

Nonetheless, having read the book, I find that a review of it in a historical journal is amply merited on at least three grounds. The first is probably sufficient: Some of the book's most illuminating chapters focus on the past as they describe and analyze the dynamics merging religion, media, and culture over the twentieth century. Thus, the story of the American cantorate charts the uneasy encounters of cantors with recording technologies and sheet music, then talkies, radio, and television. Through these encounters Shandler probes the more general tensions between cantors' liturgy and artistry, their agency and celebrity. In the process, *khazones* (cantorial music) emerges as an exciting topos for negotiating the old-home and America, Jews and Gentiles, communality and individualism, past and present.

The chapter on packaging Judaism for radio and television programs focuses on midcentury. It portrays the intersection of the Jewish and American sensibilities of a generation at home in America and its suburbs, as it adjusts its geographic imagination to the Holy Land now with, and Europe now without, major Jewish populations. Responses to this latter condition and the evolution of mediated Holocaust commemoration and interpretation are effectively surveyed here across a variety of media spanning film and television, testimonies, pilgrimages, and memorials, and all the way to the ongoing Paper Clip project. This journey, highlighting recent decades, surveys the meanings assigned to, and extracted from, the Holocaust, through a rereading of the media of remembrance put to work in Jewish and American civil religion.

While the changing problems and solutions inherent in the calendaric and cultural overlap of Hanukkah and Christmas—the “December dilemma”—are discussed within a generous historical span, Shandler's work on life cycle rites and their documentation focuses on the present. So too does his foray into the striking new media practices of Chabad (the Lubavitch hasidism), launched and shaped by the glaring absence of the Hasidic sect's last great leader. Nevertheless, both of these studies of the present have rich historical context.

But beyond the effective and occasionally surprising historical grounding of both past- and future-oriented chapters, Shandler's

particular approach to media studies makes a bold historical statement. The disparate studies in this collection cohere through their common focus on the process of remediation—the transformative succession of previous media technologies into renewed technologies and systems. In chapter after engaging chapter we observe one medium giving way to another—or rather to a “cascade of mediations” (p. 138)—in performing an ostensibly similar function. But as Shandler lavishly shows—through cantors' music and Holocaust remembrance, circumcision rituals, and Hanukkah observances—new media can serve the transformation of the traditional processes they mediate. Media—themselves the consequence of historical development—can shape traditional practices entrusted to them in their own unmistakable image.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this innovative book to historical study is a simpler one. Each of the book's case studies, however disparate, demonstrates the inextricable links between remediation and significant historical change. Together they suggest that communication can be an effective key to untangling development and understanding change. Thus, the message that this richly theorized, well-researched, and crisply written book delivers to historians is that communication, no less than politics and economy, society and culture, can and should become a major venue of historical research.

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Religious Myths and Visions of America: How Minority Faiths Redefined America's World Role. By Christopher Buck. (Westport: Praeger, 2009. xii, 324 pp. \$49.95, ISBN 978-0-313-35959-0.)

Christopher Buck is a practicing attorney and independent scholar with a Ph.D. and a J.D. He has written several other books related to minority religions. The book's claim to originality is that it presents a novel view of America, namely, from the perspective of minority religions. Because these minority religions have modified

the vision of America, the author claims that his book can be summarized in this phrase: “religions re-mythologize and re-envision America.” By this he means that minority faiths have helped shape how the world perceives America.

Buck defends his thesis by selecting ten religious groups, eight of which can be regarded as minority faiths in America. The primary criterion for those chosen is that they “have something to say about America, whether positive or negative” (p. 3). Because America is not mentioned in most holy books, many religions have been left out.

Each of these selected religions defines America’s global role differently. Native Americans see America as promoting “environmental ethics and ecological sustainability” throughout the world (p. 207). Protestantism promotes the original “Puritan values of liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire” (p. 225). Catholicism hopes America will promote “religious liberty as a basic civil right” (*ibid.*). Judaism sees America promoting “unity and pluralism” (*ibid.*). Mormonism, which has a varied but mostly positive view of the United States, sees America focusing on “liberty and equal rights” (p. 213); this is to be done by strengthening family values.

Christian Identity has a largely negative view of America but desires it to preserve “the purity of the white race” (*ibid.*). The Nation of Islam also has a negative perspective of America. While this view has been modified in recent years, it rejects integration and advocates separation “from former slave-masters” (p. 214). Contemporary Islam has no uniform view of America. The radicals regard it as the great Satan. Progressive Islam sees no definite “world role for America” (p. 216). Buddhism desires America to bring “fundamental rights and freedoms” to people living in dictatorial regimes and thus set the “world straight” (p. 225). The Baha’i Faith hopes America will “unify the world by leading all nations spiritually” (*ibid.*).

Religious Myths and Visions of America has many strengths. The author has defended his thesis with solid research. He has also made an original contribution to American studies. Even so, I have two criticisms. The first relates to style. Buck resorts to quote after quote and most are lengthy and offset. This hinders the readability of the book. The second criticism pertains to

substance. The author correctly notes the Puritan impact on the Protestant view of America, namely, setting the tone. He also rightly mentions the influence of civil religion. However, he limits the impact largely to mainline Protestantism. Currently, the greatest influence of Puritanism may be on evangelical Protestantism, especially the religious Right. Evangelicals evidence a conflicting view of America. On one hand, they push American “exceptionalism” and have “sacralized” many aspects of American culture (for example, its political and economic systems). On the other hand, they lament the loss of “Christian America” largely because of the nation’s permissive attitude toward sexual openness, homosexuality, and abortion.

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Third-Party Matters: Politics, Presidents, and Third Parties in American History. By Donald J. Green. (Westport: Praeger, 2010. x, 185 pp. \$34.95, ISBN 978-0-313-36591-1.)

Donald J. Green’s *Third-Party Matters* relies on previously published work to examine third-party presidential campaigns, from the Liberty party of the 1840s to Ralph Nader’s presidential bid in 2000. This is a large span of time, so Green narrows his field to “significant” third parties that met “at least one of three criteria” (p. 2). According to Green, these movements were either spoilers that changed the outcome of a presidential election, presented issues that influenced subsequent politics or policy, or attracted at least 10 percent of the popular vote in a presidential contest. Green commences with the Liberty party because, he asserts, it altered the outcome of the 1844 election—a debatable conclusion, according to many scholars. Next, Green moves swiftly through the Free Soil, the American (Know-Nothing), and Constitutional Union parties, followed in a separate chapter by the Greenback and People’s (Populist) parties. Green’s treatment of the origins, context, and impact of these important nineteenth-century movements is brief and straightforward. Many readers with a keen interest in one or more of them