



Emerging Geographies of Belief

David Harvey, Nicola Thomas, Catherine Brace, Adrian Bailey, Sean Carter

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This interdisciplinary book presents new research from international scholars that explores questions of belief, faith, and religion. Focusing on theoretically informed cultural, geographical and historical analyses of faith, belief, religion, society and space, the book presents new and revised theoretical approaches and methodologies, grounded in rigorous empirical research both contemporary and historical. The volume takes a deliberately eclectic approach, reflecting the complex interactions of the political and poetic dimensions of sacredness in contemporary societies. Taking this research agenda forward, this book explores how religious beliefs inform and construct social identities, public knowledge and modes of governance. In particular, the book meets an urgent need for a critical understanding of how terms such as 'religion', 'faith', 'fundamentalism' and 'secularism', for example, inform public debates and foster constructive engagements both between faith groups and between people of faith and people of no faith. The essays in *Emerging Geographies of Belief* also show that religion cannot be mapped neatly onto faith or belief. We attempt to tease out the different circumstances in which - for example - belief can operate without religious adherence or faith can inspire social action in geographies of hope. The geography of the title relates to an overarching concern with space and spatiality rather than describing a single disciplinary approach. Our concern with belief, faith and religion operates at different temporal and spatial scales in different localities, from the contemporary appeal to a more global sense of responsibility to a historically situated account of faith-led educational practices. This reflects, more generally, the so-called spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities. But despite this wide historical and geographical sweep, the authors share some key concerns. This collection is unique in combining theoretical, conceptual and discursive approaches to the emerging geographies of belief with substantive examples of the intersection of belief, faith and religion with aspects of everyday life. Discussions of the potential subversive and prophetic capacities of faith, belief and religion sit alongside consideration of how these have become implicated in the spaces and performances of hope. It provides a critique of the situationist and substantive approaches to religion along with insights into the role of faith in education, community and social work. It considers the practices of remembrance, representation and pilgrimage and the place of religion in contemporary identity politics. In sum, the book problematises the seemingly simple categories of faith, religion, and belief, calling attention to how these are mobilised and implicated differently in different circumstances. In addressing these themes, the book provides a key theoretical resource, but crucially, goes on to show how multiple perspectives on belief, however defined, can be applied in practice. Whilst there has been much contemporary work on the individual areas covered by the book, they have not been brought together before to provide a dynamic insight into issues of the most pressing relevance.

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