

Peter Clarke, *New Religions in Global Perspective*. Routledge, London and New York, 2006, pp. xx + 385, ISBN10: 0-415-25747-6 (hbk), ISBN10: 0-415-25748-4 (pbk).
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New Religions in Global Perspective is one of the best books on New Religious Movements (NRMs) since the beginning of the twenty-first century. This piece of work not only deals with the most up-to-date research on NRMs and the New Age but also thoroughly approaches these religions and spiritualities from the four corners of the globe. The main point is that to fully appreciate the impact of NRMs, one needs to move beyond a regional standpoint and that this phenomenon, to be fully understood, needs to be placed in the context of a global society. Having myself studied NRMs from various regional standpoints over the years, I was indeed pleased to discover the veracity of this statement.

There are six parts to this book. The first addresses the theories on NRMs from a global perspective and explores their account of hostility from various governments and more mainstream religions. This part also situates the New Age Movement within this global perspective. The following four parts explore this global new religious phenomenon through specific regions in the world, with Part II focussing on 'New Religions in the West', Part III on 'New Religions: North Africa and the Middle East, and Africa, south of the Sahara', Part IV on 'NRMs in South and Central America and the Caribbean', and Part V on 'New Religions of South, Southeast and East Asia'. The final part explores some future trends, especially the distinguishing features of NRMs and of new forms of spirituality.

What is particularly useful about this book is that the four parts which explore the various NRMs in the world contain interrelated chapters and sub-sections. This makes this book a strong source of information as it does more than simply list the various groups in an encyclopaedic fashion; it describes these NRMs in a global perspective and thus underlines the various transnational connections, and other global factors, among these groups. To help with the understanding of the rise of these NRMs in a global context, Peter Clarke also underlines the changes within mainstream religions to give a clearer account of the phenomenon.

Readers of the *Australian Religion Studies Review* will especially be delighted by the section on the Australian case, through the coverage of many of the contributors to the same journal.

Peter Clarke provides us with an excellent contemporary theoretical account of the field and a comprehensive source of information on a plethora of religious groups, and for this reason, I strongly recommend it. This book would be excellent as a textbook on NRMs for undergraduate and postgraduate students. For experts in the field, it offers a clear light on the most current debates in the field and covers so much across the globe that any scholar will certainly find room to learn more about a few groups and/or about the national and global context of these groups.

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