

Strathern argues strongly for the social-functional nature of religions (especially immanentist ones) and identifies exchange as its chief mode of operation. The comparative impulse owes much to historical sociology, and Max Weber's name is invoked throughout the book. There are few works by historians in which the anthropological and sociological impulses are so well integrated as in *Unearthly Powers*, and it will be stimulating for all scholars interested in the historical role of religions.

Its virtues aside, *Unearthly Powers* is a book with arguments that are open to challenges. Most importantly, Strathern's theoretical model is based on Christianity and Buddhism, although he makes some references to Islam and Confucianism. With Islam, the transcendentalist conversion model falls short because the existence of a "clerisy" was by no means comparable to that in Christianity and Buddhism. While there might have been a strong tradition of divine kingship in Mesopotamia and Persia, it is problematic to project ideas of divinized or righteous kingship onto the caliphate. For most Ottoman rulers, the title of caliph carried little real import in their exercise of authority, thus partially explaining the space opened for challenges to their political authorities by Sufis and self-appointed Mahdis. With Confucianism, we are dealing with an ethical, philosophical, and ritual system that had only a tenuous relationship with the supernatural and meta-persons. Despite the efforts of Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE) to promote Confucianism as a cosmological religion in the service of the Han dynasty, Confucianism never became a religion in Chinese history or served as a political theology for imperial regimes.

I imagine there will be other voices criticizing the relative neglect of theology, especially soteriology, and of the substantial differences between Christianities (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, etc.) and Buddhisms (Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana, etc.). Specialists may disagree with the interpretation with this or that historical case study. Nevertheless, *Unearthly Powers* presents a powerful, articulate, and stimulating argument that challenges us to deeper reflections.

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***They Knew They Were Pilgrims: Plymouth Colony and the Contest for American Liberty.* By John Turner. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020. x + 447 pp. \$30.00 hardcover.**

In *They Knew They Were Pilgrims*, John Turner turns to Plymouth Colony "as a fresh lens for examining the contested meaning of liberty in early New England" (3). Throughout the book, liberty takes on multiple meanings—Christian liberty, liberty of conscience, political liberty, and liberty of choice. As Turner deftly shows, religious liberty should not really be understood in a given society as either present or absent. It depends on definitions. It is present or absent in multiple ways at once, often under competing meanings that sometimes erupt in violence. When the Pilgrims arrived in the Netherlands, for example, they experienced a form of religious toleration and liberty of conscience that they at first welcomed—since they could find a home there—but which they soon came to see as "both too fragile and too expansive." Dutch magistrates,

who might change their views or be overthrown by the Spanish, tended to defend a range of “private belief and practice, not public worship or dissent.” Yet that range, which enabled the Pilgrims to gather, also seemed to many Pilgrims like too welcoming a platform for “pluralism, libertinism, and licentiousness” (28). Many feared that the Dutch would corrupt their children, and soon a portion of them—slightly more than a hundred—left.

The fate of separatist groups in the Netherlands reveals not only the way that zeal seldom leaves room for compromise (Turner calls English separatists “disunity specialists” [29]) but also how important the particular forms of church discipline and structure could be to individual believers. It is hard to understand what motivated so many English reformers (Pilgrims, puritans, and otherwise) during the seventeenth century without seeing how much ecclesiology factored into their sense of a true church. Every feature of doctrine and discipline was a moral cause, a righteous cause, and the morally righteous asserted the importance of their cause by separating themselves from anyone else who refused to stand up and speak out. When John Robinson, the pastor and leader of the Pilgrims, prohibited his followers from praying and worshipping together with any Christians who remained in the Church of England, William Ames, a leading puritan theologian, called him out for having too strict a position. “Are you more holy than Christ?” he asked (34). Robinson backed down, but the basic impetus remained. In Rhode Island, years later, Roger Williams would follow this separatist zeal to its natural end, refusing to worship with anyone besides his wife, since everyone was too impure.

So, what did these zealous Pilgrims hope to achieve in Plymouth? According to Turner, “The Leiden Pilgrims came to the New World to establish a haven and beacon for separatism, not a bastion of religious toleration and freedom. Their goal was to transplant a congregation, found a prosperous colony, and attract puritans wavering on the threshold of separatism to join them” (118). What they wanted, in other words, was the liberty to practice purity and a purity that would prosper—and both the economic and the religious motives often drove them into curtailing the liberties of others.

Turner’s book is particularly good on the slave conditions of New England in general and Plymouth in particular. The stories Turner tells throughout this book are excellent. He focuses the history of the Pilgrims on particular persons—leaders, usually, but also the relatively unknown pulled from an impressive study of the archives. He is not content to speak generally about slavery in Plymouth. He wants to find particular names, particular tales. And so, we hear, for example, about Hope, a Pequot War captive owned by Edward Winslow and sold to John Mainfort in Boston under John Winthrop’s direction. Hope “almost certainly died on Barbados” (176), and his story illustrates the unfortunate fate of many Native slaves in New England. So, too, we learn the story of Jether, another “captive Indian boy” passed around among New England worthies—one “among the many hundreds of Native men, women, and children who had surrendered or been captured during the closing months” of King Philip’s War (307). Name after name and story after story appear while still hewing to a larger narrative of Plymouth Colony from its origins to its eventual demise and incorporation into Massachusetts Bay.

In pulling these names and stories from the archives, Turner sets accomplishments and achievements next to extreme violence and failure. The Pilgrims in Turner’s account turn out to be remarkably human. He neither loves them nor hates them. Instead, he seems to find them fascinating for the very contradictions that defined

their course, on the one hand extending forms of political participation further than what existed in England, and on the other hand endorsing forms of slavery and servitude that seemed to trouble the conscience of all too few. In the same way, the Pilgrims and their religious sensibilities could foster “moments of concord and mutual enjoyment” (83) with their Native American allies but could also lead to the ruthless pursuit and massacre of Native American neighbors, often from a rather mercurial interest in their land.

In telling their tale, Turner goes where the evidence takes him and no further, rendering judgments about what actually happened and why based on the best possible accumulation of evidence with a wary eye about how to read the texts. That might not seem extraordinary, since it is, after all, the historian’s task. But in the case of the Pilgrims—who have been repeatedly sanctified and demonized for the past two hundred years—it is more extraordinary than it might seem. Turner offers a much more nuanced and balanced reading of the records. This comprehensive, careful, and lively account of their deeds and misdeeds will be the definitive history of the Pilgrims for many years to come.

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***The Basque Seroras: Local Religion, Gender, and Power in Northern Iberia, 1550–1800.* By Amanda L. Scott. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2020. xiii + 230 pp. \$49.95 hardcover.**

The Basques have long attracted the attention of anthropologists, who are fascinated by the people’s unique social customs. Historians of early modern Spain also have found much to interest them, as the Basques were intrepid fishermen, shipbuilders, and merchants as well as famous missionaries, saints, and, occasionally, witches. Until now, however, a little-known and largely forgotten feature of Basque life has eluded historical study. These were the *seroras*, unmarried women who served churches and rural chapels from medieval times until the institution was suppressed by the Bourbon monarchy in 1769.

In her gracefully written first book, Amanda Scott devotes an introduction, seven short chapters, and a conclusion to the history of this unique Basque institution. Scott argues convincingly that there was nothing quite like the *seroras* either in Spain or anywhere else. Like other lay religious women, they practiced celibacy and sometimes lived together in one house, called a *seroría*, but unlike others, they never became tertiaries. The *seroras*’ primary duty was to maintain the church or chapel attached to their *seroría*, but it would be a mistake to think of them as sacristans. Although their duties were similar, they were also supposed to have a superior religious calling. Yet, they clearly were nothing like Castilian *beatas*, whose piety and occasional religious athleticism could attract hordes of followers, raise suspicious scrutiny from the inquisitors, and inspire biographers. The *seroras* were emphatically tied to their natal communities, often serving a church or chapel associated with their own family. Indeed, one of the peculiarities of Basque family structure was that the institution of a single, universal