

INTRODUCTION

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All too frequently in the course of intellectual pursuit, vast configurations of man's behavioral landscape are seen at a quick glance, but explorations of these new scholarly frontiers later are abandoned. The sheer magnitude of the task of discovering what is relevant may keep the scholar from finding a key to a deeper understanding of human action.

The realm of human experience commonly known as belief has undergone this fate repeatedly. It has been relegated to theologians and religionists and only occasionally given a passing glance by social scientists. If belief has fared poorly, more so has its counterpart unbelief, which presents compounded problems of definition and analysis.

Consequently, in this collection of the proceedings of a symposium and related studies on "The Culture of Unbelief," the authors attempt an unprecedented reflection on a neglected phenomenon, the consequences of which pervade every aspect of social organization. Throughout the following pages there lurks a submerged consensus that something qualitatively new and unprecedented is happening to religion in contemporary society. Some theologians ponder apprehensively whether this is one more step down the ladder of man's progressive fall from grace, while other thinkers endeavor to redeem whatever can be saved of the ferment in today's religious domain. For their part, some social scientists view the present ferment as the rumblings indicative of the demise of conventional institutionalized religion, while others see in it the fruition of an age-old process of differentiation and upgrading, which has been thrusting the religious experience to the threshold of monumental new opportunities for relevance in the lives of men. Yet insufficient knowledge of what is happening to religion and belief in our times and the lack of refined conceptual schemes of analysis tend to preclude the hope of acquiring a broad consensus on the problem or of

specifying clear projections of developments in the coming decades.

The description of these essays (and of the symposium that brought them about) as "reflections on the culture of unbelief" is not intended to create additional problems nor generate new levels of complexity. The authors are generally agreed that unbelief cannot be studied *per se* without prior analysis of belief and in intimate reference to it. But it is also clear that unbelief does not constitute merely a residual category of human behavior; the negative term may well point to a dramatic transformation in the groundwork of human religiosity.

Professor Bellah suggests that unbelief has become so generalized and diffused that it constitutes the indispensable stage for the transition to a new level of religious experience of worldwide dimension. By contrast, Professor Luckmann views the concept of unbelief as heuristically unproductive and devoid of analytical clout. These and other differing views on the subject highlight the need for more extensive analysis and justify the "objectification" and "magnification" which the concept of unbelief receives here. Unbelief, then, will be the primary object of this study, with related assumptions about belief implied in the mode of discourse.

1

What is the culture of unbelief? Who lives by it and in it? What does unbelief mean and to whom? How can it be scientifically studied and what is the value and purpose of this study?

In formulating answers to these and similar questions the scholars represented in this volume were confronted with some momentous realizations. The first was a humbling one: in spite of decades of sociological efforts, belief and unbelief are very much *terra incognita*. The desirability of a commonly agreed definition—and its impossibility—is taken for granted, and the futile search for a common ground of discourse is only perfunctorily gone through, considering the diverse frame of reference of the contributing scholars. Once again one could speak of the customary *anomie* that reigns among scholars when conceptions and definitions are in question. And yet, notwithstanding the realization that the subject of discourse

is vague and imprecise, we come across what appear to be well-formulated and irreconcilable positions and pet theories, which render cooperative intellectual reflection unattainable.

The difficulty of coordination and consolidation of thinking among scholars is further compounded when representatives of more than one discipline are involved. Therefore, a second realization by the contributors to this volume reflects precisely the built-in difficulty of dialogue.

Beyond the ambiguities pointed out by Professor Berger in his foreword, there is the fact that a discussion on unbelief cannot be conducted with equal ease by the theologian and by the social scientist. As the limited presentations of the theologians in this volume illustrate (regrettably limited, but unavoidable), a theologian's position on unbelief—what can be said or how it can be said—is restricted. The social scientist, on the other hand, is permitted to move about more freely, may formulate alternative explanatory schemes, and, far from experiencing any threat to his discipline, may find in the study of unbelief a challenging area of investigation. A major difficulty arises, however, when the social scientist develops stronger than usual empathic capability and attempts to move his approach to profound human experience beyond the rational and objective canons normally demanded by science. The reaction to Professor Bellah's endeavor to *verstehen* the problem of unbelief indicates how compartmentalized the current approach still remains and how difficult it is to transcend the narrow boundaries of traditional disciplines, even against the evidence of their ineffectiveness when faced with problems of worldwide proportions.

Yet another realization is the appalling lack of empirical data on unbelief and the supreme ignorance of what really obtains in the world of the proverbial man in the street. So small is the patrimony of hard data available to us that, in the course of three-days' discussion and throughout the essays in this book it is nearly impossible to find substantive reference to systematic research which may be advanced as evidence for validated propositions.

In the light of this consideration, the essays having to do with problems of programs and research on unbelief are not academic exercises, but honest indicators of an awareness of some wide gaps in the field of sociology of religion as well as

in theology. We must admit that we do not know enough about the phenomenon of unbelief to formulate even a minimum inventory of validated propositions that may constitute the basis of further analysis.

2

Having alerted the reader to some of the hardships of the task of exploration to which this book is committed, it is right to highlight substantive contributions that the following essays make to the field.

An expeditious route into the little known region of unbelief is, first, to retrace historically the phenomenon under discussion, locating it within the broad structural parameters of the societies for which evidence of its existence is strongest. This cross-cultural historical excursus permits us to identify some of the characteristics of the phenomenon, its variable location in the social structure, while also allowing the writers to outline several alternative schemes to interpret the sequence of events leading to present conditions (which schemes are, again, well-educated guesses, which of course need stronger validating proofs).

Concomitant with the historical perspective the theoretical essays strive to elucidate the notion of unbelief (and, thereby, belief) focusing specifically on its composite nature of cognitive and emotive orientation to a world view transmitted and sustained in the course of a person's belonging to institutionalized religious bodies. Going beyond merely terminological questions (distinctions among belief, faith, religious belonging, etc.), the writers formulate questions of nuclear importance in our society. Is an overarching system of reference still needed and viable in our pluralistic society? What happens when the agencies of socialization, which formerly inducted the masses into a specific mode of interpreting life meanings, are replaced by other agencies, which do not and cannot perform the same function? What are the consequences of the transition from institutional (official) to individual (privatized) systems of beliefs? And what of the Durkheimian notion of religion as integrator of society?

If we accept the hypothesis that belief is disappearing before a new mode of religious consciousness, diffused and de-

institutionalized, what continuities, if any, with conventional religion as we have known it can we identify? Where will be the religion's cultural location? Will the contemporary flare for emotiveness and expressiveness build new bias in place of the former credulity and propositional rationality that has perhaps bedeviled western religious experience?

Some aspects of the constitutive symbolism which may characterize upcoming religion are identified in the course of the essays, but there are few hints, if any, of how new religious trends may be institutionalized into enduring patterns and may be integrated into the unprecindable technological character of our society.

In another set of papers (some of which are intermixed with theoretical papers for the sake of internal coherence), the scholars endeavor to come to grips with the problem of researching the phenomenon of unbelief. Nothing short of the frank and exhaustive approach found in the presentation by Professor Glock and the discussion that followed could do justice to this area which has represented particularly irksome methodological difficulties. Given the undeveloped state of conceptualization on the topic of unbelief, how should a program of research be organized? With reference to specific research instruments, is survey research the best approach, or shall we think of the entire gamut of investigative devices available to the scholar, including, for instance, case studies, socio-psychological biographies, content analysis, and participant observation? Above all, does the novelty of the phenomenon call for new and innovative though untested methods of reflection and analysis?

It would be naïve to pretend that exhaustive answers to these questions are being offered in these essays; however, it can be fairly said that at various points in this collection of papers some of the crucial questions in the area of belief/unbelief are clearly and compellingly posed. This by itself is no mean achievement and constitutes a solid starting point for future research and reflection.

3

Having presented an introductory survey of the general problems suggested by the notion of a "culture of unbelief," it may

be useful to outline briefly the connective tissue of this volume.

Luckmann's opening paper presents a global view of the history of unbelief, from its emergence during the time when society first became complex to its demise (presumably) in the not too distant future, when belief is projected to disappear entirely as a social fact. Belief (and correspondingly unbelief) does not here constitute a universally applicable notion but represents a highly restricted phenomenon, a specific vein in the development of society. As a "nonessential dimension of the human condition" belief represents the development of society from a primitive state of diffused and pervasive religiousness to advanced levels of institutional specialization and selective internalization of specific processes of socialization. In "primitive fusion" societies the notions of belief and unbelief are completely absent. As we move toward stages of institutional differentiation and independence within the social structure, religion assumes a specialized social role, develops its own organization, locates visibly and distinctly the "officially defined world view," and proclaims the monopoly of the system of meanings, departure from which constitutes unbelief.

The growing complexity of the social organization, however, generates several subsystems of world views, conflicting and not relating to the "official" model or belief. How does the individual handle these systemic discontinuities? In the modern industrial context he has a limited number of options, the most extreme of which is to relegate religious representations to the realm of rhetoric, to which he is subjectively indifferent, having moved beyond the point where systems of religious beliefs are subjectively relevant. The common denominator of postindustrial man's mode of belief appears to be a "neutralization" of official systems of belief and the emergence of "privatization" of views of the meaning of life.

The belief experience, therefore, which was but a part of the complex process of institutional differentiation of our society, must be understood as constituted by institutional definition and as reflective of conditions of social dynamics. In this sense it is on the wane and will eventually disappear completely.

However well defined and differentiated Luckmann's three

stages of development may be, the process he outlines falls into a familiar linear pattern that so frequently allures and mystifies historical analysts. From the additional papers, in fact, a plausible alternative scheme of interpretation seems to emerge which comes very close to a dialectical model wherein belief and unbelief are viewed as antithetic but continuous, the resolution to their opposing valence being reached by way of upgrading their respective social value into a qualitatively new phenomenon, which transcends their limitations but still retains religious significance. This position appears to underpin the contributions of Professors Bellah, Grumelli, and Parsons—with, of course, differing qualifications in each instance.

In his first essay (see chapter 2), Professor Bellah questions Luckmann's scheme and points out that the process of differentiation does not seem to have followed the trajectory outlined by Luckmann in any other part of society except the Western, Greek-influenced world. In oriental religions such as Zen Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, a rational system of beliefs (in our sense) has failed to develop: Western biblical religions appear to be the only ones clearly based on cognitive belief. Non-Western religions are not about objective, cognitive assertions, and the differentiation process described by Luckmann seemingly cannot be clearly detected here.

Within the West itself, the decline of belief can be described better as a diminution of the overbelief of the masses, brought about by the expansion of the intellectual class with its skeptical challenge to orthodox beliefs and increasing leaning on the individual's religious experience. This trend has been growing since the emergence of the intellectual stratum in Plato's Greece. It is a change in scale, not in the substance of the event. The social scientist is less concerned with this collapse of traditional certainties than he is with religion's power of resiliency. All available evidence indicates the emergence of a new mode of religiousness, a nascent religion of mankind located in an unbounded community—a new religious consciousness which challenges all established groups and is not the product of any objective creed.

The objectivist fallacy, the identification of religion and belief which has characterized Western experience thus gives way to a generalized religiousness where conscious critical

evaluation of religious conceptions by the masses has eroded conventional forms of belief and replaced them with a personal quest for meaning within a newly apprehended function of religion. In this sense nonbelief is generic to the contemporary religious consciousness as well as nonreligious consciousness, while at the same time the distinction between believers and unbelievers is obliterated by the fact that all believe something. Religion thus appears to be stronger than ever, if we view it as the diffused private quest for personal experience, individual authenticity, and internalization of authority, in harmony with group purposes and values such as love, sacrifice, and communion. In this view, religion is not a cognitive experience: it does not stand or fall with the vagaries of what we have known as belief.

We may well be in a revolutionary situation with respect to science, religion, reason, and faith, at the verge of a possible reunification of consciousness wherein the unconscious dimension will become part of overarching schemes of interpretation. In this sense Bellah sees conventional religion as faltering but also classic forms of nonbelief as collapsing.

A similar view is expressed by Monsignor Grumelli in his essay which constituted one of the opening statements of the symposium. From an ecclesiological's point of view he reaches conclusions substantially the same as those of Professor Bellah: the parameters of the religious phenomenon of our time are basically changing and a radical rethinking of some of our basic assumptions is needed. He focuses on atheism, as a subtype of unbelief, or, as Professor Parsons later puts it, as the classical (ecclesiastical) epithet for unbelief, and attempts to clarify some of the complex relationships that exist between atheism and secularization. Secularization offers a deep ambivalence with respect to belief/unbelief (atheism), thus illustrating how blurred the line between belief and unbelief is. It may even be said that secularization performs a conciliatory function between the two, as a halfway house. While secularization often leads to unbelief, it also precipitates states of religious awareness and fosters religious growth, away from cognitive and dogmatic beliefs and closer to appreciation and concern for a variety of expression of enduring human concerns.

When writing his essay, Professor Parsons had the advantage of having been a participant in the symposium and also of having access to the collection of papers delivered there and the transcripts of the discussions. In his customary penetrating way, he gives us not only a masterful view of the development of belief in Western society up to and including the contemporary crisis expressed in the religion of love movement, but he also offers a valuable synthesis of his most relevant thinking on religion, which up until now was found widely parceled out in his many writings. His reflections on the "culture of unbelief" go much beyond the frontiers that had been lightly explored during the symposium and in the other essays of this volume.

Side by side with its strong cognitive component (the cognitive *bias*) that expresses itself in propositional statements, belief in the West has also had a much neglected noncognitive component, which cannot be ignored if we want to account for the variations in the roles of belief.

Because they pointed out this feature of belief, Freud, Durkheim, and Weber can be seen as precursors of the contemporary scene and, in a way, as important intellectual mediators who emphasized the noncognitive component of religion. Durkheim made a greater contribution in this regard than the other two in that he alerted us to the constitutive quality of beliefs as symbolic expressions of the moral community.

In the differentiating process of evolution, the religious as well as the secular components undergo differentiation both within and between themselves. The first major crisis of constitutive symbolism (beliefs) in recent times occurred at the Reformation, when beliefs in church and priesthood as machinery of salvation were discarded in favor of an invisible church.

The interreligious hostilities that followed the Reformation disappeared out of sheer exhaustion and gave way to gradual emergence of the notion of legitimation of pluralistic religious constitutions within a political society. The attenuation of differences between denominations and the blunting of the notion of disbelief generated the climate within which the "moral community"—of which Bellah speaks—began to

emerge. The turning point in the process is characterized by an unprecedented legitimation of "expressiveness" in human behavior and a new permissiveness.

The final stage of this process is embodied in the ecumenical movement, which indicates that belief is no longer assessed in terms of cognitive commitment to one religious group, but in terms of participation in the moral community and sharing of a common religious orientation, which again Bellah aptly defined as "civic religion." Thus ecumenism is grounded in essentially noncognitive components of religion. In the present contingency, therefore, disbelievers are those who basically challenge the moral legitimacy of the modern human community, while those alienated from this community or minimizing their participation in it are more accurately known as unbelievers.

The genuine outbreak of the nonrational in Western religious experience is viewed by Professor Parsons as the end of the line, a religious ferment which, however, has enormous creative possibilities. Again, while church religion is being privatized, religious significance is being generalized to an unprecedented range in the previous secular community. We could say that expressiveness is the charism of our times, epitomized in the proclamation of the new religion of love, which incidentally includes and legitimizes aspects of non-Western religions to an unprecedented degree. The master symbol of the new religion is "community" and its pedigree is a direct socio-cultural Christian heritage. But it has no major prophet as yet and it has attained only a limited degree of institutionalization. On the other hand, the new religion is heavily tainted with moral absolutism, which separates it from those unsympathetic to it, not necessarily in virtue of any transcendent mission it claims for itself: its eroticism and permissiveness leave open the possibility of its turning aggressive, which may represent a regressive trend. Yet it cannot be denied that this emergent religion of love, which is totally world oriented and in which the nonrational components are very salient, has an enormous social potential for altering the present pattern of apparent unbelief into a turning point toward a new major cycle of religious development.

In a response that followed Luckmann's presentation, Professor Mandic briefly introduces elements of a Marxist per-

spective on the problem of unbelief. Belief and unbelief must not be apprehended on the basis of preconceptions, however scientifically underpinned, but with an open mind, ready to verify even the most appealing theories. The real-life situation cannot be comprehended if we confine our notions of belief and unbelief to the religious experience. Belief and unbelief are not limited to the religious dimensions and do not relate exclusively to the realm of the sacred. They are essential dimensions of the human condition; their function is to permit class-bound men to overcome their alienation in various ways and contexts. Our attention ought to focus on the intimate antithetical relationship which for every belief brings about a mode of unbelief, while establishing a transition ground between the two and generating a variety of unbeliefs.

Professor Mandic highlights the marginal consideration given in these studies to the Marxist thinking on belief and unbelief. The magnitude of the problem clearly suggests that this whole area ought to be given distinct and undivided attention in a study all by itself.

In some sense one could detect a broad overlap between Professor Mandic's criticism and the theories expressed by Bellah, Grumelli, and Parsons, and at the same time a wide difference with the statement of Professor Luckmann.

Professor Marty's response latches on again to Bellah's theory while attempting to restate from a different angle the continuity-development theory of belief. Marty agrees with Bellah that the stress on belief is being attenuated; but he also points out that the end of belief and the alienation from religious symbolism and officialdom does not represent the end of religion and the complete displacement of the cognitive function that conventional belief systems performed. In fact, he detects the emergence of counter-belief systems which have manifest cognitive dimensions. Belief is not being left behind, but it is being transformed and adapted, attenuated and demythologized, while retaining much continuity with historical religion.

The reactions of Harvey Cox, Jean Danielou, and Milan Machovec to Grumelli's paper elicit special interest because of their style and because of the substantive thought they introduce. Cox makes a strong case for the need to move away from Western provincialism and the equally Western pen-

chant for dichotomizing everything in artificial classification. He questions the legitimacy of the distinction between believers and unbelievers considering that, whatever the cognitive content of belief and unbelief, we all reach out for what constitutes the ground of our being (a statement indirectly challenged by Wilson and Luckmann). Rather than indulge in "incestuous conversations" between believers and unbelievers, Cox pleads for ways of stemming on the one hand the overcredulity which is a graver problem in several countries (particularly the United States), and on the other hand of making the "church" more believable.

With the aim of highlighting the bases of dialogue between Christians and Marxists, Machovec pursues further this trend of analysis and emphasizes the fact that unbelievers are only "other believers," if viewed within the concrete context of a different set of beliefs. Irrespective of the cognitive component of their beliefs, all who burn with desire for *metanoia*, for change (as for instance the early Christians and more recently the Marxists), are to be recognized as believers. In this sense, secularization represents an up-to-date way of believing, a modern expression of the most profound and enduring human questions. To this mode of unbelief Marxism is definitely open.

Cardinal Danielou appears in agreement with Cox and Machovec that the distinction between believer and unbeliever does not correspond to the real state of things. But he goes on to highlight the ambiguities that he sees creeping into this whole area of discourse, especially when sociological categories are used. In the specific case of "secularization" he feels that this notion is in urgent need of more precise definition. From a theological viewpoint, if secularization means the triumph of empiricism and the death of metaphysics, or the alibi of ultimacy (the earthly city as the final goal of life), or a condition of society wherein Christianity is no longer accessible to questing spirits, it does not represent an advance, as would be the case if secularization meant the disappearance of mythical conceptions of the universe and the destruction of idolatries.

The problem of a transitional, intervening phase in the assumed development from belief into the new cycle of religiousness crystallizes much of the content of the excerpts

from the general discussions. The terminological difficulties which pop up again and again reflect much of the conceptual ambiguities built into the notion of belief/unbelief. The French-speaking theologians, for instance, insist on the necessity of distinguishing between belief and faith, while both theologians and social scientists would welcome a clearer differentiation between belief and religion. From a more analytical angle, Professor Bellah introduces the distinction between "belief in" and "belief that," which largely reflects the distinction between emotive and cognitive components of belief. A further specification points out that belief is a composite of affective and cognitive elements within the inclusive context of community, which entails participation in an institutionalized interpretation of the universe. This adds an isomorphic relationship between belief and belonging to institutionally recognized religious bodies, with its concomitant requirement of behavioral indicators of appurtenance: to be a believer means not only to believe in but also to be seen as a believer by others.

These and other refinements of the terminological question take second place, however, vis-à-vis the central issue concerning the dynamics of development from belief to unbelief and beyond. Under what conditions and in what culture is unbelief possible?

In the particular instance of Christianity, unbelief emerges from within religion itself, and the first stage of unbelief consists precisely in the attitude of tolerance that develops within an up-till-now intolerant religious body. In the earlier phases of religious institutions the functional equivalent of what we now call unbelief was heresy, the wrong belief rather than nonbelief. This was brought about by the fact that Christianity defined itself in highly intellectual terms, developed a controlling body which sees religion in terms of propositional systems of relevance, and has fully developed the Greco-Jewish inheritance of exclusiveness. These three elements are presently undergoing deep alterations, leading to a state of provisionality in the way people hold religious beliefs, if they find any need at all to hold any belief.

More and more today the prime locus of belief is the subjective system of relevance each individual manages to develop for himself. This new mode of belief, however, is basically

different from the one we have been familiar with in the past and so is the context in which new beliefs such as childhood, social justice, peace, expressiveness are emerging. In this sense Professor Luckmann's thesis that invisible religion is becoming a substitute for visible religion is acceptable, but it leaves open the question as to how the functions performed by conventional religion are being replaced and by whom.

The discussion makes it plain that in pursuing the conditions that account for the present variation in the realm of belief, a purely cross section of the current situation without reference to its historical genesis cannot be very fruitful. It may be worth noting that while serious consideration is given to Professor Luckmann's projection of future developments in the "belief saga," Professor Bellah's vision elicits strong reservations on the part of many participants. His approach is seen as reflecting heavily the North American situation, while neglecting crucial phenomena of other areas such as the unbelief of the European working class. Some participants object to the existentialism and the stress on personal experience over dogmatic faith in his presentation. On the one hand, theologians observe that Bellah renders faith fluid and plastic; on the other, sociologists object to the rhetorical mixing of experience with scientific analysis, or to the choice of students as the key location of the emerging religiousness.

However synocopated the movement of the discussion condensed in these excerpts, they permit an instructive glimpse of scholars at work, struggling to lay down key reference points for the clarification of this unexplored area.

4

The difficulties that beset the problem of conceptualization overflow into the problem of a research program aimed at filling the lacunae in our knowledge of belief and unbelief.

Can a paradigm for research on unbelief be formulated? Given the confusion and ambiguity in the effort to conceptualize the phenomenon of unbelief, under what condition is it amenable to empirical research?

Professor Glock considers such research not only feasible but also necessary and extremely promising. With this goal in mind he formulates a provisional operationalization of the

concept of belief, and on the basis of this he defines a basic typology of unbelief intimately related to the notion of the sacred and its apprehension.

Perhaps even more difficult than the problem of conceptualization of unbelief is the problem of its measurement, fraught as it is with the hard choice between low-level-abstraction-culture-bound measurements (of sufficiently high precision), and high-level-abstraction-culture-free (but also very imprecise) measurements. Assuming that the two problems of operational conceptualization and of measurement are solved, the research needs address itself to the three basic questions of what is the nature of unbelief, what are its causes and its effects, and what brings about changes in unbelief. Also keenly important are formulations of meaningful hypotheses such as the one having to do with assumed dysfunctionality of unbelief to the integration of a group. Professor Glock makes a strong case in his presentation that a longitudinal, team, collaborative research effort cannot be easily organized. He clearly spells out the significance of such an effort for traditional sociological research and what a breakthrough it would represent in the sociological study of religion.

A singular value of Professor Glock's paper is the step-by-step description of how a research project is put together. Relying on his unequalled experience, he brings into configuration all the various tools and skills of survey research and lays down a master plan for what could be a truly significant study in the field of sociology of religion.

Professor Wilson, however, does not see this as going far enough toward a specific scheme of research. Glock's effort to establish widely applicable concepts is viewed as ineffective considering the great variety of beliefs. Wilson suggests that we accept the broad cultural concept of belief as commonly known, in virtue of which some people are considered within a religious purview while others are seen as having contracted out of that system. What brings about and sustains the culture of unbelief? Professor Wilson emphasizes institutional analysis as the primary mode of research in this context. He points out that belief/unbelief does not inhere in individuals: cultures carry belief systems. Rather than a head count, research ought to focus on institutions, organizations, communities, and patterns of social relationships. Institutions are increasingly ex-

emptying themselves from any supranatural legitimation. What needs investigation is the way culture facilitates or hinders orientations of belief or unbelief, and fosters or hinders the possibility of interpreting the world in religious terms. To be in line with our concern with the "culture of unbelief" we need to look at context situations and at institutions.

Even so, the question of whether unbelief can be an object of research remains problematic. While it is true that we are very ignorant of the culture of unbelief, this culture cannot be extrapolated by attitude surveys. It is an illusion therefore to look for a wide consensus on an operational concept of unbelief; and we need not wait for a well-formulated and agreed-upon conceptual framework.

The culture of unbelief is a new phenomenon that exists because of the recession of agencies and institutions that supported established belief systems. To comprehend it we need previous knowledge of two phenomena, among others: one, the process of institutional and cultural change; two, the way in which the culture of unbelief is integrated and made coherent with the institutions that support it. We must first study the culture of belief to arrive at the culture of unbelief. How dependent is a society upon religious institutions for the performance of its functions? And by what processes are these functions transferred to functional alternatives? What is the significance, for instance, of the fundamental change in the pattern of communication from the personal spoken word to the impersonal word of mass media? What is the living language of religion today? How does the changed conception of time—past, present, future, eschatology, eternal life—affect the chronogrammatic component of religious beliefs? How incongruous are beliefs in a technological way of life? To what extent can religious groups understand and adopt rational procedures, when rational organization seems incongruous with religious belief systems? Professor Wilson suggests that we cannot survey without a culture-bound starting point: we need to attack such questions from our culture's understanding of belief and go on to study varieties of unbelief.

The fact is, however, that, as Professor Luckmann points out, we have no convenient starting point, no commonsense notion of unbelief. Preliminary studies may be needed before a large-scale, cross-cultural survey is conducted.

Professor Glock agrees that a pilot or preliminary study would be necessary in order to provide provisional conceptualizations, and that a preliminary phase of investigation during which various instruments will be employed ought to precede survey research. Yet some optional consensus on conceptualization of belief and unbelief is needed as a broad view of the whole before focusing on parts. But the quantification in aggregate form that Professor Glock advocates finds limited support in Professor Wilson, who quotes the democratic fallacy and would rather consider a number of alternatives and use a variety of forms of empirical inquiry.

Wilson's preoccupation is echoed in Professor Bellah's question: if we are in a new religious situation, are traditional ways of research acceptable? The proposed research scheme may not be adequate because it runs the risk of missing precisely the object it set about to investigate. A research program ought to include emerging group movements, strategic to the whole scene but, because of their present marginality, unlikely to be included in a random sample. Luckmann concurred: if there is a qualitative change in religion, survey research may never discover it, but a combined approach which uses all available methods, including socio-psychological ones, may be more successful.

The limited consensus arrived at in the course of the discussion seems to indicate that a program of research ought to pursue three broad goals:

1. To define the range of functional alternatives in the sphere of beliefs and trace their social location. These alternatives will have to include out-of-the-way instances of belief, such as scientific pragmatism, astrology, Zen, fundamentalist Christianity, and so forth.
2. To define continuities of belief systems within the most important historical institutions, looking for signs of change in these systems, against the paradigm of Luckmann's developmental phases.
3. To inquire into new bases of unification of structure in our society and social integration that bring about new common entities beneath the apparently divergent characteristics of each structure (i.e., mass media, industrialization, the peace movement) along the projection outlined in the contributions of Professors Bellah and Wilson.

Bellah's short essay, "Between Religion and Social Science" brings this volume to a fitting close. Moving beyond the specific context of belief, Bellah escalates the problems dealt with in these essays into the realm of one of the most enduring contests of the past few centuries, namely the alleged conflict between religion and science. Bellah argues that the religious implications of social science point to a nonantagonistic differentiation between science and religion which is rapidly moving ultimately to resolve itself into a genuine integration of the two. This new integration is based on the conscious rejection of univocal modes of understanding reality. In Bellah's view secularization and the disintegration of religion are far from increasing: on the contrary religion is moving under new garbs into the very center of our cultural preoccupations.

It is interesting to note that toward the end of his classical monograph, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim felt compelled to spin off in the same direction and briefly cope with this same problem, although reaching somewhat different conclusions. In the writings of sociologists of religion one notices how every one of them is confronted, sooner or later, with this ultimate problem, irrespective of his starting point or of the area of specialization in which he excels.

Bellah's statement, which was directly provoked by the interchange that took place during the Symposium on the Culture of Unbelief, is a clear advance over conventional and often trite ways of dealing with this issue. But, in a large sense, so was the process that characterized the symposium itself: as this book illustrates, in spite of the contrapuntal rhythm of the dialogue between the participants (and in spite of the differing academic backgrounds they represent) the outstanding fact is that not infrequently they succeed in speaking a common language and staying within a shared frame of reference. This is owing in large part to the constructive and realistic approach brought to the discussion by social scientists and theologians alike who managed to keep their minds open to reexamine issues only provisionally resolved in the past. Considering the development of sociological thought on religion during the past decade, it is fair to say that many of these essays contain some of the most exciting and seminally rich statements on the problem of belief in our generation.