

THE ETHICS OF COMMUNITY by Frank G. Kirkpatrick (New Dimensions to Religious Ethics Series) *Blackwell, Oxford, 2001. Pp xiv + 183, £15.99 pbk/£50 hbk.*

The thesis of this book is that Society (which means, by and large, the nation state) is enriched if it gives space to and can learn from smaller intentional communities like churches, voluntary groupings etc. And those intentional communities need to acknowledge their symbiotic relationship with Society, sometimes learning from it (e.g. when Society goes ahead of Church in acknowledging the equality of women) and sometimes challenging it.

The book starts with an outline of the 'ontological foundation' of a Christian community ethic: this is that the Divine Agent intends that humans should flourish in freedom and community, living in accordance with God's intentions for us. Non-Christian communities might well in practice be living on the same foundation without acknowledging it. Particular human communities are ultimately oriented towards a universal human community 'bound together by God's love for it and the members' love for each other.'. The moral flavour of the ethic will be 'the building of relationships of trust, love, compassion and justice.'

Professor Kirkpatrick then explores the Scriptural foundations, the monastic tradition (extremely briefly, though with a reasonable exposition of St Thomas on private property, and including under this heading Calvin's Geneva, the Anabaptists and the Bruderhof which he spells with a double f.)

There follows a discussion of various communal experiments in America and of the impact of religious revival and various theological movements – the Social Gospel and Reinhold Niebuhr in particular – on the formation of the republic's ethos.

This historical section of the book indicates a certain lack within Professor Kirkpatrick's own scholarship; he is a lot more knowledgeable about post-Reformation developments than the earlier period, for which he depends on secondary sources. He does not inspire confidence when he writes of *koinonia* as though it were a plural word meaning little Christian communities.

This is a pity, because from then on, in his discussion of philosophical issues around community and society he writes intelligently and sensitively about John Macmurray, about libertarian and communitarian perspectives – indicating that there are very few writers who are unambiguously one or the other – and about the potentially fruitful interplay between communities and Society.

Towards the end of the book he acknowledges, almost as an afterthought, that there needs to be some discussion of the trend towards globalisation on our understanding of society. What I find to be lacking is any serious attention to our relationship with the eco-system, any concretisation of the discussion through a social science perspective, and any analysis of the social, political and ecological

impact of the liberalisation of economic systems worldwide.

The book is part of a projected series, co-edited by Frank Kirkpatrick, author of this book, who is Professor of Religion at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, and Susan F. Parsons of the Margaret Beaufort Institute at Cambridge. Projected topics of other books are gender, sex, nature and race.

COLIN CARR OP

TRANSCENDENT EXPERIENCE: Phenomenology and Critique by Louis Roy OP, *University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2001. Pp. xiv + 219, £42.24 hbk.*

Louis Roy, Professor of Theology at Boston College (USA), writes that the aim of this book is to 'kindle or rekindle existential and philosophical interest in transcendent experiences' (p.185). It is difficult to imagine how anyone seeking to reawaken or indeed nurture such interests could be disappointed in reading his work, replete as it is with philosophical argument and detailed analysis of some of the major contributions to discussion of the philosophy of religious experience of the last two hundred years. Among such contributions discussed are those of Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Otto, James, Heidegger, Rahner, Lonergan, S.Katz and R.C.Zaehner. When analysing the philosophies of religious or transcendent experience which emerge from 19th-century German Idealism, Roy shows himself to be well versed in the relevant scholarly literature, and offers his own considered judgments concerning such questions as the way Schleiermacher's later thought on religious experience is to be understood in relation to his earlier writing. However, when Roy involves himself in such debates he never loses sight of his principal goal: to gain insight into the phenomenon of transcendent experience itself.

The book divides into three sections. In the first section ('A Phenomenological Approach'), Roy surveys a number of attempts which have been made to provide a comprehensive taxonomy of transcendent experiences. He explains that his interest is in those human experiences which occur in ordinary life but are in some way extraordinary in their intensity. These moments attest in a forceful way to a human orientation to an 'All', an 'Infinity', a 'Divine Dimension'. Much of the argument of the book is concerned with affirming that this orientation is to something objective and authentic, and is not to be disposed of in some merely reductionist or emotivist fashion. In the first section of the book he offers what he considers to be a more complete phenomenological account of these experiences than those offered by some other researchers in the field whose work he surveys. He identifies four types of transcendent experience: aesthetic, ontological, ethical and interpersonal. He argues that six different elements may be seen in all such experiences: preparation, occasion, feeling, discovery, interpretation and fruit. Such types and elements are illustrated with examples taken from

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