

Introduction

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Illumine is a peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal produced by the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) Graduate Students Association at the University of Victoria. This seventh issue of the journal features four articles that highlight religion's social role, accenting the Centre's mandate to study religion and society. Indeed, each article in its different way confirms the myriad ways that societies—across time and space—affect and utilize religions, and the parallel ways that religions are embedded in and inseparable from societies.

Connie Braun, in “Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*: Profeminism, Piety, or Transcendence?,” explores how religious writing might be a conduit for women’s emerging voices in the seventeenth century and how women’s voices—particularly Lanyer’s—might be the conduit for an authentic Christianity freed from the bonds of gender expectations. She writes of Lanyer: “Her work is more than a religious poem written to conform to the appropriate genre for a woman writer of the seventeenth century, or a feminist’s vision of a utopian society without men; it is a hermeneutic of authentic Christianity wherein women are no longer subjugated by religious or social hierarchy.” Christianity, thus, becomes a vehicle for a kind of profeminism, making possible fresh expressions of female power.

Ami Watanabe, in her article “Hildegard of Bingen as a Holy Healer: Healing the Patient, Restoring the World,” studies five letters exchanged between monks and the twelfth-century saint and healer

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Hildegard of Bingen regarding a woman considered possessed by a demon. Watanabe finds that the spiritual and mental health of the microcosm is reflected in the macrocosm: when the woman is healed, so is her community. Watanabe writes, “Hildegard helped strengthen these monks’ sense of well-being by proving the power of saints, the meaningfulness of the cult of saints, and the importance of Christian faith. Her saintly ability emanates here as she mends the ontological crisis of the churchmen faced with demonic possession.” Watanabe’s research provides a glimpse into medieval practices of spiritual healing and illustrates the pragmatic role of saints as restorers of order to societies troubled by spiritual chaos.

Adam Stewart, in “Praying with the Hand You Are Dealt: Revisiting Social Class in the Study of Religion,” jumps into the twentieth century to read the importance of social class back into religion while maintaining the equally significant role that human agency plays in choosing and practising religions. He writes, “by combining concepts from [Max] Weber, [Pierre] Bourdieu, and [Sean] McCloud, it is possible to recognize the important influence that objective social and economic agents, as well as the subjective ideas and intentionality of individual human agents, exercise in the complex process of determining religious belief, practice, and affiliation.” His work importantly reasserts the twinned salience of economic position *and* human intention in studies of religion in contemporary North America.

Sébastien Després’ fascination with pilgrimages lead to primary research on the Roman Catholic pilgrimage to the Marian Apparition shrine of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In “Making it Real: The Narrative (Re)Construction of a Pilgrimage Centre in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” Després examines how Franciscan-influenced Medjugorje, the region’s primary symbol of Croatian identity, has been “recontextualized” by the Croats who present the territory to outsiders through narratives told about the apparitions. “These cultural texts,” writes Després, “help to create political subjects and political commitments and are appropriated and more fully narrativized by various groups in order to support specific, differing political agendas.” This article demonstrates, again, the deeply embedded nature of religion and society by investigating how religious stories concretize ethnic and political identities.

We, the *Illumine* editorial board for this issue, would like to

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