

The book falters when Chen gives the religious world of Silicon Valley tech too much explanatory power. At the outset, Chen states that Silicon Valley sheds light on a “broader trend,” namely that work is inexorably replacing religion. Recent Pew studies have tracked the growing rate of “nones,” or those Americans who are unaffiliated with a specific religious tradition. Nonetheless, when applied too generally—when not controlled for race, ethnicity, region, education level, and class—this sociological category becomes a blunt instrument that fuels a declension thesis, a concept that is by no means new in American religious historiography. Given that Silicon Valley tech is a rather homogenous group—as Chen notes, most “tech migrants,” are young, male, white or Asian, and highly educated (23)—the argument that their religiosity is both representative and, at times, causative of broader religious trends brings to mind Ann Braude’s seminal essay “Women’s History is American Religious History” (1997), which was a corrective to a similar scholarly declension narrative that cast trends among mostly white men as singular evidence that religion was declining. In many ways, *Work Pray Code* is in conversation with scholars of post-secularism, who do not see religion declining, but rather, transforming, and the book would benefit with more deliberate engagement with that corpus.

The framing at the outset is further complicated by Chen’s claim at the end of the book that Silicon Valley tech is not just manufacturing religion, but is behaving like a “cult” (200). Presented without nuance and without engagement with scholars of new religious movements who have unpacked the power of this word to deaden discourse, the religious world that Chen has so thoughtfully laid out in her central chapters becomes one thing: bad. The book certainly establishes that there is something definitively religious happening in Silicon Valley, but whether it is bad and for whom, is not established in such a way that a word with such normative power as cult, applies.

Concerns with framing aside, Chen’s analysis of the religious world of Silicon Valley and its tech employees offers something invaluable to scholars of religion, and American religion more specifically: access to a seemingly secular place that can feel inscrutable from the outside.

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To Make a Village Soviet: Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Transformation of a Postwar Ukrainian Borderland. By Emily B. Baran. McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2022. xviii + 234 pages. CDN \$120.00 hardcover; CDN \$37.95 softcover; ebook available.

In this well-written book, Emily Baran takes her readers to Soviet Ukraine in the first years after World War II, and the small town of

Bila Tserkva on the border with Romania. Bila Tserkva was a true backwater, one of a cluster of poor, Romanian-speaking villages in an isolated corner of the newly conquered and remote Soviet region of Transcarpathia. Its most distinctive feature was its large population of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1949, the state arrested seven men from that community, tried them as dangerous subversives belonging to an underground network aimed at destroying the Soviet Union, and sentenced them to 25 years in prison camps. Baran uses the extensive paper trail of the investigation and trial to explore what the case reveals about state and society: the nature and mechanisms of Sovietization, and how the Witnesses and their fellow villagers navigated the process.

All modern states seek to identify and mobilize their citizens, but the Soviet state wanted to build a completely new secular, socialist society that would elicit the full participation of the population—and the penalties for non-compliance were extraordinarily high. There was no room for neutrality, yet the Bila Tserkva Jehovah's Witnesses, like their co-religionists around the world, asserted an apolitical stance, refusing to endorse secular government by, for example, voting. Every stage of the integration of the village into the Soviet system thus resulted in confrontation with the Witnesses. Baran examines these in turn: the introduction of state identity documents in the form of internal passports; the campaign to register male citizens for the draft; the introduction of local government and the drive to ensure universal participation in the accompanying “performative” elections; the campaign to have everyone purchase state bonds; the introduction of compulsory state education; and the collectivization of agriculture. The documents, together with broader information from the regional archives, local newspapers, and oral histories, provide a lively picture of dynamics on the ground.

Baran makes several valuable points. The most important is the key role of the local population in defining who belonged in the new society and who did not. As villagers learned about the Soviet system and tried to avoid danger and advance their own interests, the Jehovah's Witnesses were convenient scapegoats. Indeed, the evidence suggests that local activists (who were the key informants against the accused) were themselves skeptical about certain aspects of Soviet power. For example, they were in no hurry to implement collectivization.

As Baran demonstrates, blaming the Jehovah's Witnesses for the local failure of collectivization allowed both the state and informants to suggest that a Soviet society in Bila Tserkva was just around the corner, temporarily blocked by these dangerous subversives. Although she shows clearly what a challenge it was to find personnel and resources to build the new society in the borderlands, Baran also cautions against portraying the Soviet state as weak. Rather, it grew stronger remarkably quickly and the population fell into line and learned to navigate its demands by the early 1950s. Finally, she makes the interesting point that the fact that

the new Soviet authorities closed the borders and cut the Jehovah's Witnesses off from communication with their co-religionists abroad actually made the confrontation in Bila Tserkva, and in the USSR more generally, more acute. For example, the Bila Tserkva Witnesses refused to get passports or to sign forms and investigatory statements, fearing that this would mean acknowledging temporal authority; yet the Church internationally does not require members to abstain from acquiring identity papers or signing state documents.

Although this is a book about a religious minority and its encounter with Soviet power, religion per se is not really the analytical focus of the book. Readers interested in the inner religious life of Soviet Jehovah's Witnesses will be better served by Baran's earlier work, *Dissent on the Margins* (reviewed in this journal November 2015). Indeed, a somewhat puzzling feature of the book is how little Baran has to say about broader Soviet religious policy in the region. She notes in passing some evidence of Greek-Catholic activity, yet seems to find no evidence of the state campaign to "re-unite" the Greek Catholics to Orthodoxy, a paradoxical method of Sovietization in the western borderlands. The reader wonders whether the villagers also made use of the Witnesses to deflect attention from their own religious activity or resistance. Instead, Baran's purpose is pedagogical: to show students how a study of the marginal can reveal general patterns and assumptions; to walk them through strategies for interpreting the evidence in investigative files and court records; and to explore what oral history with the protagonists' children can and cannot illuminate about the written record. In this she succeeds admirably.

This stimulating book will be of interest to scholars studying the integration of the western borderlands into the USSR after World War II, in the history of Soviet Ukraine, in the modern state, and in the encounter between religious dissidents and the state. Readable and relatively short, it will be a very valuable teaching aid in upper-level courses on the modern state, Soviet history, and contemporary religious history.

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Thinking in Āsana: Movement and Philosophy in Viniyoga, Iyengar Yoga, and Ashtanga Yoga. By Matylida Ciołkosz. Equinox Publishing, 2022. 235 pages. \$90.00 hardcover; \$35.00 softcover; ebook available.

In *Thinking in Āsana*, Matylida Ciołkosz compares three of the most popular systems of postural yoga—Viniyoga (founded by T. K. V. Desikachar), Iyengar Yoga (founded by B. K. S. Iyengar), and Ashtanga Yoga (founded by K. Pattabhi Jois). She demonstrates how the systems' different "yoga philosophies"—learned within social environments consisting of physical spaces, other practitioners, and teachers