identities and values, and the use of religious social organizations to mobilize support for particular parties.

On considering the wealth of evidence and argument marshalled in this book, the reader is likely to be struck by the simple question posed by Marody and Mandes: "Why do Poles still perceive themselves as Catholic and consider themselves religious" (251)? Amid processes of secularization and evident conflicts of interest and authority between the organizational structures of the Church and the institutions of state, why does the Church retain its position of institutional privilege and moral hegemony? Marody and Mandes conclude that the answer is to be found in the lack of alternative identities capable of structuring social life and anchoring Polish citizens within it. While an increasing proportion of Poles are moving away from unqualified *belief*, there are no comparable master narratives that can lay a claim on their *belonging*. Like the book as a whole, this argument is interesting, persuasive, and yet frustratingly incomplete.

***Benjamin Franklin: The Religious Life of a Founding Father*. By Thomas S. Kidd. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017*. 278 pp. $30.00 cloth.**

doi:10.1017/S1755048318000123

Gary Scott Smith
Grove City College

In recent years a debate has raged in both the academic and popular worlds over to what extent Christian values influenced the founding of the United States. In this debate, the religious convictions of the founders, especially George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Benjamin Franklin, have loomed large. Were they conventional Christians, deists, Unitarians, or skeptics? Thomas Kidd enters the fray with his sympathetic but penetrating examination of Franklin's religious life. Numerous authors who argue that few founders were orthodox Christians or very devout, portray Franklin as a traditional deist. Rejecting this view, Kidd

* The year of publication was omitted in the original version of this review published online. A corrigendum has been published.

contends that many of Franklin's religious views were conventionally Christian, but his convictions were complicated and often ambiguous.

Although Franklin, unlike the other four luminaries, never served as the nation's president, his contributions to American history are monumental. As a printer, postmaster, publicist, politician, philanthropist, diplomat, scientist, and author of the influential Poor Richard's Almanac and a classic autobiography, Franklin immeasurably advanced the welfare of both colonial America and the nascent republic. Franklin probably wrote more than any other layperson in eighteenth-century America about religious issues and participated in many religious disputes.

In this insightful, judicious, stimulating account, Kidd, the author of several other important studies of religion in colonial America, contends that Franklin's religious life is an enigma. Although he succinctly stated his basic beliefs in letters, Franklin was torn between the orthodox Christian convictions of his Puritan parents, his devout Congregationalist sister and frequent correspondent, Jane Mecom, and his friend revivalist George Whitefield, and the skeptical and Unitarian authors he read and/or conversed with, especially John Locke, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Anthony Collins, and Joseph Priestly.

Franklin stated his basic creed several times: a good, wise, powerful God created the world and governed it by his providence. People are obligated to worship God, which was best done by serving other human beings. Individuals have immortal souls and in the afterlife will receive their just desserts based on their earthly conduct.

Kidd deftly dissects Franklin's religious convictions and shows that religion played a prominent role in his life. Kidd argues convincingly that the influence of Franklin's pious parents, relationships with Christian friends and family, numerous moral shortcomings, many health problems, and immense political responsibilities (especially during the Revolutionary War), all limited his skepticism and enhanced his faith in God. As Kidd amply demonstrates, Franklin knew the Bible very well. It helped shape his understanding of human nature, providence, morality, and life's purpose, and Franklin often cited Scripture in both religious and political debates.

Like many others who embraced what has been termed "warm deism" in eighteenth-century Europe and America, Franklin disagreed with principal Calvinist tenets, questioned the Bible's veracity, disputed the claim of churches to have religious authority, and accentuated ethics. Like Jefferson, he viewed Jesus as a great moral teacher, but Franklin doubted basic New Testament assertions about his deity and miracles.

Like Jefferson, he valued reason more than revelation and insisted that some parts of Scripture were not divinely inspired. Moreover, Franklin maintained, rigid adherence to Christian dogma thwarted people from seeking the truth. Mecom and Whitefield repeatedly pressed Franklin to accept Jesus as his personal savior, but he refused, arguing that salvation depended on people's virtue, especially their good works, not their belief in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross for their sins.

Franklin's worldview, Kidd contends, revolved around morality rather than doctrine. Franklin wanted to be known for the good works he performed rather than the creed he professed. Like other founders, Franklin insisted that the success of the American republic depended on the virtuous behavior of its citizens. Although other religions also encouraged their adherents to act righteously, Christianity was the preeminent source for virtue. People could not know for sure that God existed as a Trinity, Franklin asserted, but they could all agree that Christians and followers of other faiths should act benevolently and serve others.

Kidd argues that throughout his life, especially his later years, Franklin refuted the traditional deist argument that God had abandoned the world after creating it and instead drew comfort from the doctrine of God's providence. The assumption that God intervenes in history, Franklin insisted, enabled people to pray confidently and to conclude that God rewarded virtuous living, helping make them more benevolent and compassionate. Without a belief in providence, Franklin warned, people had no reason to worship God, fear his displeasure, or pray for his protection. Like Washington, Franklin attributed Americans' improbable victory over the world's largest empire and most powerful army to the justice of America's cause and God's providence. Most famously, Franklin proposed that the delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention pray when they had reached an impasse.

Kidd never labels Franklin a Unitarian (a tradition which was not very important outside of the Boston area before the 1790s), but Franklin's rejection of Jesus divinity, attempt to revere God through his virtuous behavior, and focus on good works placed him in this camp. Nor does Kidd refer to Franklin as a theistic rationalist, a construct Gregg Frazer devised to explain the views of leading founders such as Franklin, Washington, and Jefferson. This hybrid theoretical position involves belief in theism, rationalism, and natural religion, with rationalism being preeminent, and fits Franklin well.

Kidd's account of Franklin's religious convictions, practices, and arguments is a wonderful blend of interesting biography, insightful analysis,

and stimulating story-telling. He cogently details Franklin's struggles to determine what he believed and to live by Christian moral principles and the 13 virtues Franklin delineated in his autobiography. Kidd shows that Franklin was a religious pragmatist who most valued a religion's ability to motivate people to promote the public good and act selflessly. We are indebted to Kidd for carefully explaining Franklin's complex, enigmatic faith—and his long "internal tug-of-war between skepticism and traditional faith"—and how deeply it affected his life (176).

***Creative Conformity: The Feminist Politics of U.S. Catholic and Iranian Shi'i Women*. By Elizabeth M. Bucar. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011. xxv+201 pp. $39.95 paper.**

doi:10.1017/S1755048318000135

Mary Elaine Hegland
Santa Clara University

Although in the genre of discourse analysis, *Creative Conformity* will appeal to those interested in gender, religious, or resistance politics. Bucar investigates the similarities in how U.S. Catholic women and Iranian Shi'i women work within their religious traditions to try to persuade and pressure religious authorities and their religious communities to improve conditions for women. Top leaders in both religions consider themselves to know the wishes of God better than other believers, and therefore to be better equipped to inform adherents what they should believe and how they should act—making it challenging for believers to acceptably exercise independent thought.

Women are considered to have played significant roles in both Catholic and Shi'i religions. Even today, women's appearance, qualities, and activities are seen as central to each tradition. Therefore, in order to fashion women into appropriate Catholics and Shi'i Muslims, many rules and expectations govern women. Women's bodies, reproductive activities, and lives are crucial identity markers in both religious traditions. Since in both religions males occupy or populate the hierarchy, male theologians govern female believers. How can women have a say in the discussion about what they are, how they must think and behave to be a good