

held constant, personal religiosity is associated with greater racial and religious inclusion. This distinction does not hold for attitudes toward gender, sexuality, or the family, however; even after taking Christian nationalism and other factors into account, those with high levels of personal religious commitment are *more* likely to support traditional gender roles and oppose same-sex marriage, transgender rights, and divorce. The difference is that Christian nationalists see these as overtly political issues requiring policy interventions to enforce their views and guarantee their religious freedom.

While using regression analysis to isolate the effects of Christian nationalism and demonstrate its difference from religious piety, the authors also recognize Christian nationalism as part of a “complex web of ideologies” to which it is closely related. Yet they are emphatic that it should not be seen as *reducible* to any of these—but rather as “intimately intertwined” with them. Thus, for example, Christian nationalism is not just about racism—it is the *intersection* of race and Christian nationalism that matters” (p. 19; emphasis in original). The problem is that, even when supplemented by interviews, their method does not allow for what would necessarily require relational and historical forms of understanding—especially if ideology is understood not just as ideas, attitudes, or even culture broadly conceived, but also power-laden practices and institutions that change in relation to one another. In my view, their argument about the centrality of Christian nationalism in the United States would have been significantly enhanced if the authors had tied their findings more explicitly to related historical and ethnographic work, some of which they cite, including Lydia Bean’s (2014) superb comparative ethnographic study.

From the perspective of one who views the United States through South African and Indian lenses, I strongly endorse the authors’ call at the end of Appendix A for studies of religious nationalism worldwide. The imperative for critical comparative understandings is made all the more urgent by their point that Christian nationalism will continue to pervade the political sphere at all levels of government in the United States. Indeed,

the apartheid state in South Africa (1948 to 1990) can be seen as a white Christian nationalist precursor to the contemporary hijacking of the Republican Party. What a broader comparative perspective also makes clear is that specific but interconnected forms of religious nationalism cannot be understood in isolation from the spatially uneven dynamics of global capitalism.

## References

- Bean, Lydia. 2014. *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gorski, Philip. 2019. *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

---

*Contesting the Global Order: The Radical Political Economy of Perry Anderson and Immanuel Wallerstein*, by **Gregory P. Williams**. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020. 256 pp. \$95.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781438479651.

CHAMSY EL-OJEILI  
Victoria University of Wellington  
chamsy.el-ojeili@vuw.ac.nz

---

It is surely rather astonishing that, until now, we have been without a book-length English-language treatment of the work of Immanuel Wallerstein. Gregory Williams’s *Contesting the Global Order: The Radical Political Economy of Perry Anderson and Immanuel Wallerstein*, then, immediately fills a hole. And, as Williams notes, there are very good reasons to treat the intellectual itineraries of Wallerstein and Perry Anderson together: Olympian radical scholars of the same generation, whose first books in 1974 were totalizing accounts that sought to shape a transformative understanding of the present; leaders, too, from the mid-1970s, of cultural institutions (the Fernand Braudel Centre and *Review*, and *New Left Review*); both encountering and providing novel responses to neoliberalism and the collapse of “really existing socialism,” and each continuing into the twenty-first century,

despite everything, to interpret and change the world in a socialist direction.

Focused particularly around three major themes—totalities as objects of analysis, the origins and operations of capitalism, and the role of agency—*Contesting the Global Order* delivers even more than it promises, with some exceptional summarizing of two very large bodies of work (particularly challenging in the case of Anderson) and some compelling, daring interpretation. Even for those well acquainted with these thinkers, there will be delightful reminders or fresh material—Wallerstein’s letter to Senator McCarthy, say, or some of the detail on the internal workings of *New Left Review*—especially within the end notes. The treatment of ideational lineages is also illuminating, and sometimes surprising: the importance of Frantz Fanon, Braudel, Karl Polanyi, and, later, Ilya Prigogine, for Wallerstein, with very little made of the ties between Wallerstein and early dependency thinking; the role of Edward Gibbon, Jean-Paul Sartre, György Lukács, Louis Althusser, for Anderson, as well as the intriguingly complicated relationship Anderson has with Antonio Gramsci’s thought.

Unsurprisingly, Williams views 1968 as a crucial turning point for both thinkers, a real opening for socialism, impelling both to attempt to provide better radical scholarly understandings of the historical processes shaping the current order, in an effort to bridge theory and practice. In their hugely ambitious 1974 publications, we see both thinkers taking “extranational political stances” (p. 35) and a common and related “aspiration to totalities” (p. 67). Here, Williams does some clear-headed, nuanced work on the difficulties of pinning down the meanings of totality and totalization, and he usefully suggests that we compare the two in terms of Wallerstein’s preference for closed totalities and Anderson’s leanings toward open totalities, as well as pointing to the dilemmas raised by each option.

More broadly, Williams is very sharp on the differences—despite parallels, such as totalization, and an earlier preference for structure-centered analysis—that separate

the two thinkers: capitalism as historical accident or structural necessity, capitalism as defined by the endless accumulation of capital or by the generalization of waged labor, an early or later dating of the arrival of capitalism. The dashing of socialist hopes caused by the rise of neoliberalism, as well as the interpretation of the collapse of “really existing socialism,” provide further points of contrast between Wallerstein and Anderson. Wallerstein ceases to predict the future arrival of a socialist world-system and refuses to choose either optimism or pessimism, serenely insisting instead on uncertainty together with the inevitable demise of the capitalist world-system and arguing that the fall of “really existing socialism,” as an integral part of the capitalist world-economy, only constitutes part of the terminal crisis of centrist liberalism. Anderson, by contrast, treads a much more pessimistic route, underscoring the decisive defeat of the Left, the retreat of every utopia other than consumerism, neoliberalism as “the most successful ideology in world history” (p. 114), and the real power and fluency of contemporary right-wing narratives (for instance, Fukuyama’s) about the world. Despite these temperamental and interpretative differences, both thinkers come, over time, to place more weight on human agency, though for very different reasons—the uncertainties in play and opening of possibilities that come with systemic crisis, in Wallerstein, the lasting impact of the development of class consciousness in the nineteenth century, for Anderson.

Williams achieves an impressive amount in a main text that runs just under 180 pages, and, as noted, the end notes enrich the work even further. Perhaps, in any second revised edition of the book, there might be opportunities for expansion and elaboration, especially given that Anderson is still producing important work (see, for instance, *New Left Review* 125). One issue that might deserve more attention is the varied responses given to the wave of postmodernism that washed over the anglophone scholarly world from the 1980s, to which Anderson dedicated a book and much of

which Wallerstein, somewhat surprisingly, uncomfortably sought to embrace. Surprising and uncomfortable partly because of the functionalism, determinism, universalism—that is, modernism—that many have detected in Wallerstein's work, another critical issue left rather unexplored by Williams.

More, too, could have been made of the different socialist traditions central in the two thinkers' trajectories. Anderson's attraction to Trotsky is mentioned, and perhaps something of this lingers in his more recent studies of nations and his "attention to the decisions of leaders" (p. 145). Contrastingly, while Williams notes Wallerstein's critique of Leninism and insistence on the capitalist essence of "really existing socialism," Wallerstein's more libertarian socialism could have been further considered. In addition, while Williams notes the ways in which both thinkers engaged in critiques of the extant emphases and specializations of academia, little is said about Wallerstein's substantial input into interpreting and reorganizing the

disciplines. Last, the final substantive chapter seemed, to me, the least successful, in terms of the unifying theme of a common skepticism about the self-justifications of the great powers. This is true, but maybe too obvious; and perhaps the compelling suggestion that both thinkers returned to their grand projects of the 1970s might have been a stronger theme, paying closer attention, in particular, to Wallerstein on new movements against the system and to Anderson's mordant studies of India, Brazil, and Italy.

These critical suggestions, and the queries I have raised along the way, should not, in any way, be read as diminishing *Contesting the Global Order*. This is an incredibly valuable piece of work, staging an encounter between two of the grandest, most brilliant thinkers in the contemporary critical human sciences, summarizing their quite enormous bodies of work with great rigor and clarity, and loaded with critical interpretative and evaluative insight and subtlety.