

context and more information as to how the evolution Pogue traces is related to the larger conservative reversal which fellow environmental historians James Turner and Andrew Isenberg analyze in *The Republican Reversal* (2018)—especially since Pogue conflates the religious right with politically conservative evangelicals and mostly ignores evangelical environmental activists and their organizations because he deems them too socially progressive/moderate.

While Pogue acknowledges that the religious right never fully adopted Rushdooney's more extreme theo-political views, I also found myself wondering on what basis he claims that the founding of the reconstructionist "Coalition for [*sic*] Revival" in 1984 was "[p]erhaps the strongest evidence of the religious right choosing to sacrifice the environment for a strong economy," especially since the group's "resolution on economics only indirectly rejected eco-friendly views" (97). There are other parts in the book where the argument seems forced and/or rather speculative, for example regarding Pat Robertson's alleged environmental philosophies and the religious right's reaction to James Watt. And there are some factual errors as well, for instance on pages 163 and 171, where "A Southern Baptist Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change" (2008) is confused with the Evangelical Climate Initiative of 2006.

Overall, Pogue's narrative flows together quite well, and the book brings some fascinating new primary sources to the debate. Ultimately, however, it does not deliver a convincing analysis of "the nature" of the religious right.

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***Errand into the Wilderness of Mirrors: Religion and the History of the CIA*. By Michael Graziano. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022. 251 pp. \$45.00 cloth.**

When we think about organizations like the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), we often imagine covert operatives in disguise in faraway places. But intelligence agencies are also massive, US-based information gathering operations that bring in highly-educated Americans to map and understand the world in order to manipulate it. In his stimulating and ambitious book, *Errand into the Wilderness of Mirrors*, Michael Graziano focuses our attention on what he calls the "religious approach to intelligence," which was the idea that religions across the world could be understood, categorized, and used to influence the

behavior of foreign peoples in ways that were helpful to American interests. Religion, intelligence officials believed, was “self-evident, obvious, identifiable, and universal” as well as inherently anti-Communist. (4) This approach, Graziano convincingly shows, reflected American views of Catholicism, Islam, and Buddhism more than the lived reality on the ground in places such as Iran and Vietnam. Hampered by a misunderstanding of religion, the US intelligence community struggled to manipulate religious peoples overseas in the service of American interests.

Errand into the Wilderness of Mirrors is a history of religion in the US intelligence services from World War II through the 1970s. As a work of intellectual history, key figures and their ideas come through more clearly than the institutional cultures of intelligence agencies. Graziano offers an impressive array of cases ranging from debates about European Catholicism during World War II, to animism and Buddhism during the Vietnam War, and to Islam on the eve of the 1979 Iranian revolution. Writing a book about organizations that were secretive by design presents challenges, which Graziano handles exceptionally well by accessing declassified documents, reading memoirs and exposés against the grain, and contextualizing the CIA’s ideas in broader American discussions of religion. The book joins a burgeoning body of literature on the role of religion in US national security and reflects a growing interest among religious studies scholars to find religion in places long misunderstood as “secular.” It is predominantly a work of critique and offers a catalogue of intelligence failures driven by misunderstandings of what intelligence personnel and their academic allies understood as “world religions.”

Errand into the Wilderness of Mirrors begins with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which was a short-lived intelligence operation during World War II. Headed by William Donovan, a Catholic, the organization’s most important achievements involved Catholic organizations. Some of the OSS plans drew on the stereotypes of Catholicism as monolithic and hierarchical. One such plan was to blind Hitler and Mussolini and to get Pope Pius XII to declare it an act of God and a warning for Catholic soldiers in the Italian and Nazi armies to lay down their arms. It was a plan that drew on the faulty assumption that Catholic soldiers would obey the Pope and, more generally, that religious belief neatly translates into concrete action. Understandably, it never got off the ground. But soon the OSS became more deft. It began thinking about the Vatican as a complex organization with competing interests. A more successful initiative was Operation Pilgrim’s Progress, which drew on a Catholic network of journalists to covertly funnel reports and stories in Europe through OSS offices, providing the United States important information and the opportunity to counter anti-American propaganda with its own. The CIA, founded in 1947, had a similarly mixed record.

One of the remarkable things about Graziano’s account is the prominent role played by Catholics (and Catholicism) in the intelligence community. Among them were Donovan, William Colby, Zsolt Aradi, William P. Lilly, and Thomas A. Dooley. Dooley inspired American support for the South Vietnamese government in the 1950s and 1960s. He had worked for the Navy moving Catholic refugees from North Vietnam to South Vietnam and reported on the torture they faced—Catholic children having their eardrums pierced with chopsticks for listening to religious lessons, for example—in his bestselling book, *Deliver Us From Evil* (1956). The only problem was that it was all made up by CIA and Navy ghostwriters. This fact came out in an exposé in later years in *Ramparts* magazine, highlighting potential for embarrassment in mixing intelligence operations and religion. Dooley’s episode also showed that

American ideas about religion were usually more influential with the domestic audience than they were overseas.

Graziano is more concerned about criticizing CIA officials as bad scholars than as bad practitioners. After all, how can we really know if draining the blood of pro-communist Filipino rebels to mimic the human-like beast known as the *asuang* scared the rebels because of its religious implications or because they were simply desecrated bodies? But two failures come through clearly are the CIA's inability to foresee Buddhist protests against the US-backed Diem government in Vietnam and failure to anticipate the 1979 Iranian revolution.

Looking at these failures, I did wonder whether there was anything distinctive about the failures of the "religious approach" when compared with other intellectual endeavors grounded in similar universalist and teleological assumptions and mobilized in the service of American power abroad. Modernization theory, for example, drew on similar assumptions and likewise ended up failing in many of the same places the CIA's religious experts operated. Both reflected what Graziano describes as American planners mistaking "their personal preferences as both universal and neutral." (82) It is a testament to the book that it raises broad questions about US power in the world as well as church-state relations, the role of expertise in American life, and the relationship between the foreign and domestic arenas in American religious politics.

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