

Governing Body of the WTS, and Jehovah). Indeed, it still seems to me that the primary intentionality is not directed to the group, but that it is a commitment to Jehovah and his word, the Bible. It is not so much the group's biography that is at stake as the biography of each member. The group can help achieve the goal (e.g., through mutual exchange, encouragement, correction, or to provide partners for the mission). In the end, I don't think we can approach religious communities with strictly rational theories. There are just too many variables in play: Religion is messy. Rota acknowledges that his objective was not to present « a theoretical account of a specific form of a religious collectivity » (p. 226). While he delineates the mechanisms that define the WTS as a collectivity, he does not elucidate the specific characteristics that distinguish this collectivity as a religious one, nor does he compare and contrast it with a secular collectivity. In the conclusion, the author makes passing reference to Jeppe Sinding Jensen (*What Is Religion?*, London, Routledge, 2014) and his concept of e-religion (e=external) and i-reli-

gion (i=internal), suggesting that, based on his findings, greater tension should be assumed between the « e » and the « i ».

The phenomenological approach to religion has been much criticized and was abandoned by many scholars. It is undeniable that it went in many ways too far. But as scholars of religion, we render our very own subject insignificant by comparing religious communities to soccer clubs, without at least a basic recognition of the experiences that many of the people who submit themselves to collective intentionality perceive as extraordinary, miraculous, and supernatural, and that mark real turning points in their biographies. In the end, it should be the duty of scholars of religion to theorize the incomprehensible without generalizing or belittling the devotion to an unmeasurable cause. Rota may not have done the former (alas!), but he clearly excels at providing a micro-analysis that takes the religious community and its members seriously.

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ANDREA ROTA ED., *Religion and Academia Reframed: Connecting Religion, Science, and Society in the Long Sixties*, Leiden – Boston, Brill, « Supplements to Method & Theory in the Study of Religion, 21 », 2023, 229 p., ISBN 978-90-04-54657-8.

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The contributions contained in this volume edited by Andrea Rota present case studies that show the effectiveness of ethnographic and sociological analysis carried out in a historical key; they respond to a research question clearly expressed by the editor in the introduction and, of course, in his chapter: which categories and which methods can we use today to study the continuous implication and the relational interconnection between religion as an object of study – as an observed phenomenon – and religion as a field of action?

The age-old and intricate problem of the reciprocity between subject and object is

addressed here within a particular historical context – the so-called Long Sixties (ca. 1955-1973) – and a limited geographical context which, for the sake of simplicity, we will call the West (the book focuses on European and North American cases).

Notwithstanding the deconstructive impulse of David Atwood's contribution, « The Lust for Order in History: Axiality in the "Long Sixties" », which critically challenges the rigidity of selecting specific events or periods as a necessary framework for research (an operation that risks ossifying and crystallizing time), the label Long Sixties remains entirely valid. As

Rota writes in the introduction (p. 1), despite « analytical disagreements » on the impact of those years' sociocultural transformations on personal and collective lifestyles, this period can be considered a bridge between two different eras. Indeed, it identifies a historical moment marked by great social, cultural, political, economic, and even religious changes.

These were the years of the fall of the paradigms of secularization and the death of God, as well as the years of the discovery of religious diversity. Social scientists and humanists studying religion were busy observing the resilience mechanisms of religion and deepening the study of the religious plurality arising from the global circulation of both known and new religious groups.

Related to that period are the classic and now popular reflections on the return of the sacred, of religion, of God, even in a fundamentalist key. However, this book offers a new theoretical perspective on the spiritual innovations and religious revival of that period by shifting the focus to the contemporaneous scholars who first studied them. For the first time in the history of the study of religion, in the Long Sixties scholars and academic institutions were reached « at home » by a religious effervescence they had never experienced before. Within this framework, the case studies reveal the fluidity of boundaries between religious, spiritual, and secular actors and ideas. They do so by discussing both the complex attitudes of influential individuals, such as Robert Bellah (see the chapter by W. Michael Ashcraft, « Robert N. Bellah and the New Religious Consciousness »), and collective forms of identity in which these dimensions interpenetrate and influence one another in interstitial spaces, as discussed in the chapter by Christina Wyttenbach, « Expertise on NRMs in Switzerland: An Interstitial Space between the Religious and Scientific Fields ». These were years in which Western societies experimented with manifold interaction between the religious and the secular, which would later be

identified as « multiple secularities » – an expression that, in my opinion, effectively holds together different instances which are in continuous competition and profound tension.

At the same time, the volume examines reflexively the mythopoetic aspects of the Long Sixties themselves, i.e., the narratives that offer, « through the imagination of a paradigmatic story, an order of the world as well as instructions for both individuals and collectives » (Atwood, *Schwelienzeiten. Mythopoetische Ursprünge von Religion in der Zeitgeschichte*, Baden-Baden, Ergon, 2019, p. 26, quoted by Atwood in his chapter « The Lust for Order in History: Axiality in the "Long Sixties" », on p. 201). Thus, the Long Sixties appear in their ambivalence as a turning point in the history of religions, and as a critical moment used by the discipline of the study of religion to construct its own « turning point » and new identity. In this respect, the chapters are excellent examples of the impact of the « reflexive turn » in the study of religion. The adoption of a more self-aware and critical approach within the discipline is in itself a legacy of the Sixties, as scholars began to question their own roles, assumptions, and biases in the study of religion.

Among the various turns, Rota in his introduction mentions the « relational approach » (p. 2), as a perspective that emphasizes understanding religion not as a set of isolated beliefs, doctrines, or rituals, but as a network of relationships among people, communities, traditions, and postulated transcendences. It highlights how religions are embedded in social and cultural contexts and emerge through interactions and connections across social domains. This relational approach partially aligns with the study of « lived religion ». By focusing on how individuals and groups experience, adapt, and express their religion in everyday life, it highlights how apparently unitary phenomena depend on relations between people, spaces, objects, and texts.

The volume is not a juxtaposition of case studies. It seeks to explore, within certain pro-

files and contexts, the interrelation between religious experiences and scientific interests in religion, between scientific rigor and engaged participation in the cultural movements, between the academic study of religion and the new presence of religion within the academy. What emerges, as Rota writes (p. 2), is the crisscrossing of «individual biographies, institutional arrangements, intellectual histories, and discursive constellations». It is a multifocal look at the past that profoundly interrogates, from the point of view of both

theory and the positioning of scholars, the present state of health of the social and historical sciences of religion. It is an excellent example of how historiography and the history of studies in fact could enrich not only the history of religions but also other disciplines, first and foremost the anthropology and sociology of religions.

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JONATHAN P. YATES, ANTHONY DUPONT édés., *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, vol. II, *Consolidation of the Canon to the Arab Conquest (ca. 393 to 650 CE)*, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter, 2023, 607 p., ISBN 9783110492613.

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L'ouvrage est issu d'un programme de recherche intitulé «Handbooks of the Bible and Its Reception» qui a débuté en 2020, en ce qui concerne l'Afrique du Nord, avec la publication d'un premier volume consacré à la réception de la Bible depuis Tertullien jusqu'à Augustin d'Hippone (JONATHAN P. YATES et ANTHONY DUPONT édés., *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, vol. I, *Commencement to the Confessiones of Augustine*, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter, 2020). Les actes de ce second volume, édité avec un grand soin par Jonathan P. Yates et Anthony Dupont, respectivement professeurs à l'université Villanova et à l'université catholique de Louvain, ont réuni dix-neuf études réalisées à partir de sources variées.

L'objet de la recherche, qui porte sur une période allant de la fin du IV<sup>e</sup> jusqu'au milieu du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle, est d'étudier la réception de la Bible en Afrique romaine tardive, vandale et byzantine. Le cœur du travail est la littérature patristique de l'Afrique tardo-antique et la valeur des transformations que les auteurs africains de cette période ont apportées aux lectures de la Bible. L'enquête est ambitieuse, non seulement par le champ chronologique qu'elle couvre, mais aussi parce que son ob-

jet est protéiforme. Il s'agissait en effet de s'appuyer sur une méthode interdisciplinaire pour offrir l'examen le plus concret possible de la réception de la Bible dans l'Afrique du Nord de la fin de l'Antiquité. La question des usages des Écritures est rapportée dès les premières pages à une donnée structurelle, la place très particulière de ce corpus de textes dans les systèmes de normes en vigueur dans la société africaine. Néanmoins, il fallait bien noter que le corps des textes que nous considérons maintenant comme bibliques a été transmis aux évêques africains comme étant des *scripturae*, ce qui signifie qu'ils n'en ont eu connaissance qu'au moyen de livres séparés ou de groupe de livres. Bien que l'usage de ce qu'on appelle la Septante fût très fréquent dans la *pars orientalis* du monde romain, il n'est pas sûr que les prélats africains de l'Antiquité tardive aient utilisé ou même aient vu cette Bible grecque. La première Bible latine que l'on connaisse et qui regroupe toute l'Écriture en un seul volume remonte à Cassiodore, au milieu du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle (le *Codex grandior*). Il est donc légitime de penser que les évêques africains de cette période se réfèrent à l'*Afra* connue par de nom-