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Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred C. Stepan, Monica Duffy Toft, eds. *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 336 pp. $99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-982797-8; $29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-19-982799-2.

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Preston on Shah et al., *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*

Are the disciplines of international relations theory (IR) and international history (IH) undergoing a religious turn? Both were long in thrall to the realist paradigm before being diversified and complicated in the last few decades by constructivism and its offshoots (IR), and the cultural turn (IH). Constructivism and the cultural turn emphasized forces and factors other than the traditionally realist preoccupations of power and security. Yet even with these new modes of thinking, ones more attuned to culture, religion remained ignored by IR constructivists and IH culturalists alike.[1] In international history, American diplomatic historians began to incorporate religion just over a decade ago. In IR theory, as Timothy Shah points out in his incisive and instructive introduction to *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*, it wasn't until 9/11 that social scientists began to examine the role of religion. But once they did, religion began popping up everywhere. International historians have undergone a similar transformation, as a quick scan of the pages of many recent issues of the journal *Diplomatic History* will attest. Religion has gone from periphery to center in only a few years.

Yet as Shah and the other contributors repeatedly point out in this splendid volume, the influence of religion in world affairs remains intensely controversial among academics and foreign policymakers alike. Many seek to marginalize religion as either a pernicious, conflict-inducing force that should be eradicated from international politics; many others still see it as an irrelevance, with no causal role beyond the activities of extremists and terrorists. Thus if we are indeed in the midst of a "religious turn," it is not yet complete.

This book goes some distance in explaining why. Thankfully, the usual complaint about edited volumes–that the chapters are of uneven quality–does not apply here. Shah and his co-editors, political scientists Alfred Stepan and Monica Toft, have assembled a first-rate group of contributors who have produced first-rate essays. For anyone interested in the role of religion in international affairs, *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* is an indispensable and authoritative guide.

After Shah's introduction, the book consists of eighteen chapters divided into six sections. The chapters are concise, usually fifteen pages or so, and each contains an invaluable annotated bibliography. Part 1, with essays by J. Bryan Hehir, José Casanova, and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, examines secularization in theory and practice. Part 2, with essays by Stepan, Rajeev Bhargava, Robert F. Hefner, and John Witte and M. Christian Green, focuses on religion's relationship with democracy and human rights. Part 3, with essays by Toft and Daniel Philpott, looks at religion's role in global peace and conflict.[2] Part 4, with essays by Michael Barnett, Katherine Marshall, and Thomas Banchoff, explores the religious influence on humanitarianism. Part 5, perhaps the book's most novel and innovative, contains an essay by Mehrzad Boroujerdi and Nichole J. Allem and an essay by Diane Winston on religion and the media. The sixth and final part consists of essays by Walter Russell Mead, Thomas F. Farr, and Frederick D. Barton, Shannon Hayden, and Karin von Hippel on the role of religion in U.S. foreign policy. *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* concludes with a helpful appendix containing an Internet resource guide with detailed annotations on many of the most important Web sites that grapple with the relationship between faith and international politics.

Rethinking Religion and World Affairs is so rich, so intelligent, and so interesting in a variety of ways that it would be impossible to summarize here in a brief review. Suffice to say, this volume will be essential reading for anyone interested in religion and international relations. Still, a few common themes stand out and are worth men-

tioning here.

In many ways, this book is an implicit challenge (and, for several of the contributors, an explicit retort) to Samuel P. Huntington, the Harvard political scientist whose 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations* argued that religion would be a primary cause of conflict in the post-Cold War world. While several of the contributors to *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* acknowledge religion's role in provoking and sustaining social and political violence, most are at pains to stress that religion is just as often a source of democracy and human rights promotion, humanitarianism, conflict resolution, transitional justice, truth and reconciliation, and sustainable and equitable development. The few scholars who had looked at religion before 9/11, such as Huntington, were guilty of exaggerating its tendencies towards violent conflict; they told us only one side of a very complicated, multifaceted story. This equation of religion and irrationality, prejudice, and violence became conventional wisdom in the mostly secular academy. As Hehir artfully puts it, "Holy war always sounds more ominous than simply war" (p. 17), and for most scholars religion posed only problems and never solutions.

Many of the chapters follow Casanova's lead by going further than simply pointing out that religion has been grossly neglected in IR theory to make the normative argument that religion should be a part of world politics in practice. Even a self-confessed one-time skeptic like Barnett, in his eloquent and fascinating chapter on faith and humanitarianism, has converted to the cause, and it's not hard to see why. Not all readers will agree, but it is difficult to argue with the logic, and particularly the wealth of case studies and other examples, marshaled by the contributors. And as is evident in Mead and Farr's compelling chapters, anyone who tries to marginalize or ignore religion in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy typically runs into headaches.

Yet we must also bear in mind Toft's admonition that religion can spur international tension, conflict, and terrorism, and even make wars more incendiary and difficult to end. If *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* can be read as something of a primer on how religion can be used for the benefit of humankind, it also sheds significant light on how religion stimulates the darker side of human nature. Yet the real value of the book lies in the spaces in between, by illustrating how religion can facilitate peacemaking and conflict resolution. However, there are no easy answers to a phenomenon such as religion, that is so complex and varied, and its interactions with and influence on the international system. As Witte and Green point out, since the 1970s religion has been partly responsible for the spread of human rights (something Bhargava and Philpott insightfully demonstrate in their very different but complementary essays), but it has also been partly responsible for the spread of ethnic conflict and civil wars. Reconciling these two impulses will be difficult, but it will also be of the utmost necessity. At least we have this thoughtful book to help guide the way.

Notes

[1]. For the neglect of religion in IR, see Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). For the neglect of religion in IH, particularly U.S. diplomatic history, see Andrew Preston, "Bridging the Gap between Church and State in the History of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 30 (November 2006): 783-812.

[2]. Here the authors are drawing on, as well as augmenting, their work with Timothy Shah in a major recent book: Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011).

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