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# William H. Swatos, Jr. ed. *Twentieth-Century World Religious Movements in Neo-Weberian Perspective*

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over a number of pages. It is up to the reader to assemble them into a coherent whole.

*Raymond J. Lewis*

William H. Swatos, Jr., ed. *Twentieth-Century World Religious Movements in Neo-Weberian Perspective*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992.

This is a collection of articles, including at least two by ISCSC members, addressing the perspective indicated in the title. The range is certainly worldwide, covering East Asian, South Asian, Islamic, Byzantine, Latin American and Western Civilizations.

The articles themselves are interesting enough, mostly intelligible to the civilizationist layman, most of them coming to conclusions that address the relevance of Weberian theory to the case in question. For instance Joseph Tamney asserts that textbooks in Singapore are inconsistent in presenting Confucianism because even modernized Confucianism undercuts economic development, thus affirming Weber's assessment of the impact of Confucianism on the Far East. And Donald Nielsen notes the relevance of Weber's observations on the unique conditions that provided the contexts of the Western Industrial Revolution, since other contexts, such as those which surrounded the development of Russian sectarianism, might be expected to produce other outcomes.

The editor introduces the crucial elements of Weberian theory he believes are being tested, summarizing Weber's concepts of social relationships and of ethics. He writes that social relationships concern particularly the transmission of belief in supernatural powers through leaders to lay people; ethics concern the reconciliation of perfect deity with imperfect humankind and the idea of achieving salvation. He then summarizes how he believes each article illustrates some aspect of Weberian theory.

The articles investigate a variety of cases, some extending

beyond the category of "movements": the collision of modernization and Confucianism; the reinterpretation of Buddhist doctrines to permit modernization; the diffusion of Buddhism from East to West; the operation of a "Protestant" ethic in the Hindu caste system; the opposition of charisma to modernity in Iran and Africa; the opposition of religious sectarianism and communism; the imperfect Protestantization of an African culture; the "Catholic Ethic" and Liberation theology in Latin America; the failure of secular religion to be accepted in English new towns; the national and ethnic conflict in Ireland; and the relevance of Weberian approaches to feminism and extra-terrestrial cults.

Now the preceding paragraph is certainly a terse summary of a complex set of relationships, but Swatos does not take a great deal more space--only eight pages--to summarize these articles. Moreover he organizes geographically, from East to West, so that the summaries do not help the reader make the linkages between the articles or to the crucial elements of Weber's theory. The articles themselves, while generally coherent in themselves, of course do not automatically explain or reinforce each other. Since there is no concluding chapter, the reader is left to do this for herself.

The omission creates difficulties for the civilizationist. If he is concerned with religion and civilization, he will have to accept Swatos's five page summary of Weber's theories and see if he can test these against the articles. It is true that all of the writers refer to Weberian connections and all of them seem to think Weber's ideas are supported in some way, but there is no overall set of relationships. It would seem likely that had the authors been asked to relate each of their articles to a verse in the Koran, Bible or Bhagavad Gita, they would have been able to do that. But would we call such an approach Neo-Scriptural?

It may be admirable that Weber's theory is sophisticated enough to accommodate the multitudinous variations of relation between religion and civilization, but that in itself does not help in the construction of a theory explaining this relationship. If you have an overarching theory, then you can ask how the teaching of religion in Singapore or the extra-terrestrial cult in California are either accommodated by or contradict the theory. But if you only show that such phenomena or developments only illustrate this or

that aspect of a theory (and they always illustrate, never contradict), and you are not a Weberian scholar, you don't have much to work with. You wonder, did the editor not provide a concluding chapter because he did not want to prevent scholars from making their own use of the disparate articles, or because he couldn't do it either, or because it doesn't occur to Weberians that an overarching theory is desirable or possible?

If, like Donald Nielsen or Anthony Stevens-Arroyo, contributors to this volume, one is both a Weberian scholar and a civilizationist, it is probably possible to make use of the information from a volume like this. But that combination of competencies is probably rare.

The volume may be useful for a graduate religion or social theories class, but I don't imagine there would be too many focusing that much on Weber's approach to religion. It would be a useful library volume for some researchers, but no more so than a journal issue devoted to this particular subject.

My sense of markets, however, is fairly weak, so there may be something I'm missing. But since the articles are not taken from any other publication, it looks as though they were especially solicited for this book, and that Swatos had a strong sense of a coherence he wished to create. He wished to show the continued applicability of Weber's theory, and indeed the 18 participating authors agree that the theory is applicable. It may well be that for many scholars who are free of a Spenglerian drive for universal recurrence or significance, this is sufficient.

*Matthew Melko*

T. N. Madan, ed. *Religion in India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

This is a collection of articles edited by a sociologist at the University of Delhi, part of a series in sociology and anthropology. It is intended primarily as a book of readings for students, bringing together a series of articles from disparate sources, many of them, the editor says, not readily available, most of them