

Editorial Foreword

RELIGION AND COMMUNAL POWER. Probably no subject has been more written about in *CSSH* than religion. Social analysts who think comparatively are drawn to religion, for they are naturally attracted to points of conflict and moments of change at which belief, culture, custom, and institutions intersect. Of the six articles on religion in this issue, two treat aspects of Islam, two are about Roman Catholic dissidents, and two consider Protestant sects. Each article identifies a cluster of problems; and these, rather than the great religions, invite the most fruitful comparison. Although Shahrough Akhavi provides additional categories for comparison (including corporatism and revolution itself) in his study of Shi'ism in the Iranian Revolution, he emphasizes religion, noting its importance in the passion plays, in moral visions of economic equality, and in the organization of revolutionary power. His assertion that Shi'ism is not, however, a uniquely revolutionary religion received implied support in earlier treatments of the Taiping Rebellion (see Kuhn, *CSSH* 19:3; Levenson, 4:4), the Jewish Bund (Tobias and Woodhouse, 19:3, 8:3), the campaign for Cow Protection in North India (Freitag, 22:4), and in Lanternari's discussion of nativist movements (16:4). In contrast, the Hutterites whom Karl Peter analyzes sought not to capture an established society but to form a new one; yet in maintaining a communal enterprise, they too confronted the practical difficulties of wielding political power built on a religious base. Not surprisingly, both Akhavi and Peter refer to and directly test some of the ideas of Max Weber (an exercise with many possibilities; note Stewart, Schweitzer, and Sanders on political charisma, 16:2).

RELIGIOUS DISSIDENTS. Religion as a source of group identity is most readily measured among religious minorities (Tessler, 20:3) like the Hutterites themselves or the Rastafarians (Kitzinger, 9:1), the Molokan sect (Lane, 17:2), or the Jews in Yemen (Katzir, 24:2). When, however, a religious minority sees itself not as the local enclave of a larger movement but rather in terms of its legitimate participation in—and conflict with—a dominant religion, then the issues shift somewhat and the scholar's questions change a great deal. Leslie Tentler used her study of a dissident, Polish, Roman Catholic parish in Detroit to modify our views of American Catholicism by showing how an immigrant population could combine ethnic community and American political values to assert autonomy within the hierarchical church to which it remained intensely loyal. Kaja Finkler's Mexican dissidents are more distant from the Roman Catholicism that has nevertheless greatly influenced them, and her study explores the appeal of Spiritualism to socially marginal people who have often been as unfortunate in their lives as in the status to which they were born. In

these two studies the daily concerns of dissidents lead to fresh perceptions of the American Church and the Mexican society that weigh upon but must also acknowledge these intense believers.

ADAPTING RELIGION TO SOCIETY CHANGED. Mennonites in Russia and Muslims in Kelantan could both be seen as having in some sense been distant outposts, liable to that cultural rigidification that displaced communities sometimes experience. Their efforts to adapt, likely to be explicit and deliberate, have special interest, while the mechanisms they use prove remarkably varied (compare Jayawardena on Hinduism in British Guiana, 8:2, or the articles on missionaries by Beidelman, Rigby, Shapiro, and Schieffelin in 23:1). In a larger sense, of course, adaptation is the lot of any living religion (see Deshen on religious change, 12:3; Eickelman on Islamic education and Levine on Catholicism in Latin America, 20:4; Obeyesekere on Theravada Buddhism, 21:4; and Vovelle on American epitaphs and Wilson on the Cult of Saints in Paris, 22:4). One challenge is to allow change in practice without conceding it in principle. For the Mennonites, James Urry finds education to have been an acceptable means; William Roff shows a formal legal ruling to have served that purpose in Kelantan. In both instances, adjusting to new demands while preserving old definitions of community required complex compromise and careful manipulation of integrative symbols. These six studies of religion in action reveal some of the flexibility that is possible when a coherent *Weltanschauung* persists in a changing world.

CSSH DISCUSSION. From time to time this new section will offer a forum for further discussion of important questions. The second enlargement of *CSSH* in two years will thus make it easier to publish statements—in the form of reflections, suggestions, and hypotheses—that can be significant even without the fuller development or scholarly trappings of a formal article. Roger Daniels's thoughtful comment is a good example, and directs us not only to the essays of Wong and Thompson to which he refers, but to many other articles on ethnic minorities, some of which were mentioned above. The section will also be a place for debates like the one here among David Fitzpatrick, P. Gibbon and C. Curtin, and Anthony Varley. At its best debate can both clarify issues and widen horizons; note how demography here expands into considerations of rural sociology and economy. Finally, review essays, such as Richard Graham's, that take stock of current research on broad topics will also sometimes appear in this section. *CSSH* was founded twenty-five years ago to stimulate dialogue across the hedgerows of specialization; and the added section with a freer format that more pages now permit should serve to show that rigor is not incompatible with wit nor the expert's restricted focus with recognition that our most exciting quests are widely shared.