It is a remarkably comprehensive, lucid and convincing account which brings coherence to Peirce's religious thought at the cost only of quieting the tensions which may persist between Peirce's pragmatism and his system.

Drew University

Peter Ochs


These twelve papers were selected from a symposium commemorating the two-hundredth anniversary of the Virginia Statute held at the University of Virginia in 1985. The statute is reproduced as passed, and without two philosophically interesting passages included in Jefferson's 1777 version. The inclusion of several of Jefferson's relevant letters (to: Danbury Baptists, Peter Carr, and Thomas Law), as well as Madison's "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments" and "Detached Memoranda" would have been helpful. Two of the best articles deal primarily with Madison's views on religious establishment. Still, this is a well edited collection of essays on the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.

The authors develop the themes of the religious dimension of American life and the roles of Madison and Jefferson in limiting its public place. Sometimes there is direct dialogue between the authors: J.G.A. Pocock's remark that Rorty's view of democracy gives priority "to those for whom the universe has become disen-chanted . . . ."(71). More often the exchange is brought about by editors. They place Rorty's "the Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" immediately after David Little's contribution which urges us to treat with care the claim that "... a liberal society can survive only by means of its members affirming and sharing a particular set of religious values."(253)

The articles of most interest to this philosopher were those by Martin Marty, Edwin Gaustad, Thomas Buckley, Lance Banning, and Rorty. Marty tackles the question of how to interpret the religious views of Jefferson given the inconsistency of his "wall of separation" between church and state and his practice as a public figure. Marty claims Jefferson redefined religion as primarily a matter of opinion, not practice. It is this aspect of Jefferson's thought he finds most difficult since religion is more properly regarded as a major source of motivation.

Gaustad explains that the defenders of establishment felt a common faith was necessary for the preservation of society and peace. Pocock charges Jefferson with intellectualizing experience in defining religion as a matter of opinion, and with relegating religious traditions such as the pentecostal to the private sphere. Ironically, he quotes Eisenhower, "Our country is founded on a fundamental religious faith, and I don't care what
Buckley attempts an overview of Jefferson's "political theology." He presents Jefferson's view that conscience is the source of morality. Religion is not a matter of governmental concern, since it is not necessary for peace and society. Jefferson thus split obligation into two realms, that owed to the state and that owed to God.

Banning discusses Madison's important strategic role in defeating general establishment and gaining passage of the statute. Madison's desire to move beyond religious toleration to recognition of a natural right of religious freedom, and his use of the history of Christianity as an argument against general establishment. And Banning suggests that Madison's experience with general establishment in Virginia helped generate his view in Federalist 10 that republican government needs to enlarge its sphere to prevent violations of private rights by government serving the interests of the majority of its constituents.

Rorty's contribution is an informative exposition of his own position on the relevance of metaphysics to politics. His Jefferson holds that when religious opinions entail actions which cannot be justified to the public at large, they must be abandoned or modified. Yet, Jefferson seems to have held that religious opinions will not conflict with civic duty if we recognize that conscience is the source of morality. So Rorty overlooks the problems the Jeffersonian approach to religion creates through the separation of central personal views from practice.

Despite their different metaphysics, Jefferson and Rorty both appeal to a moral consensus; one metaphysical, the other historical. And the political problems generated by personal opinion seeking meaningful expression in public practice do not go away if we stick to our own vocabulary, or label opponents mad.

The Jefferson who emerges from these essays believed in a personal God, a creator whose presence is evidenced in nature and history. Morality is founded upon a moral sense, so common religious opinion is not needed for public life. But religious practice which would interfere with freedom of belief cannot be tolerated, or at least must not be endorsed by the state. One thing that the contributors agree upon is that it does matter what religion inspired the statute and, through it, the first amendment.

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Most of us are familiar with Francis Fukuyama's use of Hegel