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ORDINARY LIVES AND GRAND SCHEMES

An Anthropology of Everyday Religion

Edited by
Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec

ORDINARY LIVES AND GRAND SCHEMES

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Afterword

Everyday Religion and the Contemporary World

The Un-Modern, Or What Was Supposed to Have Disappeared But Did Not

Robert A. Orsi

> The world—the time has come to say it, though
> the news will not be welcome to everyone—has
> no intention of abandoning enchantment altogether.
> —Roberto Calasso, *Literature and the Gods*

The modern world was not supposed to look the way it does in this book. Modern men and women were not – still at this late date (which means this many years from the European Enlightenment[s]) – supposed to be finding saints beneath the soil of a Greek island, or bringing their needs to a deceased southern Italian holy figure who had for years soaked his sacerdotal clothing with blood from miraculous wounds in his hands, feet and side (cloth cherished now by his devout as precious relics), nor were they supposed to be dancing in the alleys of Egyptian cities to boisterous pop music first composed for celebrations at the tombs of Muslim saints (to cite three examples of contemporary religion from this collection of essays). This sort of religion – and it is the assumption of the contributors to this volume that these different examples of contemporary religiosity share characteristics that warrant organizing them under the single rubric of 'everyday religion' – was fated to be outgrown by the world's cultures, beginning with the West (specifically northern Europe) and then spreading across the globe, to be succeeded by a modern liberal faith sanctioned by (and providing sanction for) law, political theory, epistemology and science. Let me briefly review this history of the making of religious obsolescence here, because I think the notion of 'everyday religion' as developed in this collection is usefully viewed in relation to this story, as

it offers an important alternative perspective, another angle of vision, on modern and contemporary religion.

The intellectuals and divines of the European seventeenth century, weary of endless internecine religious terrorism and war, imagined a 'religion' free of local particularities, a faith that all reasonable people, unless corrupted by priests, would be naturally inclined to share. Modern religion was to be an interior and personal matter, freely assented to, not compelled by priests or magistrates, and it was to be independent of the nation-state (although emergent modern Western nationalisms were heavily dependent on religion). This 'religion' addressed itself to a sane and singular divinity who did not seek human sacrifice, as the old god had (during the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572, for example, when the Seine flowed red from the blood of hundreds of brutalized Protestant bodies thrown into it as it flowed out of Paris into the countryside), but order, peace and human flourishing. Modern religion was about ethics and belief, not about kissing the relics of a dead saint. In the eighteenth century this vision of a universal, inwardly focused and tolerant religion – tolerant, that is, except for the religions featured in the chapters of this book, which were seen by liberal theorists such as John Locke as so irremediably out of step with and hostile to the coming age as not to be protected by guarantees of toleration – underwrote new ideas about the organization of society, about freedom of conscience, and about human nature and identity. It also condoned chattel slavery and soon provided the moral rationale for empire (as well as contributing to slavery's end and challenging imperial pretensions).

By the end of the nineteenth century – we can take 1871, the date of the publication of Edward Burnett Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (in two volumes: *The Origins of Culture* and *Religion in Primitive Culture*) as a crucial marker here – this notion of 'religion', with its origins first in violence and exhaustion and then in the repression and sublimation of the memory of violence in liberal political theory, an amnesia fundamental to the self-understanding and self-regard of the modern nation-state, had also become the theoretical foundation of the new science of religion.[1] So when we talk about modern religion we are referring to at least three things: (1) the subject of academic inquiry, as in religious studies and the anthropology of religion, where "modern religion" is an analytic category that attempts to name a distinct and universal dimension of human experience; (2) a normative discourse about religion and the self that has been developing from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries and that proposes how persons ought to live and how states ought to be organized, with northern European and American Protestantism as exemplary forms; and (3) the lived practices of modern men and women since the eighteenth century. The phrase 'modern religion' has always entailed both descriptive and prescriptive dimensions; it inscribes one way of being religious as 'religion' itself.

Between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, modern 'religion', in the social world and in scholarship alike, served as the ground of cultural hierarchies (more advanced societies practiced the higher, more modern forms of religion, free of archaic residue; lesser societies practiced religion of the sort evident in this volume) and as a metric for distinguishing among kinds or levels of human consciousness (primitive or infantile consciousness vs. the mature, enlightened mind); and it was mobilized as a political and legal mandate. Modern understandings of 'religion' also told a story about time: certain ways of being religious belonged inherently to past times and would inexorably be discredited and discarded. When Americans set out to explain and justify the decision to go to war against Iraq they conflated all these inherited certainties, thus unleashing anew the violence and intolerance latent in modern notions of 'religion' and contributing (together with their counterparts in Muslim societies) to bringing the world back full circle to the sixteenth century (this time around with new and deadlier weapons). This resurgence not simply of 'religion' but of religious war has led to what social theorist Arjun Appadurai identifies as 'the odd return of the body of the patriot, the martyr, and the sacrificial victim into the spaces of mass violence' (2006). We seem to have entered upon another age like that of the Thirty Years War.[2]

Modern religion turned out not to be stable and singular, however. Over the centuries, it generated out of itself alternative religious sensibilities and practices (religious 'enthusiasm', for instance, and the varieties of pietism). One of the most recent of such variants, which is central to contemporary conversations about global 'religion' and politics, is what was until a decade ago called 'fundamentalism'. The term is of recent vintage. Americans introduced it in the early twentieth century to describe a group of highly educated Protestant Christians who rejected modern liberal Christianity, which at that time was at the pinnacle of its prestige and power in the United States and in Western Europe. Doctrinally, fundamentalists believed in the infallibility and inerrancy of scripture (against the new Biblical criticism), in the literal reality of Jesus' miracles, in the superiority of conservative Protestant Christianity over all other religions, and in the moral depravity of humans, which necessitated the disciplines of religion. Fundamentalists emphasized clerical authority; they tended to be socially conservative, rejecting the allure of modern culture. By the end of the twentieth century 'fundamentalist' had expanded to include religious practitioners of whatever faith who were at odds with liberal modernity generally and specifically with its religious and political expectations.

Fundamentalists of all sorts were said to share a common set of family resemblances. They took their sacred texts literally, both as history and as moral legislation; they stressed male clerical authority over individual lay choice; they created social and political structures that would insure religious conformity and orthodoxy as they saw it; and they expected the self-effacement, if not the subordination, of women. Because modern 're-

ligion' is also the subject of an academic discipline, religious studies contributed to the construction and elaboration of the term 'fundamentalism' and to its status as an atavism in the modern world. This is why the discipline was not immediately prepared to understand the world after 9/11, when it became clear that 'fundamentalism' was not, in fact, a retrograde religious form, but an integral, inescapable and possibly permanent part of modernity itself (see, e.g. Gray 2003).

After the events first of 1989 and then of September 2001 (and the subsequent wars), the word and concept 'fundamentalism' lost salience. 'Fundamentalism' is no longer much in use, having been replaced by religious 'terrorism' in the minds of anxious citizens, but also among sympathetic observers by the more neutral and even positive terms 'conservative' religion, political religion, political theology (which assumes the fundamental interconnectedness of the political and the religious, often in a spirit of advocacy, e.g. this is the way it ought to be), or traditional piety. The rise of Islamism was paralleled by the deepening political confidence in the United States of conservative evangelical Christian coalitions, who likewise called for a rethinking of the independence of the political sphere from religion. The liberal state, with its separation of the civic and the religious, was no longer the only acceptable political form of modernity. In the United States these days, as among the clerical ruling circles of Iran, for example, you are not 'religious' unless your religion includes political ambitions and agendas. A politics free of religion has come to seem naïve and old-fashioned, and with this has come an insistence on the singular, coherent and authoritative nature of religious traditions. Among the 'world religions' everywhere there are 'heightened demands for a unitary profession of the faith', in anthropologist Robert W. Hefner's words, pervasive 'homogenizing pressures', and a widespread 'drive to make the state an instrument of religious standardization.' The phenomenon once called 'fundamentalism', imagined as the antithesis of modernity, has become an alternative modernity, one of multiple modernities; as Hefner's comments suggest, it has become the new modern. The poles of religious possibility in the contemporary world, Hefner writes, appear to be 'separation' (the old modern) and 'conquest' (the new modern) (1998: 92, 95, 99).

The religious practices and practitioners discussed in this book have very little to do with all this; they appear to be off to one side of the spectrum of modern religion, off-modern rather than an instance of the multiple modern. Does this mean that the practices of everyday religion are 'survivals', traces of the past in the present? It is the case that the religious idioms described here illustrate the multiplicity of temporalities that coexist within the modern and contemporary, especially in religious contexts, the simultaneity of the unsimultaneous (to borrow Ernst Bloch's famous phrase). I will develop this idea further towards the end of this chapter. But the 'modern' has been thoroughly deprived of its teleological inevitability and I see no justification for reinstating it as a lens for view-

ing and assessing everyday Muslim and Catholic practices. So then where do we locate these religious forms on the landscape of the contemporary global religious scene? How are the everyday religious idioms described and studied in this collection part of contemporary global reality and contemporary religion? If we do not find a place for 'everyday religion' in the conversations underway about secularization, political theology, modernity and post-modernity, scholarship of the sort evident in this book will be consigned to irrelevance, having nothing to offer the most urgent questions of our historical moment.[3]

That the everyday seriously matters in the contemporary world is perversely and tragically evident in the rage such religious practices and attitudes cause political and religious elites and in their determination to harass and suppress them. Everyday life, its pleasures and its pieties, are fiercely monitored by the various guardians of sacred public order on the planet, secular and religious, or more often some combination of the two. Nothing so provokes religious moderns of all sorts as religious idioms independent of their controlling orthodoxy and scrutiny, of their political agendas and moral rigidities. Yet the way of being religious described in this volume, organized under the rubric of 'everyday religion', is how most of the world is religious today, from the alleys of Egypt to the new religions of African and Asian cities, to the shrine culture re-emerging across Southeast Asia; in the plethora of religious improvisations in the United States; and in the resurgence of devotions to the saints across the former Soviet space.[4]

So what is everyday religion? The term 'everyday' has had, in the words of a scholar who has carefully traced its history, a very 'troubled career' (Highmore 2002: 1). It has been used (inconsistently) as a vehicle for examining and critiquing capitalist modes of consumption, the allure of the commodity, and the routinization of ordinary life, as well as a designation for spaces and times free from capitalist disciplines. The concept of the everyday, as developed by European and American historians after World War II, opened a window onto working-class culture. It has been a useful lens for tracing relationships between the global and the local. But 'the everyday' has never been a stable category.

The meaning of 'everyday' when used to modify 'religion' seems at first glance to be self-evident: it refers to how men and women appropriate for themselves the dominant religious idioms of their cultures. The phrase implies an opposition: 'everyday religion' as opposed to … 'Everyday religion' is not solely or primarily what happens in specially designated and consecrated sacred spaces, under the authority of religious elites, but in street and alleys, in the souvenir stalls outside shrines, and in bedrooms and kitchens; 'everyday religion' does not happen at times determined by sacred calendars or official celestial computations, but by the circumstances and exigencies of people's lives. The everyday religious is not performed by rote or in accordance with authority; it is improvised

and situational. Everyday religion takes place at (and contributes to the making of)

> those moments in social life when the customary, given, habitual, and normal is disrupted, flouted, suspended and negated, when crises transform the world from an apparently fixed and finished set of rules into a repertoire of possibilities, when a person stands out against the world and, to borrow Marx's vivid image, forces the frozen circumstances to dance by singing to them their own melody. (Jackson 1989: 20)

But this dichotomy between the frozen and the fluid, the orthodox and the popular, does not work well as a way of thinking about everyday religion. For one thing, the religious person who enters a particular life moment or crisis does not come to it free of all memory, relationships, embodiments, desires, fears and inheritances (unlike the archetypal existential man of phenomenological anthropology, who appears to arrive always without a story or a past and without any relationships, making him an avatar of the modernist fantasy of the unencumbered and radically individual self). This cannot be true in religious contexts. Religion situates practitioners in webs of relationships between heaven and earth, living and dead, and in rounds of stories; religious practices are always embodied and if they are forgotten in the mind they are remembered in muscle and sinew. The religious person (by which I do not mean a hypostasized entity but simply a man or woman using religious idioms in engaging their lived circumstances) comes to no life occasion free of connections and entanglements. Moreover, the two ways of participating in a religious world sketched out above, e.g., church/street – corresponding to the famous distinction sacred/profane – are obviously not distinct. Everyday religion understood from one perspective may be viewed as the most intimate (if not the most insidious) site of the intrusion of religious institutions, doctrines and authorities into the secret places of personal experience. The everyday religion of the Catholic women of Quebec in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for instance, kept them bound to a sacred and sacerdotal regime that required them on doctrinal grounds to bear children well beyond the strength of their bodies and the capacities of their families to feed them, and they did (see Gauvreau 2005). The problem of 'everyday religion' remains.

What makes the example of the woman calling on Santo Pio's assistance an instance of everyday religion, as Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec introduce the term in this collection, is not that the woman is praying at home rather than in church, but that her prayer arises at the point where 'daily practice and grand schemes come together'. The key here is the word 'everyday'. Giovanna Bacchiddu writes later in the volume that the practices of everyday life are 'irreducible' to the category 'religion'. Religion, says Bacchiddu, 'surfaces in everyday activities and practices'. The 'everyday' is more capacious than the 'religious'. Inquiry into everyday

religion, consequently, begins not with specific religious traditions, in order to trace the indigenous appropriation and reinvention of particular elements, but with the 'manifold paths of daily life', in a phrase of Schielke's and Debevec's. 'Equally if not more important' than the religious tradition in question, they write, is 'to inquire what it means, in a specific situation, to live a life.' This is an empirical matter. The central question in the study of everyday religion is 'how to account for the relationship [between] articulations of a coherent world-view and the practice and knowledge of living a life?'

It is in the interplay of religious practices and understandings with the circumstances of everyday life that religion is experienced as really real, indeed that religious phenomena become real – meaning that they acquire an 'objective, external quality', an 'objective power' – in the experiences, imaginations and practices of men and women in relation to each other and to their gods. The really realness of the two great poles of contemporary religion – liberal modern/fundamentalist modern – comes from commitment to doctrinal orthodoxy; from the alignment of religion with national or regional identities imagined as static, ancient and singular; or from adherence to a particular leader or to a political agenda. But this is not the case with the religious practices described in this volume. In everyday religion, at the juncture of the exigencies of daily life with inchoate religious inheritances, religious reality acquires a life apart from practitioners, in the world. People meet their gods as present and real before them; the gods (and ancestors, ghosts, demons, saints, and so on) take their places within necessary circles of relationships. Religious idioms become 'things [and, I would add, living beings] that people approach, use and do', as Schielke and Debevec put it. As a result of this objectivity, externality and realness, religious idioms that arise within and exist in response to the exigencies of everyday life are not ever completely or securely under the authority either of the persons using them or of religious or political authorities. In an important phrase from the introduction, everyday religious practice is 'embedded in traditions, relations of power and social dynamics, but it is not determined by them.'

The 'circumstances of everyday life', moreover, include religious doctrines and rules, as well as the official limits to practice and imagination. 'Everyday religion' is not premised on the dichotomy of religious elites/ordinary practitioners, which was so crucial to scholars of 'popular' religion. Santo Pio, for example, as Evgenia Mesaritou shows, becomes real in the contradictions and contests among his devout (who include, in any case, many priests, nuns, bishops, even cardinals and one pope, John Paul II) and church authorities (architects, bureaucrats, the officials of the local Franciscan order) determined to direct and control the devotion. It is by manipulating the spaces of the shrine – spaces which have been designed and organized by the caretakers of the devotion precisely in such a way as to shape what can and cannot take place with them between the saint and

his devout – that Santo Pio's devout have access to him. Everyday religion, in other words, does not exist apart from religious tradition and authority, either in religious spaces or at home. As American sociologist Nancy Ammerman puts it, to study everyday religion 'requires both an attentiveness to unconventional practices and an ear for the pervasiveness of traditions' (2007: 8). To return to my example of a woman praying to Santo Pio in her kitchen, it is the powerful sanction of the church and the fact of this woman's having been formed from childhood by the disciplines of a particular Southern Italian Catholic religious and social world that endows her with the capacity to deploy the devotion in order to (freely?) do what she must do within the limits of her social world (see Apolito 1998). There is no absolute distinction between freedom and authority in everyday religion.

Everyday religion is also thus the practice of a great refusal – the refusal to be excluded from religious traditions construed as normative and singular by government officials, religious elites, or scholars of religion and religions. As Graw writes of West Africa, 'Diviners usually perceive of themselves as opening within, not outside, the realm of Islam', rendering impossible any absolute distinction between '"popular" or "official" varieties of Islam.' Perhaps it is better to say that everyday religion is the practice of varied strategies of a great refusal. The men and women Debevec spoke with in Burkina Faso, for example, laid claim to their identities as 'good Muslims' first by establishing and recognizing the (impossible) ideal of perfect adherence as defined by the authorities (this is what the really good Muslim does) and then by marking their distance from this (alas, this is not what we do), a kind of participation by conscious inversion. Knowing what they are not doing is what makes them good Muslims. Or as Peterson says of the street-smart Egyptian mulid revellers, they struggle 'to find a balance between religious commitment and a love for life', or in a local popular expression, 'an hour for your Lord and an hour for your heart.'

Religion in everyday life, then, refers to the places and times where the ordinary and daunting, the exhilarating and joyful realities of human experience are taken hold of, by men and women in the company of their gods, and where other discourses (nationalism, for instance, or political fearfulness) are most intimately encountered and engaged. Here these other discourses do not dominate, or they do not always or simply dominate. In everyday religion men and women (and children), holding the multiple media of their traditions in their hands – relics, songs, images, stories, memories, beads, candles and so on – show themselves as being adept at cordoning off without actually denying – even while affirming – religious requirements that otherwise would keep them from living life the way they want to live it or the way they need to live it. 'Street-smart youth in Egypt adopt the exceptional, spectacular, all-encompassing festive moments of the mulid', Peterson tells us, 'as an accommodating framework in which they negotiate both the knowledge that explains their lives and the ways

that they actually want to live them', finding a path between 'what they are convinced they should do and how they actually act'. The 'everyday' offers a theoretical framework for the study of religion that points beyond the catalogue of antinomies in human experience that have long oriented religious scholarship – discipline/freedom; authority/agency; choice/determination; resignation/hopefulness, to cite just some of them – while at the same time keeping in clear sight the realities of political power, social hierarchies and cultural formations.

In addition to such experiential dichotomies, the study of religion has also been historically shaped by a number of key conceptual or analytical antinomies, famous pairs of opposites that have fundamentally constituted how we understand the 'religious'. Attending to religion in everyday circumstances offers the theoretical resources for developing the study of religion beyond these as well. One is, as already noted, sacred/profane. The chapters in this volume confirm that sacred and profane are never distinct or never distinct in an absolute way, but are braided in people's everyday experience. We no longer speak of sacred or profane but of a helix, a twisting of sacred and profane around each other through the movement of people's days, the contingencies of their social circumstances, and the dynamics of their relationships. This is not to say that the problem Clifford Geertz identified as one of the most vexed in the study of religion – that is, how people move back and forth between modes of thought or experience (as a nurse, for example, in a modern hospital who is also a devout of Santo Pio, whom she understands as present to her throughout her rounds, goes between her medical duties and her relationship with the saint and prayers for the sick) – is simply solved. It especially does not mean that in particular circumstances the transition between sacred and profane might not be jarring, disorienting or disruptive. But it undermines the assumption that the two are absolutely divergent registers of experience and being (Geertz 1973: 119).

The second essential pairing of oppositions in the making of religion is us/them. Theorist of religion Jonathan Z. Smith identifies this as the most fundamental and necessary of all the opposites that have contributed to the making of modern notions of 'religion' (1982: 6). Religious practitioners of the sort who appear in these pages – who have recourse to diviners in times of confusion, unsatisfied desire, and stress, for example, who dream of saints, who seek ways of securing Santo Pio's 'continuing presence in their everyday lives' – were again precisely the ones destined to disappear, in Europe and around the globe, according to the normative timeline of religious theory. Their ongoing presence in the contemporary world is taken as anomalous, even bizarre, exotic and risible; within the hierarchy of religious evaluation their behaviours are judged delusional, infantile and escapist. What modern person looks with equanimity on a woman kissing the bloody cloth relic of a dead miraculous healer? But the existential and phenomenological orientation of the contributors to this

collection – an orientation that fundamentally shapes the understanding of 'everyday religion' that emerges in these pages – restores the common and recognizable humanity of religious practitioners. (In the academic and theoretical context, that is. Their humanity was not necessarily in need of restoration in other contexts or among other interlocutors.) The notion of 'everyday religion' as developed here undoes the radical otherness of men and women practicing these forms of religion by acknowledging that they (who were once called our 'subjects') and we, the scholars who study them – us/them – are contending with similar life challenges and that all of us equally must deal with the inevitable doubleness of being both agents of our own lives and experiencing ourselves as powerless and determined, of having chosen and of having no choice.

Knut Graw puts this most eloquently and clearly when he writes, 'An anthropological study of divination as a cultural field of hope and prospect shows that divination is neither exotic nor part of a primordial cultural past but a complex and highly topical cultural practice of understanding and empowerment. Such a perspective on (Islamic) divinatory praxis highlights, in other words, its existential significance, not its otherness.' Otherness is not the same as difference. Scholars of religion can, and I believe that they must, attend to the existential, political and cultural differences between themselves and the men and women whose religious practices they study. But this does not mean rendering these men and women so different – so alien – as to make them virtually members of another species, finding no common ground between their lives and ours. This impulse of othering is unfortunately too common in the study of religion, where others and women at work on their worlds in the company of their gods are viewed as 'data' or 'fair game' for theorizing (see Orsi 2004).

The third and final foundational dichotomy in the study of 'religion' that the concept of 'everyday religion' radically calls into question is presence/absence, in particular the presence/absence of the gods (a synecdoche for the whole host of 'imaginary' beings of different religious worlds, among them ghosts, saints, ancestors and spirits). This is the most vexed oppositional pair in the modern history of the study of religion and also the most mandated, the most authoritative, and the most consequential for religious practitioners; dissolving it, consequently, is the most theoretically challenging, even explosive, contribution of the study of everyday religion as proposed in this collection to the broader study of religion.

'There was a time', says literary critic Roberto Calasso, 'when the gods were not just a literary cliché, but an event, a sudden apparition' (2001: 23).[5] But that was then and this is now. Although we know enough today not to say that the modern world is 'disenchanted', in Max Weber's famous word (there are plenty of enchantments among both modern secularists and religionists), religious practices oriented to presence of the gods in particular things or particular times and places – touching the gods, kissing them, punishing and entreating, speaking to them, feeding and

anointing them, dressing them – which included the understanding that the gods were there, really present, to be dressed, fed, kissed, and so on – were taken by modern religious theorists as evidence of the most 'primitive' and 'savage' level of religiosity, among other peoples and among the Western industrial working class. 'Good' modern religion did not include real presences. Modern religious elites sought to expunge practices of presence; at the extreme, such behaviours were classified as pathological. 'Religion', as it developed as an analytical category in northern Europe, England and America, banished the gods; the most influential modern definition of religion, Clifford Geertz's 1973 essay on 'Religion as a Cultural System', makes no reference to special beings. Philosopher Charles Taylor refers in his history of the making of modern consciousness to this understanding of supernatural presence, what I am calling 'real presence', (rather than, for example, symbolic or metaphorical presence or the doctrine God's providential agency in the movement of history) as 'the old model of presence'. Real presence is the clearest indicator of the premodern. Other forms of religiosity, including (especially, as I have argued) 'fundamentalism', were congruent with the modern. But real presence was just what modern people were expected to grow out of in time (see Taylor 2007: 447–48).

Most of the chapters in this book describe practices of presence, so we can say that everyday religion, as a theoretical category as well as lived practice, becomes those occasions when humans in the mundane circumstances of their lives engage and are engaged by the gods along with all the media (things, stones, grottos, tombs and so on) of real presence. This identification of the everyday with the real or literal presence of the gods runs throughout the chapters of this book. According to Bacchiddu, everyday religion embodies and enacts 'relations between humans and supernatural entities'; in everyday religious practices 'God and the saints are "socialized", brought into an active social relation and experienced as interlocutors.' Severine Rey speaks of 'the profound feelings of closeness felt by the villagers for the saints.' By means of rosaries, prayer cards, and other objects, writes Mesaritou, 'people ensure the saints' continuing presence in their everyday lives.' Peterson says that according to the devout, the saint's presence extends to the entire mulid area, imbuing material objects there with blessings. Debevec describes women, who are otherwise so assiduous at postponing the requirements of piety, negotiating with God to give them husbands.

As the contributors to this collection make clear, furthermore, the experience of presence is not a matter solely of the vertical, but the horizontal too. Men and women engaging and being engaged by the gods are also at the same time in relationship to other persons, in their families, states, communities and social worlds. These others include the dead and the absent, as Alison Marshall shows in her discussion of the religious practices of Chinese immigrants to Manitoba, Canada. Religion in everyday life is

abundantly intersubjective and relational. Inevitably, then, the currents that flow through the spaces and times of everyday religion include unconscious or unacknowledged desires, fears, and hopes (as well as conscious ones). The identities of the gods and persons present to each other amid the realities of everyday experience are multiple and intertwined: to borrow language from object relations theory, they include desired and feared, possible and rejected embodiments of practitioners' selves as well as of their significant circles of others (which always include the gods). Padre Pio may be one's longed for father, feared mother, the love one needs or cannot bear, or some combination of fragments of these inner realities. This makes everyday religion an especially dynamic, unstable and highly fluid psychological and social reality; the intersection of the horizontal and the vertical has consequences for both the gods and humans. Identities and lives are transformed, for better and for worse, by the presence of the gods and humans to each other.

'For better or worse' is key here. There is nothing necessarily 'good' or 'bad' about everyday religion; it is neither nourishing nor harmful, simply. Everyday religion does not liberate people from 'the continuum of the present' (in David Harvey's description of Henri Lefebvre's idea of the 'everyday') nor does it suture them more tightly to it. Either/or is not the appropriate register for the critical study of everyday religion. But as people move in and out of healing sites, as they enter the company of diviners and visit the shrines and tombs of saints, bringing their lives into these venues of presence and then bringing things touched to or taken from these places and holy persons back to their homes and workplaces, the givenness of the real is no longer stable or singular. Everyday religions are, in Graw's phrase, 'cultural technolog[ies] of hope and prospect.' This is what makes the sites and practices of everyday religion irritating and dangerous to religious and political authorities, however much they may sanction, tolerate, or authorize them.[6]

The study of contemporary religions has begun to seem increasingly claustrophobic to some of us. As one of my students, who plans to study the lives of a small community of vowed Catholic women in the middle of the United States, said in exasperation, 'how do you escape the trap of the modern?' She was frustrated because almost everything she was reading about contemporary religious women in various traditions around the world viewed them inevitably in some relation to 'the modern', however much this term is said to be contested. Contemporary religious are modern, anti-modern, alternately modern, one of a multiple of moderns, or (less often) pre-modern; but they are always defined in relationship to the modern (which includes the fundamentalist modern, in Hefner's words, the party of 'conquest'). Discourse about modernity and secularization theory (and its inadequacies and limitations) has become like a woven finger-trap toy, impossible to extricate oneself from, especially the harder one tries. The conclusions are given from the start: the nuns my student

wished to study were already destined to be located theoretically somewhere along this continuum of variations of the modern.

But with this growing frustration has come an interest in finding and developing theoretically what Hefner more than a decade ago identified as 'a third option for a refigured religion', a religious practice that is neither separation not conquest, religiously liberal modern or religiously orthodox modern. Many others have come to share this aim. 'Objects, sites, practices, words, representations – even the minds and bodies of worshippers', Talal Asad has written, 'cannot be confined within the exclusive space of what secularists name religion' (1999: 192). At the end of her study of the ways that American Christianity (including Catholicism) is being reformulated to bring it into alignment with state limitations on religion in the public sphere in order to legitimate the presence of Christian programs in state institutions, American legal scholar Winnifred Fallers Sullivan refers as an alternative to contemporary religious idioms and practitioners (she is speaking in particular about Asia and the Middle East) that 'seem to be taking charge of their own lives through re-appropriations of traditional religions in ways that appear to reject both Enlightenment epistemologies and traditional hierarchical structures of religious authorities' (2009: 178). She is pointing here to what I understand Hefner to mean by 'subaltern religious experiences' within traditions. So then what is this third way that is distinct from the two megaliths of modernity/anti-modernity, the parties of separation and conquest, this way of thinking about our world that is not exhausted either by liberal religious modernity or anti-secularist orthodoxies and political theologies?

At the same time, many of us who work on people's everyday relationships with gods, demons, angels and other such figures – those of us who work on real presences in people's experience in history and contemporary culture – have begun to feel restless with the limitations modern social science and historiography impose on what may be said about these figures, about what happens in the interactions between them and the humans who are in relation to them, of their bonds with humans, and about the social and historical import of these relationships that exist between heaven and earth. Modernity – and the critical tools to study the modern world – situates the human at the centre of things; reality exists only as it is for the human. But it is a central contribution of the study of everyday religion that the gods (to remind readers: I use the word as a synecdoche for the plethora of special beings in relation to humans and more broadly still for religious imaginings of reality) are encountered in the circumstances of everyday life as objective, really real, there apart from the human imaginations and bodies out of which they arise. If we do not find a way of studying such experiences of really realness then, as Michel de Certeau has written, they will 'sink into a hidden "underside"' of the world as lived, and we will fail to understand much of human life (1988: 128).

'Everyday religion', as the category is introduced and developed in this collection, offers just such a theoretical framework for thinking through these issues with new insight. The religious practitioners described herein make no claims on the nation-state. They do not aspire to establish social and moral orders, to compel obedience, or to institute religious hierarchies; if anything, they are wary of religious authorities and deft in their avoidance and outwitting of them. They are flexible in terms of doctrine and authority. Their primary allegiances are local and they derive their moral codes from families and communities (rather than from clerically authorized readings of sacred texts). This does not mean that they are isolated and withdrawn; the evidence is that they are fully engaged with the modern world, certainly with its idioms of popular culture, opportunities for travel, and communications media. They are focused on life's existential challenges, but they do not mandate a single path to human fulfilment and well being, even for themselves. Everyday religion as it appears in these chapters is certainly not immune from the planet's ubiquitous political violence or from politically and religiously motivated terror, but practitioners do not attempt to harness either for their own ends.

The everyday religions described are neither liberal modern religion (as this developed from the seventeenth century forward) nor fundamentalist modern (in its recent variants); they belong neither to the party of separation nor to the party of conquest, in Hefner's terms. Rather, they are the religions that were supposed to have disappeared by now. It is precisely as such, as the un-modern, as the remembered, inherited, reinvented fragments of ancient religious worlds that long pre-date the modern, that never went away, but that were explicitly excluded from the normative self-construction and self-representation of the modern at its inception – recall here that the two religions exempt from enlightened toleration, as proposed by John Locke, were Catholicism and Islam – that 'everyday religion' becomes the third way of being religious in the contemporary world that many of us have been looking for, the way out of the finger-trap.

I feel urgency in developing this idea of the third way and moving it closer to the centre of our discussions about contemporary religions. Arjun Appadurai and other social critics speak of the increasing abstraction of modern experience; of the intimate and dreadful local consequences of the invisible movements of global finance; of the increasing militarization and massive arming of the planet; the ecological disaster that is already upon us; of the manipulation of fear by nation-states to justify repression within and wars beyond their borders; and the exacerbation of local conflicts and assault against minorities and human dignity. Radical religion has been one response to these circumstances; radical secularism was another. But the majority of the planet's people are contending with the world as they find it in the practices of everyday religion as described in

this volume. The un-modern, the religions that were supposed to have disappeared but did not – even in those parts of the world, such as the former Soviet Union, where there was a sustained, politically authorized, and well-organized assault against Islam, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Tibetan Buddhism, and so on – pries open a theoretical space in the nearly hermetically sealed conceptualization of contemporary religion as organized around the two poles of separation/conquest and allows us to think new thoughts and raise new questions about religious practice in a troubled world.

Notes

1. On forgetting the violent religious past in the making of tolerant modern nation-states, see Marx 2003.
2. For insight into the new seemingly endless religious wars of our time, see Filkins 2008.
3. My first attempt at taking up this question was 'Is the Study of Lived Religion Irrelevant to the World We Live In?' Presidential Plenary Address, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Orsi 2003.
4. Two recent novels that powerfully explore the threat of the everyday to religious authorities in two different contexts are Hannaham 2009 and Mandanipour 2010.
5. The epigraph to my chapter is on page 23.
6. David Harvey is cited in Highmore 2002: 116.

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