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Introduction

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The North American debate over the relationship between theology and religious studies, and their appropriate institutional location, sometimes feels interminable. It flares up periodically, generating much heat and caricatured polemics. But no one seems to change positions, institutions appear unaffected, and there is little sense of progress, let alone closure. Why bother, one might ask, if a stalemate is the most that can be reasonably expected?

Although understandable, even tempting, such a conclusion fails to recognize the sense in which this episodic conversation is a ritual enactment of disciplinary identity and boundaries. It serves as an occasion for thinking through the nature and aims of forms of inquiry with close, even overlapping, historical lineages. Indeed, it is their tangled histories that make it all the more pressing to reflect on their similarities and their differences. Moreover, the apparent stalemate is the product of a lens with too low a magnification, one unable to detect the changes in the conversation, the shifting assumptions, contextual pressures, and anxieties that fuel its resumption. Although the most recent interchange shows few signs of resolving the argument, its permutations are revealing. They indicate shifting intellectual and social currents that have reinvigorated the conversation, destabilizing the borders that have defined the mutually articulated identities of religious studies and theology.¹

There are a number of signs that point toward a reeruption of hostilities along the borders of religious studies and theology. Consider, for example, the cover article in a 1996 issue of *Lingua Franca* suggesting that a new movement is forming within religious studies, one that aims to sweep out the theologians whose presence continues—allegedly—to pollute departments of religious studies, decades after their post World War II emergence. Summarizing the article entitled “Is Nothing Sacred? Casting Out the Gods from Religious Studies,” the editors write: “For years, religious studies departments have offered an awkward mix of social science and spiritual instruction. Now, a renegade group of scholars seeks to drive the theologians from the classroom.”² This article is revealing, but not because it alerts us to a newly emerging battle between religious studies and theology. Quite

the contrary. The “renegade scholars” to whom *Lingua Franca* alludes, far from representing a newly formed vanguard, actually stand squarely under the modernist banner. The modernist perspective has dominated the intellectual and institutional landscape in this century, and its characteristic accents are clearly discernible in the way the renegade scholars construct the respective identities and borders of religious studies and theology. Religious studies, sharply differentiated from theology, is construed as a social science that belongs within the university. Theology, on the other hand, is viewed as a form of spiritual instruction that belongs within an ecclesiastical or religious community concerned with personal formation. The presumption is that religious studies is (or more accurately, perhaps, should exclusively be) an objective, empirical form of study, and theology a subjective, religious activity. This mutually defining dialectic, or close variants, has provided the basis for the self-understanding and justification of religious studies within the modern university; legitimated the displacement or marginalization of theology from the university to the seminary or divinity school; and, in consequence, heavily influenced the character and conversation partners of theology in the modern period. The *Lingua Franca* article does not capture a novel development along the embattled frontiers of theology and religious studies, but directs our attention to renewed efforts to fortify the identities and borders between these long-standing antagonists.

Although part of a much older story, the timing and tenor of this recent chapter are revealing. The waning of the modernist paradigm that has dominated intellectual and institutional life throughout the twentieth century has proved very unsettling to the established identities, aims, and presumed publics of the academic disciplines. This may be especially the case with the fields of religious studies and theology, given the central role that the mutually reinforcing constructions of “modernity” and “religion” have played in determining the contours and location of these intellectual traditions. This can most readily be seen by considering, if only briefly, the historical trajectories of theology and the much younger academic study of religion.

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The multiple strands that constitute the discipline of theology, and that account for its contemporary diffuseness, are a product of its long, variegated history. In its earliest period, Christian theology was primarily construed as a form of wisdom, as salvific knowledge of God associated with the faithful orientation of the self. It typically assumed the form of biblical commentary, an exercise that was governed by certain assumptions regarding the revelatory character of the Scriptures. It was conducted in the service of the church and reflection was deeply integrated with individual and communal piety. Although there were antecedents in the first millennium, the sense of theology as a discipline gradually emerged with the rise of the medieval universities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Relying on methods

of dialectical reasoning, this theological genre privileged the systematic, logical study of religious doctrines and beliefs. Although harboring significant critical potential, this form of theology was rooted in a fundamental confidence in the ultimate congruence of reason and revelation. So long as Christendom reigned, then, both senses of theology persisted in close alliance, despite periodic skirmishes over the relative priority of each sense, and the most appropriate institutional location—university or monastery—for its cultivation. Theology’s status as “queen of the sciences” of the medieval university was attributable to the mix of elements that constituted it: a discipline with a distinctive method; the revelatory status of its principles; and its governing purpose in providing salvific knowledge.³

The dethronement of theology was directly correlated with the erosion of Christendom and the rise of the modern university rooted in Enlightenment ideals. These developments fundamentally undermined the sources and norms operative in theological reflection. Classical Christian theology operated, as Edward Farley puts it, within a “framework of authority,” evident in the fact that “what settled the disputes and grounded the judgments were not so much evidence-gathering inquiries as appeals to some entity, place, or person which was regarded as authoritative.”⁴ This mode of intellectual reflection appeared less and less legitimate as the authorities were increasingly contested, and, even more fundamentally, new intellectual ideals gained ascendancy. In Van Harvey’s classic account of this transformation, the transition to modernity is marked by “a new morality of critical judgment that has seized the imagination of the scholar in the Western world” and it stands in marked contrast to the “ethic of belief that dominated Christendom for centuries.”⁵ The new intellectual ideals included a commitment to the autonomy of the scholar, open inquiry, and, under the increasing influence of the sciences, empirical studies. With this revolutionary shift, theology not only lost its position of privilege, but was increasingly attacked for its lack of intellectual legitimacy. Theology’s identification with a particular tradition, its appeal to ecclesiastical and/or scriptural authorities, and its apparent lack of empirical warrants precluded its status as an academic inquiry within the Enlightenment ethos.

Immanuel Kant was particularly influential in exposing the fatal deficiencies of theology as an academic discipline within this shifting intellectual paradigm. His revolutionary call daring scholars to think independently, combined with his epistemological critique of metaphysics, challenged the very presence of theology within the intellectual core of the university. Kant proved equally influential in determining the new location of theology within this intellectual milieu as he entered the debate over the appropriate missions of the various faculties within the university. In *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant essentially distinguished the philosophical, or what we would call the liberal arts, faculty from the professional faculties of law, medicine, and theology.⁶ The former constituted the heart of the modern university, epitomizing its fundamental commitment to autonomous, open inquiry, whereas the latter professional faculties were appropriately constrained by different missions. The theological faculty was defended within the

university, not for its independent engagement in the pursuit of knowledge, but for the professional training of ministers, for which the state had a legitimate need. Although this provided a rationale for the continued presence of the theological faculty within the German university, the cost was exceedingly high. Moreover, in the United States, with its sharp separation of church and state, it led to the exclusion of theology from public and other secular colleges and universities, and its establishment within seminaries and divinity schools that were understood to have an explicitly religious and professional agenda.

The exclusion of theology from the liberal arts and sciences and its relocation within an institutional context that is governed by ecclesiastical and professional interests have profoundly shaped the discipline in its modern trajectory, a point several of the essays explore. Given this history, it should not be surprising that the academic study of religion sought to secure its scholarly credentials largely through constructing itself in opposition to theology. Intense effort has been made to distinguish carefully between the study of religion and the profession of religion or, in the words of the decisive 1963 Supreme Court ruling, “teaching about religion” and the “teaching of religion,” a watershed mark in the institutionalization of religious studies within public universities. Disciplinary histories have been written to buttress this oppositional construction of the academic study of religion and theology, exemplified most powerfully in J. Samuel Preus’s *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud*.⁷

The sharp distinction between the study of religion and the profession of religion has been exceedingly effective in legitimating religious studies in the modern secular university context, and it still enjoys considerable political currency among the wider public. Significantly, however, the theoretical cogency of this distinction has become increasingly suspect, appearing more and more, as Jonathan Z. Smith bluntly puts it, a “ploy.”⁸ Its dethronement from axiomatic principle to political ploy—at least among (some) scholars—is a reflection of the erosion of the modernist framework within which it is rooted. He writes: “Not only is the putative distinction naïve and political, it is also anachronistic. It speaks out of a period when the norms of theological inquiry (as experienced in the West) were largely governed by an intact canon, when the ideology of the human sciences were chiefly governed by the goal of achieving “objectivity” or “value-free” knowledge.”⁹ Smith’s comment is instructive not only because it calls attention to the increasing untenability of the conventional take on the identity of and relationship between theology and religious studies, but also because it does so by pointing to the misleading “modernist” interpretations of both of these forms of inquiry.

REDESIGNING THE LANDSCAPE

But if the conventional approach is diminishing in cogency and influence, what is a more appropriate interpretation of their respective identities and relationship? The

fundamental question is whether the movement past modernism, which weakens the reigning boundary demarcation between religious studies and theology, warrants their reintegration, calls for new modes of distinguishing them, or suggests a more jagged boundary. The exploration of this question is highly charged, primarily because the academic integrity of each side is on the line. Many theologians, excluded from the intellectual core of the modern university, seek legitimacy through reintegration with religious studies in the liberal arts and sciences; arguments to the contrary implicitly, if not explicitly, challenge the scholarly merits of their discipline. Most scholars of religion, on the other hand, are threatened by the rapprochement of the fields, recognizing that the intellectual legitimacy of the modern academic study of religion has been secured through its oppositional contrast to theology. Diminishing the opposition is experienced as endangering the academic status of the field within the context of the liberal arts and sciences. The motives and stakes of the debate foster polemics that reflect caricatures of the various camps. Theologians are prone to offer a highly selective, charitable rendition of their own discipline in an effort to underscore its similarities to the human sciences; scholars of religion, on the other hand, also tend toward selective portraits of theology, albeit ones that—far less charitably—accentuate the differences between theology and the human sciences. Both sides capture something important, although recognition does not lead toward any simple solutions. This is largely because our current situation is shaped by multiple vectors—including intellectual, political, legal, and institutional traditions—that may preclude a theoretically coherent resolution to this impasse. But we can gain a better sense of the complexity and determine how best to proceed through a consideration of the conflicting vectors that need to be negotiated.

The essays in this volume explore the respective identities of religious studies and theology, paying particular attention to their borders. The contributors include theologians and scholars of religion, in roughly equal numbers. Just as importantly, they reflect a wide range of institutional affiliations, including seminaries, divinity schools, private universities, private liberal arts colleges, and large public universities. Bringing their contributions together in this volume enables us to see just how important institutional location is in reflecting on the shape and future direction of these forms of inquiry. Insofar as scholars of religion and theologians stand under the same professional umbrella institution, the American Academy of Religion (AAR), the differences that mark their pursuits—differences of assumptions, audiences, and aims—are obscured, if not tempered, as the leadership seeks to broker the tensions and conflicts. In a 1999 AAR presidential address, for example, Margaret Miles insists that “theological studies” and the “study of religion” are now distinctions “without a difference.” According to Miles, they are misleading because both “must integrate critical and passionately engaged scholarship.” Hence she concludes, “I use, then, the providentially ambiguous term ‘religious studies’ to integrate the falsely polarized terms, ‘theological studies’ and ‘the study of religion’.”¹⁰ But this polarization is foregrounded in these essays as scholars explicitly reflect upon their field in relation to its most salient “other.”

The essays in this volume reflect a wide range of positions regarding the boundary between religious studies and theology, and their appropriate institutional locations. Although there are multiple axes along which the essays could be compared, the widest fault line runs between those who take contrasting positions regarding the presence of theology within religious studies and the modern secular university.

Standing at one end of this continuum, Russell McCutcheon and Ivan Strenski argue that a clear line of demarcation separates religious studies and theology, in theory if not in practice, and the intellectual credibility of religious studies depends upon protecting the viability of this line. For McCutcheon, theology constitutes part of the “data” that scholars of religion seek to theorize, and any perceived overlap simply reflects a failure to distinguish the markedly different order of questions each addresses. Significantly, the wall separating theology from the academic study of religion in McCutcheon’s conceptual landscape also functions to separate the humanist interpreter of religion, who, in his view, essentially reinscribes the emic perspective, from a more anthropological variant of the academic study of religion. McCutcheon calls for scholars of religion to abandon their role as “caretaker” of religion and pursue the naturalistic redescription of this form of cultural discourse and practice. Similarly committed to maintaining the boundary between religious studies and theology, Ivan Strenski defends this position by taking on two challenges to it that have recently been mounted from different ends of the theological spectrum. One he dismisses as a sophisticated form of confessionalism, cloaked in fashionable postmodern garb, and the other he considers a form of hermeneutics, perfectly appropriate within religious studies but not distinctively theological. Reflecting on the various senses of the term “theology” and the motivations for seeking to retain it, he concludes that it is “too late” to nuance the term, given its deep theistic and confessional ties.

For other scholars of religion, postmodern shifts have exposed the limitations, if not untenability, of the conventional demarcation between religious studies and theology, and prevented the question of including or excluding theology from the university from being a simple one. In quite different ways, the essays by Christopher Chesnek, Richard Martin, Sam Gill, Linell Cady, and William Hart seek to disclose and explore the ambiguous relationship between theology and religious studies. Christopher Chesnek challenges the sharp distinction that has been drawn between religion and theology on the one side, and the academic study of religion on the other. Although grounded in legitimate intellectual and political concerns, the debate over their relationship, Chesnek argues, has been governed by politically motivated stereotypes that rely upon and reinforce a narrow conception of religion and obscure the religious dimensions of the academic study of religion. To support his argument, he explores the history of religious studies and considers the discipline’s impact on the religious lives of its students. Reflecting on the debate over reductionism, Chesnek argues that the vast, theoretical resources of the academic study of religion have both theological and antitheological dimensions,

either of which are eradicated only to the detriment of the discipline. Although arguing that religiosity and theology cannot be fully bracketed, Chesnek concludes that they must remain incidental to the aims of the scholar of religion, neither explicitly cultivated nor assiduously policed.

Richard Martin reaches a similar conclusion in his essay that focuses on the tangled relations between theology and the history of religion during the latter's development in the past century and a half. Martin explicitly rejects the model in which the history of religions is subsumed under the umbrella of theology, its location within much twentieth-century scholarship. However, he also admits his increasing doubts about a model that denies the presence or the legitimacy of personal commitments in the study of religion. For Martin, the issues have become much more complicated as scholars of religion find themselves "analyzing, critiquing, and sometimes defending other people's theologies in a changing intellectual environment that includes the other."

In a similar vein, Sam Gill seeks to expose the deeply rooted beliefs that inform religious studies, as well as the wider academy. From a distance, Gill argues, the differences between theologians and scholars of religion are less salient than the deep similarities that reflect their common roots in the Western tradition. Gill develops this argument by exploring contrasting attitudes toward the body in Western and Australian aboriginal cultures. Like Chesnek and Martin, Gill does not want to abandon the distinction between explicitly religious and academic scholarship, but the blurring of the boundary poses new questions and problems for the field. In this emerging situation, Gill concludes that the question is "how theology can be reconstructed and reimagined beyond explicit religious theologies," in a manner that will facilitate engagement with the world's diverse cultures and critically illuminate the root beliefs that inform the academy itself.

Linell Cady's essay also explores the limitations of the conventional mapping of religious studies and theology, and the implications of recent scholarship that has exposed the jagged boundary between religion and its study. These developments, she argues, can help facilitate the further evolution of religious studies by making greater room for both naturalistic theorizing and existential normative reflection on religion, pursuits that the reigning liberal phenomenological model of the field has sidelined, if not precluded. Although the normative strand of this disciplinary evolution has clear parallels to theology, Cady considers this label misleading and inappropriate given its theistic and confessional associations. But she concludes that normative engagement with the diversity of worldviews, spanning the religious/secular divide, is increasingly important within the university context in our emerging global environment.

William Hart reflects upon the widespread feeling that theology is a polluting presence within religious studies and the wider university, an attitude he admittedly shares to some degree. He takes the emergence of religious studies at Princeton University as a case study to show the early and continuing traces of theology in shaping the field. Rejecting the cogency of the standard argument for

the exclusion of theology, Hart concludes that it is necessary to distinguish between confessional and academic theology, the latter an open, revisable form of inquiry. He concludes with some surprise and reluctance that the latter cannot be excluded from religious studies or the university on epistemological grounds. However, insofar as he connects theology with theism, he raises some concerns about its pragmatic value in terms of relevance and interest. He concludes that academic theology is a “legitimate mode of inquiry within the methodological plurality of religious studies,” but he nonetheless wishes for the day when “God-talk in its hallowed and explanatory senses is as quaint as ether-talk.”

The next set of essays share the view that the model of the university and religious studies that has excluded all forms of theology is no longer compelling, making possible—even essential—the incorporation of a form of academic theology as a subset of religious studies. However, recognizing the variety and lingering confessional imprint on the discipline of theology, Delwin Brown, Sheila Davaney, and Darrel Fasching focus directly on how to envision a theology that would be appropriately at home within a university context. Delwin Brown traces the historical antecedents for academic theology and argues that a contemporary version properly belongs within religious studies. His case does not depend on construing the university as an open forum housing all forms of inquiry, but in identifying a form of theology that embraces the norms and values of the academic tradition. Although there are some contemporary practitioners of this form of theology, they remain largely scattered and overshadowed by religious theologians, with primary loyalties to religious communities or traditions. Failure to include an academically credible form of theology within the university—which has emerged as the most “influential arbiter of knowledge” in the modern West—precludes analysis and critique of one of the most powerful and important dimensions of human culture. Arguing that the term “theology” remains an honorific one within the culture, Brown suggests that it be retained in order to take advantage of this sensibility and to secure its place as a “counter” to less academic theologies circulating within the culture at large.

Concerned about the growing animosity to theology in religious studies, Sheila Greeve Davaney situates the conflict historically, tracing the dominant narrative that has tied the maturation of religious studies to its divorce from theology. She challenges the portraits of theology generated by this narrative, in particular questioning the rights of all academic disciplines, except theology, to evolve. She analyzes four major ways of rethinking the relationship of theology to the university that have emerged in response to recent developments in cultural theory. Seeking to contribute to the further evolution of the discipline of theology, Davaney concludes by identifying the salient features of an explicitly academic theology, one in which audience and allegiance are unambiguously framed in terms of the academy, not the church or tradition.

Rejecting essentialist interpretations of theology frozen in premodernity, Darrell Fasching also explores the appropriate shape of a theology within a university

context. He suggests that we take “the sacred,” interpreted as “that which matters most” to people, as the central organizing concept within the study of religion and theology. The academic theologian, Fasching argues, is not a confessional or church theologian, but a “free-agent” who pursues the “study and critique of human religious experience (i.e., of the sacred) in all its diversity.” Far from defending the superiority of one’s own tradition, Fasching proposes the model of the “alienated theologian” who desacralizes all traditions, including one’s own, in an effort to gain through comparative study the “wisdom to live more humanely,” the overarching goal of the humanities.

The remaining three contributor—Paula Cooley, Frederick Ware, and Kathryn Tanner—seem less convinced that radical revisioning of theology is required if it is to be a university discipline. They hold that theology as a normative, constructive effort to extend particular religious traditions belongs in the secular academy. They make the case for this view, however, in significantly different ways. Paula Cooley offers two related lines of argument. One is that the humanistic inquiries provided by the liberal arts remain an element, perhaps even the central element, of a beneficial university education. The critical study of the religious aspect of cultures, and of religions and religious beliefs—especially their central symbols such as “God”—is a valuable part of a liberal arts education. But the critical study of religion need not be solely analytical or descriptive. Just as literature departments include authors and poets as well as linguists and theorists, so also religious studies departments may include “those who actively seek to deconstruct and intentionally reconstruct [particular] religious symbol systems.” Cooley argues, further, that all scholarly disciplines, not simply the humanistic ones, are constitutive and constructive. To exclude theology from the university because it is constructive is therefore untenable.

Frederick Ware assumes something like Cooley’s kind of argument as the basis for his further contention that Black theology should be undertaken as an academic inquiry located in the university. Ware acknowledges that there is a place for the more common forms of Black theological reflection answerable to the norms of the African American religious tradition, but he adds that, if Black theology wishes to be taken seriously beyond its own community, it must also subject its claims to the kind of public scrutiny characteristic of the university. In the academy, Black theological claims are to be tested in the same way that any other critical religious reflection is examined.

Ware and Cooley take some care to distinguish what they term academic theology from theologies that are governed by the norms of particular religious traditions. Kathryn Tanner, however, argues for the equitable inclusion of all forms of disciplined religious reflection, including Christian theology, in the university. Tanner rejects attempts to reconceptualize theology in order to make it palatable to the academy. Such efforts, she says, seek “to meet a strict methodological bar that no longer exists” with the advent of postmodernism. What she proposes instead is a reconceptualization of the university itself, or rather a return to its earlier aim “to serve society . . . through the formation of a citizenry educated to make good

decisions” about their life together. In her view, the university should become the site for the contest of all “socially significant . . . visions of the world and our place in it” including those of the sciences, humanities, and religions. This would include, too, efforts to create and advocate a Christian theological outlook designed to meet today’s pressing challenges.

A number of recurring themes crisscross throughout these essays. Perhaps the most prominent, if most diffuse, is a recognition that the postmodern shift has destabilized the university, reopening questions about the nature of knowledge, open inquiry, forms of evidence, and appropriate norms. The boundary between scholar and data has become fuzzier. This is a particularly troubling development for a field such as religious studies, whose “myth of origins” builds upon the disjunction between religion and its study. A number of the essays challenge the sharp demarcation between religion and its study, undermining the purported objectivity of the scholar in his or her pursuits. Discontent with the reigning narrative, however, does not necessarily lead to arguments for including theology as a sub-field within religious studies. Although some argue thusly, others prefer to see theology as an incidental by-product of the study of religion; some question the appropriateness of the label; and others take evidence of a jagged boundary as motivation and justification for making the separation sharper and neater.

Despite the prominence of the theme in this collection that the weakening of modernism and its pretensions to objectivity and neutrality make room within the university for a form of academic theology, it is important to note that other grounds for its exclusion remain salient. As Hart expresses this point, although epistemological barriers against theology may have eroded, pragmatic ones may have not. Indeed, for Hart, the subject matter of theology, what he calls God-talk, is simply not interesting or compelling, and hence perhaps should go the way of alchemy and astrology. It is significant that many of the essays advocating the inclusion of theology within the university operate with a more expansive understanding of the term. Rather than limit theology to God-talk, theology is located within a global arena and identified more generally with intellectual reflection in relationship to broadly encompassing religious/cultural traditions.

A number of the essays express discontent with the constraints of the reigning conceptual landscape, with its sharp distinction between the religious and the secular, and the corollaries that work to sustain this division. Some point to the way this bifurcation blinds us to the “religiosity” of the secular, whereas others point to the way it hinders the evolution of religion in more naturalistic idioms. Globalizing developments that have accelerated encounters with multiple “worlds,” both traditionally religious and secular, have contributed to this uneasiness with the fundamental categories through which we have engaged our fields, and distinguished the academic study of religion and theology.

The essays also make apparent the importance of institutional location in addressing these issues. Disciplines and fields do not float free from their institutional embodiment in actual colleges, universities, seminaries, and divinity schools,

including public and private, secular and religious, liberal and conservative. Constraints on intellectual inquiry will be experienced differently across these varying sites. Given the strong church-state separation in the United States, it is not surprising that scholars of religion at public institutions appear most concerned about sustaining the objectivity of the scholar of religion. Nor is it surprising that private institutions seem to provide a more hospitable context for including the study of religion within the mission of a traditional liberal arts education. But the importance of considering this issue in relationship to secular and public institutions—the focus of this volume—is particularly pressing given the demographic trends. Almost 80 percent of students attending institutions of higher education in the United States now attend public institutions.¹¹

Another theme that recurs in this collection is the importance of envisioning a form of theology that is appropriate within a university context. A number of the essays acknowledge that the discipline of theology remains deeply shaped by its historic roots, which have located it within particular religious communities and traditions. However, they argue that history is not necessarily destiny, that theology has as much right as any other discipline to self-transformation. Hence they focus attention on delineating the character of a specifically academic theology, one located unambiguously within the academy, not a hybrid standing betwixt and between church and university. Although there is consensus among a number of essays about the critical importance of forging such an intellectual enterprise, the arguments in support of this consensus differ, and there is a difference of opinion about how this enterprise should be named. Some argue for keeping the label of theology, primarily on pragmatic grounds, and others argue the opposite, also on pragmatic grounds. The varied connotations of the term “theology,” both positive and negative, are strikingly evident in this collection, making clear that the question of name is not a minor semantic consideration.

Finally, the essays collectively point to the transitional character of our disciplinary traditions. There is a significant recurring refrain that recent trends in scholarship have opened new questions about the nature of our pursuits and the intellectual and moral ideals that govern them. These questions have been accentuated and multiplied by the global context into which Western education, including the study of religion, is now moving. It is clear that the ability to understand and to engage, both sympathetically and critically, this multiplicity of “worlds” will become even more indispensable as this future unfolds. The further evolution of religious studies and theology, to say nothing of the academy itself, will almost certainly be guided in part by the need to meet this vital cultural demand.

NOTES

1. Reflecting the dominance of Christianity in the West, the discipline of theology in the North American context has been largely Christian theology. Hence, religious studies

has primarily emerged to some extent within, and to some extent over against, Christian theological inquiry. Although “theology” sometimes presupposes the Christian modifier, reflecting the historic roots of the discipline, it has increasingly been appropriated to identify a form of intellectual reflection within other world religions, such as Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, and more amorphous religious/cultural traditions, such as post-Christian and New Age. There are problems with the global extension of the term “theology” analogous to the problems identified in the extension of the term “religion” beyond its Western roots. Nevertheless, the migration of the term “theology” beyond its Christian prototype does have interesting implications for the issue of its relationship to religious studies and the university in an increasingly global environment.

2. Charlotte Allen, “Is Nothing Sacred? Casting Out the Gods from Religious Studies,” *Lingua Franca* 6,7 (1996): 30–40.

3. Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), see especially 29–48.

4. Edward Farley, *Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 27.

5. Van Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1966), 38.

6. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1979).

7. J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

8. Jonathan Z. Smith, “‘Religion’ and ‘Religious Studies’: No Difference at All,” *Soundings* 71 (1988): 231.

9. *Ibid.*, 233.

10. Margaret R. Miles, “Becoming Answerable for What We See,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68, no. 3 (2000): 472.

11. This estimate, from the U.S. Department of Education, is cited in Samuel F. Barrett and Roslyn A. Korb, *Enrollment in Higher Education: Fall 1995*, National Center for Education Statistics, Department of Education (Washington, DC, 1997).