

Sociology and Anthropology of Religion

EMERGING EVANGELICALS: FAITH, MODERNITY, AND THE DESIRE FOR AUTHENTICITY. By James S. Bielo. New York: New York University Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 225. Cloth, \$75.00; paper, \$25.00.

This book provides a comprehensive ethnographic study of the Emerging church movement, exploring the various “identities fashioned, practices performed . . . institutions created, and ideas interrogated.” Drawing upon a number of Emerging Evangelical authors and the scholarship of the anthropology of Christianity, especially studies that concern the relationship between Christianity and modernity/late modernity, Bielo sees the movement as a cultural critique of conservative evangelicalism, emphasizing the concept of “authenticity” as one important cultural logic and organizing trope. Bielo offers a poignant observation that although the Emerging Evangelical movement was born out of “a deeply felt disenchantment toward America’s conservative Christian subculture,” Emerging evangelicals are nevertheless conditioned and informed by the same cultural logics of modernity and late modernity that have informed the conservative evangelicals. For example, Bielo examines how the Emerging Evangelicals plant churches through promoting the enlightenment values of rationality and manageability. One wonders if this cultural dilemma has informed and complicated other aspects of Emerging Evangelical subjectivity and institution making, which remain uninterrogated and unproblematized in the book. Still, this is an important contribution to the scholarship of the anthropology of Christianity as it provides not only a thick ethnographic description of the Emerging Evangelical movement but also a timely analysis of lived subjectivity and religious life in the late modern United States. The book is useful for both graduate and upper level seminary students and anthropology major students. It will make a good collection for both seminary and university libraries

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DELIVERANCE AND SUBMISSION: EVANGELICAL WOMEN AND THE NEGOTIATION OF PATRIARCHY IN SOUTH KOREA. By Kelly H. Chong. Harvard East Asia Monographs, 309. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008. Pp. xiv + 272. \$39.95.

This book is an analysis of ethnographic fieldwork that Chong conducted in two evangelical churches in Seoul over the course of sixteen months. She proceeds by providing a context within which to understand the current status of evangelicalism in South Korea and how it has been affected by various economic, philosophical, and sociological factors. Chong then demonstrates how the church provides meaningfulness in women’s lives, spiritually as well as

institutionally. Finally, she highlights the dual nature of Korean evangelicalism, which helps women negotiate their domestic frustrations, but also redomesticates them within the patriarchal system. Chong concludes by noting that ultimately, South Korean evangelical women cooperate in their own oppression because of limited economic and social options for women and their strong family-centered identity. This work is insightful, culturally informed, and sensitive. It provides a thought-provoking glance into the lives of everyday South Korean evangelical women, and refuses to posit evangelicalism as a monolithic source of gender oppression. By focusing on gender, it contributes further to studies of Korean evangelicalism, and by focusing on South Korea as the locale, it expands the existing data on women’s involvement in religious traditionalism. Anyone interested in either of these areas should read this book.

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PLAY AND POWER IN RELIGION: COLLECTED ESSAYS. By André Droogers. Reason and Religion 50. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012. Pp. xi + 455. \$168.00.

Now professor emeritus of cultural anthropology at the Free University (Amsterdam), with which he has been variously affiliated for over forty years, Droogers has here culled from over 150 of his book chapters and scholarly articles (listed in the bibliography) seventeen essays dating back to 1980. Those familiar with his work will recognize many of the dominant themes that have marked his scholarship, e.g., marginality, play, ritual, syncretism, pentecostalism, and Afro-Brazilian religions. Yet, pulling together in one place the threads of an argument for methodological ludism (ML) that he has developed over the last two decades makes this collection a good fit for this prestigious religion and reason series. ML is an innovative methodological proposal that capitalizes on the human capacity, most obvious in our playful modes, of dealing simultaneously and subjunctively (as if) with multiple ways (i.e., that of the “objective” researcher and that of the “subjects” of study, with whom the anthropologist as ethnographer is a *participant-observer*) of classifying and engaging with reality. This enables the social scientist, anthropologist, or even theologian to adopt, sympathetically, multiple perspectives without necessarily synthesizing them, reducing or elevating any single view, or neglecting matters of religious truth claims. Supported not only by developments in the field of anthropology but also neurobiology and psychology, ML suggests a way beyond mere objectivism or subjectivism, without denying the role of either in research and scholarship. This is a sophisticated proposal that has implications across the humanities and deserves to be critically engaged.

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PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICAN PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC CHURCHES.

By Maria Frahm-Arp. *Studies of Religion in Africa/Supplements to the Journal of Religion in Africa* 38. Leiden: Brill, 2010. Pp. xvii + 302. \$147.00.

This book by sociologist Frahm-Arp is informed by extensive ethnographic fieldwork at two pentecostal-charismatic (PC) megachurches in post-apartheid South Africa, one predominantly black and the other more racially mixed. Although the volume is a welcome addition to the research on PC Christianity in the global South, its major contribution is to shed light on the lives of women in conservative Christian churches in general, and how they are empowered even within a context that promulgates a “masculinist” Christianity (emphasizing the biblical message of male headship and leadership in the home and of a Puritan work ethic in the public square). This study is intriguing especially since it unveils how women have become accomplished in the workplace at least in part because of their churches’ message (of the ontological equality of male and female), provision of a support network, and accumulated sociocultural capital. Yet, professional achievements within a context that promotes a more patriarchal domestic ethos comes with a price: the emphasis on traditional family values, while encouraging husbands (for those who are married) to be more responsible, does nothing to alleviate the guilt of the women regarding fulfilling female gender roles, such as those related to motherhood, and these inevitably are at odds with their pursuit of economic success and independence. An important subplot within the narrative is the contrasting strategies within the two churches for negotiating the interface with culture, especially African indigenous traditions, while women reshape their Christian identities amidst the twenty-first century global market.

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YEARNING TO BELONG: DISCOVERING A NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT.

By John Paul Healy. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010. Pp. 207. Cloth, \$99.95.

This text is a sociological study that focuses on “individuals’ experience” of the guru-centered New Religious Movement (NRM), Siddha Yoga, which was founded by Swami Muktananda in the 1970s. It also includes the numerous offshoots of Siddha Yoga, all of which are grouped under the phrase “Guru-disciple Yoga Practice.” Healy begins with a discussion of his own positive four-year participation in Siddha Yoga, a revelation that suggests a sympathetic account is to follow. Indeed, the main aim of the text is to critique and provide an alternative account of individual involvement in NRMs than those offered by “the brainwashing model of affiliation.” This is primarily achieved through 32 in-depth interviews that explore the experiences of participants both during and after their involvement in these communities, particularly focusing on the guru-disciple rela-

tionship. In addition to these individual narratives are chapters on issues most relevant to the study of NRMs within the sociology of religion and debates on the “anti-cult movement.” In taking seriously the agency of the participants and the recovery of their complex (and often transformative) experiences, Healy applies sufficient analytic pressure on his brainwashing target. A limitation of the book, however, is that it too readily assumes a “sustained reliance” on brainwashing theory, which has been undermined from several other quarters. Also, its rather dry style will likely limit its audience to scholars rather than the undergraduate classroom. Nonetheless, *Yearning to Belong* will be of interest to sociologists of religion and scholars of NRMs and Asian religions in America.

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BEHIND THE BACKLASH: MUSLIM AMERICANS AFTER 9/11.

By Lori Peek. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011. Pp. xi + 214. \$27.95.

Behind the Backlash offers an accessible, well-written exploration of the impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America, focusing specifically on how members of the Muslim American community felt and coped with the backlash that followed the attacks. The book focuses on portraits of Muslim Americans, recognizing that statistics depict only a fragment of the full story. Peek does a good job of telling a story we all already know without sensationalizing or falling prey to popular inflammatory rhetoric. The most compelling part of the text comes from the voices of the Muslim Americans themselves. While there is nothing particularly striking in the analysis, the text’s richness comes from its wealth of information, detailed portrayals, and sensitive view of the backlash. Though Peek’s treatment of the subject is generally nuanced, the repeated use of the concept of the “Judeo-Christian” world demonstrates a lack of sensitivity. Peek’s focus on the discrimination against Muslims seems to come at the price of glossing over the discrimination faced by other groups, intimating a homogeneity where none exists. On the whole, this is a strong, sociological study, well-researched, easy to read, recommended for anyone interested in exploring Islamic studies, religion in America, and the sociology of America. Applying literature on the sociology of disaster and trauma to the 9/11 attacks, this book offers insight into what it means to be a Muslim American and into the dynamics of contemporary American life.

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DURKHEIM’S SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION: THEMES AND THEORIES.

By William S. F. Pickering. Cambridge: James Clarke & Company, 2009. Pp. vii + 577. \$62.50.

In this massive book, sociologist Pickering presents a meticulous analysis of Emile Durkheim’s sociologically based theory of religion. This work, like other treatments of

Durkheim's sociology of religion, considers *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* as a vital interpretative source. But unlike other scholarly considerations, it incorporates a wider corpus of Durkheim's work in order to provide a fuller analysis. Pickering draws from lectures, articles, reviews, and books to illustrate the progressive development of the religious thought of Durkheim. Specifically, he devotes a considerable amount of space to unpacking Durkheimian dualities such as the sacred/profane, collective/individual, and religion/science. In his analyses of these dualities, Pickering creatively uses Durkheim's large body of work as evidentiary support to assert that vital components of Durkheim's sociology of religion—sacrality, *représentations*, and effervescence, for example—developed over a period of time (1880-1917). The development of the former two terms is clearly traced in the historical trajectory of the scholarly work of Durkheim. However, the latter term, in addition to notions of society, does not receive the same treatment, in that only scant pieces of the breadth of Durkheim's work are considered. Despite this concern, the book represents a comprehensive analysis of Durkheim's sociology of religion, which makes it a must-read for scholars and students of sociology and sociology of religion.

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THE BLACK MEGA-CHURCH: THEOLOGY, GENDER, AND THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT. By Tamelyn N. Tucker-Worgs. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011. Pp. vii + 255. \$39.95.

Tucker-Worgs provides religious scholars, ministry practitioners, and students of black religion and contemporary African American churches a well-researched and assessable survey of 147 black mega-churches. In addition to important scholarship on mega-churches conducted by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, and on black mega-churches conducted by Sandra L. Barnes (*Black Mega-church Culture*, 2010), Tucker-Worgs provides a study that gives attention to the ways black mega-churches are attempting to meet the needs of the community in the post civil rights era. *The Black Mega-Church* makes three important contributions. First, the text demonstrates an awareness of the historical context of the black church and how it intersects with the emergence of black mega-churches in the contemporary context. Second, the volume fills a gap in studies of black mega-churches, in which much of what is said is not based on empirical research. This book's chapters provide helpful tables documenting critical issues such as founding year, denominational affiliation, top metropolitan cities with larger number of black mega-churches, and number of black mega-churches with community development organizations. Third, Tucker-Worgs's discussions of issues related to gender, political engagement, and theology are nuanced, revealing glaring inconsistencies and problematic beliefs while demonstrating the way these black mega-

churches are more progressive than traditional black churches. This book is highly recommended for those interested in understanding a phenomenon that will not be disappearing anytime soon.

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SOCIOLOGY AND MORE THAN BELIEF: A MATERIALIST THEORY OF RELIGION. By Manuel A. Vásquez. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. i + 382. \$29.95.

The re-materialization of religious studies is the primary impetus in *More than Belief*. Specifically, Vásquez advances an immanent materialist approach to religion, one that is not bound to metaphysical explanations but rather offers an interrogation of the complex, dynamical material realities of "lived" religion. Utilizing embodiment, performance, and placement as inquiry sites, he traces the theoretical treatment of materiality in the fields of phenomenology, social constructionism, cognitive science, practice theory, and ritual theory/studies. What he discovers is the presence of a materialist countercurrent. This oppositional strand points to a tension between dualistic conceptions of material realities and multidimensional notions of materiality. For Vásquez, the latter understanding becomes an invaluable interpretative model for the study of religion in that it "overcomes disabling dichotomies in religious studies" that privileges "beliefs, symbols, and texts" over the rich material realities engulfing these same elements. This materialist approach also captures the interactive engagement between religion and embodied placement and practice. While Vásquez meticulously develops the embodiment aspect of these relational occurrences, he leaves to be desired an equal treatment of performance and space in his quest to *materialize* the study of religion. Beyond this concern, *More than Belief* offers a thick interpretative view of religion that will be of value to scholars and advanced graduate students interested in critical theory in religious studies.

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Religion and Science

APOCALYPTIC AI: VISIONS OF HEAVEN IN ROBOTICS, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AND VIRTUAL REALITY. By Robert M. Geraci. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. 233. \$27.95.

In this book, Geraci elaborates the concept of Apocalyptic AI—"the presence of apocalyptic theology in popular science books on robotics and artificial intelligence"—seeking to evaluate the "*significance* and *presence* of Apocalyptic AI in modern culture." The opening chapter provides a lucid and informative account of the general characteristics of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic