

their millenarian prophecy that envisions the coming of 33 spaceships that will usher in a period of enlightenment through elite knowledge possessed by the thousands of scientists believed to be piloting these spacecrafts. Rather than focusing on the oddities of these claims, or critically underscoring the ironies of a group that sustains or even amplifies its belief after a disconfirmation, Tumminia instead presents a sincere and believable depiction of individuals practicing their “science” of Unarius.

Based on apprentice participation, Tumminia illuminates a rather personal side of this group by attempting to tell their story in their own terms. Throughout the book, Tumminia also tactfully inserts reflections on her own involvement within the group. She makes a careful effort to reconstruct previous events that occurred prior to beginning her research by gathering and interpreting various testimonies from Unarians, as well as by analyzing Unarius literature and videos. The overall account describes a tightly-woven relationship between herself and members of the group, never dismissive of Tumminia’s effect on the group and/or *vice versa*. This feature is an indication of how crucial, visible, and self-conscious a researcher’s presence has become—since the work of Festinger et al.—and the consequential construction of reflexive narratives.

The book contains an introduction, 10 chapters, three appendices, and a photo gallery. In addition to reviewing literature on failed prophecies and mythology, the chapters also explore Unarian myth-making processes, profiles of key figures within Unarius, the mode by which Unarians deal with disconfirmation of prophecies, the loss of their leader, and the reorganization of their group thereafter.

The appendices and photo gallery are especially helpful. The first appendix is a chronological history of Unarius; the second is a series of brief narratives that describe the relationship between Ruth Norman and her planetary contacts; the third is an annotated list of Norman’s perceived incarnations. The photo gallery is a collection of 20 pictures ranging from Unarius artistic depictions of Ruth and Ernest Norman and spaceships to photographs of various Unarian activities taken by members themselves. Because the photographs at times deal with such unusual content, their presentation in color would have magnified their impact. Overall, these photographs and appendices are necessary elaborations and fully complement the written text.

In the Festinger et al. study, the team of social psychologists argued that experiencing disconfirmed prophecy might actually serve to reinforce beliefs, or to establish what is known as cognitive dissonance. They suggested that under certain specified conditions a disconfirmation of prophecy would actually increase proselytizing among group members. In contrast, Tumminia borrows Melvin Pollner’s (1974) “mundane reasoning” thesis, which states that a member’s sense of social structure is reinforced

through a perceived corpus of factual accounts provided by, and sustained in conjunction with, other members of the group. In the case of Unarians, Tumminia argues that the failure of prophecy is not necessarily an indication of a falsified event, as the Unarians have already presupposed a factual reality that spaceships either have often visited earth secretly or have been deterred from doing so by the negative energies from human beings. Tumminia calls these rationales “interpretive tools” for sustaining beliefs (p. 47). For Unarians, incorrigible realities—those established realities that will always be perceived as truth—are simply not falsifiable. According to Tumminia, the Unarians reconcile their beliefs with supposed disconfirming events by affirming that their belief system, being incorrigible, never fails. This contrast between the simple rational model of Festinger et al.—where disconfirmed prophecies were adjudicated by outsider social scientists—and Tumminia’s use of mundane reasoning—which shows the group’s support for members’ common sense reality—is a conceptual improvement in the long list of studies about failed prophecy.

Scholars and students of new religious movements may find this book particularly helpful for understanding extraterrestrial contact religions. Indeed, anyone interested in exploring the contactee community through the thoughts and actions of believers themselves will find this to be a valuable reference. Rich in detailed description and thoroughly developed dialogue, this book will also be a useful teaching tool for courses on ethnography or religion.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND STATE POLITICS: NEGOTIATING PROPHETIC DEMANDS AND POLITICAL REALITIES. By David Yamane. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. 187 pp. \$65.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Despite the importance of state politics to so many important social issues—not the least of which are most laws dealing with hot-button issues of education, welfare, and abortion—scholars who study church-state issues often focus exclusively on the federal government. In this masterfully written book, David Yamane takes a close look at the functioning of 34 state-level Catholic Bishops Conferences in the United States. In the introduction, Yamane presents a theoretical framework around the double movement of secularization. According to this theoretical construct, religious authority in the modern world has indeed rapidly given way to secular authority. However, Yamane demonstrates that religious groups have accommodated to the reality of secular politics and, in some ways, participate in the system without being beholden to it.

The first two chapters situate the contemporary situation within the history of state Catholic conferences and analyze in depth one of the oldest: the Maryland Catholic Conference. In the third chapter, Yamane analyzes the authority structure of the Bishops Conferences as dual structures in which bishops represent the religious authority structure and the lay staff constitute the agency structure. In this chapter, Yamane shows how numerous church documents such as *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium* identify the world of politics as the proper domain of the laity. However, lay Catholics do not have the authority to make or change Catholic teachings, a responsibility that lies with the bishops in communion with the Pope.

Chapter 4, entitled "Issues: The Seamless Garment in Action," brings to life both the content of Catholic social teaching and how religious authorities and agents attempt to put it into action. Through a careful analysis of issues that Bishops Conferences have lobbied on—education, welfare, health care, criminal justice, and abortion—Yamane shows how the Bishops Conferences' positions cut across traditional liberal and conservative political divides. In fact, he convincingly argues that Catholic Bishops Conferences distinguish themselves from most other religious or secular lobbying groups precisely because they cannot be pegged into a single political camp.

Although Yamane does not dedicate a chapter to Catholic social teaching *per se*, in Chapter 4 in particular he presents an engaging and concise summary of many important elements of Catholic social teaching. Yamane employs an effective strategy of quoting primary documents that comprise the church's social teachings, such as papal encyclicals and Vatican II documents. Although Yamane aims to show how all of the church's social teachings should be considered as a whole, he also states clearly that official church teachings, and thus the lobbying of the Bishops Conferences, do not waver on more hot-button or so-called conservative issues, namely, abortion. Rather than apologizing for this unyielding stance on one of the most divisive issues in America today, Yamane's explanation helps readers understand how the laity who staff the Bishops Conferences and the bishops themselves construct a hierarchy of social issues all the while emphasizing their interrelatedness. Employing the concept of "prudential judgment," Yamane explains that since numerous church teachings over millennia have defined abortion as an absolute moral wrong, the staff of Bishops Conferences need little prudential judgment to establish a policy stance on this issue; on the other hand, new questions on how much the state should spend on education and welfare require much greater prudential judgment when analyzing policies. Although the concept of prudential judgment and its application may be difficult to grasp, scholars concerned with how religious groups "negotiate prophetic demands and political realities" should

pay particularly close attention to this section of Yamane's book.

In Chapter 5, "Discourse: Liberally Clothing the Naked Public Square," Yamane further buttresses his argument that religious organizations have accommodated to the secular discourse of politics. His analysis of the testimonies of Bishops Conferences demonstrates that, contrary to what some may believe, members of the conferences rarely rely exclusively on religious arguments to support their positions. Rather, they combine religious arguments with secular reasoning and scientific evidence and religiously-based ethical arguments.

I will close with two criticisms. First, although it may be quite difficult to weigh all the factors that enter into policy decisions, readers are only given a bit of anecdotal evidence that the lobbying of Bishops Conferences has been successful. One might reasonably think that, on the whole, American public policy is inching further away from the ideals of Catholic social teachings. Second, we might wonder if the Bishops Conferences could better promote the "seamless garment of life" by better educating the Catholic population itself to uphold Catholic social teachings in both their private decisions as well as their voting behaviors. Both of these caveats may lead us to wonder if secularization has not indeed advanced much further than the double movement theory of secularization suggests. Despite this, Yamane's book undoubtedly represents an important theoretical and empirical contribution to the ever-important topic of religion in the public square.

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JAZZ AGE CATHOLICISM: MYSTIC MODERNISM IN POSTWAR PARIS 1919–1933. By Stephen Schloesser. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. xi + 449 pp. \$85.00 cloth.

Stephen Schloesser's excellent *Jazz Age Catholicism* examines how devotional Catholicism and modern realism, usually conceived as being in opposition to one another, were creatively fused, forging a "mystic modernism" in France following World War I and revitalizing 20th-century Roman Catholicism. Schloesser uses a method akin to intellectual history, but he is deeply interested in the aesthetic settings of ideas, so he attends especially to those intellectuals who cultivate the capacities for imagination: novelists, musicians, artists, and also philosophers (especially those with connections to the art world) working from roughly 1919 to 1933. He draws upon a staggering range of sources—novels, plays, pamphlets, paintings, biographies, letters, theology, papal statements, musical compositions, and secondary literature about late modern