

## Book Reviews

*Death and Religion in a Changing World*, edited by Kathleen Garces-Foley. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005. xiv + 332 pp. hb. \$80.95, ISBN 9780765612212; pb. \$32.95, ISBN 9780765612229.

This wide-ranging—almost compendious—book lives up to its title. It is not simply a study of the various theologies of death, nor is it simply an empirical study of “death these days.” Covering pretty well all religious traditions (for example, Roman Catholicism, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism and Protestantism), the thirteen contributors provide analyses and summaries both of the historical prescriptive texts or rites of those traditions, and an account of what people subscribing to those traditions in fact do when confronted by actual real-time “live” death. While the book, in its two parts, seeks to contrast “Religious Approaches to Death” (Part 1) with “Death in Contemporary Societies” (Part 2), the mental drift is essentially from Part 2 into Part 1, not the other way round. The book, that is, is premised upon the notion that it is possible to conceive of, and write, a *history* of death. In this, we can detect the continuing influence of Philippe Ariès, the progenitor of historical thanatology. Where this history is held to be a move from “tradition” towards the “modern,” it is easy to assume, as do many of these authors, that the modern consists of the practices of the hegemonic West. In a single lapidary sentence, Douglas Davies picks out one of the main themes of these thirteen essays on death in “a changing world:”

The way contemporary Western societies treat their dead expresses the value that the living place on shared past experiences of life more than the value placed upon some future eternal realm.

The “changing [Western] world” in which death is experienced has within it large and growing diasporic communities of all major faiths: and in the essays on, for example, Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, much is made of the adaptive competence of inherited and exported (and re-imported) rituals and beliefs, confronting as they

do, not merely different religions, but the subtler pressures of Western humanisms or secularisms. Further, even where, as is the case for that great majority of the world's population who live and die in the lands in which they are born, the traditional indigenous prescriptions remain vital (*sic*) and adhered to, they are commonly challenged by the sheer ubiquity of the Western presence. Thus, for example, in "*Muslim Ways of Death: Between the Prescribed and the Performed*," Juan Eduardo Campo tells how at the August 2003 funeral in Iraq of a much venerated but assassinated Shi'i Imam, the crowd made comment on the American presence in their country by calling for the humiliation of Presidents Bush and Saddam: *We will humiliate Saddam! We will humiliate Bush!* Accompanied by such re-invigorations of prescribed ritual, the bones of the murdered Imam were interred in the Najaf cemetery in which the remains of "martyrs" killed in 1920 by the British had been interred; and in the following month, at Arlington Cemetery, Virginia, Paul Wolfowitz presided over an inter-faith commemoration ceremony for the assassinated Imam, quoting, in Arabic, Sura 3: 169, which confers afterlife salvation on Islamic martyrs. Arlington is of course the burial ground of America's war dead. Thus do the West and Islam approach each other in death. It is perhaps a sadness that the Koran places all Jews and Christians in Hell (page 158 in this book, Sura 98: 6 in the Koran itself).

The eight chapters of Part One of this book provide what seem to be competent as well as terse analyses of the various "death theologies" of the major religious traditions, as well as comment (as immediately above) on the challenges they face in this changing world. Part Two (Death in Contemporary Societies), concerns itself primarily with empirical data about The West—America, Europe. American funerals are characterized as "Personalizing Tradition," while other chapters deal with "Forms of Disposal" (Douglas Davies) and "Spontaneous Shrines and Public Memorialization" (Sylvia Grider). Tony Walter looks at the role of the media—central, he feels, in re-explicating a sense of the religious in a secular society. The languages of death, especially death in disaster, or the death of children, as at Dunblane, provide a most emphatic rebuttal of post-modernism's insistence on the unreality of anything but the subjective.

Does Death have a History? Or do we, confronting it, eternally mobilize a set of antinomies which would be familiar to pretty well anyone, at any time—with, say, official prescriptions always being

countered by populist preferences, or with stern priestly judgmentalism always being moderated by the requirements of loss, love and sorrow? Throughout these essays, words such as “supple” or “religiosity” or “conversations” pour, in a sense of an insistence by human beings that the deaths in which they are encompassed are as much part of their plans and purposes, as they are of those of God. In *The Stripping of the Altars*, Eamon Duffy described how these two necessities comprehended and enveloped each other in late medieval Catholicism. Any student of the epitaphs of classical Greece and Rome, or of the many thousands of war memorials which cover England and indeed Europe, will find immediately the sense that it has ever been thus: the books, the liturgies, the prescriptive rites may be the libretto, but the music is made elsewhere. Perhaps this is what Evan Berry means when, in the Epilogue to this most interesting book, he says “religious traditions [of death] exist in creative tension with the surrounding world.” Very true: but not too obviously the basis for a History of Death.

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*The Spiritual Revolution: why religion is giving way to spirituality*, by Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead. Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford, 2005. 204 pp., paper, £17.99. ISBN 9781405119597.

This book grew on me! By its conclusion, I was grateful for the thoroughness of its team of authors in exploring an extremely complex phenomenon not only at local (Kendal, Cumbria) level but also by comparing British and US religious experience. I do not necessarily agree with its rather speculative conclusions: it tries to predict whether traditional patterns of religious practice and associational activities will decline or revive. History and cultural context offer contradictory evidence. However what was valuable was having all the scenarios explored in detail with good appendixes and notes.

The book sets out to explore “the spiritual revolution claim: that traditional forms of religion, particularly Christianity, are giving way

to holistic spirituality, sometimes still called ‘New Age’.” This method utilizes a simple formulation or contrast:

Life—as forms of the sacred, which emphasize a transcendent source of significance and authority to which individuals must conform at the expense of the cultivation of their unique subjective-lives, are most likely to be in decline;

Subjective-life forms of the sacred, which emphasize inner sources of significance and authority and the cultivation of sacralization of unique subjective-lives, are most likely to be growing!

The cultural context is summarized in the notion of the “subjective turn.”

The researchers endeavour to discover whether in Kendal personal experiences fare better than conformity to higher truths, using a variety of methodological tools grading the likely future prospects for the holistic milieu, religions of experiential humanity, religions of difference and religions of humanity. Not surprisingly the first-named appear the healthiest, conforming with national trends.

In real numbers, of course, the results remind us of another comparison—more people attend church on Sunday than football matches on Saturday.

At the time of our study 2,207 people (or 7.9 percent) were active in the congregational domain of Kendal, and 600 people (or 1.6 percent) in the holistic milieu of Kendal and environs. So we can say with some confidence that during a typical week in 2001 there were five times as many people involved in the congregational domain as there were in the holistic milieu.

They conclude: “although claims of a spiritual revolution are exaggerated, a major shift has occurred in the sacred landscape.”

The remainder of the book is an explanation of this “speculation scenario.” The many and various surveys of church attendance and belief are treated fully, as is the evidence from the US. “We conclude that even though the United States may not be quite as ‘exceptionally’ religious as some like to claim, its congregational domain is significantly more robust than in Great Britain: involving three times more of the population, and declining less quickly.” The fact that it is more fashionable gives believers/belongers/members greater confidence in participating.

There is fascinating material on the cultural effects of the perceived shift from “life-as religion” to more “subjective-life spirituality,” in

terms of provision of goods, books and newspaper articles. “Regarding magazines, our visits to W.H. Smith show that it stocks few (if any) which mention Christianity, let alone dwells on it.” This extends to the fields of education and health where (traditional) religion is played down by key, professional providers.

With the decline of sacred capital, problems of cultural transmission of the cultural momentum appears to have shifted dramatically in favour of the subjectivization thesis. But this is where the essential problem of the study lies: the authors seem to have made up their minds before they began their research. The text is peppered with value-laden words and phrases. Even the photographic section in the middle has numerous photos of holistic centres in Kendal, but only two photos of Christian communities. One is a picture of Kendal’s medieval parish church leader, “Imposing authority,” the second a picture of five elderly attenders, all female. Age and gender are key factors, but it cuts both ways: the holistic communities are also overwhelmingly female, and many are in the 40–59 age group.

Equally of the many distinguished advisers, Steve ... is singled out for a “special debt of gratitude,” whilst we read of the congregational domain of Kendal: “Rather than being encouraged to ‘become themselves,’ those who participate in this domain are expected to conform their lives to higher authority. They are ‘hearers,’ ‘followers,’ ‘disciples,’ ‘servants,’ ‘children’ and ‘sheep.’” (!)

That this is a trend in modern academia, there is little doubt. But it spoils what is otherwise a very comprehensive and informative study.

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*Gardens of the Gods: Myth, Magic and Meaning*, by Christopher McIntosh. London: I.B. Taurus, 2005. 203pp., £16.99, paper, ISBN 9781860647406.

Inspired by a meeting in 1976 with Ian Hamilton Finlay, creator of the Scottish symbolic garden “Little Sparta” (formerly “Stonypath”) Christopher McIntosh began a personal quest to explore religious, mystical and philosophical meanings of gardens. In this engagingly written book he records his discoveries and offers wide-ranging observations to a general readership.

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While not a comprehensive handbook of garden-related mythology and symbolism, the book serves as an informative sampler of the blending of art and nature to express mystical and religious meanings. History, philosophy, politics, horticulture, sculpture and architecture all come in for discussion, alongside Eastern metaphysics, classical mythology and Christian iconography, astrology and alchemy, freemasonry and Rosicrucianism. A number of classic or typical gardens are described at first hand, many of them illustrated with black-and-white photographs.

In chapter one a universal symbolic language of gardens is sketched, drawn from shared metaphors, images and symbols, yet allowing enormous variations and individual responses. Form, objects, and plants are offered as the three main “parts of speech” in the language of gardens. “The vocabulary of that language has no end, as it has been reinvented many times in history and continues to be created.” There are, however, certain recurring motifs (paradise, centre, thresholds, trees and woods, seasonal and daily cycles, stones, grottoes and caves, water, labyrinths and mazes, play and journeys for example), which readers will recognize as familiar general paradigms or archetypes from the realms of myth and religion.

Chapters two to ten describe a selection of gardening traditions and specific sites to show in greater detail their symbolic structures, features and meanings. These include Chinese, Japanese and Islamic examples, pagan and Christian motifs in European gardens, Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo styles, and a number of British and European gardens (with a small selection from the USA), illustrating developments from the 18th century onwards. For exploring garden symbolism in today’s world readers are reminded that Internet searches can reveal a number of relevant sites, often with explanatory information and even virtual tours.

After dealing up to this point with humanly-created garden art and symbolism, McIntosh turns in chapter eleven to the part played by nature itself. This he sees “both as a kind of text full of divine meaning if we know how to read it and interpret its manifold layers, and as a realm full of conscious entities and living energies that can work in partnership with us if we are sufficiently sensitive to them” (136). Compared with the depth of detail in previous chapters, this chapter is something of a disappointment. In looking at nature’s contribution to garden spirituality McIntosh draws largely from an esoteric fringe: bio-dynamics, gardening by moon and zodiac signs, compan-

ion planting, *feng shui* and ley lines, nature spirits and energies. But more mainstream examples of the spirituality and worshipfulness implicit in garden cultivation could well have been offered. These might include the personal commitment (often intense, even fanatical) of leisure-time gardeners, the lore and expertise of farmers, the passion for nature's wonders exhibited by botanists, horticulturalists, cell-biologists and geneticists, and the zealotry displayed by today's advocates of biodiversity, ecology, self-sufficiency and the like.

Clearly the contribution of nature itself to the sacredness of gardens requires another book, or many books, setting the subject in a wider context including, for instance, primal beliefs and taboos associated with food-production, pantheism and nature mysticism, herbalism and health, and present-day movements of green theology and eco-spirituality. It is a vast area for exploration. However, despite the limitations of this particular work, the author's enthusiasm and sensitivity will warm the hearts of all garden-lovers, and help readers not familiar with the subject to look with fresh interest at gardens old and new.

A final chapter offers practical suggestions for creating one's own garden, using some of the insights and approaches described in the book, and a short appendix lists a sampling of plants and explains their symbolic meanings and associations in lore and legend. Overall, the book is a timely reminder of a fundamental yet taken-for-granted area of human activity and experience, from which we not only obtain our material nourishment but can also draw rich resources of spiritual meaning and profound pleasure.

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*Buried Spirituality*, by Phil Rankin. Salisbury: Sarum College Press, 2005. 102pp., £7.50, paper, ISBN 095348369X.

The book recounts the discoveries Phil Rankin made while researching the Spirituality of Young People in Britain. The research explored how young people thought and knew about spirituality, the spiritual realm, and religion, reflected on what young people think about the meaning of these three areas, and explored the values of young people, and how these are influenced by Christianity within the multicultural society all



age groups share. “They have values and beliefs and a way of existing in the world.” The book seeks to advise youth work in the churches, for which the proportion of workers is currently growing, even though the number of young people in church continues to decline.

I suggest that his research is a moment in the continuing trajectory of society’s alienation from the church, in order to pursue its own spirituality. The religion he draws out from the shadows in these young people continues the developments articulated by the writers he cites, such as Alistair Hardy and David Hay, as well as those he doesn’t, such as Edward Bailey, Batson and Ahern. He is in fact researching the current, majority spiritual attitude of the UK.

Before reporting his research, his slim book attempts to define Spirituality, in a way that allows religious lifestyles to be included, while looking beyond the boundaries of any one faith. He notes that the terms should not exclude systems of thought which contain no concept of the Transcendent. He cites a Nursing paper by John Fisher (1999) that defined spirituality as “being to do with what helps an individual find unity and purpose in life.” Finally he approved of Sandra Schneider’s Feminist perspective that recognized the purposive use of the term: Spirituality directs one’s life towards one’s perception of “ultimate value” and is therefore a long-term, deliberate pursuit, that cannot be construed from any occasional religious experience.

Rankin determined to allow his own definition to emerge from the interviews. He approached small groups of young people from across the British Isles, in public places where their posture demonstrated ownership, so that any power remained in their hands. He wanted to achieve equality with them, and become “part of that small society for a time.” He found, as have previous researchers in the fields of religious experience and spirituality, “All that I needed to do was to be (in their space) and ask some searching questions.”

His two questions were:

“Would you perceive yourself to be spiritual?” and

“What do you think the word ‘spiritual’ means?”

He made notes on the encounters soon after they took place, categorized and coded the answers, then attempted to develop a theory.

The key characteristic was “a high degree of uncertainty,” paralleled I think by Batson’s “Quest” form of being religious. “Responses were filled with don’t knows and significant pauses for thought,” as had



been found by Ahern twenty years earlier.

Religious festivals were hardly mentioned, but neither were horoscopes, the Zodiac, reading your stars, fortune cards or fortune telling, but several young people did talk about “being guided and knowing what they were meant to do.”

“Spiritual” was given a wide variety of meanings. One group spoke of “believing in God and religion, that there’s a spiritual world or something.” Others spoke about guidance from the dead, but there were no mentions of seeing ghosts. Some spoke of “people’s spirits,” implying there is an aspect of person. in addition to body and mind, that never dies. To some, there was a “spiritual world connected to the one that we live in... something more than this world.” It could be something to do with God, but “more than being religious.” Others remained materialistic: one commented that we can “feel spiritual even if there isn’t something more than what’s in this world,” and another firmly said “There’s no such thing as spiritual. Everything is part of the world, what you can see and whatever....”

In contrast to earlier research by, for example, David Hay, Rankin no longer found any divide between “spiritual” and “religious,” but the religious forms they spoke about were still predominantly Christian and usually mentioned in very negative terms. “Religion has been such a negative force in the world. I believe there’s a God but I’d never go to church again. Christians only make it harder to see God, to experience things. Christianity puts such a load of shit around God.” Christian worship appeared false and its teachings baseless and “irrelevant, doesn’t change anything, ... (it) tells people what to believe rather than helping them to know God.” Interestingly, he detected no apathy regarding church, but high expectations unmet by the reality they perceived. “I want the freedom to choose and to think for myself” was taken as a typical comment expressing a hunger for faith and a frustration with the Church.

The questions he asked led the young people to tell him some experiences:

several spoke of an inside knowing of what their course in life should be, a few about the presence of God in exciting worship, and one performed a “magic” that healed his dying grandmother.

They openly recognized that nobody has an adequate language with which to grapple with the spiritual, thus indicating some glimmer of ineffability.

The meaning they gave to any experience mattered more than the experience itself, because it shows how to live now, just as was found by the Religious Experience Research Centre thirty years ago. Often the young people communicated a sense of ongoing communion with their fellow beings and with the Spirit, within which prayer was a natural and real part of life, and in which logic, emotion and intuition were integrated.

He concludes that Spirituality is not so much a person's convictions, but their engagement with the deep questions posed by life.

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*Time to Listen: Christian Roots, Contemporary Spirituality*, by Linda Barley. London: Church House Publishing, 2006. 72pp., £6.99, paper ISBN 9780715141021; *Time to Listen: Churchgoing Today* by Linda Barley. London: Church House Publishing, 2006. 72pp., £6.99, paper, ISBN 9780715141038.

These slim texts are the first two in a series designed to look in detail at the contemporary church and to suggest ways in which it might appropriately respond to the challenge of "making the gospel fresh for every generation," as the Archbishop of Canterbury says in his foreword. I will take both together as they share common themes and objectives. The author is now Head of Research and Statistics for the Church of England and has worked formerly for the Bank of England as a statistician amongst her other roles. I have to admit that I find her use of statistics somewhat repetitive, but, on the other hand, this is an attempt to respond to the criticism that much church thinking does not have a proper evidence base, so one has to expect a high dosage of such material and it does provide a useful resource. I am also concerned that, at first sight, this appears to be yet another exercise in "rallying the troops," and convincing the faithful remnant of churchgoers and clergy like myself that all is not yet lost, despite all the evidence to the contrary. One could easily focus on the negative trends highlighted by both texts and reach the conclusion that the picture is one of continued and inexorable decline in church attendance and allegiance, and that it is only a matter of time before "the last one out turns off the lights!" Achieving a realistic balance between the positive and the negative is no easy task and identifying signs of hope in the midst of a largely

depressing scenario is always a precarious exercise.

I reached the end of the books and found myself neither particularly excited nor encouraged. Why was this? First, I suppose, being a practising parish priest I can recognize much of what the author relates in terms of positive responses to the efforts of the faithful to encourage either lapsed churchgoers back or new potential members to join. She uses real life examples of congregations who have tried new and innovative services and methods, much in the way of other literature in this field. This is fine, as far as it goes, and it is reasonable to share good practice in order to encourage others, but it does tend to gloss over the deeper problems of resources and sustainability. Exactly how much of this can be supported over time, given the problems of finance and staffing that the churches now face?

Second, I was disappointed by the lack of analysis of the underlying questions that haunt such statistics. The opening volume does refer to work such as the Kendal research into so-called alternative spiritualities (9) but does not delve more deeply into the issue of how human beings now perceive themselves, apart from repeating the well-worn adage that faith is becoming more private and centred on the personal needs of the individual.

Third, she gives much attention to the notion of listening to the nation, to the local and to the past, but yet still returns to a very church-based and traditional understanding of the tasks of ministry. Her “signs of hope” are people’s propensity to pray, to search for contemporary symbols which express key moments in their lives, high attendance at special festivals, notably Christmas, and a concentration upon providing events for children and families. It feels as though we are doing the same old things, but perhaps a little more effectively and imaginatively. So it is very much “business as usual.”

Fourth, I find her unbelievably dismissive of any form of social or political engagement. She quotes a national journalist who criticizes the church for being taken over by social commentators and getting mixed up in the issues of poverty and unemployment rather than sticking to its own safe territory of “spirituality,” and clearly has much sympathy with this attack. If she is serious in her ambition of “developing a faith vocabulary that has meaning to the significant numbers of unchurched and dechurched” (39), then I suggest that she gives attention to the public concern for matters of human and environmental justice that engage many outside traditional church bound-

aries. Putting faith into action by showing that it has something important to offer to public life is at the heart of the gospel, rather than being a diversion.

Fifth, the author rightly states that we fall too easily into the trap of taking church attendance as the barometer of church life, but so many of her statistics do exactly this, and she sometimes offers dubious generalizations only to follow them up with figures that do not relate to the point she is trying to argue. For instance, in the first volume she says, “the status of religion in Britain is progressively reverting to a private religion of individual experience” (35), but then supports this (or not) by the decline in numbers being baptized.

The second text is a case of more of the same: figures for church attendances appearing once again (18, 19, 20, 21, 22 etc), but punctuated by occasional references to the more substantial debates. For instance:

There remains an important place for church attendance in the evolving spiritual marketplace in modern-day Britain, but our consumer society has encouraged people to participate only in activities and events that provide personal satisfaction. Gone is the era of attending church services through a sense of duty either to the church, the community or the family. (37)

Apart from the fact that this generalization is again open to challenge, and that it is something that is not, and possibly cannot be, backed up by empirical evidence, it does not address the wider theological question of whether or not, if true, it is a good thing or a bad thing. One imagines the author is suggesting it is the latter, but then her only real response is highly ambiguous. “We need to work with the modern consumer approach while not being dominated by it” (44). One might wonder what this means in practice, and quite how and where one is to draw the line between appropriate and inappropriate acts of worship. Perhaps the next text in the series, “Community Value,” will offer a more outward-looking approach, and rely less heavily on the statistics when the theological questions start to impinge.

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*Flirting with Monasticism: Finding God on Ancient Paths*, by Karen E. Sloan. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2006. 163pp, \$13.00, Paper, ISBN 9780830836024.

Karen Sloan is a young American woman, now a Presbyterian minister and a chaplain on an American University campus. This book is an account of her meeting with a Christian tradition very different from her own and what she learned from this. She grew up in what she calls an “evangelical megachurch,” which she says was “a blessing of incredible teaching and exceptional music.” She worked in children’s summer camps and “continued to encounter Jesus and learned to value prayer, Bible study and evangelism.” After three one-hour sessions she was baptized and “welcomed as an official member of the Church.” She writes, “During short-term mission trips to Mexico and poor urban areas nearby, the Holy Spirit moved my heart to focus my life on things of lasting significance.”

It was through a series of unexpected circumstances that she came into contact with the Roman Catholic Dominican Order of Friars. She found her “core passions” at the centre of their life: authentic community, an attraction to spiritual formation through prayer and study, and the preaching of the Gospel in word and deed. This world was “obviously rather different in many ways from the evangelical world,” but she persisted with it, motivated by her meeting with Fran, a candidate for the Dominican novitiate, of whom she became seriously fond. He invited her to visit him at the Catholic Church in San Francisco where he would spend his novitiate year, and an experienced Dominican priest described Fran’s Investiture to her, at which he received the Habit, a ceremony only attended by Dominicans.

She attends “quiet days” and a retreat at a Benedictine Abbey near Los Angeles. “There is so much of ourselves that can be discovered through such times of intentional living.” She wrestles with some memories of events earlier in her life: stealing sugar in childhood, her “sugar monsters,” her parents’ divorce. Unexpectedly she sees Fran again, and attends the offices at his church. These formed a contrast to “the personal quiet time” she had been taught to have, and to her “struggle to live faithfully in isolation.”

She continues to participate in Dominican services, which include “eucharistic adoration” before the sacrament. She finds difficulty in following the mass (no handouts and no pew Bibles). Her own Chris-

tian fellowship group did not place much emphasis on attending church or celebrating communion. She learns to love the Dominican world, and immerses herself in it.

Karen had visited Palestine and encountered there and elsewhere Catholic devotion to Mary and the use of the Rosary (which she found difficult). After “an encounter” with Mary during a time of prayer she “had the sense that somehow Jesus’ mother, Mary, was watching over and caring for me.” She writes to Fran, now Brother Emmanuel. She realizes she needs to let go of him, but she continues to explore what Dominican community life holds for her. She discovers the part that Art can play in assisting and also challenging a spiritual journey, and the importance of “tying together images and words.” She sees Brother Emmanuel and says goodbye to him.

Karen’s account ends with her being present at Brother Emmanuel’s first profession of vows, a ceremony which greatly moved her. Making vows of this kind was foreign to her Christian tradition, and the ritual raised questions for her. “The Christian circles I have moved in don’t feature substantial structures for shared Christian commitment. Though I treasure the memory of when I asked Jesus into my heart, how do we go beyond this, living with others as we hold Jesus in our hearts?” She found the most startling aspect of the vows made was seeing the candidates prostrate, face down on the ground. “This gesture of prayerful surrender to God is unforgettable.”

Parts of this book are written in a rather breathless girlish tone, and this does not always make it easy to read. Neither is it always clear at what place Karen is, or what stage she has reached at college or seminary; there is a lack of context to her story. She gives the impression that in some respects her life has been rather narrow, and wrapped up in an unexamined spirituality of self-improvement. In her Preface, she says, “As an outsider writing about the Dominican world, I have intentionally chosen not to attempt a critique...my story leaves out some of the less pleasant aspects of life in an order.” Does she really regard the Roman Catholic and Dominican worlds as being above public criticism?

The picture she draws of her religious self is at times perceptive, but it can also be clichéd and pious. We are left uncertain about her personal life too. We might have valued hearing more, for instance, about matters which only rate a mere mention; her parents’ divorce, her problems with socializing at school, her learning disabilities. She

is not at all socially aware. On her visit to “ancient Christian communities in Palestine,” the only matter she records here that shocked her was a village church’s “enormous mosaic of the Virgin of Guadalupe.” She has a fine sense of what it means to be a Christian, but very little sense of what it means to be a member of the Church. All the books she reads are heavily Christian, all her friends seem to be prayer partners. She never mentions any enlightening novels she’s read, or enjoyable films or plays she’s seen, or baseball matches she attended. There is not much fun, joy or humour in her book.

There is however one outstanding and brave quality about Karen’s book. She is enormously courageous in one particular respect: that of crossing the Protestant-Catholic divide. The cover of her book proclaims, “This is a love story,” and it reminds one of Bishop George Appleton’s insight that we cannot understand another Church, denomination, religion, unless we are half in love with it. Karen’s loving, generous heart, her genuine search for new ways to pray, and for new paths found in (for her) unexpected quarters to bring her closer to God, are deeply impressive. Judging from the account of her friendship with Brother Emmanuel, and her interview with Sister Antoniana of the Sisters of Life, the process sadly was not a mutual, two-way one. I’m sure they would have had as much to learn from Karen as she did from them.

She writes at the end of her account, “Finding the right path of obedience to the needs of our community and the needs of our personal formation requires much humility and discernment.” This is truly and finely said, and she herself has been able to journey along this challenging ecumenical road creatively because she herself has these qualities. The last sentence of her engaging book also tells us something else she has learned from her adventure: “my advice is that novices are best left undisturbed.”

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*African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, by Laurenti Magesa. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997. 304pp., \$26.00, paper, ISBN 9781570751059.

Laurenti Magesa offers a clear statement of the goal of this book: he proposes “to describe the system of moral theology and ethics of African Religion” (1). This is not, then, a book about implicit religion, nor is it an ethnography of either particular African religions or of an existing African Christian movement. It is, rather, the systematic statement of Magesa’s project to elevate a particular version of (some) common themes in African religious life (including among Christians) into a theology with which Christian theologians can dialogue.

Reviewing such a systematic project in a journal devoted to “implicit religion” is perhaps justified by Magesa’s proposal that the “moral perspectives of African Religion are essentially alive throughout the continent.” By this he means that although people might be Christians, Muslims or Atheists, as Africans they are still rooted in “African Religion” and see the world through this (alleged) perspective. Magesa wants to celebrate the underlying substrata of “tradition” where others have decried partial conversion. He thinks that African Religion (a singular entity he claims to find across the continent in various forms) can “tell us [something] about being children of God.” What it tells us is to do with “desiring and living the abundant life that is the gift of God to humanity.”

After an introductory chapter defining “African Religion,” there are six chapters all constellating around the notion of an abundant life. First Magesa tells us about “The Moral Universe” of myths, morals, values, ancestors, and relationality. Then he writes about “The Mystic of Life,” found in communion with ancestors, engagement with procreation and initiation, growing up within families and communities. The abundant life is rooted in “The Vital Force” and requires a chapter about marriage and sexuality, and the continuity of relationships beyond death.

These thoroughly relational understandings of life and the world are in conflict with “The Enemies of Life,” wrongdoers, witches and affliction. Having recognized the existence and influence of these enemies as theological issues, Magesa offers a chapter on “Restoring the Life Force” in prayer, divination, sacrifice, mediumship and reconciliation rites.

A final chapter discusses “Political Ethics” concerned with law, order, reconciliation, redress and community. Each of these chapters powerfully, passionately and carefully presents a view of what it means to Magesa to be an African Christian. Certainly what he writes about is a practice or a living experience rather than a doctrinal system. This re-imagines doing theology in the midst of living. It is not so far from the project of Liberation Theology. However, whatever its merits as a theological moral system, this cannot be recommended as a work about implicit, popular, vernacular, or indigenous religions.

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*The Art of the Sacred: an introduction to the aesthetics of art and belief*, by Graham Howes. London: IB Tauris, 2007. 190 pp., hardback £42.00, ISBN 9781845110055; paper £17.99, ISBN 9781845110062.

The relationship between art and religion has a long and important history. Graham Howes’ book *The Art of the Sacred* offers a comprehensive introduction to this highly rich and provocative subject. A long-time student of the subject, and an Emeritus Fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he taught the sociology of religion, Howes is well placed to properly understand and explain the important connections between these two disciplines. Howes’ book covers several subjects (in a combination of theology, sociology, and art-history) including: the four dimensions of art, the relationship between art and buildings, the connection between patron and artist, artists as professors of faith, and art and religion in the Victorian age, along with some original quantitative and qualitative research among visitors to the “Seeing Salvation: images of Christ” exhibition at the National Gallery.

Perhaps one of the more invigorating aspects of Howes’ book, however, is the chapter dealing with art and spirituality. Though taken from a primarily Christian perspective, Howes offers a great insight in dealing with newer forms of art expression, for example Bill Viola’s video installations and the work of Antony Gormley. In this analysis Howes expounds the viewpoint that religious art will become less prevalent as so few artists now claim to hold any religious affilia-

tion and so will not necessarily be clued into the religious symbolism that was so apparent for earlier artists. Yet art, Howes contends, while quoting Otto, still has the power to invoke feelings of the numinous in people, and will therefore always have some part to play in human nature. Indeed, Howes argues, it is more than likely that now artists are going to tap into the “spiritual” rather than the overtly religious in their work.

This creates the exciting possibility of being able to look at art through the lens of implicit religion, for once it is accepted that art need not meet religion in the traditional sense, but can come into relationship through the much wider avenues of people’s own implicit religion, a whole new dimension of work can open up.

This is an excellent book that must make essential reading for all those who are interested in the historical relationship between religion and art.

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*Is Christ a Christian? On Inter-Religious Dialogue and Intra-Religious Horizon*, by Per Lønning. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002. 254pp., hardback €44.90, ISBN 9783525562253. *Forschungen zur systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie*, Band 100.

As the subtitle indicates, this book is an attempt to scrutinize the meaning of inter-religious dialogue by correlating it with the dialogue on this dialogue within the horizon of one’s own religious identity. Since the dialogue between religions implies by definition that the people who speak and opt for dialogical rather than antagonistic approaches share the faith of particular communities and traditions, it is unavoidable that this faith needs to be examined in the light of actual dialogues. Whether we think of the motives and goals of dialogical encounters, or of their effects and consequences, they hinge on the implicit relationship between one’s own and other religions, both as this relationship encourages (and discourages) inter-religious dialogues, and as it becomes explicit in the course of their development. There may be other reasons to engage in these dialogues, but to be religious they have to be supported by one’s own religion. And conversely, if to be in dialogue means to be listening, the message we

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hear requires that we cope with the questions and insights that are part of it. Whatever the religious background and faith may be with which we begin, to engage in inter-religious dialogues means that we return to them and check their dialogical potential as thoroughly as possible. “In order to become operative, the inter-religious adventure must be preceded, surrounded and followed by a network of intra-religious reflections” (13). The reciprocal recognition of this procedure by different religions “may finally be indispensable for any prosperous development of inter-religious dialogue” (14). To comply with this expectation, it stands to reason that we anticipate and recall the practice of inter-religious dialogues in the form and practice of intra-religious dialogue.

When Lønning places his considerations under the provocative title, “Is Christ a Christian?,” he wants to indicate that this question is the central issue of the Christian version of intra-religious dialogue. As a “real question” (12) it points, not only to the possibility that others might ask “Is Buddha a Buddhist?,” “Is Mohammed a Muslim?” (12), and so on, in order to discover a corresponding dynamics of intra-religious orientation, but also guides us to the “question within the question” as the “ultimate issue” (12) of Christian participants.

By concentrating on the intra-religious dimension of religious plurality and, more specifically, by considering the impact of dialogical experiences on the development of the Christian theology of religions, the author intends “to lay foundations essential for ‘inter-religious’ dialogue” (13). To comply with this intention, he sketches the development of inter-religious dialogue in connection with a discussion of its motives, experiences, and consequences, in three chapters: 1. *Toward a Joint Enterprise?*, 2. *Expectations to Dialogue*, 3. *Dialogue on Dialogue—How It Started* (16–59). Since the author, now bishop *emeritus* of the diocese of Bergen (Norway), has served as a member of the Structure Committee which proposed “a particular Dialogue Unit in the World Council of Churches” in 1971, and because he has been actively involved in the development of the “WCC Dialogue program” from Nairobi (1973) to Vancouver (1983), he is eminently equipped to discuss this issue. And inasmuch as he acknowledges the developments in the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) as well, his approach is ecumenical rather than partisan. Since the idea of inter-religious dialogues brings the whole of Christianity into focus, the intra-religious horizon of Christian par-

ticipants has to be understood accordingly.

The spirit of ecumenical thinking manifests itself especially in the following chapter (4. Dialogue on Dialogue—Actual Positions, 60–140) in which the author presents and assesses the main positions which, on the Christian side, mark the present struggle with inter-religious dialogue. The discussion follows by and large the scheme of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, but centers primarily on “pluralist” (62ff) and “inclusivist” (94ff) approaches. Authors which receive particular attention are John Hick, Paul Knitter, David Krieger, Michael von Brück, Reinhold Bernhardt, on the one hand, and Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, John Cobb Jr., on the other. But we find also valuable remarks on Raimundo Panikkar, Stanley Samartha, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg and many others. Looking back on this chapter, one can agree with Lønning: “The importance of locating *inter-religious* dialogue in a setting of *intra-religious* reflection has been—indirectly, but strongly—confirmed by our review of contemporary Christian discussion on the relationship with non-Christian faiths” (141).

Since the distinction of an intra-religious horizon applies in principle to all religions, the next chapter (5. Dialogue: Religion and Religions, 141–206) is used to “visit major faith communities particularly involved in the dialogue process” (141), and to inquire about their understanding of other religions. The “partners for dialogue” are Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and, strongly inspired by the WCC conference in Vancouver, Indigenous Religions. The chapter begins with a reflection on the concept of religion which is not only interesting because it favours the “ultimate concern” approach of Paul Tillich (in contrast to that of Wilfred Cantwell Smith), but also because it underlines the author’s proximity to the “motif research” of the Lundensian school (Anders Nygren, Gustaf Aulén).

The next chapter (6. Dialogue and Biblical Orientation, 207–242) discusses the “biblical resources for a contemporary Christian reflection on dialogue,” in order to show “how appropriate, promotive questions may be asked to and through the old texts, questions which safeguard the authenticity of the historical texts—as of our contemporary reception” (141). These inquiries are followed by a brief discussion of syncretism (217ff) and the implicit theology of religion(s) (220ff). These two sections are particularly important because they connect the plurality of religions with basic religious questions, such

as: “What is the ultimate destiny of humanity?—and : how does my own religion contribute to fulfilling this aim?” (220). Religions are different and similar inasmuch as they cope with the common problem of salvation in specific ways. In defining itself in terms of “a basic (‘ultimate’) human quest, a religion decides also on the role of other religions and stages its own relationship with them” (223). The diverging answers to converging questions bring up the issue of truth and tolerance in connection with the demands of identity and integrity, and require the practice of dialogue to understand itself along these lines. “The integrity of dialogue demands that the conviction of a constitutive identity be kept intact, Truth cannot be changed for reasons other than truth. Substance can only be questioned through substantial reflection” (228).

The last chapter (7. Dialectic of Dialogue, 230–242) centres on equality and reciprocity as the main prerequisites for dialogue: “equal right and duty for each of the partners to present their own identity as they themselves sense it, with corresponding acceptance of the same right/duty for the partner(s)” (231). Neither pluralism nor fundamentalism provides a basis for dialogue, if the first ignores the truth claims of faith communities, and the second forbids unrestricted openness. “Faith commitment must be present, and at the same time absent in the conversation” (231). Lønning opts for a dialectical understanding of inter-religious dialogue in which the “grammar of dialogue” takes shape “*en route*” (235), with the possibility of “split solutions” (240) and a strong emphasis on the “developing process” (241). “Interfaith exchange can progress only when constantly enriched in two-way communication with its intra-faith pendant” (241). Is Christ a Christian? The answer is Yes and No, because Christ, as focus of empirical Christianity, is not identical with Christianity, as social and psychological framework. “In this world of relations and of relativity, truth cannot be seized, exposed and proven as some item safely parked in a proprietor’s land” (242). In the light of dialogical experiences, new insights may be gained through critical self-examination. But “certain things will remain to be seen, and may do so for a good while yet. That is what makes dialogue possible. That is what makes dialogue promising. And that is what makes dialogue urgent” (242).

The idea of connecting inter-religious experiences with intra-religious reflections designates, as Per Lønning has shown, a task of pivotal importance as far as the purpose and the understanding of the

presuppositions of inter-religious dialogue are concerned. His argumentation is to the point and to be highly commended for its balanced and ecumenical approach. Whether the authors he has reviewed in “the contemporary Christian discussion on the relationship with non-Christian faiths” (141) will agree with his assessment of their positions is difficult to say, though it is to be hoped that they will join his trend-setting project. At different points Lønning refers to the cultural dimension of religion and inter-religious relations. What I miss, however, is a contrasting comparison of inter-religious and intercultural dialogues, and a discussion of dialogical truth as it has been initiated by Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber in philosophy.

Likewise, one could argue that the awareness of inter-religious dialogue as a possible form of implicit religion is another feature which would have been highly relevant to the elucidation of inter/intra-religious relations. On the other hand, if we ask for the significance of this book for the study of implicit religion, I think that Lønning’s reference to the “latent theology of religions” (220) points to a feature of explicit religion which, since it is a matter of principle, should be a mark of implicit religion as well. It is an assumption which asks for a closer look. Next to the general interest of how a theologian and churchman understands the inter-religious adventure, it is a strong reason to study this fascinating book.

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*Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives from the World’s Religious Traditions*, edited by Karen Marie Yust, Aostre N. Johnson, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain.  
Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006. 496pp., hardback  
£72.00 ISBN 9780742544628; paper £38. ISBN 9780742544635.

This book is intriguing, challenging and ambitious. It marks three years work by The Center of Spiritual Development, a project launched in 2003 by The Search Institute of Minneapolis. The full project is described as

a major international interfaith initiative exploring spiritual develop-

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ment in childhood and adolescence designed to set the stage for new waves of scholarship and dialogue within and across traditions, disciplines, and cultures that will enrich understanding and strengthen how the world's religious traditions, and others, understand and cultivate the spiritual lives of children and adolescents around the globe.

Believing that “the world's religious traditions have centuries of wisdom regarding the spiritual nurture of children and adolescents, manifested in their narratives, beliefs, and practices” the aim of the current volume is to begin a process to harness that energy.

There is a useful overview and detailed reflection on the rationale behind the whole project. The following piece gives a flavour of this:

As we enter this new millennium three realities press for both articulation and dialogue. First, many religious traditions particularly in the west, are struggling to shape the identity and life journey of the young in pluralistic cultures where shared assumptions, beliefs, and practices cannot be taken for granted. Second, in the midst of this growing pluralism and secularization of society the world's religious traditions no longer have a “corner” on spirituality. In many parts of the world, a growing number of people describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious” and religion is often now viewed in contrast to (not facilitative of) spirituality. Thirdly, although the world has always been religiously diverse, ours is a time when the world's peoples and religion are intermingled through migration, media, and geopolitical engagement.

Given such a broad canvas some fundamental questions immediately spring to mind. How is the slippery concept “spirituality,” a term used in so many different ways by so many different people, traditions, disciplines and cultures, defined? Is work which has been initiated from the distinctive culture of America truly facilitative of a global debate? How are workable parameters drawn around hundreds of world religious traditions in order to produce a useable volume? Do the editors, coming from just two traditions, Christian and Jewish, albeit with strong inter-faith interests, have access to complementary networks in order to design a sufficiently broad process to stimulate and challenge in the manner envisaged? How will external expression of faiths with strong interiority, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, be evidenced and reflected upon across cultures and contexts? In short, at the start of the twenty-first century, how is justice being done to spirituality?

The working definition of spirituality used in the volume (and open to modification as the discussion develops) is as follows:

Spirituality is the intrinsic human capacity for self transcendence in which the individual participates in the sacred—something greater than the self. It propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and ethical responsibility. It is experienced, formed, shaped, and expressed through the wide range of religious narratives, beliefs, and practices, and is shaped by many influences in family, community, society, culture, and nature.

Flowing from this working definition, six core questions, together with subsidiaries, are used to focus individual contributions. Since the structure and flow of the book stem from these they are worth producing here in full.

1. *How do the world's religious traditions understand and view children and adolescents? What is the nature of childhood and adolescence? What role do children and adolescents play in the tradition? How have religious/theological studies within traditions dealt with children and adolescence both historically and currently?*
2. *How do religious traditions understand the process of spirituality or self transcendence in childhood and adolescence? How is spirituality understood to be nourished or to grow within children and adolescents? How does spirituality change across the first two decades of life? What roles do rites of passage play in both shaping and marking this process.*
3. *What rituals and practices within religious tradition nurture the inner spiritual life of children and adolescents? What key rituals, holy days, or celebrations are emblematic of a traditions approach? How are the narratives or stories of a tradition used to shape young people's spirituality? What individual and communal practices by young people are encouraged, nurtured, or taught to cultivate young people's spiritual lives?*
4. *What rituals, practices, and obligations of the spiritual life guide young people to meaning, purpose, and ethical action? How do traditions understand the relationship between spirituality and social/ethical obligations, including service and social action? How does spirituality relate to issues of vocation?*
5. *To whom do the religious traditions assign responsibility for nurturing spirituality (connectedness, meaning, purpose, and ethical responsibility) in children and adolescents? What do religious traditions expect from the community of faith, parents, peers, other adults, and other institutions in nurturing spirituality among children and adolescents?*
6. *How do religious traditions view and address the social, policy, and cul-*

*tural forces that influence child and adolescent spirituality?* How do major social, political and cultural forces and dynamics influence and shape young people's spirituality? How do these forces affect how spirituality is nurtured among children and adolescents?

In order to create a publishable volume the editors have been mindful of the danger to "become overwhelmed and stimulated by the complexity and breadth of the conversation in a diverse, complex and interconnected world." In this, the first phase of their work, they have largely limited their focus to five of the major world religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Sensitive to the need to expand their own Judaeo-Christian and North American perspective, contributions have been gathered from 42 scholars drawn from across the world. Clearly, this has been no mean task and they readily acknowledge the difficulty of finding scholars talking about children and youth or even spirituality in religious traditions beyond their own.

Each of the six sections has an editorial introduction which summarizes contributions, reflects on them and raises perspectives designed to draw the reader into considering ever widening implications. This gives to the book a coherent process to support the vast range of content and avenues of potential exploration. For the reader with a smattering of knowledge of these five world faiths, the editors' work, threaded as it is throughout the volume, is a good place to start. From there one might choose to follow across all six sections a faith tradition either known well or one known less well, or else choose to compare and contrast the span of contribution from different faiths within the one section.

Despite the current interest in spirituality, work has generally focused on adults and relatively little attention has been given to the spiritual lives of children and adolescents. It is not surprising that many of the authors place at least some emphasis on

interpreting spiritual texts important to their tradition in relation to talking about childhood and adolescent spirituality. Bible stories, rabbinic literature, the Qur'an, mythic tales, the Lotus Sutra, the writings of religious forebears, the Vedas, traditional sayings, the Upanishads, and other revered sources are used to shed light on traditional religious understandings and formation of childhood and adolescent spirituality. This similarity makes great sense given the role that inspired texts play in the five major religions represented by the majority of

the authors.

Similarly, “Rituals and ceremonies are the markers along the life cycle that connect the private to the communal, the personal to the transcendent. Practices differ, but in each case, family, community, and religious structure play important roles in nurturing the spiritual life.”

It is disappointing that a contribution from the Hindu perspective is not found in either sections four or six. Are the questions in those sections posed in a way which to the Hindu faith are philosophically difficult? It would be valuable to pursue this. Pleasingly, women are represented among the contributions from Islamic scholars and there is some helpful reflection on different perspectives held within the faith of Islam. Among Christian contributions it is difficult to find a truly pluralistic approach to faith dialogue. The general tension between an inclusive approach to inter-religious encounter (inclusivism recognizing the partial truth of other religions, but seeing one’s own religion as the best or the most comprehensive) and the pluralist approach to inter-religious encounter (pluralism celebrating one particular tradition, but understanding it as one of many valid representations of reality or truth) needs to be more frankly recognized.

The editors are realistic about the current state of the debate.

It is not always clear in the contributions that spiritual nurture, rather than the simple transmission of religious doctrines and practices for institutional survival is the primary goal. ... The wisdom of a specific religious community is generally relegated to perpetuating that tradition among the children of the faithful: it is not often explored by scholars for its interpretive usefulness as we talk about the shape of human societies, the challenges of creating just and caring relationships, and solving the global ecological crisis and the world’s future.

This is balanced by wonderful stories of hope in the sixth section where a beginning is made at exploring the complex intersection of spirituality, social and cultural forces, and childhood and adolescence. For example, we read of the educational work of Rabbis for Human Rights, “teaching the human rights messages in Judaism, Islam and Christianity, both to introduce to students the often neglected, hopeful and more universalistic readings of their own tradition, as well as to break down stereotypes of the religion of the ‘other’.”

The book makes a strenuous plea for further inter-religious engagement not only for its intellectual value but also as an antidote to the

mistrust and misinterpretations that tend to flourish when people of faith remain isolated from one another.

We know that personal relationships and face to face dialogue rather than just co-authoring a book will be essential if we are to move to a deeper level of trust and discourse. Few of us are used to inter religious exchanges. We typically talk with persons in our own traditions or those most closely aligned with ours.

There is an important final chapter in which the editors invite us to expand the conversation by visiting [www.spiritualdevelopmentcenter.org](http://www.spiritualdevelopmentcenter.org) and contributing through one of the discussion boards to be found there.

The elegant layout and a comprehensive index add to the appeal of a book which has made only a beginning, but a sound beginning, to a most fascinating and important debate.

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*Atlas of European Values* by Loek Halman, Ruud Luijkx and Marga van Zundet. Leiden: Brill and Tilburg University, 2005. 140pp, hardback, €141.00/\$210.00, ISBN 9789004144606.

This short article is essentially a review of the *Atlas of European Values*, the details of which are contained in the title. However, in order to “contextualize” the *Atlas*, I have placed this review within a brief account of the work of the European Values Study (EVS) more generally.

A whole generation of social scientists, politicians, policy-makers, and those engaged in Europe in more practical ways, have reason to be grateful to the small group of scholars, who came together at the end of the 1970s in order to initiate a research project concerned with European Values. The group leaders were Ruud de Moor from Tilburg University and Jan Kekhofs from the Catholic University of Leuven; Tilburg University became the operating centre. An outline of this story can be found in the introductory pages of the *Atlas* itself.<sup>1</sup>

The essential points are as follows. The beginnings of the EVS are closely and interestingly linked to the development of Europe as such—it is no coincidence that the project took shape as the elections to the first European Parliament approached. The instigators of the EVS wanted, above all, to find empirical answers to ever more

urgent questions about the moral and social values underpinning belief and behaviour in Europe. How do European populations think about themselves, their societies and each other? What, more precisely, do they have in common and what continues to divide them? Which values are relatively constant in Europe and which are changing, and what effects might these changes have on European ways of thinking? These questions were crucial for a generation for whom World War II—the self-destruction of the continent—had been a reality. Was there an adequate moral base on which to create the institutional machinery of the European Union and how might we find out?

The first empirical enquiries instigated by the EVS took place in 1981 in ten European societies; since then the project has spread to almost the whole of Europe, and indeed beyond, and has been repeated more than once—in 1990 and 1999/2000 (i.e. approximately once a decade). A “big-brother” very quickly materialized in the form of the World Values Survey (WVS) under the direction of Ronald Inglehart from the University of Michigan, in the United States—a truly global endeavour now reaching some 80 societies worldwide.<sup>2</sup> But even in Europe the scale was impressive, yielding an evermore valuable collection of findings, both cross national and longitudinal. Taken together the EVS data sets have enabled an increasingly precise map of moral and social values across Europe—both in the continent as a whole and in its constituent nations. It is also possible to see “Europe” from the outside—a crucially important perspective, especially in terms of religion (see below). No social scientist can afford to ignore this material and the impressive list of publications that have been generated by it.

It is in this context that we should see the *Atlas of European Values*, published by Brill in 2005. Personally commended by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, it is an impressive volume in every sense of the term. Quite apart from anything else, it is visually stunning—beautifully produced by the publishers in a format that displays large amounts of data in a wide range of tables, maps, figures and graphs. These summarize in an accessible form much of the material accumulated so far by the EVS research teams. In short, the *Atlas* is, without doubt, an important marker of the success of the EVS project—it is a publication of which both the EVS team and the publishers should be proud.

Its contents are arranged as follows. First a short introduction, then the data are placed under the following headings: Europe itself, the

family, work, religion, politics, society and well-being. A short epilogue draws the threads together. Each section contains a body of information under different sub-headings, followed by an interpretive essay from a specialist in the field. The formula works well. With this in mind—and given the readership of the journal in which this review will appear—it is worth looking more closely at the section on religion, in order to grasp the potential of this publication and the project that it represents.

The section opens with some general remarks concerning the state of religion in Europe. The tables, maps, figures and graphs that make up this section include the following topics: attendance at church services and private prayer, trust in the church as an institution, the importance of God in people's lives, traditional beliefs, secularization, the relationships between church-going and being religious, and commitment to the church. The section ends with a rather more reflective essay by Theo Schepens (a sociologist of religion from the Faculty of Theology at Tilburg University). Not everyone will agree with his decision to discuss the questions about religion within the distinctively *American* rational choice theory, but this is a minor quibble.

Much more positive is the fact—firmly underlined by the EVS team—that religion remains a significant feature of European society. It is equally clear that Europe, as a global region, is distinctive in terms of its religious life—notably more secular than the United States, for example, let alone the developing world. The editors also note the arrival into Europe of significant numbers of newcomers, among them a sizeable constituency of Muslims. Hence an inevitable question: taken together, might these factors influence the religious life of Europe in hitherto unexpected ways? Might it be possible, for example, for those arriving in Europe from outside to have an appreciable effect on the religious life of the continent? At the time of writing, this possibility is a real one. Whilst it is true that the number of Europeans who are actively engaged in religion continues to decline, religion as such is becoming ever more dominant in public discussion. Such debates, moreover, are clearly related to episodes that are taking place right across the world; their outcomes will effect us all. Regarding the EVS itself, it is important to grasp its full potential. This includes the fact that each of the indicators on religion set out above can be broken down by age, gender or level of education (to mention only the most obvious socio-economic variables). They can



also be plotted for each European nation or for Europe as a whole. They can, thirdly, be correlated against each other, and many other aspects of the EVS data—generational change, questions about gender, political issues, tolerance, solidarity and so on. They can, finally, be studied (singly or together) over time—a possibility that increases with every set of empirical studies. The *Atlas* as such cannot do all of these things (it would very quickly become unwieldy), but it can—and does—indicate the range of possibilities available.

So far, so good. The *Atlas* is a welcome publication from an increasingly well-known group of scholars, whose work is greatly appreciated by a growing number of people. It is not however perfect. Whilst I am very appreciative of the fact that the *Atlas* has been produced for the non-academic as well as academic reader, I think that the editors have gone a bit too far down this road. I am not entirely sure, for example, that the decision to exclude all footnotes and references was correct. If I may take the inclusion of my own work as an illustration—I am flattered to find myself in such a prestigious volume (72), but there is no way of following up this, or indeed any other, reference to the scholars mentioned in the text. A short list of selected publications from the EVS group would also be useful, simply to give the reader an idea of the range of this work and where to find it (not everyone will have easy access to the website). I very much hope that both these suggestions might be included in a second edition, which would also offer an opportunity to correct a more obvious fault—that is the quality of the English. This text is comprehensible, but a book of this quality deserves better. This, in my view, is a classic case of spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar—a careful check by an informed native speaker would have eliminated many of the faults.

It is important, finally, to place the European Values Study in the broader context of research in Europe. It is not the only source of empirical data relating to social and cultural change (including religion) in Europe. A second example can be found in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), favoured by some scholars for technical reasons (its stricter social science controls, excellent archiving, and the fact that the data are released more quickly than is the case with the EVS).<sup>3</sup> The ISSP works by inserting a fifteen-minute supplement on a chosen theme into the regular national surveys in almost forty countries. In 1991 and 1998, the theme was religion, allowing comparison between these dates and between the countries involved

in the programme, a process to be repeated in 2008. My own feeling is that preferences between the EVS and the ISSP are more a question of “horses for courses” than anything else. Both surveys are methodologically sound, and both depend increasingly on the sophistications of modern computer technology, without which this kind of work would simply not be possible. Indeed, it is an advantage that there is more than one team working in the field: each keeps the other on its toes!

Quantitative methods, however, are not the only answer to questions about European Values. The latter can be studied in any number of ways, including small-scale qualitative enquiries. I am currently involved with one that focuses on Welfare and Values in Europe (WaVE).<sup>4</sup> These are complementary rather than contradictory to the large-scale enquiries; used carefully they enable the researcher to build up as complete a picture as possible of the phenomenon that he or she is trying both to describe and to explain—in this case the values that underpin the everyday lives of Europeans. I would be the first to say that the EVS group has played a crucially important role within these cumulative enquiries. It is for this reason that I am delighted to commend the *Atlas of European Values*—it is a fitting publication with which to mark 25 years of patient work: a silver jubilee!

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## Notes

1. A more detailed discussion exists on the website of the European Values Study (<http://www.europeanvalues.nl/index2.htm>). This is a well-maintained site which contains a large amount of information about the EVS project—its genesis and development, its current work, and the ever-growing list of publications that are emerging from it.
2. See <http://wvs.isr.umich.edu> for more information on the World Values Survey and its relationship to the EVS.
3. See [http://www.gesis.org/en/data\\_service/issp/](http://www.gesis.org/en/data_service/issp/).
4. See <http://waveproject.org>.

*The Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Raymond Paloutzian and Crystal Park. New York: The Guildford Press, 2005. 590pp., hardback, £54, ISBN 9781572309227.

This book makes a significant contribution to the psychology of religion and spirituality, adding both breadth and depth to our understanding of this complex and ever-growing field. As the editors suggest, the book is a sign that this discipline has reached a further level of maturity. Many of the foremost researchers and scholars in the area have contributed substantial articles reviewing their areas of expertise. The editors are well-respected in the field and both are past presidents of Division 36 (Psychology of Religion) of the American Psychological Association. Raymond Paloutzian is Professor of Experimental and Social Psychology at Westmount College in Santa Barbara, California, and author of one of the leading textbooks in the psychology of religion. Crystal Park is Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Connecticut, where she focuses on the roles of religious beliefs and religious coping in response to stressful life events.

This book reports on an impressive body of research and will no doubt become a standard reference volume for both veterans and newcomers in the field. It is well-structured for use as a guide to this rapidly expanding area of study. A detailed subject and author index allows readers to quickly locate material on particular subjects and authors. Effective cross-referencing among the chapters permits readers to see important connections between topics and methods of investigation. The editors provide a helpful perspective from which to view developments in the psychology of religion and spirituality. They rehearse the uneven start of the discipline, the subsequent lengthy period of no systematic scientific research in the area, the resurgence of attention to the psychology of religion in the 1960s, and the relatively recent efforts at more sophisticated methods and data-analytical techniques.

To help integrate the diverse sub-fields and methods in an area that lacks an overall theoretical framework, the editors present a number of themes that cut across most of the topics in the handbook. The first theme they identify is the need for an overall framework to guide research and theory. The editors see a multilevel interdisciplinary paradigm emerging that values data analysis at various levels, and avoids reductive assumptions about the nature of religious and spiritual phenomena. This paradigm offsets the view that the explanation

of religious or spiritual phenomena at one level of analysis effectively eliminates explanations of those same phenomena at other levels. For example, phenomena such as religious conversion or mystical experience can in principle be explained at different levels, such as the neuropsychological, psychodynamic, and socio-psychological levels.

Another theme relates to methods and theories in the discipline. Traditionally, the field has had comprehensive theories, but empirical data collected did not relate directly to, nor test, these theories. This situation has changed dramatically over the last thirty years as systematic research has made considerable links between theory and research. At the same time, there have been impressive methodological advances in both quantitative and qualitative methods, expanding beyond customary questionnaires to include interviews, laboratory experiments, participant observation, neuroimaging, real-world physical and mental health outcomes, and combined multiple methods.

A third theme they discuss is that meaning may be a crucial unifying construct in the discipline. Current research in diverse areas of psychology indicate that people's meaning systems are central to their everyday life, and religion holds a unique place as it focuses on what people experience as sacred. Most of the topics covered in this handbook consider either explicitly or implicitly meaning-related concepts.

The range of topics in this volume is astounding, dealing with the relationship between religiousness and spirituality, methods of investigation, measurement in research, religious and spiritual development in childhood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood, contributions from psychodynamic psychology, evolutionary psychology, neuropsychology, cognitive psychology, and social psychology, religious conversion, spiritual transformation, mystical experience, religious ritual, prayer, fundamentalism, morality, religious aspects of coping, the relationship of religion and spirituality to mental health, and religious violence.

Of particular interest to readers of the journal *Implicit Religion* will likely be the chapters relating religiousness and spirituality. Brian Zinnbauer and Kenneth Pargament carefully examine the recent differentiation of spirituality from religiousness and note that both are multidimensional, complex constructs. They criticize the current tendency to polarize these two terms, such that religiousness is confined to the social institutional context and spirituality is viewed as a solely personal phenomenon. They remind us that most studies show

respondents identify themselves as *both* spiritual and religious, although there is a growing subgroup who refer to themselves as “spiritual but not religious.”

It is a little disappointing that the handbook makes no mention of implicit religion when considering the relationship between religion and spirituality, since this concept sheds further light on the subject, as numerous articles in *Implicit Religion* have shown over the last decade. Indeed, there is not even a listing for implicit religion in the handbook index. Apart from this small lacuna, however, the handbook is an extremely valuable reference tool that will help guide the psychology of religion and spirituality into the future.

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*Why Psychology Needs Theology*, edited by Alvin Dueck and Cameron Lee. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. 226 pp., Paper \$24.00/£14.99, ISBN 9780802829078.

“Comprehensive psychological theories of human nature are bound to incorporate some assumptions about ultimate reality ... these theological or a-theological assumptions delimit one's version of the human good” (26).

In the extended argument which comprises the first three chapters of this book, Nancy Murphy claims a place for religious doctrine within the structure of scientific theorizing which, she says, includes psychology; she offers Christianity as an example, and Anabaptist teachings as research data for psychological testing. Her aim is to be as specific as possible about theological teaching as a category of human knowledge open to psychological methodology. As Dr. Murphy is a philosopher, and her main concern the structure of human argument, the suggestion that other ways of thinking may hold together in as convincing a way as scientific psychology sets out to do, and that one of these is actually religious, is obviously of interest to students of religion in its implicit forms, so that this book is heartily recommended to the readers of *Implicit Religion*.

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At the same time I have to say that I found the later part of the book, in which seven other theologically inclined psychologists and sociologists commented on Murphy's ideas, almost as stimulating—and, it has to be said, generally more convincing. To begin with, I was excited by the epistemological respectability promised by “evidence-based” belief; all the same, I had difficulty with Murphy's assurance that the virtuous behaviour being evaluated was in fact unassisted human nature. As Derek McNeil puts it, “Our theological methodology may have some compatibility with a scientific methodology, but I'm not convinced we have retained the ‘good news’” (148). Nor am I!

Not everybody has to deal with this theological problem, however. More criticism comes from the psychological direction, particularly with regard to Duffy's choice of the most objectivist psychological tradition from which to draw her theological conclusions. Her argument is that psychology “needs” theology, to remind it of what is true according to a different paradigm, thereby broadening the scope of available knowledge. She draws attention to attempts (her own and others') to establish the credibility of her idea from a psychological point of view, arguing that if such a thing is shown to be possible, then she will have demonstrated psychology's dependence on theology, for the establishment of a connection with the over-arching and inclusive dimension which is the final and original end of every kind of human understanding; that is, its religious identity, “The ethics which requires us to choose among competing accounts of the ultimate purpose of human life, a question that calls for a theological answer” (26).

Unfortunately, the answer provided by Murphy and her associates turns out to lack originality, in that it depends far too much on the reversal of her actual proposition. Most of the first part of the book concentrates on efforts to demonstrate theology's need for psychology, rather than the other way round, in line with two generations' valiant efforts to define an authentically “clinical” theory. Thus, from an Implicit Religion point of view, it uses the wrong kind of psychology, to try and establish the wrong kind of religion. If psychology needs theology, it is to help it acknowledge its own implicit religiosity, and so wean itself from the experimentalism which has for so long limited its worldview. When Professor Murphy tells us that “The task is essentially to re-write personality theories and theories of social interaction in the light of theology” (57) we are bound to ask, Whose theories?

She is ready for this, however, specifying early on her intention to use her own Radical-Reformation theological tradition in order to test her theory. From this viewpoint, Christ's redemption of the world has extended humankind's ability to transcend itself in ways which are straightforwardly open to scientific measurement. The result is a kind of biologically grounded altruism, according to which loving behaviour shown to enemies and detachment from worldly satisfaction (for example) can be regarded as among the achievements of a transformed humanity, and consequently are testable to the same extent as anything else which is human. Marie Clements and Alexandra Mitchell write about "The application of a radical-reformation theology to psychology" (80); unfortunately, what is described here may well appear to many psychologists and theologians—and particularly people who combine the two disciplines in other ways than that suggested—as another example of the collusion which can exist between fundamentalists.

Professor Duffy doesn't have everything her own way, however. Part II, "Alternative to the Model," contains contributions from those who are so disenchanted by psychology's chronic obsession with scientific methods that they are completely out of sympathy with this project from the beginning. Frank Richardson, for example, reminds us of the way that real life differs from science by being "A dialectical process in which both the object (meaning of events) and our knowledge of it (interpretations) are continually transformed," so that, "we are immersed in and deeply connected to this process rather than essentially detached from it" (191); while from the theological side, Brent Slife states boldly that "The important and valuable things in materialistic science are tangible, visible and substantial, making it impossible for a theistic 'Holy Spirit' to matter in this context" (175).

As a whole, this book represents a wide range of viewpoints and reflects much psychological and theological wisdom. I sincerely hope it will give rise to genuine debate rather than being relegated to the limbo reserved for attempts to argue theology's case for being taken seriously by other disciplines.

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*The Multiple Natural Origins of Religion*, by Richard Clark. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2006. 417pp., paper, €72.00/\$104.95, ISBN 9783039107452 / US-ISBN 9780820480053.

At what stage in the evolutionary development of *homo sapiens* did patterns of social and personal behaviour emerge which might be viewed as examples of implicit religion? A creationist will argue that Adam was aware of God from the very beginning, but others who hold a faith and reconcile it with modern evolutionary theory, need to explore other answers.

Some of these answers may be found in Richard Clark's book, "The Multiple Natural Origins of Religion." He approaches the subject from the perspective of atheism, yet, unlike Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion*, Clark has not written a polemic.

He declares at the very start that his programme is unequivocally reductionist and that he aligns himself with an uncompromisingly rationalist stance. Despite this clear declaration, many holding a faith will find the book a thought-provoking and well-sourced attempt to explain religion in terms of evolutionary theory, much of which, certainly in its analysis of neural science, the theist might find helpful.

Clark notes the important role religion has played and still plays in a social context and he takes seriously the human quest for knowledge of the afterlife. He also accepts the validity and importance of subjective supernatural experience, although he stresses that he seeks "to explain belief in the supernatural while leaving out of account the possibility of a real supernatural realm or a deity in any form taking a hand in the 'emergence' of religion."

Some might argue that this is the scientific equivalent of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. Yet, unlike Dawkins, who appears to rave with the zeal of a Saul against the perceived dangers of religion, Clark is not judgemental. He accepts as observable fact that people are religious, that this is a normal aspect of the human condition, and then attempts to fit his observations into an evolutionary framework.

He does not doubt that some people report experiences which appear to them to disconnect them from the material world. Out-of-body experiences, feelings of *déjà vu*, moments of ecstasy, a sense of the numinous, are some of the examples cited. His examination of the literature relating to monitoring of neural activity leads him to suggest the activity associated with paranormal or numinous experience

is quasi-epileptic. This he says is indicated objectively by Electroencephalograph (EEG) evidence.

Yet the explanation, while plausible, remains limited and unsatisfactory. To say it is possible to describe the brain activity that is associated with experiences of the numinous, provides little advance in the understanding of the numinous. Similarly, it is possible to identify from EEG observation which sections of the brain are stimulated when someone is listening to Mozart, but it does not explain the wonder of his music.

Clark also asks whether patterns of religious observance are present in the human's closest relatives, the apes. He concludes not, which he says helps date the emergence of religion to some time after our ancestors split from the chimpanzees and gorillas. However, primates exhibit some behavioural characteristics which Clark describes as precursors of religious. Firstly, apes recognize death in their own species. Secondly, they are observed to select vegetable materials to eat which produce for them a sense of intoxication or detachment from everyday world. Thirdly, they interpret certain natural phenomena as threats.

These three identified precursors later evolved in humans, it is suggested, into three areas of recognizable religious behaviour. The recognition of death leads to a belief in the spirit, or soul, as a means of explaining what is absent from a corpse and distinguishes it from a living human being. The imbibing of hallucinogenic plants to create a sense of detachment from the world, Clark says, can be connected with the search for and belief in the numinous; and animism, as a religious belief system, he suggests, has evolved from seeing certain natural phenomena as fearful and threatening.

Much criticism of religion by non-practitioners is focused not on its implicit expression, but on the role taken by the organizers of religious practice who are accused of deceiving and exploiting their followers. Clark explores the evolution of the vocation of the religious professional, from the shaman of the hunter-gatherer tribes through to the priests of settled urban and rural communities. He examines the nature of the religious experiences of the shaman, suggesting that the same figure (i.e. the shaman or priest figure) who is capable of deceiving and exploiting his or her followers, might also be capable of inducing in him or herself subjective experiences of the numinous.

He admits modern anthropologists might view his anthropology as "concrete to the point of crudity." He admits he has little time for cur-

rent abstract theories and roots his ideas in the observation of people and what they say and do.

Psychologists, theologians, palaeontologists and neuro-scientists might equally well express reservations about Clark's grasp of the latest thinking in their various disciplines. Pan-disciplinary scholarship always runs the risk of offending the specialists.

Yet Dr Clark can point to a wide academic base to support his pan-disciplinary approach. He holds degrees in philosophy, computer science and religious studies. Far from curtailing his interest in other disciplines, arguably Clark should have gone further. It would have been relevant for him to incorporate meme theory into his ideas and explored how memes—units of cultural knowledge and experience—evolve over time. This would have enabled readers to test Clark's closeness to or distance from Dawkins.

Yet Clark's weakness lies not in his examination of the various strands of experience which make up the religious whole (much of what he says the theist would find highly plausible), but in his inadequate addressing of the standard religious response to evolutionary theory in all its forms and manifestations. Might evolution be, not so much an all-embracing explanation for the creative order, but simply a description of the mechanism employed by a creator God? A God, monotheists would say, who is beyond scientific investigation. Perhaps Clark did not feel this was a relevant question. "Sadly there is no independent, publicly sharable and measurable evidence that the other worlds and heaven are real. It is much more plausible that they are sublime creations of our dreams."

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*Between Dancing and Writing: The Practice of Religious Studies*, by Kimerer L. MaMothe. New York: Fordham University Press, 2004. 299pp., hardback, \$55.00, ISBN 9780823224036.

LaMothe sets out to advance the academic study of religion by three means. She challenges the opposition between Theology and Religious Studies, proposes that studying religion is like studying dance, and proposes that dance can be religion and vice versa.

In form, the book has two substantive parts: the first contains four chapters under the heading of “Writing Against Theology” in which the works of Descartes, Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel and Kierkegaard are surveyed and debated. LaMothe insists that a range of scholars of religion have opposed Theology by insisting that scholarly objectivity requires writing while theological subjectivity requires experience. Writing about religion is opposed to experiencing religion. As I had never noticed an ideological insistence on writing among my colleagues, nor heard complaints about it from theologians, I checked by asking around. Perhaps I offered a poor summary of LaMothe’s idea, but this all seemed alien to all my informants.

Towards the end of the book there are interesting passages about the practice and outcomes of writing, but the regular assertions of the centrality of writing in these disciplinary squabbles gets in the way of the more interesting discussion offered. If Part One did not improve my understanding of these scholars, and certainly did not improve on the plethora of available surveys of our academic ancestors and their methodologies, Part Two is more helpful. This is entitled “Reviving van der Leeuw,” and includes five chapters inviting a reconsideration and reestablishment of this foundational phenomenologist of religion. Again, van der Leeuw is among the ancestral figures necessarily discussed in introductions to the discipline of Religious Studies. He is contested by many on various grounds. LaMothe makes good use of van der Leeuw’s interest in dance to advance her project. However, just as I remain unconvinced that writing plays the role imputed to it here, I am not convinced that an emphasis on experience (even in dialogue with rationality) is any way to contest either Theology or the anti-theology foundation myth of Religious Studies. Instead, it almost entirely plays into the hands of anti-theologians by suggesting that scholars not only need to experience religion in order to think, talk and write about it, but actually cannot avoid experiencing reli-

gion if they do any kind of research. There are some powerful invitations to think about researchers as participants, about the formative contribution made by researchers to the construction of religion, and about whether researchers can know (and thus write) about anything beyond that which they experience or witness. Whether this really justifies the claim that the process of studying religion produces “more and different religion” is less convincing, though a wonderful rhetorical stick to wave at our more stridently objectivist colleagues.

Apart from these discipline forming debates and assertions, what readers of *Implicit Religion* may find more interesting are LaMothe’s thoughts as a dancer and scholar of religion about “religion as dance” and “dance as religion.” Certainly these are the best bits of the book. Certainly colleagues will be greatly helped to see religion as something people *do* (rather than believe or experience) by thinking about the similarities and differences. Research about religion as performance too will be greatly advanced by dialogue with researchers about dance. Just as I am not convinced by the rationality / experience duality, I am unconvinced that religion requires intention, attention and effort, or that it is always about meaning and cannot be implicit. However, I am provoked to think more about this by LaMothe’s book. And that is a useful scholarly outcome.

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*Rituals in Parliaments: Political, Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on Europe and the United States*, edited by Emma Crewe and Marion G. Muller. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 2006. 209pp., paper, €38.40/\$59.95, ISBN 9783631519936/US-ISBN 9780820465531.

For some years, I have been teaching a first-year university course in religious studies called “Religion, Law and Politics in the World Today.” Each year, we visit New Zealand’s Parliament and analyse its processes as ritual. However, the topic has suffered from a dearth of appropriate reading materials. This year will be different, thanks to *Rituals in Parliament*.

The collection arose from a conference of anthropologists, historians and political scientists which addressed the question: “Do parliamen-

tary rituals really matter?”—in terms of the way parliaments perform their functions and are perceived by their own citizens and in the international arena. The editors note that the contributors’ “verdicts are far from unanimous. Some ... argue that legislative procedure is more telling of the role and reputation that a parliament has in a given society than its rituals and ceremonies. Others stress the relevance of these ritual expressions for conveying political sense and meaning to the public” (8). Consequently, the book does not aim to produce “a novel unitary theory on parliament.”

Numerous case studies address different angles. Some document instances of ritual across an institution (e.g. US Senate historian Richard Baker’s account of “Ritual and Ceremony in the United States Senate”). Others analyse the ways in which ritual underscores particular political meanings and interpretations (e.g. two chapters on the French national assembly: “The Political Meanings of Military Rituals in the French National Assembly” by the former Clerk of the French National Assembly and Chief of Protocol, and Marc Abélès’s impressive study of parliamentary debate as “ritual struggle,” “Politics and Rituals in the French National Assembly”). Still others elaborate how the highly symbolic work of ritual facilitates, shapes and structures the substantive work of a legislative chamber (such as Emma Crewe’s gloriously-observed “Rituals and the Usual Channels in the British House of Lords”). Concluding chapters by Werner Patzelt and Marion Müller provide a comparative and thematic overview of different aspects of the study of political ritual, and, incidentally, introduce Anglophone readers to some of the German literature in this area.

The collection’s diversity is not always entirely positive. One striking divergence is over the question of what ritual actually is. Few contributors offer definitions, or engage with existing discussions of ritual. The volume’s anthropologists invoke Malinowski, Durkheim, Van Gennep, Turner and Geertz; however, there is a striking paucity of conversation with more recent studies of ritual. This may be partly attributable to the fact that the interdisciplinary collaboration did not include religious studies. Whatever the cause, it has the disconcerting effect of leaving it sometimes unclear what exactly the contributors are discussing. Some seem to assume (without spelling it out) that ritual refers to any regularly repeated activity, or perhaps to any regularly repeated activity which serves no obvious instrumental purpose. To others, it is more or less synonymous with protocol, while to still

others ritual carries a more specific overtone of sacralizing, or of regulating relationships with the sacred. Rightly, none goes so far as to limit ritual to a religious meaning, although a number of contributors include discussion of overtly religious practices (e.g. opening prayers in the US Senate, oath-taking with or without a sacred text or “So Help Me God”) along with others whose religious significance is oblique (e.g. use of ritual objects bearing religious markings or emblems), or disputed (could newly-invested lords’ triple hat-doffing be an allusion to the Trinity?) or simply non-existent. In that way, the collection makes a useful contribution to the discussion of implicit religion. One has a sense, however, that several contributors remain only “implicitly” aware that that is what they are talking about!

If the subject seems at times to be somewhat theoretically under—digested, that only reinforces the editors’ point that this is an area in which much more waits to be done. This collection makes a helpful, wide-ranging and insightful start. Not all the articles will be accessible to my first-year students; some are more suited to advanced or graduate readers. The collection will find a particular welcome among scholars of comparative politics, political anthropology and cultural studies.

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