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## Faust's "The Ethics of Violence: The Study of a Fractured World" - Book Review

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Ethics of Violence: The Study of a Fractured World.* By George H. Faust. New York: University Press of America, 1994. 207 pp. \$34.50.

In a monograph which covers an immense range of material, this book by George H. Faust treats the reader to a rare combination of world history survey and ethical analysis. Unlike most historical analyses which focus by necessity on a particular era and locale, *The Ethics of Violence* covers over two millennia of tribal warfare and national militarism on a global scale. Places and themes covered include: Latin Christendom through the American Revolution; Eastern Orthodox Christianity; Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union; Islam; a brief history and the future of China and Japan; the French Revolution; Western Europe and the United States; and Latin America, South Africa, and India in the world setting. While treatments of most significant events and developments are necessarily brief, the major ones are represented fairly adequately with remarkable conciseness and insight. All of this makes this book valuable at least for major collections.

Professor Faust's central approach assesses the religious, cultural, and ideological underpinnings of violence over the last two millennia and concludes with appropriate warnings about the need to transcend fragmentation of all sorts in order to avert greater violence and destruction in the future. This is especially urgent, according to Faust, as technological means for destruction expand. While these points are well taken, many of his treatments of the roots of violence appear shallow and unreflective, especially with regard to religious and cultural factors. Here many of the great constructive features of world religions are largely overlooked, including religious pacifism, and religious/cultural loyalties border on becoming new scapegoats for ancient and modern ills. Nonetheless, Faust's citation of religious and cultural connections to violence is certainly justified, although more nuanced analyses deserve to be performed.

Other criticisms include minor stylistic comments and a few refinement questions. For instance, the notes are all in italics, which blurs distinctions between books mentioned and accompanying commentary. Another mild distraction is the unusual number of typographical errors, which undoubtedly make author and editors alike wish for another round or two of proofreading. Colombia, for instance, does not have a "u." Also, the writing itself is at places choppy and disjointed, with many one-sentence paragraphs. These minor items, however, should not detract from the book's larger strength as a panoramic view of extremely broad topics—within a relatively brief space—synthesized into a meaningful whole in a cogent and manageable fashion.

In sum, Professor Faust's book offers the reader a rare stroll through world history, documenting ethics of violence and attempting to outline the roots of such. In doing so, a lifetime of research and information is availed the reader in ways sure to lead to further inquiry and investigation. The book is recommended as a helpful treatment of this broad theme and as a warning against

provincialism of all sorts. The need to transcend fractured realities of all stripes comes through clearly, and the extensive documentation of such a thesis serves the reader well.

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