

# DEMOCRACY

AND THE NEW RELIGIOUS PLURALISM



EDITED BY

THOMAS BANCHOFF

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The editor would like to thank the contributors for revising their conference papers in a timely fashion for publication in this volume. The open and productive exchanges that characterized the conference are reproduced here. Our group was very diverse. It included scholars from the disciplines of philosophy, political science, religious studies, sociology, and theology. We share the conviction that religious pluralism poses both challenges and opportunities for democratic societies on both sides of the Atlantic. The book analyzes those challenges and points some ways forward. It is intended as a contribution both to scholarship and to an ongoing society-wide and international debate.

The book was made possible through the generous collaboration of many people and organizations. For their help and support, the editor would like to thank members of the faculty steering committee of the Initiative on Religion, Politics, and Peace, as well as John J. DeGioia, president of Georgetown University, and Jane McAuliffe, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Conference cosponsors at Georgetown included the BMW Center for German and European Studies, the Center for Democracy and Civil Society, the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, the Department of Government, the Department of Theology, and the

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# Contents

Contributors, ix

1. Introduction, 3  
*Thomas Banchoff*

## PART I   Contours of the New Religious Pluralism

2. Pluralism, Protestantization, and the Voluntary Principle, 19  
*Peter L. Berger*
3. Uneven Secularization in the United States and Western Europe, 31  
*Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart*
4. Immigration and the New Religious Pluralism: A European Union/United States Comparison, 59  
*José Casanova*
5. The Transnational Struggle for Jewish Pluralism, 85  
*Yossi Shain*
6. Politicians' Perceptions of the "Muslim Problem": The Dutch Example in European Context, 113  
*Sam Cherribi*



7. America's Muslims: Issues of Identity, Religious Diversity,  
and Pluralism, 133

*John L. Esposito*

8. Religious Diversity in a "Christian Nation": American  
Identity and American Democracy, 151

*Robert Wuthnow*

## PART II Democratic Responses to the New Religious Pluralism

9. Radical Evil in Liberal Democracies: The Neglect of  
the Political Emotions, 171

*Martha C. Nussbaum*

10. Islam and the Republic: The French Case, 203

*Danièle Hervieu-Léger*

11. Pluralism, Tolerance, and Democracy:  
Theory and Practice in Europe, 223

*Grace Davie*

12. American Religious Pluralism: Civic and  
Theological Discourse, 243

*Diana L. Eck*

13. A Voice of One's Own: Public Faith in  
a Pluralistic World, 271

*Miroslav Volf*

14. The End of Religious Pluralism: A Tribute to  
David Burrell, 283

*Stanley Hauerwas*

15. Stem Cell Politics, Religious and Secular:  
The United States and France Compared, 301

*Thomas Banchoff*

Index 323

# Contributors

**Thomas Banchoff** is associate professor in the Department of Government and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and director of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University.

**Peter L. Berger** is emeritus professor of sociology at Boston University and director of its Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs.

**José Casanova** is professor of sociology and a member of the graduate faculty of political and social science at the New School for Social Research.

**Sam Cherribi** is senior lecturer in sociology at Emory University.

**Grace Davie** is a professor in the sociology of religion at Exeter University.

**Diana L. Eck** is professor of comparative religion and Indian studies and a member of the faculty of divinity at Harvard University.

**John L. Esposito** is university professor and founding director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University.

**Stanley Hauerwas** is the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at the Divinity School of Duke University.

**Danièle Hervieu-Léger** is professor of sociology and president of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

**Ronald Inglehart** is professor of political science and program director at the Center for Political Studies at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.

**Pippa Norris** is the McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

**Martha C. Nussbaum** is the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics in Philosophy, Law, and Divinity at the University of Chicago.

**Yossi Shain** is professor in the Department of Government, Georgetown University, and the Department of Political Science, Tel Aviv University.

**Miroslav Volf** is Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School and director of Yale's Center for Faith and Culture.

**Robert Wuthnow** is Gerhard R. Andlinger Professor of Sociology and director of the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University.

# Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism

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# I

## Introduction

*Thomas Banchoff*

A new religious pluralism is shaking up Atlantic democracies. In the United States, controversies surrounding the “under God” clause of the Pledge of Allegiance and the display of the Ten Commandments are part of a long-running constitutional struggle. But such controversies are now also colored by the concerns of Hindus, Buddhists, and other religious citizens who reject monotheism. In France, the recent ban on headscarves and other prominent religious symbols in public schools is a dramatic reaffirmation of the tradition of *laïcité*—the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. At the same time, it is a political response to greater religious diversity and to the growth of Islam in particular. In the United Kingdom, controversy surrounding the blasphemy laws is part of an old debate about the institutional prerogatives of the Church of England. But it also raises questions about whether and how to protect the sensibilities of minority faith traditions.

These and other controversies are occasions to rethink the relationship between religion and politics in Atlantic democracies. Entrenched arguments center on whether religion is increasing or decreasing as a social and political force.<sup>1</sup> This familiar secularization debate should not deflect attention from a striking development of the last several decades: the emergence of a more diverse religious landscape with new political implications. In both Western Europe and North America, that diversity encompasses dominant Christian and long-established Jewish groups, a growing Muslim population, and increasing adherents of non-Abrahamic traditions, ranging from Hinduism and Buddhism to New Age spiritualities. Religious diversity is nothing new. But it has increased in scope since the 1980s and 1990s, sparking greater interaction among religious groups and

challenges for democratic governance. That interaction and those challenges constitute a new religious pluralism.

What is at stake? For some observers, nothing less than the survival of democracy hangs in the balance. Samuel Huntington, for example, sees Hispanic immigration eroding the Anglo-Protestant culture that has sustained democratic institutions for more than two centuries. Religious diversity, in his view, threatens to undercut moral order and national identity and endanger the American experiment with democracy. In the Western European context, Oriana Fallaci articulates a parallel argument about Muslim immigration. Islam, she argues, is inimical to democracy and human rights. Europe must rediscover and reassert its Christian and Enlightenment identity against a hostile outsider now on the inside. If not, Fallaci opines, European civilization faces a crisis. Huntington and Fallaci are not isolated voices. Their notoriety attests to broad anxiety about the social and political implications of greater religious pluralism on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup>

This book rejects such alarmism. The contributors acknowledge the challenges posed by the new religious pluralism. Because it involves beliefs and practices suffused with ultimate meaning, religion is a deep-seated marker of collective identity. When diverse religious communities clash in the political arena, two of democracy's core pillars can begin to falter: minority rights and majority rule. Dominant traditions may seek to constrain minority groups, and religious tensions may undermine effective government by majority. While aware of these challenges, the contributors do not see them as threats to the social bases of democracy or the stability of its institutions. Rising faith communities, and Islam in particular, are engaging the democratic process on both sides of the Atlantic. And established religious groups and secular majorities are accommodating—and not just resisting—the new cultural and political landscape. A multiplicity of faith traditions presents not just challenges for social cohesion and governance but also opportunities for a more vibrant civil society and political culture.

As an interdisciplinary, multinational undertaking, this volume breaks with studies of religious pluralism that begin within defined scholarly communities and geographical spaces.<sup>3</sup> The disciplines of theology and religious studies center their attention on the implications of pluralism for individual belief and shared practices, while social theorists, sociologists, and political scientists more often address its impact on civil society and democratic politics. Scholars of the United States situate religious pluralism within broad social and historical currents of cultural pluralism. For scholars of Western Europe, the confrontation of secular political cultures and majority faith traditions with Islam demands more attention. By juxtaposing disciplinary and national approaches, this book illuminates the phenomenon of religious pluralism from different perspectives and underscores its distinctive and convergent characteristics on both sides of the Atlantic.

The book goes beyond mere juxtaposition. It is also a structured conversation about the social and political implications of the new religious pluralism. Its starting point is broad agreement on what religious pluralism does and

does not mean. If the term is here to stay—and there is every reason to expect that it is—it must be defined carefully. In his essay, Stanley Hauerwas raises two red flags. First, the term *religion* often connotes a narrow form of privatized belief that arose within the modern constitutional state. It tends to abstract faith from community and, as others point out, marginalize traditions less centered on beliefs and more on social practices. Second, the term *pluralism* has problematic normative associations. For Hauerwas the theologian, it evokes the idea that religions are so many paths to the same truth. For many other observers, it suggests an affirmation of U.S.-style interest group politics over the corporatist or statist alternatives more prevalent in other democracies.<sup>4</sup>

If religious pluralism is to be redeemed, it must be defined carefully. It refers here to the interaction among religious groups in society and politics. *Religion* is understood broadly to include not only individual and shared beliefs but also social practices and institutions that bind groups. *Pluralism* denotes group interaction in civil society and state institutions. As deployed throughout the volume, the term *religious pluralism* describes a social and political phenomenon and does not imply a variety of ways to one truth or the superiority of the American polity over other forms of social and political organization. If a normative undertone remains, it concerns the view that religious pluralism should be *peaceful*. A preference for nonviolence, as Miroslav Volf points out in his essay, is shared in principle across religious faiths and institutionalized in democratic orders. It is also shared by all of the contributors to this volume. Concern about the potential for social conflict and violence, heightened in the years since September 11, 2001, gives the problem of religious pluralism much of its urgency.

If the contributors agree on a working definition of religious pluralism and a normative commitment to its peaceful management, they take different approaches to the two questions that organize the volume: What are the contours of the new religious pluralism? And how does it challenge democratic governance? The first half of the volume explores the contours of the transatlantic religious landscape. It examines the differential impact of demographic and cultural shifts and points to salient differences between the United States and Western Europe. The second half of the volume addresses the response of democratic civil societies and states to the new religious pluralism. It centers on the twin challenges of protecting minority rights and forging stable majorities, and it brings in philosophical and theological, as well as social science, perspectives. Here the volume goes beyond analysis to prescription: it explores how Atlantic politics can and should engage difference in a shifting religious and secular constellation.

## Contours of the New Religious Pluralism

The new religious pluralism is, in part, an outgrowth of a more fluid demographic and cultural landscape. Migration flows generate greater demographic diversity, while modernization tends to loosen social attachments and generate



more fluid and multiple possibilities for religious identification and belonging. The contributors give due attention to changes in the religious landscape. But they do not allow the landscape metaphor, with its suggestion of a level playing field upon which religions interact, to obscure the hierarchical dimension of the new pluralism. There are majority religious traditions and majority political cultures—different on both sides of the Atlantic—within which diversity is articulated. Pluralism is about the responses of minorities to majorities and vice versa. Only by viewing the interaction among religious groups on an uneven playing field can one specify distinctive contours of the new religious pluralism.

The demographic characteristics of the new religious pluralism on both sides of the Atlantic are anchored in migration patterns and differential birth rates. In the United States, the 1965 Immigration Act generated more diverse migration flows; Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu groups have expanded their presence alongside established Christian and Jewish communities. At the same time, those established communities have been transformed by immigration from Asia, the former Soviet bloc, and Latin America. In the European context, Muslim immigration is the most striking phenomenon of the past several decades. In the case of Britain, France, and the Netherlands—three countries treated in the most depth in this volume—Muslim migration from former colonies in Asia and North Africa has been significant. In Germany, a large Turkish community that originated with postwar guest workers and their families has diversified the religious landscape. With Muslims in Europe, as with Hispanics in the United States, higher than average birth rates have contributed to growing numbers and reinforced the diversifying effects of migration. Even without Turkey, Europe's Muslims now number 15–20 million.

The new religious pluralism has a cultural as well as a demographic dynamic. It is not only about population shifts, but also about a shifting array of religious choices and forms of association. Cross-border flows of ideas and commerce have accelerated the drive toward greater individualism that characterizes modernity as a whole. In the context of globalization, individuals face a plural array of choices, including religious choices. "All that is solid melts into air," Marx and Engels argued in *The Communist Manifesto*, pointing to capitalism's relentless erosion of traditional cultural and social attachments. "All that is sacred is profaned," they continued, clearly overstating their case. In industrialized and increasingly globalized societies, religion is alive and well, if more loosely configured. People take on and put down religious identities with greater frequency. They combine elements of different traditions to form a "bricolage" (Hervieu-Léger) or a kind of "patchwork quilt" (Wuthnow). The new religious pluralism, then, is not just about demographics. It is also about more diverse patterns of individual belief.<sup>5</sup>

Different patterns of belief go hand in hand with different kinds of religious practice and association. Religion is lived with and through others. In the context of globalization and modernity, individuals constitute and reconstitute religious groups on a more fluid basis. As Peter Berger points out in his essay, this dynamic can feed fundamentalism, as people seek to reestablish lost certainties and reorder their lives under the shadow of charismatic leadership. But

individualization can also reshape patterns of interaction among traditional religious groups. Berger sees a “voluntary principle” at work—the tendency of religious organizations to become voluntary associations, responsive to the shifting preferences of discriminating religious consumers. The American phenomenon of denominationalism, traditionally applied to Protestant churches, now increasingly extends to other traditional and nontraditional religious groups. Berger further argues that this trend of “Protestantization” is evident outside the United States as well. In Western Europe, historically dominant churches, uneasily embedded within a secular political culture, face competition from a range of religious newcomers, both Christian and non-Christian.

In their essay, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart focus on the differential impact of modernization on religion in Western Europe and the United States. Drawing on an impressive array of survey data, they show that identification with established religious communities has declined on both sides of the Atlantic, but much more precipitously in Western Europe. They see an overarching economic, social, and cultural process of secularization at work, a process evident in correlations between rising levels of social and economic well-being, on the one hand, and declining church affiliation and attendance, on the other. Yes, they acknowledge, the United States is a nation both prosperous and pious, but levels of religious identification and practice within the country vary with socioeconomic position. Norris and Inglehart are agnostic on a crucial point: whether modernization drives not only a decline in traditional religious identities and communities, but also a collapse of religious sensibilities altogether. Evidence suggests that the search for ultimate meaning goes on, even in affluent settings. Modernization may drive both a more secular culture and a more fluid and ambiguous religious landscape.

The fact of a changing landscape should not overstate the demographic and cultural changes of the last several decades. In absolute numbers, the current wave of immigration pales alongside that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As José Casanova points out in his essay, this wave is more diverse, going beyond the predominantly Christian and transatlantic flows of the earlier era to encompass more Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans from more religious traditions. But it has not fundamentally shifted the religious makeup on either side of the Atlantic. In the United States, more than 80% of the citizens profess Christianity, while in Western Europe, where church attendance is much lower and attitudes more secular, majorities still identify broadly with the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Jews have always been a small minority. In France, the Muslim population has grown, but still accounts for only about 5–7% of the total population. As these numbers suggest, cultural shifts—the individualization of belief and more fluid forms of religious association—have not transformed the overall constellation.

Numbers tell only part of the story. The new religious pluralism consists not only of greater diversity, but of *perceptions* of that diversity and new patterns of *interaction* among religious groups. The media have discovered the theme of religious pluralism in the years since 9/11. Simultaneously, religious groups have begun to interact with one another more in the public sphere. And here,

the metaphor of a landscape with its suggestion of a level playing field fails, for the interaction is among unequals. The reaction of minority groups to majority groups—and the other way around—gives religious pluralism its particular cast on each side of the Atlantic. The United States is a majority Christian culture with a well-established Jewish population, coming to terms with Islam and other faith traditions. As Casanova points out, American political culture encourages the cultivation of religious difference, while encouraging cultural assimilation to the norms of an individualist and capitalist society. Western Europe has less experience with immigration and, with its more secular political culture, appears to be less comfortable with religious pluralism. Majorities respect religious freedom but must grapple with Muslim traditions that incorporate different views of personal responsibility and social obligation—some at odds with the dominant secular ones.

The American Jewish experience provides an example of a flourishing religious minority in the face of a predominantly Christian culture. As Yossi Shain demonstrates, the American Jewish community has thrived not just by adapting to (and shaping) dominant norms of American society but also by maintaining strong transnational ties. While the Jewish community has fragmented along religious and cultural lines, an overarching sense of Jewish identity has been preserved—and in some sense strengthened—through its relationship with Israel. Not only has the American Jewish community emerged as a crucial influence on Israeli debates about Jewish identity, favoring a more inclusive understanding, but the maintenance of a transnational identity has also helped to shore up cohesive group identity in the United States. The American Jewish experience suggests the importance of transnational ties for minority groups in diaspora. Shain's analysis further underscores the importance of placing the new religious pluralism, and the emerging role of new and rising groups, in an international context.

The case of Islam in Atlantic democracies, while very different, also points to the importance of international ties for national religious minorities. Islam often has a transnational thrust and self-understanding, even if it is expressed differently in diverse national and local communities. Some Muslims see themselves first as members of an international community of the faithful, or *umma*, and second as citizens of particular countries. Muslim religious identity can set barriers against assimilation to majority national cultures, whether Christian or secular, and has sometimes served as a source of tension with both. International terrorism has made things much worse. The acts of violent extremists in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, in Madrid on March 11, 2004, and in London on July 7, 2005, have placed Muslim communities in the United States and Europe in a precarious position. On many occasions, fear and ignorance have fed anti-Muslim prejudice and produced louder calls for cultural integration, challenging Muslims to organize more effectively within civil society in response.

The particular constraints faced by Muslim communities—and their responses to them—are different in Western Europe and the United States. For Europe, with its more secular political cultures, Islam represents not just a

minority religious tradition but a challenge to secularism altogether. As Sam Cherribi argues in his essay, public anxieties about extremist violence, on the one hand, and about a creeping “Islamization” of Europe, on the other, color the social and political debate. Elites and publics are committed to the principle of religious freedom and civil rights for all. At the same time, most express the expectation that immigrants will adapt to the culture of their host countries. These patterns hold across the political spectrum, with conservatives only slightly more likely to be insistent about cultural integration. There are important differences of emphasis. Pressure for assimilation is strongest in France’s secular political culture, while the United Kingdom has more experience with, and is more tolerant of, religious diversity. Germany and Italy occupy a middle ground. Cherribi’s native Netherlands now represents a crucial case. Historically tolerant of cultural difference, its political elites responded to the murder of Theo van Gogh by a Muslim extremist in 2004 with a flurry of measures designed to integrate Muslims more fully into Dutch society.

The situation of Muslims in the United States is different—and in many ways less difficult. The United States has a long history of religious and ethnic minorities organizing effectively at the level of civil society. And while the Muslim population hails from many different countries, about a third consists of American converts and their descendants, mainly African Americans. Islam, while overshadowed by Christianity in American culture, has less of an outsider status than in much of Europe. 9/11 certainly made it more difficult to be a Muslim in the United States. But as John Esposito notes in his essay, it also had a catalytic effect in mobilizing Muslims against prejudice, in defense of their civil rights, and in favor of greater political participation. For Esposito, the interplay between Islam and American culture is giving rise to understanding of Islam more in tune with dominant American values, such as religious tolerance, individualism, and multiculturalism. There is still sharp division within the Muslim community and considerable ambivalence about the individualist ethos of the wider culture. But American society, more accustomed to religious expression and religious difference than the European, presents greater opportunities for effective organization and engagement.

If the United States is viewed as a country rife with religious minorities and a supportive pluralist culture, religious pluralism would appear to pose few problems. But if one focuses on the attitudes of the *majority*, the picture is less reassuring. Robert Wuthnow’s essay shows how American conceptions of a “Christian nation” coexist uneasily with a growing awareness of religious difference. More and more Americans claim to have encountered people of other religious faiths in the workplace and in their neighborhoods. While their knowledge of non-Christian traditions is limited, they profess tolerance for other traditions in general and acknowledge, in the abstract, that they contain much that is truthful. When asked about specific traditions, however, the tenor of responses changes. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other faiths are often derided as strange. The superiority of Christianity is routinely asserted. An intolerant streak comes to the fore. One in five Americans, Wuthnow notes, favors a ban on Muslim worship. In view of such attitudes, it is far from clear

whether religious pluralism poses more of a challenge to secular Europe than it does to a religious America. Much depends on how that pluralism is articulated in the public sphere and translates into politics. The response of democratic institutions is the focus of the second half of the volume.

## Democratic Responses to the New Religious Pluralism

The new religious pluralism poses difficult challenges to two basic democratic principles—minority protection and majority rule. Potential threats to minorities can take two main forms. First, dominant traditions can respond to diversity by using the state to privilege their own communities over perceived competitors. In the American context, some critics see an attachment to the “under God” clause of the Pledge of Allegiance or government support for predominantly Christian faith-based organizations in this light. Neither practice establishes anything like a theocracy, but each represents state support—symbolic in one case, financial in the other—for majority religious communities not equally available to religious minorities. Second, governments can define religion narrowly, so as to constrain the practices of particular minority groups. Here, some point to the French headscarf ban in public schools. In this case, a secular state confronted with the growth of a minority tradition, Islam, defines the bounds of religious freedom so narrowly as to curtail a practice central to the identities of some Muslims.

The potential threats that religious pluralism poses to majority rule can also be divided into two categories. First, clashing religious groups may undermine democratic institutions. Where diverse religious and cultural communities are sharply divided, it is more difficult to foster shared identification with and support for central democratic institutions. The legacy of sectarian division and violence in Northern Ireland provides a salient example. Second, a greater variety of religious voices may impede the formation of workable political majorities on salient public policy issues. Here, “culture wars” over abortion and stem cell research in the United States spring to mind. Polarized public policy debates marked by a multiplicity of voices can undercut effective democratic governance, particularly around value-driven issues.

The first set of issues, concerning the protection of religious minorities, is far from new. From the early modern period onward, theorizing about liberal democracy has centered on safeguarding freedoms of speech, association, and conscience. Contemporary ideas about the freedom of religion were slow to evolve. John Locke, for example, was against civil rights for Roman Catholics. And dominant Catholic political theory did not fully acknowledge the principle of religious freedom until the Second Vatican Council. By the mid-twentieth century, however, the twin principles of nonestablishment and free exercise of religion were well entrenched in Atlantic democracies. Nonestablishment meant the abolition of state churches or, as in the Church of England, a drastic reduction of their power and privileges. Free exercise meant the rights of religious minorities to profess and practice their faith. During the postwar

decades, both the predominance of Christianity and the low political salience of religion kept the issue of protections for religious minorities low on national political agendas. With the new religious pluralism, it is back.

Martha Nussbaum's essay places the problem of protecting cultural and religious minorities within a broader philosophical and historical context. Nussbaum tackles the problem of radical evil identified by Kant—the human tendency to respond to plurality with competitive and aggressive behavior. She argues that classical liberal theory from Locke through Kant and Rousseau does not provide a satisfactory account of how to address radical evil and the intolerance it generates. The problem cannot be resolved without careful thought about how a liberal state can cultivate emotions that support equal respect and a toleration that is more than grudging obedience to law. Here public education to tolerance is important. But so too is the deployment of cultural resources. Nussbaum gives the examples of the poetry of Walt Whitman and the rhetoric of Martin Luther King, which powerfully evoke a nation respectful of difference. She sees the cultivation of tolerance as especially vital at a time when the Bush administration is privileging the majority Christian tradition in its rhetoric and public policy.

The challenge posed by religious diversity for governance in Europe is a different one. It is less about the power of majority faith traditions than about the state's response to Islam. Here, as Grace Davie argues, the underlying problem is cultural: a dominant conception of what religion should be—a private affair—confronts a Muslim tradition less supportive of a public/private distinction. Within European society, this tension was evident in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands in controversies surrounding Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* and Theo van Gogh's *Submission: Part I*. What a majority saw as the free artistic expression of an individual was, for many Muslims, an illicit attack on an entire faith community. Such cultural dissonances are increasingly finding their way into the political sphere. The French law on religious symbols, passed by a cross-party majority, was an effort to draw the private/public distinction in a way that prohibited the wearing of Muslim headscarves in public schools, but allowed for less obtrusive crucifixes or Stars of David. Davie notes that the British state, while less democratic than the French in certain respects, has proven more tolerant of religious difference in the public sphere. She cites the Queen's 2004 Christmas Address for its insistence that religious diversity was something not just to be tolerated but to be welcomed in the United Kingdom.

Danièle Hervieu-Léger takes up the French case from a different perspective. The French dilemma, she argues, is not fundamentally about tolerance or solely about Islam. It is rather about how the secular state should relate to greater religious diversity. Given the strict separation of church and state incorporated into French law in 1905, the key problem is not how to protect religious freedom or advance tolerance—undisputed norms in the French constitution and educational system. Nor is it any purported antidemocratic character of Islam, for recent sociological work has explored a variety of ways of being Muslim in France, many compatible with the secular and democratic

order. The key problem is rather how a secular state should interact with a religious community as fluid and fragmented as the Muslim one. Islam in France lacks a clear corporate structure through which it might relate to the secular state on the model of the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish communities. The challenge of Islam is part of a larger challenge to the French model of *laïcité*: how, in the context of greater religious diversity, the state should grapple with plural forms of religious identification and association.

Subsequent essays deal not only with the state's response to religious minorities but also with the problem of creating and sustaining majorities under conditions of religious pluralism. The concern here is an old one—that religious claims are exclusive in their essence, brook no compromise, and therefore can lead to conflict and violence. The post-Reformation wars serve as a historical point of reference. Whether the “religious wars” were less about religion than about state power—Hauerwas restates the latter view in his essay—they left an enduring legacy for subsequent liberal political theory. A long series of liberal thinkers has cautioned against injecting religious language into the public sphere in order to preserve civil peace and allow for political compromise and public policy on the broadest possible foundation. Over the past decade, Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, and other thinkers in this tradition, impressed by the resilience and depth of religious identities in contemporary democracies, have moderated their positions somewhat. But the anxiety about religious claims in politics remains.<sup>6</sup>

Greater religious pluralism makes it more and more difficult to exclude religious claims from the public sphere.<sup>7</sup> As voices become varied and more assertive over time, the possibility of cultural divisions and social conflict may grow correspondingly. One way to address the problem, set out by Diana Eck in her essay, is to distinguish between civic and theological language in the public sphere. Under conditions of increasing religious diversity, she argues, the encounter of different theological perspectives is both public and inevitable. Engagement across faith traditions that acknowledges both commonalities and differences can contribute to a vibrant political culture. In the context of democratic politics, however, where believers engage one another as citizens, theological language is unproductive. Where politicians seek to build majorities and broker compromise, the assertion of faith claims can create division and foster hostility. Echoing Rawls's idea of public reason, she calls for a civic language oriented toward the public good rather than a theological language anchored in the identity of a particular religious community. Not to nurture such a civic language under conditions of growing religious diversity could prove divisive and dangerous.

Miroslav Volf differs on this key point. Like Eck, he sees religion as a core component of personal and collective identity. But in contrast to her, drawing on the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff, he insists that religion can and should be expressed not just in the public sphere in general, but also in the context of democratic politics. Not to bring religious reasons to bear in public policy disputes, he argues, is to cede the field to secularism—an all-encompassing belief system with its own ultimate truth claims that bears a family resemblance to

religion itself. Volf, who has written extensively on ethnic and religious conflict and worked to promote reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia, acknowledges the danger of confrontation or even violence as religious voices are heard more loudly and more often. But he insists that the response to that danger must come from within religious communities themselves. Drawing on his own Christian tradition, Volf argues that the idea of permeable identities and forgiving love provides a foundation for engaging other religious traditions in society and politics. Other traditions can draw on their own resources to promote the peaceful engagement of difference.

Stanley Hauerwas is less concerned than either Eck or Volf about religious language placing strains on democratic institutions. For him, faith and community come first. If their open articulation and practice is incompatible with certain conceptions of democracy, so be it. Hauerwas rejects the idea that a civic language, or what he calls a “third language,” might mediate between different religious traditions. Such a language is never neutral but always embodies a particular set of ethical claims—“rights talk,” for example, enthrones the ideal of the autonomous individual. Though less concerned than either Eck or Volf about the fate of democracy, Hauerwas is more sanguine about an open confrontation of religious perspectives in the public sphere and in democratic politics. Traditions, he argues, are made up of different parts that can overlap and connect in surprising ways. One can grasp those overlaps and connections only through the process of debate and engagement. Honesty is nothing to fear. And open engagement with other faith traditions may even deepen one’s understanding of one’s own faith.

Eck, Volf, and Hauerwas revisit old theoretical debates about religion in the public sphere in the context of the new religious pluralism, and they reach different conclusions. Thomas Banchoff explores the question from the bottom up. His essay takes up a public policy issue, stem cell research, and examines the intersection of religious and secular claims in the American and French controversies. Neither case fits popular constructions of the issue as a confrontation between religious forces protective of the embryo and secular forces pressing scientific breakthroughs. In the United States, religious voices are increasingly proliferating on both sides of the issue: not just for embryo protection but also for biomedical advances to promote an ethic of healing. And in France, where religious reasoning plays almost no role in the public controversy, the dominant secular arguments have until recently tended to oppose the destruction of embryos for research as the illicit instrumentalization of human life. The case of stem cell politics reveals a multiplicity of public policy views *within* religious traditions and points of overlap between religious and secular perspectives.

## Challenges Ahead

The new religious pluralism, this book argues, is less a threat than an opportunity for democracy. Its contours—both demographic and cultural—represent



new challenges for Atlantic societies, but none that is insurmountable. Religious traditions are a powerful and persistent foundation for collective identity and shared ethical commitments. They are a source of solace and solidarity, on the one hand, and of enmity and—potentially—violence, on the other. In Europe and the United States, new religious minorities, and Muslims in particular, are engaging the wider society and adapting their identities and practices in different ways. Majority cultures, whether Christian or secular in inflection, are grappling with a new pluralism that tests received commitments to cultural and religious tolerance. Atlantic societies have managed to channel these tensions peacefully thus far. Religious pluralism has provoked believers and nonbelievers to reengage their own traditions through more active engagement with others—to reaffirm but also to rethink. On balance, it has been more productive than destructive.

When one adopts a more global perspective, there is less reason for optimism. While democratic regimes worldwide have successfully institutionalized religious freedom and other civil liberties, adapting peacefully to growing religious diversity and its articulation in society and politics, autocracies and failed democracies often have not. The Mohammed Cartoon Controversy of 2006 illustrates the contrast. The publication of negative depictions of Mohammed in Denmark sparked outrage among many Muslims around the world. Public officials on both sides of the Atlantic, while generally critical of the decision to publish, defended freedom of the press as an inviolable norm. With few exceptions, protests within democracies remained peaceful. In Pakistan, Syria, and Lebanon, by contrast, countries marked by autocratic rule or unstable democratic institutions, violent demonstrations took place. State elites either encouraged the violence or were powerless to prevent it. The Cartoon Controversy showed how, in the absence of democracy and stable constitutional order, religious difference can contribute to division and bloodshed. Religious pluralism is possible without democracy. But the peaceful interaction of religious communities in politics is best secured in a democratic setting.

#### NOTES

1. The literature includes David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); and Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *The Sacred and the Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

2. Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004); and Oriana Fallaci, *The Rage and the Pride* (New York: Rizzoli, 2002).

3. See, for example, Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002); Kenneth Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory*

*Mutates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and John Madeley and Zsolt Enyedi, eds., *Church and State in Contemporary Europe* (London: Cass, 2003). The transatlantic comparison emerges out of Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective: The One, the Few, and the Many* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

4. American political scientist Harold Laski first developed “pluralism” as an analytical category in 1919. See Harold Laski, *Authority and the Modern State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919); and Robert Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). John Hick is the most influential representative of the pluralist approach in theology. See, for example, John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

5. Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion en mouvement: Le pèlerin et le converti* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999); and Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

6. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Jürgen Habermas and Jan Philipp Reemtsma, *Glauben und Wissen: Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels 2001* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001). See also Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

7. For an analysis of debates about the changing relationship between religious traditions and democratic institutions, see Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

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PART I

Contours of the New  
Religious Pluralism

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## 2

# Pluralism, Protestantization, and the Voluntary Principle

*Peter L. Berger*

The relation between pluralism and religion has never been unambiguous. On the one hand, as has been argued especially for the American case, pluralism in religion can encourage political pluralism and thus democracy. On the other hand, pluralism tests the limits of what religious people find tolerable in the society and thus tests their acceptance of democracy if a democratically constituted regime legislates religiously unacceptable behavior. The current furor in American churches over abortion and same-sex marriage sharply illuminates this problem. (In other words, one does not have to go to the Middle East to find cases of tension between a religious code and democracy.) Also, religious and moral pluralism raises the question of how a democratic regime can ultimately be legitimated. Again, the American case is instructive: the republic was first legitimated in Protestant terms, then in Christian terms, then in Judeo-Christian terms. We now have the interesting legitimation of a putative "Abrahamic faith" (Judeo-Christian-Muslim), which is not comforting to the adherents of nonmonotheistic traditions, not to mention the religiously unaffiliated who have long been uncomfortable with religious rhetoric of any sort in American political discourse.

The "new pluralism," of course, is the result of globalization. Almost all societies are today inevitably pluralistic. Globalization has meant an enormous increase in intercultural communication. Religion has not been immune to this process of intercontinental chatter. The present essay will look at the institutional and personal implications of globalized religion and then at the relation of these to democracy.<sup>1</sup>

Arguably the two most dynamic religious movements in the contemporary world are resurgent Islam and popular Protestantism,

the latter principally in the form of the Pentecostal movement. Both are truly global phenomena. Not only are Islamic movements interacting throughout the huge region from the Atlantic Ocean to the South China Sea, but the Muslim diaspora in Europe and North America has become a powerful presence. In England, for example, more people every week attend services in mosques than in Anglican churches. For understandable reasons, attention has focused on the most aggressive versions of this globalizing Islam, but it is moderate Muslims as well as practitioners of jihad who talk to each other on the Internet and on cell phones and who gather for both clandestine and public conferences. As to Pentecostalism, it has been spreading like wildfire through Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, parts of east Asia, and to such unlikely groups as European gypsies and hill tribes in India. David Martin, the British sociologist who pioneered in the study of cross-national Pentecostalism, estimates that there are at least 250 million Pentecostals worldwide and possibly many more. (A crucial case is China, where we know that the movement is spreading, but which is difficult to study because it is mostly illegal and therefore underground.)<sup>2</sup>

However, globalizing religion is by no means limited to Islam and Protestantism. The Roman Catholic Church has always been a global institution, but globalization is profoundly altering its international profile: increasingly its areas of strength are outside its traditional European heartland, with the interesting consequence that precisely those of its features that trouble progressive Catholics in, say, the Netherlands are an attraction in the Philippines or in Africa. (The Vatican is well aware of this phenomenon, which explains many of its policies.) The Russian Orthodox Church, presiding over a strong religious revival in the post-Soviet era and enjoying the favor of the Putin government, is flexing its muscles in the Balkans and the Middle East, not to mention what the Russians call the "near abroad."

Hasidic movements with headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, are sending missionaries to Israel and to Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. The so-called Jesus Movie, a film produced by an American evangelical organization and synchronized in well over a hundred languages, is being screened by aggressive missionaries in villages throughout India, despite the outrage of pious Brahmins and the opposition of the Indian government. But Hinduism is returning the compliment. Devotees dance and chant in praise of Krishna in major American and European cities. Hindu missionary organizations (ranging from the sedate Vedanta Society to the exuberant Sai Baba movement) are busily evangelizing wherever they can. Similarly, Buddhist groups with headquarters in Japan, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia are attracting sizable numbers of converts in Western countries.

If one is to get an intellectual handle on these developments, it is important to put away a view which, despite massive evidence to the contrary, is still very widespread (not least among Christian theologians): often called the "secularization theory," this view holds that modernity brings about a decline of religion. Simply put, this view has been empirically falsified. This is not the place to enlarge upon the debates that have ranged over the secularization

theory in recent years. Suffice it to say that, contrary to the theory, the contemporary world, far from being secularized, is characterized by a veritable explosion of passionate religion. (There are two exceptions to this statement—western and central Europe—and a thin but influential class of “progressive” intellectuals in most countries. Again, the reasons for these exceptions cannot be discussed here.)<sup>3</sup>

Modernity does not necessarily lead to a decline of religion. What it does lead to, more or less necessarily, is religious pluralism. Modern developments—mass migration and travel, urbanization, literacy, and, most important, the new technology of communication—have brought about a situation in which different religious traditions are present to each other in a historically unprecedented manner. For obvious reasons this interaction is facilitated under conditions of legally protected religious liberty. But even where governments, in various degrees, try to limit or suppress religious pluralism (as is the case in China, India, and Russia), this is difficult to do under contemporary conditions.

A personal example illustrates this: a couple of years ago I visited Buenos Aires for the first time. I had long been enamored of the writings of Borges, and I was anticipating a rather romantic encounter with the world of the tango. As my taxi left the airport, the first sight that greeted me was a huge Mormon church, with a gilded Angel Moroni sitting atop its steeple. Here was an outpost of a religion born in upstate New York, which until recently had barely spread beyond Utah and certainly not beyond the United States. Today Mormonism has been experiencing impressive growth in many countries, notably in the South Pacific and Siberia. There are now large numbers of people throughout the world whose spiritual, intellectual, and social center is Salt Lake City.

### Implications of Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism has both institutional and cognitive implications. It is important to understand both. Institutionally it means that something like a religious market is established. This does not mean that concepts of market economics can be unambiguously applied to the study of religion (as has been done, very interestingly, by Rodney Stark and other American sociologists, with the use of so-called rational choice theory).<sup>4</sup> But what it does mean is that religious institutions must *compete* for the allegiance of their putative clientele. This competition naturally becomes more intense under a regime of religious liberty, when the state can no longer be relied upon to fill the pews. This situation inevitably affects the behavior of religious institutions, even if their theological self-understanding is averse to such changed behavior.

The clergy (using this term broadly for the officials of religious institutions) now face a rather inconvenient fact: since their authority is no longer a social given, they must seek to reestablish it by means of *persuasion*. This gives a new social role to the laity. No longer a subject population, the laity becomes a community of consumers whose notions, however objectionable on theological grounds, must be seriously addressed.



The Roman Catholic case is paradigmatic in this respect. It is fair to say that, of all Christian churches, the Roman church has the most impressive hierarchical structure, which in many ways is at the core of its self-understanding. As far as the relevant doctrine is concerned, this has not fundamentally changed, though it has been modified by the pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council and subsequent papal encyclicals. Yet the *behavior* of the church toward its lay members has changed significantly. Some Catholics have gone so far as to describe the present time as the era of the laity in the church. This may be an exaggeration, but clearly the laity has become more assertive. The past few years have offered an impressive example of this in Boston (once called the “holy city” of American Catholicism). The archdiocese, under severe financial pressure because of the huge payments made to alleged victims of clerical sexual abuse, decided to close a number of parishes. The laypeople of the parishes rose in rebellion in a way not seen before, respectfully but firmly opposing the archbishop.

The pluralistic situation also changes the relations of religious institutions with each other. Participants in a market, religious or other, not only compete but are frequently engaged in efforts to reduce or regulate the competition. Obviously attempts are made in the educational activities of religious institutions to discourage their members from going over to competitors. For example, American Judaism has made great efforts to immunize Jews against Christian missionary activities. But competing religious institutions also negotiate with each other to regulate the competition. This helps to clarify at least some of the phenomenon known as “ecumenicity”: ecumenical amity among Christian churches means, at least in part, explicit or implicit agreements not to poach on each other’s territory.

Until a few decades ago such a negotiating process among American Protestant churches was known as “comity.” Protestant denominations portioned out certain areas for their outreach activities, allocating a particular area to, say, the Presbyterians; the others then promised to stay out of this area. This reached a somewhat bizarre climax in Puerto Rico, where the mainline denominations divided up the entire island in this way. If you knew that someone was, say, a Presbyterian, you could guess which town he or she came from. Some evangelical Protestants did not participate in this comity, much to the annoyance of other Protestants. The term has fallen into disuse, but it is still a very significant reality and now goes beyond the Protestant fold. Mainline Protestants and Catholics do not actively proselytize each other, and neither seek to proselytize Jews. Indeed, the very word *proselytization* has acquired a pejorative meaning in American religious discourse, and those who continue to practice it are looked at askance. Thus there was an outpouring of protests when not long ago the Southern Baptist Convention (the largest evangelical denomination in the United States) announced that it would continue its program to convert Jews. Sociologically speaking, one could say that today comity is informally extended to every religious group in the United States that does not engage in blatantly illegal behavior.<sup>5</sup>

Religious pluralism also has important implications for the subjective consciousness of individuals. This can be stated in one sentence: religion loses its taken-for-granted status in consciousness. No society can function without some ideas and behavior patterns being taken for granted. For most of history, religion was part and parcel of what was taken for granted. Social psychology has given us a good idea of how taken-for-grantedness is maintained in consciousness: it is the result of social consensus in an individual's environment. And for most of history, most individuals lived in such environments. Pluralism undermines this sort of homogeneity. Individuals are continually confronted with others who do *not* take for granted what was so taken traditionally in their community. They must now *reflect about* the cognitive and normative assumptions of their tradition, and consequently they must *make choices*. A religion that is chosen, on whatever level of intellectual sophistication, is different from a religion that is taken for granted. It is not necessarily less passionate, nor do its doctrinal propositions necessarily change. It is not so much the *what* as the *how* of religious belief that changes. Thus modern Catholics may affirm the same doctrines and engage in the same practices as their ancestors in a traditional Catholic village. But they have decided, and must continue to decide, to so believe and behave. This makes their religion both more personal and more vulnerable. Put differently, religion is subjectivized, and religious certitude is more difficult to come by.

In one of my books I described this process as the "heretical imperative" (from the Greek word *hairesis*, which means, precisely, "choice").<sup>6</sup> This process occurs not only in liberal or progressive religious groups. It also occurs in the most militantly conservative groups, for there too individuals have *chosen* to be militantly conservative. In other words, there is a mountain of difference between traditional and *neotraditional* religion. Psychologically, the former can be very relaxed and tolerant; the latter is necessarily tense and has at least an inclination toward intolerance.

Needless to say, these developments are not unique to religion. They affect all cognitive and normative definitions of reality and their behavioral consequences. I have long argued that modernity leads to a profound change in the human condition, *from fate to choice*. Religion participates in this change. Just as modernity inevitably leads to greater individuation, so modern religion is characterized by individuals who reflect upon, modify, pick, and choose from the religious resources available to them. French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger calls this phenomenon *bricolage* (loosely translatable as "tinkering," as in putting together the pieces of a Lego game); her American colleague Robert Wuthnow uses the term *patchwork religion*. The American language has a wonderfully apt term for this—"religious preference"—tellingly a term derived from the world of consumption, carrying the implication that the individual decided upon this particular religious identity and that in the future he or she might make a different decision.

Putting together the institutional and the subjective dimensions of pluralism, we can arrive at a far-reaching proposition: under conditions of pluralism

all religious institutions, sooner or later, become voluntary associations—and they become so whether they like it or not.

Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch classically analyzed two prototypical social forms of religion—the “church,” into which one is born, and the “sect,” which one decides to join. Richard Niebuhr suggested that American religion invented a third type, the “denomination,” which he defined as a church that recognizes the right of other churches to exist, be it *de jure* or *de facto*. One could then say that, in the course of American religious history, all religious groups have become “denominationalized.” Even Judaism, despite its distinctive merging of religious and ethnic identity, split into at least three denominations in America (and, depending on how one counts, several more). But the process of denominationalization is no longer limited to the United States. As pluralism spreads globally, all religious groups become in fact voluntary associations, even if they have to be dragged into this social form kicking and screaming. Not surprisingly, some of them will perceive pluralism as a lethal threat and will mobilize all available resources to resist it.

A simple conclusion follows from the preceding considerations: the capacity of a religious institution to adapt successfully to a pluralist environment will be closely linked to its capacity to take on the social form of the voluntary association. And that, of course, will be greatly influenced by its preceding history. If this is understood, then Protestantism clearly has what may be called a comparative advantage over other religious traditions (Christian or not). Both the Lutheran and the Calvinist Reformations, in their emphasis on the conscience of the individual, have an *a priori* affinity with modern individuation and thus with the pluralist dynamic. But not all Protestant groups have had the same capacity to organize themselves as voluntary associations.

David Martin recently suggested that three types of relations between religion and society developed in the postmedieval history of Western Christianity (the case of Eastern Orthodoxy is different).<sup>7</sup> The first type he calls the “baroque counter-Reformation,” which sought to maintain or reestablish a harmonious unity between church, state, and society. It flourished in the *ancien régime* of Catholic Europe and, following the French Revolution, morphed into the republic understood as a sort of secular (*laïque*) church. In both its sacred and secular versions, this type has great difficulties with pluralism. The second type he calls “enlightened absolutism,” characteristic of Lutheran northern Europe and the Anglican establishment. It became gradually more tolerant of pluralist diversity and eventually morphed into the north European welfare state. The third type is what Martin nicely labels “the Amsterdam-London-Boston bourgeois axis,” which may be seen as the matrix of religious pluralism. But, again, not all three points on this axis have been equally hospitable to voluntary association. Dutch pluralism flourished under a famously tolerant regime, but its diverse religious groups (Calvinist, Arminian, Catholic) became rather rigidly solidified as “pillars” (*verzuiling*) of an overarching political establishment. In England there occurred a more ample flourishing of diverse religious groups—the wide spectrum of so-called Nonconformity—but, as already indicated by this name, it did so under the shadow of the Anglican state