

The following review is intended for *Journal of Contemporary Religion*. This journal's purpose is to "document and evaluate the anthropological, sociological, psychological, and philosophical aspects of emerging manifestations of religiosity in any part of the world". Among many other things, the journal encourages submissions dealing with "new forms of religious pluralism" and "religion and globalisation".

***Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics*. Thomas Banchoff (editor).
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 348pp.**

This edited volume brings together scholars from different disciplines; resulting in a multi-faceted treatment of themes signalled by its title. Acknowledging the immensity of the subject, however, editor Thomas Banchoff states that "this volume cannot provide a comprehensive overview of religious pluralism at the intersection of globalization and world politics" (31). Rather, the intended purpose is to provide readers with specific examples of how "the interaction of religious actors with one another and with the society and the state around concrete cultural, social, economic, and political agendas" (5) is affected by contemporary globalisation. Most chapters proceed from specific case studies which are self-contained enough to be read individually, while they also contribute to an overarching and nuanced discussion on a few recurring themes.

The volume is divided into two separate sections. The first one is titled *Challenges of Religious Pluralism in a Global Era* and focuses on things which may complicate peaceful interaction between different communities.

For Kwame Anthony Appiah, a key factor is the fact that religion is often understood as important for social identity; thereby complicating compromise, and increasing the political salience of religious issues. As globalisation tends to weaken local/ethnic identities, perceptions about its threat can sometimes increase tensions between communities.

In the following chapter, Pratap Bhanu Mehta illustrates some of these dynamics through references to certain Indian debates about religious communities' political representation, as well as other forms of state interaction with religious actors. He argues that globalisation has complicated these issues, as transnational trends have affected norms of governance and perceived balances between religious communities. For Mehta, these Indian dynamics also help illustrate the problematic nature of an ideal separation between politics and religiosity, as social realities rule out the possibility of such neat categorisation.

Finally, two chapters written by Jean Bethke Elshtain and John Witte, respectively, deal with issues of religious proselytization in the post-Cold war era. A central issue is that of tensions resulting from perceived power relations between Western missionaries and non-Western communities. Implications of power are discussed, together with concerns about both local identity and freedom of expression. The two authors emphasise somewhat different approaches, with Elshtain promoting the primary importance of freedom while Witte argues for caution/moderation, and readers are hereby given the opportunity to contemplate this challenge from different perspectives.

Contributions to the second section (*Religious Actors in World Politics*) focus on specific examples of interaction; highlighting ways in which pluralism and globalisation affect, for example, local and organisational dynamics.

R. Scott Appleby discuss how globalisation can stimulate attempts at building sustainable peace in conflict-ridden environments. His examples deal with newfound possibilities for transnational partnerships, which combine the local knowledge and legitimacy of religious actors with the resources of international organisations.

Leslie Vinjamuri and Aaron Boesenecker formulate a typology which tries to make sense of ways in which worldview, organisational scale, and specific strategies influence a given actor's chosen approach to justice, post-conflict/-genocide. Among other things, they identify differences between religious and secular actors, while also encouraging further study of ways in which their different approaches may complement each other.

Next, Katherine Marshall discusses aspects of interaction between religious actors and the international (secular) development sector. In this context, tensions have resulted from mutual suspicions of each other's motives, and Marshall argues (among other things) that secular actors need to abandon liberal/Western prejudices about the inherent conservatism of faith, and instead develop fruitful relationships with uniquely positioned religious organisations.

In more than one sense, these three chapters can be described as intimately related, as they deal with examples of interaction between local religious actors and transnational networks of predominantly secular peacebuilders and development agencies. Thomas Michel's chapter represents a diversion from this discussion, as an attempt at retelling the official platforms of certain peaceful Muslim actors. While bringing attention to interesting phenomena, the chapter is arguably lacking in serious attempts at situating any of these actors in relation to either wider trends, globalisation, or each other. Thus, it appears more as a catalogue of basic concepts than as a proper analysis. These weaknesses of Michel's chapter are, moreover, reinforced by its use of several loaded terms, which celebrate the supposedly "enlightened" Islam promoted by the mentioned organisations.

Given Michel's purpose of balancing the attention afforded to militant Islamism at the expense of peaceful Muslims, it is perhaps regrettable that his chapter is followed by that of John Voll. The latter author focuses on aspects of Muslim militancy, and arguably manages to achieve the sort of analytical situating which Michel's discussion lacks. Voll combines political history with rhetorical analysis, and connects resulting conclusions to much wider trends of transnational interaction, agency, and identity.

Following these discussions on different Muslim actors, Thomas Banchoff presents a case study of international political interaction involving religious actors; namely, a UN debate on the ethics of cloning technology. Banchoff illustrates how pragmatic alliances were formed across faith communities, how different worldviews and motivations influenced decision-making, and (crucially) how the "state-centred cast of the UN" (276) provided an overall framework of debate which may have disadvantaged religious actors.

The final chapter, written by Elizabeth Prodromou, examines the role of religion in the foreign policy of the USA. It highlights how the rise of an emboldened "Religious Right" in the post-Raegan era "coincides with a growing willingness of US foreign policy elites, mainly secular in orientation, to privilege force over diplomacy and unilateral over multilateral action" (299). For Prodromou, these trends are not necessarily connected, but actors associated with them have formed alliances during the so-called 'war on terror'; something which, combined with the realities of US policy in the Muslim world, has reinforced impressions about the aggressively religious biases of the world's primary great power.

While the particularities of each chapter are interesting for their own sake, it should be noted that the volume manages to both illustrate and clarify several contemporary trends. Beyond discussions on specific examples of local-global relationships, several chapters point toward ways in which certain frameworks of organisation and/or understanding may influence transnational interaction. The influence of the 'nation state' ideal is one such framework, as it encourages international actors to work through the official bureaucracies of national governments rather than engage directly with, for example, religious actors. Thus, organisations modelled upon the 'nation state' ideal enjoy a head start in terms of abilities at influencing global developments, while religious actors often lack similar access to influential forums of global engagement.

Several contributors question the fundamental soundness of an analytical separation between faith and politics. It is argued that such a separation sometimes characterises the thinking of global organisations (such as the UN or the World Bank), so that related prejudices constrain the potential influence of religious actors. Also, authors deal with related tendencies to worry about the potentially disruptive/divisive role of religion, as well as the characterisation of religious actors as fundamentally conservative and/or violent. Tellingly, Banchoff's introduction starts with the assertion that "[t]o think religion and world politics is often to think violence" (3); reflecting a common tendency in the contemporary West, which the volume sets out to problematise. Thus, the volume addresses certain biases associated with what one might call a 'liberal' framework, yet does so without resorting to one-dimensional criticism, and combines the perspectives of those who argue for a moderation of liberalism with those who think that some of its principles are non-negotiable.

While most contributors are seemingly in agreement about the continuing influence of 'state-centred' and 'liberal' frameworks, another discussion deals with the overall weakening of related paradigms. Problematisations presented by the authors themselves can, perhaps, be read as part of this trend, which (more importantly) also involves an increase in the influence and organisational capacity of religious actors. Religious actors are increasingly able to organise on a global scale and challenge even the most powerful states on a number contentious of issues, using methods which range from democratic to violent. Consequently, it is argued that religious actors are taken more seriously than they were in the more immediate post-war era, and therefore given increasing access to influential forums of global engagement.

In summary, the volume provides readers with several interesting discussions on specific issues as well as wider trends. Simultaneously, it presents a glimpse of a *zeitgeist* characterised by increasing scepticism about a 'modern' understanding of religion and a 'liberal' understanding of politics. The distinct separation of either 'religion' or 'politics' as neat and clear categories is here problematised, both as part of paradigmatic shifts in Western thought (i.e. 'post-modernism') and as a reaction to the complex ambiguities of a globally connected world.

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