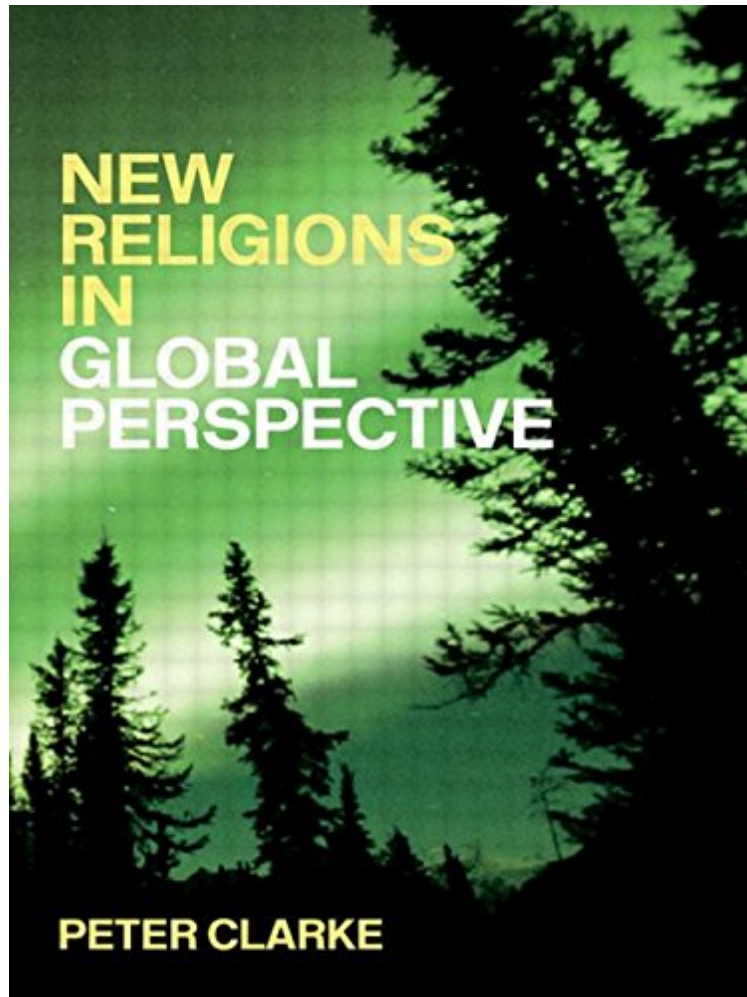


# New Religions in Global Perspective: A Study of Religious Change in the Modern World

*Peter B. Clarke*

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**Peter B. Clarke : New Religions in Global Perspective: A Study of Religious Change in the Modern World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised New Religions in Global Perspective: A Study of Religious Change in the Modern World:

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made a good business. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Welcomed Addition to the Study of Religion Spirituality By P. Cunningham "New Religions in Global Perspectives" by Peter B. Clarke (2006) is a good book, especially if you are interested in how humanity's religious sentiment is expressed in different and similar ways across societies and cultures in the modern (and so-called postmodern) world. Clarke's book is less profound than Needleman Baker's (1981) classic "Understanding the New Religions." It provides, however, a more balanced view of so-called New Age Movements (NAMs) than presented by Lewis Melton's (1992) edited "Perspectives on the New Age." Clarke thankfully avoids the polemics and loaded language that characterizes such books as Peters' (1991) "The Cosmic Self" and LeBar's (1989) "Cults, Sects, and the New Age," which not infrequently disparage NAMs as alternative faith systems to Christianity that turn man into God, while disingenuously accepting alternative conventionally-held Christian doctrinal tenets that turn God into man and the notion that the Son of God could be contained in one human frame. Drawbacks to the text are its cost, its over-attention to detail, and repetitiveness. The sticker price of the book is a bit of a shock. It costs over \$100 "used" as of this writing which I consider over-priced, especially for an .com book. My recommendation is to have an academic library purchase the book (or obtain a copy through interlibrary loan) and then borrow it as a patron to read. The first two chapters that provide defining characteristics of NRMs and NAMs are the best chapters of the book. Subsequent chapters outline NRMs as they appear in Europe, North and South America, the Caribbean, Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. These characteristics are presented in such excruciating detail that the global forest becomes lost in the local trees. The repetitiveness occurs as the author tries to make connections among the diverse geographical regions -- connections that are repeated within each chapter -- to establish the book's "global perspective" and to point out similarities across the multiple and diverse forms that spirituality and religion take in the human species. Positively, this is a scholarly work with references and a selected bibliography at the end of each chapter. These bibliographies are helpful aids for the student of cross-cultural psychology who is interested in pursuing the innovative character of new religious movements in more depth. One evocative idea that comes out of Clarke's work is the notion of "glocalization" -- the process of shaping the local religion and being shaped by it. It draws readers' attention to the emergence of "a new class (of seekers) that neither belongs nor believes. . . Even where affiliation to one faith only is still considered important, doctrinal tenets are increasingly seen as matters of personal opinion. . . .The possibility of multiple belonging becomes much more likely as religions come to reshape each other" (pp. 4-5). In other words, the various NRM and NAMs are shaping rather than displacing the form and content of traditional world religions, and giving rise to spirituality over religion and personal praxis over doctrinal tenets. Clarke's global perspective is appreciated at a time when much conventional research into the psychology of religion and spirituality is covertly ethnocentric. It complements the cross-cultural approach that academic fields such as transpersonal studies take in their study of the religious change that we as a species are experiencing today. For these reasons, this reader has found Clarke's book to be a welcomed addition to the scholarly literature of religious and spiritual change in the modern world.

Peter B. Clarke's in-depth account explores the innovative character of new religious movements and new forms of spirituality from a global vantage point. Ranging from North America and Europe to Japan, Latin America, South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, it is the perfect introduction to NRMs such as Falun Gong, Aum Shirikyo, the Brahma Kumaris, the Ikhwan or Muslim Brotherhood, Sufism, the Engaged Buddhist and Engaged Hindi movements, Messianic Judaism and Rastafarianism. Charting the cultural significance and global impact of NRMs, he discusses the ways in which various religious traditions are shaping, rather than displacing, each others understanding of notions such as transcendence and faith, good and evil, of the meaning, purpose and function of religion, and of religious belonging. He then examines the responses of governments, churches, the media and general public to new religious movements, as well as the reaction to older, increasingly influential religions, such as Buddhism and Islam, in new geographical and cultural contexts. Taking into account the degree of continuity between old and new religions, each chapter contains not only an account of the rise of the NRMs and new forms of spirituality in a particular region, but also an overview of change in the regions mainstream religions.

'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...I strongly recommend it.' - Adam Possamai, University of Western Sydney, Australia 'New Religions in Global Perspective is one of the best books on New Religious Movements (NRMs) since the beginning of the 21st century...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 wukk certainly find room to learn more.' -Adam Possamai, University of Western Sydney 'Creemos que la presente obra, enciclopédica en su formato, con buena bibliografía anglosajona, puede ser de ayuda para destinatarios muy diversos; estudiosos de las religiones actuales, políticos, pastores y sociólogos; til, por su

sistemizacin y contenido, para estudiantes universitarios que buscan conocer el momento actual del espectro religioso-espiritual del mundo.' Bibliographia Missionaria

About the Author Peter B. Clarke is Professor Emeritus of the History and Sociology of Religion at King's College, University of London, and a professorial member of Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford. Among his publications are (with Peter Byrne) *Religion Defined and Explained* (1993) and *Japanese New Religions In Global Perspective* (ed) (2000). He is the founding editor and present co-editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*.