

Kathleen (Kathy) Black, with Bishop Kyrillos, Jonathan L. Friedmann and Tamar Frankiel, Hamid Mavani and Jihad Turk. *Rhythms of Religious Ritual: The Yearly Cycle of Jews, Christians, and Muslims*. Vol. 1. Claremont, CA: Claremont Press, 2018. 165 pages. \$19.99.

Rhythms of Religious Ritual: The Yearly Cycle of Jews, Christians, and Muslims from Kathleen (Kathy) Black, Bishop Kyrillos, Jonathan L. Friedmann and Tamar Frankiel, Hamid Mavani, and Jihad Turk presents a collection of ritual practices based upon the religious calendars of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities.

Black is an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church and professor of homiletics and liturgics. Friedmann is a cantor, composer, musicologist, biblical scholar and professor of Jewish music history. Frankiel is a professor of comparative religion. Mavani is a professor of Islamic studies. Turk is the founding president of Bayan Claremont, an Islamic graduate school designed to educate Muslim scholars and religious leaders. Bishop Kyrillos is an auxiliary bishop of the Coptic Church. (More details regarding precise title and institutional affiliation as well as research interests can be found in the book.)

Intended as a guidebook for religious leaders and laity, the text arises out of interfaith collaboration between Claremont School of Theology [CST], the Academy of Jewish Religion, California (a Jewish seminary), Bayan Claremont (a new Islamic graduate institution), and the University of the West (a Buddhist educational institution). Also located on the CST campus is Saint Athanasius and Saint Cyril Theological School (a Coptic Orthodox Christian seminary) (6). The authors state upfront that the collection is not comprehensive. It will not satisfy all readers. Important observances may seem missing. For example, the pages on Christianity do not discuss a phenomenon like the potluck meal or give serious attention to charismatic, evangelical, or free church traditions of color and others not easily identified by the largely Anglo-Catholic and Orthodox based ways of considering and doing liturgy.

Yet the book excels in its first-page vision that the 21st century is marked by religious diversity, and it can no longer be assumed that the United States is a Christian country, if that assumption were ever correct in the first place (xiii). “[F]ewer and fewer persons practice any form of religion,” extended families frequently comprise religious diversity, and “there are religious ‘hybrids’ among us who are Christian/Buddhist or Jewish/Christian because of interreligious marriages or personal affiliations to more than one religious tradition” (ibid.). In short, the U.S. and the world are multireligious. Therefore, *Rhythms of Religious Ritual* is timely and illuminating.

The authors also note how ambitious or “ludicrous” their attempt at intertradition work is (3). Celebrating high holy days can markedly differ within traditions. “The Islamic celebration of Edi al-Adha will take on different practices by African American Muslims who converted to Islam through the teaching and influence of Malcolm X than American Muslims who immigrated from Turkey or Iran” (4). They are careful to recognize the array of Jewish belief historically divided between Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities, and the varieties of Islam marked by the leading Sunni and Shia traditions, as well as the mystical influence of the Sufis. Demographic statistics lead the discussion of each tradition (9, 75, 125). The Pew data, however, is better taken as a departure point for further exploration than current data. Yet for all of its limits, *Rhythms of Religious Ritual* is accessible, informative, and respectful.

The authors state that reasons, history, and theological significance of rituals do not necessarily nurture religious community (155). Even so, *Homiletic* readers might be surprised to learn what a Zeroa is—a roasted bone (often a shank bone, but broiled beet can be substituted for

vegetarians) that symbolizes the first “paschal” lamb offered on the night of the Jewish Exodus (28). For us, of course, Christ is not Jesus’ last name (78). But the absence of a season or day in Christianity to commemorate textual revelation from God, as seen in Shavuot for Judaism or Ramadan for Islam, may seem curious (156, 164). Homileticians in particular might also find it interesting that preaching (*khutbah*) happens twice at Eid-ul Fitr (“Feast of Breaking the Fast”), (142).

Citations are infrequent in *Rhythms of Religious Ritual*, and it includes no index. The narrative reads more like an annotated glossary. In a classroom it may suit undergraduates best. Yet it could also serve as a handy reference for any seminarian or doctoral student as long as the self-identified limits and promise of the book are kept in mind. The work here is swift and sharp enough to make required reading on an exam list, and fulfill the authors’ ultimate hope of reducing religious violence with shared peace and life coursing through the people who follow the God of Abraham.

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