



Heidelberg  
University

**HCA**  
Heidelberg Center  
for American Studies

**ASN**  
American Studies Network

# *Call for Papers*

## Religion and the Marketplace in the U.S.: New Perspectives and New Findings

*As decided at the 2010 meeting of the European Association of American Studies in Dublin, the Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA), in cooperation with the American Studies Network (ASN), will host a conference entitled “Religion and the Marketplace in the U.S.: New Perspectives and New Findings.” The HCA will host the conference on October 6-8, 2011, as part of Heidelberg University’s 625<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.*

*This international and interdisciplinary conference aims to investigate and explain how the conditions of the marketplace have determined, influenced, and limited American religion in the past and present. Given the prominence of the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses in the American constitution, a broad-based ‘competition for souls and purses’ has historically helped to define the contours of religion in America. This conference will build upon previous insights while probing further into the complex relationship between religion and the marketplace along the lines described below.*

*We invite scholars in American Studies and related fields (geography, history, law, literature, media studies, political science, religious studies, theology, etc.) to submit paper abstracts for this conference. Individual paper abstracts (200-250 words) should be specifically directed at one (or more) of the panel topics included in this CFP. Abstracts must be received by **March 31, 2011**. Participants will be notified by May 1, 2011. All questions and submissions should be sent electronically to: [djunker@hca.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:djunker@hca.uni-heidelberg.de).*

*We especially desire participation from European scholars working in these fields, but welcome submissions from all around the world. The HCA will cover travel expenses (economy), lodging and meals for conference participants.*

*Your Heidelberg Team,*

*Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Detlef Junker  
Founding Director, Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA)  
President, American Studies Network (ASN)*

*Dr. Anthony Santoro  
Post-Doctoral Fellow, Heidelberg University*

*Jens Hofmann, M.A.  
Ph.D. Candidate, Heidelberg University*

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*In October 2010, renowned scholars from a variety of fields and disciplines gathered in Heidelberg for a brainstorming session. Coming together from around the world, these experts worked together to plan the outline of the forthcoming conference. We are grateful for their time and energy, and are very excited about the program we created together.*

*Financing for the upcoming conference and the brainstorming session has been made possible thanks to a very generous donation from Dr. h.c. Manfred Lautenschläger. He is the co-founder of MLP, Germany's leading independent consulting company offering financial services and wealth management. Dr. Lautenschläger is an honorary senator at Heidelberg University and is a very active and dedicated benefactor.*

## Panel Proposals

### Panel 1: Religion and the Market in Theory and History

For this panel we invite contributions that engage with existing theoretical models of America's "religious economy" from different historical perspectives. Potential topics for discussion include reappraisals of rational choice-theory, the question of how to conceptualize and assess the demand-side in the competition for souls, or the usefulness of evolutionary biology in explaining successes and failures of religions. We also encourage papers revisiting Weber's Protestant work ethics-thesis.

### Panel 2: America and Europe in Comparison and Interaction

This session seeks to analyze the fate of American ideas about the market approach to religion in its relationship with Europe. It invites a look at the demand and the supply sides of an American religious presence in Europe as well as "second lives" of European traditions in the U.S. Was (and is) the motor of American outreach an inevitable extension of the idea that 'God counts success by the numbers,' or has it been part of an inner missionary drive to adapt the message to the needs of the times? Were Americans better prepared for this adaptation than Europeans and how did Europeans respond? How did the specific positions of churches in the economic systems support or undermine the position of organized religion in American and European societies?

### Panel 3: Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism

This session invites papers on the economic underpinnings of traditional Christians and their efforts to stabilize renew and expand their position in American society. Is there an internal tension between the rejection of older liturgical traditions, worship styles, etc. and the wish to advance a stable religiously conservative tradition? Was the main motive of American

Evangelicals to recapture the center of power? How closely are capitalism and evangelicalism wedded? Since business approaches were closely linked to revivals, could one maintain that these were conditional for revivals to succeed, and vice versa, that anti-revivalists were also anti-capitalists?

#### Panel 4: Religion and Popular Culture

How far do religious groups deploy popular culture in seeking to reach their target audience, either to consolidate or expand their influence? To what extent does popular culture explore the nature and function of religion in American society? What evidence is there that either is effective?

#### Panel 5: Religion in Everyday Life

Religion can be studied in a variety of ways, from institutions to individuals. Recent advances in the study of "lived religion" and "material religion" in history have furthered our understanding of how Americans are religious in their daily lives. This session is meant to push further into these approaches in order to better comprehend what religion in everyday life reveals about the marketplace in American history. How have individuals' choices reflected or challenged the larger marketplace of ideas, movements, and cultures in their religious lifestyles? In other words, what does religion in America on the micro level tell us about religion on the macro level?

#### Panel 6: Theology and the Marketplace

Critics of religion tend to perceive most churches in America and the Western world as competing for "souls and purses," whereas theologians and theologies are still engaged in warning against the unholy alliance of "God and Mammon." Given that just two of the more than 300 biblical metaphors for or references to money and market procedures support any kind of dualism between God and money, both perspectives can be highly distortive. This panel seeks papers that investigate beyond the "Money as God" or "God or Mammon" simplifications of this complex interaction. Because monetization is both the consequence of and cause of social changes, we seek papers that analyze and interpret this relationship while not losing sight of the complexity of the relationship between money/market and religion. How do other metaphors for money and religion conceive of and treat the relationship between the two? Are there differences among the preferred metaphors in the various sacred texts? Do European and American theologians differ in their understandings of the relationship between the two, or in their choice of text or metaphor to explain their positions?

#### Panel 7: Modern Capitalism, Secularization and New Spiritualities

This panel pursues two basic questions: How can we reconcile the oft-made claim that modern capitalism is an essential factor in the process of secularization and the common understanding that in America the marketplace nurtures religion? Is America an exception, or is its market-driven denominationalism simply another version of secularized modernity? Secondly, we invite papers investigating how the marketplace factors into the development of new forms of spirituality in the context of secularity.

#### Panel 8: Made in America?: Religious Imports and Exports

The import of different religious traditions to the American (religious) marketplace has led to a highly productive transformation of ideas, products and even religious protagonists. Zen Buddhism, yoga and Kabbalah are just a few examples of how religious imports are re-made in America and thereby turned into highly attractive goods ready to be exported. This panel wants to raise the question if and how various religious imports are re-made by entering the religious marketplace of the United States, which serves as a kind of catalyst for a vibrant global religious marketplace.

#### Panel 9: Media, Religion and the Marketplace

This session seeks to interrogate the relationship between media and religion within the marketplace. We invite papers dealing with the connections and intersections between religion and the media in the United States, from the institutions of mass production and mass transmission to the unique material media used by religious practitioners in their everyday lives. How do mediated rituals constitute and define their audiences even as the audiences define the rituals? In what ways do the exchanges between religion and media—whether aesthetic, sensory or technological—contribute to the construction of dynamic cultural narratives, and how do these narratives relate to the social (or individual) body? How do religion and media as technologies interconnect in the promotion of consumption and community formation, or in promoting the symbols and meanings through which contemporary culture is popularly understood?

#### Panel 10: Politics and Religion

American society is rooted in Enlightenment values. Its constitution is careful to separate church and state. Yet religion penetrates into politics and politics into religion. What is the nature, effect and implication of this permeable membrane? How far does it threaten the integrity of either?

#### Panel 11: The Literary and the Religious Marketplace in America

For this panel we invite papers exploring the complex interrelations between the literary and the religious marketplace in America from Puritan poetry to contemporary fiction. How has literature been used by different religious groups to spread their ideas and beliefs, and how have authors drawn on religious discourses to reach their audiences and sell their works? How did American authors view the connection between religion and the marketplace? What role did the marketplace play in the increasing sacralization of literature and literarization of religion since the Romantic age? How have authors responded to the tensions between the increasing commercialization of literature and the sacred qualities ascribed to it? Given that narrative fiction has become by far the most popular form of literature, how do narrativity and fictionality (and the reader's awareness of it) enable, complicate or contradict the potential religious functions of the modern novel?