

BOOK REVIEW AND NOTE

***Religion, Populism, and Modernity: Confronting White Christian Nationalism and Racism.*** Edited by **Atalia Omer** and **Joshua Lupo**. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2023. vi + 302 pp. \$35.00 Paper.

The latest surge of Christian nationalism has prompted both cheers and warnings, so it was only a matter of time before academics would weigh in on the issue. *Religion, Populism, and Modernity* stumbles from the start – with gems like “Animating this objective is the concern that critical and genealogical studies of ‘religion’ that treat it solely as a comparative category implicated in Euro- and Christian-centric visions of social and political life constrain constructive engagements with ‘religion’ from their potentially emancipatory, prophetic, and subversive capacities” (2) – but it regains its balance with some worthy essays.

Philip Gorski’s excellent contribution connects nationalism with whiteness, apocalypticism, victimization narratives, and with what he calls “blood tropes.” Jason A. Springs uses the term “zombie nationalism” to refer to the persistence of white nationalism in American history, although his treatment of that history is remarkably thin, dating back not much earlier than the 1980s. R. Scott Appleby demonstrates that “Catholic radicalism is directly antithetical to White Christian nationalism,” but “one cannot credibly advance an exceptionalist argument exempting American Catholics from vigorous participation in White Christian nationalism” (107, 119).

The chapters on comparative nationalism are instructive. Geneviève Zubrzycki looks at both antisemitism and “philosemitism” in Poland and argues that Jewishness as a symbolic category “can serve as a foil to construct not only an exclusive ethnic nation, but also to build an inclusive, civic, and secular nation” (172). Singre Bangstad identifies the 2011 terrorist attack in Norway as “a harbinger of right-wing extremist and White supremacist terrorism in Europe, Oceania, and the United States” (228).

Predictably, authors in a volume populated with sociologists and anthropologists invoke numerous theorists – Gramsci, Derrida, Latour, and others – although this book could use more historical ballast and less theoretical filigree. Even those who purport to provide history come up short, as when Gorski breezes from the Puritans to the Cold War, neglecting entirely the various efforts of the National Reform Association to amend the Constitution to read that the United States is a Christian nation, initiatives that would appear to have some bearing on the topic.

Randall Balmer  
Dartmouth College  
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