

THE THIRD CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA:
Religion and Globalization in Contemporary
Latin America

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COMPETITIVE SPIRITS: LATIN AMERICA'S NEW RELIGIOUS ECONOMY.

By R. Andrew Chesnut. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
Pp. 170. \$50.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

*BETWEEN BABEL AND PENTECOST: TRANSNATIONAL PENTECOSTALISM
IN AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by André Corten and Ruth
Marshall-Fratani. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2001.
Pp. 312. \$49.95 cloth, \$22.95 paper.)

*REINVENTING RELIGIONS: SYNCRETISM AND TRANSFORMATION IN
AFRICA AND THE AMERICAS.* Edited by Sidney M. Greenfield and
André Droogers. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001. Pp. 232.
\$65.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)

RELIGIONS/GLOBALIZATIONS: THEORIES AND CASES. Edited by Dwight
N. Hopkins, Lois Ann Lorentzen, Eduardo Mendieta and David
Batstone. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. Pp. 259. \$64.95
cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

THE NEXT CHRISTENDOM: THE COMING OF GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY. By
Philip Jenkins. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Pp. 270.
\$28.00 cloth, 14.95 paper.)

*CHRISTIANITY, SOCIAL CHANGE, AND GLOBALIZATION IN THE AMERI-
CAS.* By Anna A. Peterson, Manuel Vásquez and Philip J. Williams.
(New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001. Pp. 259. \$60.00
cloth, \$22.00 paper.)

All the works reviewed in this essay, to one degree or another, examine how religion and globalization are intertwined within transnationalized societies. Most of these works lie on the cutting edge of new research on religion in Latin America. Several of the studies invite us to try out new models (such as the idea of a "religious super-

market") for understanding the variety of roles that religion can play in hypermodern, or globalized, societies. Others are notable for their general willingness to move beyond some of the weary clichés that have weighted down the study of religious change in Latin America, such as the much-ballyhooed North American association with Protestantism. All of the studies reviewed here accept the premise that Roman Catholicism no longer enjoys a religious monopoly in Latin America, but most also point out that Catholicism, particularly in its syncretic and in its charismatic forms, continues to be a vigorous competitor in the deregulated religious marketplace.

Several of these works also suggest not long into this century, Christianity will not longer be considered so much a "Western" religion associated with colonialism and domination, but a polycentric, transnational force that, increasingly, has its two main centers in Latin America and Africa. Both regions, where Christianity's numbers swell from both rising birthrates and increasing numbers of conversion from nominalism or non-Christian beliefs, may well be home to four out of every five Christians in the world by the year 2050. This "Third Church"—continuous with the "Third World"—suggests a new tradition of Christianity that will be as transformed by the culture, traditions, and worldview of the South, as Christianity (which had its origins in the Middle East) was once influenced by Europe and the rest of the North. Clearly, such a drastic reconfiguration of what one author calls the "New Christendom" calls for a reexamination of the ways in which we as scholars try to measure the interstices of religion, identity, and culture in Latin America.

The works under review here fall into roughly three categories: (1) works concerned with Christianity and globalization; (2) studies of the application of rational-choice theory to religious behavior; and (3) an examination of the expansion of the "Third Church," which draws heavily from the first two categories. In writing this review, unless otherwise noted, I will use the term "religion" nearly interchangeably with "Christianity," because, with a few exceptions, the vast majority of people who identify themselves as religious in Latin America also self-identify as Christians, and I take this at face value. I also elect to use the terms "Christian" and "Christianity" as some defiance of scholarly convention, since both terms within popular discourse in recent decades have narrowed to describe only one small aspect of Christendom—the moral and political conservatives of the Christian Right in the United States. This narrow usage comes at the expense and often the embarrassment of the liberal, rationalist, tolerant, even activist Christianity that lies at the heart of much of mainline Protestantism, at least in the United States, and which also directs a significant current of Roman

Catholicism that continues to be influential in much of Latin America. We shall see, it is the Third Church's quarrels with liberalism and rationalism that help differentiate it from Northern Christianity. Finally, though religious pluralism in Latin America has led to an increased number of people who associate with explicitly non-Christian religions (such as some African diasporan religions and esoteric sects) or disassociate themselves from religion altogether, religious pluralism in the region has generally meant an increase in Protestant and Catholic religious options. Thus, "religious pluralism" in Latin America is roughly synonymous with "Christian pluralism," but not with multireligiosity, at least not at this particular moment in history.

In the first category (of studies which examine Christianity and globalization), three highly respected scholars of Latin American religion from the University of Florida—Anna L. Peterson, Manuel A. Vásquez, and Philip J. Williams—have developed a rich collection of essays that describe ways in which Salvadoran and Peruvian Christians have used church institutions and belief structures to interpret and respond to current social and political changes, both in their home countries and living in the United States. Their book, *Christianity, Social Change, and Globalization in the Americas*, is concerned with how church affiliation and church institutions react to and against the twin elemental forces of transnationalism and globalization.

The editors note that religion is unusually well suited to transnationalism, since Catholicism could be considered the first truly transnational entity in Latin America, with all the benefits and detriments implied, both historically as well as today. Colonial Catholicism was both "catholic" (universal) and Roman (imperial) and yet was highly variable and adaptive in its local presence. Today, the transnational nature of the Church is helpful to immigrants, who are able to find continuity in familiar rituals and organizations. This is true also for transnational Protestant churches, where church networks provide critical linkages and personnel that help people displaced by global forces to negotiate in a hypermodern milieu.

A series of well-integrated essays interrogates these relationships from three perspectives: the context of contemporary globalization, citizenship and political participation, globalization and transformation. The first section examines how churches—and the editors have made what to this reviewer is a good decision not to segregate Catholic and Protestant experiences—provide critical resource centers that help mitigate the effects of both welfare reform and the effects of global competition among the Spanish-speaking poor, both in the United States and in Latin America. The arguments presented here—such as how Protestantism can assist the "reformation of machismo," (a phrase coined by Elizabeth Brusco in her pioneering 1995 book on Protestant women in

Colombia)¹ and the ways in which religion plays a key role in the way poor (and, increasingly, middle-class) women both identify themselves and develop coping strategies for their lives²—are not necessarily new insights, but they are well developed and nicely fleshed out in essays by Anna Peterson and Rose Castro Aguilar.

The second section, on citizenship, breaks new ground, in part by abandoning the outmoded dyad of Catholic political and social activism versus Protestant political acquiescence. Instead, the authors suggest that vigorous, participatory membership in a Protestant or Catholic church can help develop a “culture of citizenship” that is important to emerging democracies, through the “construction of moral and civil agents, and strengthening bonds of solidarity” and the contesting and redrawing of “the parameters of democracy—the very boundaries of what is properly defined as the political arena, its participants, its institutions, its processes, its agenda, and its scope” (14–15). Ileana Gómez and Philip Williams illustrate this thesis in respective chapters on the ways that church organizations “filled the void” in the face of weak social and political organizations in Morazán province, El Salvador, in the 1990s and Yungay, Peru, after a catastrophic earthquake and civil violence wracked the region between 1970 and the late 1990s.

One of the richest sections of the books is on globalization and transformation, in which various authors discuss both the transnationalism of religious institutions and religious experience. Larissa Ruiz Baia describes how the vitality of Peruvian religious brotherhoods in New Jersey contributes not only to strong transnational linkages to Peru, but also to pan-ethnicity among (non-Peruvian) Latino immigrants who have attached themselves to the *cofradías*. Gómez and Vásquez, mentioned above, discuss transnational Salvadoran street gangs and the Pentecostal “armies of God” that attempt to engage with them. Gómez and Vásquez argue that, when successful, the churches quite intentionally offer alternative ways for youth to negotiate the links between local, personal, and global challenges by providing a “defensive identity” against the onslaught of global society. Finally, Peterson and Vásquez, in a study of charismatic Catholic women in Washington, D.C., suggest that the church offers distinctive sources of both rupture and continuity to immigrant women and others struggling to negotiate the challenges of globalization (17).

1. Elizabeth Brusco, *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

2. See Carol Ann Drogus, *Women, Religion and Social Change in Brazil's Popular Church* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1997); Cecilia Mariz and Maria Campos Machados, “Pentecostalism and Women in Brazil,” in Edward L. Cleary and Hannah Stewart-Gambino, *Power, Politics and Pentecostals in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

The overall thrust of this book is optimistic in the sense that the editors make clear that churches (when they aspire to) can offer a voice, dignity, and community to people who might otherwise have none of these things. The implications of such empowerment are both local and, possibly, transnational in themselves. As the editors predict, "Grassroot forms of transnationalism pose serious challenges to nation-states, insofar as the latter rely on images of a unified community, with an overarching culture in a bounded geographical space" (17–18). The evocative image of an unbounded transnational "community" may suggest to the reader, depending on one's perspective, either a utopian vision or a grim specter of the future, a point to which I shall return later in this essay.

Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America, edited by André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, adopts a somewhat different tact. This too is an edited volume, consisting of the work of mainly Canadian and European scholars, most of whom have conducted long periods of research in Latin America or Africa. The focus is obviously on both Latin America and Africa, a comparative approach merited not merely by certain historical similarities such as a colonial past and a history of racial and ethnic struggle, but also from similar histories of religious imperialism, in which native beliefs were (or, as the case may be, were not) extirpated by waves of first Catholic, and then Protestant missionaries. A third, and crucial point of similarity is that in the second half of the twentieth century, when both regions suffered what Sheldon Annis once termed "the onslaught of modern [or post-modern] forces," religion—here, not only Christianity, but also diaporan religions, and, in Africa, Islam—defied the Durkheimian equation that predicated secularization as a natural outcome of modernization. Breaking with the European (and, to some extent, North American) theoretical truisms, the authors of this volume argue that Latin America and Africa have become "more religious" (measurable not only by church attendance, but also by the emergence of many new religious players, such as sects, and, in Africa, the growth of "independent" churches led by highly charismatic "prophets") in order to confront the challenges posed by modernization and globalization.

As the title of this volume implies, this study is concerned primarily (but not exclusively) with Pentecostalism, not only because Pentecostalism is one of the most rapidly growing religious movements, but also because as a type of Protestantism, Pentecostalism allows the contributors to test some of Max Weber's theories of "elective affinities." The editors initially propose that because "modes of identification have become transnationalized," a new (Pentecostal) Protestant ethic—or, to use a more apt term, *imaginaire*—has emerged, linking Pentecostalism to a "spirit of globalization" (1).³

3. The word "imaginaire" is often translated as "imaginary" but these authors, and

The lion's share of this volume is devoted to developing this hypothesis. Corten makes note of the fact that Pentecostal church systems fully embody the ambiguities of globalized entities in the great gaps that often occur between the "diffuse, polycentric networks" that make up the transnational organization and the way these realities are appropriate and reconstructed by local believers. He notes the "great tensions between missions and local variations, which echoes the apparent paradox of flow and closure, homogeneity and heterogeneity, that seem to be at the heart of the globalization problematic" (2). Yet by the same token, he suggests that the local malleability of Pentecostalism—which in both Latin America and Africa is almost fully subject to local interpretation and reflection—is one of its greatest appeals.

Concerning the first half of this equation, Pentecostal doctrine and practice do seem to offer an "opening on the world that globalization promises." One can observe this easily in churches that promote "prosperity theology," such as the Brazilian mega-denomination, the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (IURG), which aggressively sacralizes money and material acquisition, the now-universal symbols of secular salvation. In this regard, Pentecostalism constitutes not only a discourse *within* modernity, but also a discourse *about* modernity, to the extent that it "elaborates a discourse on the present, adopting and adapting modernity's techniques, discourses, and practices into a new imaginaire" (4). In short, as Ari Oro and Pablo Seman, writing about the IURG in Argentina suggest, Pentecostal churches (can) offer "an alternative route to modernity" (15).

Yet at the same time, Pentecostalism and other alternative religious venues present an enormous potential challenge to nation-states, particularly in places where the nation-state is not strong. Austin Broos shows that Zionist Revival and Rastafarianism in Jamaica (two home-grown religions that both systematically sacralize the experience of diaspora) offer an "alternative imagined community" with which to confront a weak and dysfunctional nation-state. Although the political potential for such movements is large, it is at the moment somewhat mitigated by people's "usual" expectations for religion, which in a post-liberation theology era is more concerned with "miraculous expectations" and "spectacular events" than with social and political transformation (174).

Despite these otherworldly expectations, Pentecostalism may also represent a way for individuals to restructure their lives in a meaningful way that also provides a way to counteract modernity—in the words of Jean Comaroff, as "a response to modernity's enchantments and

many others, believe the English does not fully capture the breadth of the French term. See Jean-François Bayard, *L'illusion identitaire* (Paris: Fayard, 1996).

contradictions.⁴ Paul Gifford, a noted scholar of religion in Africa notes in the volume that, at a community level, the revival of both Christianity and Islam in Africa is due largely to people's desire to return to what they now consider to be "traditional" religion and is a direct reaction to globalization (14). Several chapters, including ones by Ruth Marshall-Fratani and Rick Van Dick, limn out how Pentecostalism helps "delocalized subjects" (here, Nigerian urban migrants), to reimagine their lives, not only pragmatically (such as dealing with alcoholism and health-endangering sexuality), but through helping create what Foucault called new "technologies of self"—new ways of imagining both the body and soul, the past, present, and future.

In *Religions/Globalizations: Theories and Cases* (Duke, 2001), Dwight N. Hopkins, Lois Anne Lorentzen, Eduardo Mendieta, and David Batstone, as the rather stark title implies, draw back to take a nuanced theoretical approach to understanding localized religion in a globalized context (nine of the book's ten chapters are about Christianity). The editors, who have collaborated together on several other important previous studies, are interested in exploring the ways in which religion and globalization are intertwined, but they are also concerned with the ways in which religion, particularly faiths such as Catholicism with long associations with power and patriarchy, have been co-opted by subaltern groups in a globalized society. Unlike the previous two books, this work is more concerned with theory than case studies (although the work does provide some unusual case studies, not only from Latin America and Africa, but also from the Pacific Rim, where Christianity and other religions are expanding quite rapidly).

Initially, this study offers some findings similar to those discussed above—e.g., that secularization does not flow from modernization in a globalized, "modernizing" world. To the contrary, as editor Eduardo Mendieta suggests, "globalization does not promise the end of religion, not even its sublimation, but its reinvention and reinception" (47).

Like the other works reviewed thus far, this study also explores the potentiality of transnational religious identities that transcend national or even ethnic identities. The contributors to this volume are not in agreement, however, as to whether this is a good or a bad thing. Taking the side of optimism, Kathy Poethig, in a compelling article about Cambodian Christians defines the challenges of transnational identities lying not so much at the state as at the local level. Citing Arjun Appadurai's image of cultural flows of "scapes"⁵—ethnoscapes, financescapes,

4. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9.

5. Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2 (2): 1–24 (1999).

mediascapes—she proposes a future in which persons may simultaneously juggle multiple types of citizenships, but ultimately be unbound by them. What permits this permeability in temporal identity, she suggests, is religious people's ability to claim "eschatological rootedness" though a permanent, fixed identity based in religion, an eternal citizenship (200).

On the other hand, Mark Juergensmeyer, who has elsewhere written on religious violence between the Islamic world and the West, takes a considerably more pessimistic view.⁶ He concurs with the contributors of the previously reviewed books that transnational religious networks pose a serious challenge to the nation-state. However, Juergensmeyer, unlike others, is not at all convinced that "global religious nationalism" will be any more of a benign force than state nationalism has been in the past. Indeed, he proposes that because virtually all religions lay claim to truth, authority, and demand the obedience of their followers, the threat of religious nationalism may pose one of the gravest challenges to global security in the future. In voicing this concern, Juergensmeyer places himself in the vanguard of European historians, who have recently begun to argue that nationalism was less a result of post-Enlightenment culture than of religion, in that religion (especially in the wake of the Protestant Reformation) early on created a sense of community by clearly defining an "us" and "them." This notion is neatly summed up by British historian Lewis Namier, who has written, "religion is a sixteenth century word for nationalism."⁷

In contrast, the editors and other contributors to this volume are more optimistic for the potential that religion, even colonialist religion, holds for subalterns, once they have co-opted it and given that religion (here, Christianity) its own local vernacular. To underscore this point, Lois Lorentzen, in a rich chapter on religious and ethnic identity in Chiapas, quotes Walter Mignolo.⁸ "One of the paradoxes of globalization," writes Mignolo, "is that it allows subaltern communities within the nation-state to create transnational alliances beyond the state to fight for their own social and human rights" (88). Mignolo sees the localization of religion as a form of "barbarian theorizing"—theorizing from and of the Third World.

6. Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

7. Alexander Stille, "Historians Trace an Unholy Alliance; Religion as the Root of Nationalistic Feeling," *New York Times*, May 31, 2003. Some of the most recent books on this subject include Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford, 2003) and Juergensmeyer's work, cited above.

8. Walter Mignolo, "Globalization, Civilization Processes, and the Relocation of Languages and Cultures," in Frederic Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 44.

Echoing James Scott, Mignolo points out that the results of such theorizing (like many subaltern tactics) may be obscure, misunderstood, or even invisible to outsiders. An example familiar to Latin Americanists is “religious syncretism” (a highly contested term) among the Maya, which Lorentzen (citing Gary Gossens⁹) posits is neither heterodox nor adaptive, so much as it is a logical extension of pre-Hispanic tradition that included “an absorption of otherness that is typically Maya.” Thus, the incorporation of Catholicism into Mayan practices “makes these traditions not less traditional” but, rather, more Maya (93).

It is the very issue of syncretism that lies at the heart of Sidney M. Greenfield and André Droogers’s *Reinventing Religions: Syncretism and Transformation in Africa and the Americas*. The editors and contributors to this slim but useful work are mostly European and Brazilian scholars, all highly regarded in their respective fields. I was initially put off by the title, because the term “syncretism”—generally thought of as the fusion of two or more religions, usually at the expense of orthodoxy to both—has gradually begun to fall into disuse, replaced by terms such as “religious creolization” or “religious hybridity,” as a subset of cultural hybridity.¹⁰ These newer terms carry none of the baggage of heterodoxy of “folk religion” that the word “syncretism” often invokes. Yet the scholars involved with this project, fully mindful of the controversy, build a strong case for “syncretism” by pointing out that it is still the best word we have to convey a full sense of what Gilberto Freyre (1986, 72) has called the “fraternal association of values and sentiments.”¹¹ The term here is reinvested with meaning to describe the highly innovative and polymorphic religions that grew out of Africa and the African diaspora (especially in Brazil, which occupies seven of the book’s twelve chapters). This revalorization of the concept of syncretism works well in the context of this study, but it would probably not serve nearly so well in studies of Mesoamerica or the Andes, two regions that this work does not address.

In a provocative chapter by one of Brazil’s premier anthropologists, Roberto da Motta further builds the case for syncretism by identifying it as the social space where religion provides what he calls *identiphagy*, or a point for contact and fraternization between races and culture (72). In such a context, membership in a (syncretic) religious organization offers religious goods that are “independent of the racial and ethnic

9. Gary Gossens, *Telling Maya Tales: Tzotzil Identities in Modern Mexico* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

10. Hans Seibers, “Globalization and Religious Creolization Among the Q’eqchi’es of Guatemala,” in Christian Smith and Joshua Propkopy, *Latin American Religion in Motion* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 261–74.

11. Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*, (Berkeley: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

sources from which they emerged”—a process which da Motta calls the “de-ethnicization of ethnicity” (79).

Two Italian scholars, Sergio and Mundicarmo Ferretti, in separate chapters, endorse da Motta’s notion of *relacionar*—that is, how religion can serve to link, or bridge, people and practices together. However, the Ferrattis take a more conservative view of syncretism overall, describing it as a survival strategy—a strategy of adaptation—that enables marginalized groups to continue their traditional religion by incorporating it (and obscuring it) within the forms of the dominant group. This they find to be especially true of diasporan religions, such as Candomblé and the Tambor de Mina sect from Maranhão, where the religion of slaves was long hidden safely within the religion of the masters.

By contrast, Inger Sjørnslev sees diasporan religions, particularly Candomblé and Umbanda, as profoundly “modern” phenomena, and as effective vehicles of identity politics. “Syncretism,” she writes, “provides the opportunity for creativity and adaptation to new challenges and interpretation of history”—and it lends flexibility to the ways in which an individual might position him or herself within these venues (132). Sjørnslev suggests that syncretism has, at this point, inverted the “native” discourse, both as an element in the current views on power and “as a manifestation of the reflexive attitude to the past” (132). Because individuals can now try on different “masks of identity,” Sjørnslev argues, they are also now free to choose among a wide varieties of “symbolic repertoires” that seem to fit their needs (132).

Finally, in a prescient chapter on the Brazilian urban diasporan religions, Greenfield proposes a paradigm for the study of religion based on the patron-client model, which typifies not only syncretic religions but also the type of everyday Catholicism (between saint and devotee) practiced by most Latin Americans. In this, Greenfield rejects as overly simplistic sociologist Peter Berger’s idea of “religious marketplace” in which Catholicism has lost its monopoly, and where other religions—syncretic or otherwise—have since gained “market share.” Rather, Greenfield argues for a patron-client model for understanding religion in Latin America. This model, he suggests, is an example of the kind of “cross-cultural applicable framework for the study of religions in which separate models appropriate to distinctive culture and histories would be developed as the basis for their analysis and comparisons before generalizations are made” (70).

In contrast, R. Andrew Chesnut, the author of *Competitive Spirits: Latin America’s New Religious Economy*, could not disagree more with Greenfield’s rejection of the religious marketplace model. To the contrary, *Competitive Spirits*, a lively and—if one dare say—spirited study (and one of only two works in this review that is not a collected volume) takes a full-bore approach to using the religious economy model

to understand religious change in contemporary Latin America. As a historian, Chesnut takes a longitudinal view. He argues that the recent expansion of “new” religions in Latin America (Pentecostalism, charismatic Catholicism, and diasporan religions) is indicative of Latin America’s historic transformation from a monopolistic religious economy to an unregulated one in which faith-based organizations, such as commercial firms, compete for religious consumers (4). He proposes that in this new “free-market of faith,” Latin Americans are at liberty to choose among the literally hundreds of religious “products” that best suit their spiritual and, indeed, material needs. In Chesnut’s words, “After centuries in which the main choice for the popular classes was either to consume the Catholic product or not to consume any religion at all, impoverished believers, and indeed all Latin Americans, can now select among a dizzying array of religious options” (4).

In such a competitive religious environment, Chesnut argues, consumer tastes run toward three basic selling points: 1) contractual relationships (between the Virgin and the saints or *orishas*, as Greenfield notes above), and 2) miraculous occurrences (such as faith healing and *ekstasis*, or supernatural rapture. The third, and most critical, quality that Latin American consumers look for in their religion is pneumatics—direct communication with the divine, either the Holy Spirit (for Pentecostals and charismatics, manifest by such phenomenon as speaking in tongues) or the spirits (in diasporan religion, manifest by phenomenon such as spirit possession).

The theoretical premise of the religious economy is not new to Chesnut, but he, along with Anthony Gill, whose 1998 work, *Rendering Unto Caesar*, looked at the religious marketplace through the lens of politics, are the first to apply these theories directly to book-length Latin American case studies.¹² As noted above, the phrases “religious marketplace” and “religious supermarket” were first used by Peter Berger,¹³ who used them mainly in a metaphoric sense. The idea was later picked up by sociologists of the American church, Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, who were among the first to actually apply some of the principles of macroeconomic theory to the study of religion.¹⁴

Some of the central notions of religious marketplace theory include the idea that monopolies (in this context, the Catholic Church) do not need to conform to consumer demand, but once that monopoly is broken and religious entities operate in an unregulated spiritual economy,

12. Anthony Gill, *Rendering Unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1998).

13. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements for a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967).

14. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

then spiritual firms must produce goods in accordance to consumer tastes in preferences (149).

Gill, in his work, used this argument to state that the unregulated market is what provoked the Catholic Church to provide a new “product” in the 1960s (i.e., liberation theology). In this work, however, Chesnut, who is not so concerned with politics as he is with the dynamics of the religious market itself, builds a compelling argument that it is Catholic Renewal (Catholicism’s brand extension of Pentecostalism) that appeals most to religious consumer tastes in Latin America, and which is helping the Roman Catholic Church regain some of its “market share” in the unregulated religious economy.

Chesnut concedes that the theory of the religious marketplace has its critics, who complain that a wanton use of the model makes it easy to slip into reductionism. Others, such as Manuel Vásquez, an author reviewed elsewhere in this essay, suggest that the supermarket model fails to account for either the complexity of religious organizations or for the “messiness of personal affiliations” and choices(150). Chesnut counters with the observation that religious participation is demonstrably greater in unregulated religious economies than in monopolies, thus accounting for the rapid expansion of religious participation in Latin America, as compared with Europe, where countries with state-sponsored churches (read: monopolies) number religious participation in the single-digits.

This brings us at last to the final book in this essay, Philip Jenkin’s *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Unlike the other books in this review, Jenkins is not an “area specialist,” but a scholar of the history of global Christianity. The topic of his work is the changing face of Christianity, as it transforms itself from being a religion of the West into one in which there is a strong North-South dichotomy, heavily dominated by the South. Jenkins emphasizes that this is quantifiably true in Latin America and Africa, where Christianity is growing by leaps and bounds, even as it withers into irrelevance in many parts of the North, especially in Western Europe. This is due in part to simple demographics, especially the population explosion that continues to take place in much of Latin America and most of Africa. But, Jenkins insists, Christianity is also expanding because increasing numbers of people are abandoning nominalism (in Latin America) and animism (in Africa) to join formal religious organizations. This movement benefits not only Pentecostal churches and independent non-affiliated Christian groups, but also traditional denominations such as the Catholic and Anglican churches and, in Africa, Islam.

Because so many of us are wedded to the notion that Christianity is inextricably tied to Western values and culture—and, indisputably, Western imperialism—it is startling when Jenkins reminds us that

Christianity was actually founded in the Near East, and, “for its first thousand years was stronger in Asia and North Africa than in Europe.” Jenkins writes, “This account challenges the oddly prevalent view that Christianity is a White or Western ideology that was foisted on the rest of an unwilling globe, under the auspices of Spanish galleons, British redcoats, and American televangelists” (14). To reinforce this point, he quotes the noted Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako,¹⁵ who claims that in observing the rapid expansion of Christianity in modern Africa, “we are now witnessing the renewal of non-Western religion” (14).

While one might be tempted to take issue with some of Jenkins’s more sweeping pronouncements (and also with some of his statistics, which are not always referenced), it is hard to dispute his idea of an emerging Third Church, which is geographically coterminous with the Third World, but which also represents a new direction in twenty-first-century Christianity. Jenkins notes that the Northern Church (what we think of as the Western Christianity) was, for most of the twentieth century, typified (at least in the North itself, if not in its missionary endeavors) by liberal, modernist Christianity. This tendency is most easily identified in Latin America as liberation theology. But it is also recognizable in the many ways that mainline Protestant churches have engaged and sometimes even become preoccupied with liberal, modernist theological and social issues. These debates include dialogue on biblical criticism, theological relativism, and ecclesiastical authority, as well as on how mainline Protestantism has been divided over such hot-button social issues as reproductive and homosexual rights, political activism, and other highly contentious (Northern) contemporary concerns.

Jenkins points out that the Southern Church, led no longer by missionaries, but by local priests and pastors, tends to be much more conservative in both theology and moral teachings. To some extent, this reflects the fact that people in the South face a different slate of challenges than those in the North; in a globalized society these challenges may actually represent a direct inverse image of Northern reality. For example, although Northern Christians may read the words of Jesus about sin and suffering in this world metaphorically, Southern Christians tend to take them literally and as tangible advice for dealing with the struggles of a difficult world on a daily basis. This same approach often leads Southern Christians to take a conservative approach to moral and social issues, which they believe are biblically proscribed and not subject to relativist interpretation.

Following Chesnut’s observations, Jenkins notes Southern Christianity has an “elastic ability to adapt to local circumstances,” which

15. Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

usually includes integrating meaningful local beliefs and practices (77). Not surprisingly, this often involves pneumatic practices such as faith healing and speaking in tongues, each of which has obvious analogues in non-Christian traditional practices in both Latin America and Africa. Southern Christianity also tends to be miracle-focused, although the interest in the miraculous may have as much to do with practicality as with a desire for spectacle, especially when miraculous transactions involve health or money, as so many do. As one observer of Brazilian mega-churches summarized succinctly, "They offer you a God you can use" (77).

Just how people end up "using God" in Latin America as the new century progresses is, in short, the question with which this collection leaves us. Nearly all the studies under review here point toward a globalized future where transnational religious identity may well transcend the many limitations of a geographically bounded national identity. This has potentially dangerous implications if Latin America follows the European model (which it notably has not in other religious trends, such as secularization following modernization or Protestantism begetting capitalism). Even so, if precedence in other parts of the world is any indication, then transnational religious identity could well lead to a potent and lethal version of global religious nationalism in Latin America.

A more optimistic outcome suggested by most of these studies is that religion, operating in both a transnational context and in an unregulated religious economy, has the potential to provide a useful nexus of identity for people who value it for both its transnational qualities and ready ability to conform to local "consumer tastes." These are polyvocal and to some extent savvy religious consumers, who speak both the international "language" of their faith, but who are also fluent in the local dialect. What is abundantly clear in all these studies is that Christianity, despite its long association with conquest, power, and imperialism in Latin America, has allowed its message and authority to be inverted, co-opted, and, indeed, internalized by those whom it once dominated. In Latin America today, Christianity has acquired what Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah has called a "vernacular hermeneutics,"¹⁶ as it is transformed into the Third Church of Christendom, centered no longer in the West, but the South.

16. Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).