Book Reviews


Watching a good film can often provide the viewer with more than just a few hours’ entertainment. For example, it can provide refuge, comfort, insight, and understanding. However, for those films that contain explicit and implicit religious questions, it can also provide a powerful medium for exploring personal faith. This is the context in which the author, Barbara Mraz, wishes her book to operate. ‘Finding Faith at the Movies’ is a resource book for Christian educators, youth leaders, and anyone wishing to use films as a teaching tool to explore and discuss issues of faith and spirituality using a selection of classic and contemporary ‘Hollywood’ films. In contrast to the conventional approach of showing a full-length film and trying to squeeze related discussions into an already tight schedule, this book provides an effective and efficient way of focusing on one major story line from a film with relevant opportunities for reflective insight and discussion within a user-friendly time frame.

The book begins with a brief ‘Introduction’ that provides the rationale for the book, as well as providing ‘Practical Suggestions for the Group Leader’, and discussing issues of ‘Legalities’. However, the heart of the book is a collection of twelve films that have inherent and implicit religious significance. Specifically, each of the films explores a particular Christian value: Saving Private Ryan (sacrifice), Contact (truth), A River Runs Through It (memories), Quiz Show (temptation), The Music Box (disappointment), Amadeus (envy), Shadowlands (suffering), Smoke Signals (forgiveness), American Beauty (gratitude), Dead Man Walking (repentance), The Prince of Tides (acceptance), and To Kill a Mockingbird (empathy).

Each of the following twelve chapters follows a consistent format under clear headings that allows for the efficient examination of a major story-line contained within each of the films selected. ‘Theological Theme’ presents the film in terms of a key question of faith; ‘Tips for Using This Movie’ contains guidelines for selecting and using the film; ‘Background’ provides background material on the film and a synopsis of the story; ‘Reflection: …’ gives a reflective essay that elaborates on the theme in the context of the film; ‘Film Clips to Use for a One-Hour Class’ contains selected film segments (with VCR counter numbers and DVD settings, within the usual 40-50 minutes of class time available); ‘Film,
Faith, and Scripture’ provides related scriptural passages to the film; ‘Discussion Questions’ are given to develop thinking about the film and to relate the film to personal and spiritual issues; ‘Extension Activities’ are provided to continue discussion throughout the week or to encourage personal reflection. This formula provides a user-friendly resource to examine each film and related value within each session using an effective and consistent template. Moreover, this approach has been well tried and tested in situ by the author.

For those individuals and groups wanting to learn about theology, discuss spiritual questions, and bridge the gap between the individual, church and wider contemporary society, ‘Finding Faith at the Movies’ is an excellent resource that provides an efficient and effective way of exploring Christian faith through the medium of film.

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This substantial text is the second in a series of International Studies in Religion and Society and is a formidable contribution to the subject of how religion might relate to the current theory and practice of human rights. I am grateful to Edward Bailey for sending it in my direction. His reason for doing so was that I wrote an article for this journal (April 2003) exploring the possibility that the discourse of human rights might usefully be interpreted as a form of secular religion. My starting point was that Christianity needs to engage more deeply with human rights as there are considerable areas of overlap between the two traditions, and this general approach is echoed here, backed up by the urgency of responding to the challenge of post-apartheid South Africa. It takes a while before this position is made wholly explicit—284 pages to be precise—but one is then left in no doubt as to the authors’ intentions:

The aim is partly that members of Christian churches should champion a true human rights culture not merely on profane but also on religious grounds. But it is also meant as a conscious contribution to the development of what has been called an overlapping consensus,
in this case in the area of human rights (Rawls 2000). Adherents of
diverse religious and nonreligious world-views participate in the
development of such an overlapping consensus and are also vehicles
of it—at least, they ought to be (p. 284).

The context for this approach is the current state of turmoil in South Africa
and the central role that human rights might play as enshrined in the South
African Bill of Rights. Human rights ‘offer a legally enforceable solution to the
manifold needs experienced by the majority of South Africans’ (p. 454). In
particular, the authors refer to the AIDS epidemic, combating poverty, contain-
ing criminality and reducing unemployment, and thus the need to implement
fundamental human rights such as the right to life, health, sanitation, food,
housing, education and work. Unless Christianity can be part of that process
then it will cease to be of relevance to most of the people of that country.

It is clear from this that human rights is not simply of academic interest but
of direct practical and pastoral importance, and that the authors approach the
subject with an underlying passion and conviction that the future of South
Africa will be in the hands of those who can offer these resources. It is for this
reason that they have conducted the research which is at the heart of the text.
Groups of Grade 11 students were interviewed and questioned, both during
1995/6 and then in 2000/1, to try to establish in what ways their religious
beliefs had an impact upon their attitudes towards human rights issues. These
were divided into two further groups, schools which were multicultural and
those which were monocultural. These schools were all in the Johannesburg/
Pretoria region. The reasons for this particular sampling are carefully argued
within the text. The methodology is of significance as representing the emerging
empirical approach to theological studies of which van der Ven in particular is a
leading exponent. The knowledge gained as a result of this research is described
as scientific (p. xx). I am aware that there will be debates centred on this aspect
of the work but do not intend to comment on them here.

In many ways it is the philosophical and theological discussions, that form
the backdrop to the research, that I found most interesting and stimulating.
One will appreciate that a volume of 600 pages is going to contain the sort of
detailed and sophisticated arguments that no reviewer can summarize. I can
therefore only point to some of the highlights of these. I was particularly
encouraged to encounter a considerable engagement with the work of Habermas
in the early chapters. The authors (and I note that van der Ven wrote Parts 1, 2
and 3—there are only 3 Parts!), draw heavily on his theory of the Systems World
and the Lifeworld, although not uncritically so, in order to move towards a
concept of deliberative democracy as being the most appropriate to the South
African context. Although they are thorough and rigorous in their discussions of
critiques and counter-arguments, I do feel that they are perhaps unrealistically
optimistic, both about deliberative democracy and the possible achievements
They conclude that deliberative democracy is the ‘least bad’ form of government (p. 76).

They also go into detail over the arguments relating to the tension between individualism and collectivism and particularism and universalism within human rights in Part 2 of the book, relating these to the Christian tradition by considering certain key texts including Genesis (pp. 154-62), Isaiah (pp. 162-67) and Romans (pp. 167-83). As with much of the subsequent theological discussion I found this extremely valuable in its own right and would commend it for further study. Perhaps this is not surprising given that the general approach is one of openness to other faiths and traditions and indeed a grounding in the type of Liberation Theology that has now been quietly abandoned in the UK (let alone suppressed within the Roman Catholic Church). It is heartening to see these radical approaches still at work!

Part 3 introduces the actual research questions and the rationale behind them. Again one encounters a deep level of theological debate in the chosen subject areas: images of God; the evil of violence; the imitation of Jesus; salvation; the nature of Christian communities, and inter-religious interaction. The close of each chapter draws together the conclusions of the research, and a concluding chapter (ch. 14) draws the whole text to an end. However, I am still not quite sure what the empirical part of the work adds to what is already a fascinating and highly worthwhile read. I accept the point that one could not have predicted the results, and that certain surprises turned up along the way. I also realize that it is valuable to have direct evidence when appeals are being made to change practice in order to encourage a more open attitude towards human rights. So p. 586 offers 4 pointers towards such changes. Do not present religion as a fixed, immutable possession; do not put an emphasis upon sermons that highlight a scriptural theme of divine retaliation; tone down references to original sin which may only serve to further damage fragile dignities and identities; abandon a narrow-minded particularism in favour of a model of inter-religious pluralism. Then one might be able to develop a church culture that is more conducive to working alongside the human rights culture that South Africa so badly requires. However, I suspect that I might have been able to reach a similar conclusion to that on p. 312 without the research: ‘Open-minded churches in fact support people’s rights, narrow-minded ones do not’.

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In *The Western Construction of Religion* Daniel Dubuisson argues that religion and ‘religion’ are Western constructions—the former the nucleus of the West’s universe of values which subsequently conferred scientific status on the latter—that have influenced all our ways of thinking about the world. Religion, he argues, is an embodiment of an atemporal essence and is the West’s most valued creation. He further maintains that religion exists only in the West, and that no other culture has a word that points to what ‘religion’ in the West designates. Moreover, the concept of religion, he claims, involves paradox and absurdity, making it impossible to draw its boundaries clearly. Given the reliance of the history and phenomenology of religion upon this notion, he insists that neither can provide knowledge of the human world comparable to that found in other disciplines. This is so, he claims, because ‘religion’—given the cultural particularity of religion—is a local or regional concept characteristic only of the West. It does not, that is, point to something universally true about being human (i.e., does not designate a major anthropological fact) and religion is not a constituent aspect of the human condition because there is no atemporal essence called religion; religion is not a simple, obvious phenomenon that exists *sui generis*. According to Dubuisson, religion is rather a ‘Western prejudice’ that, as he puts it, merely summarizes ‘the struggles of a Western consciousness grappling with itself’ (p. 5). And study of religion therefore is implicated in the theological and metaphysical controversies of Western history; in the argument between the transcendentalists and materialists. Thus, he argues, the concept of religion is inadequate to account for that universal characteristic of human communities Dubuisson refers to as the need for a global vision or philosophy; an ideology or cosmology that on the practical level provides communities with a moral framework or way of living. It is wholly inadequate, that is, to account for the incredibly disparate historical facts with respect to ideologies—‘human wisdoms’ (like Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism among many others)—that don’t correspond to Christianity; cosmologies that are other than mere variations of an obscure religious instinct.

According to Dubuisson, then, historians and phenomenologists of religion ought to have organized their work around a more neutral concept than religion; one more conducive to understanding other cultures. He proposes as such a more neutral concept the notion of ‘cosmographic formations’. ‘The notion of cosmographic formations’, he writes, ‘has precisely the goal of subsuming this totality of human creations in a scientific project that does not itself presuppose specific orientations or values’ (p. 46). It is a scientific notion, for it subsumes all items ‘that reveal... [a] common anthropological and cosmographic
purpose …’ (pp. 17-18), and includes the West without making it the ideal reference point in relation to which other cultures are assessed (p. 22). Thus he acknowledges that the terms ‘religion’ and ‘religious’ can still be used to designate a region of human behaviour, although not to designate a major ‘anthropological fact’ (p. 50); ‘religion’ and ‘religious’, that is, refer only to ‘the expression of the Western equivalent of cosmographic formations’ (p. 51).

According to Dubuisson, therefore, the concept of religion is useless in understanding other cultures, and the history and phenomenology of religions are held captive to a contradiction in the dismal division of its production of scholarly monographs on the one hand, and ambitious syntheses on the other. The monographs are, as he puts it, ‘characterized by fragmentation, dispersion, and erudition’ (p. 83) but are so numerous that no scholar is capable of absorbing the information provided by them, and the syntheses that try to provide some overall understanding of history are essentially metaphysical and therefore, unlike the monographs, not subject to ‘trustworthy methods, useable within the framework of a debate or scientific program’ (p. 83). He concludes, therefore, that there has been a ‘constant and insidious confusion’ between science and ideology in the study of religion, because scientific objectivity relates only to understanding the fragments of reality and not the world in its totality from which humanity derives its meaning. And substituting the more neutral concept of ‘cosmographic formations’ for ‘religion(s)’ escapes the contradiction and confusion, it appears, because it recognizes them as artificial constructions that do not represent accurate descriptions or explanations of the world but rather rhetorical treatments of reality that make existence in the world bearable. Such ‘knowledge’, that is, corresponds to the requirements of the mind—for unity, coherence, order, and homogeneity—rather than to the richness and complexity of the world (pp. 119-28).

The concept of ‘cosmographic formations’, Dubuisson concludes, offers the scholar seeking to understand the human condition a more judicious and efficient instrument for that task than does ‘religion’; it is more comprehensive from an anthropological point of view in that it can better encompass the heterogeneous totality of facts than can ‘religion’, and more epistemologically relevant in that it evades the great metaphysical controversies that characterize the history and phenomenology of religion.

Dubuisson’s thesis is not unique; a number of Religious Studies scholars and others have also questioned the merits of the concept of religion including, among others, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Ninian Smart, Talal Asad, Jonathan Z. Smith, Russell McCutcheon, and Timothy Fitzgerald. Ninian Smart’s suggestion that students of religion expand their interests to include a study of ‘worldviews’ that may differ considerably from ‘religions,’ for example, overlaps Dubuisson’s concerns, even though Smart is not as critical of the concept of religion as is Dubuisson.
Although sympathetic to this general line of argument, I have some reservations over Dubuisson’s account of religion as a purely Western phenomenon, and his consequent restriction of the concept of religion simply to Western society. I also think his critique of the history of religions needs further elaboration; it seems to me that his argument here ignores developments in the social scientific study of ‘religions’ (although not widely adopted by those in the field of Religious Studies) that has moved the ‘field’ beyond the metaphysical debates he deplores. Nevertheless, the main thrust of Dubuisson’s argument must be taken seriously by those engaged in Religious Studies, namely ‘that religion is not a simple, obvious phenomenon which it suffices to say that it exists *sui generis* as one of the fundamental characteristics of humanity’ (p. 189).

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The title and cover for this book are not perhaps the most inspired, but at least the sub-title gives a clue to its fascinating content. The book arose from a consultation under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of the Christian Church at the University of Exeter in September 2001, at which some 13 papers were presented. Eight of these have been selected for publication and the editor has added his own chapter, looking at the implications of the whole. It is a pity that the other five papers were not included as the book would then have been a comprehensive reference for that particular event.

Those that are included here, however, cover a wide spectrum of thinking, from the non-quantifiable religious dimension in life (by Bernice Martin) to a psychosocial approach to thinking about religion (Very Revd Wesley Carr). There is a summary of Robin Gill’s important work of looking at Christianity over time, with reference to his special study on churches, and there is a fascinating chapter by Grace Davie on her work, analysing the huge correspondence received by the National Gallery as a consequence of their very popular millennium exhibition *Seeing Salvation: The Image of Christ*.

Leslie Francis contributes a chapter looking at the flaws in the 2001 Population Census in England and Wales under the heading of ‘Religion and Social Capital’, but argues more strongly about social capital than the flaws in the question on religion.
A strong chapter by Anne Richards looks at contemporary spirituality and how it should be interpreted, a subject which is proving to be of increasing importance. She looks at how varied spirituality in fact is, and how current church life finds it hard to understand people’s expectations, but suggests ways of meeting those challenges.

David Voas from the University of Manchester asks if Britain is a Christian country, showing that the number of Anglicans is not only no longer a majority, but that it will continue to decrease rapidly unless the practice of baptism becomes popular once again. He answers the question of his chapter positively, but only just.

The penultimate chapter by Martyn Percy focuses on generational change and its implications for mission, commenting in detail on Callum Brown’s *The Death of Christian Britain*. He has a warm and insightful approach to the problems facing the church today.

Finally, the editor, Paul Avis, tries to draw the threads together from this divergent group of topics. He sees the uniting theme as missiological, and considers in some detail Grace Davie’s twin mantras of ‘believing’ and ‘belonging’. There are, unfortunately, no mini-biographies of contributing authors.

This is a book which stimulates, encourages fresh thoughts, but is not passive or merely backward looking. Its challenges should encourage strategic thinking on the future of the church today in this country, and whether there can or should be faith publicly in the 21st century. Perhaps the title is apposite, after all!

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Your reviewer confesses that until this book arrived he had not come across the label ‘Folk Psychology’. Presumably the book was sent by the publishers because they saw a connection between Folk Psychology and Implicit Religion through its distant cousin Folk Religion. Your reviewer rapidly became aware that Folk Psychology had generated a considerable literature and learned debate; at the same time he saw that without knowing it he—like virtually all other people—had practised this skill through his life. Here was a striking parallel to Molière’s Bourgeois Gentilhomme who suddenly realized that
he had been speaking prose above forty years without knowing it. Folk Psychology deals with our constant attempts—usually successful—to understand the motives or mental states of other people, enabling us to respond where necessary in appropriate ways. A few moments of reflection demonstrate that without this ability the world would be quite bewildering, and drama entirely meaningless.

The puzzle this book seeks to resolve is how we learn the skills of Folk Psychology. To do this it first deals at length with a number of hypotheses put forward by scholars. Some of these have transparent names, but others employ a jargon which, like any other specialist jargon, is not immediately clear but needs close investigation. ‘Functionalism’: perhaps that is fairly clear, but what about ‘Eliminative Materialism’ or ‘Theory Theory’?

It was with some relief that after 150 pages of close reasoning, your reviewer found that his first reactions were being confirmed as sound: from childhood onwards humans have to learn how to respond to other members of society, beginning with the family. Language plays an important role in this process, but the process begins before language is acquired. Tones of voice, facial expressions, and bodily movements are the context within which Folk Psychology has its origins. Language develops the skill, and by adulthood the beliefs, desires, hopes, emotions and intentions of others are usually correctly identified.

The author wisely sprinkles light touches throughout the book to illuminate his argument, and deals realistically with the fact that different cultures may have different psychological worlds. Some of us with a background in Religious Studies might find his account of Animism rather superficial, and Classical scholars would want to qualify what is said of Homer and the Greeks, but the main thrust of the argument is sound, and the sub-title of the book is justified: this is a socio-linguistic approach to Folk Psychology.

Your reviewer learned much from this book. Its relevance to us who try to deal with Implicit Religion may not be immediately apparent. But we do well to ponder whether our jargon is readily comprehended, and how far the examples of Implicit Religion we study are socially conditioned and rooted in the environment of childhood and the experiences of maturation. Perhaps there is an even deeper concern and it touches on the over-arching concept, ‘Religion’. How far can people of one culture understand those in another, and how far can we fairly judge the rationality of those whose beliefs and practices seem to be based on irrationality or inadequate evidence? The final 50 pages of this book have useful things to say on those important issues.

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The study of implicit religion is indebted to the editors of this volume for bringing together a fascinating array of essays on religion and culture. The essays have a wide range of times and places for their foci, helping us to reflect upon the dazzling variety of phenomena that can be profitably studied under the rubric of religion, and upon the many ways that religion and culture can influence each other. Let me give suggestive summaries of nine of the contributions in order both to indicate the range of topics and to lure you into reading the book.

Richard Cohen explores the way contemporary advocates of hindutva try to portray Indian Buddhism as a religion to be subsumed within more-than-a-religion Hinduism. He critiques the attempt by examining its rhetoric in the light of a 1st Century CE Buddhist sutra, interpreted in the context of a 5th century CE Indian Buddhist community.

Derek Peterson shows how some Gikuyu in early 20th century Kenya attempted to make the form of Christianity taught in the school that they attended, fit into their traditional culture; and how the missionaries resisted this adaptation.

Jeremy Stolow presents the contemporary haredim, usually referred to by liberal scholars as Jewish fundamentalists, using some intellectual tools of modernity to relativize the liberal critique of their practice, and thus demonstrates the inadequacy of the ways in which outsiders interpret and often dismiss their movement. Most interesting are his concluding observations about the way the haredim and their scientific interlocutors influence each other's rhetoric.

Sanjay Joshi examines the writings in English of some influential Hindu modernisers, Bishan Dar and Rama Tirtha, in the Lucknow area around a century ago. His conclusion is worth quoting:

Religion, or rather self-definitions based on religious categories, became a critical part of the modern self, created by the colonial middle class .... The modern in this case was built upon the traditional and coexisted with it, belying neat dichotomies between the modern and the traditional, the religious and the secular (p. 95).

It is easy to see how such a study might advance an awareness of implicit religion in modernity.

Sarah Thal traces the emergence and changing self-definition of Shinto. She convincingly argues her thesis that 'processes by which advocates [of Shinto] sought to unify the population of Japan [in a time of pressure from cultural
Forces originating elsewhere, creating modern Shinto as both religion and above religion, have left an indelible mark on attitudes toward religion, identity, and the Japanese nation throughout the twentieth century’ (p. 101).

James Gelvin helps us appreciate how the Ottoman government sought to interpret Islam in a way that would help it realize its intention to be its own particular version of a modern state. Interestingly, this involved presenting Islam as more than a religion, resisting the way Western modernity seeks to compartmentalise and thus marginalize religious affiliation.

In a complementary essay, Wendy Shaw portrays the way that the post-Ottoman Turkish government sought to relativize Islam by presenting some of its artefacts in museums. This effort has been counteracted by the way some of the faithful have come to treat some of these artefacts and their setting as shrines.

Aaron Ketchell has given us a delightful study of the way that popular Christianity in the Ozark hills of central USA has integrated large-scale tourism into its piety.

Finally, Gauri Viswanathan shows how the debate over literacy education in contemporary India has been shaped by the legacy of Christian missionary education and Hindu resistance to the religion of colonial domination.

In an introductory essay, the editors try to place these writings in the context of the current post-modernist debate about whether religion is a sui generis phenomenon or an intellectual construct. If one still imagines that the Latin-English word ‘religion’ can be perfectly translated into another language, or that its meaning does not shift with cultural context, this discussion may be helpful. Fortunately, the other essays are not bound to this agenda, escaping its aridity with their wealth of concrete observation and context-savvy interpretation.

This review would be incomplete without noting the inclusion of a translation of an essay by the noted Liberation theologian Enrique Dussel. If, like this reviewer, one appreciates liberationist analysis, its inclusion will be a bonus. Otherwise one must wonder why this essay, arguing that liberationist interpretations of religions offer an alternative to secularism and fundamentalism, is here, and why it is presented as a ‘conclusion’.

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t-tests revealed that spiritual and theistic strivings produced overall less conflict (hence greater integration) compared with non-spiritual and non-theistic strivings.

Goal-directed human behaviour is open to psychological investigation using psychometric measurement, and Professor Emmons is a specialist in this kind of approach. Within a religious context such behaviour takes on the nature of personal striving. Emmons homes in upon the connection in The Psychology of Ultimate Concerns in order to look in a scientific way at the nature of religious experience, a subject which—because of its global nature and refusal to be compared with anything else—otherwise tends to evade any kind of measured treatment. The goals of religious striving are, by definition, beyond comprehension; but the striving itself is not, nor its importance within the psychological economy of individuals and groups of people.

Professor Emmon’s own work, along with that of other psychologists on whom he draws, provides powerful evidence of the structural importance of the spiritual at all levels of human goal-directed action; so that, when he moves on to consider the psychological functions of religion itself (as previously examined by authorities such as William James and Gordon Allport, as well as the theologian Paul Tillich), he is able to do so from a soundly psychological position. He points out, for instance, that:

It might be profitable to assess change in internal goal conflicts as a function of spiritually based intervention techniques such as prayer, meditation or other spiritual practices (p. 129).

If this is so, then religion and spirituality might legitimately be regarded as integral to the study of personality psychology, so that ‘spirituality might be conceived of as a type of intelligence’ (pp. 157-58), one which is used to attain ‘specific goals within concrete life situations’ (p. 163), and consequently be measured as such. Goal-based investigation has already been shown to be effective in therapeutic interventions at the level of conflict resolution and stress relief; now it may be used to explore and promote personal integration and the awareness of final meanings which guide and inspire human life:

The conclusions that a person reaches regarding matters of ultimate concern—the nature of life and death and the meaning of suffering and pain—have profound implications for individual well-being (p. 145).
There is, it appears, a statistically significant relationship between the intensity of our spiritual search, and the achievement of life’s deepest and most enduring satisfactions.

This is not surprising, however, owing to the fact that: ‘... spirituality is revealed through ultimate concerns that centre on the sacred. When people orient their lives around the attainment of spiritual ends they tend to experience their lives as worthwhile, unified and meaningful ...’ (p. 104).

The notion of focused experience and intensive devotion to a practical way of interpreting it is familiar to students of Implicit Religion. However, the things focused on here are explicitly spiritual; there is no real suggestion that they may be made implicitly so by the action of focusing itself—although the creation of goals is presented as so fundamentally human that it seems reasonable to assume that it actually precedes any choice of content, particularly as:

... goals appear to be prime constituents of the meaning-making process .... And provide structure, unity and purpose to people's lives ...

(p. 141).

When a life-pattern is ruptured by trauma, the focusing action of goal reformation becomes all-important.

For Implicit Religion, therefore, the book’s main value lies in the light it throws on the difference between spirituality and religion of either kind, implicit or explicit. ‘Spiritual striving’, we are told, ‘accounted for significant variance in well-being outcomes beyond the religious variables of attendance, rated importance, and prayer frequency’. Thus the spiritual is shown to be a more fundamental, and consequently more universal, reality than any behaviour patterns which may be associated with it. There is nothing at all here about the attribution of transcendental significance to human institutions. On the other hand, however:

... strivings are coded as “spiritual” if they reflect concern for an integration of the person with larger and more complex units: with humanity, nature, the cosmos ...

(p. 102).

'It is spiritual’, Emmons says, ‘to approach life with mystery and awe'. He does not point out that it is also implicitly religious!

At the same time, Emmons’ goal-based spirituality has more to say about the reality of religious awareness than some sociological approaches, specifically those drawing conclusions about religiosity from statistics about denominational membership and retrospective records of congregational attendance. Reflecting as it does, ‘the idiosyncratic ways in which individuals strive to obtain or maintain a concern with the sacred in their everyday lives’, it adds
weight to arguments about the sociological importance of ‘believing without belonging’. (On the other hand, overt religious observance may be considered to be health-inducing because it represents ‘a trade-off between manageability and meaningfulness of goals’. Going to church reduces the pressure of the need to be holy!)

There is, of course, more to the psychology of ultimate concerns than the demonstrable fact that the satisfaction of spiritual goals contributes to emotional well-being. Having looked hard at ‘concerns’, Professor Emmons turns to ‘ultimacy’. What is it about this kind of goal that makes its achievement so very important? In other words, what special kind of well-being is this? ‘Spiritual and religious belief systems usually promise their adherents considerably more than a life of happiness’, says Emmons. The various aspects of religious experience dealt with in the second half of the book involve definite changes in the ways in which people regard themselves and their worlds. From an Implicit Religion point of view, the most important of these is religion’s ability to deal with human adversity by rendering it spiritually meaningful. Emmons points out that this is a transformation which can apply to objects and circumstances not explicitly associated with religion, as ‘almost any striving can become sacralized through a process of sanctification’ (p. 96).

This is an important book because of its psychological rigour and its preference for the empirical to the anecdotal. It is to be recommended to students of religion of every kind.

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Some forty years after it first appeared on the stage Emanuela Barasch-Rubinstein sets herself to question the aims of Rolf Hochhuth’s play The Representative (in German Der Stellvertreter; also translated as The Deputy in the title of the present study). I saw the play in London in 1966 when I was a young practising Catholic. I had heard that the play was causing international dismay and had even provoked riots outside theatres and I wanted to see it for myself so I could make an informed judgment. This was long before we had heard of fundamentalism, and decades before the riots against the play Behzti at the Birmingham Rep, or the huge fuss stoked up by the website ‘Christian
Voice’ against Jerry Springer the Opera, or the public burning of Salman Rushdie’s Satanic Verses on the streets of Bradford in 1989. It now seems that everywhere and at all times people have a very thin skin when it comes to explicit religion, thereby revealing their further, underlying, ‘implicit’ religion.

What upset Catholics was the way that Hochhuth depicted Pope Pius XII. He made him a guilty bystander, complicit by his silence in the Nazi extermination of the Jews. The play confronts the failure of Vatican officials, and indeed the Pope himself, as the Representative (of the Church) or the Deputy (of God) in the title, to confront the Nazis’ crimes and contrasts this with the heroic ideals of a young Jesuit priest Riccardo. Hochhuth makes the Church put forward its justifications for non-action, but are these honest arguments or sophistry? As Barasch-Rubinstein says: ‘amongst the various levels of the clergy there was a belief that the Church was unable to affect the Hitler regime and that it was therefore better not to attack it but to try to coexist with it peacefully’. Hochhuth does not find this a sufficient justification, but nonetheless provides further justifications for the Church’s neutrality: it enabled priests to work secretly to save lives in ways that could not have happened if they had openly opposed the regime. The Pope says to the hero Riccardo, ‘Whoever wants to help must not provoke Hitler’. He thinks the Vatican as neutral arbiter can negotiate an early peace between the Nazis and the Allies.

Hochhuth could not see how else we can explain the Holocaust except in terms of metaphysical evil, so he cast his play in the form of a medieval morality, opposing good and evil in a cosmic battle, but one where good is ultimately vanquished. The scenes of the victims in the concentration camps, so difficult to handle, were simply not enacted on the stage, in the production I saw. Instead actual film footage of the death camps was projected onto a huge screen. The accompanying soundtrack said it all—the innocent voices of Christian choirboys singing plainchant. It seemed doubly shocking and the effect was heartrending. Was Pope Pius XII complicit in these deaths through lack of courage, or was he some kind of necessary Iscariot-figure? Hochhuth was too young to have been involved in the events the play portrays but, in a strange way, like all Germans of his generation, he was also a survivor of the Nazis. Along with those who actually survived the death camps, German youth had to make sense of the fact they had survived when thousands had not. Many young Germans must have wondered why their parents fell for the Nazi myth and wondered about the failure of the Church even to attempt to dissuade Hitler from genocide, let alone from the monstrous Aryan lie.

Many believe—certainly the Vatican does—that Hochhuth treated Pope Pius XII with gross unfairness. Certainly his reputation has never recovered—his sympathy with the Nazis has most recently been alleged in John Cornwell’s book Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII, written four decades after Hochhuth’s play. In January 2005 the New York Times published a letter and called it ‘1946 Letter from Vatican’, though its authenticity is disputed.

contained the damaging allegation that ‘if the [Jewish] children have been turned over by the parents [to the safekeeping of the Church], and if the parents reclaim them now, providing that the children have not received baptism, they can be given back’. The chilling implication was that if Jewish children had been baptised they would never be returned. This allegation turns out to be false, as exposed by the *New York Times*’ Sherrie Gossett on 16 April 2005.

In defence of Pius several historians reported that the Pope supported secret operations to save Jews in Europe, and even believed Hitler should be overthrown. He was said to have ordered churches and convents to hide Jews, and the Pope himself gave many Jews a place of refuge at the papal summer residence of Castel Gandalfo. These scholars trace the negative reputation of Pius XII to Rolf Hochhuth’s play, but despite Pope John Paul II’s attempt to reinstate him through the process of canonization, it hasn’t happened—the mud appears to have stuck more firmly than on people like Josemaría Escrivá de Balguer, who was canonized by John Paul II despite having clearly supported the Fascist dictator Franco and the Falangists.

Emanuela Barasch-Rubinstein’s book is a fascinating read. She gives a fair and balanced account of the play and proves its continued importance and interest in both Holocaust studies and recent church history. Even the strange and improbable friendship between Hochhuth and the English Holocaust-denying David Irving falls into place, with her account of how Hochhuth had come across Irving’s *The Destruction of Dresden* that dealt with various aspects of Churchill’s decision to bomb the non-strategic city. It confirmed Hochhuth in his desire to write the play *Soldiers: Obituary for Geneva*, in which he develops further the link between the Church’s refusal to condemn the deportation of the Jews and its refusal to condemn Churchill’s decision to destroy Dresden.

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At the centre of *Response and Responsibility: The World as a Challenge for the Church* (Epworth 2004), Roger Grainger explores how ‘the church’ is riddled with anxiety about how to interface with the modern day world. Grainger’s insights are mostly rooted in an examination into how the church in Europe, and specifically in Britain, co-exists with other modern expressions of religion. By acknowledging the existences of various forms of religious expression—this can include a person espousing support for Manchester United Football Club,
or a person heralding mountainous landscapes as a spiritual place of worship—Grainger spotlights the legitimacy of implicit religion as a field through which a broader understanding of religious expression can be gained.

The church’s various anxieties about mounting debt, the reality of insufficient funding to sustain its running costs and programmes, and the propensity of dwindling church attendance, are but a few of the challenges that the church in Britain faces today. Grainger insists that this crisis of affairs can be viewed as an opportunity to reassess the relevance of the church to contemporary society. In his attempt to explore how the world vis-à-vis secularization can be a viable and useful challenge to the church, Grainger employs Scripture, the sociology of religion, philosophy, theology, and the study of explicit and implicit religion as mediums from which multi-layered understandings of this subject matter can be gained. By drawing upon the works of sociologists such as Grace Davie, anthropologist Timothy Jenkins and scholars such as Edward Bailey amongst others, Grainger seeks to address how various trends surrounding religious expression and secular and non-secular belief systems can be understood.

Without question, Grainger has taken on a huge subject matter, for which he ought to be commended. His writing style is both accessible and engaging. Most chapters in Grainger’s book are framed by a narrative that puts a human face to the stories of those whose lives reflect many of the themes he attempts to address in each section of his book. These stories provide an informal and inviting format from which to draw readers into his scholarship. Grainger also intertwines biblical passages in his analysis, and by doing so he stresses the point that Scripture is not in denial about the various beliefs and attitudes held by many. Indeed he stresses that Jesus and St. Paul interacted with different communities and gained much from these encounters. He goes on to point out:

The wisdom of faith, which is Jesus’ and St. Paul’s does not bully people … It is the approach from weakness rather than what we are accustomed to call strength. It admits vulnerability, it welcomes other people with their personal histories and individual world-views, along with the allegiance to more public systems of thought and ways of interpreting the world; it listens and learns; above all it encounters people where they are rather than we would necessarily like them to be. In this way it co-operates with God in setting the scene of the blowing of the wind, the glorious liberty of the daughters and sons of God (p. 55).

The subtitle of his book, ‘The World as a Challenge for the Church,’ emphasizes the benefits of Christians not solely viewing the world as being in opposition to the church. Grainger also alludes to the dangers of seeing secularism as the enemy of the church, as he contends that:

For church people one idea in particular gives rise to this reaction—that of ‘secularisation.’ This is a word frequently used in describing the present situation of the church vis-à-vis the rest of society: it is not usually defined because the people who use it are not sure what it really means. They have a vague idea that it signifies a frightening state of affairs in which much of the world—people outside the Church, that is—has begun to find the idea of God meaningless, irrelevant, a distraction (p. 16).

Here Grainger tries to capture the anxiety some ‘church people’ harbor about ‘people outside the church.’ These ‘people outside the church’, who show little to no desire to follow a Christian God or become members of a church community, cause ‘church people’ to adopt an ‘us and them’ mentality, as they relegate those who do not claim a sense of allegiance to the Church to the category of belonging to ‘much of the world.’

Grainger suggests that ‘the world’ can be an important ally or catalyst for Christians to re-consider how their beliefs and activities can be shaped, clarified and strengthened to meet the needs of the world at large. However, much of the evidence Grainger uses to support his findings is largely culled from particular members of the academy who are based in Europe. Also one wonders which ‘church people’ Grainger is talking about. References are made to certain Christian denominations, the Church of England is notably mentioned. But he fails to include in his work the Pentecostalists within Europe whose churches are strongly attended by growing numbers of people from the African diaspora. Theologians Robert Beckford’s and Anthony G. Reddie’s scholarship on Black Theology and religious formations within British Caribbean communities, Mukti Barton’s scholarly engagement with Black and Asian Christian experiences in Britain, and R.S. Sugirtharajah’s work on Postcolonial theory and biblical studies might well have complicated Grainger’s view of the cultural makeup of Britain, Europe and quite possibly, ‘the world’ at large. World scholars in the field of biblical and mission studies from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe are too numerous to mention in this review, but an engagement with some of their observations would have given Grainger’s work more academic weight and bolstered his legitimate concern with ‘the World as a challenge for the church’. How would these congregations of ‘the World’ define their sense of religion? How would they view the study of Implicit Religion in the face of other belief systems? Alternately, countries such as France and England have a significant multi-faith dimension to their cultures. This, together with pluralistic understandings surrounding the definition and practice of religion, are constantly being reviewed, debated and challenged. In the light of these points of enquiry, one has to ponder the usefulness of labels as such as ‘church people,’ when considering the significance of secularization to formations of churches in Europe and the rest of the world. This may not
have been Grainger’s intention, but one must be mindful of not making a particular brand of ‘Europe’ the epicentre of the world.

In addressing the notion that modernization and secularization is damaging the church’s credibility in the world, Grainger draws upon Grace Davie’s book *Europe: The Exceptional Case* where she asserts that declining church attendance in Europe should not be automatically equated with a decline in a belief in God. Davie also does not attribute the falling numbers of church attendance in Europe solely to the evolution of secularization. In conjunction with this point of view, Davie takes into consideration the decline in membership and belief in other voluntary-based organizations such as political parties and trade unions. But she also maintains that world Christianity is alive and well. Grainger fleshes out this point further, by stating that, ‘In terms of Christian belief there is considerable evidence of “modernisation without secularisation” in the United States, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa (also the Philippines and South Korea, where there are large diaspora communities of Christians)’ (p. 18). While this information is interesting, the comprehensive nature of Grainger’s work would have been enhanced if he had revealed which members of society make up these ‘large diaspora communities of Christians.’ Neither do we get a multi-layered analysis on why modernization and secularization do not seem to be in conflict with one another in non-European contexts. While Grainger offers a clear interpretation of secularization, his definition of modernization and how it relates to the church is less clear.

On another front, Grainger draws attention to how ‘the church’ is responding to declining church numbers with measured success. P. Dowling’s *Fondant Church* and S. Croft’s *Transforming Community* documents the existence of small home groups and cell groups, and by doing so they present alternative models of faith community formation that differ from those constructed within the traditional church paradigm that locates the development of Christian community within the walls of a church building. Grainger’s notation is welcome, and yet a greater engagement with in-depth studies that flesh out how churches in Britain are successfully responding to the climate of secularization would have contributed to a less one-dimensional depiction of the church in England one that is embroiled in what appears to be a perpetual state of anxiety.

Overall, Grainger’s observations and those of the scholars whose works he integrates into his book can assist congregations and church leaders to rise above the ‘anxieties’ held by those concerned about the apparent declining relevance of the church in contemporary society. Still, more of an engagement with scholars writing in the field of missiology, reconciliation, and urban studies would have provided fresh insight into this subject matter and a broader perspective of how ‘the world,’ religion, and secularization can be defined, and understood. And this point is significant, because anyone desiring to enter the fray of the secular debate must consider Stephen Platten’s introduction to
Grainger’s book, where he maintains that since the seventies ‘many theologians saw the sixties as an embarrassment. The challenges were seen as frothy and false, and secularisation was put to one side; its challenge largely left unanswered’ (p. viii). The growing number of scholars conducting research in this subject matter signals their attempts to dialogue and critically engage with a wide variety of scholarship from the past and present that addresses the issue of secularization in a thoughtful and rigorous manner. Such endeavours are welcomed.

At the close of his book Grainger considers the lessons that can be gleaned from Scripture as the modern day church experiences ‘anxieties’ about how it is to interact with secularist beliefs. Here Grainger cites St. Paul who comments ‘about his strength being ‘made perfect’ (yes, perfect, that’s what he said) ‘in weakness’ (p. 163). Grainger therefore contends that if the church in Europe is to evolve into a dynamic force in society, ‘the urgency of the current situation in which the European Churches find themselves certainly suggests a need for real changes to be made in the ways we have traditionally gone about doing things; somehow or other we must learn to accept the reality of change and find our own way of engaging—embracing, co-operating—with it’ (p. 163).

Building on Grainger’s narrative I would go a step further, by referring to the Gospel narratives that document the stories of individuals whose lives are transformed by Jesus. Somehow the existence of other belief systems that are competing for the attention and loyalties of his followers does not overwhelm Jesus. Also, throughout the Gospels, Jesus places significant emphasis on the individual narratives of those he encounters. As we take into account the Gospel passages that document how Jesus valued and honoured each of his followers, we can celebrate a God who is ever attentive to the uniqueness of each person’s life story. While charting the challenges facing the church in contemporary Britain we must also entertain the possibility that just as the Gospels note Jesus’ considerable achievement in healing individuals, so he continues to touch the lives of individuals today. And while acknowledging the apparent decline in church attendance, we must be mindful of not ignoring or dismissing those individual stories that continue to speak of Jesus’ healing presence and willingness to listen, converse with others and transform their lives—even when the tide of secularization seems overpowering.

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In his 1952 painting *Personal Values* the artist René Magritte depicts a scene that, if we follow Celia Rabinovitch’s argument in *Surrealism and the Sacred: Power, Eros, and the Occult in Modern Art*, reveals the gist of the kind of spirituality that lay at the root of the early twentieth century movement in art and literature known as Surrealism. Toiletry items of extremely large proportions fill a small bedroom. Common objects—a comb, a shaving brush, a wine glass and a matchstick—have been transformed into extraordinary and overwhelming, larger-than-life monuments. The scene is fascinating and unsettling: it appears familiar and yet cannot quite be grasped by the logic of the everyday. Despite the banality of the things depicted, the image refers to a realm beyond the reach of commonplace human experience. It is charged with a sense of the surreal.

Rabinovitch proposes that such products of Surrealist sensibility represent a typically modern expression of the sacred. Here, the mundane and the sacred are so intimately intertwined that it becomes impossible to differentiate between the two. According to the author, the Surrealist hierophany takes place in the form of the uncanny and the weird, created with techniques of framing, re-contextualisation and estrangement of objects, and employed to inspire enlightening or epiphanic moments. She indicates that the Surrealist object displays the same logic of the sacred as described by Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade. It is a product of a number of seemingly incongruent elements, it inspires mixed feelings of reverence and unease, and it acquires its special status as a result of somehow setting it apart from the ordinary.

The underlying idea that comes to the fore in Rabinovitch’s book is that a crisis of traditional religion, together with challenges to the validity of causal, rational thought, has resulted in the quest for alternative spirituality and occult knowledge. Surrealism was one answer to this crisis of religion and knowledge. The central thesis of this work is that Surrealism was an attempt to create a new state of mind that was neither religion nor art but hovered in the realm where the two meet. Rabinovitch investigates the sort of knowledge or sensibility that can emerge from this encounter: the Surrealist mythology that regarded imagination, the primitive and the exotic, the hidden workings of the psyche and mysticism and the occult, as primary sources of knowledge. Although the author never uses the term, what she discovers can be described as implicit religiosity. She is clear on the status of Surrealism as a secular movement and she points out that the Surrealist hierophany found expression without necessarily referring to existing, formalised religions. But she also recognizes elements of ancient and ‘archaic’ religious expressions in Surrealist practices, observes an intimate link between the sacred and the surreal, and emphasizes the persistence of a basic religiosity in modern art.
Attention is paid to the sacralization of objects in the works of the poets Gérard de Nerval and Charles Baudelaire and the Pre-Raphaelite painters—the intellectual and artistic influences of the Surrealists—as well as to the sacred elements present in the works of such Surrealists, as Giorgio de Chirico, René Magritte, Paul Delvaux and Salvador Dalí. Rabinovitch discusses Surrealist techniques, such as different language experiments, collage, dream analysis, objet trouvé, passionate use of the manifesto, riddles and jokes and estrangement of ordinary objects as means to (re)enchant the world.

A considerable part of Rabinovitch’s argument is devoted to detailed discussions of the history and semantic nuances of certain terms, so as to unearth their hidden and forgotten meanings. For instance, she offers an interesting account of the development of the concept of the surreal itself—from medieval associations with the otherworldly and the eternal, to the 19th century understanding of Surrealism as a mysterious force and an intense anti-bourgeois stance. But this is also too long an introduction to the actual subject of the book and one has the impression that the author lets herself become sidetracked into these historical backgrounds of the term. The same can be said of the analyses of the morphology of a number of words that Rabinovitch employs to characterize the Surrealist mindset. For instance, the consideration of the Indo-European verb that is the root of the word ‘weird’, to indicate its original meaning as the emergence of something awe-inspiring, seems excessive and has the effect of tiring the reader with too much information.

Here lies the main drawback of this book—too much data is cramped into a fairly small space. For example, as if to hammer in the notion of the Surrealist object as sacred, the reader is presented with a flux of terms that suggest the extra-ordinary. While magical, uncanny, epiphanic, marvellous, weird, sacred and holy are used, little consideration is given to the relationships between these notions. It is unclear how well motivated the use of these words is; are the sacred and the holy identical here, and how do they differ from the other words on the list?

The discussion of the theoretical embedding of the sacred itself seems quite sufficient and the concept is defined concisely from a number of different perspectives. Rabinovitch considers most of the better-known sociologists and psychologists who have written on the subject. Max Mueller, Rudolf Otto, William James, Sigmund Freud and Mircea Eliade are all paid attention to. However, it is striking that in her consideration of the emergence of the Surrealist sense of the sacred, Rabinovitch ignores the significance of the work of Emile Durkheim, who, surely, must have played as important a role as Rudolf Otto in shaping the early 20th century understanding of the sacred and the religious.

Rabinovitch repeatedly points out the ambiguity of surrealist works and indicates that in them the inherent heterogeneity of the sacred is reflected. Yet she makes much of the clichéd antagonism between reason and emotion, logic
and intuition, scientific knowledge and imagination. The classical dichotomy of the rational versus the non-rational forms the basis of the sort of religiosity that she discusses in this book. As she says on several occasions, the Surrealist sensibility was a conscious rejection of a certain kind of knowledge—the product of the rational, scientific mindset. We see that the central metaphor of the book—that of the threshold where incongruous themes meet—cannot quite be applied here, for in closing itself off to the rational, the Surrealist sacred was a far more homogeneous phenomenon than Rabinovitch lets the reader believe.

Rabinovitch offers the reader a fascinating tour of early modernism in the arts and of intellectual life that developed parallel to it, always trying to recover signs of the quest for the transcendent and the extraordinary. But the veritable avalanche of names of almost everyone of significance in European culture from the late 19th to the early 20th century, and the lists of influences on Surrealism from the history of ideas make this rather an exhausting excursion. From William Blake and Aubrey Beardsley to Sergei Diaghilev, from Freud, Otto, Mueller and Lacan, to de Saussure and Bergson, from Swami Vivekananda to Pyotr Ouspensky and Helena Blavatsky, from Baudelaire to Joyce, and from Zen Buddhism to the Romantic movement, the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, occultism, utopianism, psychoanalysis, cultural Darwinism, etc., etc., the author discusses such a rich variety of ideas that it takes a reader with stamina to plod through this narrative and not become sidetracked.

*Surrealism and the Sacred* is an interdisciplinary study into the more or less implicit religiosity of Surrealist art and thought—a valuable and complex enterprise. The objective is to give an account of typically modern expressions of the sacred, which, as Rabinovitch indicates, cannot be discussed sufficiently from just a single point of view. However, hers is a dizzying, kaleidoscopic survey of the ideas and the themes that make up the Surrealist sense of the sacred. In addition to the above-mentioned introduction to the cultural life of the Modernist era, the author sifts through a range of themes—the attitude of early psychoanalysts towards female sexuality, misogyny among the Symbolists, personal details from the biographies of the artists and writers in question, the longing for the primitive, exoticism and the anti-establishment stance in modern art. In the midst of all the different perspectives, influences, themes and names discussed it becomes difficult to establish the central point of focus in the author’s argument. The many interesting references to and anecdotes about the Surrealists and their influences are informative and make an enjoyable read but, occasionally, one can lose track of the subject that the title of the book suggests.

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Many people query whether it is possible to define spirituality and measure its incidence in contemporary society. This book addresses that query and goes a step further by also exploring the manner and degree of influence which spirituality has had on society, and how the movement may be harnessed and developed to produce beneficial effects in the future. In his analysis of the phenomenon that he titles ‘grassroots spirituality’, Dr Forman uses both national statistics as a general background and also case studies based on interviews with key informants. Further information is provided via a commentary on the greater visibility and impact of spirituality society’s institution. Kathryn Davison’s contribution, an analysis of the influence of spirituality on medicine, is particularly interesting, and the discussion of spirituality in the workplace will be helpful to those studying implicit religion in styles of organization and management. These case studies and overviews are a useful addition to the body of research on the relevance and sustainability of the new practices which appear to be gaining in popularity over organized religion.

The definition of ‘spirituality’ proposed by the author is based on five characteristics (sic):

• [the presence of] a vaguely panentheistic ultimate, that
• is indwelling, sometimes bodily, as the deepest self, and
• accessed through not-strictly-rational means of
• self transformation and group process
• that becomes the holistic organization for all of life.

Practitioners of grassroots spirituality thus defined include those who claim allegiance to a particular religion as well as those who consider themselves unaffiliated to any formal tradition. In fact, one might argue that the breadth of the five characteristics creates rather than merely describes the size and significance of the movement, and perhaps more needs to be done to justify this definition.

In his treatment of the history and background to grassroots spirituality, the author attempts with some success to demonstrate that the movement, though arising from many points of origin, may be considered to be reasonably coherent in its development. Other claims are less well-substantiated; for example, after declaring grassroots spirituality to be a global movement, the author then restricts his data and his historical overview to the USA. Also unconvincing are the grounds given for his claim that the movement is historically unique. Other countries and eras have their examples of people turning from the organized or established religion to a deeper and more meaningful practice of their beliefs, and some of those movements became worldwide. Some, as well, became
organized and established and even lost their first fervour over time. Might not grassroots spirituality prove to be another iteration of this cycle? It is, of course, impossible to tell at this point.

Although the main thesis of the book is that grassroots spirituality may be developed into a transforming force for society and civilization, this too may be open to debate. Grassroots spirituality as defined, or undefined, by the author has no map, but is rather a mosaic where people follow their own path and borrow pieces of others' paths as it suits them. The resulting multiplicity of methods and beliefs is not seen as a confusion of the map, but as an enriching of the mosaic. The seekers of grassroots spirituality are not striving to obtain a perfect vision; they are seeking support in the vision that they have already found perfect. The author recognizes, but does not fully resolve, the paradox of grassroots spirituality—its practitioners consider it a private, individual matter, and yet he is calling on them to create a framework for sharing ideas and goals. While some common ground clearly exists, is there enough similarity among the practitioners to overcome the real differences in the long term? Can there be sufficient tolerance of a multiplicity of truths, a real acknowledgement of the validity of several paths? That there are practitioners who believe so is certain, for the author has quoted them, but one imagines that there will be likewise a body of dissenters who will not wish to be categorized with certain other types of practitioners of grassroots spirituality and will thus participate only partly, or not at all.

The Forge Institute, an organization headed by Dr Forman that aims to provide such a framework, is described at the end of the book. Researchers in contemporary spirituality will, no doubt, follow its work with interest. At the very least, it will expand the knowledge of contemporary spirituality, and at best it may even achieve the societal revolution that is its main goal.

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