This slim book, fourth in a series on politics and culture, comprises eight varied papers from a 2006 conference “Making sense in the city,” examining how faiths that developed in societies that in 1800 were 97% rural, with few towns over 100,000 people, now operate in a world that will probably be 70% urban by 2030, and where megalopolises of over twenty million will not be uncommon, with huge contrasts between the pent-houses of the rich and slums of the poor. The editors claim (xii) that four threads run through such faiths, as below.

**Nations versus church**

Hirschon examines how Greek Orthodoxy has dominated Greek society, including the compulsory population exchanges with Turkey after the 1923 Lausanne Convention, which left only a tiny minority of Muslims and others. This common religious and national identity, established since early Ottoman days, brings outward signs not seen in more secular cities—crossing oneself when passing a church, regular prayer, venerating icons, Lenten fasting, and lighting candles. Churches abound in city centres and suburbs—indeed any visitor today can see numerous very large concrete shells rising in the growing suburbs of Thessaloniki with immigration from the Macedonian countryside and Romania and Bulgaria. In this context conferring a name at baptism was essential for a person’s identity. Identity Cards showing religious affiliation had been established since the German occupation, but when the modernizing PASOK government tried to remove the affiliation, there was huge opposition—three out of ten million adults signed a petition, and failed to co-operate, backed in 1993 and 2000 by the College of Bishops. Likewise, an attempt in 2005 by the Hellenic League for Citizen and Human Rights to separate church and state, removing religious words from oaths, allowing all faiths freedom to proselytise, and cremation as an option to burial, substantially failed. An
Drweski looks at the tensions in post-Communist Poland. The Catholic Church was very strong, even during the Communist period, fighting for the poor and linking with the trade unions, later buoyed by having a Polish Pope, John Paul II. But though the institutional Church tried to re-assert itself, and was supported by both the elite and the workers, in post-Communist times unemployment and youth unrest grew, and many middle class people felt abandoned and dispirited. Its stance became ambiguous and support more divided, especially under the current German papacy. Thus neither one of these states is typical of an increasingly secular Europe.

How does urban transformation affect church?
Coleman asks why Evangelical and Pentecostal protestants have successfully developed in the mega-cities, looking at how the Health and Wealth movement has grown in post-war years—in the USA, South Africa, South Korea, Singapore, and other places, contradicting the view of some that place is irrelevant to Protestantism. Large auditoria—theatres, tents, factories, hangars and arenas—allowed evangelists to connect with large audiences and use advanced technology, to compete with growing pluralism. Not only does this often convert secular places to sacred, but it draws congregations over large distances.

Collins shows how the built form of Quaker meeting-houses was adapted from a rural faith in small buildings to an urban one in larger, more sophisticated constructions. None of the major theories of urbanization take account of religion. Buildings express function and power, but those of sacred buildings are recent explorations. The original houses were simple, plain vernacular buildings; in the nineteenth century they became larger, more complex and grander, not least as some leading Quakers were men of substance, used to moving in circles of wealth and influence. More recent ones became, in Corbusier’s words “machines for living,” increasingly available for community use, as well as symbolic religious capital.

How do migrants to town challenge or revitalise established churches?
Vozikas focuses on how the Greek Orthodox landscape is changing in Athens, examining the community of St Marina, relatively poorly planned to accommodate 35,000 mainly rural migrants in the 1950s and 1960s.
Many still go back “home” to vote, and some retain rural properties there. Its church was built centrally as a sacred symbol, and apart from Easter, Christmas and Epiphany, St Marina’s day is a significant event for the whole populace, celebrating her martyrdom and protection of the community, with a sacred procession and profane celebrations and socializing, in home, bar and café.

Dikomitis studies how, after the Green Line was established in 1964 but opened up in 2003, refugee Greek Cypriots living in Nicosia and the south for thirty years, even living in flats built for Muslims, use rituals and symbols from their rural heritage. Some will not return, but others have started making pilgrimages back to their villages—in her study, to Larnakas. Some find their former homes in varying states, from transformed to neglected, their cemeteries, monasteries, and churches also neglected or even vandalized, and make efforts to purify and restore them, enacting services even without benefit of clergy. Through this they recreate the religious coherence of their birth or dwelling place.

The impact of urban modernity

De Theije brings anthropology to analyse how churches in Recife, Brazil, influence its life and appearance. In Brazil, churches—catholic, protestant, pentecostal, Mormon, eastern religions, and other—are significant buildings and popular centres of activity. Here urbanization has not led to the ending of religion, as some had surmized, nor to Catholic monopoly, but to diversification. Yet the July 16th festival of Recife’s patron saint, Our Lady of Carmen, is a bank holiday that affects many, though in the favelas of a city that grew ten-fold from 1900 to 1980 pentecostal churches and catimbó folk religion flourish.

Vercammen discusses how the Taijiquan tradition of “ritual boxing”—tai chi in Western-speak—expresses itself in Shanghai, the most evolved of Chinese cities. In the late nineteenth century the Qing dynasty struggled between those who wanted to open to and learn from the West, and those who wanted to stay closed—even to killing missionaries—and there were numerous rebellions. Yang Luchan devised and taught taijiquan, but, from the 1920s, disciples no longer came to the house of the Master, but were taught in new sports centres or Boxing Societies, and movements were standardized. The Communists saw martial arts as a way to health, and in 1956 produced a simplified set of only 24 movements. Taijiquan was no longer self-defence but a choreographed ecstatic exercise for the masses, which has since been exported worldwide. So the changes in this implic-
Itly religious activity epitomise the evolution, survival and modernization of wider Chinese society.

This collection is varied in style and uneven in impact; for me the second strand was least convincing. Nine of the papers are concerned with expressions of very explicit religion, which is in part still adaptively vibrant and influential in some modern urban societies. Yet for those who have only sporadic, symbolic or subterranean faith, may that vibrancy not be forming a context and ethos where, plurally, implicit forms of religion, like *taiji-quan*, can also flourish?