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**J.T.S. Madeley's**  
**'Religion and politics'**

Madeley, John T.S. (ed.)(2003) *Religion and Politics*. Ashgate Publishing (The International Library of Politics and Comparative Government): 724 pp. ISBN 1 85521 906 9.

It must have been tremendously difficult for John Madeley to make a final decision regarding what essays to include in the anthology *Religion and Politics*. Even with a length of over seven hundred pages, the subject is obviously too ripe with complex nuance, interdisciplinary overlap, subject interconnection and methodological strategy to be covered in a single volume. Nevertheless, despite the inherent difficulty of providing a comprehensive volume in a subject this complex, Madeley manages to deliver a robust examination into the interconnected relationship between religion and politics.

There is no specific normative conclusion to the volume. The goal of *Religion and Politics* is to examine the interdisciplinary, methodological and comparative relevance of religion in the study of politics. The volume's strength comes from the fact that various approaches are presented without an overwhelming representation of any particular view. In this regard, Madeley has selected essays for the anthology that represent a balanced line between various world religions, political structures, methodological approaches, theoretical conclusions, and statements for the future direction of religious/political scholarship. By creating a balance between various subject areas, the anthology maintains a solid comparative nature and guarantees relevance for anyone interested in religion and politics.

The volume is divided into four sections. Each section contains seven essays from various political and religious scholars. Although the essays are loosely associated within their respective sub-headings, each essay explores different depths and methodological approaches to the subject. Considering the vast richness of the essays, a summary review of each section can only provide limited generalities.

The first section, 'Religion and Regime', presents a series of essays that analyse how various religions react and interact with different political structures and regimes. Many methodological subjects are explored throughout this section and they cannot be summarised without an expansion beyond this review. Nevertheless, the most interesting comparative feature here is the use of historical methodology. One common theme that seems to pervade the essays within this section, is an attempt to understand the historical context of certain religious movements and the theoretical relevance of historical analysis to modern day research.

Section two, 'The Politics of Church-State Relations', attempts the impossible task of providing a comprehensive discussion in comparative church-state political analysis. Needless to say, this section only scratches the surface of what would otherwise be a topic worthy of several volumes. That said, the essays manage to span considerable distance and provide interesting case studies in almost every global region. One particularly interesting essay is provided by Mark Juergensmeyer, where he explores the distinction between religious fundamentalism and 'religious nationalism' suggesting that political motivations are often eclipsed by a general overuse (and misuse) of the term fundamentalist. The essay suggests that religion-based political movements often seek a national order and therefore are as equally politically motivated as they are religiously based. This essay in particular has considerable theoretical implication in current liberal debates concerning how to approach a conception of fundamentalism in political discourse.

The third section, 'Religion and Electoral Politics', is more straightforward than other sections. The section provides exactly what the title suggests, an examination of the role of religion in electoral politics. Several great case studies are included within this collection of essays. For example, anyone interested in the electoral impact of the

Orthodox Church in Russia or the electoral significance of the Religious Right in the United States of America, will find the essays by Stephen Write and Steven Bruce considerably enlightening.

'Religion, Public Policy and the Politics of Identity' and the essays making up section four of this volume are perhaps the most relevant to current social science research. The section deals directly with the role of religion in current liberal debates regarding public policy. The section also provides essays dealing with the role of religion in cultural identity and in the formation of identity based politics. Given the current situation in former Yugoslavia and the religious nature of new public policy in post-war Iraq, not to mention the ongoing debates of religion in liberal public policy, this section provides considerable methodological and theoretical considerations for future research in these areas.

As a whole, the interdisciplinary implications of *Religion and Politics* are numerous, but largely not linked together. Since the anthology contains 28 different essays, comprised of a vast number of different case studies, subject particularities, methodological approaches and conclusions for future research focus; the interdisciplinary relevance will have to be garnered by the reader. For what *Religion and Politics* provides, is a collection of essays, which present the wide application and implications of religion in political studies. Therefore, individual authors within their respective essays provide the connections made between various disciplines and research methods. Any cross application of various themes and methods within the volume will have to be made by the reader.

If a critical concern exists with this anthology, the concern is not with what is in the volume, but what was left out (although with a book of 724 pages you have to make cuts somewhere). In my opinion, the volume could have been improved by providing a more detailed discussion of religious fundamentalism in relation to international politics. Of course, some of the essays do discuss the political implications of religious fundamentalism, while various case studies within the volume also consider the political effects of fundamentalist movements. However, considering the global fallout and

international focus on religious fundamentalism since September 11<sup>th</sup>, I was hoping for greater attention in this area.

Nevertheless, there is little, if anything, to complain about in *Religion and Politics*. Madeley has successfully composed and edited an anthology of impressive and politically relevant essays. The essays not only show the interconnectedness of religion and politics, but also illustrate why this area of study is so important to current political issues. The book should not only appeal to academics, researchers and students, but should also benefit anyone interested in the study of religion and or politics.