

imposing a particular view as normative over substantial diversity. For instance, the reader is told that “as a rule, pagans fail to see how the institution of marriage is undermined and/or threatened by the legal and social acceptance” of same-sex partnerships (262). This may be the case for liberal-oriented Western Pagans like York himself, but can hardly be said for the modern Pagans of the former Soviet Bloc, nor of the vast majority of those York calls pagan in Africa, the Caribbean, or Asia.

As a non-Pagan, non-theological academic, I remain unconvinced that York’s definitional framework is analytically advantageous for scholars of religion. Nor do I think that we can usefully talk of a single ethical ethos behind all the groups he calls pagan. Then again, I am probably not the audience he seeks to reach; rather, he is preaching to the converted. Intellectually-oriented Pagans, particularly those with a keen interest in theology, will likely appreciate *Pagan Ethics*, although the heavy price tag will unfortunately prevent wide readership among this audience. (Conversely, *Pagan Theology* is available as a \$26.00 paperback.) For non-theological scholars of modern Paganism or new religions more broadly, this work, like Harvey’s *Animism*, testifies to the growth of an intellectually vigorous theological tradition within the Pagan community. It therefore provides interesting primary material for how modern Pagans are grappling with life’s big questions.

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Alternative Sociologies of Religion: Through Non-Western Eyes. By James V. Spickard. New York University Press, 2017. 315 pages. \$89.00 cloth; \$27.00 paper; ebook available.

Alternative Sociologies is a refreshing contribution from one of the field’s respected scholars. James Spickard’s long career and varied experiences as a field researcher and consummate teacher shine through on every page. His dissatisfaction with and hope for the future of sociology of religion energizes his quest to find concepts to move the discipline forward. Along the way, the reader is treated to detailed summations and descriptive narratives that fit hand-in-glove with his main thesis, that is, non-Western derived lenses illuminate phenomena and relationships that culturally conditioned sociology overlooks or completely misses.

Spickard first establishes what he calls the “default view” of sociology: “the idea that religion is largely constituted by formal organizations, is focused on beliefs, and promulgates moral rules” (15). He shows how this view is propagated and then traces its evolution in the discipline of sociology within its post-Enlightenment context. In the process, Spickard

offers concise, if at times a bit reductive, summaries of sociology's luminaries' major contributions.

Next, he details what a Confucian alternative looks like and its application. This alternative contests the loci of religious practice and shifts the "unit of analysis" from the individual to relationships, "ask[ing] how religions . . . create and sustain the relationships that constitute human life" (108). A Confucian approach "undercuts the distinction between 'secular' and 'religious' spheres," being more concerned with the "integrated world of mutual relationships" (108). In regard to meal preparation and serving within American Christian communities, Spickard concludes that the Confucian view would not have overlooked the crucial role women play in sustaining congregations. Additionally, this view "would not assume that someone who says that religion is a private, personal matter is, in fact, an isolated individual" (127).

The next chapters delineate and apply the ideas of Islamic thinker Ibn Khaldūn (fourteenth century). Chapter 5, for example, focuses on Khaldūn's concept of *al-asabiyyah* (group-feeling), a centripetal force comprised of ethnicity and religion (a certain form of Islam) that unites people. Spickard applies this concept to the Marian apparitions of Medjugorje, the subsequent genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and then the Islamic State. He argues that a Khaldūnian approach sees the Marian apparitions and ethnic violence as "part of the same process" since ethnic/religious identity perform similar functions in terms of generating solidarity (166). Group-feeling, he argues, might help explain the influx of jihadi recruits from developed states: "These fighters are clearly driven by a form of group solidarity: one of ideology, not origin" (177).

Spickard also explores Navajo spirituality. He centers on the lengthy Navajo rituals that performatively recreate the world. He shows how Navajo rituals upend symbolic interactionist theory by emphasizing the temporal and experiential dimensions of ritual. The ritual *does* something; it does not just *mean* something. With this insight, he examines a Catholic Worker Mass and soup distribution, highlighting how the experiences of both recreate and restore a "sense of 'rightness' to the world" and "reinforce[s] their chosen identity" (207).

Chapter 9 is a meditation on and *apologia* against cultural appropriation. After engaging briefly with postcolonial theory, Orientalism, and emerging Southern Theory, he concludes (not surprisingly) that his work is not, in fact, an act of cultural appropriation but, rather, "honors those ideas' creators" (246). His work is "not the equivalent of stealing the Elgin marbles. It is trying to create a better world" (249).

Religious studies scholars will find much to appropriate and appreciate in what should have been named *Towards Alternative Sociologies*.

Disappointingly, though, the book does not provide enough theory development to actually deploy “in the field.” Nonetheless, it would be an excellent textbook for undergraduate students in sociology, and a good counter-text for a graduate program in the same.

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Cults and Extreme Belief. A&E Television Networks, 2018. Television Series, Nine Episodes.

Exposés of “cults” were popular in 2018, owing in part to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Waco siege and the fortieth anniversary of the Jonestown tragedy. A&E’s series on *Cults and Extreme Belief* begins with an episode dedicated to NXIVM, which drew national attention in 2017 after the media reported on members having their genital regions branded with the initials of movement leader Keith Raniere. This story likely inspired the entire series. Subsequent episodes feature the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Children of God (The Family International), the United Nation of Islam (UNOI), the World Peace and Unification Sanctuary (an offshoot of the Unification Church that gained national attention in 2018 for a service in which members brought their rifles to church), the Twelve Tribes, and the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints (FLDS). The final two episodes are called “The Survivors Speak” and feature round-table discussions between apostates of these various groups, sociologist Janja Lalich, and host Elizabeth Vargas.

Cults and Extreme Belief might more accurately be titled *Atrocity Stories*. David Bromley, Anson Shupe, and Joseph Ventimiglia coined this term to describe accounts—whether true or false—deployed to stoke moral outrage and mobilize resources against the perceived offenders (*Journal of Communication* 1979). While each episode is nominally “about” a different religious group, there is minimal discussion of the actual beliefs and practices of the group. Instead, each episode features an apostate who tells a disturbing—and generally credible—story of abuse. The apostate’s narration is accompanied by photographs and occasional re-enactments. In several episodes, a situation is created where the apostate must present a “letter of disassociation” to the group that abused them, report them to federal authorities, or otherwise “confront” the group. The confrontation is always depicted at the end of the episode to create a dramatic climax. The show’s website also provides hotline numbers for viewers experiencing abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or other mental health issues.

While apostates are central to each episode, active members of these groups are rarely interviewed. A notable exception is an