories on the other hand.

The chapter by Sophie Gilliat-Ray takes us back to the macro level with its concern about ways in which a minority religion may be inserted into particular institutions of a society. She starts off from the research that she conducted with Beckford for the report on the Church of England and other faiths in Britain and their book *Religion in Prison*. She traces the somewhat intricate and sometimes challenging processes whereby a minority religion (in this case, Islam) moved from a situation in which it was allowed to have 'visiting ministers' on an individual and *ad hoc* basis in prisons and hospitals, to one in which it became part of the institutionalised structure of the prison service and the National Health Service, with a state-supported and increasingly professionalized chaplaincy, together with a growing awareness of the rights of Muslims as British citizens and their role in the public life of British society.

Religion, Power and Politics

The topic of David Martin's chapter is that of the confrontation between the Christian transcendent vision of peace on earth on the one hand and the secularity of politics, power and violence on the other hand. Drawing on a rich assortment of sociological, historical, literary and theological sources, Martin weaves a tapestry of intertwined and interacting themes and counter-themes, tracing the fortunes of voluntary groups and 'the social sacred', whilst confronting the rationality of religion in the public square.

Some of his themes can be found also in the chapter by Thomas Luckmann, although Luckmann is telling a significantly different story. Luckmann describes how, while power and powerlessness are universal elements of the human condition, these are experienced in very different ways according to time and place. In archaic society, human beings were helpless in the face of God and the Church, and power, law and economy were 'fused' as part of an all-embracing kinship system; in contemporary Western society, functionally 'rational' economic and political norms have increasingly replaced religious norms – 'first went the fear of the Inquisition, and then the fear of hell.' The close control over the individual is anonymous and discontinuous, but with a space of solitary freedom within the interstices of the social structure.

The Spiritual and/or the Religious?

The chapter by Eileen Barker starts with a quotation from Beckford in which he states that one aspect of the sacred that is currently undergoing re-location is the relationship between conceptions of religion and spirituality. This is a theme that is taken up by three of the contributors, each from a different continent. Barker's contribution attempts to locate spirituality among the other kinds of worldviews on offer in contemporary society, contrasting it in some ways with secularisms on one hand and conservative religiosities on the other. She then draws an ideal-typical distinction between the two poles of spirituality and religiosity and, having described briefly some of the ways spirituality is conceptualised, draws on some survey material to test the kinds of meanings that being a spiritual person may have for respondents. One possibly unexpected discovery is that those who define themselves as spiritual-*and*-religious are likely to be closer to the ideal-typical religious pole than those who define themselves as religious-but-not-spiritual.

Moving to a country that, like France, has long fascinated Beckford's intellectual curiosity, the next chapter comes from the Japanese sociologist of religion, Susumu Shimazono who uses his concept of the 'New Spiritual Movements and Culture' (NSMC) – a concept somewhat akin to the New Age in the West – to explore a trend towards resacralization in contemporary Japan. Those participating in the NSMC tend to think of themselves as being spiritual rather than religious; they believe they are espousing a new worldview that has overcome the defects of both traditional religion and modern science, and that while they are aiming for a personal 'self-transformation', this can result in a global transformation. Shimazono illustrates

the ways in which the NSMC has entered into such institutional spheres as the medical and welfare services, education and national ritual. He concludes a process of resacralization can be observed as the NSMC spreads throughout an increasing number of spheres in the Japanese national consciousness.

The following chapter is also concerned with ways in which a sociological analysis of 'spirituality' reveals important features of both the private and the public aspects of religion in contemporary society. In her contribution too, Meredith McGuire discusses the possibility of being spiritual but not religious, and in the process of drawing an historical comparison between understandings of spirituality and religiosity, points to four key elements shared by contemporary and earlier forms of popular spirituality: religious eclecticism; materiality and attention to the human body (which can be associated with sensual ways of being spiritual); pragmatic concerns (which may range from finding ways that 'work' to obtain health, a new job or a new washing machine); and, finally, a blurring of boundaries between the sacred and the profane. McGuire's conclusion is that by using the term spirituality, she wants to convey a sense of an individual 'condition in process'. In contrast to 'religiosity', she argues, 'spirituality' might be used to refer to patterns of spiritual practices and experiences that comprise individual 'religion-as-lived'.

The incorporation of the concept of spirituality into the sociology of religion does not, of course, diminish the need for the social sciences to recognise the centrality of religion in society, far less does it diminish the need for sociologists of religion to look beyond their sub-discipline. On the contrary, it stresses the importance of Beckford's argument by expanding traditional conceptualisations of religion and promoting an increasing awareness of the centrality of religion in all its changing contemporary forms at all levels of contemporary social life.

As always, thanks must be expressed to those who helped produce this volume. Sarah Lloyd and her colleagues at Ashgate were consistently cheerful and helpful. Inform's Research Officer, Sarah Harvey, edited the bibliographies and painstakingly searched for inconsistencies in the citations, and Peter Barker judiciously scanned the text for infelicities and typos and brewed copious cups of coffee. But finally, and most importantly, all of us thank Jim for everything he has given to us, and to many others, over the years by way of challenging ideas, scholarly inspiration, unstinting support and an enduring friendship. With gratitude, respect and affection we wish him a deservedly long and happy retirement.