

faced public criticism for their questionable relationships with men. Although Woodworth-Etter sidestepped the scandal of a divorce by taking up the mantle of widow when her husband died shortly after their separation, critics accused her of being a hypnotist and a fraud. In turn, McPherson faced a wave of public outcry and criticism following her sudden disappearance in 1926, which she described as a kidnaping and miraculous escape, but detractors argued was a “love tryst” with a former staff member, Roy Ormiston. Charges of perjury and criminal conspiracy were eventually dropped, but the accusations of sexual impropriety lingered. In both cases, Payne argues that celebrity women preachers faced harsher criticism than their male counterparts—some of whom were accused of mismanaging funds or, in one case, shooting a man. Finally, Payne returns to the question of the how the public ministries of these two preachers influenced early Pentecostalism. Both moved toward and away from that movement in terms of their theology—the tracing of which itself provides a lens into the shifting boundaries among fundamentalist, holiness, evangelical and Pentecostal strands of theological tradition and practice in America.

*Gender and Pentecostal Revivalism* is a readable cultural analysis of two of the most influential women preachers in America’s last century. The linking of women’s authority to the Bible, while skirting theological debates about women’s ordination rooted in the Bible; the reframing of deeply held (to this day) cultural norms equating femininity with the roles of wife and mother; the blending of emerging cultural norms around individualism, agency, and expressivism with a new iteration of Christian belief and practice; and the appropriation of symbols of modernity (costume, amphitheater seating; religious identity rooted in experience and emotion) are all central to this analysis—an analysis that illustrates the uses of studying exceptional cases to highlight religious, as well as cultural, change.

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***The Political Spirituality of Cesar Chavez: Crossing Religious Borders.*** By **Luis D. León.** Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. xv + 220 pp. \$65.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

Luis D. León has written an important and challenging work. Much recent scholarship on Cesar Chavez has dwelt on Chavez’s shortcomings, particularly towards the end of his life. Highly critical studies by Frank

Bardacke, Matthew Garcia, and Miriam Pawel undercut the traditional hagiography of Chavez, focusing on his authoritarianism, his paranoia and purges of faithful organizers, and his inexplicable fascination with Charles Dederich and his “attack therapy.” León chooses not to engage the debate directly. While acknowledging Chavez’s faults, he points to the overall positive effect Chavez had: “The sum of his triumphs and tragedies was to leave the world better off than he found it” (31). Chavez “empowered millions” of “Chicana/os and Latina/os to command the respect and dignity they had regularly been denied” (69).

León is more interested in what he calls the “political spirituality” of Chavez. According to León, Chavez invented and founded a new form of civil religion that sought “mass conversion and social change” (12). He states, “My thesis . . . is that through myth and ritual performances Chavez scripted a political spirituality and a spiritual mestizaje that transmuted *La Causa* into a religious movement; this is what I call religious politics” (12). León convincingly argues that *La Causa* was both a “spiritual community” and “religious system” (118). It had its own theology—the importance of sacrificial love, redemptive suffering, commitment to non-violence and social justice—its own prophets, Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez; its own rituals, symbols, holy days, martyrs, songs and a hymnal, sacred spaces, and mythology. Its goal was social transformation through the “rehumanization” of “colonized” and racially degraded peoples, such as, but not limited to, the farmworkers. León argues that Chavez undertook the same spiritual enterprise as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

The study is divided into three main chapters entitled “Mythology,” “Prophecy,” and “Religion,” with the latter chapter being what León calls the “crux” of the book (15). Chapter one addresses the “mythology” surrounding Chavez. Previous interpretations have been too simplistic, and fail to capture Chavez’s complexity. He was not simply a labor leader, nor a Catholic leader, but a “spiritual and moral leader” (xiii), who could not be limited to one cause or faith, but rather pushed for a transformation of all people. To accomplish this, Chavez adopted multiple personalities to engage a wide diversity of people and faiths. León calls Chavez a “*nepantlero*,” one who thrives in the complexity of the borderlands, who easily transverses boundaries and borders, feeling at home within a variety of religions and cultures. León adopts Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of “mestizo consciousness” (26) to describe Chavez’s “tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity . . . [an] ability to negotiate disparate cultures.” (26–27).

León concludes that Chavez promoted a new “humanism,” which he dubs Chavez’s “lost gospel,” encapsulated in the simple phrase “service to humanity” (173), which Chavez believed was his central calling. More significantly, the new humanism called for the creation of a new definition

of “macho,” which emphasized non-violence, suffering for others, the equality of women, and the acceptance of the LGBTQ community. Or, put more simply, it stressed that “love” (175) was to be at the center of the new humanism.

Significantly for León, Chavez addressed the most important issue of modern times: “The problem of the twenty-first century is the problem of the spiritual line—a socially constructed ideological border that separates the sacred from the profane” (176) and separates much else. Chavez’s greatness lay in his ability to grapple with and transcend these boundaries: “His ability to negotiate and reconcile human difference is his largely undocumented contribution to the twenty-first century” (177).

While the book’s central argument is engaging, I would have approached the topic differently. León at times relies too much on ideological constructs—of Foucault, Campbell, Erikson, and so on—that seem to shape his interpretation rather than letting his narrative emerge from Chavez’s lived experience. In one odd assertion, León writes that Chavez joined the Navy during World War II, “demonstrating a commitment to the very American imperialistic project he protested, albeit indirectly.” (43)

More troubling is León’s limited understanding of Catholicism. While he acknowledges the importance of Catholicism to the farmworkers’ movement and to Chavez, he seeks to downplay that influence as much as he can. León correctly asserts that Chavez appealed to a broad religious spectrum—Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Atheists, and even Muslims—and that several of his top advisers, Chris Hartmire and Jim Drake, were Protestants. More significantly, León contends that we can never truly know how authentic a Catholic Chavez was—“the sincerity of his faith is irretrievable” (60). (This did not prevent León from suggesting that “he was a make believer rather than an outright believer” [10]). Despite León’s assertions, and for all its ecumenical appeal, the movement remained centered in Catholic ritual (Mass), symbols (Our Lady of Guadalupe), and language (peregrinación, penitencia). Each of Chavez’s fasts was broken with reception of the Catholic Eucharist. Given Chavez’s interfaith approach, it is amazing the movement remained so visibly Catholic. In addition, León doesn’t seem to understand that Catholic Social Teaching is not directed solely to Catholics, but is directed toward all people; nor does it conflict with “service to humanity.” Several times León asserts that Chavez rejected (15) or eschewed (150) “dogma” or “orthodoxy,” but these terms meant little in the fluidity of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. Minor details: León refers to Christian Brother Gilbert (LeRoy Chatfield) as a priest (129), he mistakes Reynaldo Flores OFM with Bishop Patricio Flores (121), and he is unaware that Chavez’s attempt to found a new religious order called “Los Menos” (117), was likely influenced by the Franciscan example (the lesser brothers).

Nonetheless, León's central argument that the political spirituality of Chavez created a civil religion through *La Causa* and dramatically transformed society is not contingent upon his discrediting the importance of Catholicism to the movement. This is an important book that will generate much discussion and debate.

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***Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion and Imagined Worlds.* By Joseph P.**

**Laycock.** Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. xiv + 349 pp. \$29.95 paper.

Joseph P. Laycock has rolled a “critical hit” with *Dangerous Games*, a monograph that describes the New Christian Right's moral panic over *Dungeons and Dragons* (*D&D*). One might dismiss the panic over a mere game as frivolous media overreach by conservative Christian moral entrepreneurs. Through clear, accessible, and painstakingly researched scholarship, however, Laycock demonstrates that the panic emerged from colliding theodicies and reveals deeper strands of American religiosity. *Dangerous Games* argues that the Christian Right's critique of *D&D* was not just that fantasy role-playing games were unwholesome, or even simply time-eating entertainment that distracted from actual religious practices, but rather that *D&D* was a deviant religion, one which had the potential to undermine people's Christian faith. As Laycock argues: “The present study examines the moral panic over fantasy role-playing games in order to explore how fantasy games function as a religion, and, conversely, how religions function like a shared fantasy” (13).

*Dangerous Games* consists of eight chapters broken down into two parts, as well as a substantial introduction and conclusion. The introduction sketches out the categories of fantasy role-playing games and moral panic by theorizing “the complex relationship between fantasy role-playing games and religious worldviews” (13). Part one, “The History of the Panic,” consists of five chapters that build on the introduction by describing the deep history of fantasy role-playing games, the start of *D&D*, how the moral panic was shaped by a growing fear of cults and the vulnerability of young minds, rumors of Satanism, as well as the myth of the juvenile “superpredator.” Part two, “Interpreting the Panic,” consists of three chapters that explore how