

# Introduction

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**Abstract** *This introduction briefly sketches the aims and scope of the present volume before providing an overview of existing typologies of social forms in the sociology of religion and beyond and presenting the volume's theoretical framework, which assumes (1) a congruence between social forms and religious semantics, (2) a shift from organizational to community structures in the religious field, and (3) a marked influence on the emergence of particular social forms as a result of competition, both within the religious field and on the border to other fields. The final section summarizes the main arguments of the volume's contributions against this theoretical backdrop.*

**Keywords** *Social forms of religion, religious semantics, organization, group, market exchange, network, movement, church, sect, mysticism, cult*

## 1. Aims and scope of the volume

The present volume sheds light on the various social forms Christianity in Europe and the Americas takes and has taken since the mid-20th century. It examines the religious, cultural, social, and historical context of diverse empirical cases, from Charismatic Catholicism to Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, and asks how different social forms have contributed to the success or failure of the respective Christian communities. Social forms can be understood as the ways in which people come together to shape social interaction. Religious social forms are then the modes in which people congregate to structure aspects of their religious lives, such as religious practices or social practices that are religiously motivated. Religious social forms include not only religious interaction per se, as during a worship service or group prayer, but also the 'background coordination' that makes religious interaction possible, such as maintaining a congregation or organizing an event. Social forms in this sense must

be seen as ‘ideal types’ as Max Weber defined them (Weber 2012 [1904]). Ideal types, in line with Weber, are concepts with an extremely high degree of abstraction. They do not exist in empirical reality in their ‘pure’ forms, nor do they serve as a scheme to simply classify social complexity. Rather, they are points of reference to which social phenomena are compared. They are heuristic tools: by observing correspondences and divergences between real phenomena and ideal types, we gain a better understanding of social and historical reality.

In this introduction, we begin by providing an overview of existing typologies of social forms in the sociology of religion and beyond (2.). Next, we present the volume’s theoretical framework (3.), which assumes a congruence between social forms and religious semantics, a shift from organizational to community structures in the religious field, and a marked influence on the emergence of particular social forms as a result of competition, both within the religious field and on the border to other fields. The final section (4.) summarizes the main arguments of the volume’s contributions against the theoretical backdrop.

## 2. Typologies of social forms in the sociology of religion and beyond

Various typologies of social forms exist in the sociology of religion (both its German-speaking and anglophone variants) and beyond. In this section, we provide a brief overview of central literature on the subject.

The older sociology of religion, in the form of Max Weber and, interacting with and building on Weber’s work, Ernst Troeltsch, differentiates *church*, *sect*, and *mysticism* as three main social forms of religion. Broadly speaking, membership in a *church* (as an ideal type, with Weber) is usually not based on a personal decision or vocation, as people are born into the religious community; churches, as inclusive social forms, tend by and large to accommodate the values of majority society in order to retain adherents; expulsion is correspondingly rare; leadership positions require specialized training and are remunerated; church structures are hierarchical and bureaucratic, their practices traditional in the sense of being closely oriented towards liturgical rituals (Weber 2011 [1920; 1905]; Troeltsch 1931 [1912]). Membership in *sects*, on the other hand, is voluntary; people elect to join the group in an act of conversion and are eligible only through personal qualification, i.e., by adhering to strict behavioral rules; sects, as exclusive social forms, correspondingly reject many values of

majority society and are swift to punish transgressions with expulsion; leadership requires no specialized training but a sense of calling and charisma, structures are more flexible and practices less ritualistic (Weber 2011 [1920]; Troeltsch 1931 [1912]).

While Troeltsch expanded Weber's types of church and sect, he added *mysticism* as a separate social form to refer to the "insistence upon a direct inward and present religious experience" which "takes for granted the objective forms of religious life in worship, ritual, myth, and dogma" (Troeltsch 1931 [1912]: 730). Although Troeltsch's acknowledgment of individual spirituality as (potentially) existing separately from organized, communal religion is highly important, we argue that mysticism does not present a genuine social form in its own right, as it designates an individual's personal, inner religious experience instead of a mode of social interaction. It is only the act of relaying this personal experience verbally to another individual or a group that gives it a social dimension. The conversion experience in Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, or Charismatic Catholicism is a fitting case in point: The individual convert typically accepts Jesus "in her heart" as her personal savior before recounting the experience of being saved to fellow believers. But the act of sharing the conversion experience with the group is crucial to gain legitimacy as a 'true' believer, as without the confirmation of the group the experience is essentially worthless, at least in terms of socially integrating the individual believer in the larger collectivity of the "saved". Then again, it may also be the case that the group itself opens up the space for conversion experiences in the first place. Thus, in many Pentecostal or Charismatic groups, conversion experience – "baptism in the Spirit", as it is usually called – is prayed for together. The tension between religious individualism and communal integration deserves deeper exploration in its own right (cf. e.g. Hervieu-Léger 2007) and will not be elaborated on here for reasons of scope. We wish to point out that, in our view, Troeltsch's mysticism does not qualify as a social form as lacks the dimension of social interaction. This does not exclude, however, the possibility of mystic experiences shaping specific social forms of religion.

Weber's and Troeltsch's typology received appreciation and critique in equal amounts over the past century. It has been labeled as Eurocentric and too strongly molded on Christianity (cf. Dawson 2011 for an overview), and we add to this the observation that their typology comprises *generically religious* social forms instead of a range of social forms which may or may not be religious (such as the social form of organization, which may be religious or secular) (on this point, cf. also Petzke/Tyrell 2011). These observations notwithstanding,

various scholars of religion have expanded the typology in different ways since its inception, the first being H. Richard Niebuhr, American historian and theologian (2005 [1929]). In the attempt to apply Troeltsch's typology, which was derived from the European context, to the American religious landscape, Niebuhr added *denomination* as an additional type to capture the internal diversity of Christian traditions in the United States. The American sociologist Howard Becker (1940), in turn, proposed an alternative that included the types *ecclesia*, *sect*, *denomination*, and *cult*, while another American sociologist, J. Milton Yinger, distinguished between *universal church*, *ecclesia*, *denomination*, *established sect*, *sect*, and *cult* (Dawson 2011: 528–29). In both cases, inclusiveness decreases the further one moves from church to cult, but for Becker, the denomination and cult are both sub-types of sects (with different degrees of formalization). British sociologist Bryan Wilson (1970) offered a sevenfold sub-typology of *sects* which includes the *conversionist*, *revolutionist*, *introversionist*, *manipulationist*, *thaumaturgical*, *reformist*, and *utopian* types; each has a different understanding of its role vis-à-vis majority religion and society. Along similar lines, British sociologist Roy Wallis (2019) developed a threefold sub-typology of cults that also denotes differing relationships to majority society: *world-affirming*, *world-rejecting*, and *world-accommodating cults*. American sociologists Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge (1985) distinguish between *churches* as established forms, *sects* as schismatic forms, and *cults* as independent forms. More recently, the term *new religious movement* (NRM) has increasingly become a substitute expression for the term *cult*, because the latter was deemed too pejorative for academic use due to its everyday connotations. However, NRM as a term and category is also disputed, raising questions of how new NRMs need to be to qualify as such and where the limits of what qualifies as religion should be drawn (Cowan 2016; Fox 2010; Dawson 2008). Importantly for the topic at hand, many of these (and other) expansions of Weber and Troeltsch's typologies look to degrees of organization, the dynamics of social or religious movements, and the role of communitizing forces, i.e. of deepening interpersonal relations.

The Austrian-American sociologist Thomas Luckmann displays a very different understanding of the social forms of religion, namely as dependent on the type of society in which a given religion develops. He argues that the social forms that religions take correspond to wider, non-religious social structures. In this regard, he distinguishes undifferentiated religion in “archaic” societies, religion in “early high cultures”, religion in functionally differentiated societies, and privatized forms of religion in functionally specific, plural societies

(Luckmann 2003). This approach is located on a different scale, in terms of both geographical and temporal scope, than the preceding typologies. Canadian sociologist Peter Beyer follows a similarly global approach, yet his typology of the social forms of religion is more closely aligned with organizational sociology. He distinguishes between *organized religion*, *politicized religion*, *social movement religion*, and *communitarian/individualistic religion* (Beyer 2003). This brings us to newer approaches in the sociology of religion which partially draw from organizational sociology to distinguish between the social forms of *organization*, *group*, *market exchange*, *network*, *movement*, and *event*, among others. This framework is analytically situated on the meso-level of society, between micro-level social interactions and macro-level societal change or stasis, and functions to mediate between the micro and macro by way of coordinating and structuring social activity.

This newer perspective on social forms also draws from classical sociology. Social forms are subject to processes of *Vergemeinschaftung* (communitization, or communal relationships) and *Vergesellschaftung* (societalization, or associative relationships) and may, in turn, participate in shaping these processes. These terms were coined by Ferdinand Tönnies (1999 [1912]) and developed further by Max Weber (2013 [1922]), who emphasized their procedural nature, associating communitization with tradition, emotions, and personal relations, and societalization with rationality, reflexivity, and objectified relations. Particularly in his later works, Weber defined communitization as a social relationship based on a subjective sense of solidarity and shared identity, and societalization as a social relationship focusing on pursuing shared interests, emphasizing that all social relations contain elements of both (ibid.). The corresponding social forms in which the dynamics of communitization and societalization become manifest are (1) the *group*, defined by personal relationships between members, relative stability and durability, shared norms and values that forge a collective identity, and generalized reciprocity, and (2) the *organization*, defined by fixed membership criteria, the purpose of attaining specific goals, internal differentiation of tasks and responsibilities, formalized participation procedures, and a hierarchical structure (Krech 2018; Schlamelcher 2018; Lüddeckens/Walther 2018). Group and organization represent two ends of a continuum of social forms, with others – network, market exchange, event, etc. – located between them.

German sociologists Volkhard Krech, Jens Schlamelcher, and Markus Hero differentiate between *group* (or *community*), *organization*, and *market exchange* as three main types of social forms as well as between *movement* and *event* as

two sub-types (Krech et al. 2013). According to them, the *group* as the oldest existing social form is characterized by the personal inclusion of its members, the close emotional bond between them, their collective identity and general reciprocity to stabilize social relationships, its informal structures, and its resulting limitations regarding growth. The *organization*, in contrast, includes members based on their roles instead of their personalities, is characterized by formal structures, and is able to make decisions regarding its programmatic goals, structure, and staff via its personnel. As we elaborate in the next section, the fact that organizational roles are taken on by 'real people', individuals with their own personalities and preferences, presents a dilemma for organizations, as their formalized, rational structures are confronted with individual attitudes, opinions, and outlooks. While groups and organizations can exist for an unlimited amount of time, Krech et al. argue, the *market exchange* is a temporally limited social form that, like organizations and unlike groups, includes exchange partners based on their roles not personalities, because the exchange is a rational form of interaction. Social *movements* are constituted by both communal and organizational coordination mechanisms: The former serve to integrate members while the latter serve to propel the movement's aims and goals forward. *Events*, in turn, present a mix of market exchange and communitizing ritual (Krech et al. 2013: 54–58).

A similar typology is offered by German sociologists Patrick Heiser and Christian Ludwig (2014) in their volume on the transformation of social forms of religion. In the introduction, they distinguish five social forms of religion: *religious organizations*, which emerge from sects or charismatic movements and coalesce into formal organizations through institutionalization and denominationalization; *religious networks* (including religious movements) with porous boundaries and the ability to integrate various actors, roles, and identities through communication via local and global channels; *religious communitization*, or alternatively, individualized forms of religious community (akin to the group discussed above); *marketization* as an exchange relationship between individuals and groups based on both a cost/benefit rationale and communal norms and values; and *eventization* as a spatially, temporally, and socially condensed form of communal religious experience which provides sensory stimulation that goes beyond everyday impressions (ibid.: 6–10). Regarding events, the authors draw from the extensive work of German sociologists Winfried Gebhard, Ronald Hitzler, and associates (Gebhard et al. 2000; e.g. Hitzler 2011; Hitzler et al. 2009; Gebhardt 2018).

Interestingly, Ludwig and Heiser categorize movements as a sub-type of networks instead of as a social form in its own right. In this sense, they somewhat parallel Krech et al.'s perspective on social movements as a type in between group and organization (on this, cf. also Roth/Rucht 2008). Social movement theory has of course long become a distinct field of research in the social sciences, and it is beyond the scope of this introduction to delve into it extensively. As it has been integrated in the sociology of religion as a social form, *religious social movements* (a more general category than new religious movements, briefly mentioned above) is defined as networks of groups and organizations that establish a collective identity, frame a common goal, and mobilize available resources in order to bring about societal and/or political change that is guided by transcendental aims (Kern/Pruisken 2018). Religion acts as a mobilizing force in seeking to give rise to societal transformation in that it typically provides the organizational structures necessary to coordinate action, the ideological framework to sustain participants over longer periods of time, and the resources to engage with the broader social environment it is situated within (Williams 2003). In these broad definitions of movement as a social form in the religious field, it becomes clear that social forms are first and foremost analytical categories that help understand and organize empirical reality from a sociological perspective. They do not exist in their 'pure' analytical form on the ground; as we elaborate in the next section, while a given social form may be dominant in a given religious context – such as the type organization is in the Roman Catholic Church – other social forms are evident in the same empirical case, such as group, movement, or event on different levels of the Catholic hierarchy. Against the background of these debates about social forms of religion, briefly sketched here, we will now outline the guiding questions and theoretical ideas that we address in this volume.

### 3. Framework of the volume: Theoretical considerations on social forms of religion

In this section, we propose three central arguments regarding social forms of religion: (1) As traditionally structured religions – by which we mean hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations – are declining both in terms of membership and of public relevance, these same organizations are trying to innovate and transform by strengthening community elements and downplaying hierarchy and bureaucracy. This attempt at more community, less organiza-

tion may be called the societalization of communitization (*Vergesellschaftung von Vergemeinschaftung*). (2) This approach brings with it an approximation of the social form of community with the core idea of giving power to the people, i.e. empowering laypeople to voice their individual religious convictions and shape their own religious practices. In other words, congruence is sought between the social structure of religion and its semantics: religion develops social forms that correspond with its religious ideas, and these forms, in turn, structure religious interaction. (3) The aspect of competition thus has a crucial influence on the emergence and consolidation of social forms, as those religions that are most successful influence others in terms of dominant social forms and central semantics. In addition, competition plays a decisive role not only within the religious field, but also on the borders between religion and other social fields, such as between religion and economics, religion and health care, religion and (pop)culture, or religion and education.

Let us discuss these three arguments in more detail now. Our fundamental assumption (basically drawn from Troeltsch) is that religions try to develop social forms that correspond with their respective religious ideas (ideas of salvation, a God-pleasing life, etc.). In other words: they seek congruence of religious semantics and social structure. This correspondence between semantics and structure is not unique to social forms of religion, specifically. Social forms of religion, however, tend to be characterized in a particular way by the respective religious self-logic. This can be exemplified by the social form of *church*: In terms of the sociology of organization, the social form *church* can be described as *organization*. However, churches are atypical organizations (cf. Petzke/Tyrell 2011), and in several respects: One aspect is that churches are organizations that want to be *more* than organization. In terms of their religious ideas, they picture themselves as e.g. a community of sisters and brothers, God-chosen people, *corpus Christi mysticum*, etc.

Churches are thus hybrid social forms, characterized by a profound tension of community logics (motivated by religious ideals) and organizational logics (strictly functional), in other words – and that brings us to our second argument – by a tension between communitization and societalization. This tension strengthens a paradox that all organizations (religious or not) have in common: While the ideal type organization requires including members according to their function, i.e. not as the individuals they are, the thus formally excluded individual is nevertheless *de facto* present because roles and functions are necessarily taken on and carried out by people. Consequently, against their organizational logics, organizations ‘host’ people – with personalities, at-



titudes, preferences, and so on. This paradox is particularly pronounced in *religious* organizations, at least in Christian churches, for these claim to “call” every single “soul” to salvation by belonging to the church as the individual person they are.

Another aspect of the atypical character of churches as organizations is that while non-religious organizations usually reduce contingency by making decisions according to (ideal-typically) transparent formalized procedures, religious organizations, through sacralizing membership roles, leadership, and the decision-making process itself, make contingency invisible. The responsibility for decisions and decision-making procedures, for rituals, ethical principles, etc., is thus delegated to an authority beyond this world which is unavailable. It is precisely this mechanism that reduces the feeling of uncertainty and helps cope with contingency.

Despite the tension between community logics and organizational logics described above, organizations, including churches, may themselves be community-productive at the same time. As research on Mainline Protestantism in the United States has shown, denominations have responded to their massive membership decline by launching top-down, community-building initiatives on the congregational level in the attempt to get more people involved in local churches (Freudenberg 2018). Church organizations thus play a role in implementing the program ‘more community, less organization’. Tensions between the religiously regulative idea of community and the requirement of the organization of this communality may also set religious change in motion. Thus, the longing for ‘more community, less organization’ as well as the longing for shared personal conversion experiences instead of rigid ritual practice seems to be an isomorphic tendency of our times in the Christian field in the Americas and, though less pronounced, in Europe. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the country’s second-largest Mainline denomination, for instance, has exhibited a strong orientation toward the congregational autonomy and pronounced community culture so prevalent in American Evangelicalism (ibid.). As community logics increasingly spread and are embedded on a societal scale, ‘more community’ seems to become a goal and ideal even for highly societalized forms of religion, e.g. religious organizations. We therefore suggest considering the societalization of communitization (*Vergesellschaftung von Vergemeinschaftung*) as a central framework in contemporary global Christianity.

If we now look at the dynamics of social forms of religion in a given religious field (Bourdieu 1985; 1987 [1971]; 1991 [1971]; Bourdieu/Saint Martin 1982),

we must take into account that each religious field is composed of different religious 'sub-fields' (including e.g. the Catholic field, Protestant field, Christian field, Islamic field, Jewish field, etc.). Both levels of the field are entangled, and the dynamics of religious social forms within a sub-field (such as e.g. Catholicism) must be analyzed in the context of the dynamics (of social forms) in the broader religious field. This brings us back to our third argument regarding social forms of religion: The competition between religions or denominations or between religion and other social fields may lead either to the adoption of successful social forms from competing (religious or non-religious) actors or to their deliberate rejection with the aim of sharpening one's own profile. What is a given community's position in the respective religious sub-field, in the broader religious field, and in the structure of different social fields in relation to each other? And what role does its dominant social form play in the process of its positioning in the (sub-)field? If a given community fails, how might its demise be connected to the ways in which its adherents organize(d) to practice their faith? Religious or denominational competition is thus a decisive factor in the emergence and consolidation of social forms of religion.

Clearly, social forms are communally productive. When individuals come together to practice their faith, this creates and strengthens interpersonal relationships and community ties. At the same time, different social forms create different kinds of space for individual and collective religious experience and values to emerge. Social forms enable individual religious experience, which in Christianity requires communal grounding and validation to become legitimate and authentic. In this way, the tension between individual religion and religious community is negotiated by way of different social forms. This volume's case studies offer a range of empirical examples of the social forms to be found in Christianity and are briefly introduced in the next section.

#### 4. Outline of the volume

The contributions bring together case studies that demonstrate the plurality and dynamics of Christianity in Europe and the Americas, with a focus on its (changing) social forms.

In *The Four Phases of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (1967–2017)*, **Valérie Aubourg** focuses on the development of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in light of its changing relationship to Pentecostalism. While the first phase (1967–1982) was characterized strongly by Pentecostal experience that entered

Catholicism through grassroots religious communities, the second phase (1982–1997) saw a routinization of charisma and a renewed emphasis on the Catholic Church as an organization. In the third phase (1997–early 2000s), the Charismatic Renewal sought renewed proximity to (neo-)Pentecostalism by adopting experiential practices; the fourth stage (since the early 2000s) is characterized by the continued adoption of typically Pentecostal elements over and above the Charismatic Renewal in the strict sense and the ‘infiltration’ of Charismatic-style elements into conventional Catholic practice. In terms of social forms, Aubourg traces a shift from organization to group and network, reflecting a larger process of adopting religious social forms to religious individualization within the Catholic Church.

In *‘Catholic’ and ‘Charismatic’: Two Logics of Legitimization and the Negotiation of Belonging in the German Catholic Charismatic Renewal*, **Hannah Grünenthal** analyzes this very tension between organization and network/group within the German Catholic Charismatic Renewal (GCCR). Tracing the GCCR’s twofold logic of legitimization – the ‘Catholic’ and the ‘Charismatic’ logic – she shows which strategies are necessary for members to assert their position within two very different contexts: recognizing hierarchy, structure, tradition, and the doctrine of the Catholic Church, on the one hand, and emphasizing personal religious experiences and the experience of the Holy Spirit, on the other. Organizational logics are at times at odds with network or group logics, meaning that GCCR members require flexibility to adapt to a range of social forms to maintain adherence to both the Catholic and the Charismatic world.

In *“I am happy to be Catholic”: The Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Dynamics of the Religious Field in Brazil*, **Astrid Reuter** looks at ongoing changes within Latin American Catholicism, namely in Brazil. She takes as her point of departure the fact that Charismatic movements have experienced an unexpected boom in Brazilian Catholicism since the 1970s and increasingly since the 1990s and interprets this growth as resulting from both the dynamics of the religious field in Brazil as a whole and from the dynamics of the Catholic sub-field. She argues that the rise of Pentecostalism since the 1950s and 1960s has set in motion a previously unknown dynamic of competition which coincides with converging religious beliefs and demands (beliefs in spiritual beings and aspirations for personal spiritual experiences). Competition and convergence are thus interconnected, which, Astrid Reuter argues, fosters a dynamic of ‘mimicry’ both in relation to the style of piety and to the religious social forms that support this style.

In *Everyday Familialism in the Emmanuel Community*, **Samuel Dolbeau** focuses on the family as the guiding model for social relations within Catholic Charismatic communities in Europe, as becomes evident in the Emmanuel Community. Here, familialism structures community life in various ways, including not only day-to-day activities but also religious, political, and social involvement in broader society. This serves to support recent Catholic initiatives on sexuality and gender issues. Members are involved in and committed to the community to different degrees, from sporadic to full-time engagement, which results in a range of social forms – from dyad and group to network and organization – and a distinct gender regime influencing not only family dynamics but also the perception of clerical roles. As the Emmanuel Community is the largest Catholic Charismatic community in Europe, the dynamics described by Samuel Dolbeau could point to future changes in the Catholic Church as a whole.

In *Capital of Closed Churches: Heritage Buildings as Social Entrepreneurship in Quebec*, **Hillary Kaell** highlights urban, historic churches that often also house community organizations and run the danger of closing as resulting in community hubs as a new social form within North American Christianity. She argues that such hubs derive value from their location on the border of historically religious forms (heritage churches), economic forms (corporate investment), and the public sphere, drawing from a case study in inner-city Montreal as an example. Showing that churches in decline are seizing the opportunity to leverage tax-free land as their primary asset, the chapter emphasizes social entrepreneurship as a key area where religion and market intersect: community hubs are framed as a smart real estate investment for private investors with social purpose goals, while Christian property, supported by private investment, becomes central to reinvigorating Christian influence in the public sphere.

In *God Is Not at Church: Digitalization as Authentic Religious Practice in an American Megachurch*, **Ariane Kovac** investigates how digitalization has fundamentally transformed the organizational structure of Churchome, an American Evangelical megachurch, and how the church justified this process and incorporated it into its theology. She argues that Churchome uses its digital approach to emphasize the ideal of communitization and to present itself as an authentic and exciting organization. The resulting changes in membership structure have led to a diversification of how members relate to the church and an eventization of church life. In this way, Churchome is able to counter internal and external criticism against megachurches per se and

its move into the digital in particular. Kovac's case study reveals the manifold ways in which changing social forms influence religious semantics.

In *Shapeshifting the Christian Right: The Moral Majority as a Faith-Based Organization and the Immanent Turn of Evangelicalism in the Late 20th Century*, **Sebastian Schüler** looks at nonprofit organizations as a specific religious social form. The author starts from the premise that religious movements would hardly survive or gain social and political influence without organizations. He illustrates this assumption by using the Moral Majority as an example of how the Christian Right evolved from a loose network of church organizations into a politically successful movement by adopting new forms of organization. The Christian Right thus underwent an immanent turn, increasingly adapting its social forms and semantics to secular forms of organization and legal discourse. With his contribution, Schüler sheds light on a somewhat hidden aspect of social forms of religion by expanding the understanding of this concept to the social forms that allow religions to act efficiently in the political sphere. His case study is right-wing American Christianity, but his approach could also be applied to other religious settings.

In *Social Forms in Neo-Pentecostal Prosperity Contexts: From Network to Market Exchange*, **Maren Freudenberg** discusses the various social forms that play a role in prosperity theology. In these contexts, religious interaction and practice is coordinated by way of groups, events, organizations, networks, movements, and market exchanges, while the market exchange is a particularly salient social form due to its congruence with prosperity semantics. Freudenberg highlights that prosperity theologies teach that investment not only in one's personal faith and one's congregation, but also and importantly on the secular market, will be rewarded by God, and that these semantics are mirrored on a structural level by the market exchange as a form of transaction between two parties. She concludes that because financial risk-taking and success on the secular market are coded religiously as signs of depth of faith and divine grace, the market exchange complements these core tenets by translating semantics into structure.

In *Pentecostal Social Engagement in Contemporary Guatemala*, **Virginia Garrard** discusses emerging social forms in the context of Pentecostal social engagement in Central American Guatemala. Pentecostals in recent decades have shifted from a hermeneutics of separation from the world to a stance which embraces social and political participation, cohering into social forms that emphasize collective mobilization and participation. As Garrard shows, this development corresponds to a shifting emphasis on religious ideals and

theologies that become self-reinforcing logics within the vertical and horizontal networks of the church. Pastors build strong vertical patriarchal relations with their congregants and purposefully encourage strong lateral networks within “small groups” that strengthen group cohesion and the church as an institution. As these social relationships evolve, Garrard argues, they transform the role of the church as an organization to one of increased, outward-facing social action.

In *Social Forms in Orthodox Christian Convert Communities in North America*, **Sebastian Rimestad** and **Katherine Kelaidis** examine conversion dynamics in the Orthodox Church in North America, which is a refuge from liberalism and perceived social relativism for many. Orthodox Christian convert communities use various social forms in order to create this image of the Orthodox Church as a divinely inspired counterculture, with the effect of challenging existing Orthodox Christian communities, who are often more concerned with ethnic and cultural affiliation and wish to integrate into Western culture. The authors argue that this kind of individualization of North American Orthodoxy indicates that hierarchical structures are becoming less important while community elements are gaining in prevalence, suggesting a dynamic of societalization of communitization.

In *Forever Into Eternity: Social Forms of Religion in the Temple Wedding of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints*, **Marie-Therese Mäder** introduces us to the Mormon wedding ritual of the “sealing” ceremony at the temple to illustrate not only the profound significance of this event in the life of a Latter-day Saint but also to highlight the dyad of the martial couple as well as processes of religious communitization that occur during the ritual and its eventization as important social forms of religion in present-day Mormonism. Through interviews with long-married members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the largest branch of Mormonism, Mäder retrospectively uncovers the impact of the collectively experienced temple ceremony.

**Insa Pruiskén**’s contribution *Organizing ‘Private Religion’: Types of Governance in American Protestantism* shifts the focus from empirical perspectives to systematic considerations. Pruiskén adds a governance perspective to the social forms approach as we outline it in this introduction, discussing three elementary mechanisms of governance forms (mutual observation, influence, and negotiation) and relating these to types of actors in the American Protestant field, including individual believers, communities, congregations, denominations, and special purpose groups. Building on constellations of mutual negotiation, she then distinguishes six types of governance forms

in American Protestantism –denominational regulation, democratic self-governance, hierarchical self-governance, stakeholder guidance, competition, and network governance – and discusses the role of organizations for what, following Thomas Luckmann, she calls the “private form” of religion.

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