

European Union, changing the picture once again.

An overriding issue for Eastern Orthodox churches, especially those in former Communist countries, is that they are confronting both modernity and post-modernity simultaneously. On this point the essay by Makrides is particularly useful. He also addresses many stereotypes about Orthodox Christianity and consistently and cogently calls for a reappraisal of these stereotypes by sociologists. He writes, "Orthodoxy is not a static and changeless system, as many Orthodox like to present it. It can very well endorse and promote various changes, despite internal criticism and reactions" (196).

One of the biggest challenges readers may have with this volume is that Eastern Orthodox Christianity—its history, doctrine, and social reality—is still relatively unknown and unstudied. Most books on the Eastern Orthodox Churches feel the need to provide detailed history. Fortunately, the volume does not devote a great deal of time relaying that information, choosing to dive right into the heart of the current situation. Yet, for the uninformed reader, the background needed may become an issue. Unless one knows the complex and difficult relationship between Eastern Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Byzantine Rite churches, especially in Ukraine and Romania, the present significance of the issue may be difficult to understand. For example, about the situation in Ukraine, Yelensky writes: "Emerging from its forty-three-year-long 'catacomb,' the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has not only crucially undermined the foundation of the Russian Orthodox Church's very existence in Galicia, but also seriously challenged Ukrainian elements within Orthodoxy as well" (158-9). Unless one knows the organizational patterns of Orthodox churches, one might make comparisons to other churches and make some erroneous conclusions. For example, while the Orthodox Church is a hierarchical church organization, its polity is not nearly

as monarchical as the Roman Catholic Church. It actually behaves more like the Anglican Communion (in fact, since Orthodox polity is far older, it is the Anglican Communion that resembles the Orthodox Church).

A weakness of the book is that there is no work on smaller Orthodox church populations. Albania is a notable example of an Orthodox church recovering from the most brutal form of atheistic Communism to a more tolerant environment in a religiously diverse society, especially one with a sizable Moslem population. Also, countries where Orthodox are in the minority, whether in Western Europe or North America, are not investigated thoroughly. The essays on the situation in the United States do not make the broad analyses of the issues facing a minority church maintaining a distinctive identity in the face of American individualism, pluralism and the religious marketplace. These so-called diaspora communities are ripe for study, possibly providing a great deal of insight about how Eastern Orthodoxy may look in a globalized, pluralized future. However, these are minor concerns about what overall is an excellent and seminal work on Eastern Orthodox churches. The book fills a long existing void, and also demonstrates the still existing void in the sociological study of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

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*Invitation to the Sociology of Religion*, by  
PHIL ZUCKERMAN. New York:  
Routledge, 2003, ix + 156 pp.; \$25.95  
USD (paper), \$100.00 USD (cloth).

I came across this fun and insightful book accidentally while browsing the

library for another book. It was a lucky day. I read the brief introduction and adopted it right away for my sociology of religion course. The only shame was that the book had been published two years earlier and I had never heard of it. I hope this review will help the book gain the audience it deserves.

The title invites a comparison to Peter Berger's *Invitation to Sociology* (1963). In both cases, the use of "invitation" rather than "introduction" is apt. An *introduction* is something that covers the basics in a systematic way. An *invitation* is a request to be involved in something. When we say something is "inviting," we mean that it is alluring or enticing. Such language is rarely used to characterize introductory textbooks. Like Berger, Zuckerman makes no claim to having written a systematic overview of the field. Rather, they both want to attract people to the possibility of looking at the world in a particular way: with a spirit of critical curiosity.

As Berger writes, "The fascination of sociology lies in the fact that its perspective makes us see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives. . . . It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem." This is made especially evident in Zuckerman's chapter on NRMs, "Religion or Cult?" Rather than reviewing the scholarly literature on cults vs. sects vs. churches, Zuckerman challenges public stereotypes about cults. For example, many people believe that cults engage in brainwashing, but things are not what they seem. Not only is there no solid evidence for brainwashing; Zuckerman wonders why people are so concerned about an adult being brainwashed into joining the Hare Krishnas but not about a child being sent to Sunday school, even though the latter would be more easily manipulated psychologically. In the end, the difference between what people consider a "religion" and what they call a "cult" is simply one of legitimacy; indeed, the very label "cult" can be used as a strategy of delegitimation.

Of course, Zuckerman is not interested in promoting new religions any more than old ones. He characterizes them similarly as "manifestly implausible" (15), "uninviting and rather dubious" (72), "flatly unbelievable" (115), and so on. Zuckerman is not a detached observer. How could he be? In Berger's words, "the sociologist lives in society, on the job and off it." For Zuckerman, because religions almost always address themselves to this-worldly concerns, sociologists "have every right (indeed, the responsibility) to investigate and challenge their assertions" (31).

Zuckerman's personal engagement is also evident in the "data" he employs. He pulls examples from his mother-in-law (a born-again Christian), his father (a secular Jew), his friend Doug (a Mormon convert), his classmate Melody (who refused to shave her legs), and others. Although he does incorporate some statistics, this book may be more attractive to those who see the underlying truth of the saying, "Data is the plural of anecdote." Indeed, are students more likely to understand the communal dimension of religion by knowing that nearly 70 percent of Americans are members of a church or synagogue, or by pondering Zuckerman's father's saying: "Sam goes to synagogue to talk to Sam." I go to synagogue to talk to Sam" (13)? For my students, the latter was more instructive.

Although the book is not comprehensive, Zuckerman covers a good deal of ground in just 130 pages of text. He offers a general sociological perspective on religion, considers variation in religious expression by time and place, looks at how religion is socially learned, discusses new religious movements, examines how social life affects religion and vice-versa, and concludes by considering religious belief. In each chapter I found myself alternating between nodding my head in agreement and shaking it in disagreement. My disagreement peaked with his claim in the concluding chapter that, for him, "*belief* is of paramount concern" (115). This seems to me a distinctly Protestant American

view of religion, and the fact that it is held by a self-professed secular Jew seems to confirm what Robert Bellah has argued for some time about the hegemony of such a view in American culture.

That I often got worked up while reading this book is precisely the point. According to Berger, an invitation to sociology is “an invitation to a very special kind of passion.” Indeed, “Religion is a personal fixation” (15), Zuckerman confesses. For those of us who share this passion for the sociology of religion, we now have in book form a way to convey it to our students. Moreover, for the professional sociologist of religion, accepting this invitation can help rekindle the fire that may otherwise just smolder or even burn itself out.

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*Exploring the Religious Life*, by RODNEY STARK. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004, 219 pp.; \$39.95 USD (cloth).

*Exploring the Religious Life* is a collection of occasional essays by one of America’s most challenging sociologists of religion. It is not, as some might expect from the title, a study of the consecrated life. One should read the book to sample Stark’s vivid and often contrarian insights into the sociology of religion, and not his views on what Catholics might call the “consecrated life”—though Stark has expressed elsewhere opinions on this subject, too (the tougher the demands, the more likely the order is to be successful).

Like many other sociologists (this one included) Stark enjoys demolishing conventional wisdom. However, his favorite targets are the stereotypes many in the profession cling to when the topic is religion.

Just like almost everyone thinks they are a competent sociologists, so do a considerable number of sociologists in other sub-disciplines think they are competent on the subject of religion. Their clichés are grist for Stark’s mill. Not since the late Joseph Fichter, S.J. developed the habit of saying, “I have a thousand cases that say you’re wrong,” has anyone so enjoyed smashing the drivel of what everyone knows to be true.

Two of his more recent efforts on monotheism (*One True God* and *The Glory of God*) deserve careful reading by anyone interested in the development of Western religions. There is much debate about his theory that competition among religious groups in the same society is beneficial for religions while established churches almost always lack vitality (*The Churching of America 1776-1990*, written with Roger Finke). *Exploring the Religious Life* is not a substitute for these major texts. Rather, it provides the reader unfamiliar with Stark’s work a hint of the ingenuity, resourcefulness, and glee to be found in earlier books. It could also seduce the reader into taking a more careful look at Stark’s contribution to the responsible social scientific study of religion.

The various chapters in this volume are dedicated to the proper definition of religion (the quest for ultimate meaning), the very real consequences of religious belief, upper-class asceticism (religion is not just the opiate of the poor), gender and religious faith (men are quite capable of religious faith), the importance of families in the spread of revelation, the religion of the “unchurched” (who are often very religious, if unaffiliated), religion and the moral order (religion does not exist to enforce morality), and the search for data (research should be theory-driven and, when your theory is clear, data are often easy to find).

Not only are these interesting subjects in themselves, they are also illustrations of how a mind, intolerant of social science humbug, goes about smashing a lot of china