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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Unfinished War: Vietnam and the American Conscience* by Walter H. Capps

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Source: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Jun., 1983), pp. 196-197

Published by: Wiley on behalf of Society for the Scientific Study of Religion

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1385684>

Accessed: 29-04-2024 21:15 +00:00

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The Cult Experience is less successful when it deviates from psychology. Tacked on at the end of the book are sections on cults as "deviant religious moorings," on the role of women in cults, and on the current and future status of cults. These are all interesting topics, but have more to do with social policy than psychology. Furthermore, the underdevelopment of these sections leaves one with the impression that they were added to make the table of contents seem more impressive and "relevant."

In its attitude toward cults, this is not an unbiased book. Although Pavlos begins on a note of objectivity, his personal feelings soon become clear. They are conveyed at first through little sarcasms — "From Father Divine to Daddy Jones" — but eventually in flat declarations, ". . . their belief systems do not generally support wholesome practices for their disciples." Pavlos never becomes shrill in his attitude, however, and to his credit always cautions the reader against over-simplification. He emphasizes that such topics as conversion, commitment, and charisma — too complex to be predicted from measures of personality traits — depend on a variety of social and personal factors.

In style *The Cult Experience* balances the conceptual with the concrete. The highly abstract level of analysis can make the reading at times a little difficult to follow and a little repetitious, as the same theories are applied again and again to slightly different analytic foci. Zimbardo's social reinforcement theory turns up in three chapters in a row. The cognitive dissonance hypothesis is invoked repeatedly. On the other hand, the constant comparisons between, for example, true and partial believers, cults and denominations, Eastern and Western theologies, religious cults and secular "growth groups," lend the argument clarity and precision. The many case studies, ranging from the People's Temple to the Unification Church, the Divine Light Mission, Synanon, and the "Garbage Eaters," to mention a few, illustrate how multiple psychological factors operate together in a concrete group. This blending of modern American religion, on the one hand, with psychological theory, on the other, makes the *Cult Experience* a valuable reading experience for students in either field.

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THE UNFINISHED WAR: VIETNAM AND THE AMERICAN CONSCIENCE. By Walter H. Capps. Boston: Beacon Press, 1982. vii + 177 pp. notes. index. \$13.50.

Professor Capps wrote a brief social history of the American involvement in the Vietnam War. Too brief. He makes an excellent beginning toward a religious analysis of this war but is inconclusive in his ending.

He states the strong thesis that this war was a tragic drama of our "loss of innocence" from the "idea of America." We are left morally unresolved a crisis in our civil religion. He skillfully rehearses the tale of how we became involved at the end of World War II alongside of the French, how we tried to befriend the Vietnamese search for independence, but finally how our own geopolitical conflict with the Soviet Union made us cast Ho Chi Minh and his liberation forces as Communist aggressors in their own country. This categorical error led us into the combat in 1954 from which we painfully exited in 1975. Now three different responses to this tragic drama typify our present divided soul. First, there are the combat veterans who experienced this war as the "disruptive ritual" of American innocence. Other Americans accepted this loss of innocence as part of the threatening drama begun at Hiroshima. They turned East and mystically inward seeking a new Eden through the "new religions." Finally, Capps characterizes the third response as a return of religious dualism, exhibited by Jerry Falwell and his "Moral Majority" in a move "Right to Armageddon." The Vietnam War was not a loss of American innocence to them but a failure of courage and morality by the liberal political elite which kept the military from winning. Abruptly he closes rather than concludes his book on Ronald Reagan as a president who wishes, as Jerry Falwell does, to return to the American First Era of the 1950s. Noting that neither the Edenic turn Eastward nor the Armageddonic turn right offer moral resolution for the American people as a whole, he offers the combat veterans in their acts of confession and mutual aid as the only ones who have found a healing ritual.

Capps' book poses a significant question. "Can we, the American people, learn the lesson of Vietnam?" Yet he is not willing to offer a clear exposition of what that lesson is. Drawing upon his religious knowledge he creates illuminating analogies for characterizing the attitudes reflected in our divided responses. Yet his unwillingness to enter "the struggle for the real," as Clifford Geertz calls religion, troubles me. He will not risk a general religious explanation for our involvement and that is what the civil religious debate demands.

He draws upon David Bakan's theory about Western religions being "religions of agency" and uses this to good effect in contrasting it to the Asian religions of contemplation for explaining the Edenic and Armageddonic responses. Moreover, his discussion of the New Right religious movements offers them as bad examples of the religion of agency in American culture. Has Capps lost his faith that any religion of agency can provide a morally profound American Civil Religion?

There is one glaring omission from his social history of our involvement in the Vietnam War. His

thoughtful survey of the events of the American struggle over this war passes over the religious and political organizations of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement. He does retell the story of the successful resistance in Congress to the continuation of this war, but only implicitly does he ever allude to the popular movements which gave elected officials a political base from which to act. There is no discussion of Clergy and Laity Concerned About the War in Vietnam or of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s move from the Civil Rights struggle to the movement against the war. Indeed, there is no rehearsal of all those varied struggles lumped together in the popular press as the Movement. Does he just take it for granted?

I am left to conclude that this silence reflects the absence of a liberal presence in the public life of America today. The public debate over the meaning of Vietnam in the Civil Religion of America lacks popular movements in religion or in politics which speak a liberal voice. After their success in helping shape the public consensus that led to our military withdrawal from Vietnam this liberal coalition collapsed. Unable to produce a lasting movement for political change in America, they won the war but are now losing the civil religious debate over its historical meaning.

Was it the failure of the Movement, especially its religious members, to articulate their struggle in the religious language of agency that left these powerful civil religious symbols open to be captured by the forces of nostalgia such as Jerry Falwell and Ronald Reagan? Americans can learn from the Asian religions of contemplation; nevertheless, the American Civil Religion will remain a religion of agency. If a professor like Capps is unwillingly or unable to continue the discussion toward a genuine religious explanation of this tragic dilemma then who shall help the healing process bravely begun by the combat veterans? This is a good book, a good beginning; I hope someday soon Professor Capps will finish his own "unfinished war."

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RELIGION AND PAIN: THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF HEALTH CARE. By Joseph H. Fichter. New York: Crossroads, 1981. 143 pp. \$9.95.

In this book, Fichter tackles one of the most important, yet most understudied, problems in modern

medicine. He confronts the sufficiency of the modern health deliverer to care for the spiritual dimension of the patient. Physician skills in promoting whole person health, and in facilitating adult and child development in the spiritual dimension of their health, is currently America's greatest health care gap.

Are doctors concerned about this? Do they feel healthcare should be provided for the whole person, body, mind and spirit? Intellectually, the answer is overwhelmingly yes (>78%) according to this survey by Fichter of healthcare providers. Yet the operative skills of physicians in actually caring for the spiritual dimension of the consumer, even in the supportive milieu of the four sectarian hospitals of this study, was extremely small (<29%). Even more interestingly, the data reveal a hierarchy of levels from the intellectual to the most intimate, of modern medicine's progressive failure to provide skills to the physician to be a true healer to the whole patient.

What does this mean? To start, Fichter provides a review of the philosophic analyses of healthcare's relation to the spiritual dimension, and the available modern scientific material on the measured effects of the spiritual dimension in healthcare. With this conceptual frame we gain clarity on what is the importance of explicit spiritual caring for the full dimension of man in the healthcare setting: the importance of explicit discreteness in spiritual diagnosis and sensitive, yet vigorously-informed, appropriate intervention. What benefit is it to treat the physical and emotional value components of the disorder, if the ultimate values (the spiritual) part is not identified?

Fichter's study then presses on to point out the insufficiency in pastoral care departments to offer guidance in spiritual healing skills. After a decade an enormous increase in psychological counseling proficiency with new CPE training and accreditation standards, the chaplaincy departments have yet to develop a repertoire of applied theological skills which they can teach to physicians.

A third significant finding in this study relates to sister-administrators. These sisters, as the non-physician women with the highest level of certification, had the highest utilization of spiritual skills in dealing with patients and the greatest dissatisfaction with the contemporary quality of spiritual care given. Here the data suggest that the health provider must experientially know what spiritual care can be provided, before (s)he can register dissatisfaction that it is not there.

Fichter has done a great service to the medical and theological communities and the consumer, but most of all to USA healthcare in general, and its policy-makers. He has provided statistical evidence, from the *crème de la crème* of the hospitals' most skilled of whole-person health delivery, (the surviving sectarians), and has clearly etched the major deficiency in American health care, even at its spiritually-best trained institutions. It is not a problem just for the