

# BOOK REVIEWS

*The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, edited by BRYAN S. TURNER. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 712 pp.; \$204.95 USD (hard).

Bryan Turner's new *Companion to the Sociology of Religion* is a wide-ranging work of comparative sociology that explores the significant new sociological forces at work in the world that are both shaping and are shaped by religious groups and their beliefs and practices. As Turner notes in his opening essay, to examine the topics covered in this volume, globalization, resacralization, religious violence, and postmodernity, is to recognize "just how radically the world has changed in such a short period of time" since the publishing of the original *Companion* (2). Turner's contributors address these processes in a refreshingly global context. The essays themselves and the way in which Turner organizes them in the text effectively develop from the core theoretical foundations on which contemporary sociology of religion has developed to more recent theoretical frameworks for understanding the future of religion around the world.

The theoretical grounding of all of these essays is one of the work's chief strengths. I found myself especially engaged with the opening essays that address the contributions and continued relevance of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim to the sociology of religion today. Later essays by Steve Bruce and Grace Davie, showcasing the respective, but not mutually exclusive, processes of secularization and resacralization were equally strong and help the reader understand the complexities and the vitality of these ongoing

debates over the "status" of religion in the postmodern world.

Other important additions to this *Companion* include dynamics of megachurch growth, Native American religious traditions, and a particularly fascinating essay on religious commodification. These essays make important contributions in their analysis of new institutional forms of religion and religious enterprises and in bringing to light forms of religion and spirituality that often are invisible in a field that still spends most of its energies addressing and theorizing about, not religion per se, but Christianity.

Of course any attempt at covering the theoretical and empirical core of this sociological field is fraught with challenges of either breadth or depth depending on who is reading a volume like this. I found its weaknesses to be of both kinds. In terms of the challenges of breadth, I found Turner's choices of essays to be somewhat unusual and uneven in trying to create a cohesive analysis. Theoretically, I found the essays to be too rooted in functionalist approaches without enough contributions that draw from more critical theories of religion. Topically, there are oddities as well. Essays on "American exceptionalism" and Darwin seemed to be tacked onto their sections of the text rather than addressing some broader question that unified their sections. And while I appreciate the inclusion of two essays related to gender, these too were rather narrowly conceived. One essay dealt with issues of various schools of feminist thought as they engage women and religion and the other addressed the increasingly prominent role of women in piety movements in the Global South. Is this the extent of the ways gender relations and

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power structures are significant in the sociological study of religion today? Furthermore, at a time when there seems to be no end to religiously driven public policy battles over sexuality from the United States to Uganda, not one essay in the volume addresses this significant area of religious controversy.

What Turner refers to as a “Weberian” section on comparative religions was also disappointing. Rather than addressing the contemporary sociological issues shaping the various world religions that are included, the essays were rather long excursions into the intellectual histories of how these traditions had been studied in the past. Because I myself am guilty of maintaining too much of a focus on American Christianity, I hoped to engage theoretical and empirical lessons from these sociological analyses of contemporary Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism. This was not to be the case, given the focus of these essays on intellectual history.

Finally, the ongoing debates over the “true” nature of secularization on the one hand, and resacralization and religious vitality on the other, are not the only significant debates in sociology of religion. Yet, one would certainly think that they were the only real theoretical debate considering how much this volume and its essays are oriented around them. At times, this felt more like a companion to the “sociology of the secularization debates” than to the sociology of religion as such. So while, as the book jacket states, these certainly are topics that are “relevant to undergraduate courses,” they also only represent a narrow range of topics that most undergraduate courses in the sociology of religion typically address.

All of this being said I enjoyed reading this book for its in-depth examination of the complexities of the social forces that are shaping and are being shaped by religious groups around the world. I certainly see this being of theoretical value for researchers engaging the new religious realities of our world. However, in terms of classroom use, there

was no essay in Turner’s *Companion* that made me think that my undergraduate students ought to read that. Nevertheless, as with many such encyclopaedias, this will remain an important theoretical reference work.

William A. Mirola  
Marian University—Indianapolis



*A Faith of Our Own: Second-Generation Spirituality in Korean American Churches*, by SHARON KIM. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010, 200 pp.; \$23.95 USD (paper).

In the 1990s, there was fear within the Korean American Christian community that second-generation Korean Americans are leaving their parents’ church and abandoning their faith in droves. This outward drift was dubbed as the “silent exodus” because much of it went unnoticed by the first generation and because the numbers were thought to be staggering. Sharon Kim’s book puts these fears to rest. Second-generation Korean Americans may be leaving their parents’ church, but not their faith. In her accessible and appropriately titled book, *A Faith of Our Own*, Kim shows that second-generation Korean Americans are establishing new churches of their own with unparalleled entrepreneurial fervor. Kim’s findings are based on a decade of personal interviews, surveys, and participant observation in 22 second-generation Korean American churches in the Los Angeles area.

Instead of assimilating into mainstream churches, simply inheriting the churches of their immigrant parents, or abandoning their faith, Kim argues that second-generation Korean Americans are creating their own hybrid, third spaces of worship through their own churches. These emerging second-generation

Korean American churches are creating a hybrid second-generation spirituality by appropriating and fusing together elements of Korean Protestantism and various expressions of American Evangelicalism. Kim argues that this development is an unprecedented one. Few, if any, immigrant churches today can witness large numbers of the second generation creating their own autonomous religious institutions. As she writes, "It is only within the Korean American community that you witness large numbers of the second generation leaving the immigrant church to develop entirely autonomous religious institutions apart from the immigrant context" (22). What is more, Kim explains that second-generation Korean American churches are drawing non-Koreans into their church, albeit with mixed success. The new churches offer communities of comfort, a faith of their own, for the liminal second generation straddling the world of the first generation and mainstream America. What is interesting is that they also simultaneously seek to be communities of faith for "all nations," creating a third space of spirituality that non-Koreans can inhabit. Kim thus concludes that the emerging second-generation Korean American churches are transforming the practice and institutional landscape of religion in America.

Being that her data are focused in the Los Angeles area, readers may ask how applicable this development is to the rest of the United States. We do not know how pervasive the movement is. Religious practitioners, in particular, will want to know if second-generation Korean Americans' participation in the emergent hybrid congregations is the predominant path or simply one alternative among many, including apostasy. Readers may further question how unprecedented her findings are. Later generation Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Hispanic Americans are also forming multiethnic, even multiracial churches that are fused with their own hybrid culture. The idea of a "third" space is also a trendy

one, describing everything from an alternative public space like Starbucks to post-colonial constructs of feminism. And as Kim herself questions in the book, one may wonder just how successful these emerging churches are in creating an alternative space for a second-generation spirituality that crosses ethnic and racial divisions.

While questions will arise, as they should, Kim offers an important contribution to the literature on second-generations' religiosity. With so much of the study on immigrant congregations focusing on the first generation, this study offers a case study of what may be possible as the second generation seek to maintain their parents' faith in a community of their own. It also follows a greater recognition within the fields of immigration, religion, and ethnicity that the churches of today's immigrants are more than ethnic enclaves. They seek to engage with the broader society even as they maintain their own ethnic cultural space. In Kim's words, the emerging second-generation Korean American churches seek to be "different" and "American" at the same time. They expect to find a place and be a force of influence in the larger American Christian community on their own terms. "With remarkable entrepreneurial spirit, American-born Koreans are establishing new churches that aim to influence the practice of Christianity in the years to come" (5). Besides sociology of religion and immigration scholars, Kim's book will be a welcomed addition to religious practitioners. In only a few pages, the book offers a rich and sympathetic insight into the world of second-generation Korean American Christians. Kim's book is a must read for those interested in second-generations' religiosity in the twenty-first century.

Rebecca Y. Kim  
Pepperdine University



*To Serve God and Mammon: Church-State Relations in American Politics*, by TED G. JELEN. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010, 208 pp.; \$26.95 USD (paper).

This book is about the interplay between two primary social institutions—religion and politics—within a context of social change in America. It makes an important contribution to the study of institutions and the political process. The central premise of the book is the nature of church–state relations in America since WWII in a context of growing religious pluralism particularly from outside the Judeo-Christian world. Using “accommodationist” and “separationist” to refer to the two views on Free Exercise and Establishment, Jelen frames the organizing principle of the book in a two-by-two table: religious minimalism, Christian preferentialism, religious free-market, and religious nonpreferentialism. Jelen, in turn, argues that his typology transcends a simple religious/nonreligious or conservative/liberal dichotomy. This is important because Jelen argues that the Christian Right has moved away from an emphasis on Christian beliefs, toward a non (but still religious)preferentialist frame. Although political activism on the part of the Christian Right exemplifies the relationship between religion and politics, the book expands the analysis to include various actors and their rhetoric—that is, the interplay between the Courts, local governments, the executive, the public, and interest organizations.

Following his discussion of accommodationist and separationist views on church–state relations, the rest of the book is much more about the political process than it is about the nature of Free Exercise and Establishment—focusing on the tenuous relationship between elite (e.g., government, judges, interest groups) and public (voter) preferences on the place of religion in America, particularly when these do not neatly coincide. The public appears to be abstractly separationist but concretely accommodationist (for example,

on school prayer). Congress has become the grounds for debates on church–state relations because politicians from different districts make it a salient political issue since these issues can be politically rewarding (again, school prayer). On the other hand, Court justices are not accountable to the public. It is not surprising then that accommodationists more readily turn to elected officials who are accountable to the public whereas separationists have traditionally turned to the courts. Jelen, however, argues that while the Christian Right has moved away from Christian preferentialism to religion nonpreferentialism, the Supreme Court has moved from a separationist view to a more accommodationist view which complements the position of state and local political elites. Jelen concludes by suggesting that debates surrounding church–state relations will never be resolved precisely because of the “parochial” nature of American politics and the peculiar legacies of the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses.

Jelen’s book is an important work on church–state relations in a changing society, but I also recommended it for anyone broadly interested in U.S. politics. For this reason, I believe that the book could have benefited from a more general framework and comparison to other sociopolitical issues. First, this book really tackles a broader question: What is the role of government? This is an especially salient question given the recent “bailout” and the “Tea Party Movement,” but also for instance, “Proposition 8” in California which highlighted the relationship between the preferences of the government, the public, and the Court. It has been well documented that the American public has inconsistent views on many issues such that they favor something abstractly but have contradictory opinions on specific policies. This has been shown to be the case with taxation and spending, civil rights in the 60s, and gay marriage in 2000s. Second, Jelen repeatedly asserts that his typology is not based on a conservative-liberal (or left-right) dichotomy yet cannot avoid invoking it. Jelen

argues that the Christian Right's frame transformation to nonpreferentialism should not necessarily clash with his "free-market" type, yet it does, which seems to suggest that a conservative political view is in large part at work in shaping this frame. Then, in his conclusion, Jelen admits that the Christian Right continues to be an important reason for Republican victories. It is also unclear as to the motivation behind the shift away from Christian preferentialism to religious nonpreferentialism. Why is the Supreme Court moving toward Christian preferentialism while the Christian Right is moving toward religious nonpreferentialism? Jelen argues that Christian preferentialism is incompatible with growing religious pluralism in the United States. But, is this why this shift from Christian values to a "place at the table" occurred, or is it for some other reason, like a rational political calculation? For instance, it has been argued that Christian evangelicals demographically represent a small faction of the electorate that has already "maxed-out" their high voter turnout rate. Relying exclusively on this group will not produce anymore political gains.

Finally, Jelen often blurs religious beliefs with religious community—something Émile Durkheim explicitly distinguishes in his various works. Claiming that the new nonpreferentialist frame no longer focuses on religious community but rather on individual freedom and liberty requires further sociological explanation. It may actually be the case that religious belief becomes less relevant for maintaining political influence while religious community increasingly more important for resource mobilization. This might be one of the political motivations for moving away from Christian values to religious nonpreferentialism.

David Pettinicchio  
University of Washington



*Key Thinkers in the Sociology of Religion*, by RICHARD K. FENN. London and New York: Continuum, 2009, 250 pp.; \$34.95 USD (paper).

Reading this book is like attending a lecture course, in which the professor—deeply wise—engages the thinkers he reviews in ways that stretch them beyond their accustomed bounds. Durkheim, Freud, Weber, and Parsons among the classics, then Martin, Wilson, Berger, Luhmann, Geertz, Bloch, and Bell among our near-contemporaries; each is enlisted in deep talk. This volume does not present their work as they, themselves, understood it. Nor, on the other hand, does Fenn use them simply as foils for his own intellectual program. Instead, his conversations with them take place at the intersection of their interests and his own—just like conversations in real life.

Fenn organizes the book around the concept of "the sacred," specifically the relationship between "the sacred" and "religion" in each of the 11 thinkers' work. He defines "the sacred" as representing "a crisis that has emerged, been confronted, and transcended" (1). It produces "a sense of the momentous" (2), a sense of possibility and hope. In his view, "Religion . . . is a social institution which unites as many as possible of the manifestations of the sacred into a single vision of memory and observance" (3). He furthermore notes that both religion and the sacred are inherently secularizing, to the degree that they highlight some things as momentous and others as not. Localizing enchantment in one place or time disenchant the rest—a Weberian insight that Fenn traces throughout the chapters.

The result is not a book for beginners. Indeed, one needs to know Durkheim, Freud, and Weber rather well in order to follow some of Fenn's commentary; one can know the rest somewhat less well, though familiarity pays off. The result is invariably rich. I came away from each chapter with a new and deeper

appreciation for the (dare I say) religious visions that these eleven brought (or bring) to their studies.

Take Durkheim, for example. Fenn emphasizes the Durkheimian paradox, that “individuals experience their being as derived from, and contingent on, a social order that is in fact derived from their own presence and their own actions” (17). Good, though not unusual. But Fenn highlights that Durkheim, like Freud, “is concerned with describing a split in the psyche” (23) that lies at the core of religious and social experience. Conversely, Durkheim seems to creep into Fenn’s reading of Freud, particularly in the claim that “what primitive societies accomplished by taboos, or traditional societies accomplished by religion, law, and custom, modern societies seek to achieve by the process of differentiation” (46). I begin to see Durkheim and Freud as both reflecting on the psychological/experiential nature of modernity. Fenn’s conversations with each lead me deeper into their commonality.

Every chapter is good, though some stand out. David Martin emerges as not just a sociologist, but as a religious thinker, who sees religions and secularity as connected rather than opposed. Pentecostalism, for example, disenchant the social order while sacralizing individuals and providing them with a strong sense of moral obligation. Martin, on Fenn’s reading, is like Weber, grounding sociology in a detailed analysis of individual religious experience as it appears in various times and places. (Fenn’s reading of Weber perhaps over-emphasizes the psychological, but it is rich just the same.)

Fenn’s chapter on Peter Berger is masterful, precisely because he recognizes that Berger is, in many respects, a theologian. Rather than focusing on the apparent contradictions in Berger’s *corpus*—such as his recent shifts on the role of pluralism in secularization—Fenn stresses the religious consequences of Berger’s sociology. For example, it is one thing to say that people produce “sacred canopies” to bring order to their worlds. It is another to recognize that

sociology is itself such a sacred canopy, and then ask what the human ability to produce such canopies says about the world in which we find ourselves, including its ultimate ground. Fenn reminds us that the author of *A Rumor of Angels* is a much more complicated thinker than is usually perceived.

Unlike a textbook, this volume does not present these thinkers’ work as a set of potted plants, bonsaied to fit a discipline’s retrospective understanding of itself. Nor, in fact, does it cover all aspects of any of their work. True, I learned a lot about religion, the sacred, the dynamics of secularization, and so on—the traditional topics that the sociology of religion is supposed to engage. But I got no overall picture, no overall sense of direction—and I think that was part of Fenn’s point. For me, the book’s strength is its sense of intellectual engagement, as Fenn showed me something about each of these thinkers that I had not seen before. In treating each of them seriously, in all their depth and relevance, he showed me both the limits and the possibilities of sociology as a way of engaging with both the sacred and the religious in late-modern life.

James V. Spickard  
University of Redlands



*Theater in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at Burning Man*, by LEE GILMORE. Berkley: University of California Press, 2010, 256 pp.; \$24.95 USD (paper), \$60.00 USD (hard).

What does it mean to be spiritual but not religious in ritual? Spiritual but not religious is a common theme in the sociology of religion, but concrete examinations of enacted spirituality are few. In *Theater in a Crowded Fire*, Lee Gilmore investigates ritual and spirituality at

Burning Man. Often portrayed as an event celebrating the post- and premodern through ritualistic carnivalization, she argues that Burning Man is a site in which the spiritual finds ritual form. This book explores elements of the Burning Man experience as a lens to build a bigger picture of ritualized spiritual individuality in community. The book builds the argument that it is the open-to-interpretation nature of Burning Man rituals that enables the effectiveness of spiritual experience.

*Theater in a Crowded Fire* reflects the diversity of experience at Burning Man within its content and structure. Gilmore explores the contentious nature of Burning Man through close examination of the ways in which Burning Man is experienced, modified, and understood by participants, organizers, and the media. A challenge to dominant political, economic, and religious cultural forms; Burning Man is grounded in social context. Gilmore documents the event in historic context by examining shifts in the event's ritual, artistic, and administrative forms as well as participants' experiences. This historically rooted exploration illustrates how Burning Man requires participants to engender their own meanings that lead to a sense of community.

Gilmore utilizes her background in anthropology and religious studies to approach spiritual and ritual engagement at Burning Man from multiple angles. As a former Media Team member of the Burning Man staff, she has an unusual insight to the experience's shifting form that is supplemented by interviews of participants and organizers, a survey distributed through the online Burning Man community, analysis of internal documents and externally produced media productions. Incorporating theoretical insights from multiple disciplines, she builds an argument that Burning Man provides a space where dominant world views are challenged through ritual and experience in a way that facilitates spirituality and self-discovery.

Spirituality amongst Burners is complex, illustrating the difficulties in traversing the definition of "spiritual but not religious." Through evidence, the book explores ways in which meaning is constructed individually and communally. Incorporating interviews from multiple subjects, Gilmore identifies a shared Burning Man ethos that leads to a sense of communal connection in the desert. Shaped by this ethos, participants' spiritual understandings of transformative experiences illustrate how meaning is construed by individuals within this shared sense of community.

Contestation through ritualization is illustrated in this book in the ways that participants experience Burning Man as existing a space contrary to that of the ordinary world. By occupying what Gilmore identifies as a clearly intentional liminal space, the Burners embody for that week a different ethos and world view. This shared understanding of behavior, identified by Gilmore as a type of orthopraxy, provides a lived experience set apart from the mundane that facilitates transformative experiences that frames their experience. The dialectic interaction between Burners and the outside world as indicated by this shared ethos contributes to the critical examination of ritual and ritual theory. Gilmore both uses and challenges Victor Turner's ritual theories. Liminality, communitas, and pilgrimage are often intentionally crafted and easily identified, but for each of these concepts Gilmore finds challenges or provisos. The book argues that the similarity between many of these rituals and Turner's ideas of ritual form may provide evidence that most Western ritual theories are as much informed by Western experiences on the part of the academics as they are by the indigenous rituals they had sought to explain.

One innovative aspect of this book was the inclusion of a documentary DVD containing an interview with the author and footage of many events discussed in the book. However, the manner in which

the book and the DVD were interlinked, with references mid-paragraph to chapter markers on the DVD, detracted from the reading experience. The DVD was not addressed until the chapter on the interaction between Burning Man and the media (5), which seemed out of place in the larger argument. Having the auditory and visual supplement was, in many ways, advantageous as Burning Man is experiential. It bolstered the reflexive nature of the study and built a stronger understanding of what was described.

*Theater in a Crowded Fire* contextualized Burning Man in a way that strengthened Gilmore's theoretical explorations. Containing rich descriptions of Burning Man, the book provides a clearer image of the ritual and spiritual aspect of the event. Theoretically diverse, the book explores the intersection of religion and spirituality from an innovative angle in a temporally limited context.

Beth Dougherty  
Loyola University Chicago



*Beyond the Congregation: The World of Christian Nonprofits*, by CHRISTOPHER P. SCHEITL. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, 22 pp.; \$24.95 USD (paper).

In his unprecedented study of parachurch organizations, Christopher Scheitle presents a rich overview of Christian nonprofits and their role in the American religious landscape. Scheitle approaches the field of American religious organizations through a market perspective, arguing that the Christian nonprofit sector has grown in prominence as a supplier of religious goods and services. According to Scheitle, these nonprofits have restructured the religious market—competing with congregations and denominations to provide religious goods

to consumers, and often outflanking them.

Scheitle situates parachurch organizations within the broader context of Christian religious suppliers, both historically and in the contemporary setting. After identifying Christian nonprofit organizations as a growing sector of the religious market, Scheitle charts the historical trajectory of parachurch organizations. Linking the contemporary parachurch phenomenon to the proliferation of “religious societies” in the nineteenth century, Scheitle writes that the “rise, fall, and rise again of the parachurch sector represent a continuous narrative in the changing structure of the religious market” (21). Then and now, nonprofit organizations responded to a demand for services or products that was not being met by existing religious suppliers. Eventually, denominations began to create their own agencies, thus eliminating the need for religious societies. In the present postdenominational age, however, parachurch organizations have risen again.

Alongside this historical sketch, Scheitle examines the relationship between the church and the parachurch sector in the contemporary religious market. He notes that while nonprofit organizations collaborate with churches and other nonprofits on several scores, niche overlap has created considerable turf skirmishes between churches and other Christian nonprofits. Ironically, Christian nonprofits often hold their ground by adopting nondenominationalism as a conscious business decision, therein achieving a functional ecumenism that churches have long sought elusively.

Creating a typology of Christian nonprofit organizations according to nine sectors, Scheitle presents a profile of each sector. According to function, leadership, finances, and state relations, Scheitle compares Christian nonprofit organizations to each other as well as to churches and denominations. Since most of the sectors are organized by purpose (fellowship, mission, etc.) but some are organized



by medium (radio and television), Scheitle's cross-sector comparisons are of limited value. Moreover, because the nonprofits that Scheitle analyzes are national in scope, the comparisons he makes between these nonprofits and congregations are also unsatisfactory. It would have been helpful for Scheitle to spend energy on other types of comparisons that are largely neglected in his book: evangelical/conservative organizations to Catholic or mainline/liberal ones; Christian nonprofits to secular or non-Christian organizations, local to national parachurch groups.

While Scheitle's discussion of the function of Christian nonprofits is informative and engaging, his claim that such organizations increasingly dominate the religious market may be overstated. On one level, Scheitle does not appear to have moved beyond the historical setting of Robert Wuthnow's 1988 book, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, which Scheitle references on numerous occasions. While Wuthnow's claim that special interest groups were gaining importance in American religion was compelling in 1988, it is much less so today. A host of scholars have heralded the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" in the American psyche, noting a corresponding decline not only of denominations but also of religious organizations in general—especially on a national level. Scheitle largely ignores this literature. He assumes that the religious market is composed solely of congregations, denominations, and nonprofit organizations (thus ignoring other entities), and he jumps to hasty conclusions about the substantive impact of nonprofit organizations on the lives of American Christians. Moreover, Scheitle presents only speculative evidence to support his claim that Christian nonprofits are becoming more prolific and more influential on a national level.

Scheitle's economic/market perspective, while helpful in framing religious change dynamically, is also problematic. The idea that religious "firms" supply "products" to religious "consumers" breaks

down on at least two levels when used to analyze Christian nonprofits. First, many constituents of Christian nonprofits actively participate in the activities of nonprofits, deeming themselves not just consumers but also producers. Second, a significant portion of Christian nonprofits are "donative" nonprofits. For nonprofits engaged in charitable causes, those who fund services and those who benefit from them are often two different populations. It is too crude to consider contributors to donative nonprofits consumers in the sense that Scheitle does—implying that contributors are merely buying a sense of self-justification.

Despite its limitations, Scheitle's study of Christian nonprofits is a valuable addition to the literature on the organizational dimension of contemporary American religion. Scheitle's research is meticulous and thorough, yet his presentation is broadly accessible. His final chapter on tax laws, government funding, and nonprofit lobbying is particularly engaging; Scheitle navigates the complexities of the relationship between the parachurch sector and the state with skill and insight. The realm of Christian nonprofits is amorphous and difficult to penetrate. Sacrificing neither depth nor breadth, Scheitle has helped give shape to the chaos.

Janel Kragt Bakker  
Emory University



*Chanting Down the New Jerusalem: Calypso, Christianity, and Capitalism in the Caribbean*, by FRANCIO GUADELOUPE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008, 272 pp.; \$21.95 USD (paper).

*In God's Image: The Metaculture of Fijian Christianity*, by MATT TOMLINSON. Berkeley: University of California

Press, 2009, 263 pp.; \$22.95 USD (paper).

*City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala*, by KEVIN LEWIS O'NEILL. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, 312 pp.; \$21.95 USD (paper).

*Death in a Church of Life: Moral Passion During Botswana's Time of AIDS*, by FREDERICK KLAITS. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, 368 pp.; \$24.95 USD (paper).

*Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross*, by WILLIAM HANKS. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, 472 pp.; \$29.95 USD (paper).

Cultural anthropologists do not enjoy a long history of studying Christian cultures ethnographically. A few good works aside—one thinks immediately of Susan Harding's *The Book of Jerry Falwell*—anthropology has struggled to establish a coherent interest in Christianity as a cultural object. However, a recent book series from the University of California Press marks the maturing of a viable anthropology of Christianity. As of May 2011, the series has released 11 titles, covering a wide range of geographic, cultural, and theological territory—from the varieties of Eastern Orthodoxy to Dutch Calvinist missionaries in Indonesia, Apostolic Pentecostals in Zimbabwe and Botswana, Prosperity Pentecostals in Venezuela and Guatemala, ecumenical Christians in the Caribbean, Fijian Methodists, and Spanish Catholics among Yucatec Maya. I consider five titles below with an eye toward a major comparative theme: the formation and consequence of global Christianities. While the series engages familiar topics in the study of religion, such as missionization and conversion, anthropologists of Christianity are proving quite successful at linking the ethnographic study of local Christianities with dominant concerns in the broader discipline—to name a few: mediation,

globalization, multiple modernities, and the formation of subjectivities.

Francio Guadeloupe's *Chanting Down the New Jerusalem* (2008) explores the politics of belonging, and ties between Christianity and nationhood, on the Caribbean island of Saint Martin/Sint Maarten (SXM). Guadeloupe focuses on radio disc jockeys, the island's most influential media personalities, and their role in circulating an inclusive Christian "meta-language" that promotes tolerance in a multiethnic, hypertouristic, multid denominational context. Through a nuanced treatment of contested history and contextual identity, Guadeloupe's ethnography situates this local Christian culture as both an artifact of political economy and a strategic response to post-colonial life.

Matt Tomlinson's *In God's Image* (2009) considers how the theme of loss dominates local discourse among Fijian islanders who experienced mass conversion via Methodist missionaries, yet who have retained their traditional system of chiefly authority. Tomlinson uses the analytic of "metaculture" to illustrate how these Fijian Methodists resolve the anxiety of having lost touch with a powerful ancestral past. This concept, derived from the work of semiotic and linguistic anthropology, captures how Fijians reflect on social life, place, memory, and, ultimately, a future charted by a Christian-infused hope.

Kevin Lewis O'Neill's *City of God* (2009) examines the spiritual–emotional–moral–political lives of neo-Pentecostals in Guatemala City; a Latin American capital ravaged by severely dystopic conditions in the wake of violent civil war. O'Neill's organizing analytic, inspired equally by neoliberal and Foucauldian understandings of self-regulation, is that of "Christian citizenship." As Christian citizens these Pentecostals do many things for their nation—pray, fast, speak in tongues, read scripture—all of which confound what secular–liberal logics construe as democratic participation. O'Neill's ethnography joins a vibrant anthropological tradition

interested in how religion intersects with state subjectivities.

Frederick Klait's *Death in a Church of Life* (2010) investigates the culture of care practiced by charismatic Apostolics in Botswana. Like O'Neill, this ethnography is situated in an emerging neoliberal state, full of uncertainty and danger. Klait asks how these Apostolics marshal their Christianity amidst widespread social, medical, and political problems caused by AIDS. By connecting Christianity to the anthropologies of morality, caregiving, and emotion, Klait presents the concept of "moral passion," which emphasizes the relational work local Christians perform in order to promote life in a social context consumed by death. Particularly compelling are the everyday acts Klait highlights as crucial for this kind of faith: from nursing and bathing, to mourning and burying, visiting and healing.

William Hanks' *Converting Words* (2010) is a cultural-linguistic history of the colonial encounter between Spanish Catholics and Yucatec Maya. Forgoing tired analytics of syncretism and unilateral conquest, Hanks sees the Spanish colonial effort as an attempt to cultivate orderliness among the Maya, "nothing short of a remaking of Indian life, from heart, soul, and mind to self-image, bodily practices, lived space, and everyday conduct" (7). Hanks brings a long career in linguistic anthropology to bear on this case of conversion, including established disciplinary concerns with embodiment, intertextuality, discourse genres, and language ideology.

Even by these brief summaries the ambitiousness of the series is clear. And, it might be tempting to settle on viewing the series as a collection of fascinating, locally idiosyncratic ethnographic cases. This would miss the point. By intention, this series is comparative, designed to make clear the processes at work across Christianities. For example, many of these books exploit what some have called the "media turn" in the study of religion by focusing on processes of mediation—the

ways by which faith and experience are made subjectively real and publicly visible—and the various media that Christians use: rituals, words, texts, objects, bodies, places, memories, and senses. However, consistent with anthropology's recent commitment to transnational questions, I want to highlight a different comparative issue: global Christianities.

For cultural anthropology writ large, getting at global realities has been a central priority since the early 1980s when scholars like Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz traced genealogies of contemporary global inequities. The fact that globalization is a key topic for the anthropology of Christianity reflects the state of the discipline, but also presents a very real chance for the ethnography of religion to shape a core disciplinary debate. The conceptual stakes are high and the questions big. What are the multiple modernities of our global age? How do Christians in local contexts engage with the traveling signifiers of economic, political, and secular modernity? If globalization is fundamentally about change, how do Christian models of individual and social transformation intersect with the discontinuities promoted by global mechanisms? If globalization is also fundamentally about interconnection, where do Christian uses of media and logics of relationality place them in transnational networks? And, if globalization is fundamentally about a heightening consciousness of the world, what happens to Christian understandings of Self and Other when confronted with global difference?

Guadeloupe's ethnography of SXM Christians shows what happens to local identity in the face of a specific iteration of the global economy—tourism. SXMers must balance indigenous differences of nationality and ethnicity, a weighty history of slavery and labor exploitation, the daily dilemmas of working-class life, and the demands of being good hosts to the constant stream of tourist guests (so those guests return, so their livelihood

remains intact). Guadeloupe makes clear that their Christianity has emerged—as idiom, as discursive framework, and as embodied faith—as a prime resource for managing this balance.

Tomlinson's account of Fijian Methodists allows us to see the issue of temporality in global terms. We often think of temporality—models that construe time's passing—as a deeply ingrained and protected aspect of our cultural makeup. Whatever else happens to us, we will have our sense of time. But, using the transnational encounter between Methodist missionaries and indigenous Fijians, Tomlinson convinces us that religious conversion can refigure temporal themes of a valorized past, loss, lamentation, and hope. More important, these temporalities do not exist as settled once-and-for-all, but as the ongoing motivation for healing the wounds of memory.

O'Neill's ethnography of Guatemalan neo-Pentecostals is explicitly concerned with this movement's global causes and implications. In the postwar era, Guatemala's recovering democracy and Pentecostalism's Christian citizens both look outside the nation for direction. The extent to which the depictions of the main congregation resemble U.S. megachurches is astounding, and speaks clearly to the border crossing stability of Pentecostalism as a global faith. The intersection of religion and democracy as a global reality and the motivating force of Christian citizenship are certainly dynamics that other scholars will take up.

Klaims' work with Botwanan charismatics provides a fascinating portrait of how a small group of Christians respond

to the social and physical traumas of a global disease in the face of a largely counterproductive state. Klaims shows that care, love, and nurturing should be integral analytical themes, as AIDS rates rise and Christians increasingly confront the damages of disease.

Hanks' history of conversion among the Yucatec Maya reminds us that the questions we deem pressing about global encounters are not new. The themes he takes up—altering the habitus, subject formation, culture change, care of the self—are of broad concern among anthropologists. His methodology also provides useful ways forward for those working closely with religious texts, in particular texts produced in situations where change is imposed, change is resisted, Christianity is objectified and taught, and converts learn and negotiate their new religious self.

The anthropology of Christianity has, in relatively quick fashion, come into being. Intentionally comparative, part of the identity work has been to identify what conceptual problems will feed cross-cultural study. A number of areas have been brought forward, and I have highlighted one example: the formation of global Christianities. The story here is two-fold: mapping what forces structure local Christian life, and considering how Christians are not simply reflections of global realities but contributors to them.

James S. Bielo  
*Miami University*

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