***Christian Voices: Journeys through Faith and Politics in Contemporary American Protestantism*. By Charlene Floyd. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007. ii + 174 pp. $44.95 cloth**

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Most books that examine the intersection of faith and politics usually are loaded with statistical analyses of voting or other forms of political participation. Floyd's work is different. The reader is challenged by a preconceived notion of what a book on religion and politics is supposed to look like. It takes only a few pages to realize that this book does not resemble other examinations of faith and politics, and this difference is good.

Floyd opens with two organizing questions: "How does a person of faith determine his priorities? How does she perceive the world around her and ultimately make political decisions?" (p. 1). Both questions are important politically and theologically and both are almost impossible to answer on a large scale through the standard survey techniques commonly used in social science. Instead of using surveys, Floyd's study is qualitative. She interviews parishioners and church leaders from four different and disparate Protestant congregations: St. Francis United Methodist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina; Concord Presbyterian Church in Delaware, Ohio; Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas; and Park Slope United Methodist Church in Brooklyn, New York.

Through a comparison of these four congregations (and the three broader denominations to which they belong), Floyd paints a picture of faith and politics in the diverse world of Protestantism with stories collected from sixteen people. A few of those interviewed are pastors or other church staff personnel; the others are active congregation members. Particularly illuminating are the stories of how the interviewees found their church homes. Many of the revelations include indications of dissatisfaction with another church community or denomination. Some of the stories involve leaving years of familial tradition behind in search of a more engaging and engaged church.

The interviews collected from each congregation appear as separate chapters, with Chapter 1 serving as a useful introduction to the work and a brief description of each congregation and denomination. Chapter 6 summarizes the interviews and is provocatively titled "Politics of the Pew: Does Where

You Stand Depend on Where You Sit?" All of the subjects discuss how their faith affects their political perspectives. With a few exceptions, there are few surprises. It is not until Chapter 5's visit to Park Slope United Methodist Church in Brooklyn that the reader learns about a highly politicized ecclesial community. Chapter 5 opens with a recounting of the United Methodist Church's debate over the right of homosexuals to be members of the denomination. The members of Park Slope about whom we learn in the book are not the only politically liberal persons Floyd interviews, but they are by far the most open about their politics and how their perspectives affect their relationship to their congregation, their denomination, and the larger society.

Floyd weaves the transcribed interviews throughout her interpretation with quotations from the interviews printed in a different font. This technique can make reading more difficult. At first, it can be difficult to focus on who is talking at any one time. As the reader becomes more comfortable with the changing typefaces, however, it is almost like being in the room as Floyd conducts the interview.

One fascinating prospect Floyd raises in her summary chapter is the conversation that would ensue if the sixteen persons interviewed in the book were to come together in one room. Clearly there would be some arguments over matters of theology and politics. These arguments are a key indicator of the state of American Protestantism: denominations were founded on theological differences. But there would be significant shared experiences. For example, Floyd finds that her interviewees live lives of prayer. Many turn to prayer when faced with difficult decisions. Prayer cuts across the life experiences of each interviewee: "Without exception, when questioned about their faith journeys, people wanted to talk about prayer" (p. 160).

For students of religion and politics, the offerings presented by this book may be difficult to uncover. With careful reflection, the core answers to Floyd's organizing questions become clearer. Almost all of the subjects find strength and direction in the Bible, even if they may not always agree with the others' interpretations. Several of the subjects told Floyd that they changed churches or denominations because their previous church was not solidly centered on the Bible. Most subjects organized their lives around the Word of God, using their faith to guide decisions on setting priorities in their lives. As Floyd summarizes, "Faith is personal. For people of faith no celebration or sorrow exists separate from faith. It is deeply entwined in every story of life and death. Each decision, no matter the scope, is somehow molded by one's faith" (p. 159). Floyd's work contributes to our understanding of the

intersection of faith and politics. It provides a rich examination of the complexity of this intersection that is often lost in the more quantitative studies with which we are familiar.

***The Violence of Liberation: Gender and the Tibetan Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China*. By Charlene E. Makley. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. xvii + 374 pp. $60.00 cloth, $24.95 paper**

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Charlene Makley's book works in two modes: first as history and second as an argument about the subtle and fundamental roles of gender in the negotiation of political authority and identity in the relationships between the local (Tibetan) and translocal (Chinese state). These two modes are interwoven in a complex set of arguments about the incorporation of the Labrang region, the site of a major Tibetan Buddhist monastery, into the People's Republic of China.

The history is mainly presented in the first three chapters, each of which deals with a different era in the trajectory of incorporation. Chapter 1 focuses on the pre-Maoist era, looking at the relationship between Labrang's Tibetan Buddhist authorities and various Chinese authorities from late Imperial times until the beginning of the People's Republic of China (PRC). This is an extremely nuanced treatment of the efforts by the Tibetan authorities to "pacify" the region and bring it under their control through religio-political structures of authority, while local Tibetan Buddhist authorities conducted ongoing negotiations with Chinese rulers. Chapter 2 covers the Maoist period, when Tibetans lost virtually all agency under the PRC's campaigns to "domesticate" the region and its people into productive minority citizens, and religion in all guises was banned. Chapter 3 examines the last three decades of the Reform period. Here the Chinese state has relaxed some of its interventions and is now concerned with pushing consumption and mobility to fuel the market economy. The monastery is allowed to reopen, primarily with the hopes of stimulating the economy through tourism. At the same