*Culture and Religion*
Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2010, 9–30

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

# Propositions and performativity: Relocating belief to the social

Abby Day*

*Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex, Falmer, UK*

Divergent disciplinary approaches are traced to effect an inter-disciplinary understanding of how scholars in both sociology and anthropology frame their discussions about belief. A preliminary 'genealogy of belief' is proposed, tracing epistemological and methodological approaches over the last 200 years showing how some debates presume individual and intellectualist orientations to belief while others favour the collective and emotional. Presenting recent empirical evidence from fieldwork in the UK, the author suggests a 'performative' understanding of belief arising from and shaped by social relations.

**Keywords:** belief; performativity; performance; religion; social

## Introduction

Christians who belong to mainstream Protestant churches are schooled to memorise their creeds: 'I believe in...', they begin. When reciting that they 'believe in God the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth', one might ask if they are saying that they have faith in such a figure to, perhaps, move mountains on their behalf or that they agree in principle that such a figure created the universe and are attesting to that fact or both. So ingrained is 'belief' to their tradition that they may never consider what, exactly, they mean by that word. Like those everyday Christians, scholars in academic disciplines of anthropology, sociology, theology, religious studies and psychology often use the term 'belief' in their work without analysing or theorising what they, or the people they study, mean. This paper will review key theoretical contributions and themes about belief before moving to a discussion of my empirical research and subsequent analysis about 'performativity'.

Belief has its own genealogy as it moves through time and spaces, taking on the assumptions and hues of the people who use it. Sometimes, it remains an unspoken, implicit assumption within scholars' work; sometimes, but rarely, it is explicitly examined and, if not theorised, at least uncovered. Where scholars locate and understand belief is an epistemological choice, a reflection of how they produce knowledge about those they study and about their discipline. Although that production may be invisible, it exists nonetheless and influences their interpretations and therefore our understanding about belief.

*Email: a.day@sussex.ac.uk

ISSN 1475-5610 print/ISSN 1475-5629 online
© 2010 Taylor & Francis
DOI: 10.1080/14755610903528812
http://www.informaworld.com

Definitions and conclusions about belief do not simply arise neutrally from either 'the field' or philosophical analyses: they are deeply embedded in, and not always abstracted from, other over-arching themes and disciplinary preoccupations such as meaning, experience, emotion, order, individuality, thought, action, identity, sociality, rationality, symbolism and power. How belief is conceived and located reflects the context of the scholar and, therefore, the conclusions those scholars reach about the people they study. The disciplinary knowledge becomes laid down, layer after layer, in what Foucault (1972) conceived as sedimentary layers of knowledge.

What were earlier scholars' implicit assumptions and locations and what can we, working in the social scientific field of religion, learn from each other? Following Foucault, this paper will be a mix of archaeology and epistemology: through uncovering various layers, I hope to reveal how disciplinary knowledge about belief was created and how an inter-disciplinary approach can loosen some of those structures and promote dialogue. I conclude with a way of looking at belief I term 'performative belief,' which stresses belief's social location and its role in bringing into being forms of identity that actors strategically create in order to adapt to and integrate themselves into various social situations.

## Individually located belief

Scholars sometimes use the term 'propositional' to describe beliefs that represent a truth-claim about reality. Those beliefs are typified by statements like 'I believe in God' that seem to assert a position without indicating what kind of God or the degree of belief that is felt. Tylor's classic definition of religion (1958 [1871]) as a belief in spirits is an example of a propositional belief. He argued that religion arose from people's need to explain such uncanny phenomena as seeing someone's spirit. While Tylor's view of belief could be described as intellectualistic, psychological, universal, evolutionary and explanatory, the point of distinction I would like to raise here is that it is profoundly individualistic.

The idea that belief serves to explain uncanny events and gives meaning to life is a strong theme that arises frequently within the sociology of religion. Weber described:

> the metaphysical needs of the human mind as it is driven to reflect on ethical and religious questions, driven not by material need but by an inner compulsion to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos and to take up a position toward it (1922, 117).

That propositional and universalising way of looking at belief shaped the sociology of religion, particularly through the work of Peter Berger, a sociologist and theologian, who wrote that there exists 'a human craving for meaning that appears to have the force of instinct. Men (*sic*) are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality' (1967, 22). Berger (1967) and Luckmann (1967) followed a Weberian tradition of locating belief within an

individually based, and socially mediated, search for meaning where subjective realities were the primary framework. For Weber, Berger, Geertz, Luckmann and others, the focus on making meaning was a universal, and individually driven, human need. The social construction of reality and the maintenance of a sacred canopy depend on social consensus, Berger argued, and therefore the threat to such a shared belief system is pluralism. Mary Douglas, as I will discuss below, was writing at the same time as Berger about similar themes of coherence.

Grace Davie's 'believing without belonging'[1] thesis (1994) rests on a similar propositional idea of belief in suggesting that people maintain a private belief in God or other Christian-associated ideals, without church attendance or other forms of Christian participation. Drawing mainly on European Values Survey data, Davie argued that the majority of British people persist in believing in God but 'see no need to participate with even minimal regularity in their religious institutions' (1994, 2) and therefore should be described as 'unchurched' rather than secular (1994, 12–13). Her term 'unchurched' reflects a Christian-centric idea that a natural state is one of being 'churched'. Nowhere in her book does Davie discuss what she means by 'belief', although she notes that 'some sort of belief persists' (1994, 107). By omitting certain words she is creating an ellipse, conveying the meaning of 'belief' as 'belief in God' or 'belief in Christianity'. Her explanation is footnoted: 'The term "belief" is, of course, a wide one, it does not imply the acceptance of particular credal statements' (1994, 115).

Voas and Crockett (2005, 14) further problematised 'believing without belonging' by arguing that it was not whether people held certain beliefs but whether they were important to them and influenced their behaviour that mattered:

> Whether or not they are confident that God exists, it is apparent at the very least that they doubt the Almighty much minds whether they spend Sunday in church or in the shops. Nor is it simply a matter of believing in a god who does not take attendance: they evidently do not believe in a god who is sufficiently important to merit collective celebration on any regular basis. Put simply, increasing numbers of people believe that belonging [to a formal institution] doesn't matter.... It is not enough to find that people accept one statement of belief or another; unless these beliefs make a substantial difference in their lives, religion may consist of little more than opinions to be gathered by pollsters.

Here, they are moving from propositional forms of belief to a practice-centred view of belief.

Within the sociology of religion can be discerned a tendency to protect the concept of propositional belief. However, Bellah (1964) had already problematised the concept of belief by acknowledging that although 96% of Americans may say they believe in God, those beliefs bear little resemblance to any doctrinal or theological statement of God and are acceptable only because they can be reinterpreted by individuals. Bellah (1970, 196–207), referring to the American poet Wallace Stevens, argued that human beings require faith even if they know that faith to be a fiction. He quoted Smith (1967) in his argument that

although the symbolism of 'the sacred' is by definition limited, it gives a coherent meaning to life for those who experience it. Bellah defined religion as consisting of sacred symbols and acts that gave people meaning. An evolutionist, Bellah theorised that religion moved from the primitive to the modern. Like Berger and Wilson, Bellah was troubled by what he saw was the increasing turn towards individual and subjective authority. He argued that the important point about modern religion was not about theories of secularisation or indifference, but rather about how it had become increasingly acceptable for people to work out their own beliefs in response to changing demands and contexts.

Wilson (1966) also saw problems with what he described as non-regulated, laissez faire collections of individualised changing beliefs. These lead, he argued, to an inevitable relaxing of moral standards, which creates a level of moral freedom which 'is enjoyed by man [*sic* ] individually, but is costly to society as a whole' (1996, 63). He does not present any empirical evidence to support what he calls a 'truism'. Other theorists, such as Gill (2001, 291), also relate apparent moral freedom to social problems, but add the rider that this is due to the decline of churchgoing activity which will involve an unspecified 'social cost'. This is because 'attitude data suggest strongly that those who attend monthly have less distinctively Christian beliefs and values than those who attend weekly'. His clear implication is that Christian beliefs equate to social code morality, without which people would be immoral.

The sociologist of religion Michael Hornsby-Smith also problematised a shift from what he called 'customary Christianity' (1991, 90) among the adult Catholic population in England during the 1980s. This:

> derived from 'official' religion but without being under its continuing control ... the beliefs and practices that make up customary religion are the product of formal religious socialization but subject to trivialisation, conventionality, apathy, convenience and self-interest.

Hidden here is perhaps an assumption, recalling Berger, of what is sacred and what must be protected. That assumption, and anxiety, is found in the sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow's work. Wuthnow (1994) expresses concern about what he calls the domestication of the sacred. He describes the 'small-group' movement in the USA as growing because people were seeking a sense of community founded less on the physical place where they live as on their emotional states. This is something which he says has been worrying saints and sages for centuries because:

> Sacredness ceases to be the *mysterium tremendum* that commands awe and reverence and becomes a house pet that does our bidding. (1994, 255)

'House pet' is an emotive term for what appears to be everyday activities linked to religious practice. Wuthnow expands his point by saying that the domestication of the sacred makes God easier to understand, but may create a

> do-it-yourself-religion, a God who makes life easier, a programmed form of spirituality that robs the sacred of its awe-inspiring mystery and depth. (1994, 357–58)

Further, he criticises the orientation towards application, which 'becomes more important than whether that application is grounded in truth' (1994, 358). Although he does not specify what he means by truth, he summarises his concerns thus:

> In simplest terms, the sacred comes to be associated with small insights that seem intuitively correct to the small group rather than wisdom accrued over the centuries in hermitages, seminaries, universities, congregations and church councils. (ibid.)

His concerns summarise one of the striking differences between how sociologists and anthropologists view, and understand, belief. Where is it located – in the individual, the collective or the transcendent? Is it flexible and subject to change by those who 'believe' or is it understood as invisible, pre-social and immutable?

## Culturally performed belief

From Emile Durkheim, we can clearly trace two main developments that diverged by disciplinary focus: most of early to mid twentieth century social anthropology of religion adopted a Durkheimian turn where religion was explained in functional, rather than substantive terms, shaped by boundaries of time and space. Belief was thus whatever worked best at the time for the specific collective. The sociology of religion, alternatively, tended to favour substantive definitions, adopting a Weberian, meaning-centred adaptation of Durkheim. Belief was therefore whatever worked best for the individual and, as a result, for the greater good, generally throughout time and in all places.

Durkheim's analysis of religion needs to be understood within his larger lifetime project to explore and expound upon sociality as the key to understanding human behaviour. One of the problems he sought to resolve related to the origins of categories of understanding: were they, as Kant argued, *a priori* categories or did they arise through experience and interaction? Durkheim was influenced by Robertson-Smith (1927 [1886]) who proposed that belief arose through participation in ritual, not before. Individual belief, according to Durkheim and Mauss' theory of social classifications, was not possible. They argued that concepts and classifications arose from social relations: 'The first logical categories were social categories; the first classes of things were classes of men into which these things were integrated' (1963, 93). Durkheim was not personally religious, but as the son of a Rabbi he was raised to both respect and to critically evaluate religion. Durkheim's well-known definition of religion as 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things' takes propositional belief as a starting point but moves it into the realm of performance

> that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practice which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. (1915, 47)

Beliefs were unrelated to supernatural beings but were created through collective, intellectual effort classifying that which was sacred and profane so that people could practise socially cohesive behaviours. By rendering gods to the place of interesting but unnecessary accessories, Durkheim disrupted forces of power, authority and legitimacy by relocating belief in the social.[2]

Edward Evans Evans-Pritchard theorised that people's beliefs were, as Durkheim described them, 'social facts'. He contextualised the nature of belief and belonging, arguing that people's sense of 'tribal' belonging was based on their social relations and not on inherent differences in physical characteristics or customs.[3] A turning point in the Durkheimian understanding of belief came when Bronislaw Malinowksi took a Tylorian and Freudian appreciation of the psychological, individual source of belief and a Durkheimian appreciation of the collective bonding nature of belief. Malinowski proposed that belief was one of several interlocking, interdependent parts of a social system that 'worked' to support both basic individual biological needs and the functioning of society. In showing that the so-called primitive mind was no different or less rational than other supposedly 'advanced' societies, Malinowski refuted a Tylorian evolutionist and universalistic perspective and anticipated a performative understanding of belief.

## Locating belief in space and time

If beliefs are performative, as I will suggest, they cannot also be timeless or universal. They must be brought into being in specific contexts, times and places. Mary Douglas drew on Durkheim, and rejected Tylor, by showing that beliefs satisfy a social concern where 'the metaphysic is a by-product, as it were, of the urgent practical concern' (1966, 113). This means that no belief is static or universal but must respond, collectively, to changing circumstances. Belief arises not as a philosophy or creed but as a collective, pragmatic means for the 'believer' (returning to a Weberian theme) to impose order and achieve a sense of coherence. Propositional belief was therefore not so important as the role belief performed in the individual and the culture. All beliefs, for Douglas, were about the varieties of powers and dangers that a society recognises and have as their main function to impose system 'on an inherently untidy experience' (1966, 5).

Douglas was influenced here not only by Durkheim and Evans Pritchard, her teacher at Oxford, but also by Raymond Firth. Firth explored how individuals created and manipulated beliefs. In an interesting anticipation of Bourdieu's reconciliation of structure and agency through 'strategy', and of Goffman's analysis of performance, Firth argued that individuals made adjustments by using their beliefs as modes of action, as 'active weapons of adjustment by the person who holds them' (1948, 26–27). These adjustments are necessary, Firth argued, to manage the sometimes contradictory demands and positions between an individual's social and physical context and her own 'set of impulses, desires and emotions' (1948, 26).

But, as Mary Douglas would argue, those realities should then be exposed and verified. Douglas (1970) later criticised her own approach in light of Victor Turner's measure of what could be considered 'validity' for anthropological categorisations. Turner, Douglas argued, comprehensively showed how the cultural categorisation imposed by the anthropologist was mapped onto the social system. Douglas concluded (303) that it 'should never again be permissible to provide an analysis of an interlocking system of categories of thought which has no demonstrable relation to the social life of the people who think in these terms'.

Clifford Geertz's work in cultural anthropology may have failed Douglas' test by universalising belief and not locating it in place and time. Influenced by Weber's work on meaning, he explored how ritual provided both a model for and a model of meaning in the world. Evoking a Tylorian tendency, Geertz (1973) said that people turn to a belief in gods, spirits and other religious forms of authority to explain, following Weber, the 'problem of meaning'. Asad (1993) disrupted the Geertzian/Weberian course of meaning by pointing out that such formulations were essentially universalistic and created without showing how, and under what conditions, meanings are constructed. He further criticised Geertz for arguing that religion brings the order humans seek. I will turn in more detail to Asad below.

Needham (1972), writing in the UK at the same time Geertz was writing in the USA, argued that the broadly anthropological literature and, more specifically, ethnographic literature consistently fail to interrogate how scholars are using the term belief. Needham went so far as to say that it should be abandoned as a useful concept in research because it could not be universalised: 'it does not constitute a natural resemblance among men, and it does not belong to the common behaviour of mankind' (1972, 188). Needham forced a more careful interrogation about *belief* and its roots in Christianity. The concern about *belief* began to shift from concentrating on what other people believed to how scholars were using the concept itself.

Ruel (1982) was also concerned about how the term 'belief' is used, not because of its instability as a philosophical term but because it meant different things to different people at different times. Here, he drew on Smith (1977, 1978, 1979), a religious studies scholar, who discusses how the term 'belief' has changed over time in the Christian context, from one of trust, reciprocity, fidelity and love to one of membership, proposition and doubt. Ruel (1982) described strong/weak forms of belief where a weak, everyday version of belief generally refers to a sense of expectation or assumption, either of oneself or others, and is therefore neither generally misunderstood nor problematic. It is when, Ruel argues, the term arises in a 'strong' sense, as part of a definition, categorisation or problem that it will usually draw on connotations from its Christian use. Ruel (1982, 27–29) identified four fallacies common to the treatment of belief: that it is central to all religions, in the same way that it is central to Christianity; that belief guides and therefore explains behaviour; that belief is psychological and that it is the belief, not the object of belief, that is most important. This means that

we can separate what people believe about the world from the world itself. Ruel concludes that it is best to use the term 'belief' as we might use 'faith' and resolves to dispense with the term 'belief' when discussing non-Christian religions. As Ruel puts it (1982, 103): 'A distinction made frequently today is between "belief in" (trust in) and "belief that" (propositional belief)'.

Ruel therefore follows Robertson-Smith, Radcliffe-Brown and Durkheim in breaking from a Tylorian view of belief as animism and examining instead religious action, principally ritual.

Asad also argued that religion, and belief, was historically contingent and shaped by powerful leaders who authenticated and legitimised certain forms of belief and not others. His work radically shifted an anthropological understanding based on ideas about meaning and order to one that would become more temporally and spatially situated and produced through specific social legitimations. Buckser (2008), for example, explored how influential Jews shaped the understanding of belief among Jews in Copenhagen in two different periods to achieve two separate goals; one of integration in the early 1800s and another of distinctiveness in the early 1900s. The possibility that belief has a pragmatic and flexible quality that could be reflexively strategised by lay people informed Kirsch (2004) as he studied how Zambian people often switched their faith in healers.

Robbins (2007) drew on scholars mentioned above, such as Asad, Smith, Ruel and Needham, to discuss how the meaning of belief varies from the proposition to faith. Nevertheless, the emphasis here, whether on propositions or faith, is still individually focused. He suggests that the phrase 'to believe in' represents a cross-culturally acceptable concept of having faith or trust in the object being believed. Alternatively, belief could be used in a propositional sense, where to 'believe that' someone or something exists expresses more uncertainty, as if the statement were open to testing. That form of expressing belief is often not present in non-Protestant cultures, where belief is something more commonly expressed non-verbally – what I would describe as performative. To expect some people to convey their religiosity in terms of 'belief that' propositional statements ignores the temporal and spatial dimensions of how belief is being used. As a consequence, Robbins concluded, 'anthropologists have looked for belief in the wrong places' (2007, 15) when they are looking at people to assert 'belief that' statements rather than explore what people 'believe in'. What would be more helpful to determine if people are 'really Christian' is to look at what they believe in, he says, manifested by their actions – 'in trying to identify what people are up to culturally' (2007). Further, Robbins warns of the tendency to impute or discern 'meaning' when it is perhaps the anthropologist, not the informant, who is seeking it: 'meaninglessness is always something untoward, lobbed in unexpectedly' (2006, 218).

This is a point usefully developed elsewhere in the concept of 'sincerity' by Keane (2002, 2007) where he examines the moral, teleological narrative of modernity that presumes that we are now being freed from 'false' beliefs.

The semantic differences are not, as he says, in themselves as important as recognising how the use of 'belief' is used spatially and temporally. The Calvinists studied, for example, privilege 'belief' because their doctrines have taught that when the word of God became 'flesh' in the body (or, as Keane reads, 'materiality'), it became degraded. Calvinists thus associated belief 'with immaterial meaning over practices that threatened to subordinate belief to material form' (2007, 67).

Callum Brown, although an historian, not an anthropologist, offered an important contribution about how belief is situated in a social milieu. Brown's main premise (2001) is that Britain underwent a massive and profound cultural change post 1960s that changed the way British people believed and behaved. His theoretical claims are based on his adherence to the theories of pre-modernity, modernity and post-modernity, a position he says divides the academy. Broadly, he asserts that social scientists have mistakenly observed secularisation as a feature of post-Enlightenment rationality and relied on structural rather than discursive theories and methods (195, 196). The 1960s were a turning point because 'from the 1960s a suspicion of creeds arose that quickly took the form of a rejection of Christian tradition and all formulaic constructions of the individual' (2001, 193).

Christianity was characterised by a gendered discourse that located piety in femininity from about 1800 to 1960. Women who performed traditional, domestic roles were revered as sacred and bound to Christianity, until:

> ...the age of discursive Christianity then quite quickly collapsed. It did so, fundamentally, when women cancelled their mass subscription to the discursive domain of Christianity. Simultaneously, the nature of femininity changed fundamentally... (2001, 195)

Brown is thus shifting the location of belief from propositional, faith-based, doctrinal formulations to ones of cultural and individual identity. He stresses the importance of what may be authorised as legitimate forms of belief and behaving and then moves away from institutional forms of power to discursive, cultural forms. Unusually, for the sociology of religion, he privileges female over male agency.

Shifting now from the academic to everyday, I will use as a single case example an event that began in the UK in 2001 that could have been predicted by Asad (1993): Christian leaders embracing wholeheartedly a claim that Christianity was not in decline but thriving. It is to that event and my subsequent research that I now turn to illustrate what I theorise is 'performative belief'.

## Performative belief

Performative belief is a term I am using to describe a phenomenon that I observed during my empirical research exploring belief across three generations in North Yorkshire, UK (Day 2006, 2009), and is comparable, I will argue, to other studies elsewhere. Ideas of performativity helped explain what I observed when people

used language and specific tangible acts to not only express their beliefs but also to actively claim and shape beliefs to produce socially specific identities. Belief in these terms is not separate from identity or social context, but a way of framing who 'I' am relative to 'you' here and now.

'Performative' was used to describe how language sometimes has the effect of doing something other than merely conveying something (Austin 1962). As others have argued interpretations of a speech act must account for the cultural framework in which it is being used and the function or 'meaning-in-use'. My earlier application of the idea of performativity (Day 2005) illuminated how Baptist women reconciled the experience of unanswered prayer through meeting, making tea, sharing stories and, as they described it, 'chatting' about it. Accepting both the performative and semiotic functions of language, I was able to analyse their 'chat' in terms of how it reflected their collective beliefs, or worldview, and how they actively constructed new understandings of their world and their God to 'do theodicy'. Butler (1990) extends the idea of performativity beyond single language acts to incorporate a function or purpose: a lived, embodied performance brings into being an identity through repetition, regulation and normative adherence. West and Zimmerman (1987) argued that all the visible and invisible labour that women perform is how they 'do gender'. It is to that combined effect of language and embodiment that I turn in proposing my theory of performative belief.

## Social context

The social context in which beliefs are performed will influence what beliefs are expressed and identities shaped. Performances, according to Goffman (1959, 36–51), are socialised and idealised: they fit into social expectations and idealise society's values. One of the main acts I analysed during fieldwork was the act of selecting the option 'Christian' when asked the question 'what is your religion?' on the 2001 Census for England and Wales. That 72% of respondents self-identified as Christian appeared to be anomalous, in a country where less than 7% attend church regularly, and participation in public Christian rituals, from church attendance to weddings, funerals, confirmations and christenings, also shows a decline (Gill, Hadaway, and Marler 1998; Brierley 2000, 2006).

The research aim was to probe beliefs through conducting semi-structured interviews, without asking overtly religious questions and without selecting people on the basis of their interest in religion or spirituality. Questions such as 'what do you believe in?', 'what is most important to you?' and 'what do you think happens to you after your die?' were more provocative than closed, religiously loaded, 'propositional' questions such as 'do you believe in God?'. I wanted to probe what people thought about the so-called ultimate or ontological questions, assuming that themes of morality, meaning and perhaps even transcendence were not exclusively 'religious' or even 'spiritual'. The only direct question I asked about religion was my final question when I asked informants

what they had said in answer to the 2001 national census question: 'what is your religion?'.

Within my interviews, informants spoke in ways and described acts relating to their beliefs that seemed to bring into being certain forms of identity. It soon became obvious that most of my informants did not want to answer my questions in terms of propositions, facts or creeds. They answered by giving me examples, often long descriptions of a person or a situation that would illustrate what they were trying to say. Most of the stories I heard concerned beliefs that were about the values people trusted – or longed for – in their human relationships, drawn from those relationships, replicated through them and embodied through them. Beliefs about belonging to other people are those, I suggest, which may largely explain why people identify themselves with a religion when the act of so doing is presented in a context which forces the respondent to choose, not only between religion or no religion but also between 'them' and 'us'. Here, assertions of belief are expressions of belonging, rendering a 'believing without belonging' thesis implausible. Few people mentioned God, Jesus, religion, the church or spirituality during our interviews. I was therefore surprised to find, when I asked people at the end of each interview how they had answered the census question, 'what is your religion?', more than half (37) of my 68 informants, including those who were not sure God existed and expressed antagonism towards religion, said 'Christian'.

That so many of my informants who were otherwise non-religious, agnostic and even antagonistic towards religion selected 'Christian' initially struck me as a contradiction. Further analysis convinced me, as discussed in more detail elsewhere (Day 2006, 2009), that non-religious people sometimes claim a religious affiliation to demonstrate their 'believing in belonging' to certain self-perceived family or 'ethnic' social groups. That demonstration of belonging can, I will argue, be read as a performance that occurs in other specific social situations, arises from social relationships and results in socially mediated behaviours. The performance extends beyond what Goffman described as 'impression management'. I suggest: it not only reflects but also brings into being the desirable identity given the specific context, as, for example, both Robertson Smith and Durkheim argued.

Christian leaders were quick to welcome the census results as evidence of the nature of 'Christian Britain'. Had they examined the results quantitatively, they would have seen that the demographic record pointed to a narrative of decline: most people who selected 'Christian' as their Christian identity were over 50. Nevertheless, the leaders' reactions suggest that Brown's (2001) prediction of the death of discursive Christianity may have been premature. The new archbishop of the Church in Wales commented at his inauguration (Morgan 2003) that he faced challenges with church congregations 'slumping' but he was 'heartened by the 2001 census results, which show most people in Wales believe in God'. The census questions for England and Wales did not ask about belief or God, only religious self-identification, but the archbishop's statement shows how easy it is

to conflate issues of belief, affiliation and identity. The Lord Bishop of St Albans expressed similar confusion and conflation, extending the census finding from religious self-identification to include both belief and spirituality:

> ... the most recent census figures would indicate that, yes, of course fewer people attend and practise their belief in specific religious buildings, but the levels of belief and spirituality in our nation are huge. To describe us as secular is simply not accurate (Lords Hansard text for 6 June 2003, 230606-01).

Among the flurry of the uncritical, jubilant and somewhat muddied responses described above, one important feature of the 2001 census tends to remain unexamined: why, in a period when all the available sociological research tells us that people are turning away from Christianity – at least in its institutionalised form – would so many people choose to identify themselves with the institution of Christianity? Different surveys that ask more subjective questions about religious 'belonging', for example, achieve lower results than the England and Wales question: 'what is your religion?'. For example, the UK Christian charity Tearfund (Ashworth and Farthing 2007) asked the UK adults, 'Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?'. Their study concluded that just over half (53%) of the UK adults 'belong' to the Christian religion, a much lower figure than possibly implied with the census and one more in line with, for example, the British Social Attitudes survey or the 2002 European Social Survey.

The Bishops' responses, uncritical of the contradictory evidence, were a feature of what Asad might have recognised as discursive practices designed to legitimise certain forms of Christianity. An example of how this was acted out in a more domestic setting is Terry, 49, an agricultural contractor. He answered my question 'what do you believe in?' by immediately turning it around:

> Uh, what do I believe in? Tell you what I don't believe in [*laughs*]. Are you asking do I believe in God – is that what you're aiming for?

Terry, like most of my informants, was trying to establish the parameters, or rules, of our social encounter. When I told him I was not aiming for any particular kind of belief, I offered him the space to create his own performance about belief, which he did by first clearing the stage. He explained: 'I don't believe in one great deity who's pulling strings up in [the] sky'. Throughout our interview he returned to the theme that life was random, that people were not guided or scrutinised by a higher being and that religion played no part in his life. Terry was not religious, and yet, when I asked him what he had answered on the census, he said he had answered 'Church of England' (although that was not an option: only 'Christian' was provided as a category). When I asked him why he had done so, he replied:

> Well, only because they asked us to, not because ... we wouldn't have any qualms, but that's the British way, isn't it? If people are not religious, they're C of E. Church of England. Weddings, funerals and christenings.

His repetitive tone – 'weddings, funerals and christenings' – marks moments of the performative process. Terry brings into being his Christianity through participation in specific social contexts, such as attending the church's public,

institutionalised events, through self-identifying as Christian on the census and by talking about it in the social context of the interview. Then, and only then, is he a Christian. He is not a Christian when he goes about his daily life and even when asked a general question about what he believed in. He is a Christian when asked to choose a religious identity from a list of other religious identities (including 'none'). His act of choosing an identity on the census is further socialised by context: the census document is filled out by one person on behalf of all members of the household; it is therefore a group, not individual, act where the other members' identities and social markers, from age to ethnicity, must be accounted for.

It is also a political act if we are to read the inclusion of a question about religious identity as a political event. Census questions do not arrive neutrally on the census simply because statisticians at the Office for National Statistics think it is a good idea. Questions are ultimately approved by the Parliament. Any new questions can only be included after exhaustive consultation and, in some cases, lobbying, as occurred in the late 1990s. It was the first time since the census began that questions about people's religious identity were asked in England, Wales and Scotland.[4] The inclusion of a religious question on the 2001 census was therefore a political act, resulting from consultation and advice from several religious groups affiliated as the Religious Affiliation Sub-Group (Francis 2003; Weller 2004; Southworth 2005). I suggest that the overwhelming 'Christian' response to the census question was also a political act, best understood as performative, nominalist Christianity. Nearly three-quarters of the population identified themselves as Christian because, as Terry explained, 'they asked us to'.

Following Foucault (1980): it is a political, powerful act to lock people into a process of claiming an identity for themselves, which happens to coincide with the desired identity promoted by the powerful. Evans-Pritchard (1937), for example, observed that although ordinary common people devised complex witchcraft beliefs and practices to account for misfortune, such formulations were not practised by nobility: as nobles could not be witches, there was no need. Bloch (1986) made a similar point in arguing that circumcision rituals among the Merina of Madagascar were not only for religious and family reasons but also for a state-encouraged practice to combat colonialism. Beliefs and related practices are conceived here not as propositional, but as collective, political and, I suggest, performative.

## Social relationships: Believing in belonging

If we move away from the propositional forms of belief demanded by Christian leaders and government censuses, it becomes clear that other forms of belief are more powerful in people's social relationships. Belief in social relationships is performed both through belonging and excluding. For example, many people who told me they had chosen 'Christian' as their affiliation on the census also explained that they did not believe in God or any religion. When I asked Graham, a 34-year-old technical analyst, what he had said on the census, he replied: 'I've been baptised and confirmed as a Christian so in effect I was, I am a Christian but

I'm not a practising Christian believer'. Gary, a 52-year-old lorry driver, said he would have ticked Christian because: 'How I was brought up. I don't believe, but I don't disbelieve either'. Barry, a 48-year-old bookkeeper, explained, 'I suppose it was instilled into me from an early age that I was a Christian'. Harriet, 14, said she would answer the census question with 'Christian. Don't know why. Because I was baptised. I'd just answer Christian without thinking'. Penny said, 'Because I was christened Church of England'. Being Christened, or baptised, is a social act signifying belonging to a family and, nominally, the church to which the family belongs. It is also an act of embodiment where the moment of becoming Christian is physically marked through water and collective prayer. The baptismal experience is not recalled as a religious experience, but a social one, stressing the importance of the human relationship rather than the religious belief.

Patrick, a 48-year-old professional, described himself as an atheist who believed in 'the human spirit'. He was adamant during our interview that he dismissed religion as unnecessary and deeply wrong: 'I do not believe that there is any all-powerful force that is organising human destiny. I think that is utterly ridiculous'. He did, however, form a belief through a powerful, embodied experience. When his mother died, he was overwhelmed by a fear of attending her funeral, but was comforted later by 'the most profound peace', which he attributed to her presence. That experience prompted him to believe in what he described as 'the human spirit'. This recalls the discussion by Needham, Robbins, Ruel and Smith stated earlier in this paper about belief being best understood as 'faith' rather than proposition. Here, through people like Patrick, I am adding the quality of emotion and embodied experience in human relationships.

In another interview, I observed how my presence prompted my informant to improvise and change some of his beliefs. Rick, 20, is a painter–decorator who is single and lives with his mother and siblings. He had agreed to meet me for an interview and suggested we meet at the local pub. That would not have been my first choice, as it was neither quiet nor confidential, and yet as soon as I walked in and saw him waiting, I realised why he had chosen it: sitting at a table talking to people nearby, Rick looked comfortable, relaxed and at home. In some senses, he was at home. His mother worked there and, he later told me, he had been coming to the pub all his life. As a child, he would play in the family room and as a young teenager, he would play pool with the other young people not far from where his mother worked and many older members of his immediate and extended family would be socialising together. This was his territory, not mine. Rick was easy to talk to and seemed to open up readily, telling me about the difficulties he experienced when his parents divorced several years earlier and about his dreams of having a family and nice home in the future.

Rick: I believe everybody should have a goal in life.

Abby: A goal in life?

Rick: Yeah. To achieve something.

Abby: Have you always had one?

Rick: Well, yeah, silly as it might sound, to have a family, a semi detached house, a garage, kitchen, car, two kids, complete family, basically, like your general, English family so to speak. Always wanted to have that, really.

He spoke for a few moments about his parents' divorce a few years earlier and how upset he had been. But, there were other beliefs he wanted to share: Rick said he was concerned about immigrants.

I probably say I'm not racist like, but your Asians, stuff like that. I disagree with them, stuff like that. Not with them being in country, but with way they live when they are in the country. Asylum, immigration, stuff like that. I have my beliefs on that.

Atypically, I decided at that point to intervene by calling attention to myself, a Canadian immigrant. I asked him directly: 'What about me? I'm an immigrant'. Rick looked genuinely surprised and slightly embarrassed and replied: 'Yeah but you, you work. You're doing something with your life, aren't you?' Rick continued: 'You don't claim off me all your life, do you?' I did not respond to that direct question but returned to the general point by asking, 'So, immigrants who claim off you . . . ?'

A long silence fell between us. I sensed he was uncomfortable and I wanted to see how he would reconcile his opposition to 'immigrants' with his obvious ease with me. I waited to see how our social interaction might produce an amended view of his beliefs. After a moment or two he continued:

I don't know if I'm racist, I probably am. Don't think I am racist, but I might be. Don't know how you're classed as a racist. All I know if people come in my country [It was the first time he had used the personal pronoun 'my' to describe the country. He then looked at me directly and corrected himself] into our country, if they work and so on I've got not a real problem with it. It's when they sit on their asses and don't do owt.

Suddenly, I was not an outlier, but, at least temporarily, a member of his group: the boundary was being stretched a little. The inclusion of me, the researcher, was being effected through our immediate social interaction: as Barth (1960) argued, concepts and definitions of ethnicity are produced on the boundary through social interaction.

## Social action: Doing belief

Many informants were involved in strategic improvisation, in what I will describe as 'doing belief'. After acknowledging that they thought their beliefs were formed at an early age in the home, community and school, many people talked about how their beliefs were further personalised by life experience and interaction with other people. This does not mean they rejected what they were taught by their parents as far as the large 'social codes' were concerned, but that they accepted responsibility for working out the details themselves in practice. I probed this idea of how they 'do' believe by discussing with them the kinds of

morality they applied to their personal lives and from where they thought they derived those beliefs.

Phil, a 37-year-old psychologist, said he believed in what some people might describe as paganism, but what he preferred to describe as 'the old ways' or magic. He explained that 'I don't believe I have a particular god guiding me. I believe my beliefs guide me'. But this, he added, does not mean he always gets it right:

> I have a fundamental belief system, that I want to be good. I want to be friendly and I believe in helping. I believe in being eco-friendly, for want of a better phrase, as much as I possibly can. And sometimes I screw it up and sometimes I don't have time, you know.

The desire to look at the grey areas and then think about the appropriate action was part of Clare's own moral code. A 58-year-old holistic therapist, she said

> I believe I have the truth within me and that therefore that's where I'll find the answers, and those answers will lead to a complete state of knowing, when that is possible. If you want the formal belief system, then I'm a Buddhist. But not a hard-line Buddhist.

By hard-line Buddhism, she said she meant that there was a path which you must follow without deviation, whereas she would describe herself as 'a bit of a deviant'. She said she always saw shades of grey, never black and white: 'because we only see the truth from where we are'. Both Phil and Clare were guided by their beliefs, but did not defend them as propositional truth claims that could not be amended.

The way some of my informants initially responded to my question about what they believed in would have made it easy to dismiss their beliefs as a merely credal response. A Christian who follows literalist biblical teaching cannot be unmoved by the instruction of their saviour to believe in him: 'And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?' (John 11:26).

Sometimes, sociologists dismiss apparently formulaic or creed-like responses as if they are not critically important when, to the adherent, the act of attesting to the belief in 'God, the father, the maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ' is central to their identity as both a member of their church and to their guarantee of eternal life. Belief, for them, is both salient and functional, both faith based and propositional. Articulating belief may also be even more important than materiality if, recalling Keane (2007), for some Christians God is 'the word'.

By resisting framing of such belief statements as merely 'credal', I could see beyond what might be described as wholly propositional to something approaching my idea of performativity. For example, Jane, a teacher in her early 60s, said: 'I believe in God, one God, which I define as a spiritual being or a spiritual presence, no gender, all loving, all powerful, all mighty, creator'. Joe, a teenage boy, said he believed in 'all the Catholic beliefs' and attends church regularly. Vickie, a teenage girl, answered: 'God'. Lindsay, her classmate, answered: 'I believe, I'm a Christian, and I go to the Methodist church. I believe in Jesus, most of the stuff

that's happened in the bible and life after death'. Those were their opening statements, but beyond that emerged creative performances: Jane, for example, discussed at length how the church was her 'community'; Vickie talked about praying not to God but to her deceased Uncle; Lindsay told me stories about why in certain cases she would pray to Jesus and then refuse his advice.

Therefore, rather than look at creeds as merely recitations of propositional phrases, we can see them as collective performances, incorporating both propositional 'believe that' statements as well as more emotive, faith-based sentiments. In his work, in the field of psychology, James Day studied narrative and what he described as the performative nature of language. One of his case examples (Day 1993, 222) centred on a woman he called 'Linda' who describes her experiences of reciting a creed:

> When we say it I feel, yes, believe that; I mean, I can affirm the basics there by being there and singing and being with the other people. I feel I belong and that we believe the same thing, which means we affirm the basics of our faith in what we do there.

Those are the sorts of insights and stories that can only be gleaned from conversations, not questionnaires and from a wider, more integrative understanding of how performance and proposition operate together.

**Social action: Undoing belief**

Some informants appeared to possess dexterity in both 'doing' and 'undoing' belief that demonstrated skills of personal improvisation, similar to what Kirsch (2004, 708), in his study about how people changed their beliefs, described as wilful acts of pragmatism.

Through rejecting certain beliefs, some of my informants found the space to create their own. Sarah, 14, answered my question by saying

> I believe in honesty. I think it's very good to be honest about things. I believe in love as well. And family values. And happiness. Leading a happy life. Being content with yourself.

Sarah also described herself as a Christian, but distanced herself from many traditional Christian teachings, saying she preferred to make her own mind up and not impose morality on other people. She clearly rejects forms of propositional belief that may have been, as Wuthnow suggested, accrued in seminaries, in favour of a performative belief that can be brought into being in the context of specific relationships – or, as Firth, discussed above, saw as 'active weapons of adjustment' (1948, 26–27).

Georgia, an 18-year-old student, specifically rejected certain believing behaviours when she answered my question:

> I wouldn't class myself as a Christian. I'm not devoted. I don't live by the Ten Commandments. I don't attend, so I wouldn't define myself as Christian at all.

I do not infer from this that by not living by the Ten Commandments, Georgia steals and murders, but rather I infer she is referring to the first four

commandments, concerning a relationship with God. She told me several stories about what others might describe as immoral behaviour – experimenting with sex and drugs, for example – but what she described as useful learning experiences. Although she was clear that she does not class herself as a Christian, she discussed her other beliefs, such as holding to values such as love and friendship.

Barbara, 69, a retired pub landlady, answered my first question about what she believed in by saying

> Not a lot. I'm not religious at all. Haven't been for a number of years, so I believe in today and now and not the hereafter and all of that.

She said she was christened and went to church as a child, but became 'disenchanted' through what she saw as hypocrisy in the church. She cited the Ten Commandments as good morals to live by but implicitly omitted the first theistic four commandments. When I asked her the census question she replied 'I would put Christian because I was christened, so, yes, I'm a Christian'.

Chris, 43, a manufacturing supervisor, had told me during the interview that he had been born and raised as a Catholic and was now an atheist. He rejected religion, although not the transcendent or paranormal. Chris told me that he had once seen a ghost and he believed in aliens. Chris disliked church of any kind, describing the Catholic Church as 'illegal' and said that he refused to pray or even sing the hymns when attending church weddings or funerals. Yet, he said he was initially unsure how to respond to the census question: 'I may be very close to being a Christian. I'd help anybody out, things like that'.

Those informants did not speak from ignorance: they knew what Christian meant and they knew what they had to undo. Their undoing can be read as resistance, as an active choice rather than, for example, a failure of transmission, socialisation or religious education.

## Conclusions

I have suggested here that performative belief is one way of describing how beliefs are acted and help shape identities. Belief is not separate from identity or social context but a way of creating who 'I' am relative to 'you' here and now. Through the quality of emotion and corporeal experience in human relationships, performative belief is how people can adjust to given social contexts, expectations and aspirations.

The first part of this paper proposed a genealogy of belief that showed how debates in anthropology and sociology have influenced our understanding of belief from propositions to performativity. Beginning with Tylor, I argued that a 'belief in spirits' is an individualistic, propositional form of belief that has influenced scholars, but has limited value. Such a definition may, as Lambek (2002, 21) noted, 'remain congenial to many contemporary thinkers and is indeed almost a part of western "common sense" on the subject' but it would have been lost on some of my informants. Patrick and Chris, for example, were atheists who

believed in spirits, but were adamantly not religious. Both were also educated men with a respect for science who would likely be offended at Tylor's suggestions that their beliefs about spirits would eventually be replaced by scientific knowledge and other civilising influences as they evolved through a linear series of predictable phases.

Many of the themes discussed thus far concern issues of social organisation, individual meaning and, latterly, sociality. The place of belief in anthropology has tended to be localised, specific and typically small scale and domestic. Debates have concerned whether enquiries were sufficiently localised, as opposed to universalised, and historicised. The trend was to move from what informants 'believe' to how anthropologists construct belief, with an awareness that the sub-disciplinary preference of the scholar is likely to determine the interpretation. Durkheim's enormous sociological contribution to the recognition of social structure as a source for belief and other concepts needed to be tempered by the anthropologist Malinowksi's recognition of sociality and individual agency; both those functionalist orientations needed to be corrected by the kind of contribution the cultural anthropologist Geertz made about symbolism, with his incorporation of a Weberian meaning-centred universe, which in turn was rightly criticised for being ahistoric and essentially Christian by Asad, who in turn essentialised power, and so on.

A sociological approach to belief has tended to focus on the institutional and societal, asking whether or not secularisation is occurring in Euro-American countries, with the main emphasis on measures of affiliation and practice, rather than belief. The theoretical grounding in the sociology of religion is largely Tylorian and Weberian, with assumptions about beliefs in spiritual beings and a search for meaning being somehow inherent and irreducibly both human and religion. As Robbins (2006) observed about anthropology – the concept of meaninglessness becomes 'lobbed in' to works on religion and reflects a Christian-centric bias.

Having accepted a Weberian analysis about a search for meaning, many sociologists of religion largely ignored the most important part of Weber's analysis – social action. They dismiss the large-scale decline in religious action, measured by church attendance and participation in every significant Christian rite, from baptism to funerals. This would be anathema to a social anthropologist who would explore varieties of social action as expressions of significance and social structure. Rather than enquiring too deeply about why people choose not to participate in Christian activities, sociologists of religion from Davie to Voas based their arguments on quantitative data that asked questions using religious vocabulary to form questions such as 'do you believe in God?' and deploying Christian-centred values, such as 'do you think homosexuality is wrong?'. The results are mixed depending on the survey but tend to reflect propositional forms of belief only. A conclusion that beliefs are propositional may, therefore, reflect the research method more than the beliefs or experiences of research participants.

In this paper, I have tried to indicate how an inter-disciplinary approach can better illuminate shades of meaning about belief. What I term 'performative belief' stresses belief's social and relational location and how it can produce identities that actors strategically create to adapt to and integrate themselves into various social situations. It is to a combined effect of language and embodiment that I turned in proposing my theory of performative belief. Characteristics such as the social context, the social relationships and the actor's reflexive ability to 'do' and even undo belief all contribute to how beliefs and identities arise in specific places and times. Any universalistic, evolutionary and individually centred concepts of belief are thus problematic and contested.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Simon Coleman, Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex, for his helpful comments and suggestions and to the Economic and Social Research Council, UK, for funding my position and related research costs.

## Notes

1. Although popularised by Davie, the term was first coined by Gallup and Jones (1989) to describe a gap between religious belief and practice.
2. Durkheim's insistence that beliefs were generated and reinforced by collective worship was later addressed by Bryan Wilson. Wilson argued there was a causal effect between the transfer of agency from the supernatural to the secular: religious beliefs would decline as religious practices declined, for they would not be reinforced or integrated into people's lives or consciousness. He assumed this was a global process, 'in which the notion of a world order created by some supernatural agency has given considerable place to an understanding of a man-made and man-centred world' (2001, 40). David Martin (1978), however, argued that secularisation was neither global nor inevitable.
3. Engelke (2002, 4) suggested that Evans-Pritchard's scientific integrity broke down and took on a theological tinge during his career, as he became increasingly involved in Catholicism.
4. Somewhat confusingly, in 1851, on the same day as the population census was taken, a separate exercise called the *Accommodation and Attendance at Worship* census was carried out. That census, popularly called 'the religious census' asked questions about church attendance, not affiliation.

## References

Asad, T. 1993. *Genealogies of religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ashworth, J. and I. Farthing. 2007. *Churchgoing in the UK*. Teddington: Tearfund.

Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Bellah, R.N. 1964. Religious evolution. *American Sociological Review* 29: 358–74.

———. 1970. *Beyond belief: Essays on religion in a post-traditional world*. New York: Harper and Row.

Berger, P.L. 1967. *The sacred canopy: Elements of a sociological theory of religion*. New York: Doubleday.

Bloch, M. 1986. *From blessings to violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brierley, P. 2000. *The tide is running out*. London: Christian Research.
Brown, C. 2001. *The death of Christian Britain*. London: Routledge.
Buckser, A. 2008. Cultural change and the meanings of belief in Jewish Copenhagen. *Social Analysis* 52, no. 1: 39–55.
Butler, J. 1990. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
Davie, G. 1994. *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without belonging*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Day, J.M. 1993. Speaking of belief: Language, performance, and narrative in the psychology of religion. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 3, no. 4: 213–29.
Day, A. 2005. Doing theodicy: An empirical study of a women's prayer group. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20, no. 3: 343–56.
———. 2006. Believing in belonging: A case study from Yorkshire. PhD thesis, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK.
———. 2009. Believing in belonging: An ethnography of young people's constructions of belief. *Culture and Religion* 10, no. 3: 263–78.
Douglas, M. 1960. The healing cite. *Man* 5, no. 2: 302–08.
———. 1966. *Purity and danger: An analysis of pollution and taboo*. London: Routledge.
Durkheim, E. 1915. *Elementary forms of the religious life*. New York: Free Press.
Engelke, M. 2002. The problem of belief: Evans-Pritchard and Victor Turner on 'The inner life'. *Anthropology Today* 18, no. 6: 3–8.
Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1937. *Witchcraft, oracles, and magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Firth, R. 1948. Religious belief and personal adjustment. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 78, no. 1/2: 25–43.
Foucault, M. 1972. *The archeology of knowledge*. London: Tavistock.
———. 1980. *Power/knowledge – Selected interviews and other writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon. Brighton: Harvester Press.
Francis, L. 2003. The flaw in the 2001 Census in England and Wales. In *Public faith? The state of religious practice in Britain*, ed. P. Avis, 45–64. London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
Gallup, G. and S. Jones. 1989. *100 questions and answers*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Research Center.
Geertz, C. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
Gill, R. 2001. Future of religious participation and belief. In *The Blackwell companion to sociology of religion*, ed. R.K. Fenn, 279–91. Oxford: Blackwell.
Gill, R., C.K. Hadaway, and P.L. Marler. 1998. Is religious belief declining in Britain? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 3: 507–16.
Goffman, E. 1959. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, NY: 1966.
Hornsby-Smith, M. 1991. *Roman Catholic beliefs in England: Customary Catholicism and transformations of religious authority*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Keane, W. 2002. Sincerity, modernity, and the protestants. *Cultural Anthropology* 17, no. 1: 65–92.
———. 2007. *Christian moderns*. Berkley, CA and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
Kirsch, T.G. 2004. Restaging the will to believe: Religious pluralism, anti-syncretism, and the problem of belief. *American Anthropologist* 106, no. 4: 699–709.
Lambeck, M., ed. 2002. *A reader in the anthropology of religion*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
Luckmann, T. 1967. *The invisible religion*. London: Collier-Macmillan.
Martin, D. 1978. *A general theory of secularization*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Morgan, B. 2003. Church enthrones new archbishop. http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/3060347.stm (last accessed 23 March 2008).
Needham, R. 1972. *Belief, language and experience*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
Robbins, J. 2006. Afterword: On limits, ruptures, meaning and meaningless. In *The limits of meaning: Case studies in the anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Matthew Engelke and Matt Tomlinson, 211–23. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
———. 2007. Continuity thinking and the problem of christian culture. *Current Anthropology* 48, no. 1: 5–17.
Robertson-Smith, W. 1927. *Lectures on the religion of the Semites: The fundamental institutions*. Edinburgh: Black.
Ruel, M. 1982. Christians as believers. In *Religious organization and religious experience*, ed. J. Davis, 9–32. ASA Monograph 21, London: Academic Press.
Smith, W.C. 1967. *Problems of religious truth*. New York: Scribner's.
———. 1977. *Belief and history*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.
———. 1978. *The meaning and end of religion*. London: SPCK.
———. 1979. *Faith and belief*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Southworth, J. R. 2005. 'Religion' in the 2001 Census for England and Wales. *Population Space and Place* 11: 75–88.
Tylor, E. 1958 [1871]. *Primitive culture*. New York: Harper.
Voas, D., and A. Crockett. 2005. Religion in Britain: Neither believing nor belonging. *Sociology* 39, no. 1: 11–28.
Weber, M. 1922. *The sociology of religion*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
Weller, P. 2004. Identity, politics and the future(s) of religion in the UK: The case of the religion questions in the 2001 Decennial Census. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19, no. 1: 3–21.
West, C., and D.H. Zimmerman. 1987. Doing gender. *Gender and Society* 1: 125–51.
Wilson, B. 1966. *Religion in secular society*. London: C.A. Watts & Co. Ltd.
———. 2001. Salvation, secularization, and de-moralization. In *The Blackwell companion to sociology of religion*, ed. R.K. Fenn, 39–51. Oxford: Blackwell.
Wuthnow, R. 1994. *Sharing the journey: Support groups and America's new quest for community*. New York: Free Press.