

Editors' Introduction

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Welcome to the somewhat delayed issue 10.2 of the *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*. This issue is published in a peculiar time of both a pandemic that has spread across the globe and ongoing political instability in many of its corners. The challenges that have been presented in 2020 have been keenly felt by many in the academic sphere, but have also presented areas of study that scholars of new religions are perfectly positioned to investigate. We intend to encourage this in a future issue, but as we are still in the center of the storm at this time such a perspective can be difficult to achieve. However, we present in this issue what this journal aims to do best—original and innovative research into the history, development, impact, ideas, and culture of new religions in the world—and are very proud to offer to our readers research and review articles from both early career scholars and established members of the field.

In this issue we have as the opening article “Engaging with the Church of Scientology and the Free Zone in the Field: Challenges, Barriers, and Methods” by Aled Thomas. Thomas’ article takes up the challenge of studying the Free Zone, a term referring to groups that consider themselves to be practicing Scientology or Dianetics but act outside of the Church of Scientology. Often these groups are regarded very negatively by the Church of Scientology and can be seen as a form of heretical Scientologists. Based on fieldwork with both the Church of Scientology and the Free Zone the article deals with the problems of entering a small field, such as a contentious minority religion and its dissidents, and how to deal with the problems that arise when there is a strong antagonism within the milieu, as well as expressed by external bodies.

The second article in this issue “The Process Church of the Final Judgment: The Demise by Transmutation and Replacement of a Controversial

New Religion” by Carol M. Cusack, one of the founders of the *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, deals with a movement that originally developed out of Scientology and whose founders, Mary Ann MacLean and Robert de Grimston, were declared Suppressive Persons by the Church of Scientology. However, the movement they founded, The Process Church of the Final Judgment would quickly evolve into something distinctly dissimilar from Scientology as they developed their own original theology based on the unity of Jehovah, Lucifer, and Satan through Christ, creating an apocalyptic movement that combined Satanism and Christianity. Cusack follows the Process from their beginnings to their decline and transformation to the Foundation Church of the Millennium that got rid of all Satanic elements.

“Promises of Purity: Adventist Health Reform and Sanctification” by Emily Bailey addresses the “purity movements” of the turn of the nineteenth century, specifically the Seventh-day Adventist and their Battle Creek Sanitarium. Baily uses primarily historical sources like letters and writings by their leaders, the professed prophet Ellen G. White and Adventist promotional material from Battle Creek in her exploration of how this group and institution were part of the broader health reforms of the time but based on an underlying heterodox form of Christianity. Apart from restoring the body the Battle Creek also sought to save their patients/patrons souls, making them a significant player in the health marketplace of the early twentieth century.

The final article is a review essay by George Chryssides, the current president of the International Society for the Study of New Religions. In “Jehovah’s Witnesses: A Survey of the Literature” Chryssides provides an attentive overview of books published on the Watchtower Society. A group well known for their own prolific literary output, Chyrssides’ helpfully reviews the content, quality, and context of a range of sources by those both within and outside of the movement, including studies that are academic, non-academic, and written by ex-members.

We end this issue with six reviews of works on an array of relevant topics. David McConeghy reviews Robert Glenn Howard’s *Digital Jesus: The Making of a New Christian Fundamentalist Community on the Internet* (2011) on the use of social media and online communities within Christian Fundamentalist communities. Despite the book being nine years old, McConeghy argues that a lot of the material remains valid. The second review is by Jeremy Rapport who assesses *American Cosmic: UFOs, Religion, Technology*, by Diana Pasulka, a study on UFO beliefs within American culture, mainly looking at the role of technology. Thus both McConeghy and Rapport review technology within religious contexts although in a very different manner.

Grant Shoffstall reviews *The Seer of Bayside: Veronica Lueken and the Struggle to Define Catholicism*, Joseph P. Laycock's recent study of Lueken, her visions, and how they were integrated into, while challenging, a Catholic worldview. Susan Palmer reviews *Everyday Sacred: Religion in Contemporary Quebec*, edited by Hillary Kaell McGill, on the religious scene in a city often considered to be highly secular: an image that this anthology seeks to defy. The fifth review is Fredrik Gregorius' review of *Among the Scientologists: History, Theology, and Praxis*, by Donald A. Westbrook, one of the first studies to look at what Scientologists believe and how they themselves see their own history. A novel study as most of the time Scientologists tend to be talked about not talked with. Finally, we have Ernils Larsson's review of *Dynamism and the Ageing of a Japanese "New" Religion: Transformations and the Founder*, by Erica Baffelli and Ian Reader, a study on the Agonshū movement in Japan. The study and the review look into the problem of terms like "New Religions" and what constitutes such a movement in the context of post-war Japan.

We would like to thank those who have contributed articles and book reviews, as well as our dedicated peer reviewers, for their excellent work on this issue.