

alone alcohol) and hand holding (let alone kissing) are not permitted, yet couples come together in ways that charm the Mormon audience and respect its faith. The second chapter, “Introducing the Challenges of Humor,” acknowledges that the type of humour that Mormons and Christians find acceptable is severely restricted, and appropriate humour must be clean. Later McIntyre notes that humour in faith contexts has humility at its core.

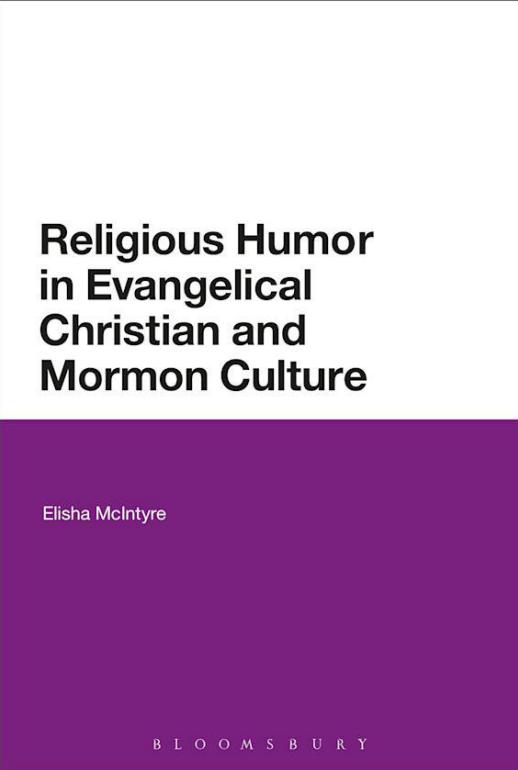
McIntyre admires the evangelical comedian Chonda Pierce, who “infuses her entire shows with her Christianity” (p. 87), while still being able to discuss female sexual states such as meno-pause and body image (which inspires her hilarious riff on Spanx, or “shapeware,” the controlling undergarments that middle-aged women have recourse to in order to reinstate their waists and a more youthfully attractive female shape). McIntyre argues that such jokes avoid blasphemy and promote faith. Chapter 4, “Appropriate Humor II: Clean and Dirty Humor,” explains that obscenity, foul language, and vulgarity are explicitly prohibited from humour that promotes faith and amuses the faithful. These ideas of clean and dirty humour are built upon ideas of the body either as pure or as polluted. So “swearing, toilet humor, and sexual humor” (p. 97) are not allowed in faith communities, and the importance of not corrupting children is signalled by the use of the term “family-friendly” (p. 99), which holds to strict boundaries. Clean sexual humour refers only to marriage but can be controversial. Thor Ramsay’s routine concerning he and his wife experiencing IVF to have children is quite explicit in certain ways, yet acknowledges God’s contribution to his family unambiguously.

The next chapter, “Appropriate Humor III: Safe and Subversive Humor,” notes the distaste for humour “based solely on attacking and insulting others” (p. 135). Christian and Mormon humour is likely to be non-hostile and non-subversive. McIntyre analyses the evangelical sitcom Pastor Greg in detail, and discusses comedians including Thor Ramsey, Brad Stines, and Chonda Pierce as purveyors of riskier, critical comedy that could be perceived as hostile on occasion. Stines, in particular, practices aggressive comedy. He says “as a Christian, I am not allowed to hate people, but I’m commanded to hate ideas that are different than God’s” (p. 159). The Mormon magazine Sunstone is another example of subversive humour; well-known for “witty cartoons alongside ...[and] penetrating articles of social commentary” (p.163). The illustrations are very amusing, and a range of Sunstone cartoons are included. The “Conclusion” reiterates the evangelical and Mormon comedians’ claim that popular culture can entertain acceptably, as long as it is not offensive to religion. McIntyre notes how religious comedians negotiate the boundaries of taste in their

communities, and how they keep the goal of honouring God front and centre.

The study of religion and humour is a small sub-field and there are many opportunities for it to expand. McIntyre’s book is unique, as most studies treat comedy and comedians outside religion(s) making jokes about religion. Here the focus on insiders, theological humour, and the production of comedy (films, stand up, cartoons, and jokes) that the scholarly audience is likely to be entirely unfamiliar with is refreshing, entertaining, and informative. This book is highly recommended.

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Religious Humor in Evangelical Christian and Mormon Culture

Elisha McIntyre

BLOOMSBURY

READER, I. (2024) RELIGION AND TOURISM IN JAPAN: INTERSECTIONS, IMAGES, POLICIES AND PROBLEMS. BLOOMSBURY. 257 + XI PP. HBK £85. ISBN: 978-1-3504-1883-7.

Ian Reader has produced a well documented and tightly argued book that shows, as the author sets out to do, that, within the broad remit of secularism's grasp, tourism has meant that religious sites, especially pilgrimage trails, have become dominated by leisure and heritage discourses that crowds out their "religious" significance within Japan. If critical readers worry that these terms do not "properly" apply to Japan, Reader fully justifies his utilisation of them in his first chapter giving a local and indigenous context, relating his work to critical studies on the concept of "religion" in Japan.

The book consists of six main chapters as well as a substantial introduction and conclusion (or chapter 7). The introduction starts with a vivid description of how a "religious" site is contrasted with a "tourist" site by a bus driver taking visitors to what he seemed to regard as something which should be the former but has become regarded as the latter. It also opens up many of the terms and issues that arise in later chapters, with particular chapters, while focused on differing case studies, also taking on specific issues. Chapter one takes on definitions of the two key terms "religion" and "tourism", which includes both a critical discussion of the wider disciplinary fields, as well as the local context regarding what they mean in Japan. Reader makes a key point which is that often scholars of tourism operate with uncritical definitions of "religion", but equally religious studies scholars are naïve in how they conceptualise "tourism". He also, rightly, takes issue with any conception

that these two are opposites and must be envisaged within a zero sum game mentality. He demonstrates that aspects of what we may term "tourism" has roots within Japanese history both as a term and a concept, with a long association with many pilgrimage trails and sites. One note that may be raised here for readers of the book, is that there is a lot of repetition of themes, issues, and arguments between the chapters. This, for myself, was somewhat tedious, and went beyond simple reminders. Nevertheless,

I do not raise it as a critique because Reader may well be alert to the fact that some readers will only read one or two chapters; many chapters would be ideal class readings. His approach helps include in each chapter critical issues on terminology, the political context, and the Japanese historical context around these issues.

Chapter two then addresses the development of transport networks – often at first bus tours, later railways, but also considering the rise of car ownership – alongside state policies on tourism. Chapter three then specifically takes on the status of secularism within Japan's

constitution, and so how "religious" sites (often officially registered as such) can be promoted and supported by the state by framing them as part of "culture" or "heritage". Chapters four to six take on particular locations as case studies, but also set them in the context of specific issues, though these often overlap and intersect. Chapter four on the Shikoku pilgrimage looks at how representations in popular television and media affect the image and popularity of sites. The next chapter takes another pilgrimage trail, Saikoku, and shows how railway companies helped popularise it and how, in particular, the question of food, especially sweets, became associated with the temples and shrines. The sixth chapter then takes on the tradition of Shugendo and its association with particular mountain re-

