

RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPES OF GLOBALIZATION: A REVIEW

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Martin, David. *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*. Malden: Blackwell, 2002.

Hopkins, Dwight N., Lois Ann Lorentzen, Eduardo Mendieta, and David Batstone, eds. *Religions/Globalizations: Theories and Cases*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Recently I attended a public lecture billed as an examination of religion in a global context. The speaker spent the entire time detailing the explosive growth of Christian Pentecostalism all over the world. His calculations were impressive, and his talk was enlightening, but as the question and answer period made clear, the assembled audience was unsatisfied. The combining of two rich fields of inquiry, globalization and religion, surely provided more provocative material than a long list of numbers proving that a particular religious form exists virtually everywhere. Granted, this is a significant thing to note—that any one particular religious form has been embraced all around the world is extraordinary. Given the predictions that religion would wither in the face of modernity, the fact that it has survived, even thrived, in the

modern period is worthy of (and has received) much study. What is most interesting, though, is how this has happened and what it tells us about the changing contours of our social environment. Happily, a number of scholars have taken up these more challenging questions, and their works provide a fruitful field for intellectual inquiry.

At first glance, David Martin's most recent book, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, might appear to put in print form what the speaker detailed in his address. Such is, thankfully, not the case. Set alongside his *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*,¹ Martin has provided us with a two-volume exploration of what he justifiably calls the largest shift in the world's religious marketplace over the last forty years. Dividing the world into geographical regions, Martin reviews the voluminous literature on the rise of Pentecostalism as a religious and cultural phenomenon. Whereas his earlier work focused on Latin America, *Pentecostalism* also explores the changing religious landscape of Africa and Asia.

Ultimately, Martin attempts to answer two questions: First, why Pentecostalism? There are, after all, other religious forms, some Christian, some not, with global aspirations. How did Pentecostalism, a relative upstart, spread so rapidly? Second, why has its growth taken shape the way that it has? While it is true that Pentecostalism has taken root everywhere, it is also true that certain places, Latin America, Africa, and Asia among them, have proved far more receptive than the North Atlantic regions. For Martin, the answers to these questions are linked. At its heart Pentecostalism and "its vast charismatic penumbra" is about the empowerment of marginalized people groups through spiritual gifts that are available to all. It is the long-awaited "mobilization of the damned of the earth," with its impetus coming not from Marxism, but from Christianity.

¹ David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

Martin argues that Pentecostalism's chief rival on the global scene, at least among religious forms, is Catholicism. While its older competitor offers a pre-existing network of hereditary relationships and symbols, it is precisely the voluntaristic nature of Pentecostalism that gives it the edge, according to Martin. Pentecostalism is a chosen, and therefore to some extent empowering, identity that provides a more salient sense of belonging to adherents. It appears as one of the new horizons at precisely the moment when the advent of a global society has made people all over the world aware of possibilities invisible to past generations. For Martin, this is not just a denominational jump, but a transformation of the entire social network as people move from an inherited to a voluntary religious identity.

Pentecostalism's advantages are not just organizational. Its emphasis on piety, discipline, and the importance of the nuclear family generates heretofore unattained levels of social capital for both individuals and the Pentecostal community as a whole. Martin characterizes Pentecostalism's social ethic as a "seizing of opportunity" as opposed to a "consolation for hapless victims." These opportunities once seized generate even more social capital that in turn serves to validate the outlook of Pentecostalism in general. Even a meager increase in social status or arrangement is taken as evidence of God's blessing on the faithful.

Why has Pentecostalism grown more in some parts of the world than others? What makes it attractive in places like Latin America and Africa is part of the obstacle it faces in the North Atlantic regions, namely, its links to the "culturally despised." As a religion of the poor and powerless, it is most attractive to the marginalized segments in the developed world and the masses in the under-developed world. Its low social status makes it unattractive to cultural elites, and even to most of the middle class.

If there is a problem in Martin's analysis, it is just how widely he has cast his net. Defining Pentecostalism is no small task, and to be sure it will always be controversial. Given its non-hierarchical nature and the concomitant lack of formal theology, and the fact that it is an ever-moving target with tens of thousands of manifestations from massive congregations to house churches, it may well be impossible to do so.

The embrace of charismata in non-Pentecostal churches is surely an important, and complicating, aspect of this story as well. Martin does well to point out that the “vast charismatic penumbra” associated with Pentecostalism has surfaced in older mainline and evangelical denominations, and that is part of the reason why Pentecostalism stays marginalized in parts of Europe and North America. But what it means to be part of this penumbra, and for that matter, what exactly unites Pentecostals in Africa to those in the rural South, is implied more than articulated. This definitional issue aside, Martin has done more than most in illuminating the rise of Pentecostalism, and no discussion of religion around the globe is complete without due attention to the very people he has labored so profitably to reveal.

The second volume under consideration in this review also takes up the question of religion and globalization. Edited by Dwight Hopkins, Lois Lorentzen, Eduardo Mendieta, and David Batstone, *Religions/Globalizations* sets out to explore the ways in which religion has been affected by the advent of global society. The book is divided into two sections, theory and case studies, but the structure seems to have been guided more by convenience than by theoretical consistency. Dwight Hopkins’ essay, for example, takes most of the elements scholars use to define a religion and locates them in global capitalism to argue that globalization is a religion. Mark Juergensmeyer, on the other hand, continues his look at religious nationalism around the world, which he articulated in more depth in his book *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*.² Although the second section of *Religions/Globalizations* does deal quite specifically with case studies from different parts of the world, there is no theory of globalization offered here. The guiding principal of the theoretical chapters seems to be that they are not based on empirical evidence gathered on one people group.

This criticism should not be overstated. The lack of a specific theory of globalization does not mean that these first chapters are somehow unor-

² Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

ganized. It just means there is no logical consistency between the chapters other than that they all deal with religion and globalization, broadly conceived. Of particular note, Mendieta's chapter is a valuable survey of previously articulated theories. He argues that the available theories of globalization can be broken into three family types: mono-metastuctural, by which he means those theories that see globalization as the result of one subsystem expanding beyond its established boundaries; matrix rearrangement and differentiation, the advocates of which argue that the fundamental building blocks of the social world relate in a new way; and meta-theoretical reflexivity, which holds that the current world order is of a totally different kind than its predecessors. According to this third school of thought, global order is an integrated, and integrating, reality. Complicated labels aside, Mendieta goes on to argue that only meta-theoretical reflexivity has any room for religion as a force in global order, though, as he acknowledges, this has yet to be fleshed out.

Enrique Dussel's chapter on the social context out of which liberation theology emerged is also valuable, if heavy-handed. Arguing that the various plans for development in the Two-Thirds world resulted primarily in the extraction of whatever wealth these lands possessed, and that political instability in these countries made non-capitalist systems more attractive, Dussel holds that the emergence of liberation theology was a radically new religious response to a deepening social crisis. Dussel claims that "official theologies" (by which he means orthodoxies, in whatever religious form) are always tied to elites, making them unresponsive to the acute social crises experienced by the masses. The disconnect between the religious explanation of life promoted by elites and the actual life experience of the masses gave rise to a reinterpretation of key foundational texts, this time not by the established leadership, but by representatives of the poor and oppressed. Thus, we have the advent of liberation theology, which is, in Dussel's view, a response to global capitalism and its continued manipulation of the poor.

The second section of the book is devoted to specific case studies of religious life in different parts of the world. Dealing with everything from televangelism to dual citizenship in Cambodia, the essays in this section are well documented and informative, of interest to generalists

and specialists in each of these areas alike. Of particular note is Vijaya Rettakudi Nagarajan's study of *Kolam* competitions in India. *Kolams* are ritual drawings made of rice flour designed to bring about the blessings of various goddesses. Indian women draw them on the thresholds of their homes and then compare them with the others throughout the day. Essentially a first-hand narrative of three competitions, Nagarajan begins in a small village and ends in a large regional competition, held in a museum, and sponsored by, of all things, Colgate. Why would a multi-national corporation sponsor such an event? Because, as Nagarajan shows, *Kolam* competitions bring Indian women together, and household goods like those produced by Colgate are usually purchased by women. This change of venue is also changing the purpose and production of the *Kolam* itself, an evolution that causes some discomfort among Indian women.

Linda Thomas' essay, "Macroeconomy, Apartheid, and Rituals of Healing in an African Indigenous Church," on the healing rituals engaged in by poor South Africans is also interesting. A study of one particular congregation, Thomas' essay sets out to prove that healing and cleansing rituals "were a proactive communal theo-political device that enhanced the quality of life for Western Cape blacks living under intense apartheid structures supported by the globalization of finance capital" (137). This essay is rich with interview and observational data and provides a glimpse of how precolonial African religion and Christianity can and have been synthesized by countless congregations. But it also is indicative of one of the key challenges facing scholars interested in globalization and religion. Thomas, and several other authors in this volume, seem to take globalization as a given and then describe religious life in different parts of the world. This yields some interesting and profitable essays, but it does not produce a real theory of how globalization and religion are related. It may be true, as Thomas contends, that global financial capital supported apartheid, and that African religion had to respond to the oppression apartheid was built upon, but that does not produce a theory of how globalization and religion interact. What we have here are several well-documented examples of "glocalization," that is, of the way local religions have adapted to certain social and economic changes associated with globalization, but we have no overarching framework to put them in. It may be that the myriad of

possible interactions between globalization and religion prevent such a framework from being developed at this time. If that is so, then future scholars will have in this volume a wealth of interesting and informative empirical snapshots on which to build and test their theories.

On the surface, religion and globalization might appear to be quite different animals. Religion has a long and well-documented history, both as a social phenomenon and as a subject of study. Its origins are intricately connected to the origins of civilization itself. Religion, even in its modern and postmodern manifestations, carries with it a sense of history. Globalization, on the other hand, is a relatively new phenomenon, and, while garnering much attention, still has the aura of newness, even novelty. It presents itself as largely unexplored territory. What both these books show us, however, is that religion, with all its historical importance, cannot be relegated to the sidelines in the study of even the most contemporary social changes, those that come under the rubric of globalization. No doubt, more will be written about the complicated relationship between these two social forces. In the meantime, Martin, in his sweeping study of global Pentecostalism, and the contributors to *Religions/Globalizations*, in their more ethnographic pieces, have highlighted different, though complementary, starting points for future research.