

no longer feel able to remain in the Church of England. No doubt these will be considered in any future edition.

A future edition may also give an opportunity to consider the arming of some chaplains during World War II, particularly (like my own father, an RAF chaplain flown into the siege of Imphal) during the Burma campaign (contrast p. 210 and Robinson, *Chaplains at War* (Tauris Academic Studies, 2008) at 160–61). In addition the Book of Common Prayer is no longer given statutory force by the Act of Uniformity 1662 (p. 200, note 152) as the relevant provisions have been repealed; however, the Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974, section 1, ensures that those forms of service continue to be available for use. As a footnote the Secretary of State has to date never exercised his powers under the Army Chaplains Act 1868, section 4.

Nonetheless, these are very minor matters that in no way detract from the enormous value of this work. It will remain the leading textbook for many years and we are deeply indebted to the author for such an important contribution to a subject that will continue of great importance both to individuals and constitutionally. The caption to the book is a quotation from Magna Carta – ‘*quod Anglicana ecclesia libera est*’ – and Professor Rivers ends his preface: ‘If this book revives and rearticulates that value in the very different circumstances obtaining eight centuries later, it will have served its purpose’ (p. x). He most certainly succeeds in the latter and deserves to succeed in the former.

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EXPLORING THE POSTSECULAR: THE RELIGIOUS, THE POLITICAL AND THE URBAN edited by Arie L. Molendijk, Justin Beaumont and Christoph Jedan, *Brill, Leiden, 2010, pp. xviii + 406, £106.00*

This collection of essays emerged from a conference, held in November 2008 and was organised by the Faculties of Spatial Sciences and of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. Perhaps illustrating its theme of the postsecular, the proceedings were held in a redundant Lutheran Church, one converted into a University conference centre. Though its price might render the collection beyond the reach of individual buyers, institutions with funds should really stock it. The collection is radical in conception and stimulating in its re-casting of religion as a resource of vitalisation in the city. Very Protestant in conception, with contributors drawn mainly from England and The Netherlands, the collection is very well edited and presented, most essays having ample bibliographies that open useful fields of unfamiliar literature in an unfolding debate of much significance.

There is much in Bernice Martin’s comment that ‘a cynical sociologist of religion might suggest the increasing use of the term “postsecular” indicates that Europeans who had taken for granted the irrelevance of religion in modern society have been forced to revise their views’ (p. 63). These can involve radical recastings, for instance, leading Beaumont to assert that ‘the public resurgence of religion is arguably one of the defining features of the 21st century, contrary to the modernist and secularist assumptions of much of the 20th’ (p. 8). Looming over the collection are Taylor’s *A Secular Age* and Habermas, who is regarded as placing the term ‘postsecular’ on the sociological map.

The contributors are split on the viability of the term, which appears unevenly in some of the essays. For some, a clean break with the nebulous term secularisation cannot be posited. Nevertheless, the collection demonstrates, amply, a change of attitude towards religion, no longer treating it as deadening and incompatible with modernity, but as exhibiting vibrant and positive properties in urban life and

expressed in a diversity of forms of faith and belief. In his introduction, Beaumont suggests that the value of postsecularity lies in offering opportunities to think about modernity and the city in ways beyond the limitations of secularisation (p. 6). As a consequence, the collection denotes a shift from the much-vaunted Anglican report, *Faith in the City*, which was devoid of theology, being basically an exercise in social policy with episcopal endorsements, to an interest in the unfolding of new forms of theological thought that suggest links with Cox's *A Secular City*.

The collection is also important in its exploration of the impact of faith-based organisations in civil society and in urban life in particular, thus indicating the way postsecularism recognises a crossing of the divide between religion and theology. Characterising this unexpected flourishing of religion attached to faith presents problems of encapsulation, hence the uncertainty surrounding the term postsecularity. Whatever its demerits, the term gives licence to the recognition of creedal issues in the public square and the realisation of an unexpected outcome of multiculturalism, of unthreading the patterns of modernity so firmly knitted by secularisation.

The collection contains twenty essays spread over four parts. The first lays out the field, the second deals with 'conceptualizing the postsecular', perhaps the strongest in the collection, the third on 'urban thinking and the religious' is uneven, but in parts interesting, and the fourth, deals with the 'public uses of religion'.

The second part commences with McLennan, who, having written much on the topic since 2007, regards postsecularism as providing 'the space to develop the kind of complex naturalistic socialism that the terms secularism and atheism only very crudely capture' (p. 61). He arrives at this conclusion via a vigorous (and accurate) characterisation of Taylor's *A Secular Age* (pp. 52–56). He invokes Gellner to offset with hard reason the Romanticism which he feels betrays Taylor's large work. Producing also an excellent account of Taylor (pp. 74–82), though not quite well attached to her interest in Pentecostalism, Bernice Martin provides a sceptical appraisal of postsecularism (and also of McLennan's take on the topic). The two best essays in the collection follow on, marking creative divisions over the significance of postsecularism.

Occupying a position of hostility to the term, Leezenberg produces a valuable critique of Habermas but one generated by reference to Islam, which makes the essay novel and unexpectedly insightful. He charges Habermas with utilising postsecularism but 'without sacrificing his theoretical architecture, his secularist normative assumptions' (p. 96). He is also insightful on the Internet and Islam.

By contrast and occupying a Christian Evangelical position, Gräß offers a positive reading of postsecularism, treating it as 'a correction of secularism' (p. 113). He suggests, rightly that 'modernity has started to produce religions in a new, postsecular way' (p. 119). The emergence of postsecularism 'is a result of our forgetting that religion can be understood as a personal experience close to aesthetic experiences', a formulation that was developed by Protestant theologians in the early 19th century (p. 113). For him, the conversion of religion to the inward signifies the advent of postsecularism, notably as expressing a response to the complexities of life in the city. Overall, this is a rich and thoughtful essay. Also in the second part, Zock's essay on personal identity and the postsecular is interesting but rather diffuse.

The third part starts with a stimulating essay from one of the editors, Molendijk, on the distinctive properties of the postsecular city which cause him to worry over the myth of its secular predecessor. In this essay, Simmel's writings on the metropolis are employed to good effect. Less convincing is de Haardt's essay on the sacred space for women in the city, which focuses on Filipina women in Hong Kong. As with others in the collection, Catholicism gets a bizarrely tiny amount

of attention. David Martin supplies a brilliant topographical survey of European cities, although the postsecular appears fleetingly. Also appearing in this part are essays on 'religion and the salvation of urban politics', on Ankara, Turkey as 'the end of the secular city dream', a useful piece on the compensations of religion in the postsecular city, and an interesting contribution on 'virtual re-evangelisation' by Oosterbaan. This last essay deals with the uses of the Internet for migrants from Brazil who use evangelical websites to bond and survive in Amsterdam and Barcelona. This is a suggestive essay. But the best essay in the third part is by Cloke.

Despite its slightly portentous title, 'theo-ethics and radical faith-based praxis in the postsecular city', this is an original, imaginative and thoughtful essay that exemplifies a counter strike against the narrowness of secularism. Milbank is cited to good effect to suggest, as Cloke writes, that 'material socialism has begun to invoke theology in order to visualize an appropriate ontology' (p. 226). The place of faith-based organisations in the city is well invoked to illustrate the rising significance of the term postsecular (pp. 224–30). The unsettlements of hyper-reality are well cast (pp. 230–38) though the linkage with what he terms 'post-Christendom' will not persuade true believers. For him, as new cultural identities are formed, there emerges what is designated as 'a politics of becoming', where 'the role of faith is most likely to be manifest in the postsecular nature of particular cities' (p. 239).

The fourth part deals with politics, inclusion, neo-liberalism, and prisons. Unfortunately, it is the weakest in the collection. It seems to mark a grand retreat from the viability of the term, postsecular. The section commences with a chapter by Jedan, one of the editors, entitled 'beyond the secular? public reason and the search for a concept of postsecular legitimacy'. It offers much, but has too much on Rawls and Audi, provides an odd detour into radical orthodoxy, and ends with a gloomy prognosis for a satisfactory concept of 'postsecular legitimacy' (p. 325). One had hopes that Beckford would supply a magisterial dismissal or commendation of postsecularism. Unfortunately, his essay is too much on prisons, on which he has written well elsewhere, and too little on the snags of postsecularism which he obviously despises. Sadly, the collection has no overall conclusion.

The value of the collection lies in its explorations of postsecularism from the unexpected angle of the city and to that degree offers a freshness of appraisal. All the essays have a sense of wrestling on the frontiers of secularism over which lies the post version, one without a stamp of identity or a postal address for theoretical or empirical collection. Collections derived from conferences are much to be appreciated and the convenors and editors have well fulfilled their obligations to their universities.

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