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Eric Michael Mazur. *The Americanization of Religious Minorities: Confronting the Constitutional Order*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. Pp. xxv + 196. \$38.00 (Cloth).

[1] The First Amendment of the United States Constitution legitimizes American religious pluralism with its provisions for both the separation of church and state and for the free practice of religion. But as Eric Michael Mazur demonstrates, the First Amendment ideals encounter their practical limitations in the experience of religious minorities who challenge the boundaries of acceptable religious practice in American culture. At the same time, however, the struggles of these religious minorities to redefine the limits of religiosity in America also give definition to American identity itself.

[2] Mazur's study seeks to explicate the internal struggles of minority religious communities in the United States over conflicting desires on the one hand to assimilate to and participate in dominant cultural norms, and on the other to maintain their distinctive communal identities. He recognizes the strong identification between Protestant Christianity and American culture that historically has presented a choice to minority religious communities, either to succumb to "vaguely Protestant modes of expression" or to remain non-citizens in the sense articulated by Rousseau (xx). Mazur argues that the efforts of minority religious communities to deal with these dilemmas at the constitutional level have contributed to the erosion of Protestant hegemony in American civic life and to the emergence of a more autonomous American constitutional order based on an ideology of pluralism. The result, according to Mazur, gives advantage to the American constitutional order itself as the sole arbiter of religious conflict in the United States.

[3] Mazur traces this historical tendency away from the authority of Protestant ideals toward an ideal of constitutional pluralism by suggesting three options that minority religious communities face. These options he labels in his chapter titles as "constitutional congruence," illustrated by the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses; "constitutional conversion," typified by the Mormons; and "constitutional conflict," exemplified in the experience of Native American religions. The options involve different approaches to authority in regard to dominant American culture. In the first case, the Jehovah's Witnesses were able to

maintain their own authority while negotiating a separate peace with the dominant constitutional order; they achieved this in the courts with more than fifty cases reaching the United States Supreme Court between 1938 and 1960. For the Mormons, constitutional conversion meant adopting the authority of the dominant culture and joining the mainstream. Thus, the Mormon capitulation on plural marriage in the 1890s not only removed obstacles to Utah statehood, but also paved the way for full assimilation into American culture during the twentieth century.

[4] The third of Mazur's options, constitutional conflict, pits the authority of religious minorities against that of the dominant culture in conflicts that persist with little or no progress toward resolution. For Native Americans, in Mazur's estimation, very different understandings of the human relationship with land has been the source of this conflict. In fact, Mazur contends that sovereignty over land claims is the basis of the constitutional order itself; as he puts it, "The strength behind the Constitution is grounded in the control of the land, and any challenge to that control can be met with indirect, but powerful, resistance" (121).

[5] The spatial aspects of the constitutional order derive from Christian, particularly Protestant, understandings of the relationship between space and time. Mazur notes this connection by contrasting it with Native American understandings: "Christianity occupies space while it anticipates the passage of time; Native American religious traditions occupy time while orienting themselves to space" (113). Hence, Mazur concludes, these contrasting views give little hope of ever resolving the conflict over authority between Native Americans and the dominant constitutional order.

[6] One limitation of Mazur's study is the tendency to regard the various groups he discusses as homogeneous units. Although he acknowledges the institutional emphasis of his project, an inadequate analysis of the internal dynamics of these groups leaves readers with the impression that struggles over authority rarely involve individual perspectives. Instead, both the religious minority communities and the majority constitutional order tend to appear in his work as static wholes lacking an internal dynamic of conflict. A more nuanced argument might explore more thoroughly the disagreements and battles that went on within each of the groups he presents in his case studies. Certainly, overcoming internal factionalism remains fundamental in any narrative of group identity.

[7] Mazur's homogenizing tendency seems particularly specious in his discussion of Native Americans. Not only does he sidestep the question of intratribal factionalism, but Mazur presents a monolithic "Native American religions" that he admits violates the diversity and historical circumstances of indigenous cultures. He insists, however, that his treatment of "Native Americans" as a religious minority requires this fictive representation. But he does not explain why this approach is necessarily preferable to a more focused case study of a particular tribal group.

[8] Nevertheless, Mazur's arguments remain both compelling and provocative. The role of religious minorities in defining not only the boundaries of acceptable religiosity but also the textures of mainstream civic identity still resonates in current debates, as demonstrated in his opening example of sacrificial practices observed by followers of Santería. At stake in these debates, Mazur reminds us, is more than the free practice of religion; indeed, the pluralistic

ideal in American civic life itself emerges in the struggles of excluded communities to join the mainstream while maintaining their own distinctive qualities, practices, and ways of life.

Thomas S. Bremer, Princeton University