

makes a point about restricting itself to the sources themselves, can offer little scope for this. It is unfortunate that the author sometimes gives the impression of wanting to abandon the caution he elsewhere acknowledges to be necessary.

On the whole this book is a good and praiseworthy attempt to examine theologically the basis for a growth in the kind of practical dialogue that leads to harmony and peace in life. The reader expecting a comprehensive or revolutionary solution to the problems of different religions' attitudes to each other is likely to be disappointed. The difficulties of making statements in this area that do not go beyond fidelity to individual traditions come across clearly in the self acknowledged limitation to what the writer can hope to do and in the seeming tentativeness of the actual elements of the 'Abrahamic ecumene' suggested. Such cautious optimism, however, is surely the most likely to be acceptable and to bear fruit.

MARTIN GANERI OP

**MODERNITY AND RELIGION**, ed. Ralph McInerney, Indiana: *University of Notre Dame Press*, 1999. xii + 172 pp.

The relation of religion to modernity is a vexed and complex one. This is, indeed, the era of hot-housed secularism. This is, indeed, the era of advanced humanism, liberalism and secularism. Increasingly, from the post-modern perspective, the story of modernity's worship of reason, positivism, technology and science is the story of modernity's desacralization of the world. And that is the story told and retold through this volume. Louis Dupré tells it from its classical perspective. In the opening essay, he details the cultural change as belief in a cosmological schema collapsed beneath the nominalism of the late Middle Ages and gave rise to philosophical tendencies which promoted "the virulent anti-theisms of scientific positivism, of social determinism and axiological humanism" (p.15). François-Xavier Guerra tells the story from the perspective of the disintegration of shared ethical values. In the second essay, he outlines the historical movement from Machiavelli, Luther and Descartes to modernity's current crisis following the Second World War when the Church, as the last upholder of traditional values, was affected. Peter Koslowski tells the story by comparing the model of religion and social order in Christian theology - which strives to defend a position between individualism and collectivism - to liberal economic policy. He argues that they have much to agree about, but the liberal dream of a human and free society is only possible on the basis of a theological order. This is the only essay in the collection which views religion and modernity as allies rather than enemies. But given the extent and depth of the enmity outlined in the other articles Koslowski's conclusion seems somewhat

naive. The story of modernity is taken up with a specific focus by Emmet Kennedy, who specifically analyses the French Revolution and the developing worship of humanity as expressed in Comte's positivism. This is a fine piece of historical research, clearly written and interestingly illustrated, but (like Dupré and Guerra) the conclusion for the future of religion is bleak. He asks, "what believer in the modern West does not feel himself in a countercultural minority?"

The story of modernity being told then, frequently pines for a re-enchantment of the world in which theology again can have a respectable voice. A nostalgia is poignantly evident, even when (as with Guerra) it is denied. Concomitant with this nostalgia is a sense of being unable to see beyond the difficulties of modernity's legacy. Jude P. Dougherty, discussing the present shift in America from "a dominant Protestant to a secular or humanistic outlook" (p.131), concludes that the Western world-view itself is set to collapse unless Christianity gains attention, that there is little cause for optimism. Where the story of modernity ends in its nihilistic crisis (there are some contributors who seem to accept that the situation today is only the continuation, not the crisis, of modernity's project) a certain re-enchantment of the world is discernible. Simon Green and Ernest L. Fortin both observe that where science won the nineteenth century, "[r]eligion appears to be winning the twentieth, but doubts persist about the quality of that religion" (p.163). But the re-enchantment is leading to fundamentalism and religious neo-tribalism — as each conservative minority patrols its borders and observes its enemies. The re-enchantment is turning into an apocalyptic nightmare. Green ends his essay on multiculturalism in Britain (one of the best pieces of sociological analysis in the volume) with the warning: "There lies the possibility for the revenge of the periphery" (p.112). It remains to be seen, he tells us, what these minorities will do "if they see a chink in the centrist liberal society's armour" (p.113). Fortin plunges his observations on the "spiritual confusion, not to say bankruptcy, of modern life" (p.163) into a concluding lesson we can learn from Tocqueville on the joys to be gained and the perils to be avoided in Church-State relations.

The volume is cleverly edited, with essays developing from and perspectives (in France, Britain and America) paralleling each other, although the articles are not at all even in quality. But my question throughout this volume concerns the legitimacy of the story itself. The religion and modernity relationship is vexed and complex; more vexed and complex than this volume allows for. Recent scholarship in France has questioned whether Descartes conceived the *cogito* as the only source of truth; Nietzsche, for all his avowed nihilism, is a metaphysical thinker, a *Lebensphilosoph*; religion, far from being demythologized in modernity, could be read as remythologized (humanism reconstructs the myth of Prometheus, empiricism and positivism are secularized

retellings of immediacy and transparency previously conceived in terms of revelation or catalepsis). As it stands, the story of modernity told in this volume has all the streamlined characteristics of a polemical target, while the clerical armoury matched against it is repeatedly recognised as inadequate. What are we to do? Dupré and Guerra ask. What is to become of us? Green, Hitchcock, Dougherty and Fortin ask. Maybe the answers to those questions would be less negative if modernity itself is viewed as more varied. Postmodernity and modernity, Lyotard continually repeats, are not period concepts. Until we have a more nuanced view of the cultural shifts between the late Medieval period and today's eclecticism, despondency is to give away far too much far too early.

GRAHAM WARD

**RELIGION AND REVELATION. A THEOLOGY OF REVELATION IN THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS** by Keith Ward, *Clarendon Press*, Oxford, 1994. pp.350.

This book rests on the thought that a proper understanding of the Christian faith depends upon an acquaintance with the beliefs of other religions. For instance, we might suppose that our assessment of the idea that the Bible is an inerrant document should take account of the fact that other faiths have advanced the same kind of claim on behalf of their scriptures (p.325). In this sort of fashion, Ward develops a case for a 'comparative theology', which is to be distinguished from traditional theology by its inter-faith perspective, and which differs from religion studies on account of its interest in the truth (and not merely the history or sociology) of religious claims (p.40). A comparative theology can be undertaken from a confessional point of view, but the confessionalism of such an approach is to be tempered by a serious resolve to understand the other faiths on their own terms.

Ward applies this comparative method to the question of revelation in particular. He concludes that Christians have good reason to regard all of the major world faiths as revealed. Thus they may consider the Koran in the same light as the Old Testament, at least in so far as it is treated as more than a merely human construct (p.190); and in a similar way, Buddhism may be taken to provide a useful resource for Christian theology, for instance as a corrective to the tendency of some Christians to downplay the role of individual responsibility (pp.334-335). Ward's survey of the different faiths also includes a valuable discussion of primal religions. Here again, he proposes that Christians may regard other faiths as genuine conduits of revelation, even if these faiths are also subject to various distorting influences (p.80).

It is difficult to overstate the importance of this general project. And Ward is particularly well-equipped to undertake it, given his wide-