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New Religious Movements in the Twenty-First Century: Legal,  
Political, and Social Challenges in Global Perspective  
(review)

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In “A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia,” David Eng and Shinhee Han explore a speculative psychoanalytic approach to depression among Asian-Americans. Their essay developed out of a series of conversations between the authors, one a literary theorist and the other a psychotherapist. Although they take Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” as a provocation to their reflections, the authors are interested in considering melancholic feelings as non-pathological responses to experiences of immigration, racial formation, and assimilation. Eng and Han look at experiences of loss in relation to racial and economic norms that can never be attained by subjects excluded from whiteness. The color line means that processes of assimilation can never be complete, so that racialized subjects are suspended in a relation to hegemonic ideals from which they must always be estranged. This suspension folds melancholia into the formation of the subject, the authors speculate, but the depressive symptoms should not be viewed as illness. Instead they express the ghostly presence of a racial interdiction against the full flourishing of Asian-Americans and other racialized minorities. The feelings are symptoms of suspended loss, of the racial structure of everyday life.

The essays in *Loss* are only rarely overtly about religious communities, but they experiment with ways of engaging issues that scholars of religion often address. They weave together themes of historiography, ethics, and hope in response to massive social losses in the twentieth century. The “remains” of such losses are intensely volatile. One can see how they are taken up as evidence in support of or against certain domestic or military policies, how they are used to verify certain positions or to underwrite certain claims. More banal is the sentimental tendency to try to redeem losses through the things we have learned, the “morals” urged, or ennobling sensations felt at a distance. The remains of the dead or the past are called upon to give vibrancy and necessity to the way things turned out or to the way things ought to be. The editors of the collection oppose such uses. They present work that is aimed at cultivating the tact to distinguish ways of relating to remains that do not end in “nostalgic opprobrium,” to use Charity Scribner’s phrase. They want to explore instead the possibilities of creative yet indeterminate relations to what remains in the wake of mourning. One is prompted to offer, in this context, the category of relics within the study of religion, and the various charisms ascribed to them. This is not to say that relics cannot be put to the uses that the editors oppose—they often are—or that the volatile energies of relics are necessarily good. Yet abstracting from multiple uses, the category of relics offers an analytical lens to juxtapose against Charity Scribner’s evocative idea of “false souvenirs.”

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*New Religious Movements in the Twenty-First Century: Legal, Political, and Social Challenges in Global Perspective.* Edited by Phillip Charles Lucas and Thomas Robbins. Routledge, 2004. 364 pages. \$29.95.

The new century seems to be beginning somewhat surprisingly with religion, rather than ideology, as a critically important organizing impetus for people throughout the world. If the twentieth century was a time of secular ideologies including democratic capitalism, communism, and fascism, the twenty-first century seems to be dawning as a period in which religious thought is again becoming more influential. In *New Religious Movements in the Twenty-First Century*, editors Phillip Charles Lucas, a professor of religious studies, and Thomas Robbins, an independent scholar of religious studies, provide a well-organized and cutting edge collection of articles from a variety of experts on contemporary new religious movements (NRMs). Their work explores regional religious issues involving NRMs for all continents plus it concludes with several articles that furnish an in-depth theoretical discussion. Readers will find the introductory and concluding chapters particularly useful as the former provides a good overview of what the book has to say about NRMs, while the last chapter examines issues that involve the future of such movements. Lucas and Robbins first brought together a collection of articles on NRMs in a special symposium issue of the journal *Nova Religio* in April 2001. The present book presents revised, expanded, and updated articles that first appeared in that journal plus eight all new ones that further expand the breadth of discussion. Among the topics involving NRMs that the book covers are "anticult" mobilization, church-state relations, the role of existing longstanding churches, the linkage of new movements to other ethnic, cultural, and political conflicts, the roles of intellectuals and cult experts, and the nature and behavior of nonconventional religious movements. This work ultimately reveals that religion in the new century is becoming more pivotal in shaping worldwide affairs but at the same time is being subjected to ever more scrutiny and repression.

Much attention is given in this book to NRMs in specific nations of different global regions. For Europe, for instance, Daniele Hervieu-Leger provides an extended discussion on how the French have come to deal with NRMs. The French seem to find themselves in a dilemma involving religion, especially NRMs, because, as a result of their secular revolutionary tradition and their battles against Catholicism, they mostly view religion as generally contradictory to individual reason and autonomy. At the same time, however, they believe that the individual has a democratic right to religious freedom. Despite their historic belief in religious freedom, French politicians have repeatedly expressed a deep concern about "sects" since the early 1980s. This concern resulted in the government creating in 1996 a list of more than 170 religious groups that required special watching, which subsequently even led to a discussion about banning the Church of Scientology and the Order of the Solar Temple. The French government took further steps in 2001 to prohibit the location of "sects" near "sensitive places" (e.g., schools, hospitals, and homes for the aged) and created a legal provision for disbanding such groups whose leaders had been convicted of criminal conduct. Hervieu-Leger suggests that the French response to NRMs reflects a deep recurrent anxiety about the contradictory issues of freedom of thought

and freedom of religion. Susan J. Palmer also takes a look at the effects of anticult policies on NRMs in France, especially the cases of Aumism and the Raelians, to examine their responses to efforts at repression. She suggests that NRMs in France have attempted to protect themselves through efforts at legal defense, creation of networks with other NRMS for self-defense, and responses in the media. Hervieu-Leger only briefly mentions the situation of the Islamic faithful in France. She states that the French policy has been one of trying to get Islamic groups to follow the model of the Catholic Church. The French religious situation is typical of other European nations dealt with in this book in that the state and the public are struggling to come to terms with NRMs that are emerging in their midst. The Europeans are responding with mixed amounts of toleration, repression, and frustration. In regard to Europe, readers will also especially want to take a look at the articles of Eileen Barker on Great Britain, Massimo Introvigne on Italy, and Brigitte Schoen on Germany.

The situation throughout the remainder of the world seems to vary from considerable toleration in the United States and Australia to extreme violence and repression in the Middle East and Central Asia. In his article, J. Gordon Melton notes that the United States, with over 2000 different primary religious groups, has emerged in the new century as the most religiously pluralistic and tolerant nation in the history of the world. This is made possible because Americans hold a strong belief in the importance of individuals, accompanied by an attitude of "live and let live." This does not mean that NRMs in the United States have been free of repression, especially in regard to charges of "brainwashing." On this latter issue, Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony contribute an article that refutes the idea that religious thought might be disqualified from full protection under the First Amendment as "free speech" and the "free exercise" of religion, as persons should have a right to protected negative discourse. Australia also seems, according to James T. Richardson, to have historically treated NRMs with toleration, although some groups, such as The Family, Unification Church, Church of Scientology, and Wiccans and other Pagans, have experienced their share of troubles. The Australian government in 1998 issued a report entitled *Article 18* that presented a mixed view of NRMs and suggested that their Attorney General should convene an interfaith dialogue to determine whether limits should be placed on these groups. The report seems to have been shelved. Richardson also notes that the Bali terrorist bombing in 2002 that killed many Australians seems to have led to increased anti-Islamic sentiment. He concludes somewhat guardedly that what the future holds for religious groups in Australia remains to be seen. In examining the more violent end of NRM spectrum, Brian Glyn Williams takes up in his article a discussion of Islamic Wahhabi fundamentalism in the Central Asia region of the former Soviet Union. He observes that the typical Muslim in the region more closely resembles a secular Soviet than a fundamentalist Muslim. This being noted, Williams states that the breakup of the Soviet Union created a considerable opportunity for Wahhabi fundamentalists, who are from the Middle East and linked to Osama bin Laden, to recruit in the power vacuum that developed in the region. However, the mostly secular Central Asian

Muslim communities met the Wahhabi efforts to proselytize with brutal repression in which thousands have died, and that has even spilled over into Russia. Williams comments that in no other place in the contemporary world has the introduction of a new religion led to more warfare, devastation, and disruption.

Perhaps the most provocative article in this book, contained in the section entitled "Theoretical Considerations," is John R. Hall's "Apocalypse 9/11." This article explores the meaning of the Al Qaeda attacks on the United States in 2001. Hall remarks at the outset that "the attacks succeeded, probably more than they anticipated, in altering political agendas, economic realities, and social life around the globe. . . . Global history is taking a sharp turn into a new era" (265). When history is in the making as it is now, Hall argues, there is an important challenge to try to understand. Hall makes his attempt at achieving understanding through his assertion that world may be entering a period of "apocalyptic war." He observes that for religionists such a war is a divine and inevitable process. The war of Al Qaeda is thus, from its own perspective, a struggle "against the postmodern simulacritic construction of the world as a tourist destination, generalized source of entertainment, and available domain for the spread of Western Culture – from Christian missions to McDonald's" (271). But sociologists know, Hall asserts, that an apocalyptic war is an open-ended process that is socially constructed or deconstructed depending on how those involved choose to act. Hall additionally notes that apocalyptic war is not a one-sided series of terrorist actions, but rather it is an interactive process. Consequently, nations, to the degree that they respond, also become parties to an apocalyptic war. Accordingly, this kind of war is not easily won. Hall concludes that the challenge "is to move the historical moment *beyond* the time of apocalyptic war" (278). How might this be done? Hall implicitly argues that the way out this apocalyptic war may be for the West to make a commitment to the construction of political and economic institutions that will have legitimacy with populations in largely Islamic states. This article in particular, if Al Qaeda is viewed as an NRM, provides an intriguing analytic framework for what is seemingly the most important religious movement of our times.

This book makes clear at a number of points that 9/11 has had a large impact on the study of NRMs. Not surprisingly, James A. Beckford follows Hall's article with his own that examines "Research on New Religious Movements in the Post-9/11 World." While Beckford derives his comments on NRMs from those mostly located in North America and adds that the full shape of the paradigm for research is not yet clear, he suggests it may well focus on four dimensions including: (1) more interest in studying nrMs rather than NRMs—that is, NRMs will likely be examined as social movements rather than simply as new religions; (2) theoretical work on NRMs that has in the past focused on structure will now shift to the examination of processes involving group cohesion and control and the mobilization of resources; (3) a shift in scholarly orientation from involvement in litigation and government policy in regard to NRMs to a role of detached scholarly observation of these movements; and (4) a move toward viewing NRMs as social phenomena that are global and transnational in character, rather than local and isolated. Beckford seems correct when he concludes

that this shift in scholarly orientation will better link the study of NRMs to broader areas of social research and theory to the benefit of both. Finally, Phillip Charles Lucas closes this book with a return to its initial and enduring theme that as religion, especially NRMs, makes its presence increasingly felt in the twenty-first century, it will experience increasing repression. He adds that the future is not bright for NRMS and that they themselves complicate the situation as some do pose an actual threat to their own members, as well as the broader community. Lucas concludes that religious repression in any nation is a cause for the gravest concern for all who are interested in protecting fundamental human rights. This book might well be used in advanced undergraduate or graduate courses in religious studies, or the sociology of religion. It would be a source for stimulating conversation about the place of religion and NRMs in the contemporary world.

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*Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons.* By Mark Siderits. Ashgate, 2003. 231 pages. \$79.95.

This self-styled essay in “fusion philosophy” should gain a wider hearing for the sophisticated reconstructions of Indian Buddhist arguments that Mark Siderits has developed in articles published over the last twenty years. This is as it should be. The book will, however, inevitably have a limited readership; although lucidly written, its idiom is very much that of analytic philosophy, and it will be tough going for readers without philosophical training. Moreover, this idiom tends to get the better of the Buddhist materials that inform the arguments, and it may not be clear to those unacquainted with Buddhist philosophy where (or even whether) Siderits’s arguments closely track particular Buddhist discussions. It is to be hoped, though, that these difficulties will not prevent the appreciation of this as an illuminating development of Buddhist arguments—as a challenging but finally rewarding book.

The book consists in two parts. Chapters 1–5 sympathetically develop the case for the broadly Ābhidharmika trajectory of Buddhist thought that includes the epistemology of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti—which Siderits calls “Buddhist Reductionism” and characterizes as constitutively “realist.” Chapters 6–9 develop the Buddhist “anti-realist” position, which Siderits seldom explicitly calls *Madhyamaka*. Proceeding thus, Siderits sets up an interpretation of *Madhyamaka* as *constitutively* opposed to the Ābhidharmika approach—in the strong sense that while it is framed as a critique of the latter, *Madhyamaka* nevertheless presupposes it as propaedeutic.

The idea of the first half is that the characteristically Buddhist approach to reductionism provides conceptual resources to address objections leveled at