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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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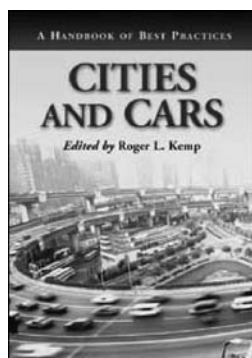
Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>



Column Editor's Note: It is fascinating to ponder popular issues throughout history. Today, and especially in a rapidly-growing city like Charleston, urban sprawl and increasing commute times are a common subject of articles in weekly national news publications and stories on news radio. Another oft-heard subject is about conservative voters, including the religious right. But what were the hot topics two centuries ago? Or two millennia ago? It's plausible — perhaps likely — that the subject of religion was on the fashionable list of talking points even then, as the relatively new creed, Christianity, was on the rise. These issues, popular throughout history, are explored in this month's **Monographic Musings**. Who knows what areas of interest will be of widespread conversation next month?!

In this issue, **ATG** readers will recognize the work of two veteran reviewers: **Steven Profit** and **Phillip Powell**. A warm welcome is extended to **College of Charleston** Associate Professor Emeritus **Lawrence Simms**. Happy reading, everyone! — **DV**



Kemp, Roger L., ed. *Cities and Cars: A Handbook of Best Practices*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007. 9780786429196. 278 pages. \$35.00.

Reviewed by **Steven Profit** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <profits@cofc.edu>

I grew up on a dirt road with-in easy walking distance of downtown Summerville, South Carolina. When

I was a boy, Summerville was a small town of about 4,000 residents and my neighborhood was where “the country” began. There were large forested tracts of land across the road and around the corner from my home; bobcats and foxes were frequently spotted therein. Neighbors on both sides raised hogs, and the family behind us grew corn on two large parcels. Horseback riders were not uncommon travelers on my street. Charleston, 25 miles away, was considered “a far piece.” Trips to “the city” were infrequent and, as a result, very special. You didn’t want to be ill or to have been caught misbehaving around the time of a trek to the city. You didn’t want to miss it.

Today nearly 42,000 people live in Summerville. While it will always be my hometown, Charleston is home for me now. I live in its historic downtown and ride my bike everywhere; it takes me just eight leisurely, invigorating minutes to get to work.

A major factor for this relocation is that I now hate with a passion the commute be-

tween Summerville and Charleston. It is very congested, frustrating, time-consuming, and expensive considering today’s high gas prices and the costs of owning and maintaining an automobile. Unfortunately, attractive alternatives to the private automobile are extremely limited for most people here. And it’s not just a situation specific to Summerville: communities throughout the Charleston-North Charleston metropolitan area are growing dramatically and experiencing the problems associated with rapid development, from traffic congestion and overcrowded schools to increased pollution and loss of green space and wildlife habitat.

Living in a region grappling with these issues added a sense of urgency to my reading of **Roger Kemp’s** *Cities and Cars: A Handbook of Best Practices*. **Kemp**, a university lecturer and author with 15 years of city management experience, has compiled a strong collection of 46 informative and inspiring articles from several leading land use policy publications — including *Urban Land; Planning; Governing; American City and County; Public Works Management and Policy; Western City*; and other relevant sources.

The first section, made up of five articles, provides the reader with some background insights into the domain of urban planning and transportation professionals. Discussed are the interlocking relationships between people, buildings, streets, cars, parking, traffic flow, safety, and federal and state transportation policies. The last section offers some prognostications about the future, from what lies down the road for roadways and how technological innovations may change the car in years to come.

The middle section comprises the majority of the book. The 36 articles therein take the reader on a tour of cities where efforts are underway to create livable, lucrative, environmentally sensitive, human-oriented communities in societies largely dominated by and

designed for the automobile. The pieces primarily address locations across the United States (Boulder, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, West Palm Beach, to name a few), however the cities of London, England, Nagano, Japan, and a couple of Canadian locations are destinations as well.

Approaches to designing greener, more people-friendly settlements vary about as widely as the geography covered. A public utility in Miami converts its fleet to hybrid-powered vehicles; Trenton alters a freeway to exchange higher speeds for slower, safer traffic and an accessible riverfront; Bethesda encourages urban renewal around public transit nodes; London charges motorists to drive into the city center; Nagano uses the latest in information systems and communication technology to manage traffic flow in real-time. All of these interventions are manifestations of a few basic concepts in contemporary urban policy and planning: new urbanism (a movement dedicated to bringing the traditional design elements and patterns of older successful communities to new developments and redevelopments), transit-oriented development (mixed-use development clustered around public transit stations to encourage less dependence on cars), congestion pricing (charging drivers to use heavily traveled roads at peak times to reduce congestion), and smart highways (hi-tech traffic management systems responsive to actual highway conditions). These articles act as case studies in the ways these ideas have been implemented under various conditions. They demonstrate how communities can actively work to reverse decades of policy, planning, and development that has privileged the car over other means of transportation.

The back matter of *Cities and Cars* provides the reader some avenues for becoming more informed about and involved in the issues of transportation management and urban transportation. Included are a short annotated list of subject-specific periodicals; contact information for relevant agencies and associations at municipal, regional and national levels; and the same for research centers and libraries in the United States dedicated to the exploration of these subjects. The index is adequate, but the glossary could be more helpful if expanded.

On the whole, **Roger Kemp’s** *Cities and Cars: A Handbook of Best Practices* is a successful enterprise. It educates the reader concerning the guiding themes of contemporary urban transportation policy and design; demonstrates the wide applicability of these concepts through geographically dispersed case studies; inspires us to envision the possibilities with concrete examples; and points the way for those motivated to learn more about how to constructively combat some of the pressing problems of the modern urban condition.

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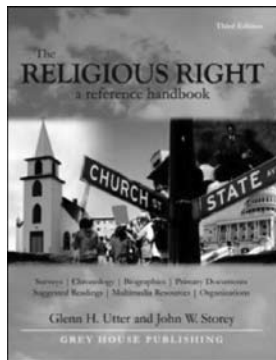
useful topical arrangement with an index in the front of both volumes.

From Suffrage to the Senate: An Encyclopedia of Leaders, Causes & Issues is a handy and helpful reference. It is well researched bringing together valuable information from

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Utter, Glenn H. and John W. Storey. *The Religious Right: A Reference Handbook*. 3rd ed. Millerton, NY: Grey House Publishing, 2007. 9781592371136. 800 pages. \$135.00.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>



Six years have passed between the publication of the second and the new third editions and having the chance to look at both, the thought of “the same, only different” comes to mind. Certainly, with a change in publishers, the new edition is physically larger and the content is noticeably expanded. Yet, the premise and emphasis remain the same between the two editions. The authors are attempting to bring an objective presentation of the Religious Right — its philosophies, its personalities, its organizations, and its com-

munications networks. Even more surprising is that **Utter** and **Storey** have included essays and the names of organizations highly critical of the Religious Right and its evangelical and fundamentalist beliefs.

Sections in the newest edition having been updated significantly include the chronology, the biographical profiles, and the analysis of survey data. The chronology runs to as late as July 2006 covering **George Bush**’s first term and half of his second. It is an interesting combination of events detailing both social

and political events regarding the Religious Right.

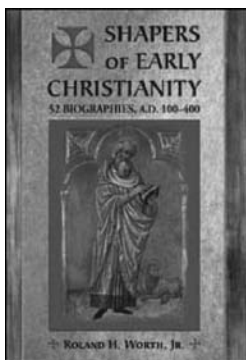
The new edition now includes two sections of articles and commentaries both defending and criticizing the Religious Right and Fundamentalism. Comparing each group of articles ably demonstrates how the two sides are truly parallel universes. For the reviewer, a mainstream Protestant on a good day, reading these articles has been a revelation. It ably demonstrates how there are no shades of gray between members of the Religious Right and the people who are more part of the moderate to liberal mainstream.

Additionally, strongly represented are bibliographies of books about and from the Religious Right. Similarly, there are lists of periodicals produced by these various organizations. Finally, completing this list are multimedia and Internet sources. Each entry is briefly and objectively annotated.

Initially, the reviewer looked upon reviewing this book with certain trepidation, but the concerns were unfounded. The authors’ efforts in writing a concise and objective work about the Religious Right are outstanding.

Worth, Roland H., Jr. *Shapers of Early Christianity: 52 Biographies, A.D. 100-400*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007. 9780786429233 (13). 201 pages. \$45.00.

Reviewed by **Lawrence J. Simms** (College of Charleston)



In *Shapers of Early Christianity*, **Roland H. Worth, Jr.**, has provided a succinct overview of the first full three centuries of Christianity

through a series of brief biographies. Divided into seven chapters, the biographies are presented according to conceptual groupings with the exception of chapter one, titled “Second Century Christianity.” Thus, the author looks at early Christianity from the perspective of politics, the intellect, Bible translations, orthodoxy, heresy (terms which he qualifies in the preface), and asceticism. Each chapter is amply supplied with scholarly notation at the back of the book, followed by a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, including Internet resources, both attributed and unattributed. The index incorporates names, subject areas, and literary works.

The author’s purpose, as stated in the preface, is “to understand the beliefs and behavior of both key and representative figures in the crucial transitional phase from primitive Christianity to early medieval Catholicism.” In the final paragraph of the introduction, he expresses the hope that by presenting a “cross section of personalities and attitudes, we gain insight into the rival approaches to Christian faith that warred during the first few centuries after Christ.” He has succeeded, in general, on both counts through a balanced and non-judgmental presentation of the diverse personalities

who achieved prominence or, in some cases, notoriety in the earliest centuries of developing and evolving Christianity. Although many of these individuals were eventually canonized, the author refrains from using the title of saint, since it was, as he says in the preface, “bestowed upon many of those later regarded as ‘orthodox’” who “became the ‘orthodox’ because they won.” He judiciously qualifies the terms “orthodox” and “heretic” without “necessarily endorsing either side in the religious controversies that are described.” Given that this author does not write as a disinterested observer, but rather as one who has “preached the gospel for more than two decades,” his evenhanded approach is refreshing and commendable.

In his selection of biographical subjects, he has included the major figures of the period, as well as some with whom the general reader is not likely to be familiar, such as **Pammachius**, the Roman senator turned monk; **Ulfilas**, who translated the Bible into Gothic; and **Bonosus**, bishop of Naissus, who maintained that **Jesus**’ mother need not have remained a virgin throughout her life, thus accounting for the mention of siblings of **Jesus** found in the New Testament. Moreover, despite the male domination of early Christianity, we meet with a number of prominent Christian women, including **Faltonia Proba**, who adapted **Vergil**’s *Aeneid* to a Christian interpretation.



In a book of slightly less than two hundred pages, **Roland H. Worth, Jr.**, has provided a good introduction to early Christianity, of which there are already many to be sure. But his biographical format sets his book apart from the more conventional, and often dry, narrative histories. The focus on those men and women who contributed positively or otherwise to the formulation of Christianity as a belief system in its formative centuries should appeal to many, especially younger readers immersed in a culture of celebrity-mania.

The book itself is “user-friendly,” with clearly legible typeface, flexible binding, and a detailed table of contents that lists each biography for ready reference, with many of the biographies themselves subdivided with appropriate headings. Even the “packaging” is effective. The front cover with its full-color portrait of **Saint Jerome** is an eye-catcher. Given the ongoing popularity of the subject matter, this book should find a readership in academic (both high school and college/university) and public libraries.

From the Reference Desk
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diverse sources. The selection of articles in this set offers numerous facts about individual women, as well as providing historic context for the expanding role of women in American politics. Both academic and public libraries will want to consider it for their collections.