

Book Review

***Religion, Populism, and Modernity: Confronting White Christian Nationalism and Racism.* Edited by Atalia Omer and Joshua Lupo. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2023. ii+302. \$125.00 (hardcover); \$35.00 (paper); \$27.99 (eBook). ISBN 9780268205812.**



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As the most recent addition to the University of Notre Dame Press's Contending Modernities series, *Religion, Populism, and Modernity* centers "White Christian populist and supremacist rhetoric that traffics in an exclusionary conception of peoplehood" to expose the working relationships between religion and nationalism across the global north (3). This exposition then informs an effort to deconstruct ongoing genealogies of modernity.

[This effort prevents] us from falling into stereotypical and reductionistic arguments concerning liberal and ethnic typologies of nationalism, where the former is assumed to represent "good nationalism" and the latter "bad nationalism," and [prevent] us from the all too facile assumption that right-wing populism as the latest iteration of exclusivist nationalism has little or nothing to do with the worlds wrought by racialized capitalism and neo-liberalism over the past few decades (227).

In this project's analysis of modernity, editors Atalia Omer and Joshua Lupo bring together critical voices to "uncover the underlying antisemitic and anti-Muslim grammars of modernity, and their complex intersections with patterns of racialization" (3).

The text consists of eight chapters engaging different facets of right-wing populism, White Christianity, and their rejections of difference. Each author sets out on an independent and interconnected journey of defining and reiterating forms of nationalism that have supported White Christianity's efforts to redefine "authenticity" and suppress differences it views as threats to its status quo.

In Chapter 1, Philip Gorski analyzes the White Christian nationalism running rampant in the United States, its narrative elements, and its sustained support of Donald Trump. Building on this foundation in Chapter 2, Jason A. Springs tackles the sexual politics infused in the zombie nationalism of White evangelical Christianity in the U.S. Chapter 3, by R. Scott Appleby, pivots from evangelicalism to discuss race-religious constructions and anachronistic social histories among Catholics in the U.S. Richard Amesbury broadens the geographical conversation to focus on theological language's role in legitimating exclusivist right-wing populist language in the U.S.

and Germany (Chapter 4). In Chapter 5, Geneviève Zubrzycki moves farther east to examine ethnic nationalism in Poland as it pits itself against Jewish identity, both positively and negatively. Chapter 6, the sole chapter invoking climate and environmentalism, sees Yolande Jansen and Jasmijn Leeuwenkamp analyze global rightward political pulls fueling the climate catastrophe through the lens of Bruno Latour's religious/secular dichotomy. The penultimate chapter, by Sindre Bangstad, converses with several chapters in the volume to advocate interdisciplinarity as a means of further illuminating the harms of right-wing populism. Finally (Chapter 8), Ebrahim Moosa concludes with an assessment of the false liberality of nation-states, such as France, that boast of democratic and secular ideals while violently suppressing religious differences, such as Islam.

With each chapter, *Religion, Populism, and Modernity* offers a critical and eye-opening analysis of the social trends of the first decades of the twenty-first century, while simultaneously starting a new type of conversation and theorizing poised to welcome and engage additional voices for decades to come as we all learn how to actualize an inclusive world. In its thorough approach to understanding the historical and contemporary nuances that have shaped peoplehoods in the global north—specifically those peoplehoods reliant upon iterations of Christian narratives—each author challenges their readers to reexamine their given religio-political narratives and search for communities, both human and nonhuman, that remain marginalized by a system of thought built on benefitting the few at the expense of the many.

Not only does this volume examine the political and social category of religion as it operates across ideologies, but it also tackles the philosophical traditions that undergird these categories and sustain an arbitrary division between the secular and the religious. For example, Ebrahim Moosa's chapter, "Going Rogue on Islam: Derrida's Muslim Hauntology and Nationalism's Specters," takes seriously the strengths and limitations of Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist philosophy, despite the philosopher's limitations in maintaining such an intellectual position in his Schmittian nation-state/friend-enemy political theology that uncritically analyzes Islam. Studies like Moosa's move beyond the critical turn to draw attention to how individual and national theorizing "operate myopically to conceal [their] deep historical, philosophical, and theological parochialism and grammars despite [their] universalizing scope and implementation" (7–8).

The diverse voices present in the volume allow readers to gain a working knowledge of the many local and global trends of right-wing populism that have informed one another for decades and continue to impact many sectors of daily life. This diversity aligns with the editors' long-term hopes to retain "the insights of genealogical accounts of the secular and the religious, while nonetheless pushing beyond them by also giving attention to the dynamic ways in which persons reinterpret these categories in particular social and political contexts" (2). Yet, Sindre Bangstad's chapter—"Which Populism, Which Christianity?"—rightly asserts the need for intersectionality and multivariate analyses to further explore the ways in which religion and secularity are always political and always informing social experiences regardless of the working knowledge individuals may possess about their stated religious traditions.

By centering contemporary right-wing populist movements, the authors of this edited volume accomplish more than a basic overview of populism. They offer deep and thought-provoking engagement with the tangible effects of populisms and the intellectual traditions that

inform them as a means of deconstructing and re-envisioning religious and sociopolitical communities in a complex and multipolar world. Thus, this volume is essential for scholars and students of religious studies and public policy seeking additional context that informs the seemingly unprecedented times in which we live, theorize, and work.

Shaunesse' Jacobs Plaisimond
Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

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