



NEWSLETTER

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Important items to note from this issue:

- Papers submitted to the SISR Conference to be held in Santiago de Compostella
- XVII-ISA World Congress of Sociology—Call for Papers

Letter from the Secretary

Dear members of the Sociology of Religion Research Committee (RC22) of the International Sociological Association and dear colleagues:

The 31st of October will be the deadline for the submission of an abstract if you wish to give a paper in the Sociology of Religion section of the next World Congress of Sociology in Sweden (11-17 July). You will find the session information in this newsletter, and we welcome you to submit your abstract to the session chair(s). There are some exciting topics that will be discussed next year, and we hope many of you will be able to participate. Our two highlights will be the RC22 Keynote Address on ‘Power, Religion and Social Theory’ with Enzo Pace and Bryan Turner, and the RC22 Presidential Address on ‘The Sociology of Religion on the Move: What Has Changed in Religion and What Has Changed in Sociology of Religion’ with Roberto J. Blancarte.

Unfortunately, there might not be enough space for all papers submitted to us. The International Sociological Association is quite strict on the number of sessions allocated to each Research Committee, and the limits depend on the amount of fully paid members, rather than on the amount of pro-

posals, however good they are. A few of you have received a reminder from the association to renew your membership, and we hope that you will be able to continue your commitment to us before the end of the year. Others who are reading this newsletter, and who are not RC22 members, might also be interested in joining us. If this is the case, please go to <http://www.isa-sociology.org/memb i/index.htm>.

After the 31st of October, our conference committee will go through all the submissions and organise the various sessions. We hope that by having as many full and distributed papers of strong quality, we will have some stimulating discussion. However, more information about the RC22 activities in Sweden will be available in the next newsletter, just before the World Congress.

As a reminder, we have two e-mailing lists: one that distributes general information on the sociology of religion such as calls for papers and job advertisements to both members and interested parties

(RC22@uws.edu.au), and one for members only (RC22members@uws.edu.au). If you have any information that you would like to share with other sociologists of religion in the



world, simply email your message to

RC22@uws.edu.au. If you are not on that list, and would like to join, simply send an e-mail to me at a.possamai@uws.edu.au.

In this newsletter, you will find a report by Fatma Sündal on the last conference from the International Society for the Study of Religion at Santiago de Compostela, Spain, July 27-31, 2009. RC22 co-organised with ISSR 4 sessions which attracted a total of 16 papers. Also in this newsletter is a column by Inger Furseth on the current state of the sociology of religion with an emphasis on the Nordic countries.

Many of our members have written books in 2008-2009. I strongly recommend that you have a look at the list of their extremely interesting publications. I hope that many of these authors will be present at the World Congress to discuss their recent works in person.

Adam Possamai
Secretary/Treasurer of RC22 of the International Sociological Association

A Report - 30th SISR Conference on “The Challenges of Religious Pluralism” Santiago de Compostela, Spain July 27- 31, 2009

(by Fatma Sündal)

The 30th ISSR Conference, “The Challenges of Religious Pluralism”, was held in the beautiful atmosphere of the University of Santiago de Compostela from July 27 to 31 2009 by the SISR, with the cooperation of a local committee chaired by Juan-Luis Pintos de Cea-Naharro. The charming Galician city of Saint James with its historic cathedral provided a stimulating backdrop to the proceedings. The conference conveners invited 520 participants from all academic levels to present their works and receive feedback from their audiences. Various themed sessions took place in the rooms of the *Facultad de Ciencias Politicas*/Faculty of Political Science and the *Facultad de Derecho*/Faculty of Law.

For beginners in the sociology of religion, the ISSR conference once again offered an invaluable scope of theoretical works, methodological and epistemological discussions, and case studies. It also covered related works from law, politics and gender. Experienced researchers had many fruitful discussions accompanied by card exchanges and commitments to future collaborations, especially in areas of comparative research. In sum, this conference contributed to understandings of religious diversity and sociological analyses of religious pluralism. In its many discussions under the banner of “the challenges of religious pluralism”, participants searched for ways to understand how each society responds to its own current condition. Linguistic regional groups again served as links between scholars, but discussions were not limited to these groups.

We attended opening and plenary sessions in the main hall of the Faculty of Law. Keywords for the opening session by the hosting committee were “visibility” and “logic”. Each speaker from the committee gave an intensive account of the logic of the visibilisation of religion, with particular regard to Spanish religious minorities. Following the opening session, we met with colleagues in the garden reception area of the Faculty of Political Science, where we also had the pleasure of listening to local Galician music. Furthering the discourse from plenary session 1, small groups discussed how to evaluate societies in terms of religious pluralism, and to find ways to rediscover social and ethical responses. Diverse religious orientations were discussed in terms of their attributes with respect to dialogue, mission, confrontation, or indifference.

In plenary session 2, particular aspects of society affected by religious pluralism were examined. Religious intermarriage, national identities, different demands of education from religious and nonreligious groups and communities, interactions in the political realm and the importance of governmental decision-making on these matters were all topics of conversation.

Some sessions focused our attention inward onto our own personal experiences. For instance, a sociologically introspective attitude was encouraged by the session “Pluralists Ourselves: Research Epistemologies for the Sociology of Religion”, chaired by Spickard. The centrality of “scientific faith” was emphasised, and an important similarity between religion and science was expounded: “religion

like science is a process not product” (Spickard). Smith, an exemplary scholar uniting Marxism, ethno-methodology and symbolic interactionism, inspired a paper by Neitz, who proposed “standpoint” as an epistemology for the 21st century and based her analysis on two main frames of feminist sociology of everyday life developed by Smith:

- relations of ruling in capitalist society, and
- understanding women from their standpoints, in the actualities of their daily lives.

Also in the session “Pluralists Ourselves”, Dodson reported on sensing Cuban religions. Her work seeks to create a middle ground between scientific interpretations of extraordinary experience in religions and the subjectivity of the researched, particularly in Cuban religions. Her presentation insightfully reminded us that we researchers have much to learn from the researched in processes of conceptualisation. Finally, in this session, Riis provided the audience with some precepts for utilising the philosophy of science in empirical research.

The conference agenda introduced the strong primary relation between the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of religion—an explanation for novices; a recapitulation for the more advanced. Specific discussions followed about debates around spirituality, a topic recently receiving much attention (“what we have observed as religion is not religion alone” (Beyer)). In another creative paper (Hjelm) we journeyed from Hegel’s *Zeitgeist* through Mannheim and considered

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the importance of the concept of *Zeitdiagnose* in constructing general theory and gathering empirical evidence. The concept of religious pluralism in academia was interrogated (Schepelern).

No doubt the content of “The Making of Progressive Islam, Between Discourses and Practices”, chaired by Pace, was very inviting for sociologists of Islam from every part of the world. These new conceptions have been lately forcing us to revise our theoretical knowledge. The first part of the session provided us with an intellectual overview of Islam in the world—to ‘catch the wave’ of Islam. We were introduced to major themes, ideas and values in discourses of progressive Islam, which seemed to be constructed upon a search for a safe common ground for Muslims with multiple forms of Islamic identity. Ideas of progress in religious thought without totalitarian tendencies were possibly aiming at an “Islamic humanism” (Duderij). We also heard new interpretations and analyses of Muslim social ethics. For example, a narrative of a researched Muslim woman, equating men’s guardianship in Muslim religious marriage with the witness system in a civil marriage (Pedziwiatr), framed an effort at finding peace between the code of Islam and modern life. If this is actually the case in Western Muslim populations, that is if men have given up their ‘right’ to talk in the place of women in the religious (Islamic) act of marriage, and have adopted roles comparable to civil witnesses, this might indeed have objective significance for Islam in the West.

Another study in this session focused on Islamic identity through accounts of biographical experiences of Crimean Tatars. Its driving question was: why has Islam existed better under communism than orthodoxy (Borowik)?

“Toward an Index of ‘Laicity’ in the World”, chaired by Blancarte, probed another long-lasting debate. First, Martinez discussed the anticlerical and “lay/secular” dimension of popular Catholicism. Blancarte proposed an index of laicity and analysed the condition of Latin America with a comparative outlook. The Catholic Church and the civil code seemed to be the most problematic juncture, and women’s rights to have control of their bodies was introduced as a term of reference. Sündal demanded an integrative theory of secularization uniting Christian and Muslim experience. She proposed cross-religious translation as the first step toward a universal index of laicity, and analysed the Turkish model with reference to three fundamentals of laicity: “(1) freedom of conscience, thought and religion; (2) equal rights and duties of all citizens; and (3) the respective autonomy of state and religions”.

The 30th ISSR Conference ended with our promises to meet at the next ISSR Conference to discuss the hot issues in another part of the world in two years’ time. Conference abstracts can be accessed at the web page of the Local Committee

<<http://:issr30con.gceis.net>>.

Current State of the Sociology of Religion—with an emphasis on the Nordic Countries (by Inger Furseth)

Religion seems to be more visible across the world and this is reflected in the list of new titles among academic publishers. Several books relevant for the sociology of religion have been published in 2009. Religion and culture is a common theme for some. Noteworthy is *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age* by Christopher Deacy and Elisabeth Arweck (Ashgate), which combines interdisciplinary perspectives for the analysis of religion, media and popular culture. Adam Possamai's textbook *Sociology of Religion for Generations X and Y* (Equinox) is written with specific relevance to the generations of X and Y as it draws from popular and consumer culture. Other books of interest are *Contemporary Religious Satanism*, edited by Jesper Aagaard Petersen (Ashgate) and the forthcoming *Religion and Social Problems* by Titus Hjelm (Routledge).

- New titles with an emphasis on theory in the sociology of religion have also been published this year. *Key Thinkers in the Sociology of Religion*, written by Richard Fenn (Continuum), takes a look at central figures within the field from Max Weber to Peter L. Berger, Niklas Luhmann, Brian Wilson, and Catherine Bell. A new handbook is also on the market, *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (2009), edited by Peter Clarke. It comprises 1007 pages with 57 contributions. Apart from the themes found in many handbooks, such as theory, methods, institutional religion and new spiritualities, this book includes chapters on irreligion, art, embodiment, media, and the internet. The growing emphasis on religion and the law is also reflected here. So is the focus on migration and religious diversity.

Indeed, sociologists of religion are increasingly delving into issues of migration and the challenges it poses for Western societies, which was seen at the 30th ISSR Conference in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 27-31 July. The conference theme was *The challenges of religious pluralism* and several sessions centered on various aspects of

this issue. In contrast to social anthropologists and political scientists, sociologists of religion are almost newcomers in dealing with the sociology of difference that discusses race, ethnicity, and migration. Whereas sociology of difference in the 1990s used to focus on gender, sessions on gender were practically non-existent at this conference. Perhaps this fact is a reminder to include several different forms of difference in the sociology of religion, such as ethnicity and race, gender and sexuality, and combine them.

In the Nordic countries of Europe, the sociology of religion continues to be a theme in large research programs. Two years ago, the University of Copenhagen, Denmark ended a five year interdisciplinary program, *Religion in the 21st Century*. In Sweden, Anders Bäckström at Uppsala University has been the director of two programs: *Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective. A Comparative Study on the Role of Churches as Agents of Welfare within the Social Economy* (WAVE) 2003-2007, which included eight countries, and *Welfare and Values in Europe. Transitions related to Religion, Minorities and Gender* (WREP) 2006-2009, which included 12 countries. Bäckström is also the director of a new 10 year research program at Uppsala University, *The Impact of Religion: Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy* (IMPACT), 2008-2018. In Norway, Inger Furseth at KIFO Centre for Church Research in Oslo is the director for a new Nordic comparative research program, *The Role of Religion in the Public Sphere: A comparative study of the five Nordic countries* (NOREL) 2009-2013. The University of Oslo also announced its new, interdisciplinary program *Religion in Pluralistic Societies* (PluRel) in 2009. Finally, the program on *Religion as esthetic praxis* 2009-2012 is underway at the University of Agder, and the director is Pål Repstad. The University of Agder is also going to be the host institution of the next *Nordic Conference on the Sociology of Religion* (NCSR 2010). To be noted is also *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* (NJRS), a journal in English for all disciplines that study the field of relations between religion, churches,

religious institutions, culture and society. Sociology of religion is a key discipline. NJRS is in its 22nd year and editors are Inger Furseth and Pål Repstad. The focus is on the Nordic region of Europe, but NJRS also publishes articles relevant for the sociology of religion in general. Although the Nordic countries are considered to be one of the most secular regions of the world, the sociology of religion attempts to detect and understand the changes that this region is going through as it becomes increasingly diverse and multi-religious.

XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology

11-17 July 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden

<http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/>

Research Committee on Sociology of Religion RC22

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Please send your proposed paper for any of these sessions (except sessions 3, 4, and 13) to the session chair(s) by the 31st of October 2009. Please include with your proposal, a title, a 100-200 words abstract, your name (family name first), your affiliation and your e-mail address. Do not send the same paper to more than one session.

Call for Papers

Session 1

Religion on the Move: Religion in the Context of Global Migration

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This session explores several existing and emerging models of religion in the context of global migration. As is well-known, religion often plays a role in adapting immigrants to – or buffering them from – their new socio-cultural homes. Religion can also operation bi-nationally, tying together regions and communities that would otherwise remain apart. Religions can

flow in surprising directions, South to North and South to South, among others, as missions and reverse missions push religion along unaccustomed paths. Religious organizations can operate transnationally, following migratory flows, or they can stimulate those flows; in either case, the movement of peoples makes their organizational dilemmas more complex. And religion can be an unexpected response to the denationalization and deterritorialization of economic migrants, both subaltern and elite; these often have political consequences. This session welcomes papers that shed new light on these topics.

Session 2

Religion and Power: Observing Catholicisms from the Global South

Eloisa Martin,
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This session proposes to discuss power relationships within Catholicism (specially State-Church, but also catholicism-Church) in the Global South (Latin America, South Africa, and South and Southeast Asia). The comprehension that Europe –and the USA ultimately – could offer universal paradigms to understand religion (and its relationship with Modernity), left durable effects. The very existence of something as an international globalized academy is largely based on the prevalence of a Europhilic model of knowledge organization and production, that has, as a consequence, the almost impossible contact between scholars and researchs from the Global South. It is more evident within studies on Catholicism, because of its European power centralization, tends to be mediated by and compared to European perspectives.

Session 3

RC22 Keynote Address: Power, Religion and Social Theory with Enzo Pace and Bryan Turner.

Session 4

RC22 Presidential Address. The Sociology of Religion on the Move: What has changed in religion and what has changed in sociology of religion?

Session 5

Immigrant Religion and Gender

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Studies on immigrant religions in the West have been growing. An important theme is the different ways in which gender transforms religious values and practices among immigrants and their descendants. There is a new awareness of the role of women in various world religions. Some immigrant women demonstrate higher levels of religious activity in their new country compared to their country of origin. Gender also structures immigrant religious communities and their roles for women and men. The gender discourse in the host society may provide an important influence on the view on gender within the immigrant religious communities. In some instances, there are more varied roles, especially for women, and in other instances, these roles have become more restricted and contested.

This session explores the importance of gender in immigrant religion, both in the lives of immigrants and their descendants and in the immigrant religious communities. The aim of the session is to provide a forum for scholars to present papers on gender and immigrant religion. Especially welcome are papers discussing new theoretical approaches, but also empirical works are welcome.

Session 6

Religious Freedom and Religious

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Rights – Different Contexts, Different Concepts?

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Freedom of religion and freedom from religion is widely recognized to be one of the main human rights, guaranteed by numerous international and national documents. However, what is the substance of that freedom and how it should be guaranteed in practice is far from clear. The issue is not mainly about differences between countries which basically recognized it and those which place several restrictions toward religions, but about different and in many cases conflictual understandings of religious rights. Even in the most democratic societies there are evidences about rising tensions and restrictions in the field of religious rights. This session welcomes papers which deal with the concept of religious freedom and religious rights from different social and cultural experiences and which show how and in what way the understandings and practice of religious rights change historically and socially. Both the specific case studies as well as comparative papers are welcomed.

Session 7

Religion and the Sociological Imagination

Grace Davie,
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This session invites participants to think 'imaginatively' about religion and its place in the modern world – in other words to open up new areas of research, new methodologies and new research questions. The latter is particularly important: how we pose the question has huge influence on the subsequent research process. Let us, then, following C W Mills himself (1959): 're-arrange' the file, abandon the conventional script, engage with

reality rather than received truth, but – at the same time – think rigorously about what is going on. Papers are invited from people who have done this, are doing this, or who want to do this.

Session 8

Religion and Modernity

Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers,
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The assumption that modernization erodes religion in the western world – once uncontested in the social sciences – is increasingly under fire; many now feel that it has been exposed as a mere ideology or wish dream, intimately tied to the rationalist discourse of modernity. And indeed: today's rapid globalization of Islam and the Evangelical upsurge, especially in Africa, Latin America and East Asia, fly in the face of the expectation that religion is doomed. Moreover, the modern world is witnessing a rise of various forms of post-traditional spirituality and 're-enchantment'. This session calls for papers that address the relationship between modernity and religion. Two varieties are called for: first, papers that delve into the ways modernity is transforming traditional religion. One can think, for instance, about the influence of market, media and Internet on religious beliefs, routines and rituals in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism or Hinduism. Second, papers that address new religions that are generated by modernity and modernization itself are also called for. One can think in this context about New Age 'self' religions, 'rational' sects and 'scientific' cults like 'Scientology' or the 'Raelian' movement or unacknowledged spiritual meanings in contemporary popular culture.

Session 9

New Religious Movements and the Secular State

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Susan J. Palmer,
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The principle of separation of church and state has been understood and applied in most democracies in the West for the better part of the 20th century. But an international survey of the "public management" of new religious movements (NRMs) indicates that this principle been applied in many different ways - ways that reflect the history and culture of the country in question. As we move from France's «laïcité», to the U.S. "melting pot"; from Canada's "reasonable accommodation" system to Quebec's "multiculturalism", we find that the line separating church and state is not always as clear as most citizens would like to think - and its "fuzziness" has implications for the level of tolerance that various states exhibit towards NRMs in their social midst. This session is dedicated towards exploring this issue, through the case studies by international scholars of NRMs and a sociological analyses of the data, that will hopefully shed light on the remarkable permutations and wide variations in church-state relations involving NRMs in recent years.

Session 10 (A Joint Session with RC34)

Youth and Religion
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The research tradition of religious phenomena assimilates young age, and mainly adolescence, with the major religious transformations in a person's life cycle.

Over time, researchers interested in the study of religious conversion, in secularization or in the adhesion to the

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New Religious Movements have paid special attention to young people. What is happening now? Do young people still constitute an interesting category for the sociology of religion?

Research topics like religious socialization, religious formal education, youth religious practices, behaviours and spirituality, radical and alternative religious movements, the influence of religion on youth values, norms, social aspirations and social capital, the methodological and ethical aspects of researching youth or, looking from the opposite direction, the influence of youth (sub) culture on religion could be interesting subjects for this section.

Session 11

Miscellaneous Aspects of the Sociology of Religion

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This session addresses an eclectic mix of themes in the sociology of religion that is not covered in any of the other sessions.

Session 12 (A Joint Session with TG04)

Risk Society and Religion

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Alphia Possamai-Inesedy,

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The Risk Society thesis warns us not only about the rise and change of type of risks that the whole world is facing but the challenges caused by institutional individualization that urges people to deal with risk and uncertainty individually. Whilst Giddens emphasises that late

modernity would see the rise of a new prudent subject, Beck is more open regarding the possible negative responses to recent social changes which might even lead to increasing xenophobia or religious fundamentalism.

There is little empirically informed theoretical work on individuals' responses to the challenges of late modernity which shows the advantage of religion as a resource for dealing with uncertainty (Zinn 2006). However, religion is involved in reflexive modernization in two ways: Firstly, religion is a valuable resource to deal with risk and uncertainty, however how people use religions to deal with risk and uncertainty differ and are not yet sufficiently understood. In an international perspective it is important to see how religions integrate uncertainties differently. Secondly, religions are part of general social transformations. This is reflected in the change within religions and the rise of new religions or new forms of belief. Religions engage in issues of sustainable and reflexive development (e.g. Ecotheology and neo-pagan groups), and some groups (e.g. fundamentalist groups) offer some island of security to people's rise of worries.

This session seeks to explore religions involvement in reflexive modernization to fill the gap in the existing literature that poorly addresses issues of religion and the risk society.

Session 13

RC22 Business Meeting

2008-2009 Member Publications

- Bäckström Anders and Davie Grace, with Ninna Edgardh and Per Pettersson (eds) (forthcoming 2009) *Welfare and Religion in 21st century Europe: Volume 1. Configuring the Connections* (working title). London: Ashgate.
- Barker, Eileen (Ed.). 2008. *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life: Essays in Honour of James A. Beckford*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Berger Peter, Davie Grace and Fokas Effie (2008) *Religious America, Secular Europe: A Theme and Variations*. London: Ashgate. pp. 176.
- Bramadat, Paul, and Matthias Koenig (Eds.). 2009. *International Migration and the Governance of Religious Diversity*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Cipriani, R, (a cura) (2008) *L'analisi qualitativa. Teorie, metodi, applicazioni*, Armando Editore, Roma, pp. 224.
- Cipriani, R, (a cura) (2008) *Dai dati alla teoria sociale. Analisi di un evento collettivo*, Anicia, Roma, pp. 208, in collaborazione con G. Losito.
- Cipriani, R, (2008) *L'intellettuale cattolico. Una ricerca sull'associazionismo religioso e sulla formazione teologica*, Borla, Roma, pp. 174, in collaborazione con L. Diotallevi, G. Giordan, R. Ricci.
- Cipriani, R. (2009) *Nuovo manuale di sociologia della religione*, Borla, Roma, pp. 588.
- Cipriani, R., (a cura) (2009), *Corpo e religione*, Città Nuova, Roma, pp. 512, in collaborazione con G. Mura.
- Clarke Peter B (ed) (2009) *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.1046.
- Clarke, Peter B and Beyer, Peter (2009) *The World's Religions: Continuities and Transformations*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 783.
- Dhaouadi, Mahmoud (2009), *The Muqaddimah to Cultural Sociology within an Arab-Islamic Framework*, Univ. of Tunis: Tunisia Beirut.
- Dodson, Jualynne E. *Sacred Spaces and Religious Tradition in Oriente Cuba*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Guizzardardi, Gustavo (ed.) (2009), *Identità incorporate. Segni, immagini, differenze (Incorporated Identities. Signs, Images, Differences)*. il Mulino, Bologna.
- Herzog, Hanna, and Ann Braude (Eds.). (2009) *Gendering Religion and Politics: Untangling Modernities*. New York: Macmillan/Palgrave.
- Joas, Hans (2008) *Do We Need Religion? On the Experience of Self-Transcendence*. (Yale Cultural Sociology Series). Boulder, Co: Paradigm Publications.
- Joas Hans and Wiegandt, Klaus (eds.) (2009) *Secularization and the World Religions*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Koenig, Matthias, and Jean-Paul Willaime (Eds.). 2008. *Religionskontroversen in Frankreich und Deutschland*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Maduro Otto (2009) *Mapas para la fiesta*. Cochabamba (Bolivia): Editorial Verbo Divino.
- McGuire, Meredith B. (2008) *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford University Press.
- Naryan, Anjana and Purkayastha, Bandana (2009) *Living Our Religions: Hindu and Muslim South Asian American women narrate their experiences*. Stirling, VA, USA: Kumarian Books.
- Possamai, Adam (2009) *Sociology of Religion for Generations X and Y*. Equinox: London.
- Tiryakian, Edward A. (2009) *For Durkheim: Essays in Historical and Cultural Sociology*. Ashgate Publishing. (contains an original essay for this volume: "No Laughing Matter: Applying Durkheim to the Danish Cartoons Affair".)

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