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Lynn Schofield Clark (editor). *Religion, Media, and the Marketplace*. Rutgers University Press, 2007.

Lynn Schofield Clark's book of scholarly essays probes into various aspects of how religious identity and leadership intersect with the commercial marketplace. A century ago, German sociologist Max Weber, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, argued that Calvinist ideals led to a disciplined "work hard-save money" attitude that fostered wealth creation. Since then, many attempts have been made to cross-correlate religious attitudes and marketplace ideals. This anthology, edited by Clark, builds on the established nexus between religion (*religio*) and the marketplace (*mercato*) and extends this model. While the text is a compilation of separate essays, the articles together weave the collaborative thesis that religion itself is a marketplace, in which consumer principles prevail.

From a marketer's standpoint, "build it and they will come" is the prevailing *modus operandi*, and in order to "build" the appeal of any product (religious or otherwise) the marketer relies heavily on the media. Media, in their traditional role, are expected to act as neutral recorders of history. However, the book argues that the techniques of effective media operations have been cleverly tapped for public relations goals; well-trained operatives have the ability to crystallize public opinion favorably through what appear to be semi-journalistic activities. Hence, as Clark states in her Preface (p.x), "the logic of the market is transforming the meaning and experience of religions." As such, media, the book's thesis argues, are interlocutors, agents of the marketplace. While traditionally perceived to be neutral presenters of an objective reality, the media are, by very definition, *mediators* of culture, interlocutors who stamp the validity of trends and religious events through reportage. Items become officially admitted into the archives of culture once they are recorded through electronic or printed media. For instance, a religious *event* exists once it is recorded in the newspaper or a gathering place online (Christian web sites, beliefnet.com). In other words, while the media may appear neutral about a particular brand or type of religion, the decision in and of itself whether and how to report (or not report) a given event in the media reflects that event's perceived cultural significance (or irrelevance). As such, the media play an important role in creating and determining both religious and secular concepts themselves, as perceived by the society in which the media (and by definition, *mediated*) messages are viewed.

The anthology extends the marketplace metaphor globally, asserting that increased global migration creates a world arena in which immigrants transport the concepts of Old Country religions to new shores, where eager consumers await such "goods," much as they would attractive consumer wares. Part one, specifically, traces the selling, influencing, and purchasing habits of consumers in the mediated religious marketplace. In the opening chapter, David Nord focuses on the nineteenth century Philadelphia Bible Society and its practice of giving away books. This practice, Nord claims, became the foundation for the merger of religious evangelism and religious publishing. Anne Borden, in the subsequent article, discusses Christian bookstores as commercial outlets for religious publishers and the supply chain that has emerged around these venues. The religious publishing industry has developed a parallel chain to secular retailers, with a commercial outlook that is equally far-reaching. Later essays about

Indian religions, Islam, and “the cult of Mary” further investigate the global religious marketplace and attempt to examine the global religious book market.

Part two of Clark’s book examines material artifacts and film in different cultures as a more permanent record of religious civilization, while part three focuses on the religious “Other,” including Muslims in Denmark and the priest-healer in a Christianized Africa. An essay on “Religious Functionaries in Ghanaian/Nigerian Films,” by Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, discusses the threat to the Christian mission of African Christians’ continued reliance on the sorcerers and mystics of native cultures. The missionary effort presumes that the western marketing ideal will prevail in creating a pivotal shift from more “backwards,” indigenous ideals to the “implicitly desirable,” more prosperous (and Protestant) work ethic and the missionary viewpoint; problematically, the enduring role of indigenous spiritual shamans appears, to the eyes of Western missionaries, to impede this effort. As such, the “name of Jesus” (p. 240) is evoked in the films to attempt to encourage African Christians to “overcome” a reliance on “evil medicines” and local shamans. Hence, film, which is shown in commercial theaters under the “evangelical” genre, is used to bring about a desired social change and religious-market economy work in tandem.

Part four discusses the revival of Woodstock-type festivals in the United States as showcases for new religious practices. A chapter on “The Burning Man Festival” and its totemic artifacts highlights the intense visuals created for a “Media Mecca” on television. A secondary audience is thus created that can be exposed to neo-pagan practices through the high-impact nature of the media event. Similarly, the Mexican-inspired “Days of the Dead” in South Texas and California, celebrated in November, provide a focus for the Latino community that is both ethnic and religious. It is popular with non-Latinos in California, who buy “Day of the Dead” products such as skulls, miniature skeletons, and other items to decorate altars.

A concluding chapter by Stewart Hoover puts forth that religious ideas, like other articulations of culture, must be mediated in the marketplace to take effect. It is within that marketplace that they are modified, as are any ideas, and therefore must be analyzed through the existent models of perception and attitude alteration. Religious media messages compete with secular messages and the perceptual filters of the average consumer. Hence, he argues, there are not two parallel, discrete worlds, but one holistic media battleground. The media are the messengers of both secular and religious messages, the authors maintain, which is a unifying theme. Finally, suggestions for future research are included, with a view toward how religion itself is changed through the encounter with the secular world. Much religion research focuses on the impact of missionaries and preachers on populations, but far less on how the religious establishment itself is modernized or forced to change by what is encountered.

Clark’s book will be particularly useful for readers who do not have a strong background in the history of global religions. Her work illuminates often-neglected religions, such as pagan and indigenous Latino, and places them in the global sphere. It is sufficiently transnational in reach to be attractive to any audience. All of the essays illustrate how individual religions impact secular society and how they make visible the typically transparent merging of the sacred-secular realm. What remains unclear is the mainstream secular media’s reaction to the splintering of society along religious lines and how the average secular reader reacts to the new religious coverage. For experts in the

religion-ethnicity field, however, the work offers concrete examples of the interaction between media, culture, and religion. In short, the book is comprehensive, analytical, and insightful, combining the works of several modern authors with substantial background in religious and ethnographic research. It speaks with one voice to the scholarly and commercial markets and is sufficiently global to be useful to any campus or classroom community.

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