

Since they are conspicuously unmarked by the brokenness he presumes of all human artifice, Barth's emphatic proclamations of God's Lordship and the eschatological elimination of *das Nichtige* appear as hubris when placed alongside Ricoeur's subtle analyses. Though methodologically diametrical to Jaspers, the evilness of evil in Barth's thought—where sin before the Lord is absurd—is diminished (231) to the point of appearing theoretical (237). Nevertheless via Barth, Schaafsma concludes that religious hope is always tempered by a properly gauged awareness of human finitude. As such, religious views on evil accomplish a coherence not possible for speculative thought (279).

So what would be lost were evil omitted from philosophical reflection? Four finite insights: evil does obtain as a notion, humans do bear ethical responsibility for evils, humans do tragically suffer evils, and evil in general will eventually come to an end. Primarily via Ricoeur and Barth, Schaafsma 'regauges' evil according to this quadrilateral of insights that are reciprocally critically counterbalanced (286) "pre-eminently" in a religious context (287).

Religion in the Media Age

Stewart M. Hoover. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

ISBN: 978-0-415-31423-7. Pp. 341.

Reviewed by Warren Kappeler, McGill University.

In the twenty-first century, religious life is increasingly moving from churches, mosques, and temples into the realm of the mass media. In this book the influential communication scholar Stewart M. Hoover examines the way in which media and religion intermingle and collide in the cultural experience of media audiences. Hoover is the director of the Center for Media, Religion and Culture and a professor of media studies at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, at the University of Colorado. A leading authority on the topic of religion and media, Hoover's study provides a critical introduction for those who want to understand the role of media in contemporary practices of religious belief. Readers will find that this book provides an insightful analysis of the variety of ways that media contribute to religious practice.

The interviews discussed in *Religion in the Media Age* were generated from Hoover's endeavor to bridge the chasm between ethnographic data and social theory. This book emerged from an earlier work entitled *Media, Home, and Family* (2004), which outlines a research project undertaken by Hoover, Lynn Schofield, Diane F. Alters, Joseph G. Champ, and Lee Hood. Briefly put, Hoover's research team began with the idea that the significance of mass media for meaning (including

religious or spiritual meaning) would be rooted in key moments or 'passages' of lived experience. In terms of method, Hoover's research project is fundamentally sociological. His study looks at the contexts, influences, and consequences of the relationship between media and religion in the material spheres of cultural and social life. As such, *Religion in the Media Age* joins a growing body of literature in media studies that is rapidly developing a substantive record in ethnographic and interpretive audience research.

In nine chapters Hoover reviews the place of religion and spirituality within the history of media in modernity. In chapter two he discusses the shift from medium to meaning and the evolution of theories about media, religion, and culture. He notes that it has been easy for most people to think of religion and media as separate spheres. We have thought of religion as a set of traditions, dogmas, practices, and institutions that exist in autonomous position *vis-à-vis* the 'culture'. We have thought of culture as merely making communication, interaction, memory, and history possible within social relations by providing the languages and contexts of interaction. In chapter three, Hoover explains how media and religion entered a transition stage by the end of the twentieth century. Today religion and the media are ever more connected as we move further into the twenty-first century. He finds that it is through the media that much of contemporary religion and spirituality is known.

This book is a skillful illustration of the 'ethnographic turn' in the sociology of religion. In chapter four Hoover explores plausible narratives of the self or how believers articulate life and culture in the media age. The scientific study of narratives represents an important research tool for Hoover. His own scholarship has been dedicated to the long-term study of religion and meaning in the media age, which he describes as both interpretive and constructivist. In keeping with the symbolic-interaction theoretical approach, Hoover is interested in understanding how people make meanings in the media age, and how the symbolic resources of the media sphere relate to those meanings that are oriented to faith, spirituality, religion, and transcendent meaning (92–112). In chapter five Hoover discusses the importance of reception for the study of religion and media. He argues that if we think about religion and media only in institutional-structural terms, then we will ignore the way in which media and religion are coming together in important ways in contemporary life. Hoover contends that these historical trends lead researchers to adopt a particular kind of analytic strategy: one that focuses on the use or reception of media, and looks at both the texts and practices of consumption that result (113–146).

The second half of Hoover's ambitious book focuses on the politics of religious identity from a North American perspective. He shows that the growth of mass media technology has stimulated the 'return of the religious' for daily life. This phenomenon is deeply influenced by the marketing culture of consumption and the power of global capitalism. Attention is given to the negotiated readings of

popular culture amidst the dominance of 'neat capitalism' that create new expression of religious practice. Chapter six looks at the expressions of cultural objects and religious identity among born-again Christians and members of mainline Churches (147–175). Chapter seven looks at the expressions of cultural objects and religious identity among what Hoover broadly labels as 'metaphysical believers, dogmatists, and secularists' (176–204). He argues that the new millennium effectively ushered in a new conversation both at the intersection between religion and media, and about religion and media. Religion re-entered public life and public discourse at a whole new level in the years since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Hoover tends to concentrate on the so-called 'culture wars' based in religion or religious values. The outcomes of media culture can be found in the rise of religious conservatism, especially fundamentalism and evangelicalism within North American Christianity. This book emphasizes the link between religion and media during the US General Election of 2004.

Overall, this work will be valuable for readers concerned about the relationship of media to religion. Hoover shows how specific groups make sacred meaning and religious representation via media culture. He highlights how mass media provide symbolic resources that shape various modes of religious experience, including the body, the visual, objects, ritual, music, and experience itself. Also, he documents the decline in authority and the rise of individual expression and autonomy, a phenomenon that crosses both social class and location within world religions. It remains important for readers to question the hegemony of media over religion and to find examples of religion shaping media. Furthermore, there is a need for scholars of religion to engage this kind of media study by their peers working in journalism or sociology.

God In France. Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God

Jonkers, P. & R. Welten, eds. Leuven: Peeters, 2006.

ISBN: 90-429-1570-6. Pp. 236.

Reviewed by Nathan Loewen, McGill University.

With *God In France*, Peter Jonkers and Ruud Welten have edited a volume that says almost as much about the current philosophical and theological thinking in the Netherlands as it does about thinking on 'God' in France. Presumably, given the many options, these are the figures who generate the most interest and response among Dutch academics. This volume reviews nine intellectuals that figure prominently in France.

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