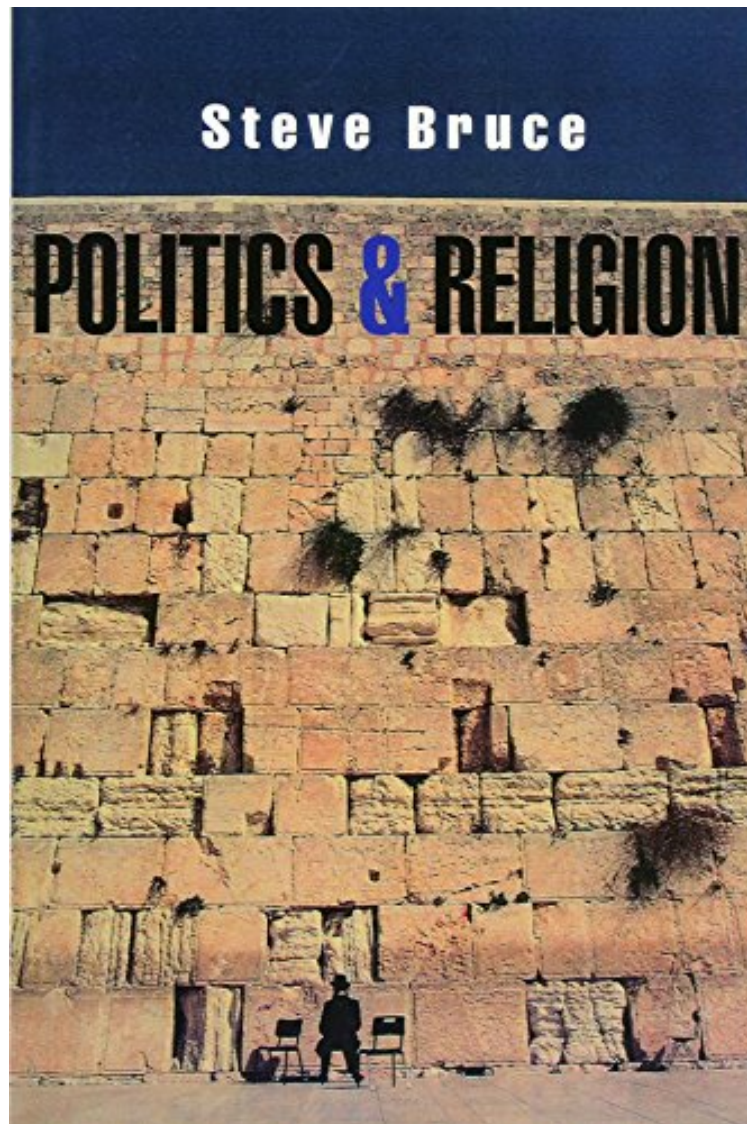


Politics and Religion

Steve Bruce

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Steve Bruce : Politics and Religion before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Politics and Religion:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Sweeping, erudite, and insightfulBy Phil ZuckermanBruce is my favorite sociologist of religion. His CHOICE AND RELIGION is a masterful refutation of Stark's work, and his GOD IS DEAD delves into the realities of secularization in Europe with data nd theory soundly enmeshed. This new book is amazing. It covers an enormous amount of territory. Bruce has been carefully studying religion for decades, and it

shows. His knowledge is truly sweeping. Bruce lays important criticisms as Muslim societies. He discusses why liberty, democracy, gender equality, and basic liberal tolerance are largely absent from most Muslim nations. Having several friends who must endure the hell that is modern-day Iran, his discussion is readily applicable and important. I applaud his willingness to critique Islam, and Muslim societies, in the face of those who will fault him for being "culturally insensitive." His explanation for secularization in Europe largely echoes Berger's SACRED CANOPY. I fear his dismissal of the Christian Right in the USA may be a bit optimistic and naive. He suggests that for all its PR hype, the CR has largely failed in most of its goals. However, the current political climate in this country seems to suggest greater strength of the CR, not diminished. We'll see. Finally, the greatest strength of this book was also its greatest weakness -- it was so sweeping in its analysis, and so inclusive of so many themes, topics, religions, countries, developments, etc. -- that at times it felt like almost TOO much. Nearly every theme/case study raised in this book could comprise a separate book in and of itself. Bruce's work on religion demands careful consideration and attention. He is brilliant.

Steve Bruce draws on material from all over the world and from all religious traditions to explore the complex links between religion and politics. He shows that, while social, economic and political circumstances shape the political choices and actions of believers, religion still matters. Although the major world faiths have at times been associated with every conceivable political agenda, there remain important differences between Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Confucian, Shinto and Muslim politics.

"Bruce is consistently rigorous and disciplined, literate and humane, as he brings the sociology of religion into the center of public issues and debate. A major contribution by a mature sociologist, this book should be required reading for all those concerned with the prospects for freedom and rationality in a frightened and frightening world." Richard K. Fenn, Princeton Theological Seminary "There are two things to be said about this book apart from the characteristic acumen, learning and clarity Steve Bruce brings to the major issues of religion and politics. First, that those who so often publicly air their views about the dire consequences of religion should here learn the kind of social scientific work they need to undertake to render mere opinion serious. Second, that it will be worth watching the reactions of all those involved in the intellectual scandal of political correctness to so trenchant, courageous and even-handed a treatment of "sensitive" topics." David D. Martin, London School of Economics "In many respects, this book contains all the hallmarks of Steve Bruce's writing: it is bold, provocative, clear and fluent...he [the author] has provided food for thought, and a welcome introduction to the place of religion in the modern world" Grace Davies, Church Times "I commend this book as a very good and judicious introduction and review of a contested and fraught subject: the inter-relationship between faith and politics." Theology "It contains a great deal of useful history and analysis, clearly presented, and it focuses on an insufficiently studied area of social science." Malcom Brown, Cambridge Theological Federation "Bruce draws on a dazzling array of cases across the globe and across time to explore the nature of the relationship between religion and politics...this is an excellent book. Its range is extraordinary, its arguments clearly laid out, and its writing clear and lucid." Clyde Wilcox, Political Science Quarterly "Steve Bruce's Religion and Politics takes a different approach to the question of religion's resurgence in the aftermath of the Cold War. A sociologist by training, he takes the reader through the role of religion in politics in an encyclopedic manner, using a comparative case study approach. ...It is here that reader begins to understand the enormous depth of his investigation--a quality that is maintained in each chapter. ...Religion and Politics [is] a welcome addition to a growing and much needed new body of scholarship in international relations. James F. Rinehart, Troy State University

From the Back Cover Islamic fundamentalists wreck the financial heart of New York; Hindus destroy a mosque at Ayodhya; Orthodox Jews battle Palestinians for possession of holy sites; in Egypt, Israel and India political leaders are murdered by religious zealots. In many parts of the world, religion combines with ethnic and national conflict to stimulate political militancy. The collapse of Communism and the failure of Western secular models of development have stimulated the revival of religiously inspired nationalisms. Even in stable affluent democracies, religion is a powerful influence on political preferences. It affects lifestyle concerns such as abortion, gender roles and gay rights. It influences economic attitudes. It shapes the alignments of political parties. Believers try to influence governments and, although most governments in principle tolerate religious diversity, many still attempt to regulate religious behaviour, particularly that of new religious movements. Steve Bruce draws on material from all over the world and from all religious traditions to explore the complex links between religion and politics. He shows that, while social, economic and political circumstances shape the political choices and actions of believers, religion still matters. Although the major world faiths have at times been associated with every conceivable political agenda, there remain important differences between Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Confucian, Shinto and Muslim politics.

About the Author Steve Bruce is Professor of Sociology at the University of Aberdeen and a Fellow of the British Academy