

Title:	Religion and the Marketplace in the United States
Editors:	Jan Stievermann, Philip Goff and Detlef Junker
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Reviewed by:	Hacer Bahar

### Review:

*Religion and the Marketplace in the United States* is a collection of eleven essays covering a wide array of marketplace theories within the context of American religiosity from leading experts and scholars. The book touches upon a broad range of academic fields including history, literature, sports, politics and media to demonstrate how religion and the marketplace are intertwined.

The editors are Jan Stievermann, who is a Professor of the History of Christianity in North America at Heidelberg University; Philip Goff, who is Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture and a Professor of Religious Studies and American Studies at Indiana University, Indianapolis; and Detlef Junker, who is the founding Director of the Heidelberg Center for American Studies. Associate editors are Anthony Santoro and Daniel Silliman who respectively teach American religious, legal and sport history at Heidelberg University and American religion and culture at University of Notre Dame.

The book is divided into five sections containing a total of eleven essays. The first essay in the book comprises the entirety of the section entitled *Reassessment*. This first article “Why are Americans so Religious? The Limitation of Market Explanations” is written by E. Brooks Holifield who is the Charles Howard Candler Professor of American Church History, emeritus, at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University. The essay tries to answer the question of Americans’ religious experience in comparison to Europe. According to the article, it is sometimes questionable when Americans talk about their religious enthusiasm. Some Americans have misguided ideas about major religious figures, or have little knowledge of the doctrines of prime religious sources such as the Ten Commandments. In addition, the article

claims that Americans do not practice their religion as much as they claim, citing a study conducted on Americans' attendance at religious services, which shows that of the 40% of Americans who claim to be religious, only 20% of them are actively participating in the field. Overall the essay claims Americans are seen to be enthusiastic about their religion, however, they are not practicing it as much as they claim.

The article attributes Americans' being enthusiastic about their religion to marketplace theories. It interestingly claims that religion and the marketplace have no "relevant connection" citing some major marketplace and religion theories such as how religion justified and checked markets which led to the division of religious groups, or how religious holidays bolstered the US economy and religion has enabled Americans to produce a variety of marketplace practices. However, these theories still do not answer Americans' enthusiastic appearance in the matter of religion compared to Europe. The writer further emphasizes that Americans seem more religious because of the religious marketplace in America.

The article challenges the commonly held religious marketplace theories that explain why Americans seem to be more religious than Europeans. These theories include the supply-side argument; how religion takes a crucial position in politically and economically unsafe countries; how American religious communities were able to amalgamate the marketplace into religion via the medium of advertisement and media; how revivalism led into evangelicalism; how the American Revolution accelerated the flourishing of American Christianity through its democratization; how the usage of the terms 'religion' and 'nationalism' can sometimes be interchangeable in the US; the different role of theology in the US and in Europe; immigration; how women have played a major role in the religiosity of the US.

The essay concludes that Americans seem more religious than Western Europeans for many reasons. The separation of church and state and a competitive religious marketplace are cited as major factors. Marketplace theories alone do not, however, explain American attitudes to religion. Theories need to be analyzed together with other political, social and economic factors. The difference between Europe and the US is a "matter of degree". However, a matter of degree still makes a difference, as the book suggests.

The second section *Evangelicals and Markets* comprises three articles. The first of these articles "Weber and Eighteenth-Century Religious Developments in America" is written by Mark

Valeri who is the Reverend Priscilla Woods Neaves Distinguished Professor of Religion and Politics at the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics at Washington University in St. Louis. The article addresses the issue of how commerce and evangelicalism influenced each other in the context of the Boston merchants of the 18th century. It has been observed that commerce and evangelicalism flourished together. The author raises the question of how protestant revivalism shaped the activities of Boston merchants who contributed to the growth of early Anglo-American capitalism.

This essay considers two prevalent theories. The first of these is Max Weber's protestant ethic theory which posits that the protestant ethic as a source of self-disciplined rationality led to capitalist industriousness. The second one is evangelicalism which changed the dominant Christian economic philosophy. The article argues that evangelicalism replaced puritan communalism and its resistance to commercial ambition. Evangelicalism was free from the moral pressure which came from Puritan doctrines.

The article, however, argues that these theories can be better explained in the context of Habermas' studies as his findings can also shed light upon the relationship between religion and the market during the eighteenth century. Habermas implies that evangelicals contributed to the public sphere in terms of the development of market capitalism. The essay suggests that both Weber's and the Evangelicalism theory, which are commonly used by today's scholars, are not sufficient to understand 18<sup>th</sup>-century evangelicals and the market theories. In this case Habermas' public sphere theory can help the reader to gain a broader perspective on the subject.

The second essay in this section "Billy Graham, Christian Manliness, and the Shaping of the Evangelical Subculture" is written by Grant Wacker who is the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Christian History at Duke Divinity School. This article seeks an answer to the question of how did American evangelicals use the market system to establish a "distinctive subculture"? The answer lies in the evangelicals' ability to make sense of the market and to shape it according to their objectives. In order to give a concrete example, the article uses Billy Graham as a case study. It repeats the question of how evangelicals have used cultural capital to achieve their aims and states that Billy Graham knew his audiences' religious needs and how to use the resources to meet them. Billy Graham's smart usage of media and the tools of advertisement led to him successfully gaining popularity in a short period of time. Billy Graham was also aware of the fact that physical appearance and bodily expressions are significant when aiming

to gain attention. His manly presence and connections with political figures helped him to build his reputation. Another important aspect of Billy Graham's popularity was his firm stance on what he believed to be right.

The article concludes that the evangelicals' perseverance in the context of cultural capitalism helped them to spread their ideals. They perceived the marketplace as a good venue in which to prosper. In the context of cultural capitalism, advertisement and media are two strategic channels used to reach the public, and Billy Graham was one of the pioneer evangelicals who understood the philosophy of the market system and was able to utilise it to transmit his evangelical doctrines in a truly effective fashion.

The third and final essay in the section is "Money Matters and Family Matters: James Dobson and Focus on the Family on the Traditional Family and Capitalist America", written by Hilde Løvdal Stephens who holds a PhD from the university of Oslo. This essay uses James Dobson's findings as a case study to highlight the relationship between the concepts of family and capitalism. The article starts with a definition of success by Tom Minnery. He states that graduation from high school, working full time, and marrying before having children, are the requirements for success in life.

James Dobson, who is the founder of Focus on the Family (FOtF) was influenced by the evangelical philosophy of "God ordained that America have a capitalist economic system." The article argues that Dobson supported Reaganomics, free market capitalism, traditional values and the nuclear family. Dobson further emphasised how the American economy is dependant upon family values. A stable family means a stable economy, and women and men both have roles to play in sustaining the system. If one of them fails to do so, or if the social norms change as happened with the 1960s sexual revolution or the more recent emergence of different sexual orientations, then economic collapse is inevitable. Consequently, it can be seen that the family, as one of the most important social institutions, has a dramatic impact on American capitalism.

Section three, *Religious Book Markets*, consists of another three articles. The first of these articles, "The Commodification of William James: The Book Business and the Rise of Liberal Spirituality in the Twentieth-Century United States", is written by Matthew S. Hedstrom who is an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and American Studies at the University of Virginia. The article seeks to observe the changes when people focus on the relationship

between market and culture, instead of the institutions of churches and politics, when analysing the incidence of twentieth-century American religiosity. The author argues that the institutions of churches and politics do not shed light on the consumerism and culture that prospered in the context of American religious life. The author states that the publisher Harper's can be used as a case study which reveals how religion and consumerism can be engaged in the context of the publishing industry.

Harper's move to California and "publishing books to offend everyone" contributed to an increase in its book sales. The philosophy is related to offering various religious views from the concepts of irreligion, being a seeker, personal awakenings to mystical experience. In the past, religious books had a limited audience such as theology students, but following the revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, the publishing industry started to change its policies. The author highlights that Harper's knew what Americans needed in terms of religion and published books that would appeal to a broad, mass audience.

The next essay is "Literature and Economy of the Sacred", written by Günter Leypoldt who is a Professor of American Literature at Heidelberg University. The article observes the relationship between the marketplace and the sphere of cultural value in the context of "sacred". It argues that the global commercialization of our lives has caused the deformation of "sacred." However, it has also led to the prospering of low intensity spiritualities and a consumerist lifestyle. The article analyzes and relates this phenomenon through Toni Morrison's being a guest on Oprah Winfrey's program. The article argues that many writers and artists see little economic gain from their works. As the culture becomes commodified, deconsecration occurs in art. Oprah Winfrey's Book Club introduces literary novels to the public, and a large number of people from a range of social backgrounds participate in it. The perceived inaccessibility of some major novels can be discussed and analysed with the writer in this program. The article thus states that as pieces of art, in this case literature, are written for the market, they lose their "sacred" form. Consumerism reduces their literary value and their commercialization becomes unavoidable.

The final essay in this section, "Publishers and Profit Motives: The Economic History of *Left Behind*", is written by Daniel Silliman who teaches American religion and culture at Heidelberg University. This article aims to observe how religious philosophies are influenced by the publishers' policies and interests. It claims that publishers have become critical distributors,

both spreading and shaping ideals. *Left Behind*, which is an apocalyptic fiction series by Lahaye and Jenkins, is a good case study within which to observe that impact. The article defines commercial success as both corporations and the market's willingness to adapt and produce fiction as commodities within contemporary culture. In the case of *Left Behind*, the series gained a significant amount of popularity. The article explains the series' success through its adoption of commercially minded business practices such as reaching a broad audience - both church goers and nonbelievers. As a result, this market practice not only produced a commercial success but also contributed to the spread of evangelical ideologies.

Section four, *Religious Resistance and Adaptation to the Market*, comprises of three other essays. The first one, "Selling Infinite Selves: Youth Culture and Contemporary Festivals", is written by Sarah M. Pike who is a Professor of Comparative Religion and Director of the Humanities Center at California State University. The author analyzes Coachella, Earthdance events, Faerie worlds, and Burning Man festivals which have become components of the American religious spectrum. Young adults are the main participants, and they explore and experience spirituality without established religious institutions. Throughout the essay, the author defines the festivals and argues that festival goers inevitably become consumers themselves. However, their being consumers contradicts their major philosophies.

The ninth article in the book is "Religious Branding and the Quest to Meet Consumer Needs: Joel Osteen's 'Message of Hope'", written by Katja Rakow who currently leads a research group on Pentecostal megachurches in a global context at the Karl Jaspers Centre for Advanced Transcultural Studies at Heidelberg University. The article defines the concepts of brand, branding and faith brand and sets out how religious figures can use market strategies and media tools to spread their message and grow their churches. Joel Osteen is a fitting example in this context. He is famous for emphasizing how individuals are solely responsible for their acts and success. It is possible to live the life of which individuals dream, if they persevere in working towards that dream.

The tenth essay "Unsilent Partners: Sports Stadiums and Their Appropriation and Use of Sacred Space" is written by Anthony Santoro who teaches American religious, legal, and sport history at Heidelberg University. The article analyzes American football in the context of American religion and the marketplace. It states that sports are considered religious and stadiums have become sacred places like established worship areas. The article states that these comparisons

can be perceived in both a figurative and realistic fashion. For some Americans, going to the stadium can sometimes be the same as making a pilgrimage. In addition, football as an industrial game is also a venue for advertisement through its material spaces such as stadiums, and it aims at maximum efficiency from its players by applying its rules.

The final section *Critical Reflection and Prospects* comprises one essay “Considering the Neoliberal in American Religion”, written by Kathryn Lofton who is a Professor of Religious and American Studies at Yale University. The article introduces the various definitions of neoliberalism in terms of its connection to American religiosity. In doing so it refers to the previous ten essays in the book and analyzes neoliberalism from their perspectives. The article argues that neoliberalism and religion are strongly blended in the US. However, it urges the reader not to focus on their intermingling state, but to consider instead how they hardly ever clash with one another.

The book is a rare resource in the area of marketplace and religion, which would seem to warrant more works of this nature, as it is a subject that touches upon so many fields of academic endeavour. Each essay is richly interwoven with accepted theories in the relevant field, and interesting narratives and examples are given throughout. It is a good reference work for anyone curious about the relationship between economics and spiritual life in the US, as well as for the reader who wants to gain an insight into religious studies alongside changing trends in the economy, literature, arts, politics and sports in the US.

Hacer Bahar

M.A., Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg