



William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI

Author: **Edmondo Lupieri**

Title: IN THE NAME OF GOD

Choice, October 2012

Lupieri, Edmondo. **In the name of God: the making of global Christianity**, tr. by Giovanna Lammers; rev. by the author with James Hooten and Amanda Kunder. Eerdmans, 2011. 271p indexes afp ISBN 9780802840172 pbk, \$25.00

Lupieri (Loyola Univ. Chicago) narrates a fascinating, if sometimes sordid, story of Christianity's spread around the world. Originally published in Italian in 1994 as a popular book (*Jesus Christ and the Other Gods*), the volume was revised in 2005 as *Identity and Conquest* to reflect increasing interest in globalization. Lupieri's work is more a historical, sociological, and anthropological account of Christianity's movement into other lands and other cultures than it is a theological story. The coverage is amazingly broad as Christianity progresses from continent to continent—from Africa to Asia to Australia and on. Not surprisingly, the story includes some unfortunate and sometimes tragic aspects, which Lupieri does not avoid. This lucidly written volume will help people see the various roles religion played over time and could help shape hopes for a world that will continue in many ways to be "religious." Ample explanatory footnotes help those readers interested in more depth and understanding, and a list of additional suggested readings is provided. This is a useful resource for those interested in Christianity's presence in various global locations. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Lower-level undergraduates and above; general readers.—*A. L. Kolp, Baldwin Wallace University*



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Reviews

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Reviews in Religion & Theology, January 2013

In the Name of God: The Making of Global Christianity, Edmondo Lupieri, Eerdmans, 2011 (ISBN 978-0-8028-4017-2), xx + 246 pp., pb \$25

The magnitude of Edmondo Lupieri's *In the Name of God* is stunning. From Cortez, to Francis Xavier, to Malcolm X; from Jesuits, to Huguenots, to Moonies; from Solomon's descendants in Ethiopia, to Voodoo, to Melanesian cargo cults, Lupieri's book taps a vast array of people, ideas, events, and movements that have shaped Christianity and the world since the beginning of the age of exploration. He rightly calls it a 'voyage through the continents and religions' (p. 242). The book tells how colonization and mission advanced side by side and how 'the conquest of the planet by the European powers was often justified by motives of a religious nature' (p. 231). It is a breathtaking look at the making of global Christianity.

The book began as a personal project and was first published in Italian in 1994 as a popular book entitled *Jesus Christ and the Other Gods* without a bibliography or footnotes. With the aid of a translator and teaching assistants, Lupieri updated the book and added references. It was renamed and published in English in 2011. He wanted to show that 'our European ancestors were not ethically, nor religiously, nor even culturally ready to conquer the rest of the planet' (p. x) and he does just that – with candor, style, and a bit of dry humor. Every thoughtful Christian would benefit from reading this book – and every person who cares about the relationship between Christianity and culture; between what Christians 'have been, what we still are, and what we could be or do' (p. xiii) could learn from this book about the role that institutional Christianity has played in world history. The book would make an outstanding textbook for undergraduate and graduate courses on Christian mission, World Christianity, and/or Christian history.

The text is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, 'Faith and Discoveries', introduces the conquistadors and themes emerging from their arrival in the New World: rights, authority, the land, salvation, damnation, the church, colonies. Chapter 2, 'Saints, Gods and Missionaries' tells us how the indigenous people and their religious ways were conquered by and absorbed into Catholicism. The New World was, for the most part, forced to adapt to the European's worldview. In this telling, the familiar stories of European arrogance and brutality are offset by stories of indigenous rebellions and resistance, and well-intentioned, if doomed, defense of the indigenous people by some champions. Lupieri



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reveals theological justifications that Europeans used for their brutality towards and enslavement of the indigenous populations (they were not human, they were descended from Noah's cursed son, Ham, etc.). In a segment on 'Resistance and Nativisms' he examines four instances of political and religious rebellion by the Indians. Then, he speaks of the *Indios* dancing their hope, and of Bartolome de las Casas (an early defender of the Indians) and of the Jesuits' valiant and failed attempt at establishing the Guaraní Republic. In another segment, he discusses the various Indian madonnas that miraculously appeared to *Indios* and the cults that grew up around them. He briefly illuminates pieces of the complicated syncretism of Christianity and the indigenous sacred ways.

In Chapter 3, 'The Black God', Lupieri moves to an idea that begins in Africa and moves to the Americas and then returns to Africa. Starting with the Portuguese explorations of the edges of the continent in the fourteenth century, he goes on to describe some early, short-lived successes of Christianity in Africa and the ultimate failure of Christianity to take hold in these early centuries. We follow the slave trade back to the new World where Christianity and traditional African religious ways intertwine and become New World cults such as Voodoo, Santeria, and Umbanda. We meet the Catholic saints who became identified with Indian and African gods. The importance of traditional dances, sacrifices, and spirit possessions for the African slaves in the New World is explored. Pentecostalism, Black Judaism, and Black Islam in twentieth-century US America become part of the story. Finally, we return to the African continent of the twentieth/twenty-first centuries where we see that Christianity, especially through the New African churches, has exploded.

Asia is the setting of the fourth chapter. Lupieri has already reminded us that the Thomas Christians of South India claim apostolic roots. Here he tells us that Christianity also enjoyed an early presence in China, through the Nestorians and Manicheans, from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries when Chinese authorities evicted all Christians. When the Jesuits returned in the sixteenth century, they practiced their own unique brand of evangelization using the 'theory of adaptability' (p. 193). Ultimately, their acculturation caused a scandal within the catholic community. 'The Jesuit missionary system was dismantled piece by piece, not without personal dramas: How could what was happening be explained to the converts without destroying their faith?'

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(p. 198). Brief discussions of the Silk Road, the Spice Road, Christianity in Japan and Korea, the opium wars, and a segment on Rev. Sun Myung Moon's 'Unification Church' close the chapter. Chapter 5 takes the reader to Australia and the Pacific Rim where we are introduced to aspects of the religious lives of the Aborigines in Australia and the Maori in New Zealand and Melanesian Cargo cults in the South Pacific.

Finally, in Chapter 6 'Are the Dead Returning' Lupieri suggests that: first, there is not one Christianity, but there are many Christianities, even very far removed from each other, and in this diversity we are witnessing phenomena of growth. Second, competition among religions, made easy by the instruments of mass-communication, is very strong in today's world. The competition does not appear to lessen the need for religion, which seems to be absolutely ineliminable, or at least we can say that all endeavors historically undertaken so far to destroy religion *tout court*, or in particular Christianity, must be considered a failure (p. 242).

In the Name of God is a substantial historical-sociological study. It is also a grand story built of smaller stories. It is an eclectic book, a densely packed book, a wide-ranging book, full of compelling images and ideas. It spans hundreds of years, visits five continents, and engages many religions in relation to Christianity. It left me a bit astounded – and wanting to learn more. In the 'Afterward to the First Italian Edition', Lupieri speaks of the 'New Year's Day Revolution' in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. He writes: 'It appears . . . clear that the *Indios* do not have today greater possibility of success than they had in the past' (p. 243). Then, Lupieri goes on, but 'This time is not the same, they [the *Indios*] seem to want to tell us; this time the *Indios* are doing their own revolution. . . . What do not appear to have changed are the methods used by the Mexican army . . .' (p. 246). Will we Christians never learn? We might – if we read Lupieri's book.

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