

Simon Coleman and Peter Collins (eds), *Religion, Identity and Change: Perspectives on Global Transformations*. Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004, pp. xii + 214, ISBN 0-7546-0450-0 (hbk). Review doi: 10.1558/arsr.v20i3.359

This volume of essays focuses on contemporary Britain (only one contribution, Douglas Davies' 'Time, Place and Mormon Sense of Self' diverts from British material) and is an interesting snapshot of religiosity in the UK at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Much of the methodology and conceptual framework employed is familiar to the student of contemporary Western religious change: the secularization thesis in all its different permutations; shifting notions of identity; the growth of new, syncretic forms of religion and spirituality; and the impact of globalization on religion and identity.

Many of the pieces are interested in the renegotiations that the Christian churches are engaged in to retain relevance and energy in the face of social change. Issues of clerical sexuality are canvassed (Martin D. Stringer's 'Identity and the Anglican Priesthood: Debates on the Ordination of Women and Homosexuals in Sociological Perspective'); the place of the parish church and the concept of the parish itself are questioned (Martyn Percy's 'Losing our Space, Finding our Place? The Changing Identity of the English Parish Church'); newer phenomena including black churches are investigated (Nancy A. Schaefer's 'American-led Urban Revivals as Ethnic Identity Arenas in Britain'); and historically significant phenomena such as Northern Irish Loyalist marches are examined from new perspectives (Katy Radford, 'Protestant Women—Protesting Faith: Tangling Secular and Religious Identity in Northern Ireland').

Newer religions in Britain are also featured: David Herbert discusses Islam in a post-September 11 climate and Eleanor Nesbitt cleverly teases out the ways in which school-age Gujaratis and Punjabis conflate ethnic and religious identities for social purposes, and how those identities can be broken down into much more complex and less unified blocks for those 'in the know' and able to recognize the fine distinctions (Hindu, Sikh, Sai Baba, and within Sikhism, Khalsa and non-Khalsa). New Religious Movements and the New Age feature in Davies on Mormonism (mentioned above) and in Steve Sutcliffe's intriguing 'Unfinished Business—Devolving Scotland/ Devolving Religion' (which parallels the process of Scottish political separation from Westminster with Scottish religious moving away from the Protestantism of John Knox towards a multi-faith community).

The volume would be of use to undergraduates studying contemporary religion; the narrow focus on Britain is actually a strength, in that the picture built up of one modern European political entity is both dense and multi-faceted. That being said there is little that is truly exciting in the collection of essays. It is solid rather than remarkable; that may, however, prove to be the key element in whether it has a long shelf life (as it deserves to).

Carole M. Cusack
University of Sydney