out of Sheffield; yet Coomber is an example par excellence of Sheffield's relevant rigour. It is greatly to be hoped that Coomber's final paragraphs—"Potential for Future Study"—are a project he himself will undertake with haste.

Media, Spiritualities and Social Change
Stewart M. Hoover and Monica Emerich, eds. London and New York: Continuum, 2011.
ISBN 978-1441145550. Pp. 272
Reviewed by David Kolosyzc, McGill University

In recent years the study of religion and media has emerged as one of the more fascinating fields of academic and social research, bringing together scholars from religious studies, theology, cultural studies, communication studies, media studies, film studies, sociology and social psychology. Some of the key areas of concern include: representation of religion in mass media; the use of communications technology by religious individuals, communities, and institutions; religious contributions to ethical and epistemological questions pertaining to contemporary communications technology; and the changing nature of religion and spirituality in a mediated world. Scholars who attempt to address these concerns face considerable challenges. The speed and unpredictability of current cultural and technological transformations demand constant reinterpretation, readjustment of data, and redefinition of our understandings of 'religion' and/or 'spirituality'. Some of the material written in the 1990s, for instance, lost its relevance following the expansion of public discourses on religion in the wake of September 11th, the emergence of new religious themes in film and on television, and changes to religious practice triggered by new social media technology. It should come as no surprise then that the majority of publications on religion and media consist of diverse collections of studies addressing a wide variety of technological and religious experience, in many instances written by relatively young scholars. The new publication from Continuum, *Media, Spiritualities and Social Change*, follows this model, bringing together seventeen essays and studies which focus on 'spiritual' concerns related mainly to questions of identity, community, social integration, spiritual consumerism, and environmentalism. The volume is edited by Stewart M. Hoover, one of the most experienced and prominent scholars in the field, and Monica Emerich, a fellow research associate from University of Colorado at Boulder's Center for Media, Religion and Culture.

The editors' introduction offers a brief but effective overview of some of the central issues that have shaped contemporary studies of religion and media. Hoover

and Emerich discuss the manner in which our experience of the 'public sphere' is being transformed in an increasingly mediated culture. They argue that, rather than merely constituting the means by which we communicate and establish new meanings, identities, and experiences, mass media are gradually becoming the very sites where meaning and identity are constructed, and where 'experience' takes place, dissolving the traditional distinction between public and private life. The book's key aim, in this respect, is to consider how recent technological developments are enabling religious individuals and communities to become active agents for social, cultural, or political change. Contemporary media make it possible for individuals and communities to define their own spiritual identity, purpose, and belief-system beyond traditional religious, social, political, or economic institutions. By the same token, media offer new and diverse opportunities for redefining the 'common good', for bringing about social integration, or for transforming the way our culture understands the nature of both 'media' and 'religion'. A number of essays included in this collection explore such opportunities. Among these, the reader will find Lee Gilmore's interesting discussion of "Do-It-Yourself" spirituality, centred on Burning Man, an annual festival which brings together art, spirituality, and performance, and which has led to the establishment of a (mainly) virtual community of individuals who share common ethical, artistic, and spiritual principles. Of particular current relevance are Rebecca L. Self's excellent text entitled "Mideast Youth: Can Social Media = Social Change?" and Solomon Schimmel's insightful study, "The Blogosphere of Resistance: Anonymous Blogging as a Safe Haven for Challenging Religious Authority and Creating Dissident Communities."

The shift from 'religion' to 'spirituality', Hoover and Emerich suggest, reflects many individuals' disenchantment with traditional institutions, authorities, and rituals, while also bearing witness to the manner in which, even across 'secular' cultures, existential questions continue to resonate with spiritual concerns. In many instances, the need for a more personal, more meaningful experience of such concerns can paradoxically result in a spirituality that is radically indistinct. Hoover and Emerich remain aware of the ambiguous character of this situation. Echoing their observations, some of the contributors to this volume express concern over certain dangers–at once social, political, and spiritual–that permeate global communications networks. In the 'media age', 'spirituality' can be co-opted easily and on an unprecedented scale by political and economic interests. By the same token, many spiritual aspirations are being translated into political and commercial aspirations, and our personal and collective desires and anxieties are being exploited to establish new concepts of 'good' and 'evil, new spiritual threats, and new visions of spiritual salvation. The result is that, in our radically mediated world, an entire marketplace of spiritual symbols, ideas, and experiences has emerged, one that demands a new kind of critical awareness, bringing together the knowledge of

religion, culture, and media technology. These issues are effectively addressed in Sharif Islam's "Media, Religion and Citizenship in the Mosque-Building Debates in Europe," in Janice Peck's "The Politics of 'Empowerment' in Oprah Winfrey's Global Philanthropy," and in Ann Hardy's "Spirituality in Flight: Making Meaning around State-Sector Television Commercials."

The key flaw of this collection of studies is the all-too-apparent lack of scholars of religion as participants in the conversation. This lack reflects a tendency that, unfortunately, is characteristic of a number of similar collections published in the past. The issue can no longer be ignored, as it can and does undermine the quality of some of the scholarship in the field of religion and media. Most of the authors in the present volume, for instance, ignore the fact that, in a world in which mass media are becoming central mechanisms of social change, many religious institutions are quickly realizing that they cannot remain passive observers of this process if they are to maintain their relevance in contemporary global culture. Indeed, a considerable number of religious communities have profited from their engagement with mass media, expanding their membership base and transforming social, cultural, and political contexts that, until recently, were resistant to anything overtly 'spiritual'. The few references to more traditional religious ideas and beliefs found among these studies are too vague to merit serious attention. To be sure, the explicit purpose of the book is to explore the 'spiritual', not the 'religious' dimensions of contemporary media; however, both terms remain equally obscure in the current global context, as does the nature of the relationship between them. Even if the reader is willing to accept the concept of 'spirituality' in its radically open sense, he or she will likely have a difficult time grasping the reason for the inclusion of four or five of the texts in this collection.

These criticisms aside, *Media, Spiritualities and Social Change* contains a sufficient number of interesting and relevant studies. As such, the book constitutes a valuable resource, not only for scholars of religion and media, but also for college teachers and university professors who engage in the exploration of the presence of religion or spirituality in contemporary culture in their classrooms.

Early Christian Books in Egypt
Roger S. Bagnall. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
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Reviewed by Stéphanie Machabée, McGill University

Early Christian Books in Egypt is written by papyrologist and professor of ancient history at New York University, Roger S. Bagnall. This scholar enters into the