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# Représentations des jeux de hasard et d'argent (gambling) : repères socioculturels et religieux

AMNON JACOB SUISSA

**Résumé :** La dépendance aux jeux de hasard et d'argent (gambling) est principalement comprise comme une maladie, une pathologie psychiatrique teintée d'une perte de contrôle et d'un désordre d'impulsion. Cette conception de la dépendance ayant son origine dans la culture nord-Américaine, met en veilleuse la réalité multifactorielle de ce phénomène alors que les facteurs culturels et sociaux jouent un rôle prépondérant dans la saisie de ce problème psychosocial complexe. Au delà des aspects cognitifs et comportementaux associés aux joueurs dépendants, quelles places occupent les valeurs culturelles, religieuses et sociales de certains groupes dans les pratiques sociales du jeu ? Dans quelle mesure les facteurs culturels, religieux et sociaux contribuent à l'augmentation et/ou à la réduction des incidences de ce type de dépendance ? Face à ces deux questions, et devant la multitude de situations culturelles et nationales diverses dans le champ du gambling, cet article privilégie une démarche exploratoire en mettant en relief, de manière schématique, les dimensions socioculturelles de l'usage des jeux de hasard et d'argent auprès de la culture asiatique et chinoise, juive, autochtone, musulmane et chrétienne. En privilégiant une analyse psychosociale critique, nous espérons ainsi contribuer à l'avancement du débat sur cette question complexe que représente le jeu dit compulsif.

**Summary:** While Gambling was considered a vice, a sin, a deviant behavior and an outlaw industry, it is now understood as a disease, a psychiatric pathology combined with a lost of control and an impulsion disorder. This dominant approach to this condition has its origin in North America, sidelining any macro-contextual explanatory factors of a cultural or psychosocial nature in constructing this discourse. How the cultural, religious and social values can influence the nature of relations to gambling practices? To what extent it does contribute to the rising and/or reduction of the incidence rate regarding this addiction? In response to these questions, and without pretending to cover all the

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Amnon Jacob Suissa est professeur au Université du Québec à Montréal, École de Travail Social ; courrier électronique : Suissa.amnon@uqam.ca.

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aspects of this phenomenon, we will restrain our analysis by putting the focus on the values of diverse cultures and their influence on gambling practices. In an exploratory perspective, we will analyze specifically the nature and dynamics of relations toward gambling among the following cultures and religions: asian and chinese, jewish, native american, islam and christian. Through a critical psychosocial analysis, we hope to contribute to the heated debate on gambling as a social issue.

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## Introduction

Ce début de troisième millénaire a vu un développement fulgurant des espaces de jeux à travers le monde et ceci ne va pas sans avoir d'impact et un certain pouvoir d'attraction sur les sociétés et les cultures. Sauf quelques États qui, pour des raisons de croyance religieuse bloquent l'introduction des jeux de hasard et d'argent, tel l'Iran, l'Arabie Saoudite ou l'Afghanistan, on peut dire que la quasi-totalité du globe côtoie de près ou de loin les jeux de hasard et d'argent. Que ce soit avec l'établissement de nouveaux casinos ou l'installation de nouveaux jeux de hasard et/ou de loteries, il n'y a aucun doute que nous assistons, depuis quelques années, à un développement sans précédent de l'industrie privée du jeu et ce, en collaboration avec les États respectifs dans plusieurs régions du monde. Dans ce contexte, on peut dire, qu'à part quelques exceptions, aucun pays n'échappe à la réalité des jeux de hasard et d'argent qui suit le courant économique de la mondialisation des biens et des services.

Alors que plusieurs études scientifiques et historiques existent sur les effets de l'affiliation religieuse, des pratiques et des croyances sur plusieurs comportements tels l'usage de psychotropes et d'alcool, les comportements criminels ou le suicide, peu de recherches se sont penchées sur l'influence de la religion sur les jeux de hasard et d'argent dans une perspective contemporaine. Depuis l'apport de Blaise Pascal à la théorie de la probabilité au 17<sup>e</sup> siècle, et ce dans la perspective chrétienne de l'époque, on peut sans aucun doute affirmer que l'affiliation à des instances de religion semble jouer un rôle de contrôle social des comportements de déviance, voire de prévention par rapport aux jeux de hasard et d'argent. Selon Hoffmann (2000), certains facteurs semblent influencer le faible taux d'incidence des problèmes auprès des personnes religieuses. Parmi ceux-ci, les espaces religieux sont généralement reconnus pour promouvoir et améliorer la santé mentale de leurs membres ; les personnes religieuses auraient des réseaux sociaux informels plus denses ; les pratiques de culte en groupe renforcent les croyances privées qui, à leur tour, sont affectées par les normes mêmes du groupe. Elles augmentent également « la certitude existentielle » qui mène à des sentiments de bien-être élevés et d'émotions positives, et enfin, les relations divines augmenteraient l'estime de soi en approfondissant le sens de l'ordre tout en élevant les perceptions de prédiction. L'hypothèse qui se

hasard et d'argent : avidité, méfiance de Dieu, déni des devoirs et la place des vulnérables. Selon la Bible, en voulant toujours plus que son voisin et en se concentrant sur une opportunité d'avidité, c'est contre Dieu et son prochain que le péché est commis ([www.faihandvalues.com](http://www.faihandvalues.com), 2004). Au lieu de remercier Dieu pour les biens matériels fournis, nous exprimons, par les jeux de hasard et d'argent, notre insatisfaction et notre trop grand attachement envers les biens matériels comme valeur centrale de la vie. Il y a là une obsession pour l'argent qui ne peut mener qu'à l'aliénation et la dépendance.

Quant à la méfiance envers Dieu, le fait de mettre l'emphase sur la chance est incohérente avec la foi que nous devons avoir envers Dieu. Considéré comme une bénédiction, l'effort au travail est également banalisé en faisant croire à la « richesse instantanée » quand on s'adonne aux jeux de hasard. Pour le déni des devoirs, l'être humain est vu comme redevable à Dieu dans la mesure où il doit respecter les biens et non les gaspiller.

### **Conclusion**

Nous remarquons que la variété impressionnante des relations psychosociales, religieuses et culturelles avec les jeux de hasard et d'argent s'avère parfois déterminante dans le tracé des trajectoires des joueurs potentiels. Comme avec le phénomène de l'alcoolisme où le taux d'alcoolisme est peu élevé dans le groupe où le fait de boire est évalué positivement par la culture dominante, et plus élevé s'il est évalué comme un acte marginal ou asocial, cette réalité s'apparente assez fortement avec les réalités culturelles des jeux de hasard et d'argent. C'est bien à l'intérieur du contexte culturel global que nous devons poser la question des problèmes de jeux de hasard et d'argent et non en dehors de celui-ci. Dans cette logique, comprendre les perspectives différentes dans une culture ou une religion donnée quand on tente de répondre à des problèmes psychosociaux de jeux de hasard et d'argent devient essentiel si on souhaite trouver des réponses appropriées.

En termes de discours, le modèle dominant à travers le monde est celui des États-Unis, et il n'est pas approprié d'appliquer ce modèle compris comme une pathologie/maladie à des sociétés sans tenir compte des variables culturelles qui sont au centre des motivations et des raisons réelles des personnes en question. Les histoires des peuples et de leurs cultures respectives entretiennent des relations différentes avec les jeux de hasard et d'argent et les critères du DSM VI et du SOGS sont également plus spécifiques à la culture américaine. Si ces critères étaient appliqués à des populations autochtones en Australie, par exemple, près de 80% pourraient être définis comme étant des joueurs à problèmes. Dans la mesure où les critères d'évaluation du modèle de la pathologie/maladie sont dérivés d'une perspective à majorité protestante et de la classe moyenne, ils ne peuvent être appliqués de façon mécanique à la population australienne. Au delà des informations

cognitives au sujet des croyances erronées et biaisées qui peuvent être transmises à toutes les cultures, le processus du développement de la dépendance est à inscrire comme un phénomène multifactoriel et où la composante culturelle et religieuse joue un rôle prépondérant dans l'explication plus globale de ce phénomène complexe.

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# Sacralization, secularization and religious fundamentalism

JOHN DADOSKY

**Summary:** This paper seeks to understand religious fundamentalism and extremism by viewing it in a broader context in terms of a provocative fourfold distinction made by Canadian philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan: a sacralization to be dropped, a secularization to be welcomed, a secularization to be resisted and a sacralization to be fostered. Such distinctions shed light on the concerns of religious fundamentalisms and the dangers that the extreme aspects of these pose. Moreover, such distinctions reveal hope in the long-term from the ongoing inter-religious engagement leading to a context beyond religious fundamentalism and extremism.

**Résumé :** Cet article aborde les thèmes du fondamentalisme et de l'extrémisme religieux. Ces phénomènes sont analysés avec une grille en quatre volets inspirée par les travaux du philosophe et théologien canadien Bernard Lonergan. Quatre catégories sont proposées : la perte de la sacralisation, la promotion de la sécularisation, la résistance à la sécularisation et, enfin, la promotion de la sacralisation. De telles distinctions jettent un éclairage sur les inquiétudes ressenties à propos du fondamentalisme religieux des dangers engendrés par son extrémisme. De plus, de telles distinctions éclairent les perspectives à long terme du dialogue interreligieux par delà le fondamentalisme et l'extrémisme religieux.

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In light of the events of September 11, 2001, there is a great need to understand religious fundamentalism and extremism. Karen Armstrong illustrates in her book, *The Battle for God*, that fundamentalism is not unique to the Muslim faith. Her more popular account traces the history of fundamentalism through three of the major world's religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Armstrong 2000). Armstrong's presupposition relies on the extensive *Fundamentalism Project* initiated by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby. They identify the "family traits" of fundamentalism as they exist across traditions and cultures within all of the world's major religions (Marty and Appleby 1991).

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John Dadosky is Assistant Professor at Regis College, Toronto School of Theology, M4Y 2R5; e-mail: john.dadosky@utoronto.ca.

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Yet, while many would agree that the pervasiveness of religious fundamentalisms throughout the world is problematic, one must also consider what legitimate concerns the fundamentalists may be responding to. Likewise, one must consider their oversights, that is, the extent to which they contradict the teachings of their originating traditions by promoting intolerance. Third, one can consider the possibility of a global context beyond religious fundamentalisms. While the latter may seem naïve or too optimistic, I believe it is implied in what the Canadian philosopher, religious thinker and theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984) called “a new sacralization to be fostered.” What is needed is an interpretive schema that places religious fundamentalism in a broader context, one that leaves it open to criticism but simultaneously leaves open the possibility that it is resisting something legitimate.

This paper seeks to understand religious fundamentalism and extremism by viewing it in a broader context in terms of a provocative fourfold distinction made by Lonergan: *a sacralization to be dropped, a secularization to be welcomed, a secularization to be resisted and a sacralization to be fostered*. Lonergan’s distinctions as applied to fundamentalism not only shed light on the dangers these extremes pose, but also offer a challenge and invitation to identify legitimate insights to which fundamentalisms are often overreacting. Moreover, the distinctions reveal hope in the long-term, stemming from ongoing inter-religious engagement, which may lead to a context beyond religious fundamentalism and extremism.

I proceed by summarizing some basic characteristics of fundamentalism as the attitudes reflective of these believers have been identified as existing across various religious traditions. Next, I identify some aspects of Lonergan’s thought that shed light on fundamentalist attitudes. Third, I devote the principal part of the article to unpacking Lonergan’s distinction of *a sacralization to be dropped, a secularization to be welcomed, a secularization to be resisted and a sacralization to be fostered* in order to provide a frame or broader context for understanding fundamentalist attitudes.

### **Fundamentalism: A modern and global phenomenon**

The term *fundamentalism* can be misleading. Originally, it was invoked by American Protestants who sought to return to the “fundamentals” of their faith, in response to liberal Protestants who they felt were distorting the faith (Armstrong, 2000: 12). In this sense, the term would not be easily translatable into the fundamentalisms of Judaism, Islam or other religions. More recently, the term has been broadened to refer to certain fundamentalist-like attitudes that persist in all religions to greater or lesser degrees. Armstrong admits the term is not perfect; but she insists it is here to stay.

Some of the traits observed in the *Fundamentalism Project* identify the following patterns within fundamentalism existing across religious traditions: a religious idealism that emphasizes transcendence and forms an “irreducible basis for communal and personal identity”; a depiction of revealed truth as

“whole, unified, and undifferentiated”; an adherence to religious identity that is “intentionally scandalous” in its attempts to separate “true believers from outsiders”; a rejection of multivalent interpretations regarding sacred texts in favour of their own literal interpretations, which they believe are absolutely correct; “dramatic eschatologies” that shape their identity and behaviour; a mythologization of enemies; the establishment of sharp boundaries in order to protect themselves from “contamination, and preserve purity”; and an intense missionary fervour. Fundamentalists emerge in a response to an “actual or perceived” crisis, where the crisis is a threat to their identity (Marty and Appleby 1991: 817–23). These are some of the major family resemblances that Marty and Appleby observe, careful to keep these patterns descriptive rather than to make universal claims about fundamentalism.

Armstrong’s work (written before 9–11) understands fundamentalists as those religious individuals/groups who “have no time for democracy, pluralism, religious toleration, peacekeeping, free speech, or the separation of church and state” (Armstrong 2000: ix). She emphasizes that fundamentalisms emerge in large part as a response to a radical modernization and as a resistance to such modernization. “Fundamentalists feel that they are battling against forces that threaten their most sacred values,” so they experience modernization as an “aggressive assault” (Armstrong 2000: xviii). However, it is not that the fundamentalists reject technological and scientific advancements per se, rather they reject the values perceived in modernization (or secularization) that threaten their sense of identity.

Further, Armstrong emphasizes the following about fundamentalism: (1) it is a modern development; (2) it exists within every major religious tradition (including Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism); and (3) the extremists who commit acts of terror in the name of religion are a small minority (Armstrong 2000: xi). Her second and third points are particularly relevant in a post-9–11 context, which has given rise to stereotyping, due in large part to media amplification of Islamic extremists, and to the heightened racial profiling wrought by anti-terrorist measures.

#### *Resistance to values of modern secular society*

Armstrong claims, borrowing from the *Fundamentalism Project*, that the dramatic increase in religious fundamentalisms is a 20th-century phenomenon. Accordingly, it is a “reaction against the scientific and secular culture that first appeared in the West,” and began to emerge well before the 20th century, in which it culminated (Armstrong 2000: xiii). The scientific-technological advancements of the last hundred years are remarkable in human history, to the extent that she likens our contemporary situation to that of the Axial period (700–200 B.C.E.) (Armstrong 2000: xiv).

The economic changes over the last four hundred years have been accompanied by immense social, political, and intellectual revolutions, with the development of an entirely different, scientific and rational, concept of the nature of truth; and, once

again, a radical religious change has become necessary. All over the world, people are finding that in their dramatically transformed circumstances, the old forms of faith no longer work for them: they cannot provide the enlightenment and consolation that human beings seem to need. As a result, men and women are trying to find new ways of being religious ... One of these modern experiments—however paradoxical it may superficially seem to say so—is fundamentalism. (Armstrong 2000: xv)

Fundamentalists have a paradoxical “symbiotic” relationship with modernity. “They may reject the scientific rationalism of the West, but they cannot escape it” (Armstrong 2000: xiv). Similarly, the *Fundamentalist Project* observes: “Coupled with this envy and resentment of modernity [fundamentalism] is a shrewd exploitation of its processes and instrumentalities” (Martin and Appleby 1991: 827).

### **Loneragan on fundamentalism**

Loneragan did not directly speak to the topic of religious fundamentalism, but there are aspects of his thought that not only pertain to it but also contribute to an understanding of it in a broader context. First, he speaks of the dialectical nature of religious development that involves the struggle to attain human authenticity and a constant “withdrawal” from inauthenticity. The originating teachings on which the various religions are established are subject to distortion and corruption. In the limit, the original spirit of the teachings will be matched by their opposites (Loneragan 1990: 110). He states:

Unless religion is totally directed to what is good, to genuine love of one’s neighbour and to self-denial that is subordinated to a fuller goodness in oneself, then the cult of a God that is terrifying can slip over into the demonic, into an exultant destructiveness of oneself and of others. (Loneragan 1990: 111)

By “authentic,” Loneragan means that religion must flow from a dynamic state of being-in-love in an unrestricted manner that promotes self-sacrificing love for one’s neighbour, and even a love for one’s enemies. By contrast, a religious ideology co-opts certain aspects of religion to serve its own purposes, so that the original spirit of the teachings is reframed to serve the ideological purposes.

Second, there is an *obscurantism* that blocks the dynamism of conscious intentionality. Concretely this entails the restriction of questions that would entice people to reflect critically on their own tradition. The pre-Vatican II Catholic Church, with its abuses of the Index of Forbidden Books, exemplifies this obscurantism in Roman Catholicism. One of the books on that list, Antonio Rosmini’s *Five Wounds of the Church*, was read by Pope John XXIII, who was impressed by it (Fahey 1991: 329–30). The Pope’s endorsement of a previously restricted work, at the very least, symbolized the movement in the Church away from obscurantism with respect to religious reform. Perhaps it is coincidental, but John XXIII went on to convene the historically unprece-

dented Vatican II Council (1960–1964), which sought to bring the Church up to date and took into account some of Rosmini’s concerns.

With respect to religious fundamentalists, a locus for obscurantism is a strict literal interpretation of their sacred texts. We noted above that a narrow literal hermeneutic is identified as a common trait by the *Fundamentalism Project*. Vernon Gregson addresses the issue of obscurantism as it pertains to the literal interpretation of sacred texts. Such obscurantism indicates the need for intellectual conversion. “All fundamentalisms, all literalisms, which hold the viewpoint that there is a ‘clear’ truth, that the meaning of the texts of the past are obvious, if one would open one’s eyes, are mistaken on the very basic way we human beings gather knowledge and affirm truth” (Gregson 1988: 94; see also Schüssler Fiorenza 1989: 252).

For Lonergan, knowing is not just “taking a look,” and so the extent to which a fundamentalist claims that the truth is “out there” on the page in “black and white” indicates the need for an intellectual conversion. Intellectual conversion in this instance would open up inquiry into the full range of meanings in the text, which are grasped through attending to all relevant texts, understanding those meanings intelligently and judging the interpretations correctly. This can help to prevent the “religiofication” (turning practical purposes into holy causes) that can be perpetuated by the prohibition of critical inquiry into a religious tradition.

Third, in a previous article on religious identity, I sought to develop Lonergan’s insights by seeking a more explanatory language to account not only for religious fundamentalism but also for the extremes of secularism. I wanted a language for a more integral understanding of religious identity that avoided the simple categories of “right” and “left” (Dadosky 1999a). The context for my reflections on the dialectic of religious identity was Lonergan’s comments concerning the “not numerous center.” He states:

There is bound to be formed a solid right that is determined to live in a world that no longer exists. There is bound to be formed a scattered left, captivated by now this, now that new development, exploring now this and now that new possibility. But what will count is a perhaps not numerous center, big enough to be at home in both the old and the new, painstaking enough to work out one by one the transitions to be made, strong enough to refuse half measures and insist on complete solutions even though it has to wait. (Lonergan 1993: 245)

Lonergan is referring to the condition of the Catholic Church, but his insights can be applied analogously to religious identity in general. Inspired by this quote, I introduced the categories *inauthentic specific identity focussed* to refer to those of the solid right, and *inauthentic general identity focussed* to refer to those of the “scattered left.” Gregson asserts that fundamentalist-like attitudes lie on both extremes (Gregson 1988: 94). Likewise, Hoffer emphasizes the similarities in personalities from each extreme: “In our day, each proselytizing mass movement seems to regard the zealous adherents of its antagonist as its own potential converts” (Hoffer 1966: 25). He provides illustrations

himself as the clown who tries to warn the crowd of the impending doom, not only for their faith, but for their salvation as well. Whatever the case may be, it would seem that he was well aware of the peril that the sacralization of church and state presents to the true appropriation of one's faith.

*A secularization to be welcomed*

One can assume that the secularization to be welcomed is the one that has ushered in the scientific and technological advances that continue to make human life more efficient and easier, as well as the political developments of democracy, religious tolerance and freedom. We have noted the symbiotic or paradoxical relationship that fundamentalists have with modernity. For Lonergan the secularization to be welcomed complements the sacralization to be dropped and for Christians this compels them, "... through the force of circumstance to get out of the mental and institutional complex of Christendom" (Lonergan 2004: 264).

Many fundamentalists welcome at least those aspects of secularization that work to their own advantage. One thinks, for example of the fundamentalists who use television as a medium to amplify their message. The secularization to be welcomed has specifically challenged Christian fundamentalists' literal interpretations of Scripture, especially since Protestant scholars began to embrace historical-critical methods. Eventually, the Roman Catholic Church began to encourage the use of such methods of interpretation in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) and in *Dei Verbum* (1965). In a similar way, Salim Mansur, a professor of political science at the University of Western Ontario, has challenged Muslims to engage in "revisionism" by "reading the Koran with fresh eyes," as a way to prevent religious extremist interpretations (Mansur 2003: 16).

*A secularization to be resisted*

One of the chief aspects of a secularization to be resisted according to Lonergan is *secularism*: the attitude of "outraged and outright rejection of all religion as the futile champion of a dead and unlamented past" (Lonergan 2004: 274). Perhaps what is equally an affront to religion is not just the outright rejection of religion by secularists but also religious indifference. Eric Hoffer refers to this affront when he states: "The opposite of the religious fanatic is not the fanatical atheist but the gentle cynic who cares not whether there is a God or not." Atheism, agnosticism and religious indifference are obvious aspects of a secularization to be resisted. In fact, according to Hoffer, widespread religious atheism and indifference, insofar as they diminish a sense of ultimate meaning, can provoke the reaction of mass movements of religious fundamentalisms (Hoffer 1966: 81).

*Hyperculture.* In addition to secularism, there is perhaps another aspect of secularization to be resisted which is not so obvious, one that may help us bet-

Certainly, I do not mean to say that the whole multi-media telecommunications conglomerate should be resisted, but rather that there are hypercultural aspects that are amplified through these various media that can perpetuate a decline in cultural development. In addition to encouraging a homogenization that is devastating to struggling cultural-religious identities, hyperculture also promotes stereotypes and can even amplify some of the most unflattering aspects of a particular culture or religion. For example, a cousin of mine has lived in the United Arab Emirates for 10 years working for an American company. Following the events of 9–11, we queried him for his perspective. He observed that there is a lot of resentment towards the United States and that many of these perceptions are shaped by what they view on Western television:

The success of the country [USA] is flaunted to the rest of the world in TV and media. (20/20 doing a special on the risks of liposuction gets broadcast all over the world)... [They perceive] Americans are all well paid, well kept (with clothes, cars and houses), and well fed, in a very large country... While most of the world still struggles with poverty.

The issue in this example speaks to the wealth of the United States and how this can be a target of envy, especially given the continuing rise in global poverty; but it also illustrates how hyperculture is exported and shapes the viewers' perceptions.

Hyperculture is inextricably connected with consumerism and the values associated with it. One could also say that it represents an aberrant form of universal culture in that it promotes cross-cultural uniformity and homogenization rather than diversity. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza suggests one of the insights we can adhere to from fundamentalism is its "protest against cultural impoverishment" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1989: 246). Insofar as hyperculture contributes to this cultural impoverishment, it represents an aspect of secularization to be resisted.

*A new sacralization to be fostered*

Robert Doran in *Theology and the Dialectics of History* states that in our era we are faced with two choices: "the anticipation of a post-historic homogeneous State incrementally moved toward by terrorist and counter-terrorist violence," or "the anticipation of a truth above and beyond divergent points of view, a truth that, while preserving the sharpest sense of subjectivity, provides access to a new organic civilization on a transcultural, or world-cultural basis" (Doran 1990: 155–56).

I would argue the second choice Doran refers to is akin to what Lonergan had in mind when he refers to "a new sacralization to be fostered." Lonergan does not elaborate in detail just what this new sacralization entails, but he suggests the following signs: humans becoming more humane, "peace among nations," "the rise of conscience in peoples of the world." For example, the emphasis of the Christian's relationship to the world has shifted:

However, while the mutually self-mediating encounter may be enriching for both parties in the dialogue, it may be mutually challenging as well. That is, if we assume with Lonergan that religions develop dialectically through various authentic and inauthentic expressions throughout their historical development (Lonergan 1990: 110–12), then we can suppose that one of the benefits of mutual self-mediation in the interfaith encounter will be for neighbouring religions to challenge each other where necessary, in order to facilitate development as part of a broader dialectic of community (Lonergan 1992: 242–44).

James L. Fredericks argues that friendship is an “invaluable” approach for inter-religious dialogue and he encourages Christians to pursue this as a method for inter-religious engagement (Fredericks 1999: 173ff). Friendship is the optimal approach for encountering the different types of differences in the Other. That is, for example, he argues when the Buddhist and the Christian sit down together for dialogue in a spirit of friendship, this spirit provides the best context for mutual enrichment, for mutual challenge and for the “surprise” of something new emerging through their respectful sharing and camaraderie. The spirit of friendship provides a context for engaging the different types of differences, even contradictory ones: “... Christians will do well to develop deep and abiding friendships with the non-Christian neighbours as a useful way to disagree with honesty and depth” (Fredericks 1999: 177). Friendship as method is an example of mutual self-mediation and provides a way of engaging serious differences without alienating the Other.

*Theology of world's religions.* The emphasis on interfaith dialogue with the promise of mutual enrichment raises an additional possibility—the emergence of a common theology, perhaps a theology of the world's religions in some form. The idea intrigued Lonergan in his later thought, but he says little about it. Whenever he refers to this notion it is usually by way of a bow to Robley Whitson's work on the subject, *The Coming Convergence of World Religions* (1971). This text received relatively little attention from the academic theological community.

Robert Doran invokes the term “theology of theologies,” which refers to the systematic understanding of an integral relationship among the world religions. However, for Doran, a theology of theologies would be specifically the task of theology and the result would be a development in Catholic theology, i.e., an account of the world religions from that perspective (Doran 1998: 574). However, what Whitson means by a convergence of religions seems to be broader in scope.

According to Whitson, we are faced with three options of engagement within our radically new religious situation: *conformism*, *separate co-existence* and *convergence*. He argues for *convergence* over *conformism* (unity imposed by an external power), and *separate co-existence* (tolerance without in-depth engagement with other faiths) (1971: 23–24). *Convergence* is not a guarantee

but it remains the best option for a more civilized world. For Whitson, the question of convergence concerns “not one *or* many, but one *and* many” and this seemingly “unresolvable paradox” contains the seeds of convergence (1971: 26). The goal of such convergence is not a syncretization of religious belief systems, but an integration and inter-relationship through the emergence of a common theology. An analysis of Whitson’s claims in detail is beyond the scope of this paper. However, his reflections are provocative and deserve greater attention from the academic community. At this point, it would be impossible to anticipate what form a comprehensive religious viewpoint might take. The notion is a heuristic one, and the attempt at premature speculation regarding its concrete form might be analogous, albeit roughly, to the 12th-century masters of theology attempting to anticipate the *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas. One thing seems clear, however. This potential higher integration of interfaith relating would be an advance beyond the intolerance and triumphalism fostered by many religious fundamentalisms of our day, and in this way, it would comprise part of a new sacralization to be welcomed.

## Conclusion

We have been discussing the topic of religious fundamentalism as specifically a modern and global phenomenon. We have placed our discussion in a broader perspective in terms of a sacralization to be resisted, a secularization to be welcomed, a secularization to be resisted and a new sacralization to be fostered. In this way, our goal has been not simply to understand fundamentalism in a broader context, but to get some clue as to what may be going forward historically amidst the rise of religious extremism, namely the possibility of an emerging religious (and secular) consciousness, the religious fundamentalisms of our day will eventually being seen to represent a shadowy prelude of a more authentic world religious-cultural context to come. Finally, there is the suggestion that such hope lies with the human subject directed and guided by grace, with personal integrity and the ability to navigate through the various worlds of the secular and the sacred—at home with both the old and the new. The fruits of such achievement promise dramatic social, cultural and religious transformations.

## Notes

- 1 I am indebted to Ramin Jahanbegloo, who made this point very clearly in his lecture on Islamic fundamentalism (although I think it applies to all forms of religious fundamentalism) at Trinity College, University of Toronto, June 26, 2002.
- 2 I came across some clues to such an understanding in my research on Lonergan and Eliade when I discovered a lecture (then unpublished) by Lonergan entitled “Sacralization and Secularization” (see Dadosky 2004: 134–35).
- 3 I have applied this notion of mutual self-mediation to the issue of *inculturation* (see Dadosky 1999b).
- 4 For an excellent survey of the various issues and methodologies concerning interfaith dialogue, see Knitter (2004).

- 5 A pioneering work by a group of Canadian anthropologists emphasizes that one cannot have a serious encounter with another cultural context without having one's worldview challenged, expanded and/or enriched, i.e., "being changed." (Young and Goulet 1994).

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# Comptes rendus / Reviews of books

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## **Ishmael on the Border: Rabbinic Portrayals of the First Arab**

Carol Bakhos

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006. vii + 207 p.

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This volume, a study of the place of Ishmael in rabbinic literature, is a revision of the author's Jewish Theological Seminary dissertation (2000). Using a variety of methods, including historical and literary criticism, Bakhos analyzes a significant body of rabbinic writings to conclude that the material from the period before the rise of Islam treats the biblical patriarch Abraham's firstborn son Ishmael either impartially or negatively (chap. 2), while later midrashic works, in particular *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, an 8th- or 9th-century compilation, tend to describe Ishmael in far more negative terms because he is read typologically as a stand-in for Arabs/Muslims. This results, at least in part, because the Bible itself presents him as the father of the Arab people and because Muslims themselves promoted Ishmael as their ancestor (chap. 4). Further, the negative portrayals in the early midrashim tend to deal with Ishmael as an imagined other for the purpose of highlighting issues of Jewish chosenness, while only the later depictions treat Ishmael as a representative of real people. In other words, early discussions of this biblical figure are not directed at an actual group, while later ones should be interpreted as deliberately polemical against a particular group.

Bakhos' conclusion does not appear groundbreaking, but surprisingly this subject has not been previously tackled. Her primary success is in mustering substantial evidence to support it. Ultimately, this volume is an excellent example of the application of well-established methods of analysis to new material.

Although other biblical characters, particularly Esau whom she examines in chapters 1 and 3, have been studied extensively, Ishmael has largely been ignored. Much scholarly activity has been focussed on examining anti-Christian material in rabbinic literature and rabbinic interaction with non-rabbinic Jewish groups like Sadducees and Essenes; little notice has been paid to the influence of Muslims and Arabs on these compilations despite general agreement that a number of these later rabbinic volumes were produced in lands controlled by these groups. Bakhos uses the treatment and attitudes to Esau as a benchmark with which to compare rabbinic presentations of Ishmael. She begins with Esau because previous scholarship has shown him to be a marginalized figure in the Bible (chap. 1) who continued to be marginalized by the rabbis (chap. 3). Thus, this comparison is reasonable, well defended, and leads to sustainable conclusions, but these could have been strengthened with an examination of secondary material on the rabbinic treatment of other biblical figures, including Noah and Melchizedek. Further, her discussion of Esau overlooks a number of important scholarly works (e.g., Sysling (1996) and Hadas-Lebel (1981)), but is consistent with their findings.

The volume includes an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary materials and a general index. The index is less than satisfactory; the book would have ben-

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**In the Time of Trees and Sorrows: Nature, Power, and Memory in Rajasthan**

Ann Grodzins Gold and Bhoju Ram Gujar

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002. xxv +395 p.

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My first reaction after reading the first few chapters of this book was “a labour of love.” I was born in Rajasthan and I could immediately connect to the book’s locales by the affectionate and detailed account by both the authors (Gold clarifies right in the beginning how both the co-authors managed to write in an overall unified voice). The preface begins with profuse gratitude to many of their colleagues in academia and informants in the fieldwork, a rather rare list of several names mentioned with great love and respect.

The book opens with an introduction of their theoretical framework. They clearly situate their work by observing three main methodological developments: First, the shift from a single authoritative voice to multiple voices in narrating their fieldwork; second, the shift from a unified voice representing a culture to multiple representative voices; third, and according to the authors the most important, the paradigm shifts taking place in the fields of history and anthropology, viz., the interdisciplinary boundaries breaking away. The authors then go on to describe their choice of various words such as “nature” and “environment” (and even the title of the book and its dropped Hindi version). Later, they compare various recent ethnographic works such as those of Dube, Skaria, Guha and Mayaram.

The next chapter, entitled “Voice,” describes the close collaboration Gold had with Bhoju Ram Gujar and his family throughout her fieldwork. It recounts several sentimental moments such as how Dr Gold became first Ainn Bai (lady) for Bhoju’s family and then Ainn Buaji (Aunty), how they had tears in their eyes when Gold was to come back after a lengthy stay with Bhoju’s family. I especially enjoyed a footnote on page 335 about Gold sitting behind Bhoju on his motorcycle and villagers passing a comment about his helmet. In the final part of this chapter, there is a brief account by Bhoju about the methods he used during the fieldwork.

The next chapter, entitled “Place,” describes the geographic and historic details of Sawar and Ghatiyali. Several details about agriculture are also mentioned. Next comes the non-Rajput details of history followed by several historic details from archives of Rajasthan government offices. Throughout these chapters, we keep getting glimpses of what is to come in forthcoming chapters; how the villagers of Sawar area are going to recall the sorrows they had in the times of kings before India’s democratization. One Hindi/Rajasthani word *darbar* that appears several times in these details is translated as “the court.” This suggests that the meaning of this word is limited to the affairs of justice alone. Rather, I would suggest *darbar* be translated as a sort of central hall of the king’s palace where all kinds of official and administrative matters used to be conducted.

In the next seven chapters, we meet several Rajasthani men and women narrating their memories of sorrows and eventually the kings turn into villains and the villagers as victims of royal pleasures of the kings and their officers. Overall, this is an excellent ethnography, suitable for upper-level courses on history, environmentalism and anthropological topics in South Asia.

*Pankaj Jain*

University of Iowa

# Critique Brève / Book Note

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## **The A to Z of New Religious Movements**

George D. Chryssides

Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2001. 420 p.

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This “historical dictionary” is part of a series of more than 20 references works on the major religions, lesser religious groups (e.g., the Quakers), and other social phenomena ranging from feminism to the Vietnam War. The book is quite comprehensive and I have found it to be a very useful and accurate quick reference for basic information on almost every new religious group, leader, and idea that I looked up and much more (e.g., groups and figures associated with the anti-cult movement, historically relevant beliefs and practices from the major religious traditions). The entries are commonly one to two paragraphs in length, written in clear and informative prose, and free of any obvious bias in this often contentious field of research. Chryssides is a quite well-known British scholar of new religions and the book appears to have been very carefully prepared. I could detect no obvious weaknesses, though use over time will undoubtedly reveal some omissions. Since the book was published in 2001 some of the information provided needs to be up-dated already (e.g., information on developments is the controversial Christian NRM called The Family). But this is not relevant in most cases and I strongly recommend it as a useful quick reference work for interested scholars and all university/college libraries.

*Lorne Dawson*

University of Waterloo

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