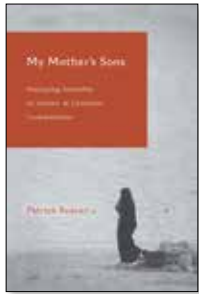


Book Reviews

My Mother's Sons: Managing Sexuality in Islamic and Christian Communities, by Patrick Kraye (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013, pp. 269)

—Reviewed by Harley Talman



Should Western Christians conform to Islamic cultural norms that oppress and devalue women, or should they resist customs like purdah and speak prophetically against them? This emotionally charged cultural and religious issue is obviously relevant for those working for social justice and spiritual transformation in conservative Muslim contexts.

Patrick Kraye, executive director of Interserve USA, spent a quarter century in South and Central Asia, seeing firsthand the fruit of the range of various attitudes and approaches to these issues. He affirms God's desire for cultural diversity as well as the biblical imperative for transformation. He purposes to sensitize intercultural workers to the reality that how we perceive and manage sexuality cannot be separated from our own cultural heritage. Kraye exhorts Western readers to recognize that different ways of managing sexuality (like so many other aspects in diverse cultures) are not wrong, just different. Therefore, we must first understand, and then affirm all that is good in the Islamic ways of dealing with sexuality, yet work to inject biblical values that will eventually transform those societies from within.

This book is marked by three divisions. The first examines Islamic (specifically Pakistani Pashtun) management of sexuality, explaining how and why it functions as it does, especially in regard to the influence of the sacred texts of Islam. These texts instruct Muslim communities to "create two safe spaces.... Public space is meant to be safe for men... Domestic space is meant to be safe for women" (45).

Part II examines Christian views of sexuality and its management, as informed by central biblical passages. This enlightening discussion examines both egalitarian and complementarian perspectives on these passages and will introduce almost all readers to new theological and exegetical insights. Kraye acknowledges his preference for the complementarian, but acknowledges how significantly it is shaped by Western culture. As such it is not a directly transferable paradigm for Muslim societies. On the other

hand, the complementarian view does not adequately promote the Scriptural imperative of reformation of Islamic social systems. Hence, Kraye proposes a third way.

Based on the creation narrative in Genesis 1–3 which ran contrary to Greco-Roman values and assumptions, Kraye shows how the apostle Paul integrated this theological foundation regarding sexuality with the managing of it in the various social contexts to which he wrote (1 Cor. 11; Gal. 3:28, Eph. 5:22–23 and 1 Tim. 2:9–15). His research thoroughly interacts with contemporary scholarship on the cultural and exegetical issues involved. Most readers will profit (and be challenged) by understanding the cultural backdrop of the varied contexts which Paul addresses in each of these passages.

For example, aristocratic men in Corinth were covering their heads with their fine togas to draw attention to themselves. By removing the symbol of propriety and marriage, elite women were shaming themselves, as well as their husbands, thus a woman is obliged to have a veil [*exousia*] on her head. Kraye explains:

In the Greco-Roman world and especially within the redeemed community, a woman was to exercise her own will and assent to her marriage. Wearing a head covering in the corporate assembly while praying and prophesying apparently was a statement by the wife affirming the value, integrity, and sanctity of her marriage relationship before the community (132).

In his analysis of 1 Corinthians 11, Kraye demonstrates how Paul seems to accept the Greco-Roman hierarchy of relationships, but subverts the idea of ontological difference between the sexes. Moreover, he obliges men to reflect the image of God by acting as servants, not lords, of their wives. Thus, Kraye argues that Paul accepted and worked within the social constraints of his society while at the same time being countercultural in rejecting the assumptions and values upon which they were built.

In Part III, Kraye integrates the preceding research to suggest ways that Western workers can more effectively engage Muslim societies so as to promote biblical transformation. Cultural immersion and building relational trust lay the foundation for impactful dialogue. A central premise of Kraye's Pauline model is that changing values can lead to changes in structure, but failure to work within the existing system leads to reactionary refusal to listen, contemplate, and negotiate, and thus to wholesale rejection. The implications of this premise are enormous and affect many areas of intercultural ministry and missiology. For example, insider movements seem to be following Paul's approach to existing social, cultural and religious systems by working within them, eventually transforming them through the injection of biblical understandings and values. The traditional mission paradigm that demands rejection of a religious system in its entirety causes unnecessary social dislocation and

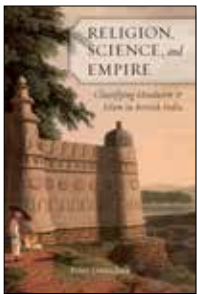
Christian workers in conservative Islamic contexts who minimize the importance of learning the local language for effective service can equally dispense with My Mother's Sons.

upheaval, provoking widespread communal rejection. (See my “The Old Testament and Insider Movements” in this issue for further biblical precedent for this approach).

My Mother's Sons is extremely well researched, organized, and straightforward. Kraye is balanced, and judicious in his own views and respectful in representing alternative views. Despite the immense anthropological and biblical research which undergirds this study, the author's writing style is extremely clear and readable. It is hard to find fault with the book. While Kraye does not expect every reader to agree with him, all readers can expect to be surprised by the untested and often unwarranted assumptions which affect their understanding and attitudes toward Muslim and Christian views of sexuality and its management. I am hesitant to become one more reviewer adding one more book to readers' “must read” list. So instead I will say that Christian workers in conservative Islamic contexts who minimize the importance of learning the local language for effective service can equally dispense with *My Mother's Sons*.

Religion, Science and Empire: Classifying Hinduism and Islam in British India, by Peter Gottschalk (Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 421 + xx)

—Reviewed by H. L. Richard



This is not a book for the faint-hearted, as Peter Gottschalk takes on a panoramic survey of the colonial impact on India by focusing on a largely forgotten town (Chainpur) in Bihar. His survey of cartography, travel writings, census work, ethnology and archaeology add up to a devastating exposure of misguided colonial efforts

to implement a scientific approach to India. A final chapter introduces Chainpur today and the impact of Western “scientism” on modern developing India.

Reams of data are powerfully presented to support the position that

Since the fifteenth century, a system of knowledge has been in development in Europe that would form a matrix of inter-related disciplines used not only by Europeans to understand, exploit, and control non-Europeans, but also by non-Europeans to understand and control their own societies, and by others while resisting European power. (pg. 5)

Central to this Eurocentric perspective is the concept of religion. Matched with the idea of science, it became a powerful tool that provided a mistaken sense of certainty about subtle and complex matters that needed (and need) more careful handling.

For example, even in the realm of cartography the idea of religion came to hold a central place. Revenue surveys were vital to the taxation plans of the East India Company, but their surveyors sought to present accurate data of many kinds, and that included identifying the religious identity of buildings and populations. Yet,

Both the 1853 key and 1845 map of Chainpur illustrate the tendency of the British to classify Indians first according to religious categories, which commonly reflected British expectations rather than Indian self-identification. Far from the mutually exclusive and antagonistic Hindu and Muslim communities of many British imaginations, actual practices and interactions demonstrated a complexity that belied such easy sorting. British persistence in their views of a bifurcated India, strictly separated into primarily religious communities (despite the evidence of many of their own surveys and personal encounters), suggests the impact of the scientific classification paradigm... (pg. 77)

The core problem here is the binary assumption that one must be either Hindu or Muslim, with no intermediate category or overlapping hybridity possible. Two chapters analyzing accounts of India written by British travelers (one on Christian writers, one on humanist) demonstrate how central “religion” was in the British episteme; “mutually exclusive, essence-defined, religious categories” (pg. 183).

This same assumption of scientific water tight compartments was also attempted in the identification of caste groups, with the resulting necessity of even more illegitimate forcing of categories. The censuses of 1871, 1901 and 1941 are very helpfully analyzed with a focus on confusion related to religion, tribe and caste denomination. Gottschalk helpfully compares the process to the difficulty of categorizing the platypus, which after a century of debate was defined as having its own biological order.

The development of ethnographic studies and even the birth of archaeological work are similarly documented as assuming a “scientific” basis that simply is not valid. However, basic to Gottschalk's study are the dual realities that, first, “when coupled to the powers—both persuasive and coercive—of the state, classification regimens can alter the on-the-ground realities they presumably represent” (pg. 332), so that British categorizations

“inscribed, or reinscribed more deeply and broadly, communal boundaries and social rankings supposedly derived from indigenous communities” (pg. 187). And second, Indians fully embraced the “scientific” perspective of their colonizers.

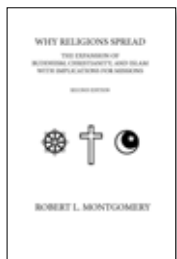
If the surest evidence of hegemony is the adoption of the paradigms and structures of the hegemon by those attempting to resist it, then the scientific hegemony is secure in Chainpur, and India in general. People routinely reference “the cause of science,” “scientific accuracy,” “scientific precision,” and “scientific objectivity” as though science is a monolithic, self-apparent enterprise defined by its perfection of knowledge and devoid of obfuscation or selfish motives. The scientism that Indians have adopted along with particular forms of cartography, demography, ethnography, ethnology, historiography, and religious studies evidences the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of British epistemic hegemony. (pg. 335)

This could be described as the crisis of post-modernity; we (both “Occidentals” and “Orientals”) see the folly of scientism, the world religions paradigm, and Euro-centrism, but we do not know how to escape our own linguistic and epistemic bondage.

Gottschalk’s book is vastly better than this review which attempts to highlight a few of his key points. His data and argumentation enlighten and convince. This is not an easy read, and the shifts of intellectual paradigm necessitated by such presentations can produce deep discomfort. But slovenly missiological work which fails to wrestle with the innate complexities of human life and cultures cannot expect to be blessed by God. Fresh hope and revitalized faith lie beyond the abandonment of simplistic paradigms, even when often there is no alternative but to walk by faith and not by sight.

Why Religions Spread: The Expansion of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam with Implications for Missions, by Robert L. Montgomery (second edition, Ashville, NC: Cross Lines Publishing, 2012, pp. 461 + xxvii)

—Reviewed by H. L. Richard



This book is a creative effort to understand the spread of what are understood to be the three great expansive religions. In the course of presentation the author shows a distinct understanding of the complexities of religious studies. Yet an inadequate paradigm is allowed to dominate the book despite clear indications of awareness of the reductionistic simplicity of the “world religions” paradigm.

The author defines his project quite clearly.

I have chosen to focus my study on the spread of religions across socio-cultural borders, which are usually also geographical borders, by propagation leading to the change of religious identities in new locations. In other words, I am considering primarily why religions have spread or not spread across borders through propagation and ensuing acceptance of new religious identities. (pg. 8)

He then points out that it is Buddhism, Christianity and Islam that have successfully spread according to his definition. But there is serious question as to what the “spread” of Buddhism might mean; there were powerful transformations of the Buddha’s teaching and no real sense of a “unified religion” until the late colonial period. One could argue similarly even related to Islam and Christianity. (This is largely acknowledged at places, as on pg. 369.)

The author also acknowledges the importance of differences within the religions he considers (pp. 15, 112, etc.). But these caveats do not hinder his pushing ahead with an analysis of seven factors that speed or inhibit the spread of religions.

Focused faith on an individual along with tangible contact points for mass consumption is the first important factor. Moral and organizational factors are also included among “religious content factors.”

Two macro and two micro level social factors are then also outlined; five insightful sub-points are discussed under the first macro factor of conditions in the receiving society. The second macro factor is relations between the sending and receptor societies. Social relationships within the receptor society and motivations within that society complete the seven factors that affect the spread of religion.

There is a section of missiological application that discusses some cutting edge issues related to insider movements. The author points out that “religion as an ethno-cultural identity marker will continue to be a major obstacle to the spread of religions” (pg. 377), yet he sees the information age undermining this traditional position so that “religious leaders will have to give up their attempts to maintain followers on the basis of their religion as cultural marker” (pg. 377). This theme is touched again later;

We have to ask, is it possible for Christianity to enhance Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim identities and vice versa? There may be cultural aspects to all three of these religions which Christianity would enhance and would in turn enhance Christianity. (pg. 417)

A concluding truism is worth noting again here; “the greatest danger to Christianity is bad Christianity, which can infect almost all branches of the faith” (pg. 420). This is a book recommended for its contribution to understanding the spread of religion, but hindered by internal tensions regarding the nature of “religion” and the “world religions” being considered. **IJFM**