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Book Reviews

Peter Beyer^a; Cristián Parker Gumucio^b; Grace Davie^c; Barbara Thériault^d; Robert T. Miller^e; Paul Badham^f; Mary Ellen Konieczny^g; Michael Hoelzl^h; Victoria S. Harrisonⁱ; Patrick Riordan Sj^j; Vaughan S. Roberts^k; James V. Spickard^l; Steve Bruce^m; Chris Arthurⁿ; Jolyon Mitchell^o; Steve Nolan^p; Jo Carruthers^q; Matthew Wood^r; Christopher Key Chapple^s; Bill Ellis^t; Allan Kellehear^u; Dennis Klass^v; Christie Davies^v

^a Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada ^b Institute for Advanced Studies, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Santiago de Chile, Chile ^c Department of Sociology and Philosophy, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK ^d Department of Sociology, University of Montreal, Montreal, Canada ^e Villanova University School of Law, Villanova, PA, USA ^f Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter, Wales, UK ^g Department of Sociology, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA ^h Department of Religions and Theology, The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK ⁱ Department of Philosophy, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland ^j Heythrop College, University of London, London, UK ^k Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, UK ^l University of Redlands, Redlands, CA, USA ^m School of Social Science, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Scotland ⁿ Director, Centre for Theology and Public Issues (CTPI), New College, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK ^o Princess Alice Hospice, Esher, UK ^p Department of English & Department of Theology & Religious Studies, School of Humanities, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK ^q Department of Sociology, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK ^r Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, USA ^s Professor Emeritus, English and American Studies, Penn State University, USA ^t Department of Social & Policy Sciences, University of Bath, Bath, UK ^u Truro, Cape Cod, USA ^v University of Reading (Emeritus),

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Book Reviews

The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion

PETER CLARKE, ed., 2009

Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press

xvi + 1046 pp., £85.00, US\$150.00 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-19-927979-1

In a field that is sufficiently crowded with 'handbooks', 'companions', and guides for the sociology of religion that publishers have to insert their name in the title to tell one from the other, the first question to ask of this new offering edited by Peter Clarke is what makes it distinctive. Like others, its intended audience consists of those readers not already experts in the domain; and like others, it is not so much comprehensive as eclectic in the sub-themes that it chooses. The distinguishing feature is therefore in the specific approach to the selection of chapter topics and in this regard in certain unifying and interrelated themes that editor Clarke outlines in his introduction. These are six: the insistence on an *organic* conception of religion, meaning one that is rather inclusive than exclusive; the focus on religion in a *global* context; the idea that we are experiencing a *global resurgence* of religion; that religion is necessarily *plural*; and that therefore it is subject not just to understanding, but also to *management*. In this context, the aim of the book is not only to present a snapshot of past and current sociology of religion, but also to contribute to the transformation of the discipline.

The 54 individual chapters do, of course, not follow this approach in any explicit way. As is usual in such volumes, each author offers her or his own particular perspective on their respective topic, combining a summary of issues and relevant research with a focus on the specific concerns that emanate from the author's own research interests. The six themes, however, do offer a way of reading the contributions in a kind of *organic* way: one starts from any chapter, notes the relation to other chapters, which are then read next, pointing to other chapters, and so on, until the entire book is covered.

To illustrate this thematic structure, I start with a set of chapters that speak specifically to my areas of specialisation and interest, in a section on globalisation, fundamentalism, migration, and religious diversity. Roland Robertson begins this section with an analysis of globalisation in the light of perceived trends towards theocratisation and the politicisation of civil religions. His clear and characteristically sombre vision raises questions of the relation of religion, organically conceived, and issues such as nationalism, state, law, and power. Similar indicators flow from Anson Shupe's article on fundamentalism, but with a decidedly greater emphasis on the situation in the United States.

Consulting the chapters that deal with these devolving issues introduces the reader to both answers and elaborations as well as alternative ways of looking at the questions. Phillip Hammond and David Machacek discuss religion and the state in another section, emphasising the issue of the *regulation* of religion and the variable religion/state relations on hand of seven examples from all around the world and ending on the themes of civil religions. Christophe Jaffrelot takes on the related theme of religion and nationalism, again taking several *global* examples and stressing the *plurality* of ways that religion inflects with different sorts of nationalist visions. James Richardson then guides the reader to the concrete institutional level of law courts, saying the most about American courts, but not thereby ignoring how courts treat religions in various parts of the world. Yet Meerten ter Borg, reflecting his interests in less institutional forms, expands the question of power beyond state power, to focus on the power of religion. That in turn suggests all the other institutional and non-institutional ways that religion is seen to manifest itself, making salient the third of the four articles with which I began, that on religious diversity by Gary Bouma and Rod Ling. This article not only reiterates the importance of things like state and law in the sense of underlining how religious diversity provokes the perceived need to *manage* religion, but analyses in some detail how this whole question varies, depending on the different ways that states and people conceive what religious diversity means. This idea, in its turn, raises questions, such as how to define religion and relatedly how to measure it, the subjects of, for instance, chapters by Malcolm Hamilton on rational choice theory, André Droogers on defining religion, Ole Riis on methodology, and Jeppe Sinding Jensen on conceptual models for studying religion.

Returning to the original set of articles, a different path leading to other sets of articles is suggested by Caroline Plüss's excellent article on migration and the globalisation of religion. Plüss focuses her analysis on the local–global dynamic that migration accentuates for religion, creating multiple places of identification and thus raising issues such as religious authenticity and cosmopolitan or non-cosmopolitan orientations. Her treatment raises a number of questions, including those addressed in other articles, such as Wade Clark Roof's discussion of religion and generations. Roof deals with the issue more broadly than in terms of migrant generations, asking the temporal question of religious change over time, in addition to the spatial question of religious variation across different places. Mathew Guest tackles a related issue in his article about the reproduction and transmission of religion, examining the organic forms of globally spread religion, such as the Christian Alpha course or fluid, de-institutionalised and postmodern manifestations, but not forgetting another critical institutionalised form that is critical for transmission—the family. These chapters then suggest another set, such as Penny Edgell's chapter on religion and the family or chapters on spiritualities (Paul Heelas, Eva Hamberg), new religions (David Bromley), and implicit religion (Edward Bailey). And so on.

In spite of the selectivity of the different chapters, it is pointless to criticise the *Handbook* for things it *may* have included, but does not include. It is not an encyclopedia. On one point, however, there is some question, and that is whether the idea of religious resurgence, as outlined in the introduction, is demonstrated in the chapters themselves. The great variety of religious forms

addressed does not mean that there is more religion now where there was less before; it may only be that we are paying more attention than before. There is also the usual issue of chapters differing in quality, but that also barely warrants mentioning, given that it is almost impossible not to have this outcome in a book of this size and comprehensiveness. As such, it is a valuable addition to the growing group to which it belongs and well worth consulting and perhaps reading from cover to cover, but not necessarily in that order.

PETER BEYER

Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada

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Lived Religion, Faith and Practice in Everyday Life

MEREDITH B. McGUIRE, 2008

Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press

304 pp., £54.00, US\$99.00 (hb), £10.99, US\$19.95 (pb)

ISBN 978-0-19-517262-1 (hb), ISBN 978-0-19-536833-8 (pb)

In the beginning of the twentieth century, when Durkheim (1911) was carrying out his research about the *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, William James (1902) had finished his research on the *Varieties of Religious Experience*. While Durkheim focused on collective forms of religion, James focused his studies on the diverse religious experiences of extraordinary individuals.

Meredith McGuire, writing at the beginning of the twenty-first century, prompts us to reflect on the lived religion of individuals; her focus is “on how religion and spirituality are practiced, experienced and expressed by ordinary people” (12). She is aware that official religion “and what religious organizations promote as ‘religious’ are surely part of the picture” (16), but when we focus on personal religious experience, “the ecclesiastical organization”, as James would say, “sinks to an altogether secondary place” (35).

The book that McGuire presents is full of vivid, fascinating, and colourful narratives about the complex, eclectic, and lived religiosity of ordinary people living their spiritual lives. Against the background of her own work on healing in contemporary North America, the author engages in dialogue with other authors who have worked on lived religion as historians or sociologists in the US, such as Nancy Ammerman, Robert Orsi, Jim Spickard, Mary Jo Neitz, Janet Jacobs, and Michael Carroll, or who have worked on popular religion in the US or in Latin America, such as Gustavo Benavides, Jon Butler, Thomas Csordas, Richard Flores, David Hackett, and Cristián Parker. The question McGuire wants to answer is how all kinds of people—ordinary people—engage with and work through the inevitable requests and contradictions of life in religious or spiritual terms. Moving away from an essentialist concept of religion requires the effort of seeing religion in a dynamic way. Everyday religious practices involve people’s bodies, emotions, and genders and they involve spiritual experiences which are as yet invisible to the standard sociological analysis of religion. The religious and spiritual practices of meditation, praying, healing, singing, dancing or even doing ordinary jobs in a contemplative manner are

religious rituals that have an effect in everyday life. Popular and personal religion is a practical religion rather than an intellectual exercise. (83)

In the chapters of her book, McGuire lays out how spirituality and materiality are interwoven in everyday practice, how impossible it is to understand quotidian practices without understanding that they are embodied practices (97–118), how healing and the search of wholeness have to be analysed in the complexity of the interaction of mind, soul, and body (119–58), and how spiritual and religious practices engage the body and are always framed by gender (159–83). This is certainly a book written by a scholar who, over decades, has been firmly ‘grounded’ in fieldwork in many diverse contexts.

The book’s discussions challenge the scholarly, especially the sociological standard concepts of religion. The empirical descriptions are the ground that justifies all the author’s theoretical reflections. Thus we find a theoretical work that opens the gates to a new paradigm for religious studies. Indeed, the author suggests to “rethink sociological interpretations of contemporary religion, religiosity and religious identity” (16, see also 185ff). McGuire shows the consequences of the social and historical conditions in which the classical sociological concepts of religion were produced: they have obscured and even made invisible many realities that in fact are key elements of the religious and spiritual experiences of everyday life, treating them as ‘non religious’. This historical fact has biased our interpretation of the entire panorama of what we call ‘religion’. The book’s merit is to ask the very question of what religion is. The answer which unfolds in the chapters is that religion is a socially constructed concept that has been redefined, changed, and established in different historical contexts.

The main sociological definition of religion is Durkheim’s dichotomy of sacred and profane. However, the present book illustrates with impressive empirical foundations that the sacred is not entirely different and separate from the profane. Most scholars also use the dichotomy for magic and religion, but people’s religious experiences show that the sacred arises within the profane world and that magic forms a continuum with religious practices. In rethinking our conceptual tools, the author says, “it would be fruitful to examine some cultural understanding of religious, magical, and miraculous powers that were common in the late medieval era, before the definitive boundaries of religion and the religious were redrawn” (32). Religion is thus definitively linked with the connotations of a concept coined by religious institutions and by secularisation theory. The history of modernity is marked by an increasing definition of boundaries between religion and what is considered not to be religious, between religion and magic, between sacred and secular. Therefore, “The issue for a sociological interpretation of religion is how Protestant and Catholic reformation movements changed the church teachings on magic and miracle” (38). Conceptual tools in sociology are then the result of the redefinition of boundaries, which is tied to the history of Christianity in the West. The sociological tools we commonly use are limited by Euro-centric and ecclesio-centric bias and therefore do not adequately apply to non-Western religions.

Popular religion and the multiple and heterogeneous expressions of lived religion in late medieval times—and, I would add, in colonial periods in Middle and South America—can be metaphorically represented, as McGuire

suggests following Peter Burke (39ff), with Breughel's painting of the struggle between Carnival and Lent. However, in the history of Western religion, it is Lent that has won; indeed, the long Reformation was something of a metaphorical battle between Carnival (popular religiosities with their vivid expressions) and Lent (Protestant and Catholic long reformist movements that emphasised discipline, austerity, and control).

Sociological concepts were generated at a time when Reformation had succeeded in redefining what 'religion' was and what was to be considered to be 'magic', 'superstition', and improper conduct. "Religion came to be identified with the 'higher' or more 'spiritual' aspects of human existence." (41) The book develops a new paradigmatic approach to diverse religious expressions which are mostly seen in the lived and popular religion around the world. Indeed, the key concepts that need to be developed must try to grip and interpret in depth the *different logic* in lived and popular religion (196ff). As I have set out in a previous work (Parker) and McGuire further develops in her book, religion-as-lived is not centred in beliefs or in ideas, but in practices and in personal and embodied experiences—they are lived and do not claim to be intellectually coherent or logical.

All lived experiences of the religious are to a certain extent syncretic (188ff) experiences. Viewed as a creative synthesis, syncretism is in fact an indigenous and very common phenomenon, which is part of the discourses and practices of local actors, as they struggle for symbolic legitimacy. Symbols, rituals, practices, and signifying structures of lived and popular religion follow a logic which is different from that of Western rationalism and dualism. Therefore, the new paradigm to understand religion reminds us that the religious field must be understood as a complex phenomenon where institutional and non-institutional aspects are produced in dialectic processes.

McGuire's book has the merit of showing that popular religious expressions can be found not only and exclusively in Catholic contexts, as scholars of Latin countries (in Europe or Latin America) have commonly studied, but also—and in very varied ways—popular religious expressions are found within Protestant and Evangelical areas (67–96). This insight is challenging sociologies which have a classical Protestant bias, because—given a rationalist perspective—they usually refuse to understand different ways of living and studying popular religious phenomena.

McGuire analyses lived religion, but what about non-lived religion? We refer to the ecclesiastical, institutional, 'ideal type' religiosity. Is this 'pure religion' really 'lived' in some way? Does someone in the whole world live by all the norms prescribed by the church which s/he believes in, is engaged in, and is affiliated to? The notion of purity (42) is not only concerned with authenticity in terms of absence of cultural pollution, but also with orthodox practices and discipline. Even the consecrated religious men and women, the priests and monks do not always live up to the 'purity' of religious rules: "Only a small and unrepresentative proportion struggle to achieve tight consistency among their wide ranging beliefs, perceptions, experiences, values, practices and actions" (16). Sociology has to escape the normative church-oriented approach to religion, if it wants to understand real lived religion, but there is no question of being 'positivist'. It must be acknowledged that "religion can be ambivalent", that "Religion can be resistance to oppression" and redeemer (63), but also that

religion can be “oppressive” or “violent” or promoting “submission” to domination (61ff, 116–17, 177ff, 241 n 56).

While the classical sociological paradigms of sociology of religion are still valid to explain and understand the structured, official, institutional and/or church-oriented types and manifestations of religion (although they need to be adjusted and reformulated), the new emerging paradigm is needed in order to study and understand, in an adequate and proper manner, experiences of everyday lived and/or popular religions. And this new theoretical approach gains pertinence in the context of globalisation processes. By examining lived religion we get closer to understanding not only individual religion in all its diversity and complexity, but also the diversity and complexity of all religious phenomena in contemporary globalised societies.

After reading Meredith McGuire’s book, it seems to us that religion cannot be fully understood in the twenty-first century, if we do not take into account that it is first of all a lived experience of individuals in their particular historical, social, embodied, and gendered contexts.

CRISTÍAN PARKER GUMUCIO

Institute for Advanced Studies, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Santiago de Chile, Chile

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Parker, Cristian. *Popular Religion and Modernization in Latin America: A Different Logic*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996.

Church and State in 21st Century Britain: The Future of Church Establishment

R. M. MORRIS, ed., 2009

London: Palgrave Macmillan

261 pp., £55.00

ISBN 978-0-230-55511-2

The aim of this book is to ‘be prepared’—specifically to think through the issues related to establishment in both England and Scotland in order that neither state nor church(es) should find themselves caught out by precipitate decisions, provoked, for example, by a change of government, or more radically, a change of sovereign. The editor—who is also the author of eleven of the fourteen chapters—recognizes that there is no immediate groundswell for change. However, the gap between form and reality in terms of establishment is now too large to be credible, so what is to be done?

This book does not look for an easy way out. There is none. On the contrary, it sets out the current situation in all its complexity, indicating in some detail how we come to have a monarch who can neither be a Catholic, nor marry one, and a non-elected second chamber in which 26 bishops from the Church of England sit as of right. It is almost impossible to justify either.

Morris divides his analysis into four sections. The first outlines 'establishment' in both England and Scotland, paying particular attention to the English case. Part II sets this material in a broader context, paying attention not only to the Irish and Welsh examples, but also to the Lutheran churches of the Nordic countries, in other words to the Church of England's closest European cousins. The third section contextualises the church/state debate in a different way, by scrutinising both the changes in religious adherence in modern Britain and the attitudes towards establishment found in a variety of constituencies, both inside and outside the churches. The final section looks to the future: at the possibilities for the monarchy, for the House of Lords, and for a range of further institutions.

The editor, a former civil servant at the Home Office and now an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Constitution Unit at University College, London, uses an interesting device to summarise his argument. He invents an imaginary statesman to whom he offers advice. For example, the religious situation in modern Britain is contained in a series of perceptive bullet points: among them, the weakening of all Christian denominations, but their continued existence; the growth of unbelief, but the absence of anti-clericalism; the sensitivities of church leaders regarding their vulnerable status; the fact that Britain remains culturally Christian, although it is no longer 'instructed' in the faith; the increasing presence of non-Christian religions (171–2). The remainder of the book is an attempt to think through the political and constitutional implications of these findings.

Said statesman reappears at the end of the book to receive the final recommendations (234–5). The problem lies in the changing nature of society: establishment 'fits' a situation in which a large majority of the population belongs not only to one faith, but to one church. This assumption no longer holds. It is better, in the editor's opinion, to recognize that the gap between religious theory and fact has grown too big for comfort and to make contingency plans. Certain questions must be addressed, if we are to achieve *equality* as well as liberty of religion, a situation that demands the pro-active collaboration of both parties (church and state). The crucial points are set out in tabular form.

In many respects this book impresses. It is well informed, well written, and well argued; the reader will learn a great deal about the ramifications and subtleties of establishment. However, if the issues brought to the fore by this discussion are a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves, cannot the underlying question be more positively stated? For example, might not the specifics of our history, political settlement, and constitution offer us resources—as well as challenges—with which to 'manage' a largely secular population who, more frequently than we had anticipated, is obliged to engage with the seriously religious of all faiths? If this is so, it is important not to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

GRACE DAVIE

Department of Sociology and Philosophy, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

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Religionskontroversen in Frankreich und Deutschland

MATTHIAS KOENIG & JEAN-PAUL WILLAIME, eds., 2008

Hamburg: Hamburger Edition

475 pp., €35.00 (hb)

ISBN 978-3-936096-96-5

It has often been noted that Émile Durkheim and Max Weber never met. Although they were contemporaries, they did not comment on each other's work. The editors of the collected volume *Religionskontroversen in Frankreich und Deutschland* (Religious Controversies in France and Germany) propose to make up for this gap. Together with the contributors to this volume, they engage with the classics of sociology and their take on religion at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Durkheim and Weber lived and wrote at a time riven by controversies over religion and politics—the *Kulturkampf*, the education laws, and the Dreyfus affair were not far away, and the 1905 law on the separation of church and state was being enacted and heatedly discussed. Their work, according to the editors' hypothesis, reflects not only these debates, but also the prevailing national contexts in France and Germany at the time. Although bound up with different configurations of state and nation, we, too—as social scientists and citizens—are, like the founders of sociology, faced with debates about religion. It is precisely this observation that the volume takes as its starting point. In contrast to similar endeavours, such as the volume *Religionssoziologie um 1900* by Volkhard Krech and Hartmann Tyrell, the originality of this volume lies in the authors' attempt to isolate the influence of the development of state and nation and thereby assess the relevance of the classic sociological accounts of religion for the study of contemporary religious controversies.

The editors, Matthias Koenig and Jean-Paul Willaime, outline their project in a well-drawn introduction. They point to the shifting frontiers between the political and the religious spheres in France and Germany and, among other things, the importance of different confessional patterns in both countries. The introduction is followed by eleven chapters which are divided into two sections: a theoretical section emphasising the classics of sociology and their time and an empirical section, grounded in today's controversies. After a conceptual history of 'laïcité' and 'secularisation' in the chapter by Sylvie Toscer-Angot, Hartmann Tyrell gives voice to Durkheim and Weber, but also to other figures, such as Troeltsch and von Harnack, and thus to cultural, or liberal, Protestantism. Besides learning about their theoretical programmes, we become acquainted with national debates and how they were read and received between the two countries. Concentrating on Durkheim, Jean Baubérot's chapter portrays the somewhat puzzling position the sociologist took towards *laïcité* as a political project and a moral issue. While the two last chapters highlight particular actors, Ulrich Bielefeld's chapter frames the question from a different angle. Using a differentiation approach, he concentrates on churches, their conflicts with the state, and their outcomes or forms of institutionalisation in national and post-national states. Such a perspective notably stresses the continuity of churches as institutions beyond the loss of members—a perspective also explored by Alois Hahn in his chapter.

The second part of the volume introduces empirical cases. We are invited to enter into schools, which have been the staging grounds of controversies on religion since the late 1980s. The wearing of the headscarf, the presence of crucifixes in classrooms, and religious instruction are discussed. We are also taken to visit a mosque. We read with particular interest Claire de Galember's chapter and her ethnographic account of the relations between local governments and mosque representatives. The case studies presented in the chapters provide different accounts, at times ethnographic, at times discursive. If most of the chapters are highly valuable contributions on their own, they do not, however, meet the expectations set by the editors in the introduction. Although the editors mention cultural transfers and *histoire croisée*, most of the contributors do not take up this challenge, which would have no doubt brought the individual cases into closer contact with one another.

Religionskontroversen is no doubt a rich and interesting volume, although the reader misses the 'sociological imagination' in a field where the founders of sociology and the 'new' controversies over religion have already been discussed for some time. There are also missed opportunities, where the authors, scholars from transnational backgrounds who, unlike Weber and Durkheim, willingly meet and engage in debates, might have been bolder in constructing comparisons of national cases, objects, and time frames "in relation to one another but also through one another" (Werner and Zimmermann).

BARBARA THÉRIAULT

Department of Sociology, University of Montreal, Montreal, Canada

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Permutations of Order: Religion and Law as Contested Sovereignties

THOMAS G. KIRSCH & BERTRAM TURNER, eds., 2009

Farnham, Surrey & Burlington, VT: Ashgate

269 pp., £55.00, US\$99.95 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-7546-7259-3

This volume of essays resulted from a conference on "The Legitimate and the Supernatural: Law and Religion in a Complex World" at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale in 2005. The contributors, most of whom are European scholars, present a broad array of empirical case studies on the relation of law and religion from various parts of the world, including Bolivia, Cameroon, Cuba, Germany, India, Indonesia, Palestine, Morocco, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Zambia. As the editors explain, the essays take as a common point of departure substantial increases in both (a) the resort

to law and litigation in settling disputes, and (b) the prominence of religion in various domains of life in many parts of the world (1). Sometimes, the treatment of these themes is decked out in pretentious academic jargon (e.g., according to the editors, “One can suggest that the dichotomies in ‘legal’ and ‘religious’ realms are both unified *and* fragmented, stable *and* fragile, structured *and* processual”—emphasis in original, 3), but, for the most part, the various essays discuss perspicuously important issues arising at the intersection of law and religion. In the balance of this review, I shall briefly describe three of the essays that I believe are generally representative of the thirteen in the collection.

In his contribution to the volume, Anthony Good of the University of Edinburgh considers how courts in the United States and the United Kingdom have defined ‘religion’ for the purposes of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The issue arises because, although the Convention affords certain rights to persons with a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of (among other things) ‘religion’, it never defines this term, thus leaving the definitional question to the national courts which decide asylum cases. Good concludes that, although the relevant American jurisprudence (arising from the religion clauses in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution) is more sophisticated than that of British courts, the laws of both nations could benefit from greater engagement with the anthropology of religion. In particular, he argues that courts should adopt “some kind of polythetic rather than essentialist definition” (46) of religion. Given the immense diversity of beliefs and practices most people would recognize as ‘religious’, Good is likely right about this. He is wrong, however, to blame the courts’ mistakes in this area on “taken-for-granted, ethnocentric prejudices” (46). In fact, in almost all areas of the law, courts have tended to assume that definitions must be essentialist, not polythetic, including in cases in which there could be no hint of illicit prejudice. See, for instance, *Wellman v. Dickinson*, 475 F.Supp. 783 (S.D.N.Y. 1979), in which a federal court in the United States implicitly assumes that definitions must be essentialist and so struggles mightily with the definition of ‘tender offer’ (a kind of securities transaction) for purposes of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. Unfortunately, such facile moralising—when the author disagrees with other people, such people must be biased and prejudiced, as if there were no more innocent explanations of how people might come to hold putatively mistaken views—mars several of the essays.

In “There is no Power Except for God: Locality, Global Christianity and Immigrant Transnational Incorporation”, Nina Glick Schiller of the University of Manchester (United Kingdom) studies certain Christian Pentecostal and fundamentalist congregations in Manchester, New Hampshire (United States), and Halle an der Saale (Germany). These congregations are largely composed of recent immigrants from Africa, but Glick Schiller thinks that it is a mistake “to see migrants as primarily identified by their nationality or ethnicity” (128). Rather, she argues that “migrants who participate in a universalistic fundamentalist Christianity wield their faith as a biblical charter that entitles them to simultaneous membership in the locality in which they are settling, the nation-state they have entered, and the transnational networks connecting them to other Christians” (129). Their theology allows such immigrants to transcend native-immigrant divides by identifying themselves as “social citizens who

contribute to their new home" (129), most importantly by spreading their Christian faith to the native population. Although Glick Schiller's study is limited to the particular Pentecostal and fundamentalist congregations she investigated, it is worth noting that more mainstream Christian churches have made similar arguments for a long time. The Catholic Church, for example, has often argued for the rights of immigrants on the basis of theological values—see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 2241: "The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin."

Finally, Jacqueline Vel of the Van Vollenhoven Institute of Leiden University examines "how religious ideas and symbols are used as tools of power and competition at election rallies" in local political elections in West Sumba, Indonesia (207). In the 2005 campaign for the office of district head, she explains, there were two principal candidates. One "played the religious card by stressing his Protestant Christian identity" and utilising "many symbols from the traditional local religion" (208), including the sponsorship of a public banquet reminiscent of events organised by the pre-colonial Sumbanese rulers from whom the candidate was descended (Vel aptly calls the event the "Election Rally of the Protestant Prince"—218). The other candidate, the incumbent deputy district head, ran on his record as a competent bureaucrat with a reputation for honesty. He chose as his running mate a Catholic medical doctor who also had a reputation for honesty and who benefited from the Catholic Church's poverty-relief work in the area. In the end, the second candidate won with a plurality of the vote. Vel concludes that "direct elections encouraged politicians to use identity politics in their struggle to be elected to the highest office in their autonomous districts" and that "religion remains a resource for identity politics" (223).

As these examples show, the essays in this volume are not as closely related to each other thematically as the editors imply; indeed, the subjects of the essays are as diverse intellectually as they are geographically. There is also an unevenness in quality between contributions, which is inevitable in any collection of papers resulting from an academic conference. All that said, however, on the whole, *Permutations of Order* is a valuable book for scholars working in the sociology or anthropology of religion, especially those interested in surveying the extremely broad range of questions arising at the intersection of law and religion.

ROBERT T. MILLER

Villanova University School of Law, Villanova, PA, USA

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Disciplining the Divine: Toward an (Im)political Theology

PAUL FLETCHER, 2009

Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate

203 pp., £55.00 (hb), £17.99 (pb)

ISBN 978-0-7546-6716-2 (hb), ISBN 978-0-7546-6722-3 (pb)

This book starts from the premise that it is a "fundamental, but seldom acknowledged, fact that many of the basic categories of theological reflection

are meaningless in the modern world" (3). In a post-Copernican Universe, "theistic religion stands without a cosmology and is therefore forced to retreat into the domain of man's inwardness" (6). Within the domain of inwardness, theological doctrines have their function as explicating what it means to be a human being. This is the context in which the doctrine of the Trinity has come to the fore in the past half century.

Fletcher notes the widespread belief that in the Augustinian-Thomist tradition, the primary theological emphasis has been on the unity of the Godhead. According to Rahner, this means that in practical life, Christians have almost become "mere monotheists". Therefore, if the doctrine of the Trinity were dropped, "most religious literature would remain unchanged" (40–1). However, in contemporary theology, a "rainbow coalition" of scholars from all denominations emphasise the Social Model of the Trinity attributed to the Cappadocian Fathers and argue that this should transform our theological thinking and its implications for practical life.

For many years, Paul Fletcher was an enthusiastic advocate of the Social Model and its cultural, political, and practical implications. But more recently he came to believe it to be false. This book offers the first really comprehensive survey of contemporary Trinitarian theory, providing both a detailed and well documented analysis of the case for the Social Model as well as a thorough refutation of it.

Fletcher cites, as a "useful definition" of the relational God, Cornelius Plantinga's claim that in Cappadocian theology, "Father, Son and Spirit are conceived as persons in the full sense of 'person', i.e. as distinct centres of love, will, knowledge, and purposeful action" and yet are also related to each other in some central ways analogous to, even if sublimely surpassing, relations among members of a society of three human persons" (68). The tri-unity of the Holy Trinity provides a model for us, indicating that our true personhood is found in relationship with other persons. Indeed, for Zizoulas, the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century led to "the Invention of the Person" not as an isolated monad, but as a person in relation to other persons.

Some Social Modelists, such as Leonardo Boff, believe that the dominance of an a-Trinitarian monotheism has provided ideological underpinning for concentrating political power in one person: "The king enjoying absolute power is the image and likeness of the absolute God." (101) By contrast, according to Migliore, "the doctrine of the Trinity has the potential for playing a liberating role... Trinitarian faith tends in the direction of political and economic theory based on mutuality, participation and the distribution of power and wealth." (107)

Fletcher's critique of the Social Model of the Trinity is partly that "The social modelists have not returned to the patristic sources themselves", but have relied on a tradition of interpretation derived from De Regnon's *Etudes de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinite* of 1892, which by a kind of "Chinese whispers has provided an authoritative pattern by which to honour Cappadocian theology and condemn Augustine" (63). Fletcher documents that the sharp distinction traditionally drawn between the two is a myth. The Cappadocians were vitally concerned with the unity of God and Augustine was equally concerned for God's triune nature.

Likewise, the link between Monotheism and Totalitarianism is impossible to justify historically: "Three man juntas are almost as common as

one-man dictatorships." (116) One might additionally argue that, whereas in a polytheistic system, the ruler was often acclaimed as divine, in a monotheistic culture, the ruler was always 'under God' and the worst forms of totalitarianism of the twentieth century occurred in political systems which rejected all divine claims.

The book succeeds in giving a full and fair account of the reasons which have led scholars to embrace the Social Model of the Trinity as well as providing a powerful case for its rejection.

PAUL BADHAM

Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter, Wales, UK

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Global Catholicism: Diversity and Change since Vatican II

IAN LINDEN, 2009

London: Hurst & Co.

viii + 337 pp., £45.00 (hb), £14.99 (pb)

ISBN 978-1-85065-957-0 (hb), ISBN 978-1-85065-956-3 (pb)

Vatican II (1962–65) was a watershed event for the Roman Catholic Church. The Council's *aggiornamento* developed the Church's self-understanding and renewed its everyday practices, changing the ways it engages with the secular world, people of other faiths, its laity, and its own tradition. The reforms touched the lives of ordinary Catholics throughout the world. Over 40 years since the close of the Council, scholars and Church leaders still strive to understand its ramifications in the context of Catholicism's subsequent historical trajectory.

Ian Linden's historical investigation is such an exploration. At its heart is an examination of the Church's renewed engagement with the public sphere and her determination to fight poverty and injustice in societies across the globe. Linden presents an historical look at Catholicism in the global south: in several countries of Central and South America where the roots of liberation theology are found, in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Malawi, and the Philippines. Although action for social change inspired by liberation theology in Latin America has been well explored, less attention has been paid to similar movements in other non-Western settings. Linden's Catholic histories of Africa and Asia are perhaps this book's most important contribution.

Another central contribution results from the book's comparative strategy. Examining the complex contexts of social and religious change, Linden uncovers elements of a common Catholic story in the global south. An important frequent thread is the presence of Catholic movements in each of these countries, led by a group of bishops—and often opposed by more conservative members of the episcopate—which mobilised in order to deal with the widespread poverty created by capitalist economic development. In each nation, mobilisation efforts involved sisters, priests, and lay leaders, encouraging ordinary Catholics to reflect upon scripture and life experience according to the 'see-judge-act' model used in Catholic Action movements prior to the Council. Beginning in the 1970s, as these movements created cooperative organisations and social action programmes to better the lives of the poor and protest injustice, national governments responded

with harsh repression. However, different outcomes occurred in the countries of the global south, ranging from Catholic participation in a successful non-violent transition to democracy in 1986 in the Philippines, to a long-divided Church in Rwanda that was unable to stop—and was victimized by—recent genocides. By examining the interplay of race, class, culture, histories of colonialism, and politics in the context of actual struggles and events of repression and liberation in these countries, Linden helps us to understand the reasons behind the Catholic Church's successes and failures in alleviating poverty and injustice in different settings.

One of Linden's central aims is to inquire whether the Church has become truly global since Vatican II. In early chapters, he reviews theological and political developments in the West in the decades prior to the Council, which he uses both as a point of comparison for assessing the extent to which the Church has become globalised in recent decades and as an element of an historical explanation for how the Vatican II documents and subsequent papal and episcopal Church statements have been formed. Some of Linden's arguments are not new—others have argued that the trajectory of thought that shaped the Council's pronouncements originate in the decades before the Council—but importantly, he makes a contribution in demonstrating how this trajectory has led to the broad development of theologies that have globalised the Church and entailed consequences in the global south.

This book is accessible—it is written for a broad audience. However, Linden is clearly an interested party who seeks a less authoritarian and a more progressive Church; these sympathies are often expressed in colourful rhetoric that drives the narrative. Some of Linden's evaluations, especially concerning the Roman hierarchy, do not include adequate evidence to explicate his interpretation, making his overall arguments more difficult to assess at times. Linden is at his best when he is telling the story as a more or less neutral observer.

MARY ELLEN KONIECZNY

Department of Sociology, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA

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God, Philosophy, Universities: A History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition

ALASDAIR MACINTYRE, 2009

London: Continuum

v + 193 pp., £16.99 (hb)

ISBN 978-1-4411-7581-6

Alasdair MacIntyre's history of the Catholic philosophical tradition is remarkable at least in three aspects. Firstly, it provides a genealogy of the Catholic philosophical tradition ranging from Augustine to the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* by John Paul II in a very concise and clear style—in under 200 pages. This makes the book especially useful for a wider audience and very accessible for students. Secondly, the author does not only narrate the history of the development of the Catholic philosophical tradition, but also engages with key philosophical problems such as the proof of the existence of God, with intellectual rigour and analytical brilliance. Thirdly, in the last chapter, MacIntyre makes a convincing

plea to rethink the nature and purpose of a university: "The contemporary research university is . . . by and large a place in which certain questions go unasked or rather, if they are asked, it is only by individuals and in settings such that as few as possible hear them being asked." (174) There is a real need, as the author continues, that universities become universal again and most importantly ask the crucial question of "what is it to be human" (177). Therefore, the primary task of Catholic philosophers today is "to do philosophy in such a way as to address the deeper human concerns that underline its basic problems" (176). From this, MacIntyre's indebtedness to *Fides et Ratio* as the seminal document for Catholic philosophy is evident.

Fides et Ratio is the first of three crucial moments in the proposed history, because it redefines Catholic philosophy and the relation between theology and philosophy. The second significant moment in the history of Catholic philosophy is Thomas Aquinas and the rediscovery of Aristotle. The author dedicates four chapters (73–102) to the Dominican. With Aquinas and the establishment of universities in the thirteenth century, MacIntyre argues, the 'proper' Catholic philosophical tradition emerged. Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, ibn Rushd (Averroes) or Maimonides, to name just a few of the philosophers who are discussed in chapters 5–8, represent milestones in the prologue to the Catholic philosophical tradition. In this prologue, Augustine plays a superior role and MacIntyre does not hesitate to express his theological preference for Augustine in the last chapter of the book (178).

The third important moment in the history of Catholic philosophy occurs with Henry Newman. The author follows Newman's understanding of what a university is and what it ought to be and, more importantly, Newman's claim, that "[a]ll adequate understanding is in the end a theological understanding". "It was this conviction", the author states, "that was central to Newman's thinking about the nature of universities" (142). Starting from Newman's idea of the university, the author adopts from *Fides et Ratio* John Paul II's conviction that: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves" (*Fides et Ratio*).

With these two fundamental statements, the task set out in chapters 1–4 of MacIntyre's book *God, Philosophy, Universities* comes to its completion. MacIntyre summarises his view of Catholic philosophy as follows: "Because what is required of us is dialogue and debate, both within the tradition and between the protagonists of the tradition and those with whom we are in philosophical disagreement, what we are committed to is a large cooperative venture." (179) One can only hope that MacIntyre's recommendation will fall on receptive ground in contemporary research universities and that the *History of Catholic Philosophy* is not restricted to Catholicism in the narrow sense of the word.

The only shortcoming of the book is of a practical nature and concerns the absence of a subject index.

MICHAEL HOELZL

Department of Religions and Theology, The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

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Contemporary Practice and Method in the Philosophy of Religion: New Essays

DAVID CHEETHAM & ROLFE KING, eds., 2008

London & New York: Continuum

ix + 225 pp., £65.00, US\$130.00 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-8264-9588-4

Unlike many other edited books on philosophy of religion currently available, this ambitious and provocative volume does not take it for granted that the contributing authors should have a shared view about what philosophy of religion is and what a philosopher of religion does. Indeed, it does not seek to present a single view of the current state of philosophy of religion, but to display the luxuriant variety of viewpoints characterising the discipline today. The volume consists of an introduction and 13 essays about the practice and method of philosophy of religion. The essays are informed by a range of both philosophical and religious traditions.

The first two essays, by John Schellenberg and Nancey Murphy, display in vivid relief the breadth of current disagreement about fundamental questions concerning the nature of the discipline. Schellenberg holds that philosophy is a universal human activity. He takes it to follow from this that philosophy of religion is not tradition specific; its content may well differ when it is applied to different religious traditions, but its methods nevertheless remain the same. Philosophy of religion, argues Schellenberg, happens when philosophical methods are applied to different religious traditions. Given this understanding, he holds that a philosopher of religion who only focuses his attention on one religious tradition is working with an unnecessarily limited amount of data. He asserts that such narrowness of scope is inappropriate for someone genuinely seeking a philosophical understanding of religion. Murphy disagrees with all of these claims. Following Alasdair MacIntyre, she believes that rationality, and hence philosophy, is unavoidably specific to some tradition. The Christian tradition, for example, comes with its own norms of rationality—and philosophy encapsulates these norms. On this basis she argues that philosophy cannot be applied to the Christian tradition from a perspective outside that tradition, but can only be used by thinkers already within this tradition, in an attempt to come to a better understanding of their beliefs. In her view, tradition-independent philosophy of religion is impossible, because philosophy is always practised within some tradition or another.

Consideration of the disagreement between Schellenberg and Murphy raises the following question: can one just be a philosopher of religion or does a philosopher of religion need to be a Christian philosopher of religion, an Islamic philosopher of religion, a Jewish philosopher of religion, a Buddhist philosopher of religion, etc.? This question is explored in various ways in the essays by Joshua Golding (writing from a Jewish perspective), Shabbir Akhtar (Islamic perspective), David Webster (Buddhist perspective), and Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh (Sikh and feminist perspective). Each of these essays repays careful reading, as each explores the contours of a genuinely distinctive approach to the philosophy of religion.

Jonardon Ganeri's contribution is written from a different angle. Rather than focus on the theoretical question of how philosophy of religion might be applied

to Hindu and Buddhist traditions, he gives us a fine example of what it looks like to philosophise in the Indian traditions. This essay can be seen as pointing out the visionary role in intercultural philosophy that philosophy of religion may mature into. While Ganeri's approach has some affinity to Murphy's tradition-centred approach, it goes well beyond that, as it seeks to promote intercultural and interreligious understanding.

Promoting understanding across cultural and religious boundaries is also a concern of David Cheetham, one of the volume's editors. He shares Schellenberg's view that it is artificial and unnecessarily restrictive for a philosopher of religion to focus on just one tradition and he argues that philosophy of religion is at heart a comparative discipline. Understanding the philosopher's task as one of analysis and hermeneutics, he explores what it means to claim that philosophy of religion is comparative. After looking at some of the difficulties involved in comparative approaches to philosophy, such as the well known incommensurability problem, he concludes that, despite such apparent obstacles, the possibility of comparative philosophy of religion is grounded in the willingness of philosophers to engage in debate with those working within other traditions.

As Cheetham's contribution underlines, this volume is not only concerned with exploring the current terrain of philosophy of religion, but also with charting pathways into new territory. Each essay does this to some degree, but the ones which stand out in this respect are by Rolfe King, who is also an editor of the volume, and Mark Wynn. King's contribution tries to shift the ground of two familiar and connected debates within philosophy of religion: one about the reasonableness of belief in the existence of God, the other about how much evidence against the existence of God is presented by the presence of evil in the world. King's intriguing suggestion is that we should introduce the notion of trust into our analysis of these issues and move away from the almost exclusive focus on belief. While this essay does not provide a detailed map of the new terrain, it points to a possible way to get there. Wynn's inventive essay takes the prize for starting with the most intuitively odd thesis proposed in the volume—that our knowledge of place can serve as an analogy for our knowledge of God—and developing it in a direction that persuasively opens up a refreshingly new approach to the philosophy of religion. Again, like King, Wynn does not provide a detailed map, although he gives some concrete pointers towards the destination.

Contemporary Practice and Method in the Philosophy of Religion is a testament to how much philosophy of religion has changed in the last decade, from a discipline with a predictable syllabus focusing on familiar problems generated by the standard Semitic conception of God to a discipline whose content is open to intercultural influences and other contemporary concerns, such as feminism. Given that many of the contributions break new ground in the rapidly changing contours of the discipline's map, those that leave one with a sense of unfinished work can be forgiven.

The volume will be primarily of use to professional philosophers of religion and advanced graduate students. The many questions raised by the editors and contributors will provide a valuable stimulus to further research, as philosophy

of religion continues its evolution into a discipline appropriate to the multi-cultural environments in which it is now practised and taught.

VICTORIA S. HARRISON

Department of Philosophy, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland

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Explorations in Christian Theology and Ethics: Essays in Conversation with Paul L. Lehmann

PHILIP G. ZIEGLER & MICHELLE J. BARTEL, eds., 2009

Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate

xii + 194 pp., £55.00 (hb)

ISBN 987-0-7546-6358-4

This collection of ten essays by friends and students of Paul L. Lehmann is a useful introduction to this mid-twentieth-century thinker's theology and ethics. Apart from over 130 articles and occasional items, listed in a bibliography, Paul L. Lehmann published four books, the last one posthumously: *Forgiveness* (1940); *Ethics in a Christian Context* (1963); *The Transfiguration of Politics* (1975); *The Decalogue and a Human Future* (1995). They all reflect his interest in the practical demands of Christianity and a concern with the political implications of the Christian faith. He had been a friend of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his own political involvement included resistance to the MacCarthyism of 1950s America and engagement in the campaign for civil rights.

The book titles seem to encapsulate the issues for anyone who assumes that the Christian faith must make a difference to practical life and political engagement, but struggles to understand and articulate how that is to be done. That the Christian faith might so transform politics as to transfigure it, that the dynamics and power of forgiveness would be part of that transformation, that a faith context would give ethics a different hue, and that religious faith would make life more, rather than less human, seem particularly relevant themes.

Nancy J. Duff worked with Lehmann on the Decalogue book and edited it for publication after his death. Her chapter provides some helpful signposts for reading Lehmann. The notion of 'apperception' is central to his theological method: Lehmann defines it as "the uniquely human capacity to know something without knowing how one has come to know it" (36). Christopher Morse names this capacity as theological discernment and presents Lehmann as a nurturer of discernment. Duff's second theme is Lehmann's emphasis on the descriptive character of divine commandments. He reads the Decalogue, not as a set of regulations, but as "a clue to responsibilities". As Duff formulates it, "they do not *prescribe* what God would have us do in the world, but *describe* the lives God would have us live" (39). This coheres with her third theme, namely, the pattern of relationships appropriate to a humane existence. Lehmann advocates a middle path between hierarchy (exaggerating differences) and egalitarianism (exaggerating identity).

Barry Harvey's chapter links these themes with Lehmann's views on politics. The corporate structures and dynamics of social life are to be reviewed for their success in facilitating human fulfilment (52). A central and long-standing theme of

Lehmann's writing and teaching was "making and keeping human life human". Relationships of domination in which power oppresses threaten to dehumanise both victims and oppressors. David Demson quotes from Lehmann's politics book: violence is "the violation of the humanity of my neighbour, by whatever means—military, psychological, moral, medical, institutional, religious" (91).

Friends and students are in danger of presenting a one-sided account of their mentor, but that is avoided in this collection. Lehmann's limitations are not ignored. Duff's personal recollections along with Fleming Rutledge's introductory chapter give a balanced picture of the man and the teacher. The three essays of Part II consider Lehmann in the context of the theological debates in which he engaged. James Cubie presents him as a target of Paul Ramsey's criticism, David Demson views him in debate with Barth, and Philip Ziegler contrasts his thought with that of Torrance on the role of human law. These discussions reveal the limitations of Lehmann's approach. Part III considers the implications of Lehmann's work for spirituality and for preaching.

What emerges from this collection is the centrality of Lehmann's project and its persistent validity: "making and keeping human life human". This is a source of questions for many disciplines, not least for politics, curious to know what human well-being is. It is central to theology's task, especially in relation to politics. This volume offers an introduction to that task through the lens of one man's life and effort to fulfil it. It will also be a resource for those interested in the history of relevant debates.

PATRICK RIORDAN SJ

Heythrop College, University of London, London, UK

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If You Meet George Herbert on the Road, Kill Him: Radically Re-thinking Priestly Ministry

JUSTIN LEWIS-ANTHONY, 2009

London & New York: Mowbray (Continuum)

viii + 248 pp., £14.99, US\$29.95 (pb)

ISBN 978-1-9062-8617-0

Given that sacrificial killing has been important in the founding of both the Church (through the death of Jesus) and the Church of England (through the death of Anne Boleyn), it is perhaps no surprise to find another death being invoked metaphorically for the refounding of Christian ministry in the twenty-first century. Justin Lewis-Anthony makes clear that this act of homicide refers to a Buddhist parable—if disciples meet the Buddha on the road, they should kill him, because they will only have encountered their own longings for such a meeting. In other words, this book asks those who are involved in ministry to take an honest look at how their own expectations, desires, and hopes, along with those whom they serve, shape their working lives and be prepared to actively 'kill' them, if they are unrealistic or harmful.

The book is divided into three sections: Part 1 "Death to Herbertism" sets out the case for the prosecution and the damaging effect Lewis-Anthony believes the longstanding cult of George Herbert has had on parish ministry in the Church of

England; Part 2 "Herbertism Habilitated" explores how two Archbishops of Canterbury (Michael Ramsey and Rowan Williams) and others have recast an understanding of parochial ministry for more contemporary times, in particular using the images of witness, watchman, and weaver; Part 3 "The Killing George Herbert (KGH) Method" outlines the author's own proposals under five maxims: (i) know who you are, (ii) know what you are for, (iii) know who you are set over, (iv) know how to make decisions, and (v) know how to manage conflict.

Speaking personally, I found this book enormously stimulating and helpful, but then I would, wouldn't I? It is written by a parish priest in the Church of England for others in a similar role. Questions which occurred to me throughout were: what would ministers in other traditions make of this? Would this be helpful to priests in other parts of the Anglican Communion? My hunch is that Part 3 provides sufficient advice, which is theologically and practically grounded, to make it helpful to those in other contexts, but such readers might be advised to start there rather than with the earlier sections. The other query in my mind was whether Lewis-Anthony really makes the case that George Herbert has had the thoroughgoing and malign influence upon ministry that he claims. However, it is arguable that this point is irrelevant, because the author certainly identifies some key challenges for modern ministry and helps readers to address them in such a way that it is immaterial whether Herbert is genuinely the villain or not.

Despite these minor reservations, this is a thought-provoking and practical treatment of current parish ministry in the Church of England, which will be most helpful to those in post, those exploring a possible call to ordained ministry, and those charged with educating and supporting all forms of priestly ministry in facing the challenges of a new age.

VAUGHAN S. ROBERTS

Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, UK

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Blood and Fire: Godly Love in a Pentecostal Emerging Church

MARGARET M. POLOMA & RALPH W. HOOD, Jr., 2008

New York: New York University Press

215 + 28 (methodological appendices) pp., US\$36.78 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-8147-6748-1

Take an extremely creative and charismatic Pentecostal ministry whose aim was to transform inner-city Atlanta by bringing 'God's Love' to the homeless and poor; add some predictable organisational crises, common to such work; season the ministry with an ideological commitment to seeing 'God's Hand' in everyday life and to following 'His Will' wherever it leads, however impractical; bring in two experienced social scientists, each open to examining religion's edgier moments and committed to avoiding social-scientific reductionism, yet neither of whom is local enough to get more than extended snapshots of the organisation's life; make sure they have radically different perspectives and methodological strengths; give them access to parts of the ministry, but not to all of it, and don't make that obvious to them at the start; stir; have the ministry

and the organisation collapse in the middle of their research, making it impossible for them to carry out their original design, yet leaving them with rich and conflicting data about a phenomenon that comes along maybe once a decade and whose story needs to be told.

This book is the result of the above recipe. Its main problem is not the missing data, but a need for much better theoretical cooking. This is not to say that the book is half-baked; it is incomplete, however, and the data do not support the authors' dominant theoretical frame. Still, we learn enough about the 'Blood-n-Fire' ministry and its demise that readers will be able to reconstruct the main elements of what happened, from the stories and interviews that the authors provide.

According to its founding myth, Blood-n-Fire developed in Atlanta out of an early 1990s Vineyard Fellowship ministry to the poor. David VanCronkhite, a suburban executive participating in that ministry, soon heard a call to do something new: to create "a community that includes black and white and brown, yellow and red, rich and poor, young and old" (21). He became pastor of a new church, committed to "retaking Atlanta" for God's Kingdom. Steeped in the Pentecostal tradition, VanCronkhite found himself "falling in love with the poor, the harassed, the oppressed" (24). He found his heart transformed. Through a combination of prophecies, visions, and dawning realisations, he saw God pulling him to manifest 'His Kingdom' in the here-and-now. Over the next decade, relational language replaced military images and VanCronkhite came to speak of his church as a large family, whose love would transform poor people's lives. He insisted that God would make this possible—a message underscored by the seemingly miraculous appearance of money to purchase and renovate a downtown warehouse and to support a drug-treatment programme for homeless addicts, a shelter, and a soup kitchen. For a time, the church held vibrant worship services at which inner-city Blacks rubbed shoulders with suburban Whites. Poloma and Hood tell us that the shelter was the city's safest and that the soup kitchen served the best meals in the area.

Poloma, a sociologist with a longstanding interest in contemporary Pentecostalism, heard about this success, and in 1997 travelled from her home in Ohio to see for herself. Five years later, the Templeton Foundation announced grants to investigate "unlimited love", so Poloma teamed with Hood, a psychologist, to explore Blood-n-Fire's attempt to manifest God's Love among the poor. Poloma would explore the community's dynamics and how it maintained its sense of the ever-present Kingdom; Hood would chart the effectiveness of the various programmes and the impact of the group's love-based philosophy on community members and on the homeless.

As is so often the case with effervescent religious groups, however, the Spirit blows where it will. Margaret Poloma and Ralph Hood arrived amidst a series of organisational breakdowns, which led their research on paths that they had not expected. Following his own personal prophecies and visions, VanCronkhite redefined the worship services, focusing them on the inner-city residents and excluding the suburban visitors. He argued with his governing board over how—or whether—to plan for the group's expanding programmes. In Poloma and Hood's telling, he adopted a lilies-of-the-field attitude, arguing that Blood-n-Fire's core was not its poverty outreach, but its willingness to depend on God for everything. 'God's love flows from a willingness to trust in Him', he said,

and the loving relationships that Blood-n-Fire workers found so compelling likewise depend on the organisation being open to the 'Spirit's call'. Poloma and Hood recount how VanCronkhite argued his point, took a 'sabbatical', battled with depression, and then returned to wage a bitter struggle to regain control of the ministry. At the end, the church ran out of money, the programmes closed, and the church's buildings were dismantled and sold.

Poloma and Hood could have framed this as a story of failed vision; fortunately, they did not do so. They could have, more usefully, framed it as a story about a predictable life-cycle crisis that is common in such visionary organisations, one for which the standard sociological phrase 'routinisation of charisma' does insufficient justice. They did not do this either. Indeed, rather than take the ethnographer's traditional way out, of studying what one finds in the field rather than what one expects to find there, they stuck to their original research plan. Poloma focused on the dynamics of a community based on 'godly love' (this is an *etic*, rather than an *emic* label), while Hood charted the religious and psychological differences between the largely White members of the Blood-n-Fire inner circle and the largely Black clients of the shelter and drug-treatment programmes (see the two valuable appendices).

Unfortunately, the authors' data do not allow them fully to explore either of their original questions. Moreover, their choice to frame the data using Randall Collins's theory of 'interaction rituals' is both unelaborated and unconvincing. Their use of Sorokin's sociology of love is similarly unhelpful. At times, it seems that Poloma, particularly, wishes to include God as an identifiable actor in the drama, which is rather difficult to do when most of her data derives from interviews with participants. It would have been far better to focus the book on charting the participants' mental worlds, noting that for them—or at least for some of them—God was a very real player in the Blood-n-Fire's work. The authors' efforts to impose theory on these events do not take them very far.

One of the more interesting findings, however, is the degree to which the mental world of the Blood-n-Fire organisers was not shared by their homeless clients. Although they were affected by the ministry, including religiously—Hood's data give some indications of this—only the inner circle reported experiencing the loving Kingdom that was the ministry's chief promise. It is a shame that this book could not explore that story in full.

JAMES V. SPICKARD

University of Redlands, Redlands, CA, USA

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The Quaker Condition: The Sociology of a Liberal Religion

PINK DANDELION & PETER COLLINS, eds., 2008

Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing

265 pp., £34.99 (hb)

ISBN 9781847185655

With under 20,000 members and adult attenders, the Quakers are one of the smallest flowers in Britain's religious garden, but they are also one of its more exotic. Social historians are interested in the Quakers because the founders

played an important role in testing the limits of religious tolerance in Britain in the eighteenth century and in forcing the pace of reform. Later, as they prospered, they became significant figures in banking (Barclays grew from a number of Quaker banking houses) and in chocolate-making and they also punched well above their weight in the innumerable good causes of nineteenth-century social reform.

Contemporary sociological interest is more morbid: we want to know how a movement that eschews doctrines and creeds and worships through silence survives at all. Rather against the assumption of heterodoxy, Kate Mellor's survey (80) shows that 90% of her Quaker sample gave the positive answer to the question "Do you consider yourself a Christian?" and only half viewed themselves as universalists. Nonetheless, as Giselle Vincett's study of Quaker Pagans shows, there is a great deal of internal variety within the movement. Hence the essays by Pink Dandelion, Peter Collins, and Gay Pilgrim on the nature and basis of Quaker identity and cohesion.

All the contributions to this edited collection contain interesting insights and it is convenient to have twelve studies of the same movement in one volume. The editors are to be commended for bringing their contributors together and I most strongly recommend the book. However, for all their individual excellence, many of the case studies are a little frustrating, because they lack explicit comparison. For example, in her discussion of how Quakers do (or do not) manage conflict, Susan Robson (147) tells us that it is more likely to be created by administrative issues than by theological differences. For the long periods between major schisms and reunions, the same was true of Methodism. In decade after decade of chapel minutes, the hot topics were the same three: faulty boilers, leaking roofs, and janitors. Simon Best's study of adolescent Quakers tells us that "Adolescent Quakers are Quakers not by virtue of believing the same thing or doing the same thing but by being the same thing" (213). It would be useful to know if a comparable group of young Methodists or Anglicans was all that different and, if so, in what ways.

The frustration at the absence of explicit comparison is compounded by the absence of information that would help the reader put together the insights of the separate contributors. In her foreword (ix-x), Linda Woodhead chides the sociology of religion for too great a focus on beliefs and suggests that the essays in this volume present a more promising subject: religion as the construction of alternative social worlds (or in the mock Greek of social theory: heterotopia) and ways of life. Maybe so, but passing references to a rate of decline that will see British Quakerism die out in the next 25 years suggests that: Quaker identity is not being sustained; however much adolescent Quakers are 'being the same thing', they are not being it for very long; however interesting Pagan Quakers may be, that they are at all is probably part of the explanation of decline. Without basic information about the age, gender, and class profiles of members, and on patterns of recruitment and defection, it is impossible to know if we are looking at a sustainable modern way of being religious that is sufficiently important to cause a re-orientation of the sociology of religion. Before we decouple shared beliefs and shared ways of life, we might want to consider another account of contemporary Quakerism. It may be that it has survived on a combination of inherited, but steadily depleting 'capital' of distinctive beliefs and style of worship and the unique appeal of being a respectable (but slightly counter-cultural) alternative to more conventional (that is, hierarchical, dogmatic, doctrinaire)

churches. Now that few Britons have any religious background, not being the Anglican or Catholic Church may not be enough of a draw.

STEVE BRUCE

School of Social Science, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Scotland

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Fundamentalisms and the Media

STEWART M. HOOVER & NADIA KANEVA, eds., 2009

London & New York: Continuum

xii + 223 pp., £65.00, US\$130.00 (hb), £19.99, US\$29.95 (pb)

ISBN 978-1-8470-6133-1 (hb), ISBN 978-1-8470-6134-8 (pb)

The editors “see the questions raised in this collection as being more than just ‘academic’” (xi). Their assessment will surely be shared by readers. *Fundamentalisms and the Media* contains material that will interest specialists in religious studies and media studies, but it also deals with issues of much wider public concern. As recent events have shown, fundamentalism can pose a deadly threat to the values of liberal democracy. If we want to head off situations where fundamentalists choose violence to express their opposition to such values, books like this, which help provide the groundwork of understanding, are essential.

Readers cheered by the plurality of focus suggested by the term ‘fundamentalisms’ in the title will not be disappointed. The contributors cover a wide range, geographically and religiously, thus ensuring a properly nuanced understanding of this multi-faceted phenomenon. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu’s chapter looks at “the clash of spiritualities” in Ghana, showing how Christian fundamentalism collides with African traditional religion. In Jun Kyu Park’s chapter, readers are given a clear analysis of the way in which Christian fundamentalism reacts to resurgent Shamanism in Korea. The situation in India is deftly explored by Pradip N. Thomas. He reaches the worrying (if unsurprising) conclusion that “Christian fundamentalists are on a collision course with Hindu nationalists and secularists” (215). In the same vein, some of the examples cited by Leon Barkho, in “Fundamentalism in Arab and Muslim Media”, suggest that in other areas of the world, too, interfaith relations are poised for conflict. The meticulous application of reasoned analysis that characterises this volume offers some hope of defusing the flashpoints that seem an all too imminent likelihood. R. Scott Appleby’s chapter—“What Can Peacebuilders Learn from Fundamentalists?”—is perhaps particularly relevant in this regard.

The question of how ‘fundamentalism’ is best defined is touched on in many of the chapters, but the problems of formulating an adequate definition are used to cast light on the nature of the phenomenon rather than allowed to create a stumbling block to studying it. The editors make the important point—amply borne out by the contributors—that “fundamentalisms cannot be fully understood without reference to the media” (3). By this they do not simply mean that fundamentalists have been adept at using the media, but that the media are “integral to the evolution of religion in general and fundamentalisms in particular” (5)—a view that could usefully be linked with

Jeremy Stolow's persuasive arguments about the need to see religion *as* media, in addition to looking at religion *and* media.

Although the volume takes a far more interesting approach than merely a focus on media use, the instrumental dimension is not ignored. For instance, Claire Hoertz Badaracco's chapter on the response by Opus Dei to the (mis)representation of its organisation in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (and in Ron Howard's film of the book) shows a Catholic fundamentalist group launching a highly effective public relations campaign. Despite the negative portrayal in *The Da Vinci Code*, Opus Dei's sophisticated media strategy allowed it to increase its membership on the wave of public interest created by both book and film. Robert Glenn Howard's chapter on the "vernacular fundamentalisms" that are developing 'bottom up' on the World Wide Web provides a welcome contrast to a 'top down' organisation like Opus Dei. What he says is based on some fascinating fieldwork, focusing on individual use of new media to establish a kind of "virtual *ekklesia*" (138). Howard's chapter provides an essential *addendum* to Susan A. Maurer's "Historical Overview of American Christian Fundamentalism in the Twentieth Century". While it is important to have the kind of overview Maurer provides, the media situation in the twenty-first century shows some very different contours.

Edward Michael Lenert, focusing on the controversy caused by the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons of Muhammad, provides an interesting discussion of the extent to which it is reasonable to expect *absolute* freedom of expression. Few would disagree with his point that it "makes little sense to fight Islamic intolerance with secular Western intolerance" (51), but his notion of "free expression fundamentalism" (43) is of doubtful usefulness without more careful development than it receives here. As it stands, it seems tantamount to labelling advocates of liberty suspect on the grounds that they criticise those who would imprison them.

Not infrequently, the media are presented as villains when it comes to their presentation of religion, with accusations of inaccuracy and stereotyping. There are, of course, ample grounds for such a stance, but it is refreshing to find the media being praised for their *accuracy* in covering religion. David Haskell presents a convincing case that the term 'fundamentalist Christian' "was, in large measure, used judiciously and sagaciously in Canadian national television news reports" (120) during the eleven-year period of his study.

Although the impact of fundamentalism can often be eye-catching and obvious, this is not always the case. Kirsten Isgro's study of the way in which *Concerned Woman for America* and the *Family Research Council* have come to be increasingly quoted in the mainstream media, but with no mention of their religious affiliation, is particularly concerning. As she points out, this means that the pronouncements of such groups may "become normalized as 'American' rather than as 'fundamentalist Christian'" (103). The unnoticed infiltration of religious groups' views into what many will take to be the national paradigm is a particularly powerful argument in favour of books like this one.

It is excellent to see a body of work that addresses such a key area of public concern and scholarly interest with the level of authority and coherence that this one brings to bear across its wide range of topics. Hoover and Kaneva are to be congratulated for gathering together a series of first-rate studies where the

authors' expertise is accompanied by the clarity of expression needed to reach a wide audience.

CHRIS ARTHUR

Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter, Wales, UK
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Northern Lights: Film and Media Studies Yearbook 2008

The Mediatization of Religion

STIG HJARVARD, ed., 2008

Bristol: intellect

199 pp., £33.00 (personal), £210.00 (institutional)

ISSN 1601-829X

This collection makes a useful contribution to the ongoing research discussions related to media, religion, and culture. The eleven essays in this volume provide a range of perspectives on how different media have the potential to transform religious practices, replace religious institutions, and re-enchant sites of cultural insight and experience. Largely emerging out of conferences organised by the Nordic Research Network on the Mediatization of Religion and Culture, this collection of articles includes several unexpected interpretations. Unlike other recent accounts, these essays rarely "dissolve the distinction between media and religion" (5).

The editor, Stig Hjarvard, opens the volume with a nuanced consideration of how media can "change religion". For Hjarvard, 'mediatisation' means that "the media have developed into an independent institution in society" (11), while at the same time, the media "have become integral to the functioning of other institutions like family, politics and religion" (5). This leads to a variety of outcomes that include: religious groups becoming increasingly dependent on different media, the re-sacralising of secular societies, and the undermining of the authority of religious traditions. These themes resonate throughout this diverse collection. Hjarvard's theoretical account is effectively balanced by Graham Murdoch's well-crafted article on "Re-enchantment and the Popular Imagination: Fate, Magic and Purity". His discussion of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake is particularly evocative, as is his exploration of some of the more recent unexpected sites of re-enchantment. Several articles on film provide further evidence of how re-enchantment is to be found in surprising spaces. Read together, essays on the growth of supernatural movies (Torben Grodal), scholarly attempts to identify the transcendental in films (Casper Tybjerg), and the attraction of eclectic religious symbols in a film such as *The Da Vinci Code* (Christopher Partridge) combine to illustrate what different groups "value and find plausible" (122), alongside the fragmentation of belief.

The move in Western societies from inculcating religious belief to searching for spiritual experience is another recurring theme in this volume. It is to be found not only in Partridge's 'occultural' reading of a popular blockbuster, but also online in *Second Life* (Ryan G. Hornbeck and Justin L. Barrett) and in popular television series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Line Nybro Petersen's discussion of viewers' fascination with super-heroes who have super-natural powers finds an unexpected connection in Helle Kannik Hastrup's reflection upon the attractiveness and "coronation" (130) rituals of an Academy Awards Oscar ceremony. Re-enchantment, in a variety of guises, is also to be found in Japanese animation (Lars-Martin Sørensen) and Arabic satellite television (Ehab Galal). Through a discussion of two different popular religious programmes, Galal invites readers to consider how a "Quran recitation competition" (172–3) and a "Quranic healing programme" (173–6) provide evidence of the "re-enchantment of the Quran on Arab satellite TV" (176). Unexpected practices resonate with Lynn Schofield Clark's insightful analysis of further unexpected locations for viewers to explore religious beliefs and symbols. On the basis of her discussion of the popular television series *Lost* she argues that "programmes like *Lost* evoke religious symbolism and narratives within contexts that are outside the bounds of what is normally considered 'religious'", that are beyond religious institutions and that are viewed through "the lens of popular culture" (159). Taken as a whole this collection provides further support for such claims, while also illustrating the diverse nature of re-enchantment and the mediatisation of religion.

Like any thought-provoking volume of essays, this one raises a host of further questions. For instance, to what extent have there always been mediatisations of religion? What are the dangers of highlighting discontinuities while overlooking continuities with the past? How far would the conclusions of these articles stand up in non-Western settings? What are the new kinds of religious networks emerging in the age of digital media? What are the implications of the mediatisation of religion for healing religious divides, building peace, and shedding light upon environmental threats? These are but a few of the questions that emerge from this valuable and timely volume of *Northern Lights*.

JOLYON MITCHELL

Director, Centre for Theology and Public Issues (CTPI), New College, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

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The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film

WILLIAM L. BLIZEK, ed., 2009

London & New York: Continuum

x + 426 pp., £85.00, US\$160.00 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-8264-9991-2

It seems that a *Companion to Religion and Film* is like the proverbial London bus: you wait nearly 40 years (since Cooper and Skrades's *Celluloid and Symbols* and Hurley's *Theology through Film*), then two come along together! Of the two (the other published by Routledge), I probably boarded the one with the least

interesting travel companions. Not that editor William Blizek (who co-founded the on-line *Journal of Religion and Film*) had not understood that his *Companion* should, “assist the reader in understanding the newly developing field of religion and film” (5)—rather, he has been unable to steer his contributors in the direction needed for them to follow their brief.

In part, this is because Blizek attempts too much and the consequent limit of around 5,000 words is insufficient for many of his writers adequately to address their topic. For example, Brent Plate’s chapter on “Religion and World Cinema” is reduced to little more than an annotated list of more or less religiously themed films from non-G8 countries; the interesting question about how politics, religion, and film-making interact is mentioned only in passing (92). Another reason this *Companion* fails to deliver is that it lacks clarity about its audience. While price and presentation suggest serious academic readers, the editor’s introductory chapters seem aimed at secondary/high school readers. His repeated proposition that “Finding religion in movies... religious interpretations of films... is fun” (31, 38) may be true, but it issues in the kind of “cinematic analogue of the religious or sectarian question” advocated by John May (26) that, although popular, has limited value. With not a few contributors following the editor’s lead, too many chapters merely provide *précis* plots (with spoilers) and advise the reader that “other films that discuss [fill the blank] include [fill the blank]”.

Some writers do assist reader understanding. In Part One (“The Study of Religion and Film”), Alyda Faber (ethics), Clive Marsh (theology), Gregory Watkins (film theory), and Melanie Wright (cultural studies) all provide the novice with historical perspective before contributing something to the current debates. Outlining developments in religious ethical critique of film, Faber aims at a “visual ethics” developed from feminist film theorist Kaja Silverman and informed by Rowan Williams’s Christian theology—although, strangely, having laid his foundation in relation to Hollywood, Faber uses Austrian director Michael Haneke to illustrate the cinematic analogue of his visual ethics. Defining theology and film as a concern with “what films and film-watching are doing to and for people, religious and not, with respect to theology’s subject-matter” (61), Marsh eschews cinematic analogue, discussing instead four methodological trajectories for theology and film enquiry. Marsh’s definition indicates his increasing interest in audience reception; an interest his editor intended to omit from this *Companion*, but which Marsh sees at the core of theology and film enquiry. Potentially one of the most important chapters, Watkins’s contribution is too brief and simply ignores the single most significant contribution to film theory, psychoanalysis—an area of real value for audience reception. Wright provides a well crafted introduction to her area.

In Part Two (“Religions and Film”), the accounts by Michele Marie Desmarais (Buddhism), Allison Smith (Judaism), and Rubina Ramji (Islam) show how each religion has been represented and consumed; they stand out against the writers who opt for producing yet more annotated lists. Part Three (“Religious Themes in Movies”) is similarly patchy: Adele Reinhartz’s and Guy Matalon’s historic perspectives (respectively, Jesus and Holocaust movies) are of interest, as are the chapters by Matthew McEver (Saviour figures) and Conrad E. Ostwalt (End of Days), mainly because these writers are interested in “how films *function* in our popular culture” (291).

Overall, I was disappointed by Blizek's book. In addition to inconsistent and, at times, trivial writing, there are numerous referencing omissions—the example of what Peter Malone describes as a “classic text in English on the portrayal of the Catholic Church in cinema” (137) being left out of notes and bibliography is the most frustrating. There are puzzling bibliographic duplications: apparently in 2003, Lyden wrote both *Film as Religion* and *Religion as Film*, and, particularly perplexing, a 26-page list of all the films cited by the authors *without* cross-references. These final comments may appear trivial, but they suggest rushed editorial attention to detail that undermines confidence in the editorial craftsmanship.

STEVE NOLAN

Princess Alice Hospice, Esher, UK

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Reading Spiritualities: Constructing and Representing the Sacred

DAWN LLEWELLYN & DEBORAH F. SAWYER, eds., 2008

Aldershot & Burlington, VT: Ashgate

xi + 240 pp., £50.00, US\$99.95 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-7546-6329-4

Dawn Llewellyn and Deborah Sawyer explain that the book's intention is “to pause and frame—at least momentarily—a range of contemporary conversations with and about texts and their relationships to the sacred” (6). The conversational metaphor is apt: the essays in this collection connect with and spark off each other, introducing a variety of subjects and approaches that have significant hermeneutical implications. The opening interview with Michèle Roberts sets the tone. Not only is it a wide-ranging (yet never rapid) conversation that includes church, ritual, and mysticism, but it also represents the book's dialogic qualities through disturbing one of the book's headline terms: “I don't like the word spirituality”, she insists, “because it invokes the split between body and spirit that I think I've spent my life fighting” (21).

Not unexpectedly, considering the editors' own interests, the collection will be of especial interest to anyone involved in gender studies. Their introduction gives a pithy overview of feminist theology as an example of “subjective, standpoint hermeneutics” (1). Ursula King's promotion of *spiritual literacy* (74) offers an interrogation of Buddhist women's access to foundational religious texts, whether through writing or recitation. Heather Walton's chapter, drawing on feminist writers, such as Rebecca Chopp, and Paul Ricoeur's theory of

destabilising metaphor, considers what reading *literary* texts means for political feminism and sees in literature a source for “new forms of political energy” (93). Maria Antonia Álvarez’s chapter on the Virgin of Guadeloupe considers the reception of the Virgin Mary and her relation to the goddesses of pre-Christian Mexico, exploring the complex and subtle nexus of these female figures, unsettling orthodox histories with the lived experience of syncretistic worship. Raana Bokhari considers women’s reading, in contemporary Britain, of a two centuries-old reformist work, the *Bihishti Zewar*. Focusing on a text written to educate women in the knowledge of Islam, Bokhari reveals the ways in which the text’s doctrinal and practical elements are negotiated for a new diasporic context. Llewellyn redresses the neglect of spiritual experience in third-wave feminism and, drawing on interviews, considers the creation of women’s community in and through reading. Although concerned with gender, these chapters more notably embrace the everyday (how spiritual lives are *really* lived) and disrupt more traditional theological enquiries. Further thematic connections are highlighted by the perceptive introductory *spiel* to the book’s four sections.

Everyday topics (music, the internet, film) are introduced in scholarly context, with rigorous and sophisticated frameworks. Performance and improvisation are central interpretive issues in the “jazz hermeneutic” (59) of Anthony G. Reddie’s examination of jazz music and black preaching style. Katharine Sarah Moody analyses ‘emerging church’ blogs within the bifurcation of writerly and readerly texts, offering a reading of the internet format and its negotiation of writerly authorities. Maria Beatrice Bittarello, in comparison, considers neopagan web pages and offers thoughtful readings of sacred space and text-image relations on sites that themselves transpose the images and rituals of (largely) Greek myth. Ozayr Saloojee’s chapter is exemplary in its interdisciplinary, cross-faith analysis of Solomon’s Temple. He puts under scrutiny the approach of the three faiths to the Temple, which reveals much about their attitudes regarding sacred space, materiality, authority, and divine ‘presence’, offering a final examination of how the Temple “becomes a metaphor of Qur’aannic [sic] revelation” (183). Michael N. Jagessar provides a thoughtful critique of the interaction with the spiritual in Caribbean literary criticism. In this expansive introduction to the field, Jagessar offers general reflections on the relation between culture and theology, with an in-depth discussion of theodicy in the works of Roger Mais and Earl Lovelace.

Complex theological issues are also the subject of the two final chapters: Graham Holderness’s chapter deals with the representation of Christ and the relative Christologies in Zeffirelli’s film and Burgess’s novel. Assumptions of orthodoxy are unsettled by Holderness in the rewritings by the ‘unbeliever’ (207) Burgess and the Catholic Zeffirelli. In the final chapter, David Jasper takes forward Roberts’s deconstruction of spirit and materiality (an investigation in part impelled by another contributor, Heather Walton), as he interrogates the knotty relationship between body and soul. He traces responses to the theologies of incarnation, self-emptying, the suffering Christ, and the invisible God through centuries of Christian writing and art, engaging with writers from Origen and Bernard of Clairvaux to John Updike.

This vivacious collection examines the very terms it sets up to describe. ‘Reading’ and ‘Spirituality’ are de-shrouded and in this sense the book

presents a tantalising array of potentials and possibilities for research in this wide arena.

JO CARRUTHERS

Department of English & Department of Theology & Religious Studies, School of Humanities, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

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Contemporary New Age Transformation in Taiwan: A Sociological Study of a New Religious Movement

SHU-CHUAN CHEN, 2008

Lewiston, NY & Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press

viii + 251 pp., US\$109.95, £69.95 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-7734-4880-3

In recent years, the study of the 'New Age' has largely been superseded by the study of 'spirituality'. This is due, in part, to the recurrent criticisms levelled against the former, particularly from a sociological perspective that argued that studies of the 'New Age' paid scant attention to issues of social authority and organisational coherence (although this also remains the case in the study of 'spirituality'). Shu-Chuan Chen's examination of the 'New Age Movement' (hereafter 'NAM') in Taiwan therefore enables a re-consideration of the scholarly treatment of this topic, particularly as it attempts to address these two issues. Chen does this by considering a number of 'primary nodes'—groups and people that centrally tie the NAM in Taiwan together—and their emergence through processes of globalisation. Empirically, this involves interviews with 40 participants and participant observation with two groups (A Course in Light and Divine Will, both of which focus on healing through meditation). The importance of Chen's study lies not only in bringing to our attention some contemporary religious developments in Taiwan, but also in raising the sociological significance of participants' emotional states and relationships with authorities.

Chen defends sociological reference to the NAM on the basis that there exists a core belief system which operates through a loose social movement, while usefully delineating the differences between the NAM and other social movements. This is advanced through reference to Paul Heelas's description of the ideology of 'Self-spirituality', although Chen criticises Heelas for neglecting the way in which "New Agers learn about the Self from external authorities [. . . and] are following their 'inner voice' because they believe that their 'inner Self' is in alignment with an external authority" (58). Chen's focus on self-reflexivity as a hallmark of the NAM leads to a consideration of Anthony Giddens's thesis of reflexive modernisation, although she argues that this would benefit from attention to emotions, particularly their social construction and negotiation through 'feeling rules'.

These promising openings certainly represent a step beyond scholarly enquiries into the 'New Age', which since their inception have been marked by a lack of sociological rigour. However, the way in which the empirical data (Chapters 4–7) are handled raises problems akin to those enquiries. Despite participants' statements being generally vague in content, this does not prevent Chen from constructing a 'New Age' ideology which, she claims, holds

the NAM together. This social coherence is also questionable, given that the links among her identified 'New Age Movement Organisations' and 'New Age Movement Participants' are alleged rather than empirically demonstrated. Crucially, there is persistent attention to people's statements of their beliefs, rather than an exploration of how discourses and beliefs are expressed, constructed, negotiated, and contested *in relation to practice*. This is particularly apparent, since the participant observation which Chen states to be one of her core research methods is represented only through *two* brief fieldwork incidents (118–19, 124–6). While these incidents are discussed in an attempt to examine the social construction of emotions, little is learned about how this occurs regarding *specific emotions* through social practice and social authority in these groups. Instead, we are presented with participants' statements that they have learned to face up to, and express, emotions in general.

This lack of social contextualisation is also evident in Chen's relative neglect of participants' biographies, despite this being a stated objective. For example, although we learn that 35 out of 40 interviewees refer to an active religious background (with 14 of these being Buddhist—see page 86), there is no significant discussion about the relevance of this in relation to their current activities. Indeed, it may well be the case that many participants see the latter as an extension of the former—particularly as Chen states that other religions have not necessarily been abandoned and since her two fieldwork groups were based in 'Buddhist Life', "a distribution center for religious and spiritual products (especially for Buddhism)" (181). In other words, like other New Age studies, Chen's analysis rests upon a largely uncritical adoption of the accounts of participants who were selected primarily because they are "pioneers", "leaders", and "organizers" (11). This perhaps explains the relatively frequent use of the term 'New Age' among her interviewees, since they are engaged in the marketing of various religious products (including books); studies elsewhere have shown that the term has much *less* significance for ordinary participants in such religious phenomena than it has for scholars, religious critics (such as Christian churches), and business firms.

To summarise, while this book raises a number of important sociological issues that have too often been neglected in studies of these kinds of religious phenomena, its exploration of them is unfortunately let down by its research methodology.

MATTHEW WOOD

Department of Sociology, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

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Biodivinity and Biodiversity: The Limits to Religious Environmentalism

EMMA TOMALIN, 2009

Farnham & Burlington, VT: Ashgate

ix + 219 pp., £55.00, US\$99.95 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-7546-5588-6

This book problematises the notion that religious systems inherently carry with them the equipment needed to develop a valid approach to environmental ethics.

The author states that two models have emerged from the project of thinking about religion and ecology: either a Romantic attitude towards nature or a managerial approach to nature, driven by anthropocentric self-interest. The author suggests that environmental ethics entails a projection of Western values on to local societies and that this is in some way dishonest. She points out that survival in traditional societies has traditionally been driven not by a concern for other-than-human life forms, but by human self-perpetuation. The author cites three cases as examples of modern environmental movements: an anti-development protest in South London; a gathering of largely non-Indian Rainbow environmentalists in a Himalayan hill town; and the advocacy of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation on behalf of the Yamuna River in Vrindaban. In her conclusion, the author states that there is "no simple, linear relationship between religious and cultural values and how people relate to their natural environment". Nonetheless, she also states that "religious environmentalism ... is by now a prominent and well-established feature of the contemporary environmental movement" (181).

On the one hand, Tomalin makes a convincing argument that proper environmental actions vary according to cultural context. Citing Guha, Bhaviskar, and others, she notes that Western models for wilderness preservation are not appropriate in the Indian context, where population pressures require different strategies. She writes strongly in favour of the adoption of a "local pragmatic" approach to environmental issues in India, as an alternative to the choice between pristine Romanticist and resource-hungry managerial models. She takes a critical approach towards the iconic status accorded to the Chipko movement and its predecessor, the Bishnoi resistance against tree cutting in eighteenth-century Rajasthan. She notes that sacred groves were protected "out of respect for the resident deity" and not due to "ecological consciousness" (87). This leads Tomalin to state that "religious environmentalism is largely unaware of and uncritical towards its use of narrative and discourse" (89). Given two of the examples she cites, she certainly makes her case. The largely fringe activists who created an eco-camp in Wandsworth, South London, in 1996 were unclear in their demands and did not seemingly advance a constructive agenda, nor were they inspired by a united religious perspective. Similarly, the Indian Rainbow Family, rooted in the philosophy of Rajneesh, does not seem to be grounded in a traditional worldview. However, counter to Tomalin's key argument, the Krishna devotees in Vrindaban seem abundantly aware of their narrative history and use both text and tradition to advocate the clean-up along the Yamuna River.

Another area that Tomalin explores is the one-time close relationship between Hindu fundamentalists and the environmental movement. She notes that this was probably an opportunistic moment and that members of the BJP party quickly abandoned environmental issues when elected (171). She also provides an insightful critique of the work of Meera Nanda, who warns against the alignment between Western neo-pagans and the Eastern philosophy, which Nanda considers to produce "horrendous inequalities". Tomalin notes, correctly, that "while pagan environmentalists do adopt features of eastern traditions they tend to mould them to fit egalitarian social systems and are sharply critical of hierarchy and oppression" (171).

At the end of the book, Tomalin includes an appendix explaining the methodology of religious studies. This helps account for what might be considered an over-emphasis on anecdotal sociology in the book, to the neglect of a deeper reflective process generally employed by scholars of world religions who have been involved with the study of environmental ethics. According to Tomalin, religious studies is 'scientific' in contrast to the confessional bias of theology, which, following Gavin Flood, she associates with Christianity. Hence her approach allows her to draw conclusions from her observations and comparisons of contemporary British and Indian environmental activists. Unfortunately, this takes a huge leap and thus avoids the vast literature and tradition that have historically contributed to the philosophical development of traditional ethical responses to any aspect of the human dilemma. By giving herself methodological permission to ignore the ways in which constructive theology goes about its task of reflecting upon and responding to evil (in this case, the evil of ecological devastation), she overlooks a vast pool of resources that merit deep consideration, particularly by scholars of religion affiliated with the Forum on Religion and Ecology.

These methods include knowledge and exposition of key primary texts (classical and vernacular) and sustained field research. Therefore, this book, although covering interesting material, does not provide the cutting edge research and reflection on Hinduism and ecology in the style and manner of David Haberman, Pankaj Jain, Vijaya Nagarajan, and Albertina Nugteren. Nonetheless, although incomplete, it includes important insights into the admittedly grim realities faced by environmental activists in India today.

CHRISTOPHER KEY CHAPPLE

Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, USA

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Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology

JESPER AAGAARD PETERSEN, ed., 2009

Farnham, Surrey & Burlington, VA: Ashgate

xii + 277 pp., £49.50, US\$99.95 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-7546-5286-1

'Satanism' was originally an invention of conservative Christian factions in the 1890s, who demonised liberal tendencies by linking them to a fictitious underground of 'Evil Others'. Most studies of so-called Satanism have in fact shown how the 'Satanic cult' fiction proved useful for such factions in Europe and North America. It is a paradoxical human tendency, however, to take the stigma of the Evil Other and wear it with pride. This book looks objectively at what self-proclaiming Satanists believe and practise and is therefore a welcome addition to the literature.

Contemporary Religious Satanism applies models from mainstream religious studies to produce qualitative and quantitative observations of groups aligned in some way with the philosophy of Anton Szandor LaVey, the founder of

the Church of Satan and author of the influential *Satanic Bible* (1970). The editor provides a comprehensive overview in an introduction, "Embracing Satan". Notably, he contests the standard wisdom that a movement honouring the name of the Lord of Hell must be devoted to hatred of traditional Christian values. Some converts may be motivated by free-thinking distaste for the excesses of Christianity, he concedes, but as Satanic movements gain adherents and mature, they develop doctrines that make them best understood as religions on their own terms.

The contributors to this volume identify several traits distinctive of contemporary Satanism: 1) a move to 'detraditionalise' religion by questioning the authority of *all* modern religious traditions, 2) an emphasis on self-actualisation or recognizing the uniquely divine nature of each human being, and 3) an antinomian scepticism about socially defined codes of behaviour. Such traits are prominent in LaVey's teaching, which all factions acknowledge as seminal, but they are also shared by many independently organised communities. As such, the phenomenon is best understood in terms of a 'satanic milieu' with fuzzy boundaries rather than a tightly-knit occult underground.

Indeed, Kennet Granholm challenges even this generalisation, noting that most modern groups no longer name Satan as their focus, but honour instead rogue or trickster deities, such as the Egyptian Set, from an eclectic range of world religions. The most inclusive of these is the quasi-pantheistic 'Dragon Rouge', based in Sweden, which finds a foundational life force expressed in a wide pantheon of dark gods. Granholm therefore suggests that such movements are best understood in terms of a 'Left-hand Path' to enlightenment and that scholars should avoid using the term 'Satanism' if at all possible, because it inevitably "arouses predominantly negative presumptions . . . in scholars not familiar with the subject matter" (97).

Most of the contributors acknowledge that studying the phenomenon is impossible without confronting the official belief that Satanic groups are a menace, implicated in vandalism, animal sacrifice, and child abuse. Kathleen Lowney's contribution, "The Devil's Down in Dixie", is a sobering illustration of how even academic administrators routinely attempt to *prevent* young academics from doing objective research on such groups, due to such misconceptions. One value of the book, however, is that it demonstrates how marginal the movement actually is.

Jesper Aagaard Petersen estimates that the Church of Satan and its offshoots now comprise about 400 active members worldwide; Graham Harvey, in a study of such groups in Great Britain, estimates only 50–100 adherents there. An interesting section describing the arrival of LaVey's ideas in Scandinavia and the Baltic republics likewise finds just a handful of apostles, linked not by physical meetings, but by the distant network of a newsletter or Internet web site. Some factions, notably the Temple of Set, have devised sets of rituals along the lines of the more robust Neo-Pagan movement. But overall, one learns that a 'satanic cult ritual' is about as widespread as a ham dinner at a Jewish synagogue.

Much of the book is written in a dense academic prose and it is steeply priced at nearly 50 pounds or 100 dollars; by itself it will have little impact on the broad educated public. Nevertheless, one hopes that it will find its way into major

libraries and that its carefully researched findings encourage more scholars to buck official resistance and give this tiny, but influential sect its fair due in the marketplace of new religions.

BILL ELLIS

Professor Emeritus, English and American Studies, Penn State University, USA

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Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations: Universalism, Constructivism and Near-Death Experience

GREGORY SHUSHAN, 2009

London: Continuum

238 pp., £65.00 (hb)

ISBN 978-0-8264-4073-0

This very interesting book is an in-depth examination of the following questions: are there universal elements across time, culture, and context in religious stories about personal afterlife journeys and what light does this shed on modern accounts of near-death experiences? The introductory chapters provide some rehearsal of theoretical and methodological considerations to do with the highly contentious and ambiguous task of comparative religion. Another early chapter introduces the research on near-death experiences (NDEs). These are a long-standing set of human experiences, recently given popular coverage as experiences associated with medical resuscitation—out-of-body experiences, tunnel sensation, life review, meeting a being of light and/or deceased relatives. The heart of the book contains about five principal chapters which discuss the otherworld journey literature from ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, China, and Mesoamerica. Final chapters summarise the comparisons, review the limitations of past explanations (for similarities and differences in otherworld journeying), and make the case for an eclectic approach to explanations in comparative work on otherworld journeys.

For interested readers, it is important to note at the outset that this is *not* a book about comparative eschatology. Rather, the book has quite a specific focus—the otherworld journey of the dead or dying person. Gregory Shushan looks closely at how these journeys resemble—or do not resemble—the near-death experience that has received so much popular and academic attention in the last 40 years. The book has much to offer readers interested in the theory and analysis of myths and folklore, readers interested in epistemological debates about consciousness and experience, and readers studying the near-death experience. Some readers of this review may be surprised to learn that the NDE has a major research community associated with it, including its own international peer-review journal and multi-disciplinary professional association.

There are numerous positive reasons to read this book. Firstly, Shushan successfully develops a very strong case against sociological, psychological, and biological reductionism when attempting to explain what appear to be ‘universal’ elements in otherworld journey stories. Secondly, Shushan provides an important mapping of what it means to say that culture *mediates* (but does not

create) personal experiences. For anthropologists and folklorists, Shushan also offers a set of suggestions and a schema for analysing myths (structure–mytheme–symbol) in descending order of cultural and personal idiosyncrasy. There is much to disagree with and argue about in this book. As in all original work that attempts to reposition our current understanding, there is an abundance of opportunity in the argument or its evidence to attract the wrath of any one reader. But that is also its final and most valuable contribution. Shushan's book is of the kind that should certainly attract and generate valuable debate in numerous areas cognate to his own work. Certainly in the area of 'near-death studies', Shushan's work is original, well argued, and much needed. Much of the research on near-death experiences suffers from its obsession with empirical, clinical, and interview-based methodologies, much of which has added precious little to an academic understanding in recent years. The historical, theoretical, and ethnographic orientation of Shushan's work is a wonderful contribution to this important area.

I found some aspects of the work somewhat problematic. At times, some of the writing is a bit esoteric. Shushan's style of discussion often seems aimed at his own small circle of specialist religious studies scholars, not a wider audience of interested readers. The chapter on near-death experiences, for example, launched straight into a review that assumed most readers would know what an NDE is. A more careful, introductory approach to that field would have addressed the needs of a wider, multi-disciplinary readership. Like many colleagues in anthropology and historical sociology, I am not convinced either of the reliability of claims to universalism, if these are confined merely to peasant societies, however geographically dispersed. An obsession with the problem of diffusionism has led Shushan away from the economic and socially very different societies and religions of hunter-gatherers. The omission of stories of afterlife journeys in these kinds of human communities undermines claims to cross-cultural generalisation. Further, although Shushan acknowledges that NDEs and shamanic experiences have informed religious stories of otherworld journeys, he does not place these in a wider (and perhaps more revealing) set of related experiences—deathbed visions, visions of the bereaved, and even simple, but common hallucinations of the dying.

The author's narrow focus on the NDE and otherworld journeys has helped him to control for some types of criticism, but comes at a price. Such specificity prevents him from looking at related experiences, such as the dying experience itself in all its complex organic, psychiatric, and social dimensions. Not informed by studies of dying, or hunter-gatherer religions, these omissions ultimately deprive the book of two essential human contexts in which to locate the continuity of mystical experiences and journeys in earthly life with those that might appear in death and eternal life. Despite these few reservations, however, this is a valuable and important addition to the literature in religious studies, consciousness studies, and the sociology of death and dying.

ALLAN KELLEHEAR

Department of Social & Policy Sciences, University of Bath, Bath, UK

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Death and Dying in America

ANDREA FONTANA & JENNIFER REID KEENE, 2009

Cambridge & Malden, MA: Polity Press

240 pp., £50.00, US\$99.00 (hb), £16.99, US\$69.95 (pb)

ISBN 978-0-7456-3914-7 (hb), ISBN 978-0-7456-3915-4 (pb)

Sociologists Andrea Fontana and Jennifer Reid Keene's textbook *Death and Dying in America* gives those planning Death and Dying courses a good new option. At 240 pages (including the long bibliography and index), the book is far shorter and more manageable than DeSpelder and Strickland's 672-page *Last Dance* or Corr, Nabe, and Corr's 712-page *Death and Dying*. The book is also less expensive, although at just under 70 US dollars it is still not cheap. With this shorter text, a teacher can be freer to assign readings and activities closer to the teacher's interests and to the students' circumstances.

The book gives very good summaries of the history and research on topics that have become standard in death and dying courses: the 'who, where, when, how', and 'what happens' during and afterwards. They often rely on Emile Durkheim to supply the 'why'. There are chapters, among others, on demographics, children, large-scale death events, grief, and various religious answers to the question of life after death.

The last will be insufficient for readers of this journal who are likely to teach the course within a Theology or Religious Studies programme. The authors say, for example, in the opening of the chapter on grief, that "the dead person's work is done, but the living are left to cope and find ways to continue with their lives" (161). That is true, of course, in today's secular individualism, but in much human history and in many cultures, the dead's work is not done. One of the functions of mourning rituals is for the living to help the dead, for example, by transferring merit to help secure a better rebirth. In the twentieth century, with continuing bonds to the dead, the dead's work seems sometimes to have hardly begun. Religious Studies and Theology teachers will find other shortcomings, but here is where the short book is an advantage. Teachers can use this book to cover the common topics in death and dying courses and still take the course in any direction they want, with readings, guest speakers, field trips, in-class exercises, and assignments for class projects.

In each topic, the authors try to work within three sociological themes: firstly, to show the interrelationships of macro-level social processes and individual experience; secondly, to demonstrate how the inequalities of money, class, and gender translate into inequalities in individual experience; and thirdly, to set out how consumerism and commercialism shape the peculiar American ways of dying and bereavement.

The authors use those themes successfully to open the topics for readers. For example, in the discussion of euthanasia, they give a good account of Jack Kevorkian's work, trial, and imprisonment and then of three young women who attracted national media attention about withdrawing treatment: Karen Quinlan, Nancy Cruzan, and Terri Schiavo. During the twentieth century, grief was increasingly regarded as an individual psychological process that was best treated by using psychological concepts. Thus grief is different from mourning, its social expression. These sociologists nicely skewer that bit of false thinking: "It is really difficult to provide specific examples of grief, since the

moment it is expressed it becomes mourning" (162). All the chapters show a solid scholarly competence. Some of them sparkle.

The authors try hard to maintain an objective tone in describing experiences that are emotionally freighted. However, occasionally, we find slips that make us want to talk to them about where they stand. Is putrefaction really like the wicked witch of the West liquefying into a brown puddle? (87). The deaths of children can be overwhelming, frightening, tragic or even inassimilable, but "unfortunate" (93) is an unfortunate choice of words. Had the authors shared more of themselves, their student readers could sort through the observer effect that is always working in research, writing, and teaching about death, dying, and bereavement.

If teachers are looking for a textbook that will structure the course and give them all they need, including a test bank, this is not the book. However, if teachers want to make the course their own, *Death and Dying in America* is a very good resource on which to build.

DENNIS KLASS

Truro, Cape Cod, USA

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From Faith to Fun: The Secularisation of Humour

RUSSELL HEDDENDORF, 2009

Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press

xvi + 202 pp., £17.50 (pb)

ISBN 978-0-7188-9186-2

Russell Heddendorf is no doubt a fine scholar of religion, but he knows very little about humour indeed and this rather disqualifies him from writing such a book as this. Humour is now a major field of study with its own empirical findings, but Heddendorf has ignored most of the work that has been done. You will look in vain in the index and bibliography for the work of such major modern scholars as Giseline Kuipers, Elliott Oring or Willibald Ruch or indeed any twenty-first century writings on the subject. When occasionally Heddendorf has consulted the work of, say, John Morreall, Michael Mulkey, Victor Raskin or myself, he has done so without much understanding and seemingly in search of a quote with which to decorate his train of thought. This is not sufficient. A scholar would not write an entire book about religion or the transcendent without properly consulting those specialists who had previously studied the subject, so why try to do so in relation to humour. Humour is far too difficult a subject for an

amateur, possessed only of a few foolish armchair ideas, to wander into and pronounce on.

Heddendorf in consequence keeps making elementary errors, such as confusing humour and laughter, long after it has been shown empirically that most laughter has nothing to do with amusement, humour or fun. When Abraham's wife Sarah laughs on being told in old age that she and her equally elderly husband are about to have a child, it has nothing in common whatsoever with a Jewish woman of a similar age laughing at a comedian in the Catskills telling jokes about Jewish mothers. Likewise, to bring together the ideas of incongruity and paradox that underpin both religion and humour, because in each case they lie outside the world of purposive, material activity, is merely to make use of the broad and ill-defined meanings of these words to play verbal tricks. Had the author read Elliott Oring's masterly study of incongruity, he would have known what the problems are. Further, if he had read Oring's work on the history of Jewish humour, he would have seen that it is an essentially modern phenomenon and *cannot* be profitably linked to the Old Testament; we could then have been spared Heddendorf's long tale about the Book of Esther.

When the author condescends to give an empirical example, which is vital to *any* book on humour, he gets it wrong—badly wrong. He seems to think, for example, that a Jewish joke about a sports contest between two Jewish schools both of which claimed defeat is merely self-deprecating; such a joke is much more complex than this. Jewish jokes about Jewish failure at sport are also triumphant jokes about the utter inferiority of *goyische kop* (gentile heads, i.e. stupidity) and *goyische naches* (the foolish satisfactions of the gentile)—they are jokes about dumb gentiles who take sport too seriously. For someone of superior insight and intellect to belong to a school that wins at sport, the subsequent revelling in victory must feel essentially demeaning; it is far better to lose and celebrate the loss like the Jews in the joke. I can only suppose that observers who come from a backwoods area, where a strange version of football rule dominates the life of the local schools, are unable to comprehend the force and subtlety of this aspect of a joke, told by a culturally distant group about its own members. It is also a measure of the author's limitations that he fails to realise how highly ambiguous jokes are and how many contradictory implications can be discerned in a single joke.

The reader will look in vain for much else in the way of empirical data about humour. This book is one of those thoroughly bad exercises in sociology that consists of stringing together largely vacuous quotations from cultural critics. A further problem is that the author conflates humour and 'fun', by which he means trivial secular entertainments, which he rightly claims play far too large a part in people's lives and which have replaced religion. However, the examples he gives, such as sport, soap operas, and pop music, have nothing to do with humour. For their devotees, these forms of 'fun' command excessive loyalty and emotional commitment and even credulous belief; those so obsessed even re-arrange the schedules of their everyday lives to give them priority. Humour is not like that. It does not take over lives in the way sport does. No-one believes that comedy characters are real or identifies over-strongly with comedians. That is why there are very few jokes about the death of professional clowns, whereas there have been entire joke cycles about the

demise of popular entertainers such as Michael Jackson. Such jokes emerge only when a large section of the public gets so involved in the existence of such figures, whom they do not really know, that they even mourn their death, much to the amusement of others.

At the end of the book, the reader is no nearer understanding the shift from faith to fun, but merely knows what a lot of pedants have said about it. This volume does not bring the reader closer to faith nor is it much fun to read.

CHRISTIE DAVIES

University of Reading (Emeritus)

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