Chapter 2

Articles in the Sociology of Religion, 1964–1984

In Chapter 1 it was only possible to trace the early history of American sociology of religion through dissertations because there were no journals in the field and books were so diverse, ranging from pamphlets to major research reports and systematic tomes, that they could not be meaningfully tallied up for purposes of discovering patterns. With a few exceptions, dissertations were consistently empirical research reports. It was possible to find out from them that, for example, the American university centers of research in the sociology of religion were no different from those of sociology in general: Columbia University, the University of Chicago, from 1940 the University of Wisconsin, and from 1950 Harvard University. There were also a few early dissertations in the field at the University of Pennsylvania. One may surmise that the initiative for dissertation research in the specialty came from the graduate students rather than any research projects housed in the degree-granting departments.

In the present chapter, the focus will be slightly different, highlighting work in the field not by graduate students earning doctorates but by everyone publishing relevant articles in journals and collections of readings. Most of these authors had earned doctorates in sociology, as we will see, and had written dissertations either in the field or in some other specialty within sociology. This stage of the study is made possible by the fact that specialized journals were established in time for us to trace developments after 1959. The present journal Sociology of Religion began in 1940 as the American Catholic Sociological Review; the first editor, Paul Mundie, did not want American Catholic sociologists to be isolated from the mainstream but wanted the new journal to serve as an added forum because “Catholics have a body of truths to serve as guides in the study of social theory and, because of this, society for them can never be a goal-less or purposeless organism, nor can society be an end or purpose in itself” (Mundie [1940]1989: 321). By the 1960s, however, there appeared to be less of a distinctively Catholic sociology at the meetings of the sponsoring organization, the American Catholic Sociological Society, and in its journal, though there was an interest among the membership in the sociology of religion and of Catholicism.¹ We will trace this change, described by those who went through it as an “evolution,” in a later chapter. Here we need only observe

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¹ Information on the American Catholic Sociological Society, as well as the other professional associations mentioned immediately below, is provided in Chapter 5.
that the name and nature of the journal changed in 1964, when it became *Sociological Analysis* and served as a journal in the sociology of religion. The intent had been for *Sociological Analysis* to serve as the journal title through a transitional period, as noted by the 1964 editor, Paul Reiss, in a 1991 letter (quoted in Swatos 1993). While the actual transition was quick, the name was not changed to *Sociology of Religion* until 1993, when a referendum of the renamed Association for the Sociology of Religion approved it. So an English-language journal devoted entirely to the field assumed its definitive form in 1964, obtaining a definitive name in 1993.

Meanwhile, the tradition of the pre-World War II Institute for Social and Religious Research persisted in the Committee for Cooperative Field Research, which became the Religious Research Fellowship and finally, in 1959, the Religious Research Association. The Association began publishing the *Review of Religious Research* in the summer of 1959 (see Whitman 1959a). While the journal was multi-disciplinary from the outset, the bulk of the articles published in it was and still is by sociologists. The applied focus of its founders has been retained in the form of summaries of denominational research reports that appear in a separate section after the main articles.

The first issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* dates from October, 1961. The “Introductory Word” notes that “a generous grant from the J.A. Kaplan Fund” was instrumental in launching the journal (Kallen and Pemberton 1961). While there was more of an evident university basis for the new journal than for the *Review of Religious Research*, given the officers of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion listed in the issue, the SSSR Vice President was Lauris B. Whitman, the 1959 Religious Research Association President who had introduced the *Review of Religious Research*. So in addition to *Sociological Analysis* (the future *Sociology of Religion*) there were newly in place two interdisciplinary journals that published a number of articles in the sociology of religion.

Even with three specialized journals in place, articles in the sociology of religion appeared and continue to appear in general sociological journals, such as the *American Journal of Sociology*, the *American Sociological Review*, and *Social Forces*. In addition, American sociologists of religion occasionally participated in international meetings and published their work in overseas journals. From 1965 to 1971 the *Internationales Jahrbuch für Religionssozioologie* published works in both German and English. *Sociaal Kompass* was established in the Netherlands in 1953 and came to be published as *Social Compass* from Louvain, Belgium, from the 1960s; American sociologists of religion publish in it regularly. There are also general international sociological journals,