

sociological thinking about “the social construction of reality” (see 52), but this framework would seem to undermine, not support, the implication of a single, stable “normal reality” to which war and religion are ready alternatives given each reality is just as socially constructed as any other.

Perhaps these criticisms, however, miss the point. Despite taking on such large categories and sweeping questions, this is a refreshingly modest book. It is less intent on answering its big questions than in provoking its readers to ask them, to ponder them, to take them seriously. It also shows a wide array of people in diverse circumstances doing just that in their everyday lives. A portion of the second chapter recounts how Juergensmeyer happened into the study of religion and violence in the first place, further enhancing the personal appeal of the book. As an addition to the ongoing scholarly conversation about religion and violence, from such an authoritative source, this is a welcome publication.

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Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit: The Place of Zen in Christian Life. By Robert E. Kennedy. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2020. xxiii + 167 pages. \$18.00 (paper).

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Robert Edward Kennedy is both a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest and a Zen master. His journey into Zen Buddhist practice began more than forty years ago, in Japan, under Yamada Roshi (1907–1989), a Zen master linked with the Sanbōkyōdan (Three Treasures Association) who taught Zen to many Western Christians in the twentieth century without insisting that they should convert to Buddhism. He continued his training under two Zen teachers in the United States linked with the same group. *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit* is a revised edition of the 1995 version of the book with twenty-five more years of Zen experience added.

The book is written primarily for Christians or other theists who are attracted to the idea that Zen could enrich their spiritual life. For them, it is a tool for reflection and practice. However, it will also be of interest to undergraduate and postgraduate students studying contemporary spirituality, dual religious belonging, religious experience, and Buddhist-Christian encounter.

Kennedy claims at the beginning, “I have never thought of myself as anything but Catholic and I certainly have never thought of myself as a Buddhist” (xiii). He can say this because he does not see Zen Buddhism as a religion but rather “a way of seeing life that can enhance any religious faith” (xv) and “be

fully integrated into Christian life” (xxi). Although some Zen Buddhists in Japan might disagree because they see Zen as intrinsically embedded within Buddhism, this has become a popular position among Roman Catholics taught by masters such as Yamada Roshi and his disciples, thereby allowing them to hold together two systems with very different tenets.

Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit evokes what Kennedy sees as the heart of the Zen way of seeing through theological reflection, poetry, and koan—brief stories or dialogues that Zen Buddhists, particularly within the Rinzai School, use in meditation. Some are illustrated beautifully through art by Amy Yee, a follower of the same form of Zen practice as Kennedy. At the end of the book, in part 4, Kennedy uses the twelfth-century Sufi poem, *The Song of the Birds*, to illustrate one of his main points—that “we ourselves are God’s final revelation” (xxiii).

Zen Buddhist practice is underpinned by the concept nonduality, namely the complete integration of subject and object, in which the person and ultimate reality or “emptiness” reach union. Under Kennedy’s pen, this becomes integration between the person and God. Christians, he states, have “no independent existence” of their own “apart from God” (27). Zen methods of meditation, he suggests, can help this realization through jolting us from seeing and thinking the world through our “ego-self” into “just seeing,” letting go of pseudo-knowledge, conventional wisdom, and possessive love. In this process, clinging to a “false self” dies. A kenosis, a self-emptying, happens that can bring the Christian to the point when they see that they are one with the mind of Christ. They are Jesus in the world. In evoking this, Kennedy draws on Buddhist and Christian narratives, as well as cameos from his own, long experience, all of which draw out deep affinities between Zen and Christianity.

This is a beautiful book, infused with poetry, enigma, art, and narrative. For those who wish to use it in their own spiritual journey, it is a book to savor and ponder. For the student of religion, it is a fascinating and deeply moving account of what happens at the level of experience, when Zen Buddhism and contemplative Christianity fuse to create a powerful and liberating spirituality. It is a spirituality that remains quintessentially Christian, while drawing deeply from the wells of another tradition. The result is a powerful testimony to the transformations that happened within religion in the twentieth century through interreligious encounter and that continue to influence religious belonging in the twenty-first century.

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