



Dark, K. R., ed.

**Religion and International Relations**

New York: St. Martin's Press  
293 pp., \$75.00, ISBN 0-312-23067-2  
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In this interesting collection of essays, K. R. Dark, a lecturer in international relations at the University of Reading, and seven other British scholars "explore some of the implications of religious beliefs and religious change for world politics."

Two essays, by Scott Thomas and Dark, provide a conceptual overview of religion's role in influencing the conduct of world politics. In today's post-Cold War global society, the possibility that transnational religions can challenge the concept of secular national states and the "secular construction of international society" by creating "transnational ideational communities" has been greatly enhanced. Even though countries such as the United States and France still officially portray themselves as secular states, Dark maintains that the influence of religion and religious groups on the conduct of domestic and international politics everywhere is real and acknowledged by all. Christianity and Islam are more likely to have global political roles; Judaism and Hinduism will probably be limited to roles in specific states or regions.

Seven case examples are provided. Harriet Harris looks at Protestant Evangelicalism and concludes that it does not pose a threat to global stability. In a discussion of the role of churches in the conflict in former Yugoslavia, Peter Palmer emphasizes that although Croatian Roman Catholicism is part of a transnational church, the Serbian Orthodox Church is not, and the latter is therefore much more nationally introverted and tied to an ethnic and national identity. Christopher Wyatt successfully demolishes the idea that in Islam the West faces "a united threatening and Islamic monolith." Nazila Ghanaea's discussion of human rights and religious intolerance as reflected in the Iranian government's treatment of the Bahais delineates the issues created when rights of citizenship are specifically tied to membership in a particular religious group or faith.

C. Ram-Prasad examines the nature of what he designates as "hard" and "soft" Hindu nationalism and concludes that the role of Hinduism in determining India's foreign policy, including the testing of nuclear weapons, has been marginal with the exception of contributing to attitudes regarding Kashmir. Dark presents a statistical overview of religious change and growth in China and the Asia-Pacific region, noting that Islam and Christianity, especially Protestantism, are the two rapidly growing religious movements in the area, while the various Asian religions

remain static or in decline. Finally, Roger Williamson describes the Church of England between 1979 and 1997 as an independent organization actively involved in international aid projects and consciously taking public positions on various issues of international concern.

Common to all the authors is a thorough familiarity with the current literature in the field, as indicated by the extensive footnotes and nearly 850-item bibliography. The volume is clearly intended for those with professional interest and training in religion or the field of international relations.

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McNeill, J. R.  
**Something New Under the Sun:  
An Environmental History  
of the Twentieth-Century World**

New York: W. W. Norton  
416 pp., \$29.95, ISBN 0-3930-4917-5  
Publication Date: March 2000

Drawing on Ecclesiastes for his title, J. R. McNeill rewords the verse to argue that there is indeed something new under the sun, that "the place of humankind within the natural world is not what it was" (xxi). Twentieth-century people have changed the environment in unprecedented ways according to McNeill, a professor of history at Georgetown University. He seeks to demonstrate that ecological and socioeconomic history must be viewed together to comprehend the past fully. In the twentieth century humans brought about significant and rapid changes in the environment that were often unintended and always a complex mix of social, political, economic, and intellectual factors. Additionally, these human actions have occurred in the general context of an agreeable, moderate climate, cheap energy resources, and abundant water accompanied by escalating population and economic growth. The environmental changes that people wrought will most likely require adaptation to the new conditions; however adjustment will not be swift or easy.

McNeill explains that his focus is anthropocentric and that the changes in the natural world that he has documented will not be judged as positive or negative. Rather, environmental change has been varied in its influence. For instance, a project such as the Aswan Dam may be good for some people, classes, societies, or species and bad for others. McNeill describes projects that transformed the environment, and then he evaluates the effects as fairly as possible. Yet overall, the book clearly reveals the lasting damage that has been done and the reality that human-induced change always has unintended consequences that hurt or destroy some living things, even entire ecosystems.

McNeill discusses his main themes of economic growth, population expansion, and energy use in the prologue. The atmosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere are discussed in part 1. "Engines of Change," part 2, examines the complexities of population growth and its effect on nature, urbanization, energy regimes (coal and oil), technological change, the economy, ideas, and politics. Examples from around the world illustrate McNeill's points. For instance, the Aral Sea in the former USSR was the victim of "the single greatest irrigation disaster of the twentieth century," McNeill argues persuasively. Its demise was brought about by "arrogant political and scientific elites, justified in the name of the people" (162).

Although McNeill tried to avoid a treatise that condemned all environmental change, his evidence shows that humans' exploitation of nature has been destructive, serious, and is still continuing. Whether people will have the will power, political influence, and intelligence to save the environment and themselves is not clear. McNeill's book is thought-provoking and accessible to a popular audience. Maybe it will stimulate readers to think and take action.

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Micale, Mark S., and Robert L. Dietle, eds.  
**Enlightenment, Passion, Modernity:  
Historical Essays in European  
Thought and Culture**

Stanford: Stanford University Press  
507 pp., \$75.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper  
ISBN 0-8047-3116-0 cloth  
ISBN 0-8047-3117-9 paper  
Publication Date: May 2000

The editors and prominent contributors to this volume hope not only to honor Peter Gay but to rehabilitate intellectual and cultural history. Whereas those fields of study had formerly been found guilty of the sin of elitism—concentration on the "great thoughts" of "great men"—they have now assimilated the leveling insights and methods of social history, anthropology, literary theory, gender studies, and studies of popular culture. The essays collected here are therefore intended to serve as signs of an academic renaissance. The subjects to which the authors apply their fresh approaches are those that have long preoccupied Gay himself—the Enlightenment, the Victorian middle classes, cultural modernism, twentieth-century Germany, and psychoanalysis.

As in Gay's work, one can discern a common theme: hostility to Christianity—there is no volume on Christian belief and practice in his *Bourgeois Experience* series—and an almost religious commitment to rationalism and paganism, redefined as secular humanism. W. F. Bynum discovers in Cardinal Newman's undistinguished brother the