

***Daddy Grace: A Celebrity Preacher and his House of Prayers*, by Marie W. Dallah. New York University Press, 2007, 276pp., 12 illustrations, Hb. \$40.00, ISBN-13: 9780814720103; Pb \$14.00, ISBN-13: 9780814720370.**

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Marie W. Dallah's book about the American preacher Daddy Grace and the United House of Prayers for All People provides the reader with a detailed outline of a very interesting piece of modern American history. Arriving as an immigrant from the Cape Verdean archipelago in the early twentieth century, "Sweet" Daddy Grace was able to build a church and develop an enterprise (including commercial products, houses and properties) centred around his personal charisma and the ability he claimed to perform miracles. Contrary to most other religious communities at that time, however, the United House of Prayers for All People did not address racial issues, its focal point being its leader, Daddy Grace. Even though this church is closely linked to Pentecostalism and other contemporary charismatic Christian movements, Dallah argues convincingly that Daddy Grace also could be seen as a representative of a new religious movement. For example, the leader's luxurious and extravagant dress code, the spectacular use of fire hoses for baptism, Daddy Grace's claimed ability to perform miracles and the strong focus on financial matters often placed the United House of Prayers for All Peoples in opposition to other religious groups and to society. Hence, it can be seen as a movement that was questioned and challenged by the larger religious community in America and thus can be viewed as a new religious movement.

Dallah's book is a balanced and critical description of the history of the movement, the contemporary context and the religious scene in America. The sources used for the presentation are assessed and presented in a critical and open way, and the official story of the movement is contrasted and compared with alternative sources. The book is organized into six chapters that provide a detailed background to Daddy Grace and the development of his movement. Besides the thorough presentation, Dallah addresses important theoretical and methodological issues that are of great relevance to all scholars who are interested in both modern American history and new religious movements. From this point of view the book is a wellcomed reading for all scholars interested in these fields. I am especially intrigued by Dallah's use of economic theories and her use of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic

capital” in explaining and outlining the movement. Instead of presenting Daddy Grace as a greedy celebrity preacher, which is how the leader and his movement are commonly understood, Dallam is able to explain and contextualize why the buying of houses and commercial products was of such great importance for the movement. Even though some scholars of religion are unwilling to see the function of and interplay between money and religion, Dallam does not fall into this trap; finance and power are important if we want to understand religious groups and historical trajectories in the history of religions. Like most new religious movements, Daddy Grace and the United House of Prayers for All People was also the epicentre of conflicts, accusations and judicial trials, topics that are also addressed by Dallam in a careful but critical way.

Contrary to the presumption of the critiques, the movement did not fall apart after the death of Daddy Grace on 12 January 1960. After the death of its charismatic leader, the movement was rather transformed and institutionalized in a new and more efficient way under the leadership of an appointed bishop. The charisma of the leader is still important, but the strong influence of Daddy Grace is of less importance, and the United House has developed into a more regular charismatic movement. This development raises important new questions that should be more developed in the future study of new religious movements. Dallam writes: “It would be especially helpful to have a label for groups that are in between sect and the mainline/church end of the spectrum, as a great number of religious groups pass through this space at one time or another” (181). With this quotation the reader is taken back to the important theoretical discussion about the difference between sects, cults and churches, a topic addressed by, for example, Max Weber in Germany in the early twentieth century. In doing this, Dallam has situated her research at the very centre of the discussion about how to differentiate between so-called new religious movements and “ordinary movements/churches.” In other words, what is the essence of a new religious movement? From this point of view, Dallam’s book should be obligatory reading for all students and professors interested in American history or in the history and sociology of religions.