

# Chapter 1

## Editors' Introduction

### Religion as Living Culture

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A large majority of the world's population continue to identify as followers of religions.<sup>1</sup> The word 'continue' is used advisedly here, because although few would doubt the importance of religion in world history, over recent decades few within the social sciences have viewed it as an important dimension of the present.<sup>2</sup> Tacit secularism has informed inquiry across disciplines, despite heated technical debate about the secularization thesis within the sociology of religion. A.E. Crawley summarized the sentiment of social science secularism aptly back in 1905 when he declared that 'religion is a mere survival from a primitive age'.<sup>3</sup> In this view it is little more than a remnant of previous socio-cultural formations – of traditional superstitions to be overcome by modernity.

While Crawley went on to predict that the extinction of religion was 'only a matter of time', a distinctive feature of the secularization theories developed from the 1960s onwards was that they did not reduce the process to decreased levels of religious belief and participation *per se*.<sup>4</sup> Although putative declines in reported belief and practice in liberal democracies have played their part in the argument, the theories were compatible with the persistence of widespread religious affiliation among populations. They had to be. Their main point was that religion ceases to be *socially significant* in the modern world because religious ideation becomes supplanted by technical expertise in supplying the operating principles for social practice. In other words, the integrative influence of religion over primary institutions of the state wanes even though it may 'continue' to have an important place in the personal lives of individuals and families.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, 'Population by religion, sex and urban/rural residence: each census, 1985–2004', Demographic Yearbook, 2005, at [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybcensus/V2\\_table6.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybcensus/V2_table6.pdf), accessed 1 October 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Malory Nye, 'Religion, Post-Religionism, and Religioneering: Religious Studies and Contemporary Cultural Debates', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 12 (2000): pp. 447–76.

<sup>3</sup> Rodney Stark, 'Secularization, R.I.P.', *Sociology of Religion*, 60/3 (1999): p. 250.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 149.

However, by the late 2000s the supposition that actually existing religion is merely a marginal, private affair has become problematic. The global awareness of the rise of Islamism and related conflicts since the September 11 attacks in the US acts as a headline reminder of both the role of religion in politics and the way it can act as a marker of ethnocultural identity. Meanwhile, although the debate is by no means finished,<sup>5</sup> secularization theory has been roundly criticized.<sup>6</sup> Peter Berger, one of the most prominent of secularization theorists, effectively recanted in the late 1990s, identifying the ‘desecularization of the world’ in the face of burgeoning religious movements around the globe.<sup>7</sup> Fundamentalist variants of all the major religions have spread and orthodox religions remain globally popular in renewed forms such as Pentecostalism.<sup>8</sup> New religious movements and alternative spiritualities proliferate, and there is evidence to suggest that participation in their less conventional (and countable) forums offsets much of the decline in traditional worship in countries with developed ‘spiritual marketplaces’.<sup>9</sup> Overall, those who accept the existence of ‘secularizing effects’ tend to decouple them from anything like a normative theory of secularization’s linear, inevitable spread. Rather, the accent is on more open-ended processes of adaptation and reformulation as religion responds to secular forces that are themselves not uniform.<sup>10</sup>

This volume seeks to contribute to the understanding of this environment – one in which religion remains a vital aspect of the present that is related to broader social dynamics, and is increasingly recognized as such. It brings together scholars from a range of disciplines around the challenge of thinking of religion as living culture again – that is, after the hiatus in which it was dealt with little seriousness outside of religious studies and sociology of religion, specializations that themselves developed in proportion to the effective expulsion of matters religious from other fields of social and cultural study. This first involves acknowledging

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<sup>5</sup> For one reformulation see Steve Bruce, *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> See Asad for a conceptual critique and Greeley for a more empirical one: Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Andrew M. Greeley, *Religion in Europe at the End of the Second Millennium* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Peter Berger, ‘The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview’, in Peter Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), pp. 1–18.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Freston, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Martin Geoffroy, ‘Theorizing Religion in the Global Age: A Typological Analysis’, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 18/1–2 (2004): pp. 33–46; Yves Lambert, ‘Religion in Modernity as a New Axial Age: Secularization or New Religious Forms’, *Sociology of Religion*, 60/3 (1999): pp. 303–33.

that religion, while having special features such as appeal to superempirical agents, is not a realm distinct from the rest of culture. It is mediated, administered, lived, contested and adapted by socially situated agents, just like other forms of culture – and in relation to them. Secondly, analysing religion as culture also involves reconsidering its social significance in light of other contemporary social, cultural, economic and political issues, and the theories that have been developed with reference to them.<sup>11</sup>

It is somewhat ironic that founding figures in social studies, viz. Durkheim and Weber, did view religion as socially significant culture in no less than its capacity to integrate ideologically entire social systems (Durkheim) and to catalyze socio-historical formations (modern capitalism for Weber).<sup>12</sup> However, implicit in both arguments is the association of religion with particular arrangements that are superseded by modernity – primitive societies in Durkheim's case and early capitalism in Weber's. In taking religion seriously each thinker simultaneously helped to lay the foundations for secularization by identifying religion with originary points separated from the rationalized and functionally differentiated modern world.

In the face of religion's continued vitality in 'global modernity', determinations of its significance need to be opened up to multiple perspectives. The currency of received oppositions such as those between the sacred and the profane deserves questioning. As Asad argues, such distinctions may arise more from conceptual schemas of Western thought than they do from the logic of world religions. Whether the latter integrate institutions and practices across whole societies is a debatable measure for the relevance of religion in pluralized milieux. Its imbrication with social differences of class, race, nationality, ethnicity and gender may be just as important an influence on identities and public life.<sup>13</sup>

However, a limiting factor that bears upon any interdisciplinary analysis of contemporary religion is that religious studies and the sociology of religion were somewhat sequestered from the cross-disciplinary interest in the cultural aspects of social life that became known as the 'cultural turn' of the 1980s and

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<sup>11</sup> In making these distinctions, we are also implying that, while religious identity can be a highly individualized experience, religious experience is always more than a subjective – or cognitive – mentality; hence the reason for our emphasizing other socio-cultural relations and processes. Cf. Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 2nd edn (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 2nd edn (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> For a fuller discussion of the changing relationship between different faith communities (viz. Anglicanism, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism) and civic society within the UK, see Zaki Cooper and Guy Lodge (eds), *Faith in the Nation: Religion, Identity and the Public Realm in Britain Today* (London: Institute for Public Policy Research, 2008). For a more philosophical analysis of these issues, particularly the question of religious citizenship within liberal democracies, see Jürgen Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', *European Journal of Philosophy* 14/1 (2006): pp. 1–25.

1990s.<sup>14</sup> Cultural theorists working under rubrics such as postmodernism and poststructuralism destabilized models of a universal, progressive modernity of the kind assumed by secularization, but they had little interest in exploring their radical ideas in relation to religion. One of the legacies of this is that those working in cultural studies frameworks can construe almost any phenomenon as amenable to cultural analysis, but, in practice, they do not tend to admit religion to the cathedral. This is somewhat odd, as if anything the cultural turn that followed structuralism was about the discovery that the social is replete with the production and exchange of meanings.<sup>15</sup> If religion – with all its constructions of the meaning of life and how to act accordingly – is not meaning-making *par excellence*, what is? The truth is that it continues to be an ‘embarrassment’ to many secularist academics.<sup>16</sup> So it is that Rita Felski suggests that everyday life, the sphere of mundane practice that is of particular interest in cultural studies, is viewed as thoroughly secular in the field.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, for billions, religion does play a role in how life is lived, and scholars who attend only to the ‘secular’ or ‘religious’ aspects of diverse issues related to those lives risk conveying an impoverished understanding of the phenomena they study. In proposing this, it is not our intention to dismiss the specialized study of religion. Tim Fitzgerald is one who has argued against religious studies in its current form, which he sees as being organized around a reified category of religion that constructs it as different from everything else, especially matters of state.<sup>18</sup> This, Fitzgerald argues, acts to create distorted discourses that separate out the religious from the secular in ways that are not borne out in practice. In these terms, religion should be researched within the frameworks of other disciplines to ensure that its imbrication with the rest of social and cultural life is an initial premise of inquiry. However, although the intent of this argument is commendable, we propose that the best means to loosen divisions is to promote exchange across already existing disciplines. Religion is distinctive in its cultural forms, even if it never stands apart,<sup>19</sup> and religious studies and the sociology of religion generate

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<sup>14</sup> Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991), p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> Stuart Hall, ‘The Work of Representation’, in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage and Open University Press, 1997), pp. 1–74.

<sup>16</sup> John Frow, ‘Is Elvis a God? Cult, Culture, Questions of Method’, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1/2 (1998): pp. 197–210.

<sup>17</sup> Rita Felski, ‘The Invention of Everyday Life’, *New Formations*, 39 (1999): p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Fitzgerald, *Discourse on Civility and Barbarity: A Critical History of Religion and Related Categories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> The lack of consensus over a definition of religion and whether it is a cultural universal opens up questions about the forms religiosity can take in changing environments. Do we worship celebrities? Does advertising offer us heaven on earth? See Benthall for a recent take on the problem of defining religion and parareligion through a set of recurring features that can be instantiated in different combinations: Jonathan Benthall, *Returning*

detailed knowledge of its terrain. As Stewart Hoover notes, there has already been a notable turn towards culturalism – a context-sensitive focus on lived cultures, everyday life, and meaning construction, reception and negotiation – among those who study media and religion.<sup>20</sup> The problem is the limited number of forums through which those conducting such work can share broader theoretical resources and findings with those working outside of the domain of religious studies. Such opportunities are grossly disproportionate to the social pervasiveness of religion.

Along these lines this volume brings together scholars from religious studies, sociology, communication studies, media studies, cultural studies, gender studies, literary studies, history, anthropology, international relations and musicology to explore religious culture through cross-disciplinary rubrics of mediation, youth, consumption and lifestyle and politics. The intent is to see how a range of conceptual resources and approaches can be brought to the empirical study of religious issues as they appear across contexts. This arrangement is designed less to build up substantive knowledge of any particular object of study than it is to highlight the ways that religion can be tied up with key dimensions of the present. Chapters raise critical concerns including governmentality, post-feminism, neo-liberalism, globalization, consumer culture, diaspora, new media and the politics of representation. The interest is to show that, whatever the situation, religion is part of contemporary sense-making and practice, and as such is an emergent property of socio-cultural change. In other words, that it is living culture.

In taking this approach *Mediating Faiths* is designed to complement other ongoing explorations that are bringing religion back into frames from which it has largely been excluded. The 'theological turn' in recent critical theory is one notable example. Since Derrida considered the spectre of faith in his later work a number of noted theorists, including Žižek, Kristeva, Badiou, Taylor and Rorty, have addressed religion.<sup>21</sup> Another example is the increasing amount of work that has examined the links between religion, media and popular culture.<sup>22</sup>

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*to Religion: Why a Secular Age is Haunted by Faith* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Stewart M. Hoover, 'The Culturalist Turn in Scholarship on Media and Religion', *The Journal of Media and Religion*, 1/1 (2002): pp. 225–36.

<sup>21</sup> Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo, *The Future of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001); Julia Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby (eds), *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture* (London: Sage, 1997); Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber (eds), *Religion and Media* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark (eds), *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Jolyon P. Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (eds), *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and*

The concept of mediation that lies behind our title refers not only to the expanded symbolic realm created by media technologies in which religious communications consist, but to the broader sense that apprehension of and practice in the world is mediated by material, cultural and social elements. Mediation in this sense is the intersection of multiple, co-determining factors amid any set of relations in which religiosity is implicated. Including but moving beyond media in the restricted sense of communications channels, the chapters collected present mediation as an ongoing social process of meaning-making through which religious discourses articulate with other contemporary forms. These relationships demand reconsideration of settled notions of the place and value of the sacred. In various ways throughout the chapters, the authors raise questions about the changing relations of authority over religious symbolization and practice that arise as religions interact with the rest of media and society. This happens through the ways that agents bind the religious to concerns of the everyday and to broader public spheres in the course of action and expression.

While not advancing any particular theoretical programme, this orientation can be explained with reference to Stuart Hall's development of Gramsci's concept of articulation.<sup>23</sup> Articulation describes the way that ideological elements form combinations with each other, social formations and subjects. The model leads to a particular way of reading in which the value of an ideological element is to be ascertained by its contingent relations with others. Religion is Hall's primary example: 'Its meaning – political and ideological – comes precisely from its position within a formation. It comes with what else it is articulated to'. In this view, it has no fixed political connotations, but is related to power structures in particular ways by particular movements, which inflect it, develop it and engage with it to construct narratives that transform people's awareness of themselves and their potential behaviour. Accordingly he notes 'the extraordinary diversity of the roles which religious formations have actually played' in the developing and modern world. For instance, he sees the 'funny language' of Rastafarianism in Jamaica as deriving from, but subverting the Bible, such that it became a

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*Culture* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Publishers, 2003); Peter Horsfield, Mary E. Hess and Adan M. Medrano (eds), *Belief in Media: Cultural Perspectives on Media and Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors (eds), *Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere* (Bloomington, IN, and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005); Lynn Schofield Clark (ed.), *Religion, Media, and the Marketplace* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Stuart Hall, 'On Postmodernism and Articulation', in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 141–4. Hall incidentally is one of the more influential intellectuals who has recently called for religion to be taken seriously again in the humanities and social sciences. See Laurie Taylor, 'Culture's revenge: Laurie Taylor interviews Stuart Hall', *Newhumanist*.org 121/2 (2006), at <http://newhumanist.org.uk/960>, accessed 2 September 2010.

conduit for the reconstruction of black history, a cultural resource that transformed experiences of poverty and colonialism into political subjectivity.

In this spirit, via Christian beauty competitions in the US to environmentalist Thai Buddhist monks protesting deforestation by ordaining trees, and almost any other contemporary religious culture one could mention, we propose that the significance of religion be interpreted through its place in socio-historical formations, not against universalist benchmarks that themselves prove to be creations of very particular histories.

## **Part I: New Media Religion**

Throughout the volume contributors examine how religiosity is manifested in multiple ways with diverse consequences. Any material object, practice or representation effects signification upon being perceived. Communal worship, meditation and even vows of silence convey meanings and subjective effects that are shaped by the communications forms and physical environments in which they consist.

People often tend to think of media in terms of the most recent physical means for communicating messages. In our times these are electronic and digital. This section comprises chapters that show how changes in the media environment are directly implicated in how religion is expressed. However, in order to avoid the risk of fetishizing only the 'very latest' media technologies it is first necessary to acknowledge that religious communication and experience has always been mediated and that for as long as there has been recorded human history there have been new media of one kind or another. For instance, the 'very latest' in religious art, drama and music conveyed the Christian gospel to the illiterate European laity for generations while monks laid cultural foundations for the print revolution by fastidiously hand-copying manuscripts in their scriptoria.

The case of the European Reformation illustrates how mediation, in the sense we have proposed above, is much more than a matter of message formats. It is also the social relations that form around them and the cultures transmitted through them. Upon the publication of Gutenberg's Bible surely few at the time would have seen the potential mass dissemination of the word of God as leading to the decreased authority of the Catholic Church and the secularization of learning. However, as Elizabeth Eisenstein has argued, the capacity of printed media to store, index and distribute information promoted the specialization in and comparison between bodies of knowledge that underpinned both the Reformation and the Renaissance.<sup>24</sup> The heterodox monk Martin Luther was the first star author

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<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

of the print age, new media entrepreneurs ensuring that his word was sold like any other for which there was demand.<sup>25</sup>

Without the benefit of hindsight we can be less certain where the current electronic media ‘revolution’ might lead. Nonetheless, the increased volume of media messages and the proliferation in formats through which religion is communicated are certain, even if their effects may vary by context. This presents religious organizations with the strategic challenge of spreading their views amid changing media ecologies. Evangelical and Pentecostal movements appear to be the winners in this scenario because of their entrepreneurial willingness to adopt new avenues such as cable and satellite television.<sup>26</sup>

However, others are more ambivalent about mediated public spheres that may favour particular modes of representation (such as entertainment and critique) and that may be subject to governmental regulation, commercial power and a range of other voices. The spread of religious representations is no guarantee that they can be controlled by those who consider themselves to be the custodians of creeds. As Bryan Turner notes with reference to films such as *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Last Passion of Christ*, popular media ‘contribute to the circulation of religious phenomena, but at the same time they challenge traditional, hierarchical forms of religious authority and interpretation’.<sup>27</sup> With its bias towards decentralized and cheap cultural production, much generated by private users, the Internet in particular has the potential to further open up the range of interpretations. It allows the public expression of personal belief and of religious ideation that circumvents state-regulated or commercialized media.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> See Stewart M. Hoover, *Mass Media Religion: The Social Sources of the Electronic Church* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988); Steve Bruce, *Pray TV: Televangelism in America* (London: Routledge, 1990); Quentin J. Schultze and Robert H. Woods (eds), *Understanding Evangelical Media: The Changing Face of Christian Communication* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Bryan S. Turner, ‘Religious Speech: The Ineffable Nature of Religious Communication in the Information Age’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25/7–8 (2008): p. 228.

<sup>28</sup> For more about online ‘participatory culture’ see Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006). For work about religion and the Internet see Brenda E. Basher, *Give Me That Online Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004); Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online: We Are One In The Network* (Oxford and New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Morten Hojsgaard and Margit Warburg, *Religion and Cyberspace* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); chapters 13 and 14 in Christopher Deacy and Elizabeth Arweck (eds), *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 219–51; chapters 19–23 in Mitchell and Marriage, *Mediating Religion*, pp. 213–82.

Stephen Hunt's contribution charts the changing fortunes of Christian broadcasting in Britain over the last 30 years. Hunt shows how religious broadcasting on the major terrestrial channels has changed in nature and scope. The broadcast 'religious voice' has been transformed from a privileged discourse intended to 'bind the nation' under the original paternalistic public service model of the BBC, to being one voice among many after the market reform of broadcasting. Mainstream religious programmes tend to be more secular, covering matters of general morality, with critics arguing they are indistinguishable from normal current affairs. New media, satellite, cable and the Internet offer new opportunities, but also generate conflicts and paradoxes. Broadcasting in Britain is highly regulated, in terms not only of ownership but also of content. As well as facing commercial realities, Christian broadcasters have to navigate regulations regarding funding, recruitment, and freedom and curtailment of speech, if their commitment to Christian mission is to be compatible with the conditions applied to broadcasting licences. Questions arise as to how the broadcasters convey distinctive Christianity in a highly pluralist culture.<sup>29</sup> They make concessions in order to have voices at all, and may principally reach confirmed Christians rather than converting members of the public.

In her chapter, Aini Linjakumpu considers the emergence of 'alternative' Islamic discourses made possible by the decentralizing and globalizing influences of the Internet. In reducing the communications advantage that large organizations have over small ones and individuals, and in favouring recursive discourses that respond to other mediations, the Internet is an important platform for alternative media.<sup>30</sup> Violent manifestations of Islam currently take centre stage in many discussions of the religion, but there are alternatives within the mainstream. Islam has never had a centralized authority and in the past people looked to local scholars for guidance. In annihilating space, the Internet has allowed Muslims to seek advice, guidance and interpretations anywhere. This is especially important for those who live in societies where there is little freedom of speech and where it is difficult to form political organizations independent of the state. The Internet allows freer exchange of ideas, leading to lifestyle-oriented discussion on topics such as 'Queer Islam' and 'Everyday Islam'. The latter includes the use by young Muslims of social networking sites, chat rooms and blogs, to circumvent restrictions on dating, for example. In these ways, Islam is being reconfigured from within in a way that was not possible prior to the development of the Internet.

In the next chapter, Knut Lundby discusses the results of a project initiated by the Norwegian government, who wished to review religious education in the interest of social cohesion. This contribution concerns the use of new media in exploring the meaning and place of religion in the lives of twenty-first-century Norwegian

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Michael Bailey, 'Media, Religion and Culture: An Interview with Michael Wakelin', *Journal of Media Practice*, 11/2 (2010): pp. 185–9.

<sup>30</sup> Chris Atton, *An Alternative Internet* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

youths, all members of the Church of Norway. Though most people belong to the Church, attendance at services is low and declining, and open discussion of religious faith is not normal in Norwegian culture. The project was an attempt to draw upon the potential of new media to embrace otherwise ‘unspoken’ aspects of lives and to articulate the ineffable. Respondents created ‘Digital Faith Stories’, short, multimedia productions themed around the role of faith in their sense of identity and personhood. For these young people, ‘faith’ meant ‘faith in oneself’ rather than in any sense of the transcendental, and belonging to the Church meant just that – a sense of belonging to something, of solidarity. The results were very similar to a study on the same subject in Britain, which found that faith existed for British youth in relation to family, friends and the self. This suggests a reflexive approach to narratives about oneself and the significance of one’s life that is consistent with the detraditionalization of belief in late modernity.

The question of how religious groups make use of and respond to the media is not always about the advancement of an assumed strategic interest for good publicity. The desire to control media use can also be a matter of a group’s attitude towards the world beyond their constituency. Some religious traditions embrace the media and the modern world. For others, such as the Israeli Haredi community of ultra-orthodox Jews, the subject of Yoel Cohen’s chapter, both are something to be shunned. He outlines the attempts of Haredi rabbis to police the use of the Internet on the basis that it threatens traditional family and religious values. The first reaction of the leadership, as it had been with every development in media from newspapers onwards, was to outlaw the use of the Internet by members of the group. This has proved difficult to maintain not least because the Internet is a valuable source of religious knowledge. Earlier bans on television and the cinema have been widely respected among the Haredim, but the ubiquity and utility of the Internet has meant that rabbis have had to reach an accommodation with this aspect of modernity, and attempt instead to control the use of it in the same way that they eventually did with newspapers.

## **Part II: Consumption and Lifestyle**

Chapters in this section raise questions about the yoking of the sacred to apparently secular concerns with self-improvement and personal preference. Authors engage with theories of neo-liberalism, post-feminism, consumer culture and late modernity in considering how religious ideation is tied up with elective projects of self-fashioning such as those concerning health (Ruth Barcan and Jay Johnston), appearance (Karen Tice) and entertainment (Anna E. Nekola). Related to this sense that religion caters for broader lifestyle concerns of its socio-cultural environment, is the question of how religious organizations adopt strategies of ‘intentional contemporaneity’ to frame their appeal. Veronika Krönert and Andreas Hepp assess how the brand-like management of religious symbols constitutes a

bid to grab attention amid popular culture, and Rob Warner shows how successful churches stress the convenience and experiential value of participation.

Religion is conventionally viewed as a communal affair that integrates individuals into collectivities. For functionalists following Durkheim this may be its principal social purpose. However, relations of individuality and collectivity have uneven histories. Theorists including Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman suggest that late modernity is distinctive in the sense that society becomes increasingly organized around the category of the individual, such that in many spheres of action people have 'no choice but to choose'.<sup>31</sup> While critiques of such theories of individualization stress that not all citizens are in the same position to effect choices,<sup>32</sup> commentators including Wade Clark Roof have noted generational patterns towards what might be called 'personal quest spirituality' among baby boomers.<sup>33</sup> Whether manifesting in chosen affiliation with particular religions or with the eclectic consumption of options in the New Age spiritual marketplace, for many seekers the accent is on elective involvement rather than upholding a received tradition.

Neither everyday religious life nor the discourses that enjoin followers to observe piety in their lifestyles are new, but their mediation has changed. In the 1960s Thomas Luckman noted how the expression of religiosity merged with other aspects of lifestyle media to create forms of 'invisible religion'. Market models of religious symbolization and participation have developed alongside recognition that many people are at liberty to pursue religious meanings in terms that speak to their lifestyles. Berger was one of the first to note that some churches adopt marketing-style discourses through which they differentiate their angle on the sacred from others, effectively creating a brand image aimed at informing the choices of potential churchgoers.<sup>34</sup> New Age practices offer a more literal marketplace

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<sup>31</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); Zygmunt Bauman, *The Individualised Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> Mike Savage, *Class Analysis and Social Transformation* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> Wade Clark Roof, *Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> For a fuller analysis of this phenomenon, especially in relation to the United States, see Schofield Clark (ed.), *Religion, Media, and the Marketplace*; Richard Cimino and Don Lattin, *Shopping for Faith: American Religion in the New Millennium* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002); Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); for similar analyses but in relation to other global contexts, see Pattana Kitiarsa (ed.), *Religious Commodifications in Asia* (London: Routledge, 2008); Roberta Motta, 'Ethnicity, Purity, the Market and Syncretism in Afro-Brazilian Cults', in Sidney M. Greenfield and Andre Droogers (eds), *Reinventing Religions: Syncretism and Transformation*

of commodified workshops, therapies and media that do not necessarily demand loyalty of the kind traditionally associated with religious involvement.<sup>35</sup>

In their chapter, Barcan and Johnston examine the articulations between spirituality and health. Religious healing has many manifestations, but there are grounds to consider whether, in some contexts, therapy is becoming not just a latent, but a manifest function of religion.<sup>36</sup> Some might question whether alternative health practices are in fact religion, quasi-religion, or something else altogether. However, practice in the world does not obey the logic of neat analytical distinctions. The therapies they examine are sometimes explained through recourse to metaphysics of the divine, in forms such as sacred healing power latent in the higher self, or the intervention of higher beings such as angels into physiological processes. Others may be explained in terms of a more naturalistic vitalism. While the concepts of healing the self entailed in many therapies echo the normative subjectivity of neo-liberal self-responsibility, Barcan and Johnston argue that when the complexities of alternative therapies are taken into account they appear to have ambiguous rather than simple relations to what Jackie Stacey calls ‘the recognisable metaphors of western individualism (control, autonomy and personal output).’<sup>37</sup> Looking at these practices within body-models generated by a range of religious or spiritual disciplines opens up potentially very different understandings of them.

Krönert and Hepp present a case study of the 2005 Catholic World Youth Day celebrations held in Cologne, which they analyse as a media event. Their interest is to show how mediatization – defined as an increasing spreading of ‘technical communication media’ throughout different social and cultural spheres – plays a part in religious change. They argue that forms of our present media cultures structure the production and representation of religion around specific sacred brands (‘the Pope’, for example), making religious contents pointedly communicable in fragmented media landscapes. Drawing upon the work of Beck, such a ‘branding of religion’ on the side of media production and representation is related to individualized belief at the level of the consumers who appropriate the media. Clear ‘brands’ and ‘symbols’ offer material for personal ‘religious bricolage’. However, this reaching out of religious institutions into the mediated public sphere is more than just a mixing of the religious with the mediated public sphere. It raises issues about who has what kinds of authority to control religious symbolization and its interpretation.

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*in Africa and the Americas* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001); Sudeep Dasgupta, ‘Gods in the Sacred Marketplace: Hindu Nationalism and the Return of the Aura in the Public Sphere’, in Meyer and Moors (eds), *Religion*, pp. 251–72; Carlton Johnstone, ‘Marketing God and Hell’, in Deacy and Arweck (eds), *Exploring Religion*, pp. 105–22.

<sup>35</sup> Guy Redden, ‘The New Age: Towards a Market Model’, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 20/2 (2005): pp. 231–46.

<sup>36</sup> Bruce, *God Is Dead*.

<sup>37</sup> Jackie Stacey, ‘The Global Within’, in Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury and Jackie Stacey (eds), *Global Nature, Global Culture* (London: Sage, 2000), p. 116.

In light of the fact that Christianity has always issued 'decrees for the flesh', Karen Tice asks how we might make sense of faith-based initiatives for beauty, fitness, diet and self-help. She traces the recent normalization of prayer and witnessing in conventional US beauty pageants and the creation of Christian beauty pageants to promote evangelical missions, examining how these initiatives fracture and reconfigure conventional binaries of body and soul, material and spiritual, religion and popular culture, and the sacred and the profane. Fuelled by contemporary neo-liberal discourses of consumerism, post-feminism and self-responsibility, a new vanguard of Christian body entrepreneurs has merged evangelicalism, bodily makeovers and popular culture in novel ways. As one manifestation of WWJD ('What Would Jesus Do?') culture of everyday religion, the case demonstrates how living truth is constructed as those with particular social interests fill the room for interpretation that exists within religious creeds.

In his chapter Rob Warner examines the experimental reconfigurations and cultural assimilations of populist neo-Pentecostalism. Case studies from three experimental churches in York, UK consider to what extent church seeding and operational initiatives exhibit a relativizing of religious traditions in the quest for pragmatic acculturation. On the basis of empirical data, Warner argues that intentional contemporaneity, particularly in terms of music and multimedia, legitimates cultural expectations of religion as commodified entertainment, and validates the participant as an autonomous religious consumer. In the reflexive project of the self, religious identities may be in the process of becoming more provisional, contingent and individually constructed. Moreover, such transitions, driven by the rhythms of popular culture, have the unintended but inevitable consequence of producing transitions in theology and ethics.

The links between evangelical Christianity and contemporary lifestyles is also the subject of Anna E. Nekola's chapter, which raises questions about the market in religious commodities and individualism. The focus is on popular music, 'Worship Music', in the USA. Music of course has always been a significant part of religious practice, but here the author argues that the popularity of the worship genre, which began in churches but is now consumed anywhere – at home, on the move, in the car – is exacerbating tensions within evangelical Christianity over the place of the Church and community in worship. To producers of this kind of music, it allows evangelicals the opportunity to worship anywhere, but others are concerned that Christianity has always been about more than individual worship, that Christians have worshipped in congregations and modern, individualistic trends mean that people are isolated rather than empowered.

### **Part III: Youth**

How to renew and enlarge religious membership is a permanent concern for most faiths and their spiritual leaders. If a religion is to survive and reproduce itself from one generation to the next, it must necessarily ensure that its belief system

and everyday rituals achieve a precarious balance between the traditional and the popular, custom and innovation, the 'residual' and the 'emergent'.<sup>38</sup> Hence, in recent times, even traditional monotheistic religions have developed and adapted programmes of worship and spiritual pedagogy that people can more easily identify with as they negotiate the many contradictions that tend to characterize modern societies. The melange of competing, and sometimes conflicting, public discourses and private pleasures can be especially confusing for young people, who tend to be acutely susceptible to fads, peer pressure and the popular appeals of the ever-multiplying culture industries. More crucially, while it has always been the case that religiosity varies over an individual's lifecycle, recent research would suggest that increasing numbers of young people no longer participate in an official religion or readily identify with such things as spiritual authority, pastorship, discipline and reverence. This is certainly the case in the context of Europe and Christianity, prompting some religious leaders to lament that we have entered a post-Christian era in which young people are adrift in an immoral sea of materialism and hedonistic narcissism.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, one could argue this has long since been the case. Furthermore, the issue of how best to secure the spiritual obedience of future generations is not just a concern for senior figures in the local church, synagogue or mosque. The question of how to instil certain moral values and practices in young people has long been a concern for most parents, especially parents who feel that the social and cultural traditions that marked their own childhood have started to wane. Sending one's children to Sunday School – a practice commonly referred to as 'religion by deputy' – or teaching them to say prayers at bedtime has a long and peculiar history, certainly in Britain.<sup>40</sup> And let us not forget the various functionaries of the state – not least the media – that occasionally give us cause for panic about the moral condition and the future direction of society more generally. Phrases such as 'anti-social behaviour', 'hoodies', 'yob-culture', 'chavs' and 'binge-drinking' are just a handful of the expressions that spring to mind when one thinks of the many public discourses associated with youth culture in the present instant. In short, 'youth culture' is one of the oldest and most enduring of folk devils, which

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<sup>38</sup> For a fuller analysis of worldwide religious traditions and transformations, see Steven Engler and Gregory P. Grieve (eds), *Historicizing 'Tradition' in the Study of Religion* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005); Linda Woodhead *et al.* (eds), *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations* (London: Routledge, 2002). See Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), for a fuller discussion of 'residual' and 'emergent'.

<sup>39</sup> See Stephen J. Hunt, *Religion in Western Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 76–81; Cooper and Lodge (eds), *Faith in the Nation*.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Walter Lacquer, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780–1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976).

is what makes it such an important category of analysis for sociologists, historians, and the like.<sup>41</sup>

There is, however, a problem with treating religion and youth in fixed, functionalist terms. For a start, not all young people experience religion as something that is purely and simply the cultural logic of a dominant culture, reason of state or parental dogma.<sup>42</sup> Though still a minority, significant numbers of young people are turning to religion in search of something out of the ordinary. Not surprisingly, this search for a more authentic way of life is particularly evident within new religious movements, which have proved particularly attractive to teenagers, especially those that offer alternative forms of worship and spirituality.<sup>43</sup> Also, much recent sociological research has focused on the way in which youth culture can be spiritual and transformative without being necessarily religious, for example, as seen within the New Age movement or contemporary clubbing culture.<sup>44</sup> Though written over 30 years ago now, Dick Hebdige's analysis of the 'Rasta hymnal' was exemplary for the way it drew the attention of academics to the complex intersections between religion and popular culture.<sup>45</sup> Finally, there is an additional complication insofar as religion is widely seen as one of the causes – not a solution – to some of the problems presently associated with youth culture. The conversion of an angry minority of young male Muslims to radical

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<sup>41</sup> See Michael Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1985); Stan Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: Paladin, 1964); Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (London: Routledge, 1993); Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen & Co, 1979).

<sup>42</sup> Graham Murdock has argued that this selective viewpoint is one of the reasons why British Cultural Studies has overlooked the popular appeal of religion for so long: Graham Murdock, "'The Re-Enchantment of the World": Religion and the Transformations of Modernity', in Hoover and Lundby (eds), *Rethinking Media*, pp. 85–101; see also Lynn Schofield Clark and Stewart M. Hoover, 'At the Intersection of Media, Culture and Religion: A Bibliographic Essay', *op. cit.*, pp. 15–36.

<sup>43</sup> See Dereck Daschke and W. Michael Ashcraft (eds), *New Religious Movements* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Christopher Partridge (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of New Religions: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 2004); Gordon Lynch, *After Religion: 'Generation X' and the Search for Meaning* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002); Lynn Schofield Clark, *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media and the Supernatural* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); see also Roland Howard, *The Rise and Fall of the Nine O'Clock Service* (London: Mowbray, 1996), for an intriguing account of one of the most controversial examples of charismatic Christianity in the UK in recent times.

<sup>44</sup> Lynch, *After Religion*; Rupert Till, 'Procession Trance Ritual in Electronic Dance Music Culture', in Deacy and Arweck (eds), *Exploring Religion*, pp. 169–88.

<sup>45</sup> Dick Hebdige, 'Reggae, Rasta and Rudies', in Hall and Jefferson (eds), *Resistance Through Rituals*, pp. 135–54.

Islam – largely as a result of them feeling socially marginalized and the outrage surrounding the violent conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine – is the most obvious and pressing example.<sup>46</sup>

In the opening chapter, Thijl Sunier looks at emerging forms of post-migration religiosity, religious belonging, religious representation and practices among young Muslim men and women living in Western Europe. On the one hand, Sunier calls into question the simple dichotomies such as secular/non-secular, modern/traditional, integrated/non-integrated, radical/democratic, anti-western/pro-western that characterize much present research and the public debate on Muslims in Europe. On the other, he suggests we treat young Muslims not as victims of a cultural clash or pre-constituted religious identities, but as active agents of their own cultural environment. By elaborating the concepts of ‘style’ and ‘styling’, as ‘signifying practices’ and ‘enactments of meaning’, Sunier’s analysis puts emphasis on the types of performativity and aesthetics of religion that appeal to young Muslims in the twenty-first century.

It has been argued that, under the influence of globalization, the primary challenge to religious faith is not cognitive, but rather the commodification of everyday life. As discussed above, the principal issue facing religious leaders here is how to retain the loyalty of the next generation amid fierce competition from ‘Madonna, Microsoft and McDonalds’. Joy Tong’s chapter addresses these related issues by looking at two of the largest charismatic megachurches in Asia – City Harvest Church and Faith Community Baptist Church – that are notable for their success in recruiting thousands of young followers over the last decade. The two churches’ proactive engagement with media is particularly fascinating in this regard as they both have aimed at creating world-class quality media performances and ‘pastors–entertainers’. The combination of rational structures and emotional expressivity, and the interplay of media and commodification, raises some interesting questions: how do mega-churches construct a modern and authentic experience that excels in the religious marketplace? What constitutes its spirituality? Above all, to what lengths will religions go in an effort to recruit a younger membership?

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<sup>46</sup> According to a recently published editorial in a special issue of the *New Statesman* on Islam (15 February 2010), the latest British Social Attitudes Survey reveals only a quarter of Britons feel positive towards Muslims. More than half of Britons strongly object to a mosque being built in their locality. In spite of this prejudice, surveys published in the same special issue show that the overwhelming majority of British Muslims (77 per cent) felt themselves to be British and an even greater majority (99 per cent) expressed a strong objection against terrorist attacks. For further evidence of Islamophobia and cultural segregation among young Muslims, see John R. Hinnells (ed.), *Religious Reconstruction in the South Asian Diasporas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Geoffrey Brahm Levey and Tariq Modood (eds), *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

## Part IV: Politics and Community

This section looks at some recent examples of the ways in which religious movements have become entangled in socio-political relations and processes: the involvement of various religions in welfarism and the wider global struggle to make poverty history; the rise of religious extremism, right-wing evangelicals and radical Islam in particular; and the related issues of immigration, race and multiculturalism. Though not specifically mentioned in this volume, other examples include: the growing influence of creationism within the US, the ongoing debates surrounding the rights of gays and lesbians, the bioethics of abortion or genetic engineering, and the increasing numbers of private religious schools and faith 'academies' in Australia and the UK. And let us not forget the much older and more deeply rooted religious politics associated with, say, the Middle East, former Yugoslavia or Northern Ireland.

Of these, the 'Muslim question' has become a key issue in many Western democracies. While one may not necessarily concur with the main thrust of his argument that religious identity is set to be the primary source of international conflict in the current era, Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis is a compelling and chilling narrative that has set the tone for much political and public debate following the collapse of Soviet communism and the subsequent thawing of cold-war relations.<sup>47</sup> One doubts whether even he could have anticipated the terrible events of 9/11, the equally brutal response of Western democracies and the so-called 'war on terror', the attendant intensification in fundamentalism (of all persuasions, not just Islam), and the escalation of ethno-religious conflict more generally. On the other hand, critics such as Edward Said have argued that Huntington's hypothesis is an overstated gimmick that has been used by 'self-appointed combatants' to legitimate a United States-led geopolitics for the twenty-first century.<sup>48</sup> Either way, the current political climate is one in which religious traditions and communities of faith have an important role to play, particularly where international relations are concerned, and we ignore them at our peril.<sup>49</sup>

Of course, religion and politics have been inextricably intertwined since time immemorial. For example, one could argue that Jesus is best understood as a non-violent revolutionary who was crucified as a political criminal for offending the Roman authorities. For over fourteen centuries, Muslims have looked to *Sharia*,

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<sup>47</sup> The theory was first mooted at a lecture Huntington gave at the American Enterprise Institute in 1992, and was later expanded and published in book form: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Edward W. Said, 'The Clash of Ignorance', *The Nation*, 4 October 2001, at <http://www.thenation.com/article/clash-ignorance>, accessed 1 October 2010; cf. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), especially Chapter 6.

<sup>49</sup> Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere'.

that is, Islamic religious law, for spiritual and political guidance.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, most European countries have an historic association with the religious and political doctrine of royal absolutism, better known as the divine right of kings. One only need look to British history, particularly from the Reformation onwards, to see how religion has played an important role in shaping and influencing political and public debate, and effecting social and cultural change.<sup>51</sup> For example, though the relationship between the Church of England and the state has been one where distinct functions have been observed since 1531 – the Church as the trustee of Christian utterance and the state as the guarantor of justice and the nation's economic welfare and security – Church of England bishops still have the right to sit in the House of Lords where they can publicly voice concerns about issues other than religious ones, as Margaret Thatcher knows only too well.<sup>52</sup> This articulation between religion and politics is even evident in such countries as the United States where there is a constitutional separation of church and state. Indeed, the role of religion in public life, and its revitalization as a political force, is especially pervasive in the United States, to the point where faith communities really can influence social policy and the outcome of political elections.<sup>53</sup> In other words, it has never been clear what things belong to Caesar and what things belong to God.

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<sup>50</sup> See Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> The following are just a handful of references that provide an impressionistic survey of the role of religion in British socio-political life: David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Callum Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 2006); Mark Chapman, *Doing God: Religion and Public Policy in Brown's Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 2008); Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identity Among British Muslims* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> Among the many critics of Thatcher's economic reforms during the 1980s, perhaps the most vociferous were liberal Church leaders, many of whom took exception to Thatcher's dismantling of the welfare state and the consequent rise in unemployment and 'selfish individualism'. One of the most damning criticisms of Thatcherite policies was the publication of the *Faith in the City* report in 1985. For a fuller and more detailed analysis, see Michael Alison and David L. Edwards, *Christianity and Conservatism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990); Henry Clark, *The Church Under Thatcher* (London: SPCK, 1993); Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920–2000* (London: SCM Press, 2001).

<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, there is a vast body of literature (of varying quality and objectivity) that examines the role of religion in American politics and society, particularly in relation to the influence of evangelism on education policy, the culture wars between liberal Americans and the conservative right, the influence of American–Jewish political lobby upon US foreign policy, and the relationship between religion and race. See, for example, Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Steven Brint and Jean Reith Schroedel (eds),

Not surprisingly, there is an extensive and rapidly expanding body of literature that examines the contribution of religion to political life in multifarious ways and various global contexts, for example: in relation to religious denominations, party allegiances and voting behaviour; the association between religiosity, civic unrest and social reform; attempts by certain political elites to repress religious organizations and religious values (as was the case in Communist Europe, and still is the case in China) in an effort to suppress political rebellion; the insidious use of ethno-religious identities to promote nationalist ideologies and political violence; the relationship between faith-based aid agencies and internationalism; or the above-mentioned use of the supposed 'clash of civilizations' thesis for spurious political ends and the contemporaneous rise of Islamic militancy.<sup>54</sup> Such accounts raise interesting and important questions that problematize some of the more simplistic propositions put forward by secularists and modernists, particularly those on the left who still associate religion with such theses as 'the opium of the masses', 'the chiasm of despair' or 'the sign of the oppressed'.<sup>55</sup> They also bring into question the widely-held assumption that public debate is best left to politicians, pundits and the electorate *qua* secular citizens.

It is in recognition of this agonism that increasing numbers of political and cultural commentators have started to rethink the division between the religious

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*Evangelicals and Democracy in America: Religion and Politics* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009); Kenneth J. Heineman, *God Is A Conservative: Religion, Politics, and Morality in Contemporary America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Valerie Martinez-Ebers and Manojeh Dorraj (eds), *Perspectives on Race, Ethnicity, and Religion: Identity Politics in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Robert S. McElvaine, *Grand Theft Jesus: The Hijacking of Religion in America* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009); R. Murray Thomas, *God in the Classroom: Religion and America's Public Schools* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008); David Domke and Kevin Coe, *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>54</sup> See for example, Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*; Rik Coolsaet (ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe* (Brussels: Royal Institute for International Relations, 2008); Lucian N. Leustean and John T.S. Madeley (eds), *Religion, Politics and Law in the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2009); Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2004); Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler (eds), *Religion in World Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2007); John Anderson (ed.), *Religion, Democracy and Democratization* (London: Routledge, 2007); Naveed Shahzad Sheikh and Naveed S. Sheikh, *The New Politics of Islam: Pan-Islamic Foreign Policy in a World of States* (London: Routledge, 2007); John Hinnells and Richard King (eds), *Religion and Violence in South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2006); Sarah Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>55</sup> Though published over 20 years ago, Kenneth Thompson's *Belief and Ideology* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1986) offers a succinct and informative study of religion and ideology from various sociological and Marxian perspectives.

and the secular in an effort to confront the mounting ethical dilemmas that most nation-states currently face.<sup>56</sup> Radicals, social democrats and Tory paternalists alike (a holy trinity if ever there was one) have begun to look to their not-too-distant religious pasts for spiritual and political inspiration. For example, in his search for an exit out of that heartless wasteland otherwise known as ‘democratic state capitalism’, Simon During argues that Christianity is best understood as ‘capitalism’s lost other’. Citing the ‘quasi-theological’ work of such European theorists as Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou, During argues that ‘theo-politics’ (as opposed to leftist cultural theory) is the best means of rejuvenating both public engagement and a progressive politics for the future.<sup>57</sup> More crucially, injecting religion with a more progressive sense of spirituality might also provide an effective antidote to the many fundamentalisms to have emerged in recent times and their tendency to preach reactionary dogma, intolerance and apocalyptic fatalism. Similarly, in the recently published polemic by Terry Eagleton, the so-called ‘Ditchkins’ (a witty conflation of the ‘anti-God brigade’s’ key luminaries, Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens), we hear a passionate lament for religion’s many virtues, not least its championing of social justice for the socially excluded, sympathy and compassion for the suffering of others (not to be mistaken for bleeding heart liberalism, by the way), selfless and unconditional love (*agape*), the idea of the human good and, above all, speaking truth to power.<sup>58</sup> For Eagleton, all these ideas can be understood as a political resource for resisting the cultural logic of late capitalism and the possible remaking of humanity.

Claire Chambers’s chapter examines representations of the ethical issues surrounding representations of Islam and specific Muslim communities in recent British fiction. She argues that, while there was a growth of artistic interest in Islam (as it is practised in Britain) following the Honeyford and Rushdie affairs of the mid- to late 1980s and the first Gulf War of 1991, such novelists as Hanif Kureishi (in *The Black Album*) and Zadie Smith (in *White Teeth*) have used Islam rather reductively, as a marker of ‘fundamentalism’ in a broad sense. Other, less high-profile novelists, such as Farhana Sheikh and M.Y. Alam, portrayed groups of young Muslims grappling with issues surrounding identity in late twentieth-century Britain. In other words, while Islam was an important concern, it remained subservient to other issues, such as gender, class, sexuality and regional identities.

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<sup>56</sup> Habermas, ‘Religion in the Public Sphere’; see also Cooper and Lodge (eds), *Faith in the Nation*, particularly the Introduction and Michael Kenny’s concluding remarks, pp. 3–15 and 61–68.

<sup>57</sup> Simon During, *Exit Capitalism: Literary Culture, Theory, and Post-Secular Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. viii and 131–61; Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute or, Why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?* (London: Verso, 2000); Badiou, *St Paul*; see also Mike Kenny, ‘A new chapter for the centre-left’, at <http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/ReadingRoom/public/kenny.html>, accessed 3 September 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

Yet creative interest accelerated in the years following the 2001 Burnley, Oldham and Bradford riots, the attacks on America later that year and the onset of the so-called war on terror, and British writers have begun to examine Islam with greater complexity.

The next chapter, by Ann Hardy, theorizes the centrality of mediated communication to religious groups in the modern world but also looks at the reciprocal shaping effects of media involvement on the groups themselves, particularly in relation to tensions around the location and exercise of spiritual and worldly forms of authority. More specifically, she focuses on how a number of conservative Christian groups in New Zealand have been stirred into political action in the face of recent liberal social legislation. In particular, Hardy looks at examples of what happens when evangelical sects that normally forbid both voting and contact with the attempt to influence an election outcome, as the Exclusive Brethren tried to do in the 2005 New Zealand general election with a million-dollar media drive to discredit the incumbent Labour Party: a strategy previously undertaken by cognate groups in Australia and the United States.

Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, Holly Randell-Moon argues that religion is mediated through specific historical and cultural discourses as well as influencing cultural and social formations at particular political moments. Using the intersections between religion, culture and politics under the John Howard-led Coalition Government in Australia as a case study, her chapter examines how Australian culture, history and government policy are mediated through a discourse of 'Christian values'. In particular, she argues that religion is an important area for investigation into the processes by which particular political, economic and social events such as neo-liberal welfare reform are imagined and made culturally meaningful. By analysing a number of speeches by key members of the Government Randell-Moon shows how the Government's discursive framing of Christianity as beneficial to a unified Australian national identity has a corresponding legislative effect in the privatization of welfare services contracted to predominantly Christian church welfare and charity agencies.

Finally, Katherine Wiegele's chapter describes how novel uses of mass media and urban public space by El Shaddai, a new Catholic charismatic movement in the Philippines, has generated new social and ritual forms since its inception in the mid-1980s. Based on 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork, her research is anchored in the everyday experiences of residents in squatter neighbourhoods as well as in larger national contexts, such as the nationally broadcast weekly rallies these residents attend. What Wiegele illustrates is that the new social forms created by this movement are implicated in new spiritual understandings and ritual forms. The group's weekly massive rallies are also a form of demarginalization for the invisible urban poor, who now become a visible critical mass with political relevancy. Wiegele also shows how popular Catholic movements are also intertwined with a controversial relationship with the institutional Catholic Church: for example, El Shaddai's quasi-physical mass-mediated space is one from which critique of the institutional Church is possible.