Preface

The present volume of papers on official and popular religion, their characteristics and the relationship between them, is the result of some years of work by a study group at the University of Utrecht which took an interest in the theme. The group consists of staff from the Faculties of Theology including Science of Religion, Arts and Social Sciences, who teach and carry out research in the field of the empirical study of religion, Christian and otherwise. At the beginning the group was concerned with different and smaller subjects, but in 1974 attention was focussed on the theme "Official and Popular Religion".

Besides becoming familiar with materials on and approaches to the subject outside the confines of each individual's own specialization, one of the main aims of this study was to see to what extent the distinction between official and popular religion can serve as an analytical tool in the study of religion in a more general sense. Would it be possible, for instance, to lay bare a dialectic which is inherent in religious traditions and structures and which is closely connected with the social reality underlying such traditions and structures? Would it be possible at all to distinguish clearly popular from official religion in research which pretends to be strictly empirical? Besides its strictly scholarly interest, a study of official and popular religion could turn out to be relevant to the religious traditions existing today, whether in their more official or in their popular manifestations.

Once the members of the study group had started writing papers on these questions, the possibility of publishing their results was envisaged. The two undersign-
ed undertook the responsibility of bringing together the information contained in the papers and the various lines of thought underlying them. In their summaries and conclusions they have not gone beyond what in fact has been presented in the papers themselves, limiting in this way the expression of their own ideas on the subject. The book which has resulted from these efforts, consequently, is neither just a collection of facts and ideas presented by the various authors nor did it receive any authority's stamp.

Although the group consisted of thirteen members at the beginning of 1977, who all contributed papers to this book, for some essential subjects scholars outside the group were contacted who kindly accepted to contribute papers on subjects on which the members of the group were not qualified. These were, with omission of their respective titles, W.Th.M. Frijhoff in Paris, R. Ransdorp in Louvain, and from the University of Utrecht R. van den Broek, J.W. Doeve and Ria Klop-penborg. Their collaboration has been greatly ap- preciated.

The papers of the members of the studygroup have all been discussed within the group, which gave rise to necessary revisions in the texts. Suggestions for improvement, mostly on minor items, could be made by way of correspondence with the contributors from outside. Because of this procedure the preparation of this publication has taken much more time than had been anticipated in 1974. It took more than a year and a half to discuss the papers of the group members at different sessions, after which parts of them were rewritten. The editorial work included, besides the usual technicalities, directing the definite typing of the manuscript as a whole according to standards unknown at the outset. The terminal date for acceptance of manuscripts was January 1st, 1977, which means that for a number of papers more recent data and/or literature
could not be inserted, and that the patience of most authors – not to speak of that of the editors – has been put to a hard test. Authors and editors have been responsible for their own contributions as well as for the performance of their role in the birth of this book.

Editors and group members want to express thanks to Professor D.J. Hoens who consented to chair the meetings where most of the papers have been debated and discussed. They are grateful to Mr. H. Jarring and to Dr. P. Staples for translating several contributions from Dutch into English, and to the latter in particular for giving much of his precious time to correct the English style of most other contributions. Thanks are due to Mrs. N. Biesta, Mrs. A. Lagarde, Mrs. L. Lensink, Mrs. T. Meijer and Mrs. J.W. Steenhuisen for typing out the text most conscientiously in its definite form, and to Mr. L. van Welij for composing the indexes. Mr. G.Th.J. van Elsberg of the Institute of Sociology gave invaluable help in finding ways to solve the numeral practical problems connected with the preparation of the typescript. Mouton Publishers made it possible, notwithstanding its size, to take this book into production on the basis of a camera-ready copy prepared thanks to a subvention from the Institute of Sociology and the Institute of Theology, both at the University of Utrecht.

It is gratifying that the book could be published in the series "Religion and Society" devoted to empirical studies of religion in its social and historical context.

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