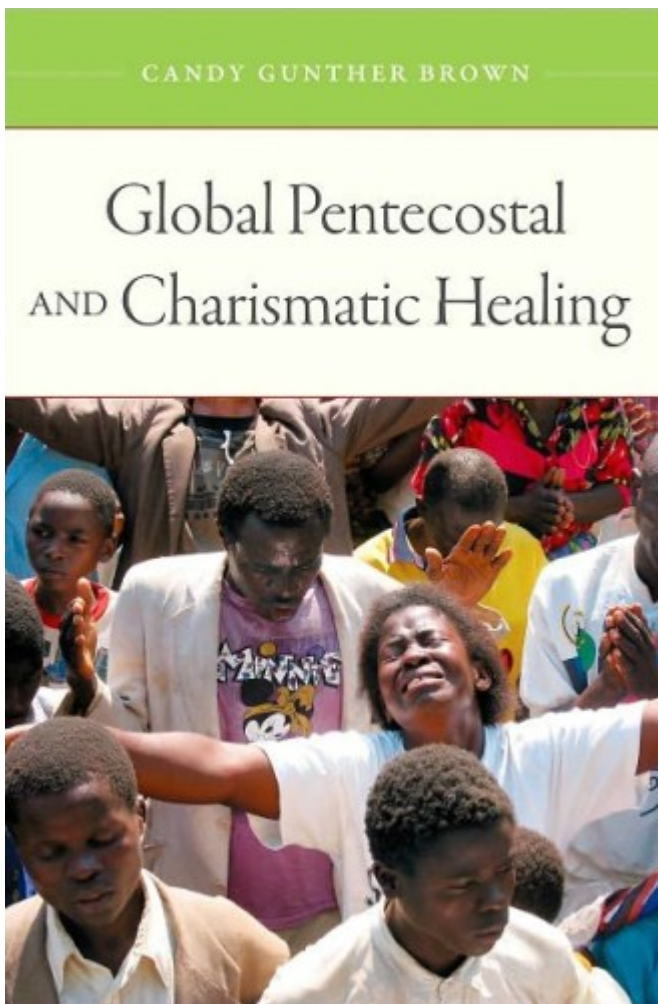


# World Christianity & American religion

selected by [Philip Jenkins](#) and [Grant Wacker](#)

This review appears in the [October 18, 2011](#) issue.

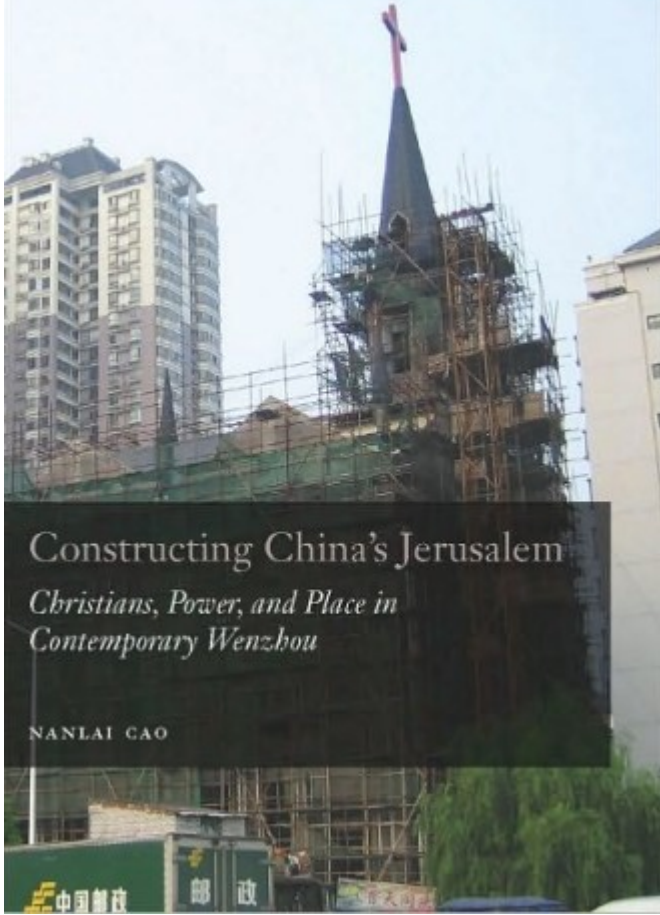
## In Review



## Global Pentecostalism and Charismatic Healing

edited by Candy Gunther Brown  
Oxford University Press

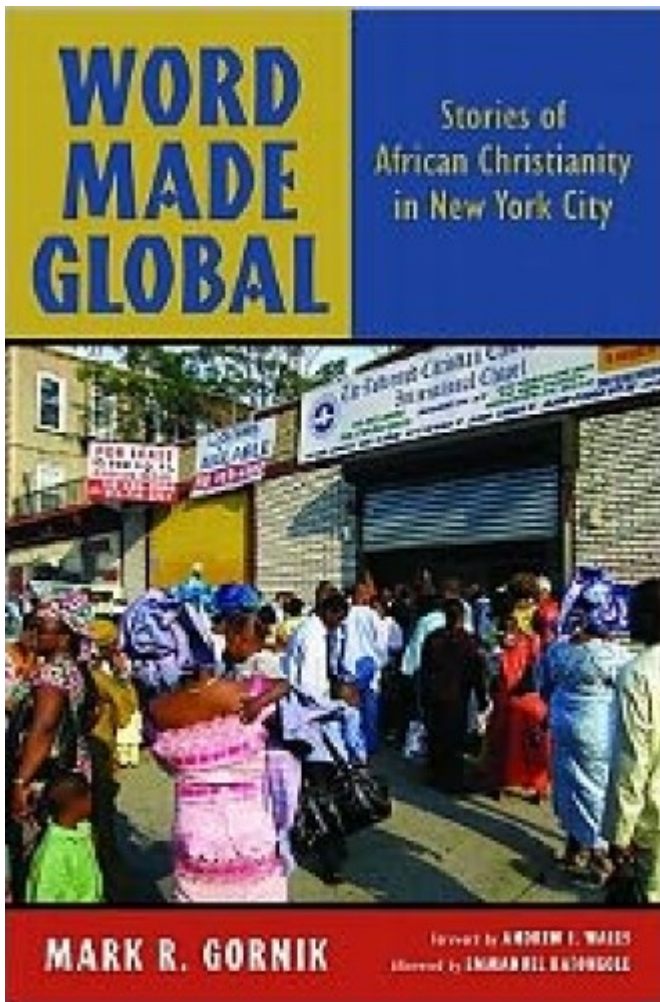
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



## **Constructing China's Jerusalem**

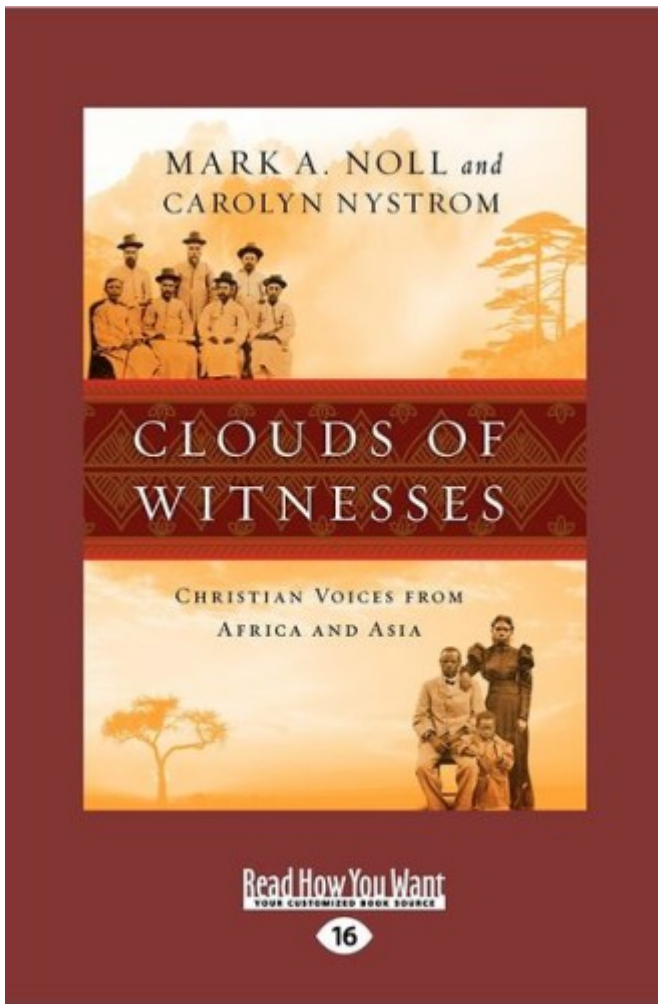
by Nanlai Cao

Stanford University Press



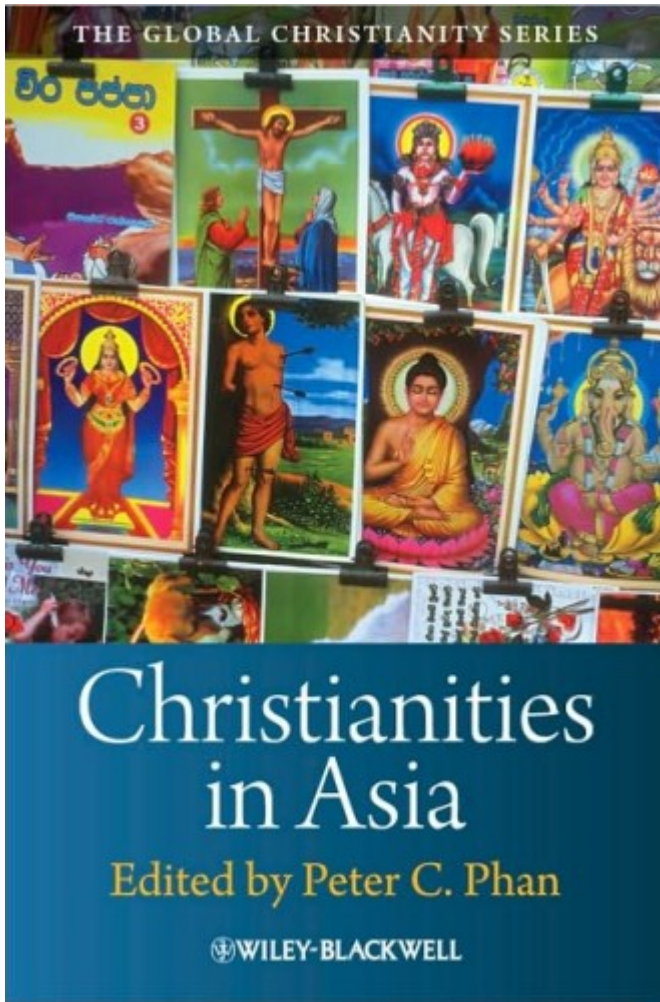
## **Word Made Global**

by Mark R. Gornik  
Eerdmans



## **Clouds of Witnesses**

by Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom  
InterVarsity Press



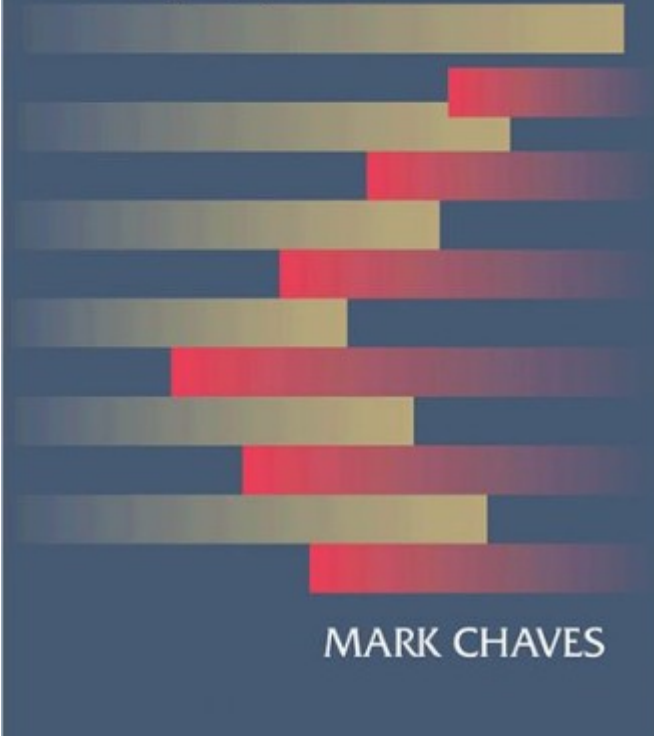
## **Christianities in Asia**

edited by Peter C. Phan

Wiley-Blackwell

# AMERICAN RELIGION

Contemporary Trends

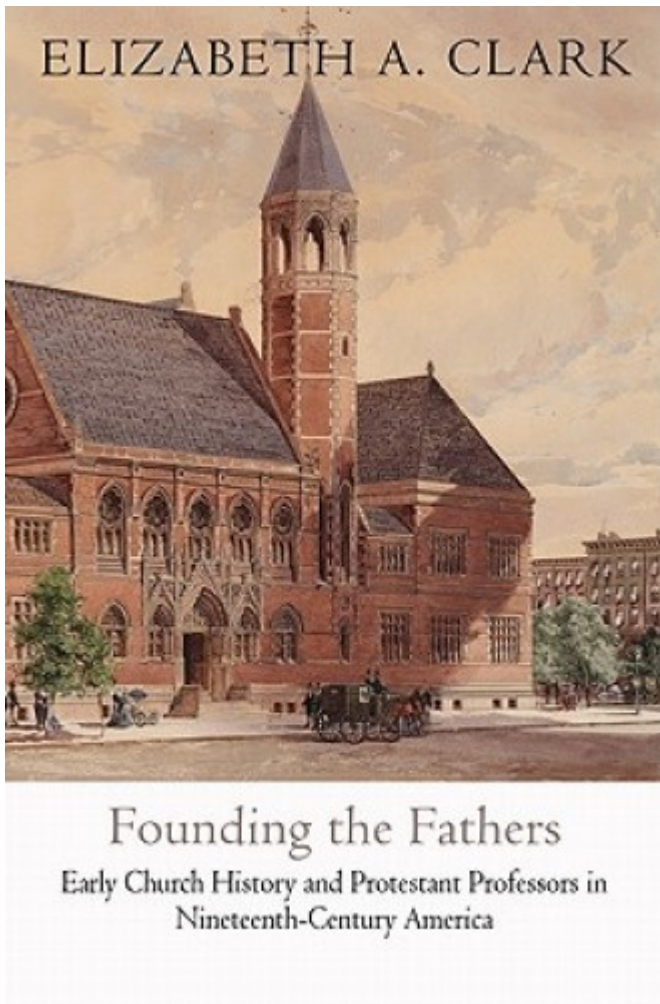


## **American Religion**

by Mark Chaves

Princeton University Press

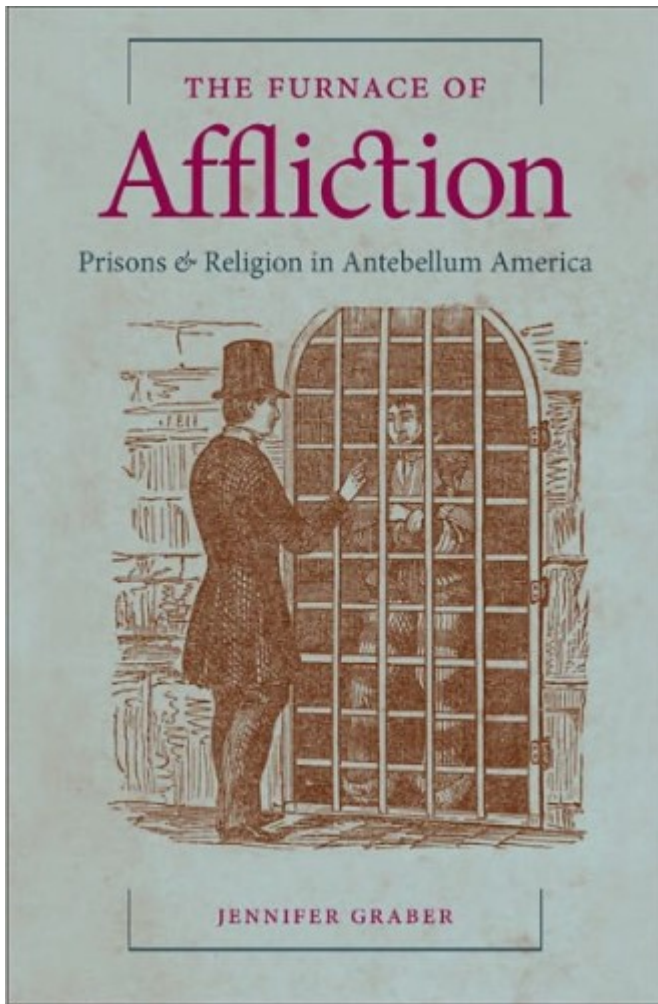




## **Founding the Fathers**

by Elizabeth A. Clark

University of Pennsylvania Press

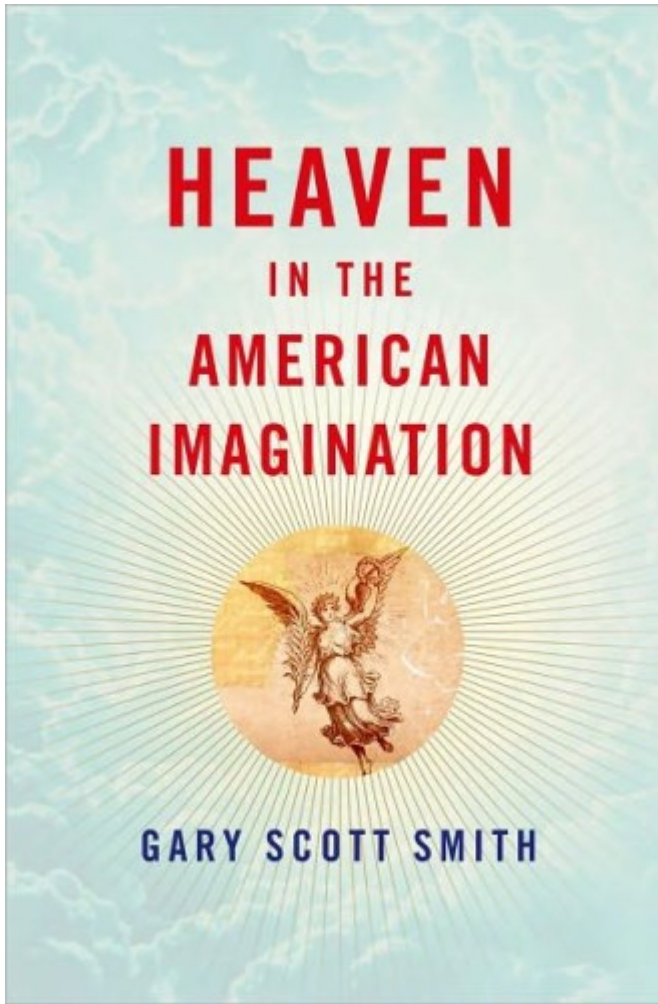


## **The Furnace of Affliction**

by Jennifer Graber

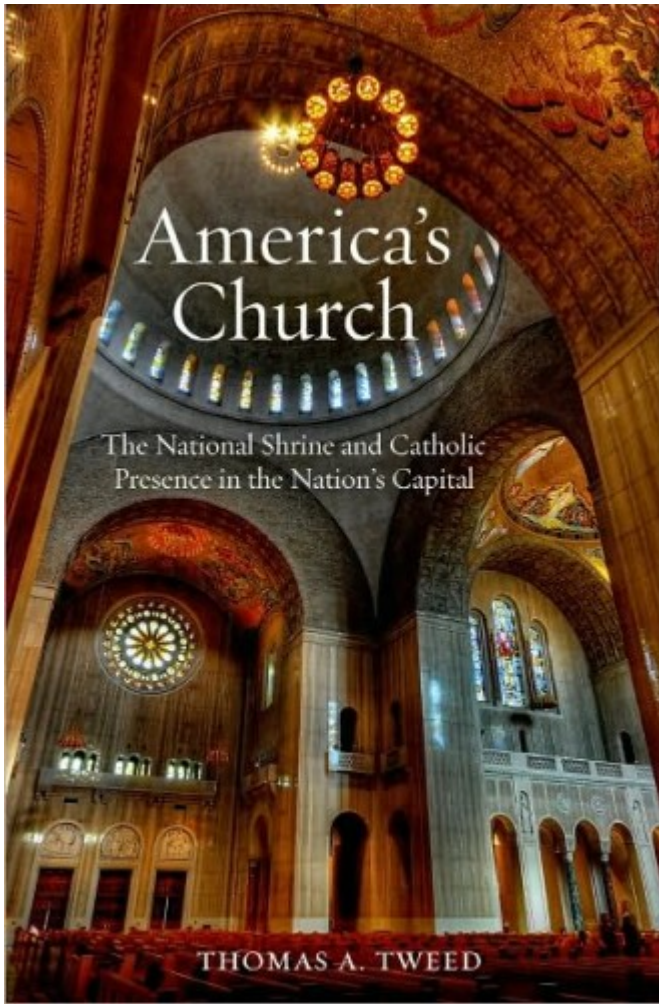
University of North Carolina Press





**Heaven in the American Imagination**

by Gary Scott Smith  
Oxford University Press



## **America's Church**

by Thomas A. Tweed  
Oxford University Press

*Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, edited by Candy Gunther Brown (Oxford University Press, 424 pp., \$29.95 paperback). Perhaps a half-billion Christians worldwide follow some form of Pentecostal or charismatic faith, and for many, healing in mind and body constitutes a major part of their religious practice. Given the critical importance of the subject, a wide-ranging collection of case studies like this is long overdue. This landmark book—with 17 contributors, who represent the cream of the academic crop—stands out for the authors' sensitive but critical attitude toward some of the most controversial issues in the field, including the prosperity gospel churches.

*Constructing China's Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou*, by Nanlai Cao (Stanford University Press, 232 pp., \$21.95 paperback). An anthropologist, Cao shows how the Christian faith works in one population center of China: Wenzhou, the huge commercial metropolis that has been called China's Jerusalem. Although Christianity appeals to people of various social levels in China, Cao focuses on prosperous elite networks—the alarmingly named Boss Christians—for which this religion is a badge of modernity and progress. Although Cao's book tends toward the academic, it's a beautifully textured study.

*Word Made Global: Stories of African Christianity in New York City*, by Mark R. Gornik (Eerdmans, 368 pp., \$30.00 paperback). One could debate whether this book should more properly be counted as a contribution to the study of American or global Christianity. Either way, it is an excellent account of thriving transnational denominations, focusing on the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Church of the Lord (Aladura). Gornik explores the perennial dilemmas of immigrant religions as they encounter their new societies, and the critical role those churches play in helping their members interact with the host culture. He presents an evocative analysis of life in a charismatic church, with plenty of sympathetic characters.

*Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia*, by Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom (InterVarsity Press, 286 pp., \$25.00). You can read all the scholarly analyses of Christian developments around the world, but there is no substitute for thoughtful, readable biographies of individuals—stories that put human faces on significant historic changes. Noll and Nystrom present 17 short biographies of figures who deserve to be counted alongside the greatest names in the Euro-American tradition. This is the sort of book that forces us to rethink how we teach the story of Christianity worldwide.

*Christianities in Asia*, edited by Peter C. Phan (Wiley-Blackwell, 288 pp., \$36.95 paperback). Leading off an impressive new Blackwell series on global Christianity, *Christianities in Asia* is a rich collection of essays on various regions by top-ranked names in the field. Although the societies covered are extremely diverse—Phan includes the Middle East as well as the more obvious regions of East and South Asia—some important common themes emerge. Above all, Christians in Asia live not as dominant majority populations but as small minorities, often coexisting with adherents of other great world faiths, and interactions are not always easy.

*American Religion: Contemporary Trends*, by Mark Chaves (Princeton University Press, 160 pp., \$22.95). Drawing on the General Social Survey and the National Congregations Study, Chaves offers a concise overview of what has and has not changed in American religion since 1972. Separate chapters examine trends in diversity, belief, participation, leaders, polarization, congregational life and liberal Protestant decline. Chaves shows that some indicators, such as belief in God, have remained largely unchanged, while others, such as belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, have changed considerably. Elegantly written, this work will serve admirably for students, scholars and Barnes & Noble browsers who want to cut through impressions to the hard data that document the evolution of the religious landscape.

*Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America*, by Elizabeth A. Clark (University of Pennsylvania Press, 576 pp., \$69.95). This clearly written and often witty work examines the rise of the academic discipline of patristics in four Protestant seminaries: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. That aim serves as a scaffold for much else, including analysis of transatlantic influences, the confrontation with Catholic thinkers, the enormous impact of German notions of social and cultural evolution and, above all, church historians' determined efforts to establish critical methods for the study of religion. Clark's immersion in the secondary literature and especially in the primary sources—letters, diaries and manuscript class notes—sets the gold standard for serious historical scholarship.

*The Furnace of Affliction: Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America*, by Jennifer Graber (University of North Carolina Press, 248 pp., \$39.95). Focusing on the New York state prison system in the first half of the 19th century, Graber shows how evangelical ministers sought to transform jails from sites of retaliatory suffering into places of personal redemption—initially with surprising success. Ultimately, however, they failed. Owing to the emerging ideology of church-state separation, growing diversity in their own ranks and, ironically, prisoners' resistance, the reformers found themselves forced out of the discussion. A secular regime that saw punishment as just reward for lawbreaking replaced them. Gracefully crafted, this book offers a perfect example of how to infuse rigorous historical method with moral insight.

*Heaven in the American Imagination*, by Gary Scott Smith (Oxford University Press, 360 pp., \$29.95). In this sweeping work, Smith describes the dazzling variety of views that the faithful—Puritans, evangelicals, liberals, Catholics, Jews, New Agers

and countless others—have held about heaven. Teachings about how to get to heaven and avoid hell figure largely. Smith shows that notions of the afterlife have been firmly rooted in the structures, assumptions, aspirations and antagonisms of each era and each group. The story is rich with irony, as biblical literalism seems to have led in as many directions as biblical antiliteralism. Presented in the winsome prose of a seasoned journalist, the book exhibits years of careful research.

*America's Church: The National Shrine and Catholic Presence in the Nation's Capital*, by Thomas A. Tweed (Oxford University Press, 408 pp., \$35.00). *America's Church* is an extraordinary book. Tweed uses the history of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., as a lens for viewing the vast—and vastly complex—landscape of 20th-century American Catholic culture. Themes as diverse as architecture, childhood, ethnicity, gender, iconography, papacy, philanthropy, soteriology and, of course, the ever-present shadow of the Protestant majority tumble from the pages in rich profusion. This cornucopia of topics easily could have submerged the narrative, but it does not. Tweed keeps his eye firmly fixed on the story of the National Shrine, which is as interesting as it is important.