

## Book Reviews

*Nature, Technology and the Sacred*, by Bronislaw Szerszynski. Oxford, Malden, MA and Carlton, Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. ISBN 0-631-23604-X. Pbk. Pp. xviii + 222. \$29.95.

In the quest to describe and analyse the implicit religion of our dominant culture, the concepts that appear in the English language as ‘nature’ and ‘technology’ have been prominent. ‘Nature’ has been held up as a locus of the sacred since the Romantic movement appeared. Heidegger, Ellul and others began, in the mid-twentieth century, to insist that something religious was going on under the rubric of ‘technology’. Some of us have tried to imagine, in an attempt to see our implicit religion as a whole, how these two constructs, each serving in some way as a locus of the sacred, could be related to one another. Now Bronislaw Szerszynski, of Lancaster University’s Centre for the Study of Environmental Change and the Institute for Environment, Philosophy and Public Policy, has given us ‘the authoritative treatment’ (John Milbank) of the intersection of the three topics named in the title of the book.

Szerszynski is already a widely-published and discussed author (766 ‘Google’ references as of this writing), being involved in much collaborative work on several academically popular topics. With this, his first book-length post-doctoral publication, he shows that he can give us deep, sustained, and superbly documented thought on matters that are of the utmost importance for those who would understand the implicit religion of our world. Further, this book gives us not only analysis, but also considerable practical wisdom about how we might respond well to our present religious climate. We can only anticipate that much more will come from the mind of this formidable scholar.

The conventional wisdom is that ‘technology’ and ‘nature’ are the opposite poles of the spectrum of our values, and that a commitment to one implies a rejection of the other. While there is some truth in this assumption, a truth that Szerszynski recognizes, the assumption leads us away from the question of how it has come to be that both sets of values are prominent within the same culture and way of life. Could it be that the argument between them is a family quarrel?

Not only does Szerszynski document thoroughly the ways in which each of these is a locus of the sacred in our world, he also helps us go deeper than the conventional wisdom by placing both ‘nature’ and ‘technology’ in historical

context. Rather than seeing these constructs as either universal elements of the human experience, or as manifestations of the unique insights of our modern world, he shows how the same religious trajectory that brought us from Medieval Europe through the Reformation and the Enlightenment into modernity gave us the contemporary religious situation in which the presence of the sacred can appear in both 'nature' and 'technology'. Further, Szerszynski does this without falling into either a deterministic or a progressivist historicism. He shows us the path by which we have come to this place. This place is different, he claims, but not necessarily better in all respects; and there are multiple paths leading from here to the future. Most important, he shows some important connections between where we have been and where we are now, connections that can help us with the decisions we will have to make. A fine example can be found in Chapter 5, 'The Body, Healing and the Sacred', in which Szerszynski takes us from the variety of healing practices in sixth century Europe to the present, in which many of us (this reviewer being no exception) resort to both mainstream medical practice and alternative practices, such as Yoga, without any sense of conflict.

The basis for tracing this and other, related cultural developments is laid in Chapter Two, 'Nature, Secularization and the Transformation of the Sacred'. Without imagining that this summary can do justice to the richly documented argument, we can at least entice potential readers with the terms involved. Szerszynski traces 'the long arc of transcendental religion' from the primal and archaic, through the emergence of the monotheistic traditions, to 'the radical dualism of Protestantism and the immanent sacrality of modern society' (p. 16), in which 'the perpetuation of biological existence, of life itself ... became the new location of the sacred' (p. 21). The religious situation of the present is termed the 'postmodern sacred, which exhibits a more thoroughgoing collapse of the organizing dualism of the monotheistic and Protestant sacred' (p. 22). The 'multiplex reality' of this situation allows it 'to accommodate earlier orderings of the sacred' (p. 23), so that characteristics of what I would have called tribal religions can appear without being 'out of place'.

I confess that, when I first read this chapter, I judged it, despite its meticulous scholarly documentation, to be simplistic. I was especially struck by the use of the term 'Protestant' to cover a range of religious orientations that we all know to generate severely contradictory ways of confronting modernity. As I continued, however, the interpretative power of this framework, its ability to make religious sense out of what had previously been, for me, puzzling phenomena, was undeniable. I found myself compelled to treat the author's analysis with increasing respect. Szerszynski has confirmed my judgement that both 'nature' and 'technology' are crucial matters for students of our implicit religion to understand, and he has led me into a deeper grasp, both of how they function as loci of the sacred, and how, as such, they are related to each other, and to the explicitly religious traditions that gave birth to modernity.

This is a 'both/and' book. The author is a social scientist, *and* he is conversant with, and acknowledges the importance of, philosophical and theological literature. He presents 'the sacred' as, in all its forms, a human construct, *and* he acknowledges that it cannot be dismissed as merely a human construct. He notes carefully the plurality of the loci of the sacred in our culture, *and* he works to show how these are related to each other without one being reduced to a form of another. He shows how 'nature' is a particularly modern construct, *and* appreciates its links with pre-modern analogues. He demonstrates that 'technology' is an orientation destructive of the influence of traditional religions, *and* points out its roots in Western religious tradition.

*Nature, Technology and the Sacred* takes our ability to study implicit religion to a new and deeper level.

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*Religion and Everyday Life*, by Stephen Hunt. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005. ISBN 0-415-35154-5. Pbk. Pp. 200 + xii. £14.99.

It may be a reflection of the character of everyday life in late modernity that this book is a bundle of contradictions—or it may simply be an attempt by the author to try to balance too many perspectives in a single work, further intensified by poor editing. The book is basically a sociology of religion text, masquerading as an easy-to-access paperback, and one would at least like to think that a sociology of religion text would try to portray sociology of religion as having some consistency of thought. For my money, for example, Phil Zuckerman's *Invitation to the Sociology of Religion* is leaps and bounds ahead of this. And in terms of bigger texts, Christiano *et al.*, Roberts, or Swenson are all superior. Specifically, this book does *not* provide 'an accessible and captivating introduction to the sociology of religion', as the publishers claim on the back cover, and, because it is not well written, I would not use it with students to whom I hoped to present the sociology of religion favorably as an academic discipline.

At the same time, however, I have to be honest and say that I have adopted the book for a diocesan course in ministry education (part of a sequence leading to the permanent diaconate). But the course isn't on sociology of religion, and I will not have them read the whole book. I chose the book because it was cheaper than David Lyon's *Jesus in Disneyland*, in a setting where financial considerations matter, and I also thought it provided a bit more data than Lyon's book. The purpose of this course is primarily to get people to think

about the religion-and-society nexus and grapple with some of the characteristics of late modernity that impact on the ways religion is and is not a part of everyday life in our times—and how and why that is different from the past. Parts of the book do this extremely well.

The book is, indeed, strongest when it works at *describing* the sociocultural conditions of late modernity, the place of religion and transformations of religion ('spiritualities') within those conditions, the circumstances that got us from the modern to the late modern, and why there is very little likelihood of turning back. The book is weakest when it tries to deal with sociological theory. The chapter on rational-choice theory is particularly disastrous. Not only does it attempt to minimize the popularity of supply-side theory (which is, in fact, a far more accurate term) by attempting to restrict it to the United States (whereas books by the most prolific proponents like Stark and Finke have been widely translated and are in use from Brazil to Italy to China), but it claims that 'in recent years there has been a spate of books and articles that have offered quite damaging criticism of the rationale upon which it is based and on the failure of empirical research to confirm its major propositions' (p. 52). Curiously, the *only* author's work whom Hunt cites in relation to this 'spate of books', other than Steve Bruce, is the latter's mentor Roy Wallis's 1984 book *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*, which was published *before* virtually all the work in rational-choice theory that Hunt cites. So it boils down to Bruce *contra mundum* (take your choice).

Other things also are bothersome. On p. 88, for example, in a chapter discussing religiosity and gender, he cites different articles written over a 20-year period in an ahistorical fashion as if no change had occurred over this generation—one that was crucial for the emergence of women, especially within religious roles. Similarly, on p. 91, he writes that, 'there has long been a relationship between demographics and adherence to certain religious traditions since they were first observed in Niebuhr's *Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1957)'. Inasmuch as there is nothing in Hunt's book about the *Social Sources* previously, I find this citation highly misleading, since the study was first published in 1929, and nothing in the material that follows gives me the least reason to believe that Hunt knows that. On p. 68 there is a sentence where a line of type has dropped out. The book is fraught with contradictions from beginning to end, making it difficult to assess how Hunt thinks. For example, having largely trashed rational-choice theory in chapter 3, he then uses rational-choice language throughout most of the book. And I cannot figure out why he cites Jay Demerath's SSSR 1999 Presidential Address in its unpublished form, when it was published in the *JSSR* in 2000. Inasmuch as Hunt's concluding chapter is highly dependent on Demerath, Hunt should have cited the version anyone who wanted to could easily access. Names are misspelled, particularly Hervieu-Léger, but not only hers. One senses in particular that had Hunt been

a person who participated more in the organizational life of the professional societies in the social scientific study of religion (he is not a member of any of those in the US, nor of the BSA sociology of religion study group, according to current directories), there might have been a greater personal familiarity with the people whose work he uses.

Readers of this journal will be particularly interested in the way *implicit religion* is handled. On the one hand, we can rejoice that the concept is addressed at all. On the other hand, while Hunt invokes Edward Bailey's 'commitment, integrating foci, and intensive concerns with extensive effects' (p. 161), he vacillates terribly on whether implicit religion is or is not worth studying. Two things, at least, are wrong here: Hunt specifically identifies 'implicit religions' with quasi-religions, thus making a move from a way of seeing to a way of doing. When Greil and Robbins talk about quasi-religions, they are talking about specific *organizations* that operate like religious organizations, while I take implicit religion to be pre-organizational, though for some people membership in a particular organization may become an implicit religion or *vice versa*. But this organizational relationship is not so much about the organization as it is about the individual. When I heard, about twenty years ago, a prominent statistician give a lecture on regression analysis, which he began by saying, 'I'm here tonight to talk about regression analysis, which some people like and some people don't. Let me put it to you this way, my *religion* is the least-squares line', that was implicit religion made explicit to his hearers. This is nothing in the world like the groups Greil and Robbins include within the rubric of *quasi-religions*. Hunt furthermore can never decide whether he wants to take a functionalist or a substantive (or other) approach to religion, and as a result of that can talk out of both sides of his mouth as he pleases at different points of the book. In particular, if he had taken more time with Bailey's examples in *Implicit Religion* (which is the source he cites), rather than simply quoting a phrase out of context, both he and the reader would have had a better sense of the value of the concept as a tool, not only in the analysis of religion, but of human behavior.

The inadequacies of the book for a work in the sociology of religion, however, all come clashing and crashing to a head for me in the sociologically incredible statement, 'Above all, religion is not like other social phenomena' (p. 58). *Really?* If Hunt believes this, then, in those immortal words of Wittgenstein to Moore, 'I will grant you all the rest'. But I will also say, 'You are not doing the sociology of religion. Your implicit religion is religion?'. At the root and ground of all sociology of religion is the presupposition that religion *is* like other social phenomena, at least in the sociological sense of that use. *Sex*, for heaven's sake, is not like other social phenomena. Neither is science. Or banking. Or the law. That's what *social institutions* are all about. Could repeating Sociology 101 be entirely out of order?

So I have a hypothesis about the masquerade: What we have is someone who has *unsystematically* gathered together a hodge podge of material on the sociology of religion, possibly from books and journals, possibly off the Web—who knows? I don't think the material is well integrated or well presented. The book's copy editor should be fired, and if Routledge wouldn't spend the money for a copy editor, they should be ashamed of themselves. While it is not exactly garbage-in/garbage-out, it is a fair few times too often garbled in/garbled out. The book is fine for a discussion piece, but there are too many loose ends and rough edges for me to commend it as a worthwhile introduction to the discipline of the sociology of religion, because as far as I can see, the author has a real problem understanding what sociology is. We can do and have done better.

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*Religion: Empirical Studies*, edited by Steven J. Sutcliffe. Aldershot, UK and Burlington VT, USA: Ashgate, 2004. ISBN 0-7546-4158-9. Hbk. Pp. xliii + 279. £52.50, \$99.95.

The fifteen chapters which comprise most of this interesting volume are revised versions (sometimes with recent postscripts) of papers previously presented at conferences of the British Association for the Study of Religion (BASR) and published in that organization's series of 'Occasional Papers' between 1991 and 2002. In their broad diversity of content and form, the materials thus assembled supply significant insight into the variegated interests, opinions and commitments of BASR members. They also explicitly 'represent a series of positions on appropriate theories, methods and subject matter' to be found prominently within the broad and porous field of what (within the academic institutions of the English-speaking world) is known as Religious Studies, Study of Religion(s), Scientific Study of Religion(s), History of Religion(s), World Religion(s) or Comparative Religion (p. xvii).

Within the volume, the chapters are organized into two distinct parts, concerned respectively with 'Category and Method' (chs. 1–7) and 'Case Studies' (chs. 8–15). Part One thus emphasizes matters of theory and method and explores the topics of fieldwork, folk religion, modes of sacred communication and iconography. It also investigates the familiar concepts of community, diaspora and the sacred, in relation to religious activity. Part Two comprises empirical studies concerning specific aspects of a number of religious traditions.

Ranging in approach from the philological through the anthropological-sociological to the historical, these highly diverse enquiries focus on African spirituality, Christian-Buddhist relations in Sri Lanka, Celtic goddesses, Hindu widowhood, early Buddhism, Unificationist syncretism and British Muslims.

Taken as a whole, the informative, insightful and sometimes provocative contents of this book underline the staggering breadth of religious studies scholarship, while indicating certain theoretical and methodological ingredients as salient sources of disciplinary intellectual integrity. In this regard, Steven Sutcliffe's introduction evinces an appropriate inductive ability to extract general themes from precise particulars which, commendably, furthers the transmutation of this compilation of writings into something more than the sum of its parts. As is evident from its title, the book's underlying and unifying master theme concerns the *empirical* and observable character of religious meaning and practice. More specifically, its editor embraces the notion of religion 'out there', independently of the scholar, as a material and discursive field of practice rooted in a shared social world. Such a phenomenon, in his view, requires a *qualitative* methodology 'open to all explanatory hypotheses which take empirical and behavioural dimensions seriously' (pp. xxiii–xxiv).

Such a scholarly strategy (as Sutcliffe is acutely aware) involves serious and sophisticated attunement to the intricate interconnectedness of definition, description and explanation as well as to the possibilities, pitfalls and prohibitions of both deductive and inductive theorizing in different religious contexts. It also demands continuing contemplation of the relative worth of external versus internal observational accounts of religious activity and experience. An inevitable outcome of these exigencies, which receives heavy editorial emphasis, concerns the status of theology in the academic realm of religious studies. Sutcliffe declares bluntly that theology (in so far as it 'entails a normativizing, confessionalist and metaphysical self-construction') employs a knowledge practice of a profoundly 'different conceptual and disciplinary order' to those empirical modes of religious representation which have dominated the study of religion's modern march toward disciplinary autonomy (p. xxxix). Whether, in fact, there exists such a clear contrast between the methodological agnosticism of the religious studies mainstream and an overtly theological point of view, has, of course, been seriously doubted by such contemporary scholars as Timothy Fitzgerald, Donald Wiebe and Russell McCutcheon. For this reason, the suggestions of Terence Thomas (p. 65) and James L. Cox (pp. 261–63 in the volume's afterword), that the temptations of surreptitious theology can only be resisted through a sharp separation between religion and the sacred, provide a usefully provocative though highly debateable supplement to the main editorial argument.

A book which devotes so much attention to general theoretical/methodological questions, and to the particular perennial problem of a 'definitive'

disciplinary definition of religion must inevitably incite some interest in readers of this journal, even though the term 'implicit religion' does not appear in its index. In this respect, its introduction, afterword and first part will prove more rewarding than the contents of its case studies. The latter will collectively disappoint because, despite the diverse exoticism of their empirical accounts, none of them specifically addresses subject matter that transgresses the conventional in its conception of what constitutes 'religion'. Students of implicit religion would, however, be unwise to infer from this that the editor, BASR, or the discipline of religious studies, is, in principle or practice, any less hospitable to their interests than the currently panoptic and highly inclusive field of sociology of religion. Those uneasy with a relatively restricted table of contents bearing the *imprimatur* of 'the sole autonomous professional academic association in the U.K. predicated upon the categories "religion" and "religions"' (p. xvii) should note that Steven Sutcliffe has recently co-edited a volume on alternative spirituality, an entirely appropriate topic from the standpoint of this journal.

This is not to imply, however, that proponents of the broad implicit religion project would be unjustified in criticizing and rejecting certain theoretical proposals within this volume as incompatible with their own inclusivist conception of religious phenomena. To such readers, James L. Cox's prominent concluding strategy for delineating the precise subject matter of religious studies (by means of the empirically-grounded definition of 'religion' formulated by the French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger) will thus appear unduly restrictive. They will question precisely how, by employment of this author's notion of religion as a 'chain of memory', 'the field known as religious studies can be *expanded* to encompass within it a rich variety of cultural practices ...' (p. 263, reviewer's emphasis). They will do so, furthermore, not only on general theoretical grounds, but for the specific reason that such phenomena as sport, nationalism, marxism or freudianism are explicitly and peremptorily excluded from the range of such practices on the highly dubious basis that (unlike religion proper) they lack the capacity for collective remembrance (p. 263).

On a related issue, many readers of this journal will doubtless endorse the goal of extricating religion definitionally from the transcendent (pursued in this volume by Sutcliffe, Cox and Thomas), as part of a process by which the discipline of religious studies emerges as more empirical and less (overtly or covertly) theological in character. With Thomas Luckmann's combination of shrinking transcendence and expanding religion in mind, however, they are less likely to accept uncritically Cox's suggestion that 'by separating the sacred from religion a methodological middle ground between theology and culture is restored' (p. 263), or Sutcliffe's apparent optimism that ensuing definitions of religion will prove less intellectually problematic or academically contentious than their predecessors (p. xxviii).



In its efforts to sketch out the empirical 'common ground' which may offer a foundation for the integration and invigoration of religious studies (p. xxxv), this volume avoids the adoption of any radically new intellectual viewpoint and contents itself with the forceful reassertion (for good or ill) of familiar arguments. As its editor observes: '... restating the obvious is sometimes salutary; making manifest once again what has become merely latent and implicit can shift structural-institutional stasis' (p. xxx). These are words which, on the basis of their own experience, readers of this journal can surely endorse. While, therefore, the appeal of this book for them will necessarily be limited, a re-visiting (through its pages) of certain central theoretical controversies might well assist them in envisioning more clearly the character of the common ground on which their own investigations are predicated.

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*On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*, by David Martin. Aldershot/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005. ISBN 0-7546-5322-6. Hbk. £16.99, \$29.95. Pp. 216.

This book assembles the texts of thirteen papers presented at different occasions in roughly 2002–2004 and it documents Martin's intellectual journey with regard to Christianity and secularization. Consequently, it does not have the rigid unity of a book: it addresses aspects of secularization theories according to the purpose of the occasions in which these talks were given. However, the book is clearly a critique of some aspects of traditional theories of secularization, especially those that present the process of modernization as inevitably leading towards the decline of religion. Taking into account that Martin's point of departure is that 'the sociologist does not present a package of certified knowledge, but begins a conversation' and that he sees 'through a grid which organizes what [he] sees' (pp. 17–18), we should be aware that he has structured his observations from the standpoint of a cultural sociologist who is also a cleric deeply grounded in theology. Some chapters are also concerned about morals since, according to Martin, 'the sociology of culture is necessarily a sociology of the moral' (p. 185).

The book is indeed sociology interwoven with theology. In the last but one chapter of the book, for example, he asks the question: 'What is Christian Language?', and states that 'characterizing Christian language is itself a translation, that is, a theology' (p. 183). And, analyzing Christian language, he opposes it to

scientific language which is explanatory of a world which is the object 'to be known about and manipulated'. Christian language, as all religious languages, on the contrary, is exclamatory, intensive and particular; it responds to the world 'as emblem to be "beheld"' (pp. 173 and 189). Its core language is ritual, in which words and symbols carry meanings that are 'inexhaustible and emanate renewable energies' (p. 178). Indeed, religion is an autonomous sub-system in the modern social system, with its own language (pp. 134–39). The question then emerges, whether individual secularization is not partially the result of the fact that in modern societies socialization is basically centred on science and applied science, i.e. techniques, so that most people do not comprehend religious language any more, and read it as if it were 'scientific' language. Indeed, was apologetics, using a kind of scientific argumentation in defence of religion, not in itself self-defeating? And I wonder if people still comprehend the 'exclamatory language' of sacred space and its architecture in those cities that Martin is relating to secular space and architecture in his analysis of secularization. Do the majority of western citizens still have an alert religious memory to understand the symbols? Are they not approached with a purely artistic point of view: the beauty of the building, stained-glass windows, paintings and other treasures to be found in churches?

In his introduction, he immediately sets the tone by stating that 'instead of regarding secularization as a once-for-all unilateral process', he rather thinks speculatively 'in terms of successive Christianizations followed or accompanied by recoils' (p. 3). The four successive Christianizations, which are overlapping and still with us, are a Catholic Christianization; two versions of a Protestant Christianization (the Calvinist one, attempting to universalize the monastic ideal, and the Lutheran version, covering everyone by grace alone rather than by works); and finally, the evangelical and Pietist 'Awakenings', first in the North Atlantic world, and nowadays globally through Pentecostalism. Here, he clearly opposes those interpretations that read these successive Christianizations as successive forms of internal or institutional secularizations of Christianity. And this is linked to the fact that he refuses to see in the past a historical baseline (p. 137), which would allow scientists to measure a process of institutional secularization; for example Bryan Wilson, who saw in Protestantism and Methodism, 'the elimination of mystical, sacerdotal elements from the religious system' (1969: 261).

Pentecostalism is discussed in most chapters and more specifically in two of them. The chapter on *Evangelical Expansion in Global Society* is a survey article, discussing its emergence in the Protestant North of Europe and the North Atlantic and its expansion into Latin America, Asia and Africa, with a few footholds in Eastern and Western Europe. The emergence of evangelical Christianity was linked, according to Martin, to the crumbling ecclesiastical hierarchy which allowed for the development of a lay, popular and enthusiastic Christianity that culminated in the Pentecostal awakenings. He suggests that its spread

was so successful owing to the 'remarkable resonance between their spirit-filled religion and the spiritist layer of worldwide shamanism' (p. 27). Furthermore, he underlines the social functions of these religious communities, for example, for women, 'offering them opportunity for expression as well as havens of security and respect'; for the better off, 'dealing as much with stress, psychic and professional problems as bodily ills'; and for those on the move, geographically and socially, 'the disciplines of the group [which] generate solidarity'. In *Pentecostalism: A Major Narrative of Modernity*, he discusses the metanarrative of Pentecostalism in relation to domains like authority and gender; work discipline and religious consumerism, based on 'story and song, gesture and empowerment, image and embodiment, enthusiastic release and personal discipline' (p. 142), rather than on rationalization and bureaucracy.

In a chapter on *Secularization: Master Narrative or Several Stories?*, Martin points to a number of possible stories about secularization which give alternative interpretations to the so-called 'standard model'. However, he states very clearly that this model 'is not straightforwardly untrue' (p. 123). Indeed, he also referred to the process of social differentiation in his book, *A General Theory of Secularization*, a process that is basic to the standard model, and he still does. However, since his approach is cultural rather than structural, he complements the structural approach by pointing out the different languages of different subsystems. For example, there is a chapter on *What is Christian Language?*; and in the last chapter, *The Christian, the Political and the Academic*, he points out how social differentiation erodes the links between Christian language and emerging secular languages such as those of science and politics. He points out, for example, the differences in their time-scales and values.

In his *A General Theory of Secularization*, he already expanded the analysis in terms of social differentiation, giving special attention to an analysis in terms of centre and periphery, and the different social consequences of social differentiation according to the cultural matrix of the country and the different roles that national intelligentsias play with respect to religion. Now he refers also to the changes in women's roles since the mid-twentieth century, and, in his chapter on 'Comparative Secularization, North and South', he studies the role of élites and counter-élites, in relation to the 'masses' they represent and manipulate. I applaud such an approach, since I have always stressed that we have to bring 'the actors back in'; indeed, secularization is not a mechanical, straightforward evolutionary process, but the result of social actions. In Belgium we see the impact of Humanist associations and of atheistic Masonic Lodges, stimulating politicians to liberalize the laws on divorce, abortion and euthanasia and to legalize same sex marriages. Laws on the same issues have been changed in the same direction in several European countries. We need to study the differences in approach to these issues in European countries, the social actors involved and their ideologies. In other chapters Martin points out further important social actors influencing the process of secularization, for example,

global communicators, professionals in religious-educational and welfare agencies, academics and journalists. In the chapter on Master Narratives he also discusses the impact of the authors' understanding of religion on the inferences they make beyond what can be induced from observation, and he points to 'rational choice' theory and evolutionary psychology. Finally, I should stress that in this chapter, he also refers to theories about the growing autonomy of nature and the nation, and its impact on the religious repertoire.

There are so many interesting points to make while reading this book and new ways of studying secularization. In his chapter on 'Rival Patterns of Secularization and their "Triumphal Ways"', Martin looks at the organization of the sacred space, political and religious, in Washington, Paris, London, Vienna, Budapest, Vilnius, Helsinki, Amsterdam and others, and he deduces from the comparisons the different paths that secularization has taken, pointing out differences between North Atlantic Anglo-Protestant and Catholic patterns. These comparisons point out different relationships of Church and State in the past. But I was wondering what cities like New York, compared to small cities in New England, would signify today? In the latter, the white steeples of the churches shine against the blue sky; in New York, on the contrary, the skyline is made up by skyscrapers representing big business and finance, and the churches are invisible. It marks a shift of the public importance of religion and polity to economy, and points out the importance of the latter, whose medium is money and whose values are competition and success. In one of my first visits to New York, I asked a professional if it was easy to live in New York. He told me: 'For five days it is a rat race; however, at the weekend, if possible, I leave for my home in the outskirts of the city, where I find family, garden and church'. And in Brasilia, built in the second part of the last century, the political buildings dominate the city (*Plaza de los Tres Poderes*), the Cathedral is largely subterranean on the side. Indeed, the mapping of cities allows us to see not only the different paths that secularization has taken, but also the evolution of societal secularization over time.

The study of centre-periphery dynamics is typical of Martin's approach. The peripheries may be countries, like Ireland in the context of the British Isles, or regions, like Québec in the context of Canada. The religious opposition may be between different religions or religion and secularism, for which Paris is the global reference point. In the chapter 'Comparative Secularization, North and South', he gives hints for a full analysis in terms of language, religion, geopolitical position, dominance and subordination. As far as religion is concerned, the symbolic identification, which does not have to be related to frequent church practice, is a 'potent presence in the rise of pilgrimages and festivals connected with sacred sites' (p. 61). This refers us to a tension between universalism and particularism that Robertson (1997) pointed out in relation to globalization. Religion is a potent symbol of specificity in a context of homogenization: it allows us to express opposition and to symbolize identity, which is clearly

expressed in festivals and pilgrimages at sacred places (Albert-Llorca 1996; Dobbelaere 1998; and Voyé 1997). These sacred spaces are like the gathering places of the clan where a *corrobbo* or a religious ritual takes place (Durkheim 1965: 246). When the clan unites to participate in such rituals, the aboriginals adorn themselves with the paraphernalia representing the totem (Durkheim 1965: 138–39). In festivals and pilgrimages we see resemblances: the participants carry banners, their ‘national’ flags and statues of their saint, which are the emblems of their ‘clan’, and a number of participants are also dressed in traditional attire. There they revivify their national or regional allegiances and their common beliefs by manifesting them in common.

In that context, Martin signals an interesting question: how far does language cooperate with religion, or alternatively take over from it as a carrier of national consciousness (p. 61)? Language and religion were strong symbols of Flanders’ particularity in Belgium. The lower clergy promoted the use of the Flemish language, in a country where French was the *lingua franca* of the dominating classes, to protect the Flemish masses from ‘*la laïcité*’, typical of France, which had promoted a- and anti-religiousness in the French-speaking bourgeoisie of Flanders and French-speaking Brussels and Wallonia. The First World War symbol for the death of Flemings in Dixmude (Belgium), expressing emerging Flemish nationalism, carries the motto ‘All for Flanders, Flanders for Christ’. However, over time, the Flemish language has taken over from religion and it symbolizes the Flemish region in a since (1980) federalized Belgium. A comparative study between Québec in Canada (p. 69) and Flanders in Belgium would be interesting. Both regions were strongly Catholic, highly pillarized, with a high church attendance that has imploded since the late 1960s, and both linguistic regions have expressed tendencies towards independence. What provoked these changes and who were the actors involved, how did they proceed, what was their purpose, their ideology and their relation to religion?

Another interesting chapter is ‘Central Europe and the Loosening of Monopoly and the Religious Tie’, in which he discusses the individualization of contemporary spirituality as compared with the more organic ethical communities of Catholicism and Protestantism of olden days. Contemporary spirituality, not having a recognized presence in the public sphere, has, according to Martin, ‘no corporate ethical discipline and little interest in self-discipline. It is an extreme version of Protestant inwardness often mixed with antinomian dislike of rules and authority’ (p. 112). The individualized spirituality has also diminished the moral power of Catholicism and Protestantism. Although the media, taking advantage of the visibility of the hierarchy, talk of the voice of the church, ‘there are [in fact] many different Christian voices’, expressed by a number of voluntary pressure groups, and the churches are one of them. Even the pope, although acting like an authority, is, according to Martin, in practice only a totem. All this indicates ‘the end of religious monopoly, either in society or within the church itself’ (pp.116–17).

The typical methodology of Martin is based on comparison, which he uses in chapters that we have already discussed, but also in 'Religion, Secularity, Secularism and European Integration: Canada in Comparative Perspective', and 'The USA in Central European Perspective'. He looks for resemblances and differences which allow him to point out different trends of secularization and to suggest explanations for these different trends. However, we know from survey research that we need multivariate analysis to test the apparent association between two variables. Indeed, by introducing control variables, the found zero-order association may disappear. In comparative research one should reproduce experimental research by cumulating experimental controls on the found explanation. Indeed, his book brings together talks given as keynote addresses (for example at the start of a conference) and talks given to assemblies of theologians. We must hope that the hypotheses Martin suggests will be tested by himself or by other sociologists of religion. But in spite of the methodological shortcomings, the book gives many valuable insights into the relationship between religion and society, which should be treated as hypotheses for further research. The book is also a very good guide for sampling the best countries to do comparative research in order to test competing theories. In fact, the book suggests a vast programme for research that sociologists of religion and politics should study to orient their work.

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*Bringing the Gods to Mind: Mantra and Ritual in Early Indian Sacrifice*, by Laurie L. Patton, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. ISBN 0-520-24087-1. Pp. xv + 289. \$49.95, £32.59.

Whereas the observation of rituals implies their performance on the part of participants, it saddles the attentive scholar with questions about occurrences as well as the meaning and interpretation of ritual behaviour within the horizon of culture history. In her remarkable study, Laurie Patton has chosen to concentrate on examples of the ritual history of Vedic India and to investigate the application of mantras (a mantra being 'a sacred poetic formula, usually a verse from one of the four Vedas' [242]), as one of the features which are essential to the meaning and understanding of rituals. The examples she has selected come primarily from two of the many brahminic schools; that is, the Āśvalāyana and Śāṅkhāyana branches (śākhās) of the Ṛg Veda. In order to trace the ways in which these schools have interpreted Ṛg Vedic mantras over time she considers them in the sequence of ritual commentaries; that is, of the Śrauta Sūtras ('Sacred ritual texts concerned with the proper procedures for the sacrifice, such as the responsibility of priests, the placement and use of implements, and the application of mantras' [p. 245]), Gṛhya Sūtras ('Domestic ritual manuals, outlining the appropriate life-cycle rites of a brahmin and his family, including conception, birth, initiation into Vedic study, marriage, death' (p. 240), and Vidhāna ('Lit., 'application', or 'rule'. A class of literature in the late Vedic period that concerns the use of mantras for the individual brahmin. Many of these concern extrasacrificial situations, such as a journey homeward, getting lost in the woods, the sudden appearance of a dove in one's kitchen, and so on' [p. 247]).

The book consists of two parts: the theories, and the case studies. In the first part the author discusses the sources and focus of this study as indicated by the question: 'What is the changing interpretation of the Ṛg Vedic mantras from the Brāhmaṇas to the Śrauta Sūtras to the Gṛhya Sūtras to the Vidhānas?' (p. 16). Next, she develops a theory of metonymic association as a key to the use and application of mantras, on the one hand, and as a lens to see and to understand the formation (the performative linkage between ritual image and ritual act) and development of ritual reality, on the other hand. Since the metonymic relationship between two different elements is set up by contiguity within the same conceptual domain (as, for instance, when 'we need a new glove to play third base' [p. 46] whereby the 'glove' is not similar to, but identical with, the player, inasmuch as the touch between them signifies his role in the play), metonymies become words in their own right which can be analyzed in terms of framing, linguistic pragmatism, referentiality, prototypical meaning, and identification. As mental images they originate in the dynamics of concrete relations, and

shape these relations as they join them explicitly. Finally, the author examines the tradition of *viniyoga* (application, particularly of mantras) as a hermeneutical principle that concerns ‘the placement of poetic formulae within a ritual situation, according to criteria of association and connection between the words uttered and the ritual action enjoined’ (p. 147). *Viniyoga* ‘involves two assumptions: (1) that mantras have some semantic content, even if it is only in terms of a single word association; and (2) that some imaginative world is built in juxtaposing, or metonymically linking, ritual poetic word and ritual action’ (p. 59). The basic issue of *viniyoga* is the connection (*bandhu*) between word and action, ‘between a mantra and the outside ritual world surrounding it’ (p. 239), which often appears to be arbitrary, but turns out to comprise important principles when seen in the light of metonymic linkages.

In the second part of her book the author presents five case studies which show why and how the metonymic interpretation of mantras permits us to make sense of ritual performances. The central themes of these studies concern images which connect with the categories of eating, enemies, eloquence, journeys, and the attainment of another world. Each study relates to *Ṛg Veda* verses which refer to these categories, and considers them diachronically in accordance with their applications in the context of *Śrauta Sūtras*, *Gṛhya Sūtras*, and the *Vidhānas*, where they become part of various rituals.

Under the heading of *Laughter and the Creeper Mantra* the book ends with some remarks on ‘the changing role of recited canon’ (p. 183), ‘new perspectives on the religious history of Vedic India’ (p. 185), ‘the imagination of the brahmins who kept sacrificing’ (p. 186), and on ‘*viniyoga*, ritual dissociation, and the idea of ritual change’ (p. 191). A glossary (pp. 237–48) explains most of the Sanskrit terms which are mentioned in the text. Bibliography and indices complete the work.

Though Indian rituals (and the clarification of controversial issues among Indologists) are the main target of the book, the theoretical part and the understanding of rituals as works of art turn it into a study of general interest. Like all works of art, rituals may vary greatly, whether they concern sophisticated Indian rituals, or the recitation for a sick relative of a *Hail Mary* at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Chicago on the way to work (p. 15), but as compositional wholes they provide spaces which permit people to live poetically in ritually transformed worlds, and thus to make sense of their religious beliefs in practical ways that bring the gods to mind because, and to the extent that, they explore the mystery of human existence. The book clearly indicates that it is not acceptable to reduce late Vedic rituals simply to expressions of magical behaviour—though the rejection of this view remains somewhat problematic because it retains parts of it without explaining the precise meaning of this



retention. But that is a weakness which becomes negligible in the light of its overall accomplishment.

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*Experience and Religion: Configurations and Perspectives*, by Wilhelm Dupré. Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2005. ISBN 90-5201-279-2. Pp. 187. Pbk. £26.30.

‘If some people complain about the loss of faith in a secular society, the crucial issue is not the lack of specifically religious experiences, but whether the faith to which one refers is still consonant with the tale of being human ...’. (p. 172).

‘The tale of being human’ is the central organizing theme of this fascinating book, giving the reader something to hold on to throughout 173 closely argued pages. Throughout, fundamental importance is given to human experience as a truthfulness about itself, which is ‘essential to the unfolding of being human and cultural’. This being so:

‘then it is not unreasonable to ask whether there have been—or still are—special experiences which are basic to the emergence of religious traditions’ (pp. 55, 75).

It is a piece of work which must be read with imagination as well as intelligence, because Wilhelm Dupré uses the precise and inclusive language of philosophy to describe pre-philosophical experience. At the level of the religious significance of fundamental movements of being, there is an awareness which precedes logic, in which things are known as universal and yet specific, shared but idiosyncratically personal, the same yet different: a self which experiences, at the same time as experiencing experience.

It is this ‘experience of experiencing’ which gives rise to culture, and to the specifically religious idea of culture identified with particular religions; and yet this too must be acknowledged in terms of the whole—in which it originates, and to which it refers.

These two movements (the essential experience and its cultural expression) are united in myth and ritual, where process reflects back on its origin in the symbolic integration of being-experience. Myth is both cosmic and *personal*:

‘If we connect the question about religion and its meaning with that of myth, and that of myth and the constitution of human reality, it becomes obvious that religion appears anew with each human being

in the order of experiences and their relation to symbols which structure and are structured by the meaning of universality. The history of religions is primarily not a preservation of unchanging truth claims in a theoretical sense, but a struggle with truth and universality in relatively constant and constantly or abruptly changing configurations. *Reality is 'seen' in the light of symbols we discover and create*' (p. 150; my emphasis).

This is essentially a book about the religion-behind-religion. For Professor Dupré, 'implicit' refers to the fundamental experience of universality prior to its concretization. Just as human experiences provide the raw material of thought and reflection, so universal awareness is expressed in the shape of actual religions, the latter giving final place to the former where genuine religious truth is concerned. For instance, there is a fascinating passage, reminiscent of Tillich, near the end, where he describes the effect of decayed symbols in which:

'The language of myth is equated with that of instrumental reason because the ritual dimension of its meaning is neglected, or because rituals are forced into the mold of practical syllogisms' (p. 171).

The notion of Implicit Religion provides Dupré with the last stage of his argument about the primacy of experience within any exposition of religious truth, because of the obvious need to consider origins before the particular forms in which they become institutionalized. If religion itself, the non-thetic awareness of ultimacy, precedes its description, then implicitness is as fundamental to humanness as Edward Bailey suggests it is; and the spheres in which it is manifested will indeed be many and various.

As 'the meaning of religion and religiosity dwells in variety rather than uniformity', so 'the main problem comes down to the question why human beings should be religious or not' (pp. 76, 77). Dupré devotes the rest of the book to answering this question, distinguishing 'false' from 'true' spirits of religion with painstaking discernment. Characteristically religious phenomena, he says, are those which:

'refer to a new and comprehensive, that is, to a transcendental, perspective in which we look at others as we and others are looked at by the known and unknown 'eye' that follows us in similar and dissimilar developments' (pp. 91, 92).

These are the truths which occur 'between' nature and culture, making a special kind of sense out of both, shaped as they are by 'our own myth on the one hand, and (in a less specific sense) by the experience of the divine on the other hand'. Certainly, this is vague as a description of any particular expression of religiousness; however, Dupré's purpose is to try to understand religion, in all its forms, according to its distinctive identity *as itself*; the 'implicit

ideality' subsisting in 'the essential distinction in the tale of being human' (pp. 111, 117). Obviously such a definition exceeds limits imposed by explicit religions and established traditions of spirituality; but 'Experiences are, and become significant as religious experiences if and to the extent that they relate to the *initial completion* of the project of achieving an authentic religious belonging' (p. 127; my emphasis).

I would urge you to read this book yourself, rather than depending on my approximation to its argument. Having first read it through in order to be in a position to write this review, I suggest that you start with the final 'Conclusion' before launching into the main text. (You can always read 'Conclusion' again when you have finished!) My own conclusion is to say that it is an important book about the meaning of being human and cultural; about being religious and looking very closely at religion; and about that objectivization of human subjectivity in symbol and myth which is the real substance of actual religions.

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*Modern Societies and the Science of Religions: Studies in Honour of Lammert Leertouwer*, edited by Gerard A. Wieggers in association with Jan G. Platvoet. Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002. Pp. viii + 397. Numen Book Series 95 (Studies in the History of Religions) ISBN 90 904 11665 6. Hbk.

This substantial *Festschrift* honours an eminent Dutch scholar, Dr Lammert Leertouwer, who for many years held the Chair in the History of Religions and in the General and Comparative Study of Religions at Leiden University. He was also Dean of Theology there (1984–86) and eventually its Rector Magnificus (1991–97). To celebrate his academic eminence and achievements, a conference on 'Modern Society and the Science of Religion' was organized on the occasion of his retirement, out of which eventually grew the publication of this impressive, informative volume. It brings together the revised proceedings of this conference, plus additionally commissioned papers. The volume also includes Dr Leertouwer's valedictory address and his *curriculum vitae*, listing his publications, and academic and administrative responsibilities. Its major content, however, consists of wide-ranging surveys of variable length, detail and quality of the study of religions in Europe, North America, Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Some of these are excellent, others merely descriptive, providing some information on little known developments without closer details. In an edited collection of this kind such variation is almost unavoidable and while it is impossible to discuss every contribution here, I will highlight those that I found most stimulating to read and have most to offer.

The main editor, Gerard Wiegers, opens the discussion with a lively Introduction wherein the contributions to the volume are set within their wider historical and contemporary context. He briefly retraces the emergence of autonomous, historical-critical studies of religion—whether called the history of religions, the science of religion(s), or comparative religion—that developed in western Europe under the impact of complex socio-political and cultural factors, some of which were forms of colonialism and imperialism that have come under sharp critique. But their development was also affected by processes of modernization and secularization, by the organization of knowledge in universities, and by the profound changes following World War II, so that the discipline ‘has become an almost global science since 1960’ (p. 22). An intriguing but unresolved point concerns the autonomy of the science of religion as an identifiable discipline different from philosophy and theology, the social function of this discipline, and the question whether its ‘fruits’ can be applied to burning social issues such as peacekeeping, combating racism or promoting inter-religious and intercultural dialogue among others. Although much of this ongoing debate is well-known, it is useful to read a succinct, though by no means comprehensive, survey of it, which also includes a brief summary of the papers that follow in the succeeding three parts of the volume.

Part I on ‘Europe and North America’ (pp. 41–243), by far the longest and the most detailed, covers much that is known from other, earlier publications. It opens with two papers in French, describing the development of the study of religions in France (Michel Meslin), that of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in Paris and the sociology of religion group (Jean Baubérot), followed by Hans Kippenberg’s paper on the Dutch scholar C. P. Tiele and his impact on German *Religionswissenschaft*.

After this comes a long, fascinating account of the study of religions in the Netherlands, provided by Jan Platvoet, the co-editor of this volume. Well worth reading, this is one of the few contributions to include not only descriptive data, but also a theoretically sharpened interpretation and conceptualization of major developments that are generally little known outside specialist circles in the Netherlands. Amply documented by a large bibliography, and richly annotated (with 233 footnotes) this is only, to quote its author, ‘a first draft of a social history of Dutch Science(s) of Religions’ (p. 82), and thus obviously part of a major work to be expected in the future, something to be looked forward to.

The main editor, Gerard Wiegers, has contributed helpful information on the science of religions in Spain as practised at universities in Madrid and Cordoba, again not widely known, whereas Donald Wiebe’s views on the debates surrounding the academic study of religion in the USA have been well disseminated in numerous publications before. The last paper of this section on ‘Recent Trends in the Study of Israelite Religion’ (Karel von der Toorn) highlights four themes that are prominent in contemporary debates on the historical reality of

Israelite religion: 1. family religion; 2. the cult of the goddess; 3. the cult of images; 4. the continuity between Israelite and Canaanite religion. Intriguing as this is to read, it does not tell us anything about the development of the science of religions in Israel. This topic is treated with nuanced reflections in another essay by Shaul Shaked, placed in Part II of the book, dealing with 'The Middle East and Africa' (pp. 245–328). Here we find, besides the very informative piece on Israel, a short contribution on institutional developments in Turkey (that concern only the study of Islam, however, rather than the wider, more inclusive science of religions). Another brief chapter is devoted to developments in Morocco, followed by a far more substantial, thought-provoking chapter on 'Discussions on Orientalism in Present-Day Saudi Arabia' (Qasim Al-Samarrai), a great contribution not easily found elsewhere. Another rich discussion is provided by the excellent survey of 'Modern South Africa and the Science of Religion' (Abdulkader I. Tayob) which European and North American readers will find most informative.

The concluding Part III on 'Asia' is the shortest (pp. 329–86) with only three chapters on the study of religions in contemporary Indonesia (Herman L. Beck), modern Japan (Michael Pye), and the rediscovery of religion in China (Kristofer Schipper), each providing just a snapshot, but most stimulating to read because of their strong focus on significant recent developments.

There is no overall conclusion to round off this large offering of scholars, events, institutions, perspectives and ongoing debates that reflect ever more global interconnections of academic scholarship on religion in numerous societies of the contemporary world, but it is by no means a fully comprehensive, representative survey of the current pluralism of religious studies. It would be wonderful if we really had a global overview of the science of religions—a great *desideratum*—but this one is still far too focused on European developments and it is also more past- than present- or future-oriented. As my discussion indicates, the different chapters are very uneven; moreover, some important concepts are insufficiently problematized and reflected upon. The Middle East, Africa and Asia are given only a limited presentation here, nor is there anything at all on India, on Canada, South America or Australia. Even the well-covered sections on Europe do not include the important Scandinavian countries or those of Eastern Europe. As so often, the philosophical and theoretical developments in the study of religions also find little mention, nor is there any reference to women's, feminist or gender studies in religion. Most regrettably, there is also no contribution by any woman scholar.

Some of the silences and selections reflect hidden agendas and biases, institutional constraints as well as those of the imagination. The study of religions comes across as a pluralistic, interdisciplinary field, full of controversies (especially between theology and religious studies, and on what counts as religion), but also much vitality. It often appears as a subject marginal to the dominant

concerns of the contemporary academy, while religion in its different forms remains profoundly implicit and of great importance to so many aspects and processes of modern society. Critical remarks notwithstanding, this volume is an important reference work for anyone concerned with the contemporary study of religions and should be in every university and college library. The editors are to be congratulated on their mammoth achievement.

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*The Future of the Study of Religion: Proceedings of Congress 2000*, edited by Slavica Jakelić and Lori Pearson. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004. ISBN 90-04012317-2. €110, \$ 149.

*The Future of the Study of Religion* consists of a collection of ten papers and responses which have been presented at a conference in Boston (Mass.) on the future of religious studies as ‘an object of engagement and debate’ (p. 1). In the Introduction (‘Whither the Study of Religion?’, pp. 1–22) the editors give a survey of the contributions and responses under the headings: Subjectivity and Objectivity in the Study of Religion: The ‘Problem’ of Normative Subtexts; Theology and/or Religious Studies? ; Methodological Questions in the Study of Religion; The Changing Landscape of the Study of Religion. They conclude the Introduction with some remarks on ‘A ‘New’ Agenda for Religious Studies?’. In the light of what has been said in this volume, it is important to acknowledge the significance of normative expressions and truth claims; it is vital to study religious traditions integrally and in detail, without neglecting the task of building comparative frameworks; it is necessary to employ new models next to, and by examining, previous methods in the history of religious traditions; it is critical to find new methods and categories, by making use of past resources, in order to cope with the developments of religion in a globalized and postmodern world.

The papers and responses in this volume cover a wide range of subjects. At one end of the spectrum, Ivan Strenski (‘The Proper Object of the Study of Religion: Why it is Better to Know Some of the Questions than All of the Answers’ [pp. 145–71], with a response by Elizabeth A. Castelli [pp. 173–88]) argues for a problem-oriented study of religious issues that hinges on ‘innocent curiosity’ (p. 155) and ‘the conviction that the point of entertaining the problems of religion is self-justifying’ (p. 170). On the other end, John Milbank (‘Retraditionalizing the Study of Religion: The Conflict of the Faculties: Theology and the Economy of the Sciences’, pp. 279–94, with a response by Paul Morris,

pp. 295–300) pleads for reinstating ‘the hegemony of theology as an alternative to nihilism’ (p. 294) and as a basis of all true knowledge including the knowledge about religions (p. 292).

In between these extremes, four of the papers deal with specific subjects within the framework of religious studies. Bryan S. Turner takes up the issue of globalization (‘Globalization and the Future Study of Religion’, pp. 103–37, with a response by Adam B. Seligman, pp. 139–44), and defends the thesis that, in a global world, religious studies ‘can provide an understanding of human frailty and function as a pedagogical platform, a sentimental education, for what I shall call *cosmopolitan virtue*’ (p. 104). Elisabeth Clark discusses the impact of women and gender on religions and the study of religions (‘Engendering the Study of Religion’, pp. 217–42, with a response by Amy Hollywood, pp. 243–49). Steven Katz considers the conditions and standards which have to be observed in the study of mysticism in all its forms (‘Diversity and the Study of Mysticism’, pp. 189–210, with response by Francis X. Clooney, pp. 211–16). Paul Hellaas examines contemporary trends in religion and spirituality—such as New Age spiritualities of life, spiritualities in mainstream culture, theistic spiritualities of life—in the light of detraditionalization processes and with regard to the thesis ‘that a spiritual revolution has taken place’ (‘Detraditionalizing the Study of Religion’, pp. 251–71, 264, with a response by Ann Braude, pp. 273–78).

The four remaining papers defend positions which move them towards one of the two poles. In focusing on the tension and conflict between religious studies and theology, Trutz Rendtorff (‘Ernst Troeltsch and the Future of the Study of Religion’, pp. 301–13, with a response by Sarah Coakley, pp. 315–20) goes back to Ernst Troeltsch and his distinction between naïve and scientifically elaborated religion, in order to endorse the practical task of religious studies and their present and future contribution to the achievement of peace among religions. The argumentation of Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (‘The Stubborn Persistence of Religion: Some Post-secular Reflections’, pp. 23–42, with a response by Peter Berger, pp. 43–46) centers on the implicit partisanship of scholars, their attempts to efface theology in the name of self-legitimizing objectivity and by means of constructivist rhetoric, and their involvement in religious developments in a postmodern age. To clarify the present situation of religious studies on their own grounds, Hans G. Kippenberg (‘The Study of Religions in the Twentieth Century’, pp. 47–64, with a response by Christoph Schwöbel, pp. 65–75) approaches this situation in the light of theoretical considerations which connect and contrast the history of these studies with shifts in the interpretation of religious history in the course of the twentieth century. Finally, while acknowledging the differences between cultures and religious traditions, Michael Pye (‘Difference and Coherence in the Worldwide Study of Religions’, pp. 77–95, with a response by Robert Cummings Neville, pp. 97–101) points

out that the diversity of models of religion can be understood in ways which corroborate the coherence of reflections upon religious differences, and are such that they establish the study of religions as an autonomous and integral discipline.

To the extent that religious traditions and their theologies are part of culture history, the future of religious studies will be ensured as long as human beings are curious and care about their past. How they will do it, and whether religious developments will be part of the future, are different questions. The papers in this volume exemplify the tensions between theology and the study of religious traditions as well as the struggle of religious studies to do justice to their subject in fascinating ways. The contributions and their responses (which in some instances are critical, but which deepen and complement the texts they address, most of the time) present themselves as different worlds with their own reasons and arguments. Even if one does not agree with all of them, they are worth studying and considering carefully. However, as to the vital question about the practical side of religious studies and their role in the adoption of religious policies, I regret that Peter Berger's distinction and connection between citizen and scholar (p. 46) hardly received the attention it deserves.

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