



Summer 2006

Earthly Powers: The Clash of Religion and Politics in Europe From the French Revolution to the Great War (Book Review)

John B. Roney

Sacred Heart University, roneyj@sacredheart.edu

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Recommended Citation

Roney, John B. "Earthly Powers: The Clash of Religion and Politics in Europe From the French Revolution to the Great War" (Book Review). *Journal of Church & State* 48.3 (2006): 679-680.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Earthly Powers: The Clash of Religion and Politics in Europe From the French Revolution to the Great War. By Michael Burleigh. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005. 529 pp. \$29.50.

Michael Burleigh has studied the interplay of religion and politics in post-French revolutionary Europe. While long recognized as one of the grand struggles in world history, until very recently the critical study of the religious foundations of secular states remained relatively unstudied. While George Weigel's *The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America, and Politics Without God* is a more popular study, Joseph Byrnes's *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France* is a more direct case study of the legacy of Catholicism in the French psyche. Burleigh widens his study to include France, Great Britain, Germany, and Russia, which reflects his numerous books on central Europe and Germany. Burleigh's book is well researched, well written, and accessible to the general public. He investigates the role of many social philosophers, such as Rousseau, Herder, and Comte, or the activists, such as Robert Owen and Leon Harmel. Together with a thorough comparative study, however, many conclusions lay hidden or unspoken, and more synthesis is still needed.

The specific focus of this book follows the development of the politics of religion and the religion of politics. Perhaps the title of chapter five has encapsulated this theme well: "Chosen People: Political Messianism and Nationalism," for the main issue is that there has never arisen a real replacement for the social function of religion in society, yet the "clash" was due to the fact that they were competing for the same thing. Other authors have recently selected this theme as well, including *Many Are Chosen: Divine Election & Western Nationalism*, edited by William Hutchinson and Hartmut Lehrman, and Anthony D. Smith's *Chosen People: Sacred Sources of National Identity*. While the French Revolutionary leaders set out to drastically reduce the political and economic power of the Church, they soon realized the internal power that inculcated social values and responsibilities. Very few nineteenth-century politicians could afford to ignore the social function of religion, and the growing nationalism was ripe for mining this power. The progress of nations and a new grand narrative replaced Divine providence, yet as Tocqueville reminds us, these new civic religions were incomplete in themselves. Despite the loss of social position, religious devotion and social activity survived; the Catholic Church in France had an increase after the 1860s. Where religion was not connected to the state, it had an easier time attracting the mass of working-class people. Dissenting and non-conformist Protestant churches had a far easier time in attracting social programs.

Whereas on the Continent the Roman Catholic Church was synonymous with conservatism, in Britain it had far more appeal to the many Irish workers in London. Ending this study at the opening of WWI, Burleigh shows that despite the struggle to eliminate official religion from the state, "Everywhere clergy and theologians played a considerable part in justifying participation in the war, whether in terms of its justness and virtue, or by claiming that God was with their nation's defensive struggle" (p. 439).

JOHN B. RONEY
SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe. Edited by James T. Richardson. New York: Kluwer Academic Press, 2004. 570 pp. \$216.00 cloth; \$97.95 paper.

This compilation of essays by editor James T. Richardson explores the myriad ways in which religious groups, especially new religious movements, are investigated, intimidated, and often restricted in their rights and activities. While the book displays a bias towards the Northern Hemisphere (specifically European countries), the range of nations and religious groups addressed is impressive and the quality of essays commendable. A few are worthy of special mention. James A. Beckford's contribution, "'Laïcité,' 'Dystopia,' and the Reaction to New Religious Movements in France" portrays an increasingly "alarmist" French culture that has promoted more direct cooperation between the French government and the nation's anti-cult institutions. That reaction, in Beckford's view, is based less "on anxiety about the loss of an organic social and cultural order" and more "on allegations of psychological manipulation, fraud and anti-democratic tendencies" (p. 29). Conversely, Michael Homer's essay on new religions in Italy demonstrates that "deregulation of the religious economy" is possible even in a nation with a long-established religious tradition, and new religious movements have found this de-regulated environment conducive "for religious freedom and even for their proselytizing activities" (p. 211).

While notable for their quality, Beckford's and Homer's essays are topically representative of those found in *Regulating Religion*. Underlying the book's focus on the regulation of religious groups is the idea that despite creative attempts to contain it, religion inevitably "finds a way." Reuel Hanks's investigation of "Religion and Law in Uzbekistan" points out how the disparity between "law on the books" and "law in action" often undermines social stability. In the case of Uzbekistan, the government's attempted suppression of Islam has created a void in the reconstruction of an Uzbek national identity. Hanks believes that void will be filled with some surrogate that contains a religious component, perhaps leading to consequences unforeseen by the regulating body. Governments often contribute to such identity crises and

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