PREFACE

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In his 1993 Paul Hanly Furfey Address to the Association for the Sociology of Religion’s annual meeting, N. J. Demerath, III, took up the “major shift that occurred in religion’s perceived political prominence, especially following key events in 1979” (1994: 105). Jay went on to write a book to share the findings of the project that he outlined in his address (Demerath 2001), and it is fitting that in this, his Presidential, year at ASR we should see the Association’s “Religion and the Social Order” series revived and renewed through a look at how religion is faring among one of the populations from that project: the Chinese. We do so courtesy of the collaborative work of ASR’s 2004 president, Joseph B. Tamney, and his program chair for that year’s meeting, Fenggang Yang. They have put together a series of chapters that explore in depth the many-faceted sides of religious expression among Chinese living in Asia.1 Buddhists, Confucians, Daoists, Christians all enter a new market, albeit more heavily regulated than what we are used to in the West, to construct new expressions of age-old faith traditions. The results are fascinating and significant to our understanding of the variety of religion-and-society relationships that can develop across time and space among cultural groups. I am happy to offer this book as a “new beginning” for this series.

As I do this, I also want to express not only my own appreciation but also that of the Association to David Bromley, who first conceived this series and served as General Editor for a decade. Beginning in 1991, with an overview volume on new developments in theory and research, edited by Bromley himself, the series continued with an examination of changes in the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council, under the editorship of Helen

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1 This collection will eventually be complemented by a special issue of Sociology of Religion, which they will also co-edit, that will contain articles about the conversion to Christianity of Chinese people in the United States, with special focus on the methods used by churches to attract Chinese converts.
Rose Ebaugh, through a two-part volume on new religious movements, co-edited by Bromley and the late Jeffrey K. Hadden, to additional offerings, among others, on quasi-religions, deviance and religion, the problem of ‘authenticity’ in religion, concluding with a volume recapping the definition-of-religion question. Throughout the series demonstrated high quality scholarship and professional dedication. As we move into a new era of publication with Brill, we can look back with gratitude to David for the not always easy years of service he gave to the Association and its members.

With respect to the present volume, most of the chapters included here were presented at the 2004 ASR annual meeting or at the 2004 annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and both organizations provided support to authors from ‘greater China.’ Additionally, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies in Hong Kong, and the Culture Regeneration Research Society USA provided support for the development of the sociology of religion in China in 2004 in ways that were directly relevant to this volume. On behalf of the editors and myself, I wish both to acknowledge the support of these organizations and affirm our gratitude to them and to our colleagues who worked in the summer sociology of religion programs.

Finally, I am grateful to our contributors for sharing their research with us in this forum and for a spirit of outstanding cooperation in working to bring it to completion in a timely manner.

I look forward to sharing with you next year a collection under my own editorship on a variety of issues related to contemporary pilgrimage issues (cum tourismus), and invite our membership particularly to consider offering other work and expertise toward this series.

References