

## BOOK REVIEW

### RELIGION IN PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS: FAMILY, FRIEND, FOE?

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This edited volume addresses a variety of themes related to religious philanthropy. The book's primary focus is on the West and uses case studies to illustrate trends, tensions and definitional aspects of religious philanthropy. The authors create an insightful exploration of various ways philanthropic organizations are religious. It is well suited for scholars and students of philanthropy, religion, and development studies. It is also useful for practitioners and fundraisers seeking to better understand important questions and possibilities in the field of religious philanthropy.

Chapter one, by Elizabeth G. Ferris, divides the World Council of Churches (WCC) history regarding concern for the "poor and needy, to refugees, and to victims of floods, tsunamis and earthquakes" into three eras: interchurch aid (1948-1961), solidarity with the world (1961-1994), and new ecumenical instruments (1994-present) (p.1). Analysis of this history is done through the lens of service, power, and the tension between diakonia (service) and the professional secular world. As international humanitarianism has shifted, WCC has given up its role of funneling funds to churches for humanitarian purposes, is concentrating on inner-church discussions and dialogue, and has professionalized. Moreover, the rights-based approach often employed affirms the dignity of recipients and causes WCC members to steer carefully away from anything that smacks of missionary activity or proselytizing.

Shaul Kelner's second chapter addresses the ambivalence between synagogues and Jewish federations over the last century. As American Jewish philanthropy federated, it grew beyond voluntary action for the public good (one definition of philanthropy) and into a source of "internal governance" for the Jewish community. This larger role created a division between the religious authority of the synagogue and the more secular voice of federations. However, as Kelner notes, the Sociologist Jonathon Woocher's use of the term "civil religion" with regards to the Jewish community posits an alternative religious expression that serves as a more accurate framework: "'We are one' [the federation's slogan] becomes a more immediate and compelling watchword than 'Hashem echad' (the Lord is One)'" (p. 44).

In the third chapter, Diane Winston uses the Salvation Army as a case study of the impact of news coverage on the identity of religious philanthropic institutions. For some, the "practical religion" of soup kitchens and homeless shelters was a natural part of Christian teaching that would bear spiritual fruit, while it was a "distraction from their evangelical task" for others (p. 53). This internal tension impacted public debates about the Army's mission. Originally focusing on the

Army's humanitarian work, journalists shifted to highlight state-church conflicts with "gotcha" stories involving hiring and sexual orientation (p. 67). Thus, a century-long focus on the philanthropy of a religious organization gave way to emphasis on the religion of a philanthropic organization.

Chapter four, authored by David King, explores the example of Bob Pierce, who founded the largest Christian humanitarian organization in the world, World Vision (WV). After WV's mission was reinterpreted "as more humanitarian than missionary," Pierce left and founded Samaritan's Purse (SP) with his desired missionary commitment (p. 71). Pierce illustrates three tensions in religious philanthropy: religious identity and humanitarianism, professionalization and faith, as well as religious identity and partnership with government or secular NGOs. While both organizations founded by Pierce "remain decidedly Christian organizations," they have done so in different ways (p. 86). WV is a professionalized respected industry leader/insider, with a broad range of organization, and SP is akin to a missionary organization on the periphery of the development industry.

Chapter five, by Fred Kammer, addresses religious philanthropy via Catholic Charities. Valuable statistical data showing a wide range of diverse stakeholders lays the foundation for a discussion of pluralism. Kammer calls attention to the often false either/or dilemma of church vs. state. Partnership with government enhances "Catholic Charities' gospel-based mission of diakonia (service)," and government humanitarian provision has been recognized as indispensable since the Great Depression (p. 116).

The sixth chapter, authored by Allan W. Austin, discusses Quaker racial thought during the interwar period. Despite leading in abolition and just treatment of first nations, Quakers came to largely see racism as an issue to be overcome by individual relationships between races. One of several initiatives on race, a summer institute, was caught between the desire to involve social science and religious principles. The various initiatives helped the Friends move beyond ambivalence and out-right racism by some members to a more proactive stance addressing both individual and systemic racism for the cause of "racial brotherhood" (p. 138).

Sheila S. Kennedy's seventh chapter addresses the legitimacy of religious institutions seeking government funding. This brings up issues of the first and fourteenth amendments as well as a variety of judicial decisions. The biggest constitutional difficulty is for "pervasively sectarian" organizations and "inherently religious activities" (p. 146). The chapter turns toward ideological considerations such as the "deserving poor," social Darwinism and the social gospel (p. 152). Kennedy concludes with the notion that faith-based partnerships are one legitimate form of philanthropy if done well, which entails questions of capacity, commitment and constitutionality.

The eighth chapter, authored by Susan McDonic, returns to the subject of World Vision (WV) to illustrate differences, even in the same organization, within religious philanthropy. WV's Canadian office minimizes its religious commitment and "foregrounds secular understandings of development practice" (p. 169). Meanwhile, the Ghanaian office "reframes development as Christian missions" (p. 169). These differences are attributable to cultural context, but each office grapples with both ends of the tension between Western rationality and "the African 'other'...steeped in superstition and 'irrationality'" (p. 178). One key aspect of this tension is to recognize that Western discourse is "locally distilled" and "refigured" (p. 179). Moreover, as the power of the Christian church shifts toward the global south, it is "imperative that we understand the South's views on faith...and the development process itself" (p. 179).

The penultimate chapter, by Arnold Dashefsky and Bernard Lazerwitz, focuses on data from the National Jewish Population Surveys of 1971, 1990 and 2000-2001. The stated reason for

analyzing the data is to mitigate the “specter of devolution,” which is the shift of “the responsibility for the poor the ill, and the infirm from the government to the citizenry” (p. 182). An important point from the 1990 survey, which is the heaviest focus of the article, is that American Jews “do not give in greater proportions than other Americans—but they did appear to give in greater amounts” (p. 184). Two important broad trends over the three surveys are a decline in giving (both to Jewish and non-Jewish causes) and a positive correlation between involvement in the Jewish community and giving and volunteering. With the latter in mind, the article concludes with the admonition for NGOs of all types to utilize community networks to raise more funds to meet the widening gap created by devolution.

Lastly, the final chapter by Shariq A. Siddiqui entitled “Myth vs. Reality: Muslim American Philanthropy since 9/11” begins with an insightful discussion of charity in Islamic thought—including philanthropic injunctions from the Qur’an and the Sunnah. This introductory section quotes the Sunnah describing generosity as being “close to God,” wrestles with the definition of “voluntary” and discusses worthiness of recipients. It is helpful reading on philanthropy regardless of one’s religious or philosophical commitments (p. 205). The second and third sections provide demographic data and information on attitudes toward giving in the American Islamic community. Anywhere between two to six million Muslims, of which more than 65% are foreign born, reside in the U.S. (p. 206). Surprisingly, despite fear of government profiling after 9/11, the highest interest in Islamic charitable giving is in social services for the poor, not civil rights and political advocacy (p. 208). The final section challenges a common narrative that Islamic giving has declined since 9/11. Fears among donors of guilt by association or funds being used to combat legal challenges have been posited as leading to decreased giving, but evidence suggests that U.S. Muslim giving has increased significantly in the decade of the 2000s. An important related trend in Islamic charities is increased professionalization. For example, use of Charity Navigator and voluntary submission of 990 forms have helped to build accountability and credibility in the post-9/11 era. The chapter ends with a short discussion of remittances in this heavily immigrant population and a call for further study.

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**References**

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