Book Reviews

Aku Visala: *Naturalism, Theism and the Cognitive Study of Religion: Religion Explained?* Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, 218pp.

There is a crisis brewing among religious people, both outside and inside academia. A surge of cognitive theories of religion is threatening to dispel religious belief, claiming it to be nothing more than a natural side-effect of the way our brains work. So claims Aku Visala in his book *Naturalism, Theism and the Cognitive Study of Religion: Religion explained?* By way of philosophical analysis and argumentation, he seeks to alleviate the anxiety resulting from this crisis. Sure of the success of his project, he reformulates the crisis as a question of 'whether current explanations of religion have *relevance* for theistic religious beliefs' (p. 2) and the answer is positive. With his problem defined in this way, the book perhaps should be most relevant for theologians and philosophers of religion. Yet Visala's argument could attract a broader audience, since in order to arrive at his conclusion he analyses and criticises fundamental issues in the cognitive study of religion that should be of interest to anyone interested in or working with this field.

As with all good anxiety management, Visala starts out by putting a face on the threat. Or fac*es*, rather, for as Visala rightly notes, 'whatever CSR [the cognitive science of religion] is, it is not a single theory of religion.' (p. 11) Instead of speaking of CSR as a coherent set of theories, Visala suggests that 'CSR' should be understood to refer to a 'field of research'. He identifies three theoretical layers of this field: 1) The core theories and hypotheses of CSR, 2) its auxiliary theories and methodological assumptions, and 3) a broader philosophical framework. This enables Visala to argue that while CSR might implicitly assume a certain philosophical frame, we could, nevertheless, change this frame and still maintain coherence at the level of CSR's core and auxiliary theories. In other words, CSR's reductive naturalism (implicitly assumed or not) can be replaced with a broader naturalism that makes CSR compatible with theistic claims.

This also spells out the structure of the book. The book has 5 chapters, spanning a little less than 200 pages. In the two first chapters Visala presents the *Standard Model of CSR*, which encompasses the theories of Pascal Boyer, Scott Atran and Justin Barrett, with Dan Sperber as the theoretical godfather. This presentation is formidable, and Visala shows impressive knowledge of the core theories and methodologies. CSR is situated historically as (part of) a reaction against the strong division between the natural sciences and humanities, and Visala singles out Clifford Geertz's hermeneutical and Mircea Eliade's essentialist approaches to religion as targets. The core claim of CSR is stated as being that religion is not a *sui generis* phenomenon, and hence does not need a special interpretative approach.

On the contrary, religion can be explained as a by-product of cognitive capacities evolved for other purposes. Framing these claims is what Visala dubs '*strict naturalism*', according to which everything (including religion) eventually can be explained as products of physical causes. While sympathetic to the overall claims of CSR, Visala turns against the ensuing reductionism of *strict naturalism*. In the following chapters he analyses several formulations of the *Standard Model of CSR* to isolate what he calls the *physicalist constraint* as a constitutive part of these theories, whereby these claims are situated within a philosophical frame of scientific explanation called the *causal-mechanism model* (p. 96ff). In this manner Visala is able to make his way out into the broader philosophical framework of CSR, which he describes as the third layer of the research field. By calling this layer a philosophical framework, Visala makes the point that no scientific evidence can directly influence the views held here (p. 92). While these are valid points, it remains unclear what philosophy actually is, as opposed to science, except that it is some sort of conceptual investigation. Further, on a more general view it is debatable whether this distinction between science and philosophy can be upheld, or if philosophy then risks collapsing into some sort of interpretative endeavour.

Nevertheless, this enables Visala to claim that because of the strong reductionism of the *strict naturalist* explanatory model, at least two problems with it can be identified. Since everything is reduced to basic physical interactions, the model is unable to home in on the relevant explanatory causes for a given phenomenon. Likewise, the model handles complex systems badly, because it assumes a single 'basic level' of explanation, that ignores levels of more complex explanation which are crucial in for instance biology or economics. Against this *strict naturalism*, Visala constructs an alternative view which he calls *explanatory pluralism*. At its core is the *interventionist theory*, which takes causal relationships to be determinable through 'interventions', where adjusting 'cause factors' can be used to check for corresponding changes in 'effect factors'. The point is here that explanations are representations of *relevant* causal relationships. What is explained is only what is conceptualized by the explanation. It follows that this explanatory model does not suffer from the problems that Visala identified in the *causal-mechanism model*, since there is no reduction required. Visala writes that 'we should cut the metaphysical idea of causation loose from the empirical and pragmatic notion of explanatory relevance: we do not need an *a priori* account of "causal powers" or a menu of ultimately real processes in order to explain' (p. 123).

By appealing to this philosophical framework of *explanatory pluralism*, Visala is able to make CSR explanations of religious phenomena accommodate theistic beliefs. More

specifically, he delegates CSR explanations to a category of ultimate explanations, that is, they explain general recurrent patterns in human cognition and behaviour, while the category of proximate explanations would for instance contain explanations of particular instances of religious behaviours and beliefs (p. 127). Visala concludes:

> 'CSR explanations of theistic belief deal with causal factors that make religious beliefs of some sort or other become prevalent in human populations (this is because of certain regularities in the operations of our belief forming mechanisms), but not with those which give rise to particular, content-specific beliefs. Therefore, individual theist cannot be judged to be irrational in trusting their theistic beliefs' (p. 182)

The danger, argues Visala, has thus passed: CSR does not necessarily spell disaster for theism.Actually, quite the opposite could be true, he claims. The decoupling of CSR from *strict naturalism* can be seen as an opening towards integrating CSR into a theistic framework such as is seen in the *sensus divinitatis* accounts and Reformed Epistemology. However, the details of these theological views are not the main aim of the book, and are discussed only cursorily. Rather, as we saw, the aim is to provide a philosophical frame for them. Unfortunately this omission betrays a tendency to avoid a more general discussion of the relationship between theology and philosophy. The implicit idea that philosophy can be neutral ground for the meeting of theism and naturalism is less than convincing. Likewise, while Visala does make a strong case for the possibility of a different philosophical framework for CSR, advocating *explanatory pluralism* instead of *strict naturalism*, his use of the distinction between ultimate and proximate explanations has its problems too. It is not that there is no point in distinguishing between explanations that target particular properties of individuals (proximate) rather than statistically generalized populations (ultimate); questions about what kind of explanations we would accept in the proximate category still remain, even though CSR is no longer considered a running candidate. But that is perhaps exactly what Visala is aiming at. He wants to reserve the debate over theistic beliefs for theology and the philosophy of religion. I am, however, worried that Visala stretches the term 'explanation' too much in order to make it cover both scientific and theological views. The concept simply threatens to lose significance.

Be that as it may, *Naturalism, Theism and the Cognitive Study of Religion* remains a fascinating read with its clear prose and concise argumentation, even though you never know whose spell you are under.

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Michael Pye (ed.): *Beyond Meditation: Expressions of Japanese Shin Buddhist Spirituality.* London: Equinox, 2011, 307pp.

This collection of essays is a collaboration between the editor (Michael Pye) and the staff of the *Eastern Buddhist Society* housed in Kyoto, and focuses on the Shin Buddhist tradition of Japan during the first half of the twentieth century. While it acknowledges that this was a period affected by political extremism, which crept into various authors' writings and resulted in the emergence of 'self-assertive nationalism', this volume steers away from a focus on the social implications of Buddhism, though it does note that a piece by Takagi Kenmyo entitled 'My Socialism' and unpublished until long after the war (Part III, pp.251–258), reveals 'an undercurrent of the kind of social conscience which is now typical of leading Shin Buddhist circles' (p. 1).

Perhaps as a sign of gratitude, this collection opens with an essay by Beatrice Lane Suzuki, the wife of Suzuki Daisetsu (D.T. Suzuki) who was instrumental in orchestrating the Eastern Buddhist society founded in 1921. In this essay, Beatrice Lane Suzuki differentiates between the teachings of the Gate of Saintly Path (*Shodomon*) and the Gate of the Pure Land (*Jodomon*), and mentions the Buddhist philosophical view of the Buddha's three bodies (*dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, and *nirmanakaya*), but states that her aim is 'to give a presentation of the Jodo ideal of life as taught by Honen Shonin' (p. 25).

Sugihira Shizutoshi provides a focused analysis of Shoku's (1177–1247) interpretation of the Pure Land doctrine, based on his view on the law of karma and the brevity of life. He then contrasts the Shingon sect's esoteric views with the Tendai sect's exoteric view. He elaborates on Shoku's explication of the means to reach the land of Amida, and notes that the symbolism of the *nenbutsu* represents Shoku's understanding of the symbolism of the universe.

In the next essay, 'The Teaching of Ippen Shonin', Sugihira Shizutoshi offers an alternative view on the practice of the *nembutsu* by focusing on Ippen Shonin (1239–1289). He analyzes one of Ippen's letters, in which he argues that all that is required is the continuous and uninterrupted recitation of the *nenbutsu* (*nembutsu*). This unbroken recitation clears one's mind from all other thoughts, and the universe itself becomes 'no other than the *Nembutsu*' (p. 46). He provides a brief comparison between Eastern and Western thought, with a slightly over-simplified distinction that 'the Westerners are expansive and the Easterners are inclusive' (p. 46). More intriguing is his assertion that all schools of Buddhism are essentially similar, and that the differences between Zen and the Pure Land relate merely to differences in the 'temperament of the founder of each sect.' Consequently, the practice of the *nembutsu* becomes likened to the practice of the *koan*.

He concludes that for Ippen, contrary to Shoku, the followers of the Pure Land attain Buddhahood after their death.

Sasaki Gessho, in the 'Religion of Shinran Shonin (1173–1262)', elucidates Shinran's articulation of 'faith', placing it within a larger framework of Buddhist thought. He maintains that while Sakyamuni's teachings acknowledge the significance of the idea of 'giving' (*dana*), Shinran attributes to 'giving' a larger significance, especially in his articulation of the doctrine of Amida-transference. The idea of 'giving away the Self' (p. 58) – the Bodhisattvic principle central to Shinran's thought – produces an 'absolute transference when Amida transfers or gives up his all to us, and we, by giving up all that is to be given up of our selfhood, are enriched by becoming recipients of Amida's love' (p. 59).

In 'Rennyo Shonin (1415–1499): A Great Teacher of Shin Buddhism', Sugihira Shizutoshi offers a nuanced portrayal of Rennyo, whom he calls 'the restorer of Shin Buddhism' (p. 83). He reflects on Rennyo's ten letters (epistles), known as *Ofumi*, and terms him 'a rare religious genius' who infuses Shin Buddhism with characteristics unique to his own understanding. According to Rennyo, human salvation is an 'established fact', of which humans are unaware because of their ignorance, and hence continue to suffer. Awareness that salvation is achieved by the Buddha on behalf of all humans spares humans from their worries about their own salvation. Accepting life 'as is' results in experiencing this life as 'the best place for us to live with our karma' (p. 89). This acceptance of life is a consequence of a spiritual awakening, rather than any intellectual ratiocination, which is perceived by Rennyo as heretical.

Murakami Sensho, in 'Mahayana Buddhism', argues that, while Asvaghosa is considered as the precursor of the Mahayana tradition, its true forerunner is Nagarjuna. He posits that Asvaghosa's impact is in the synthesis of his own thought with that of Nagarjuna and the brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu. Turning to the Pure Land sect, he emphasizes the significance of faith, which purportedly distinguishes the synthesis mentioned above from Pure Land thought. Nonetheless, he argues that the apparent contradiction between their schools of thought and that of the Pure Land sect loses its potency when the teachings of the Pure Land are examined carefully.

Akamuna Chizen, in 'Buddha as Preacher', draws some parallels between the historical Buddha and Shinran. He argues that both the Buddha and Shinran possessed commendable abilities for 'preaching'. He points to the Buddha's 'loving heart' as a prerequisite for establishing a following, and terms Shinran a 'delegate of the Tathagata'. In addition to being an eloquent preacher, the Buddha is 'a great educator' (p. 116) and 'a great rhetorician' (p. 117), and he implies that Shinran possessed similar skills as well.

In 'The Triple Body of the Buddha', Akamuna notes that people's admiration of the Buddha's physical existence transformed into devotion of the 'Dharma or Law of Truth which was revealed by him' (p. 123). In other words, from the physical following of the Buddha grew the spiritually-based following, which eventually led to the concept of the Triple Body of the Tathagata emerging as the line of demarcation between the Mahayana and the Hinayana. He discusses the influences of Nagarjuna and Asanga on the development of this doctrine.

Sasaki Gessho, in 'Philosophical Foundation of the Shin-shu Doctrine', addresses the place of Shin Buddhism within the larger scope of Buddhism proper. He asks whether the Amitabha doctrine is a corrupted version of how Buddhism was originally envisioned by the Buddha, or represents 'an interpolation of an idea originally foreign to the spirit of Buddhism' (p. 141). In his view, Shin Buddhism neither corrupts nor misconstrues the Buddhist concept of enlightenment, but is rather 'rooted in it' (p. 147).

In 'The Unfolding of the Nenbutsu Teaching', Sugihira Shizutoshi argues that there remains a deep spiritual relationship between Honen and Shinran. He avers that while Honen's thought is transparent, it did not escape controversy, which started during his lifetime and increased after his death, particularly in relation to the length and frequency of the practice of the *nenbutsu* and his approach to 'good works'. Sugihira contends that neither the practice of the *nenbutsu* nor good works are a matter of prescriptive normativity, but rather a result of one's spontaneous experience through which 'the Buddha and the believer commune with each other' (p. 163).

In 'What is the True Sect of the Pure Land?', Sasaki Gessho argues that both Mahadeva, who belonged to the Mahasamghika Brotherhood, and Shinran shared a focus on inner experience. He alerts the reader against the fallacious idea that these thinkers ignored religious authority, and states that rather they argued against separating dogmatic authority from the focus on inner experience. He avers that the True Sect of the Pure Land, without diminishing traditional authority, is producing a 'movement of a free soul'.

Yamabe Shugaku, in 'Amida as Savior of the Soul', demonstrates that despite certain similarities between the God of Christianity and Amida, there are clear distinctions. Unlike the God of Christianity, Amida and humans are 'one in substance only differing in functions' (p. 181). In the follow-up essay, Yamabe argues that the way to be born in the Pure Land is dependent upon the human ability to hear and understand the significance of Amida's name. The practice of the *nenbutsu*, he states, is 'a pure act of thanksgiving' (p. 186). The ability to hear Amida's name relates to self-reflective examination, followed by self-surrender, resulting from the recognition of one's own ignorance and sinfulness. This self-surrender is

signified by the practice of the *nenbutsu*, since this practice exemplifies giving oneself up.

In the fourth essay by Sasaki Gessho, 'The enlightened Mind of the Buddha and the Shin Teaching', he focuses again on the Buddha's enlightened consciousness and the simultaneous existence of 'me' and 'thee.' Sasaki asserts that Shinran considers the '*Larger Amitayuh Sutra*' to be the most accurate representation of the true teaching of the Buddha, and demonstrates that the philosophical underpinning of the Shin sect rests on this particular sutra.

Yamabe Shugaku, in 'The Buddha and Shinran', in the same vein as Sasaki Gessho, posits a continuous path between 'primitive Buddhism' and the teaching of Shinran, by focusing on the *Sukhavativyuha-sutra*. He contrasts Shinran's teaching with the teachings articulated in the *Vinaya* texts and the *Agamas*, and reminds us that in these teachings, faith is defined as 'the other I', and that when one has faith, one's ego no longer belongs to him and the individual's ego becomes replaced by the Buddha-ego. He maintains that the same approach is articulated by Shinran.

In 'The Teaching of Shin Buddhism and the Religious Life', Sasaki addresses Shinran's view on human morality and his notion of overcoming the 'dualistic bondage of good and evil' (p. 210), often misunderstood as advocating immorality. He argues that it testifies rather to Shinran's acute understanding of human imperfections and hence to the need for humility and penitence.

Yokogawa Kensho, in 'Shin Buddhism as the Religion of Hearing', draws a distinction between two types of religions: 'the Seeing and the Hearing' religions, which he also terms 'active' and 'passive'. He proposes that Zen is an example of a 'Seeing' religion,. and *Shin-shu* is an example of a 'Hearing' religion. He distinguishes between "seeing" (*satori*) as *Dharmakaya* and 'hearing' (*nyo*) as *Sambhogakaya*; the meaning of *nyo* is directly connected to the idea of naturalness (*jinen*), which, Shinran maintains, reflects the fact that 'Supreme Buddhahood is free from any form' (p. 244). He warns against any interpretations of the Pure Land as a land of idleness, since those who reach it 'manifest themselves over and over again in the world of suffering in order to deliver their fellow-beings from sin and ignorance' (p. 239). This practice can never take place without the saving power of Amida, and indiscriminately extends to all, as a 'religion of the masses and householders' (p. 248).

In 'My Socialism', Takagi Kenmyo introduces an alternative to political socialism. Socialism is inseparable from faith, he argues, and is articulated in terms of *Namu Amida Butsu* through its complete egalitarianism and peacefulness. Practical action relates to compassion, and the practice of the *nenbutsu* is never envisioned as a means to any military dominance or power. It is particularly important to keep in mind that

this essay was completed in 1904, and sadly remained unpublished until 1959. In line with Takagi's argument against militarism, Mino Kogetsu proposes in 'The Shinran Revival of 1922' that the increased interest in Shinran's teaching manifests 'the spiritual yearnings of modern man' (p. 259) , which were at least to some extent discouraged by a militaristic religiosity in the Nichiren tradition.

In one of the concluding essays, Beatrice Lane Suzuki reflects upon the seven hundredth anniversary of Shinran's *Kyogyoshinsho*. The collection finishes with an eloquent obituary to Sasaki Gessho, one of the chief organizers of the Eastern Buddhist Society, and President of Otani. This collection includes a synoptic list of text titles, a character list for historical persons, full details of original publications, and an index.

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Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, Andre F. Droogers and Cornelis van der Laan (eds): *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, 338 pp.

It is often stated that Pentecostalism, or charismatic Christianity – a revivalist movement with roots in the early twentieth century – is the world's fastest growing religious movement. Despite this fact, it took several years before the movement was made a topic of scholarly interest, and it is not until the last twenty years that Pentecostal studies has emerged as a research field in its own right. Over this period, studies have been made within a range of academic disciplines. At present, the field of research seems to be undergoing a consolidation phase, where scholars reflect on the topic of study and the research process, and seek cooperation with scholars from other disciplines. This is not only visible in the emergence of international conferences and research networks dedicated to the study of Pentecostal groups, but in recent scholarly work. The present volume, *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, edited by Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, André Droogers and Cornelis van der Laan, can be seen as part of this trend.

The book, which is an introduction to this field of research, is the first of its kind. In it, scholars from various disciplines provide an overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches that have been employed in the study of charismatic groups. In addition to accounting for historical developments in the field, the book outlines suggestions for further research and addresses contemporary challenges. Three such challenges are brought to the fore in the introduction: the delimitation of the field, the need for interdisciplinary approaches in an otherwise multidisciplinary field, and the different takes on science among the scholars who study the phenomenon. These top-

ics are addressed throughout the chapters in the volume. Structurally, the chapters are divided into three different sections: those that are interdisciplinary, social science and humanist, and theological in their approach. All in all, the volume contains contributions from fifteen scholars, working in fields including sociology of religion, theology, anthropology and history of religion, among others.

The book is a well-written introduction to Pentecostal studies, and it is relevant both for newcomers and scholars working within the field. In other words, I believe that everyone with an interest in Pentecostal groups will benefit from reading it. Furthermore, I appreciate the thorough discussion about how the background, biases and disciplinary affiliation of researchers influence their work – a discussion that has been absent in most literature on Pentecostal groups. It is therefore positive that a whole chapter is dedicated to this topic by the cultural anthropologist André Droogers. Other chapters that address important issues and which deserve to be mentioned include the anthropologist Elizabeth Brusco's chapter, in which she highlights the need for gender analysis, pointing to to the paradoxical situation for women in Pentecostal groups: while the majority of the world's Pentecostals are women, they have a subordinate role in most groups. I also appreciated attempts by the anthropologist Joel Robbins and cultural anthropologist Birgit Meyer to introduce studies of 'lived religion' into the field of research. Finally, I valued the contribution of the historian of religion Michael Bergunder, who discusses issues of presentation and categorization, and problematizes the way in which many scholars have understood Pentecostalism to be an *a priori* category. Bergunder, who approaches Pentecostalism from a poststructuralist perspective, argues that the research community has constructed Pentecostalism as a separate object of study, thereby downplaying connections to wider historical and contemporary trends. In addition to this *a priori* understanding of Pentecostalism, he also challenges the idea that it has a clear starting point (or starting points) and special characteristics like glossolalia. Turning to the Azusa Street revival of the early twentieth century, Bergunder suggests that it should be understood as part of a wider Protestant revivalist movement in the United States at the time, in which glossolalia was widespread. In was only later that the practice became an important identity marker in some groups (Pentecostals). To define Pentecostalism by glossolalia and to look for similar practices back in time risks leading scholars into a teleological view on history, and ascribe meaning to practices that they did not have in their original contexts.

Though the benefits of the volume outweigh the disadvantages, I nevertheless have some reservations. The most important concerns the aim to transform Pentecostal studies from its current multidisciplinary

approach in a more interdisciplinary direction. As I understand the task, it includes promoting cooperation between scholars from different disciplines, and creating a shared set of categories and methodological tools. As for the former, I have no objections. However, the attempt to create common categories and methods is more problematic. In the introduction, the editors themselves make clear that the researchers' diverse takes on science can be a hindrance. I believe that differences go even deeper, and that they involve epistemological aspects, our ability to obtain knowledge. Scholars from various disciplines are likely to answer epistemological questions differently. My point is that such differences make common methods and categories hard to achieve. Secondly, I do not believe that homogenisation of categories and methods is the best way to obtain further knowledge about the topic of study. On the contrary, in order to shed light on a phenomenon as multifaceted and complex as Pentecostalism, I believe that it is an advantage that scholars employ different methods, theories and categories. Also, it allows researchers to critically reflect on their own work, as well as the work of other scholars. In the end, I think that it will be a more fruitful way to further scholarly discussion, which eventually can lead to new insights.

Studying Global Pentecostalism is an important contribution to Pentecostal studies. There are two major benefits. The first is the ambitious research overview presented here, which manages to introduce a complex field of research in slightly more than 300 pages without trivializing the topic. Second, the volume introduces a range of new and interesting topics that could be addressed in future research. Even though I have my doubts concerning the ambition to develop shared categories and methodologies, I believe that the overall discussion on methodology invites us to reflect on these matters, which is of great importance for the future of the study of Pentecostalism.

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Gordon Lynch and Jolyon Mitchell, with Anna Strhan (eds): *Religion, Media and Culture: A Reader*. London: Routledge, 2012, 294 pp.

Religion, Media and Culture: A Reader aims to provide scholars and students alike with an accessible overview of the significant writings and current main themes in the scholarship on religion, media and culture. The volume is divided into four main parts, each containing five to six (sometimes very) short chapters, focusing on the following broad themes: religion and consumer culture, the intersection of religion and the media, the sensory, bodily and material aspects of religion and religious life, and religion and the ethics of media and culture. The volume affords an equal amount of space to each of these themes, and

can thus well be described as one that also engages appropriately with the sometimes overlooked 'culture' component in scholarship addressing 'religion, media and culture'. In this regard the volume thus provides a welcome complement to other closely related recently published collected volumes. Each main part of the volume is preceded by useful short introductions highlighting the most central issues explored in the individual chapters. While around half of all the contributions consist of parts or shortened chapters from previously published work, the other half consist of original contributions.

Part I, on religion and consumer culture, contains two previously published and four original contributions, most which are introductory in character. Bowman provides a general account of Glastonbury as a site of seeker pilgrimage and spiritual consumption, while Nabil Echchaibi provides a useful general introduction and brief analysis of an emerging Islamic consumer culture. Part I also contains a somewhat odd chapter comprised of some largely list-like sections on developments in the Christian publishing and recording industries, from Pete Ward's *Selling Worship* (2005), as well as chapters by Monica M. Emerich on the contemporary marketplace of Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability and Lee Gilmore on the peculiar role of religion in the anti-consumerist ideological context of the Burning Man Festival. Part I closes with a chapter that basically constitutes a shorter summary of the introduction to Jeremy Carrette and Richard King's critical and much debated *Selling Spirituality* (2005). Although the contributions for Part I are somewhat uneven, the editors should nevertheless be commended for including a main part on a still somewhat fragmented but fast-growing area of study.

Part II, on the present-day intersection of religion and media, starts with some parts from Hoover's widely read *Religion in the Media Age* (2006) which deal with religion, media and 9/11. Readers working in the field of religion, media and culture will most likely already be familiar with this work. This is followed by a very short but notable original chapter by David Herbert on the concept of religious 're-publicization'. Herbert highlights the many ways in which recent developments in media technologies have contributed to the increased public visibility and presence of religion, for example through providing new channels and arenas for the construction of transnational diasporic networks. The role of media in the construction of diasporic communities is also further highlighted in Marie Gillespie's chapter on media and religious transnationalism. Part II also contains contributions by Lynn Schofield Clark, who provides an interesting interpretation of the role of U.S. talk show host and media celebrity Steven Colbert as a type of authority on religious issues, and by Diane Winston, who exemplifies how the media may contribute to

changing public perceptions of religious communities through the case of Salvation Army women. The chapters of Part II generally work well together. However, although clearly hinted at in some of the chapters, it is somewhat surprising that no chapter has been included focusing more directly on current debates on the mediatization of religion.

Part III, on the 'sacred senses', starts with two chapters consisting of parts from Colleen McDannell's *Material Christianity* (1995) and Robert Orsi's *Between Heaven and Earth* (2005) respectively – both widely read books in the study of material and everyday religion. Part III continues with a chapter by Birgit Meyer which basically constitutes a shorter summary of her argument on the concept of 'sensational forms', which has also appeared in different guises in many of Meyer's previous publications. This is followed by a re-published essay by David Morgan on the role of images in religious life, and a through-provoking, although unfortunately rather too short, original contribution by Christopher Partridge on the sonic dimensions of religious life and the capacity of popular music to contribute to the creation of 'affective spaces'. Part III closes on the topic of religious images and material culture, with a summary of some of the central arguments from Steven Pattison's 2007 Gifford lectures. The inclusion of Part III as a whole can been seen as a deliberate – and indeed successful – attempt on the part of the editors to bring the study of religion, the body and material culture into clearer focus in religion, media and culture research on the whole.

Part IV begins with a chapter comprising extracts from Nick Couldry's widely read book *Media Rituals* (2002), on the 'myth of the mediated center'. In this case, however, the argument does not come across very clearly, due to the short length of the chapter. Readers with little or no prior knowledge of media ritual research will surely need to consult the original book in order to fully grasp and appreciate the argument (this, of course, is not a criticism of the argument as such). Couldry's chapter is followed by a chapter consisting of some largely descriptive parts from Jolyon Mitchell's *Media Violence and Christian Ethics* (2007), which could preferably have contained some deeper analysis. The most notable chapter in part IV is provided by Elaine Graham, who discusses the promotion of different notions of 'religious literacy' in late-modern, post-secular Western societies (primarily in light of the UK context). As Graham points out, in addition to certain notions of religious literacy which contemporary states aim to promote among public institutions and service providers, as well as through religious education in schools, the media and popular culture have now emerged as parallel, and perhaps much more influential, general sources of religious literacy and shapers of people's perceptions of and orientations to-

wards religion and religious actors in society. In a way that echoes the topic of both Graham's and Herbert's chapters, this theme is also central to Gordon Lynch's chapter on the role of the media as the 'primary institutional structure' (p. 246) through which people today engage with, re-produce and contest various understandings of the sacred. Part IV also contains a chapter by Tom Beaudoin on contemporary culture and everyday media consumption from a critical theological perspective.

Reviewing a volume of this type, which contains a large number of chapters comprising extracts from already published work, will always to some degree amount to an assessment of how successful the editors have been in compiling an interesting and useful whole. In this regard, with only a few exceptions, the inclusions from previously published work are generally well chosen, and they also work quite well together with the original contributions. As a whole, the volume therefore provides a good mixture of original and previously published work. As such, it will most likely interest a wide readership. But, as is often the case with volumes of this type, scholars working in religion, media and culture research and related fields will most likely already be familiar with most, if not all, the inclusions from previously published work. As already noted, some chapters also vary considerably in length and thereby also in detail and depth. Some of the original contributions in particular could preferably have been afforded a bit more space so that their arguments could have been developed in more detail. That said, the volume is organized around a set of highly relevant themes, and provides a useful and accessible resource for courses and teaching on religion, media and culture.

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Stig Hjarvard and Mia Lövheim (eds): *Mediatization and Religion: Nordic Perspectives*. Gothenburg: Nordicom Press, 2012, 210pp.

Together with some key institutions in North America, Nordic scholars have been an active force in developing the study of religion and media for many years. It is therefore not surprising that one of the current theoretical frameworks that have caused a lot of discussion has been developed by the Danish Professor of Media Studies, Stig Hjarvard. Mediatisation is such a many-folded concept that it is difficult to do justice to its complexity in one or two sentences, but the basic idea is that in the context of religion it refers to a process whereby the media's growing influence begins to change religious institutions, take control of some of the cultural and social functions of religion, and direct which religious forms are most salient in public life.

Mediatization and Religion, edited by Stig Hjarvard and Mia Lövheim, is a collection of articles exploring various intersections of media and religion by using the mediatisation debate as a focal point. It contains the editors' introduction and ten chapters. The editors' introduction and the first chapter, written by Hjarvard, frame with clarity the debate on mediatisation of religion, to which most chapters contribute either directly or indirectly.

There is no space here to evaluate thoroughly and fairly all the benefits and possible problems of the theorising related to the mediatisation of religion. Many questions are raised by the contributors themselves – and this is obviously a strength of the volume: it is not often that one of the editors' own work is evaluated in such a balanced manner. However, I want to add three points to the debate. First of all, in Hjarvard's account there is a pendulum-like movement between what might be called functionalist and processual approaches. On the one hand, Hjarvard suggests that the media institution replaces some of the functions that religious institutions used to have; on the other, he takes a step back from this approach by suggesting that mediatisation is similar to processes of individualisation, commercialisation and globalisation. The possible problem with the former is that it is too simplistic, and with the latter that none of these supposedly similar and comparable processes are anchored in one institution, thus making the analogue questionable.

Secondly, some assumptions of Hjarvard's formulation of mediatisation sound too simple, even when they are used as ideal-types. For instance, the idea that journalism on religion is based on the media's 'secular' values is assumed in theory, but not fully explored. If Hjarvard means simply that the religious media are more religious than the mainstream media, the argument is trivial, but I assume there is more to it. Hjarvard suggests that journalism on religion is 'critical of religious institutions if [they are] out of sync with secular values' (p. 40), but studies on this suggest that the media are equally critical of anti-religious voices who want to downplay the role of religion in society. The media may well be a secularising force, but in many European countries the mainstream mass media are less secularist and often more pro-Christian in their content and attitudes than Hjarvard's ideal-type suggests.

Thirdly, Hjarvard's notion on 'banal religion' needs further clarification. It refers to the idea that information about religion comes to be formed according to the demands of popular media genres, and that representations of religious issues mix institutional and popular aspects and rearticulate traditional meanings. This part is clear, and it is well illustrated in the analyses of popular movies and televisions series, exemplified in this volume by Line Nybro Petersen, among others. However, it refers to a 'form of mediatised religion' on the one hand,

and a 'primary or fundamental form of religion that tends to emerge in all almost human societies' (p. 36) on the other. What the relationship between the two is supposed to be is not made explicit. It is not clear how banal religion can be both.

However, none of these comments nullify the fruitfulness of the mediatisation debate for studying religion and media. This book is an example of that. It is not so much a test case of mediatisation of religion, but a showcase of Nordic scholarship on complex entanglements with religion and the media. Most of the articles address some aspects of mediatisation theory explicitly, but in others it forms rather a loose framework for discussing particular cases. The contributors agree with Hjarvard to varying degrees: some offer strong support for his framework, while others take it as a reference point in discussing their findings in this particular volume. In this reviewer's opinion, there is at least one underlining tension that is not highlighted in the volume. For Hjarvard, mediatisation is quite directly connected to secularisation, but the repertoire of sociologists of religion referred to by other contributors for understanding their cases is dominated by the presence of Grace Davie and José Casanova, who have both been critical towards aspects of secularisation paradigm. I am not suggesting that there are necessarily unsurpassable disagreements between the contributors, but this does tell us that scholars are not unanimous about the relationship between mediatisation and secularisation.

The examples analysed in the volume range from popular culture (Liv Ingeborg Lied, Line Nybro Petersen) to religion-related media events and controversies (Henrik Reintoft Christensen, Knut Lundby & Kjersti Thorbjørnsrud, Marcus Moberg & Sofia Sjö, Johanna Sumiala) and further beyond mainstream media to religious media, social media and internet use more generally (Peter Fischer-Nielsen, Ehab Galal, Mia Lövheim). What is particularly enjoyable is that theoretical resources and empirical cases are intertwined in all chapters. This makes it possible to rise above the level of particular cases, and also pose critical questions to contributors.

'Nordic perspectives' on the mediatisation of religion means that all contributors are from 'Nordic' countries. It also refers to a scholarly network (but not to a homogeneous school). Furthermore, all the cases studied in this volume are 'Nordic'. Scholarly talk about Nordic and Scandinavia usually means Sweden and Denmark, often Norway, sometimes Finland and practically never Iceland. This volume does not have any chapters about Iceland, but two chapters deal with Finland, while others focus on Denmark, Norway and Sweden (with some overlapping between the three). While 'Nordic' is not presented as a homogeneous bloc in this collection, it would be a good idea to address differences between Nordic countries more specifically in the future.

One of the underlying issues related to the 'Nordic' aspect is whether mediatisation is a specifically Nordic phenomenon. The theorising has arisen from the Nordic societies, but I am not yet convinced that mediatisation applies to the Nordic countries and not to other parts of Protestant Europe. Moreover, this volume illustrates that it is not yet a settled issue how well it applies to the Nordic countries themselves.

In thinking about the development of the study of religion and media, the most important short-term impact of mediatisation theory is not that it delivers a correct framework for understanding the complex entanglements with religion and media, or a clearly falsifiable hypothesis to be tested empirically, but that it provides shared topics for discussion in an interdisciplinary field of study. Just as all sociologists of religion have an opinion on secularisation, the debate on mediatisation has become a candidate for a similar focal point, albeit on a much smaller scale.

One of the key strengths of the mediatisation framework is that it forces scholars to ask how the media have tapped into recent changes in the religious landscape in Nordic countries and elsewhere. It highlights the question as to the media's role and power in relation to religion. Readers can also learn a lot from these chapters without delving deep in the mediatisation debate. What is more, rather than verifying or falsifying the mediatisation hypothesis as such, individual chapters illustrate well some of the recent changes in the religious landscape in the Nordic countries and make a compelling case in arguing for the crucial role the media have in this process.

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