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Review: *The Art of Living Foundation: Spirituality and Wellbeing in the Global Context* by Stephen Jacobs

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up the slack. He made good money throughout these decades operating a mail-order business of racy photographs, usually, Campbell hypothesizes, of vaudeville performers and other traveling actresses who passed through Salt Lake. In all these ways Johnson profited off of the Mormon transition, drawing on models who would not have been there two or three decades prior, integrating Salt Lake City into cultural networks unthinkable to earlier generations of Mormon leaders, and, not the least, playing upon old stereotypes of captive Mormon women trapped in the harems of Mormon men. For earlier generations, that story was a terrifying image of a degraded civilization. For Johnson, who draped his models in silk and posed them like the belly dancers he saw in other exotic photographs, it was a cash cow. As Campbell puts it, in characteristically casual yet graceful prose, by integrating Salt Lake City's culture into that of the nation in both content and trade networks, Johnson's "shots of scantily dressed young women ultimately worked to knit the newly monogamous Saints back into the nation" (56).

By the end of his life, Johnson had seemingly abandoned his faith, moving to San Francisco and happily taking up residence with a woman to whom he was not married. The church he left behind, however, was steadily integrating itself into the United States. Campbell increasingly abandons Johnson himself. The last chapter, in particular, addresses modern representations of Joseph Smith and a famous photograph of Smith's nephew, Joseph F. Smith, standing at the presumed site where his uncle received a vision of God and Jesus Christ. Campbell hopes to use these dichotomies to show that the Mormons have never quite lost the sense of tension with the world around them. Though Johnson remains present in the chapter through a self-portrait, Campbell's effort never quite connects him with the rest of the narrative. However, the story of Johnson and his art remains a compelling microhistory of his faith, and casts into illuminating light a story often told through abstractions.

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The Art of Living Foundation: Spirituality and Wellbeing in the Global Context. By Stephen Jacobs. Ashgate, 2015. 250 pages. \$97.60 cloth; ebook available.

The Art of Living Foundation (AOL) was founded in India in 1981 by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Today, it is a global movement focused on well-being and spirituality, with a presence in 152 countries. Stephen Jacobs, whose expertise is contemporary Hinduism and the interaction between religion and media, has written one of the first academic monographs about this group. This is a good introduction to the organization and its founder.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter locates AOL in its historical and cultural context. Jacobs discusses major themes in

neo-Hinduism, core parts of many Hindu-derived meditation groups, as being both traditional Indian and including European content. Jacobs problematizes the intersection between different aspects of East and West and examines themes like the spiritualization of psychology and the psychologization of spirituality, secularization, and enchantment, and the subjective turn emphasizing individual experiences. He writes that the teachings of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar assess individual experiences, and frame these in a meaning system that makes sense of these experiences, enabling the participants to perceive themselves as free autonomous individuals and at the same time to acknowledge AOL as a source of that freedom. AOL makes sense of both individual and collective identity. According to Jacobs, one of the keys to the success of AOL is its capacity to function on different levels, so that individuals can pick and mix those aspects that resonate best with their own individual preferences and cultural contexts.

The second chapter focuses on the founder, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and the history of AOL. Jacobs emphasizes that most of his sources for this chapter are from AOL, and that they are thus constructed from a particular standpoint. Jacobs observes that accounts of the guru's life tend to reveal more about the followers' perceptions than about the guru him/herself. There are also conflicting narratives from ex-members. Jacobs shows that the biography of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar follows many aspects of what he calls the "guruography" genre. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar spent a few years with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Transcendental Meditation, but left in 1981 to found AOL. There seem to be surprisingly few sources about his time in TM and the split, which would have been interesting to know more about. Jacobs shows, however, that AOL displays several similarities with TM.

Chapter 3 deals with beliefs and practices, and Jacobs starts out by saying that practice, not doctrine, is emphasized in AOL. Beliefs are referred to as "knowledge" or "wisdom," and the two sources are the inner self and the teachings of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Jacobs differs between therapeutic beliefs—that AOL practices bring about a sense of well-being; spiritual beliefs—that there is an authentic mode of being underlying both the individual and the whole creation; social beliefs—that the whole world is one family, fostering a social responsibility; and religious beliefs—salience of certain Hindu practices, like devotional songs and chants. The beliefs are vague and individuals may select and interpret them in ways that resonate with their own individual and cultural perspectives. The three core practices of AOL are yoga, especially the breathing exercise *sudarshan kriya*; *seva*, or volunteer work; and *satsang*, group practices or meetings. The breathing technique *sudarshan kriya* is interpreted as having a capacity to evoke experiences to access one's authentic self.

Chapter 4 discusses authority and legitimation. Although the main validating principle in AOL is personal experience, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

is also an authority along with the organization itself. Jacobs analyzes different discourses of authority in AOL, relating to science and representations of Indian traditional wisdom, as well as narratives of personal experiences and charismatic authority. There is a common historical appropriation of India as a place of lost wisdom, which is also used by AOL. The use of Sanskrit terminology in the group suggests that the teachings are rooted in the authentic and ancient traditions of India.

The last chapter deals with AOL in the light of globalization and mediatization, that is, the increasing use and integration of media processes which shape and transform phenomena such as religion. AOL was created in India, yet has a global appeal. Jacobs suggests that AOL should be seen as a hybrid that intentionally fuses elements associated with Hindu culture with aspects associated with the West; it is thus a product of global encounters. According to Jacobs, AOL asserts that spirituality transcends the particularity of specific religions traditions and can thus be understood as a form of religiosity that addresses the global-human condition. AOL sees all major religious traditions as being expressions of universal human values. Jacobs opines that networks of spirituality like AOL can be seen as a direct response to globalization. The idea that spirituality transcends cultural, religious, and political distinctions is both a product and an agent of globalization.

This book is written in a very helpful way, and engages with contemporary academic discourses and theories, making it a useful book both for students and the academic community. For the beginner in Hinduism, Jacobs explains the terms and contexts necessary to understand AOL, and thus contextualizes the movement not only religiously but also sociologically. AOL is an organization displaying many significant characteristics of our time, which makes it a useful example of a current religious organization being a part of a historical and cultural context. Jacobs also continuously makes useful comparisons to other Hindu-derived groups which increases our knowledge about the phenomenon overall. The part of the story which still waits to be written is that of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's years with Maharishi and the split between TM and AOL. It would be of historical interest to know more about this event. This would be a fruitful research project.

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Apocalyptic Anxiety: Religion, Science, and America's Obsession with the End of the World. By Anthony Aveni. University of Colorado Press, 2016. xiv + 252 pages. \$28.95 paper; ebook available.

Despite having been the object of widespread millennialist speculations for decades, 21 December 2012 came and passed in an uneventful