

***Religious NGOs in International Relations: The Construction of 'the Religious' and 'the Secular'.* By Karsten Lehmann. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016. x + 217 pp. \$116.00 Cloth**

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In an attempt to counter resurgence of religion debates that do not look into the “black box” of religious actors, Karsten Lehmann in *Religious NGOs in International Relations* offers a rich and detailed analysis of two religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs). Lehmann places his analysis in the context of the United Nations (U.N.), and he further limits the scope to human rights related discourse and activities. Lehmann compares the Catholic international student umbrella organization, Pax Romana and the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) to determine how far the resurgence of religion debate is dependent on changes within RNGOs. He also considers to what extent these changes add to our understanding of resurgence debates and what do they tell us about our understanding of religions (2). In the process of tackling these questions, Lehmann challenges the idea of “the religious” and “the secular” as a zero-sum game. Instead, he argues for a more complex and dynamic understanding and “considers the resurgence of religion as a new sediment in the construction of ‘the religious’ and ‘the secular’” (3). By placing his analysis within the literature on the resurgence of religion in the public sphere, Lehmann contends that debates over religious resurgence and opposing secularization should consider that the meanings of religious and secular’ are not fixed, but rather shift in response to societal changes.

After initial chapters devoted to competing theoretical debates and methodology, Lehmann gets to the context of his analysis in Chapter 4. He examines the development of human rights discourse within the U.N. from the 1940s to 1970s and suggests that while the U.N. is considered “secular,” the boundaries between religious and secular are not as precise. The two notable examples are the establishment of freedom of religion as articulated in the 1948 U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and the role religious actors play within the U.N. Lehmann devotes the following two chapters to his two cases, the CCIA and Pax Romana, and offers a parallel analysis of human rights discourse in the U.N. and the two RNGOs. It is

this analysis — the development of human rights discourse and activities within each RNGO, as well as their influence on human rights discourse within the UN — that is the book's biggest strength.

Lehmann makes insightful observations in his examination of both cases. First, he highlights the purposeful decision within each RNGO to look outward and gain a voice in international affairs. For the WCC, this decision would lead to the formation of the CCIA and the integration of CCIA officers into the daily work of the U.N. In the case of the more loosely structured Pax Romana, the desire to represent the values of Catholicism in an international organization helped guide their decision. Second, the importance of religious elites shines through in the narrative, and Lehmann pays proper attention to their contributions to human rights discourse within the U.N. and in their respective organizations. Equally significant is his analysis of the changes over time within each RNGO and how those changes affect the agendas of each group. Lehmann highlights modifications brought about by both institutional and societal factors including the Vietnam War protests and the Civil Rights Movement. In the case of the CCIA, human rights discourse moved from largely being the domain of the CCIA to become an integral part of the WCC. In both cases, changes within each organization resulted in a broadening of agenda and a more global outlook. Human rights discourse, which began as a U.N. related issue and was predominately within the scope of a select number of elites ultimately became a part of the overall identity of each RNGO.

In Chapters 7 and 8, Lehmann brings both cases together to establish more generalizable conclusions. The most significant of which is his narrative of the transformation within the larger RNGO community from Church Diplomacy to Civil Society Activism. What began as Church Diplomacy by elites who saw the secular U.N. as the primary mechanism to expand their voice outside the sphere of religion, eventually moved to Civil Society Activism and increased ties to the broader NGO community. Against the backdrop of the resurgence of religion, defined as “an increase in the individual and societal significance of religions in opposition to the ‘secularization paradigm’” (178), Lehmann concludes that the changes within RNGOs from Church Diplomacy to Civil Society Activism is illustrative of the resurgence of religion. He cautions, however, against interpreting such changes as one directional due to the interdependence between RNGOs and their context. The activities of RNGOs in the public sphere are influenced by what happens within their organizations, and one cannot consider each one independently.

Lehmann's analysis of the CCIA and the Pax Romana as examples of RNGOs are acceptable choices given his decision to analyze the early years of RNGO activity. On the other hand, his decision to conduct his analysis in the context of the U.N. is understandable but simultaneously limiting due to the emergence and increasing influence of regional inter-governmental organizations. However, any critique of the U.N. as a point of context does not take away from the fact that Lehmann's *Religious NGOs in International Relations* is an insightful book. His detailed examination of religious NGOs offers a unique contribution to existing research on the influence of religiously affiliated actors in the public sphere and the significance of religion in international relations.

***Seeking the Truth: An Orestes Brownson Anthology.* Edited by Richard M. Reinsch II. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016. xii + 524 pp. \$39.95 Paper**

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Was Orestes Brownson a religious skeptic and socialist, or was he a Roman Catholic who defended American constitutionalism? Yes. The 19th-century American intellectual seems to have adopted almost every religious, political, and economic position available to him. So there's a Brownson for everyone, and *Seeking the Truth* provides enough primary source material to explain the variegated appropriation of Brownson in the centuries after his death.

Thankfully, the volume's editor, Richard Reinsch II, offers a wide-ranging and insightful introductory essay to prepare the reader for these many Brownsons. In 35 brisk pages, Reinsch delivers both a concise biography and a systematic accounting of the many intellectual stages of Brownson's life. Biographically, Reinsch includes the impressive (by age 14, he had memorized most of the Bible [4]) and the poignant (he lost two sons in the Civil War [5]). Yet the introduction is no hagiography: Brownson says he suspended his quarterly review due to ill health; Reinsch fingers declining subscription rates instead (33).

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