PREFACE

This 14th volume of Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion provides an excellent sample of the wealth of knowledge and understanding of religion that is available through scholarly research in the social sciences. Tucked into it is a rich trove of topics that ranges from knowledge about the impact of religion on individual persons to its influence upon global society. It covers subjects as current as the impact of the 9/11 terrorism upon women who, as residents of the cities that were its main targets, were the most directly impacted, but also as old as the secularizing trends in European history and as perennial as the problems of race relations in American churches.

Topics that on the surface seem as opposite as ecumenism and evangelism, cognition and emotions, altruism and terrorism, lying and the clerical persona, agnosticism and faith, children and senior adults, spirituality and agnosticism, neuroticism and hope, and religious expansion and church decline in the contemporary world are found within these pages. The articles include answers to questions like these.

- How do children and adolescents develop their world views?
- Are elderly women more spiritual than those who are young and middle-aged, and are they more self-centered and less concerned with social ethics and the well-being of other people?
- Do men and women really differ on measures of religion/spirituality and personality?
- Does religion affect the responses of women to the vicarious victimization that results from terrorism?
- Are all varieties of Christian clergy similar with regard to lie scale scores and neuroticism?
- Does the racial integration of church congregations increase the likelihood that they will experience internal conflict?
- Do all research findings support the religious market model of rational choice theory?
- Is the decline of religion in Europe an actual or only a fictional trend?
- Can the normative studies of Christian missions ever be useful in the objective research of social scientists?
- How do the increasing globalization and pluralism of contemporary religion influence the scientific study of religion and spirituality?
- Is Islam a homogeneous or heterogeneous religion?
Is secularization an inherent process in and therefore a consequence of the Christian faith?

How has *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* contributed to the expansion of knowledge, and how can it continue doing so in the future?

Because most of the research that is reported here was done in Europe or America, the predominant religion of these studies is Christianity, including several of its branches, but one article is an analysis of Islam, and several others mention their implications for research on Buddhism, Falun Gong, New Age, and other religions.

The methodological approaches used in these studies are diverse. They include well established techniques of empirical investigations, especially through the use of questionnaires and interviews in survey research and applications of psychological scales, but some are based upon content analysis, structural hermeneutics, theoretical investigations, or the analytical methodologies of interpretive sociology. While psychology and sociology are the primary disciplines behind these investigations, resources from history, missiology, cultural anthropology, religious education, and other specialties contribute to them as well. Many of the articles mention connections of social and behavioral science research with their theological underpinnings, and all implicitly reflect philosophical presuppositions that provide the foundation for every empirical investigation and all humanities scholarship. Partnerships between the disciplines are an important stimulus for fruitful explorations and innovative insights on both personal spirituality and institutional religion. Every report includes numerous references that can lead inquisitive readers to still further investigations of the same and related topics, as well as to methodological resources and beneficial suggestions of techniques and topics for further research. We hope these will stimulate others to extend the investigation of these and related subjects in the social sciences of religion and in related disciplines.

The subject of religion and spirituality can be approached broadly as either a universal phenomenon that has similar characteristics among the diverse people of all cultures, or as a particularistic subject that focuses upon the uniqueness of every religion and its differences in various cultural settings and frames of reference. Both perspectives are reflected in this edition of RSSSR.

The authors of these studies are as diverse as the subjects they cover. They are truly international, with "home bases" in Australia,
Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, Switzerland, the USA, and Wales. In addition, many of them have studied or worked in nations beyond their native lands.

In summary, this volume can be likened to a deep mine with dozens of veins of rich ore, or to a tree with many branches, each laden with a different variety of fruit, or to a supermarket with numerous aisles laden with diverse products, yet all about aspects of religion or spirituality. Each article can be approached as a unit in its own right, or all of them can be viewed together as a cross-sectional sample of current social science work on religion and spirituality.

Beyond question, Volume 14 sustains and strengthens the reputation of RSSSR as an international resource on religion that is not narrowly limited to only one nation, one discipline, one methodological approach, or one religion. It includes both micro- and macroinvestigations of religious phenomena. These articles can enrich the work of professionals in numerous religious, human services, academic, and other occupations, and it can expand the knowledge, increase the understanding, and satisfy much curiosity of persons in any of the other scholarly disciplines or lay careers.