The book reviewed below is the result of an interdisciplinary cooperation of 22 scholars of religions dealing with the historical foundations and the recent developments of present-day religious plurality in Switzerland. Its editors — Martin Baumann (Religious Studies) and Jörg Stolz (Sociology of Religion) — compiled a body of 21 essays in order to produce an „anschaulichen, wissenschaftlich gestützten und zugleich allgemein verständlichen Text zur religiösen Vielfalt und ihren Folgen in den verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Bereichen in der Schweiz“. (14) In doing so, they approached the difficult task of editing an academic textbook and a professional reference book at the same time. This aim translates into the structure of the edition that brings together (a) terminological reflections, (b) case studies on particular Christian and non-Christian traditions and (c) considerations on the relations of these traditions to the wider society. Following this agenda, the text is ordered around four complementary sections.

The first section starts with poignant reflections on the general subject matter of the book and the terms ‘religion’ and ‘plurality’ in particular. Baumann and Stolz introduce an analytical frame of reference that combines three main theses: First, they highlight the long duration and fluctuating traditions of religious plurality in Switzerland. Second, they claim that throughout the last 30 years a substantial increase of religious plurality has occurred — in terms of the numerical presence of religious groups as well as the variety of their social forms. Third, they make the point that this process has to be analysed in the context of modernization-, differentiation- and secularization-theories. In this way, the editors elucidate their general approach (without going too much into the academic debates around the respective concepts) and set the tone for the following essays.

From this starting-point, the second part of the book brings together a group of historians of religions that present case-studies on the developments of the Christian traditions in Switzerland. Bertrand Forclaz opens this section...
with a review of inner-Christian processes of differentiation after the Reformation. The remaining essays focus on the Roman Catholic Church (Krügge- ler/Weibel), the Reformed Churches (Bernhardt) as well as on more marginalized Christian traditions — such as Evangelicals (Favre/Stolz), Christian-Orthodox groups (Baumer) and what they call Christian ‘Sondergruppen’ (Weibel). All these contributions follow one joint pattern: They start with a section on historical developments, go on with up-to-date statistical data and complete their contribution by identifying major present-day trends. Taken together the essays convey a vivid impression of the multi-confessional history of Switzerland and its cantons.

The next set of case-studies of Eine Schweiz – viele Religionen completes this picture with reference to the Jews (Picard), Muslims (Behloul/Lathion), Buddhists (Sindemann) and Hindus (Baumann) and closes with Stefan Rademacher’s essays on the so called New Religious Movements and the Esoteric-Scene. Even though the presence of these religious communities is of more recent origin (with the exception of the Jewish groups) and smaller numbers, the authors argue, that they add a distinctive aspect to the present-day religious scene in Switzerland. Moreover, they assert that all these religious traditions look back on a development that is manifold and diverse in itself.

The final part of the edition is based upon the case-studies of the second and the third section and focuses on the social consequences of religious plurality (rather than the process of pluralization itself). The first five essays of this section deal with the interrelations between religious plurality and public schooling (Frank/Jödicke), the media (Imhof/Ettinger), the legal system (Famos), politics (Voll) and the medical system (Rossi). In doing so, they allude to present-day potentials for conflict as well as long-established strategies of conflict-resolution. The section closes with another article of the editors that adds a more political flavour to the whole edition. Baumann and Stolz highlight the ambivalent role of religious plurality in regard to social conflicts, the idea of religious freedom and the European history of religions.

To put it in a nutshell, all 21 essays of this edition are more or less descriptive in character. On about 15 pages, each author offers an up-to-date and well-balanced impression of one particular aspect of the present-day religious scene in Switzerland. The essays present interesting details on the religious traditions as well as fruitful systematic cross-references to further social phenomena. However, the virtual strength of Eine Schweiz – viele Religionen lies in the combination of the essays. In total, they draw a detailed picture of the religious situation in Switzerland that gives justice to the manifold processes of pluralization. In this sense the book goes beyond a mere dictionary of varied religious traditions or an ecclesiastical history of Switzerland and gives a good