

and the shifting of power from 'the royal-priestly coalition to a priestly-lay coalition' (pp. 225-228).

In the *Appendix*, of survey is included on H.-P. Schmidt's study and his English translation of so-called Sixteen Sanskrit Ślokas. As 'an outsider to Sanskrit literature,' as Williams calls himself (p. 20), he decided to do so in order 'to allow readers to make up their own minds about Schmidt's arguments' (pp. 21)).

It is a pity that text of the *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān* is not edited in Arabic script. But, the author claims that he did so for two reasons: first, 'it is easier to indicate textual readings in the romanized transcription' (p.11), and second, because 'Western students of the history of religions may not necessarily know the Persian Arabic script, but will want to read this book. The text will thus be at least legible to them in romanized transcription.' The second reason seems to be very strange: western scholars who can read Persian text, surely know the Persian Arabic script!

This is a minor quibble. The book is done at a high academic level and will provide students of Zoroastrianism and Iranian culture with very interesting materials.

Armen Alexanyan

Reviewed work: **Exploring the Postsecular: the religious, the political, and the urban.** Ed. by *Molendijk A., Beaumont J., Jedan Ch.* Brill, 2010. 406 pp.

«Postsecular» is a very interesting and, in a sense, an ambiguous problem. On the one hand, there are many researchers — both in Russia and abroad — who willingly and abundantly write about the «post-secular» as an established and informative concept¹. However, there are many concepts of «post-secular,» and sometimes they are inconsistent with each other. For example, they describe heterogeneous situations or directly contradict each other. J. Beckford's article in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* makes this point quite well². On the other hand, there are works that attempt to problematize the concept of «post-secular,» such as the book we are reviewing here.

This volume is a collective monograph divided into four parts. The first is an introduction to the post-secular problem specific to this book. The second part refers to the «concept of the post-secular» and estimates its heuristic value. For example, how Eurocentric is it? The articles of the third part focus on urban issues and the place of religion in the urban space. Finally, the fourth part examines the role of religion in the modern public sphere.

¹ Uzlaner D.A. Introduction to the postsecular philosophy // *Logos*. — №3 (82). — 2011 (Russian), Mozhegov V. In a defence of secularity. URL: <http://www.polit.ru/article/2010/11/17/svetskost/> accessed February 01, 2013, Habermas J. Notes on a Post-secular Society. 18.06.2008. URL: <http://print.signandsight.com/features/1714.htm> accessed February 01, 2013, Žižek S. Human rights and its discontents. Transcript of lecture delivered at Bard College, 15 November 1999. URL: <http://www.lacan.com/zizek-human.htm> accessed February 01, 2013.

² Beckford J.A. Public Religions and the Postsecular: Critical reflections // *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. — Vol. 51. — Issue 1. — 2012. — P. 1-19.

Let me consider some of the more salient points made in the volume. First are the definitions of «post-secular,» given in the opening articles by Justine Beaumont and Kim Knott. According to Beaumont the term «post-secular» refers to the fact that in the secularized social structures of modern capitalism religion is quite visible. Its disappearance is, thus, out of the question, despite the antipathy to religion by some liberal and secular commentators. The strength of this definition is its distancing from the dichotomy of the sacred / profane. It does not claim, for example, that at some time in the past, religion played an exclusive role in social life so much so that there was no a non-religious dimension. Nor does it assert that «at present» religion ceased playing a great part in social life. This view obviously lacks a persuasive logic, since social life is always a complex of interconnected institutions, and can never be defined exclusively by one of them. Nor, is there an empirical basis for this position. Historically, Marc Bloch shows very convincingly that the religious dimension was not an exclusive substitute for all the other social dimensions even in the Middle Ages.¹ Similarly, Alexey Appolonov demonstrates the same conclusion from the point of view of the history of philosophy². At the same time, our understanding of «post-secular» is still weak for lack of empirical evidence. Beaumont tries to fill the empirical gap by identifying seven relevant topics that indicate post-secularity, but primarily in urban space.

The main topics are, first, de-privatization of religion, as most clearly expressed by the growth, second, the impact on the social policy of the faith-based organizations, third, the re-engagement of faith and politics, and fourth, the growth of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal organizations around world (pp. 8-12).

In the second introductory article, Kim Knott echoes a previous understanding of «post-secular». From her point of view, post-secular is a re-sacralization. It accepts secular values, such as value of the «self», concepts of freedom and choice. In her view, the notion of “post-secular” is a response to institutionalized Christianity (pp. 20-21). It might seem that the author here is simply repeating the shaky notion of “post-secular” as the transition from the position where there was «little» of religion to the position where is «a lot» of religion. But, this is not so. Knott says that the focus of “post-secular” is «faith” or the “spiritual,” but not “religion.” The “spiritual” could co-exist with the “secular,” but, «religion» could not. (p. 31)

Another feature of the book is the critique of the Habermasian concept of “post-secular”. Michiel Leezenberg writes that despite the popularity of this interpretation of «post-secular» it remains exclusively Eurocentric, an inadequate in terms of empirical and historical evidence. It, further, is based on a concept of linear progress (pp. 92-96).

James Beckford confirms this charge of an ethnocentric and contextual notion of «postsecular”. He examines the role of religion in prisons in two countries: United Kingdom and France. Beckford shows that the role of religion in these public institutions can be understood more adequately by examining the specific changes in the specific institutional settings in which religion is defined and practiced and not by the talk of “post-secular” state of society in general (p. 381).

¹ Bloch M. Feudal Society. 2 vols. — Routledge, 1989.

² Appolonov A.V. The notions of “religion” and “secular” in Medieval European tradition // Researches in Religious Studies. — №5-6. — 2011. — P. 110-131. (Russian)

In conclusion, we can say that the book is a very significant example of problematizing of «post-secular» and will be of interest to anyone interested in contemporary social studies.

Roman Safronov

Reviewed work: **Handbook of Hyper-real Religions**. Ed. by *Adam Possamai*. Brill, 2012. xiv, 442 pp.

Sometimes a title of a book can be puzzling. This is true, for example, for a *Handbook of Hyper-real Religions*, recently published by Brill. What did authors mean? What is this book really about? What are these hyper-real religions?

This volume is part of a series called *Handbooks on Contemporary Religion*. Perhaps, this is our first hint? In any case, the subject should be something current and up-to-date. A second, hint might come from the fact that the authors of the volume are unfamiliar to Russian readers, with the exception of Eileen Barker. She has written a books and articles which have been translated into Russian¹. Likewise, Massimo Introvigne might be well known, not so much for his academic writings, as for his widely cited in ideas on the Russian Internet. As an expert on inter-religious dialogue and the position of Christianity in modern society,² Introvigne is better now in Russia. Both these scholars are in the field of sociology of religion so, we may safely suppose, that whatever this hyper-real religion is, it will be studied with the standard empirical methods of social research. Other authors are young scholars, PhD candidates or those who've just got a degree from different universities worldwide. The editor of the volume is Adam Possamai, a sociologist of Belgian origin, lives in Australia and represents the University of Western Sydney. While European and American studies of religions are well-known here in Russia, we can only imagine what's going on in this field in Australia.

It was Adam Possamai who suggested the conceptual framework uniting this volume in one piece. The initial research on hyper-real religion was started by him some time ago³. This term is borrowed from French postmodernist philosophy. For that reason, the first chapter is called «Religion, popular culture and Baudrillard».

Here is the definition Possamai suggests in an introductory chapter of the book: «A hyper-real religion is a simulacrum of a religion created out of, or in symbiosis with, commodified popular culture which provides inspiration at a metaphorical level and/or is a source of beliefs for everyday life» (p. 20). A simulacrum in this context is interpreted as a copy, which is regarded as more real

¹ Баркер А. Новые религиозные движения. Практ.введ.: Пер.с англ. СПб. : Изд-во РХГИ, 1997; Баркер Э. Научное изучение религии? *Вы, должно быть, шутите* / Пер. с англ. // Религиоведение. 2003. № 4. — С. 93-113.

²Unexpectedly, Massimo Introvigne was widely interviewed: by Rossiyskaya Gazeta on the future of Christianity (<http://www.rg.ru/2012/07/19/europe.html>) or by Interfax Information Services Group on the Pussy Riot case (<http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=46932>).

³Possamai A. Religion and Popular Culture: A Hyper-Real Testament. Peter Lang, 2007.