

fine and well-ordered thinker and reflector on Christian faith will find here much to stimulate them.

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SECULARIZATION AND THE WORLD RELIGIONS edited by Hans Joas and Klaus Wiegandt, *Liverpool University Press*, 2009, pp. x + 325, £70 hbk, £14.95 pbk

Unexpectedly (for sociologists of religion) the term 'secular' has of late become a battleground over the place of Christianity in Europe and in British society in particular. For those within Catholicism, it has emerged as a nefarious process that marks the hostility of political and cultural elites who conspire to discredit and marginalise the faith. From the other side, it has become a strategy of desire to defenestrate Christianity, with all its antique prohibitions on sexual emancipation, from the public square. In short, the 'secular' has become the battleground for cultural wars.

Yet, despite, its significance and seeming fusion with modernity, the term is remarkably under-theorised and is deeply perplexing in sociology, not least because of a realisation, that when compared with the vitality and significance of religion in the USA, Europe is markedly exceptional. This suggests that there is something parochial if not misplaced about European, and especially British, assumptions that religion is fated to collapse with the advance of modernity. Also emerging is a realisation that secularisation embodies far more complex processes than many in contemporary disputes seem to realise.

Nobody seriously interested in debates on multiculturalism, faith communities and on the place of religion in modern society can neglect this highly important and original collection. It manages to draw out the distinctively Christian basis of secularisation, but at the same time points to the distinctive formats that emerge from the responses to modernity of non-Christian religions such as Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. Whilst these responses have been raised elsewhere in more specialist venues, it is difficult to think of an equivalent collection of essays that brings these issues together in an accessible way, hence its enormous value.

The collection, impeccably produced by Liverpool University Press (though sadly lacking an index) emerged from the *Forum für Verantwortung* series and is based on a conference, directed by Hans Joas, at the European Academy, at Saarland and held in April 2006. Impeccably translated by Alex Skinner, the essays are masterly, scholarly, highly readable and replete with many unexpected insights. With the exception of Casanova and Martin (both of whom are in fine form), the contributions are German in origin and this lends a further novel property to the collection. The introduction by Joas is exemplary. While many of the contributors are specialists in religion, their contributions flow well in a coherent and fruitful sociological direction.

Containing thirteen essays covering Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, the collection also has essays on the religious situation (as relating to secularisation) in Europe, the USA, and East Asia, the use of the European model of secularisation in relation to America and Africa, and a very original contribution on the desecularization of the Middle East conflict. Standing alone is Fischer's essay, chapter 8, 'Science Doesn't Tremble: the secular natural sciences and the modern feeling of life'. The essay has much to commend.

Fischer is professor of the history of science at the University of Constance and writes well, with authority and with a sense of topicality. By contrasting the forms of rhetoric employed in the natural sciences with that proper for characterising

the spiritual, Fischer draws out the intrusion of secularisation into modern thought where fear of the unknown seems to have been expelled. But his point is that even with 'the neutralisation of the cosmos' (pp. 203–4) a sense of disquiet still remains, but now one expressed as disenchantment, the loss of 'a harmoniously ordered whole' (p. 205). For him, the Designer always returns.

The trouble with secularisation is that as a concept it never sufficiently encompasses that which it stipulates: the disappearance of religion. The force of the collection is to demonstrate that too many permutations, too many exceptions, and too many conundrums defeat its aim to imperialise religion and eject it from the domain of modernity. The essay on Catholicism by Cardinal Lehmann (chapter 1) represents a missed opportunity to confront the dangers of secularisation, especially as these have been magnified by an ill-considered strategy to modernise ecclesial culture. By contrast, these perils are well recognised in Graf's essay on Protestantism (chapter 2). He draws out persuasively the individualism, the subjectivity, and the pluralism of Protestantism that involves the exercise of a calling within the world. As to be expected, Weber looms large in the essay. Facing the duty of seeking salvation by reference to this world, Graf asserts that 'Protestants were both empathic modernizers and utterly distraught by modernity' (p. 67). Invoking the theologian Mark Noll, Graf suggests they had 'the gift of ambiguity', characteristic of Lutheranism in particular, of living in the world but with awareness of being different from it (p. 76). As to be expected, Graf is useful on the influence of Protestantism on the formation of the German nation and politics (pp. 68–72). This essay enforces the sense that secularisation is a peculiar plight of Christianity and its efforts to accommodate to the gestation of modernity in Europe.

Secularisation is applied to Judaism in Otto's essay (chapter 3) where it is treated as an ambiguous process but one that generates distinctive forms of theologization peculiar to this faith. By way of background, Otto provides a useful summary of Weber on the Jewish religion which also had to reconcile demands of the other world with the entailments of this world (pp. 78–82). Otto suggests that 'the response to the disenchantment of the lifeworld was an ethical theologization which saw the secularized external lifeworld as a field to be shaped pragmatically in line with God's laws' (p. 101). The need to reconcile ties of Ancient Israel with accommodations to their modern state provided Jews with a distinctive form of secularisation. But Otto concludes that more than in Christianity, there is in Judaism 'a core of messianic non-conformity to the everyday lifeworld, which will be resistant to every compromise between transcendent God and the world'. In his reading, the coming of Christ into the world generates a compromise with it, leading him to wonder if Christianity contains within its structure 'the seed of secularization, ultimately even its own self-abolition' (p. 107). This draws attention to the apocalyptic property of secularisation that renders it tolerable but intolerable. Such destructive seeds and ambiguities are treated as inapplicable in the case of Islam.

Whereas Christianity faced a diminishment of its public sphere of influence with the rise of the secular nation state, Islam suffered no such weakness, as Krämer indicates in chapter 4. He asserts that any separation of religion and state 'is an offence against Islam as well as a violation of Muslim identity – both individually and collectively' (p. 109). Secularisation, when it emerges, does so over the validity and application of the system of norms and values known as Sharia. Inhibitions on its practice in the West lend a pejorative property to Islamic responses to secularisation. One form of secularisation was treated as hostile, but another form simply did not apply, for as Krämer suggests, Islam holds no equivalent notion of church, let alone of one as separated from the state. The edifice complex has a particular application in Islam which Krämer asserts 'is a public religion par excellence. According to classical legal notions,

the minaret must be taller than all other buildings' (p. 119). The degree to which adherents of Islam are secularised in second and third generations in the West is not considered in the essay. When the contributors attend to Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, matters become truly anomalous and conventional understandings of secularisation become muddy.

In chapter 5, von Stietencron draws out well the problems Hinduism poses to advocates of secularisation. First, and most unexpectedly, he suggests that Hinduism is more a civilisation than a religion, given that four traditions have to be fitted under the definition (pp. 125–6). Hinduism seemed to be characterised by some of the properties of secularisation, but apparent before the advent of modernity. In its pre-modern form, it lacked a central authority, the codification of a belief, and binding forms of tradition. Only with the advent of modernity does it organise itself into a religion. The forces that gave rise to the de-construction of religion in the West generated the need for its construction for Hinduism, if it was to survive the pressures of modernity. Modernity generated competition from other religions such as Christianity and Islam and forced Hinduism in the direction of a coherence of belief rather than a state of incoherence. But it is in chapters 6 and 11, on Confucianism and Buddhism and religion in East Asia that the seemingly fixed relationship between secularisation and modernity becomes unstuck. It seems to have secularised itself as a religion without reference to the claims of modernity.

The disdain of the world to be found in Islam is even more sharply asserted in Buddhism. As Wagner suggests, Buddhism treated the world as secular from the beginning and this distancing formed the basis of renunciation and the seeking of salvation, values infused into the cultures the religion shaped by means of an all-pervasive monasticism. Again, the impression emerges that Buddhism was a beneficiary of modernity. Unlike Christianity, with its Incarnational ties to the world, Buddhism seemed to have an uncomplicated set of teachings devoted to the need to detach one's self from the world's allures. By treating the world as purely secular, Wagner suggests that Buddhism offered an uncomplicated escape from it (p. 152). Whereas Buddhism rendered itself immune to properties of secularisation, Confucianism seemed to flourish under its ethos as a form of state religion, but one whose gestation was pre-modern. As a result, compared with the Islamic world, Wagner asserts that 'Buddhist and Confucianist cultures of East Asia had no difficulties in assimilating the secular agenda of the modern nation state, including its nationalist and socialist variants' (p. 158).

In chapter 11, Gentz draws attention to the invention of new religions and the revival of more traditional versions in East Asia, again undermining the sweeping tenets of secularisation that religion is to be treated as a casualty rather than a beneficiary of modernity (p. 243). He suggests that in relation to China, modernisation did not lead to the secularisation of Buddhism but rather to its international revival (p. 248). He is particularly interesting on the way modernisation led the post-Revolution Chinese government to form a Bureau of Religious Affairs to work out which religions to recognise. He is especially good on the problems posed by the Falun Gong movement. In summary, Gentz suggests that in China, of late, 'secularization must also be understood as the redefinition of traditional teachings and practices within a new conceptual system. Here, the place reserved for "religion" was so greatly diminished that the continuity of religious traditions could be ensured only under a secular banner' (p. 262). Furthermore, Gentz claims that the traits of secularisation were to be found in Japan 'earlier than in Europe and independently of modernity' (p. 269). The difficulties of concluding whether secularisation did or did not occur in East Asia are well set out in arguments for and against the plausibility of its thesis (pp. 274–77).

On the religious situation in the USA, Latin America and Africa, Chapters 10 and 12, by Joas and Martin, illustrate further exceptions to European assumptions regarding the secularisation thesis. Chapter 7, by Brugger, on state-church models and their relationship to freedom of religion has some very useful schemas. But it is Casanova's contribution, in chapter 9, on the religious situation in Europe that requires comment. He draws out well the need for new interpretations of the secularisation thesis. It has a high degree of plausibility in regard to the former East Germany, the Czech Republic, and France, the most secular of all European societies 'countries in which religion as chain of collective memory is clearly disappearing' (p. 213). But he is right to suggest that this outcome relates less to modernisation and more to what he terms 'the particular historical dynamics of state, church and nation' (p. 214). Reversing the famous notion of 'believing without belonging', popularised by the English sociologist, Grace Davie, Casanova points to the reverse, of 'belonging without believing', a phenomenon to be found especially in Scandinavian countries (pp. 214–16).

In the end, one feels that Casanova is right to suggest that there is a self-fulfilling prophetic dimension to secularisation in Europe where the population accept its hegemony as normative. He is also correct to point to the transfer of collective affiliations with the imagined community from the church to the nation state (p. 220). The outcome was that the churches 'lost in the process their ability to function as religions of individual salvation' (p. 222). Finally, his comments on what he terms 'a post-secular Europe?' deserve close attention (pp. 223–8).

The ironic way the advance of modernity in the Middle East generates a process of desecularisation leads Kippenberg to note a dangerous point. With the advance of modernity, religion has become more and more difficult to understand and as it unexpectedly revives secularisation has generated a generation of religious illiterates (p. 321).

This collection will bring no comfort to advocates of secularisation, suggesting as it does that the process is not a one-dimensional trait of modernity but is infinitely more complicated. Nor will it give comfort to those who treat secularisation solely as a nefarious process. It can become a scapegoat and there is some justification for this treatment, but the danger is that this might distract attention from a much more fundamental point: the failure of Christianity to reproduce itself in the context of modernity in Europe. Compared to non-Christian religions, Christianity in Europe has made some unproductive capitulations to modernisation, uncoupled its own chains of memory, and lost what might give its religion its distinctive power: the provision of safe means for seeking salvation.

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