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within local “ecologies” or networks of churches, voluntary associations, and other social and economic resources within four communities.

Edgell argues that congregations, more than religious elites and activists, are the context through which families assess changing ideals for family life. As might be expected, elements of culture wars rhetoric appear across conservative and liberal/mainline churches. However, themes around the need for churches to support “the family” are typically muted in light of pragmatic concerns for meeting increasingly diverse needs within the wider community. A “standard package” of family ministries developed in the 1950s (Sunday school, women’s groups, and teen programs) continues to undergird many congregational programs today—with emphases on programs for youth, the elderly, women, and men. Not surprisingly, larger churches have both more traditional and more innovative programs; more conservative churches also tend to provide a mix of traditional and innovative programs that are more flexible in schedule, location, or organization in order to meet the needs of two-earner and single-parent families.

In addition to placing the work of congregations within communities at the center of her analysis, Edgell’s study also emphasizes how individuals draw on interpretive frameworks, or schemas, to assess the meaning and salience of religion and family in their own lives. She poses two alternative sets of schemas that frame how individuals in these communities think about religion and family. On the one hand, individuals may think about religious participation as an element or expression of their own spiritual pilgrimage or journey. This “self-oriented” framework conceptualizes religion as a separate domain from work or family. Others interpret religious participation as an expression of family and community life, via a “family-oriented” rhetoric. These frameworks operate independently of individuals’ structural position *vis-a-vis* either work or family. Chapters on styles of religious involvement highlight gender differences in motivations and meanings of participating in congregational life. Men, Edgell finds, are more likely than women to describe church involvement as a venue for supporting connections to children, and to struggle with the appropriateness of ministries to diverse families. Women describe how participation in congregational life supports their own spiritual growth and experience, and are generally more supportive of nontraditional and more flexible programming.

A third theme within the book concerns the relative importance of religious markets and religious institutions in the process of social change. From a rational choice theoretical perspective, churches that revise programs and services to meet diverse needs of contemporary families should thrive because they are better able to compete for new members. Yet questions of when and how congregations change, Edgell argues, are better addressed from an insti-

tutional approach to religion. Thus, although some programs are ostensibly appealing because of their marketability, Edgell makes the case that the stability of core programs and limited incremental change within congregations provide greater support for an institutional perspective on religion and religious change.

Finally, Edgell’s analysis provides additional evidence that “culture wars” are more a product of religious producers than they are the experience of religious believers within local congregations. Rather than finding that congregations thrive when they are in tension with the broader culture, Edgell argues that religious organizations thrive when they offer a coherent religious tradition that provides a moral framework, personal identity, and a sense of what is good, true, and right. In these ways, Edgell’s work reaches beyond sociology of religion and sociology of family in an effort to speak to broader questions about culture, meaning, social engagement, and social change.

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WHEN PROPHECY NEVER FAILS: MYTH AND REALITY IN A FLYING-SAUCCER GROUP. By Diane G. Tumminia. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 216 pp. \$35.00 cloth.

On the eve of the 50th anniversary of Festinger et al.’s *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), Diane Tumminia’s study of the Unarius group meticulously demonstrates just how far the social sciences have progressed in attempting to present fair and accurate research on the subject of failed prophecies. Festinger and his research team have since been criticized for their misinterpretation of a historical event, misunderstanding of millennial group organization, rigid outsider objectivity, methodological negligence, and failure to recognize alternative reactions to prophetic disconfirmations. Tumminia acknowledges the importance of *When Prophecy Fails* and the subsequent critiques that have followed, and contributes in a major way to the study of failed prophecy by: (1) reflexive techniques of making her presence a part of the narrative; (2) presenting thick descriptions of Unarius members and dialogue that they shared with her; and (3) applying the “mundane reasoning” thesis to the analysis of this subject.

Tumminia’s *When Prophecy Never Fails* is a compilation of over a decade and a half of ethnographic research, in which she presents an overview of activities and events of the Unarius extraterrestrial contact religion. Founded in 1954 by Ernest and Ruth Norman, Unarius is an eclectic new religious movement that incorporates a host of New Age beliefs and practices and postulates relationships with extraterrestrial beings. Unarians are perhaps best known for

their millenarian prophecy that envisions the coming of 33 spaceships that will usher in a period of enlightenment through elite knowledge possessed by the thousands of scientists believed to be piloting these spacecrafts. Rather than focusing on the oddities of these claims, or critically underscoring the ironies of a group that sustains or even amplifies its belief after a disconfirmation, Tumminia instead presents a sincere and believable depiction of individuals practicing their “science” of Unarius.

Based on apprentice participation, Tumminia illuminates a rather personal side of this group by attempting to tell their story in their own terms. Throughout the book, Tumminia also tactfully inserts reflections on her own involvement within the group. She makes a careful effort to reconstruct previous events that occurred prior to beginning her research by gathering and interpreting various testimonies from Unarians, as well as by analyzing Unarius literature and videos. The overall account describes a tightly-woven relationship between herself and members of the group, never dismissive of Tumminia’s effect on the group and/or *vice versa*. This feature is an indication of how crucial, visible, and self-conscious a researcher’s presence has become—since the work of Festinger et al.—and the consequential construction of reflexive narratives.

The book contains an introduction, 10 chapters, three appendices, and a photo gallery. In addition to reviewing literature on failed prophecies and mythology, the chapters also explore Unarian myth-making processes, profiles of key figures within Unarius, the mode by which Unarians deal with disconfirmation of prophecies, the loss of their leader, and the reorganization of their group thereafter.

The appendices and photo gallery are especially helpful. The first appendix is a chronological history of Unarius; the second is a series of brief narratives that describe the relationship between Ruth Norman and her planetary contacts; the third is an annotated list of Norman’s perceived incarnations. The photo gallery is a collection of 20 pictures ranging from Unarius artistic depictions of Ruth and Ernest Norman and spaceships to photographs of various Unarian activities taken by members themselves. Because the photographs at times deal with such unusual content, their presentation in color would have magnified their impact. Overall, these photographs and appendices are necessary elaborations and fully complement the written text.

In the Festinger et al. study, the team of social psychologists argued that experiencing disconfirmed prophecy might actually serve to reinforce beliefs, or to establish what is known as cognitive dissonance. They suggested that under certain specified conditions a disconfirmation of prophecy would actually increase proselytizing among group members. In contrast, Tumminia borrows Melvin Pollner’s (1974) “mundane reasoning” thesis, which states that a member’s sense of social structure is reinforced

through a perceived corpus of factual accounts provided by, and sustained in conjunction with, other members of the group. In the case of Unarians, Tumminia argues that the failure of prophecy is not necessarily an indication of a falsified event, as the Unarians have already presupposed a factual reality that spaceships either have often visited earth secretly or have been deterred from doing so by the negative energies from human beings. Tumminia calls these rationales “interpretive tools” for sustaining beliefs (p. 47). For Unarians, incorrigible realities—those established realities that will always be perceived as truth—are simply not falsifiable. According to Tumminia, the Unarians reconcile their beliefs with supposed disconfirming events by affirming that their belief system, being incorrigible, never fails. This contrast between the simple rational model of Festinger et al.—where disconfirmed prophecies were adjudicated by outsider social scientists—and Tumminia’s use of mundane reasoning—which shows the group’s support for members’ common sense reality—is a conceptual improvement in the long list of studies about failed prophecy.

Scholars and students of new religious movements may find this book particularly helpful for understanding extraterrestrial contact religions. Indeed, anyone interested in exploring the contactee community through the thoughts and actions of believers themselves will find this to be a valuable reference. Rich in detailed description and thoroughly developed dialogue, this book will also be a useful teaching tool for courses on ethnography or religion.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND STATE POLITICS: NEGOTIATING PROPHETIC DEMANDS AND POLITICAL REALITIES. By David Yamane. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. 187 pp. \$65.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Despite the importance of state politics to so many important social issues—not the least of which are most laws dealing with hot-button issues of education, welfare, and abortion—scholars who study church-state issues often focus exclusively on the federal government. In this masterfully written book, David Yamane takes a close look at the functioning of 34 state-level Catholic Bishops Conferences in the United States. In the introduction, Yamane presents a theoretical framework around the double movement of secularization. According to this theoretical construct, religious authority in the modern world has indeed rapidly given way to secular authority. However, Yamane demonstrates that religious groups have accommodated to the reality of secular politics and, in some ways, participate in the system without being beholden to it.