



Joseph Runzo and Nancy M. Martin, *Ethics in the World Religions*, Oxford: One World Publications, 2001, pp. xvii and 374, £14.99 ISBN: 1851682473

Dedicated to Keith Ward and Chris Chapple, Volume III in The Library of Global Ethics and Religion boasts seventeen chapters by renowned philosophers, religious scholars and theologians from many world faiths. The Library (which includes *The Meaning of Life in the World Religions* and *Love, Sex and Gender in the World Religions*) stands in a tradition stemming from the first Parliament of World Religions in 1893 and offers perspectives from a diversity of religions on questions of religion and ethics. Convinced that religion is a social force in the new millennium, the editors express the hope that this force will be one for peace, wisdom and compassion, and speak of 'commonality and difference' amongst the diversity of religions represented in the book. What contribution, they ask, can and must the world's religions make in 'our increasingly global world'?

The essays are almost uniformly well-written and informative. Elliot N. Dorff's essay on fundamental convictions and methods of Jewish ethics is superb; a systematic account of the major features of Jewish ethics leads into specific observations on the family, education, community and the environment. Zayn Kassam's essay examines tensions between religion and culture in the relation between Islamic law or the *shari'ah* and international human rights conventions. Christopher Chapple writes informatively for those who know little about Jainism, discussing Jain identity, approaches to non-violence, cosmology and spirituality, and tolerance. John Berthrong outlines the root metaphors of Confucianism and describes a Confucianism for the twenty-first century in terms of 'concern' and 'civility'. The key ethical issues of non-violence, organ transplantation, and 'care' ethics, are examined across religious traditions, and Ram-Prasad, Mary Tucker and Brian Hebblethwaite present diverse views of global ethics from within their respective traditions.

The approaches taken towards relations between the religions vary considerably. Keith Ward does not seek 'some sort of agreed global



ethic' (p. 61) but looks for agreement amongst the religions on universal values: benevolence, liberty, truthfulness, justice and appreciation of the value of religion. His essay on 'Religion and the Possibility of a Global Ethic' articulates basic human goods and examines how different religions recognise and respect these. C. Ram-Prasad explains a Jainist belief in 'multiplism' that diverse and autonomous truths together constitute integratively a totality of truth. Brian Hebblethwaite investigates the distinctiveness of Christian social ethics and affirms the global aspects of Christian ethics from not only beliefs in natural law and human dignity but also from 'the gospel of the incarnation, the sacramental principle, the social theology of Trinitarian belief, and from specifically Christian eschatology' (p. 329). Other writers describe and analyse the ethics of the traditions in which they stand. Thus, whilst the Library of Global Ethics and Religion aims to offer 'a pluralistic and global perspective on questions of religion and ethics' (p. xvi), this Volume offers something related but different. It does not presuppose a single vantage point or meta-theory of pluralism from which it can be seen that all religions share the same ethical core. It does not abstract a general notion of ethics from the diversity of religious experience, but offers a more radically pluralist pluralism in which incompatibilities co-exist. The dialogue that the book represents is respectful of otherness but unafraid to hear truth-claims that might conflict.

Ethics in the World Religions would serve as a useful textbook or a 'dip in' book for the general reader. I recommend it warmly.

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