Religion in Times of Crisis is an essentially European initiative and a significant contribution that explores the crises of religion in European as well as non-European socio-political spaces. Articles in this volume were initially presented at the 2013 meeting of the European Sociological Association’s Sociology of Religion network. The book especially includes contributions by younger scholars that shed light upon counterintuitive insights into the ways in which religion deals with the crisis of modernity and interacts with state apparatuses. This book is broadly divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the crisis of modernity that religion is faced with, especially in contemporary Europe. It includes four articles by Tom Wagnor, Vladimir Kmec, Marta Kołodziejska, and Anne-Sophie Lamine. Wagnor examines the ways in which the Australian Hillsong church deploys music as a primary means of reaching out to people. Based on ethnomusicalological fieldwork carried out at the Hillsong London branch, this article includes an insightful discussion of the branding of a transnational evangelical Christian growth church. Wagnor outlines the vital role played by the branded music and musicians of Hillsong in making the church’s values to be “in,” if not, of, multiple — even contesting — Christian worldviews.

Kmec’s article on the religious practices of immigrant communities in the city of Dublin marks a new addition to existing research on a vital aspect of the lives of immigrant communities in Ireland. Kmec observes that, as opposed to the essentialist perception that immigrants are oftentimes inclined to staunchly preserve their ethno-religious identities, the immigrant community under scrutiny is open to alterations in their religious identities, creating their own intercultural and cosmopolitan religious spaces. Kmec also explores how the migration of young people to Ireland has led to a multiplicity of attitudes towards religion and, consequently, growing diversity in ecumenism in the Irish metropolis.

The article by Kołodziejska focuses on the ways in which people create religious spaces in the sphere of online Catholicism in Poland. This article outlines new responses to the crisis of communication between the institutional (Catholic) Church in a country with a strong Catholic tradition, which, not unlike its counterparts in Western Europe, has witnessed a considerable diminution of parishioners. Kołodziejska’s research identifies a simultaneously respectful yet ambivalent relationship between Catholics active in the cyberspace and the institutional Church.
Lamine develops a deeply engaging analysis of the relationship between belief and doubt in a pragmatist framework of “belief in the making.” Lamine identifies three ideal/typical modalities. Lamine’s argument, developed as an insightful discussion of the concept of contemporary pragmatism, is a timely contribution to contemporary research on religion. Lamine’s analytical framework is transferable, as it provides insight on radicalizing forms of believing, while explaining how potential crises of doubt are negotiated at the micro-level.

Part two of the book is titled “Religion, Crisis and the Nation State,” and contains an interesting line-up of five articles.

Joram Tarusarira’s article focuses on the role of churches in the Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe, which is also the second most populated province in the country. Tarusarira argues that some politically engaged church organizations are structurally better positioned to transform crises than mainstream church institutions. The key point highlighted is that such religious actors can employ flexible, non-hierarchical, and non-bureaucratic approaches, which are especially effective in applying pressure for change.

In a comparative exploration, the article co-authored by Marieke von den Berg, David Bos, Marco Derks, R. Ruard Ganzevoort, Miloš Jovanović, Anne-Marie Korte, and Srdjan Sremac explores the interrelationship between religion and homosexuality in three different sociocultural spaces — in the Netherlands, Sweden, and in the Western Balkans. As opposed to the popular assumption that LGBTQI rights are guaranteed to equal levels in Western European polities such as Sweden and the Netherlands, this article brings out particularities in the interaction of LGBTQI rights advocacy and religion between the two countries. This article’s comparative focus contributes to broadening existing interpretations on how religious opponents are socially constructed, and plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards homosexuality. This article stands in line with a growing literature that critically assesses the intersections of LGBTQI rights and attitudes towards “the other” in liberal democratic polities.

Ali Quadir’s contribution focuses on the Pakistani constitutional amendment that hereticized the Ahmadiyya community in a Special Committee of the Parliament of Pakistan in 1974. Quadir explores the correlation between the conception of nationhood and the state’s attitude towards the Ahmadiyya. The Pakistani policy on the Ahmadiyya officially sanctions discrimination against that community, its cultural practices, identity and right for self-determination. Using recently declassified official sources, Quadir elucidates the rationales that drove policymakers to draft the 1974 law, which continues to be upheld with a total disregard for international human rights norms.