GOD

AND
COUNTRY

America in Red and Blue

SHEILA KENNEDY

GOD AND COUNTRY

This page intentionally left blank

GOD AND COUNTRY

AMERICA IN RED AND BLUE

Sheila Kennedy

CONTENTS

Part IV
Living Together

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I was aware when I began to write this book that I had set out across an intellectually treacherous terrain. An exploration of religious influences on American policy required not only a careful review of American historical and religious experience, but also at least a superficial familiarity with the scholarly literatures of several discrete policy fields. Even summoning all of my personal hubris, I knew I could never accomplish my goal without significant assistance from people with expertise in these areas.

The friends and colleagues I approached for suggested reading materials, disciplinary "roadmaps," and later, to read drafts and provide feedback, responded with unbelievable generosity. There is no way this book could have been written without their advice and counsel, and I am immensely grateful to all of them. Whatever errors remain are entirely the fault of the author!

My most constant support, as usual, came from my best friend, Jan Rubin. She read drafts, asked pertinent questions, made excellent suggestions, and was a model of patience and encouragement.

The Very Reverend Robert Giannini read every word of the manuscript, shared his own copies of books I had missed, and offered

appropriate cautions and less deserved plaudits. Similarly, Steve Sanders took a lawyer's eye to the first draft, and made invaluable suggestions for reorganizing, emphasizing, and tightening the arguments. John Clark brought his historical and foreign policy expertise to his review, and the Reverend John Hay Jr. helped ensure accurate representation of his Evangelical tradition. Rabbis Aaron Spiegel and Dennis Sasso offered valuable insights and suggested further readings. My colleague Tom Stucky patiently explained criminal justice theory and pointed me to appropriate resources, while Miriam Langsam brought a prodigious knowledge of American history and historical literature to her review.

Arthur Farnsley, Philip Goff, and Jan Shipps—all noted religion scholars—took time they didn't have to tutor me in that literature, review portions of the manuscript, and offer immensely helpful guidance. Other scholars affiliated with the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at IUPUI—Pat Wittberg, David Craig, and Tom Davis—also offered valuable suggestions and feedback, as did Brian Bex at the Remnant Trust.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to all of them, and—especially, and as usual—to my patient and long-suffering husband Bob, who puts up with me during the frenzied and overwhelming process that is (at least for me) involved every time I write a book.

Last, but most definitely not least, I must acknowledge our five children and four grandchildren, who are the living, breathing reasons I keep trying to clear a path through the past and present to a more thoughtful and accepting future.

PART I

What is a Paradigm, and Why Does It Matter?

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

HABITS OF THE MIND—
THINKING IN RED AND BLUE

Is America coming apart? If you turn on a "public affairs" television program, listen to talk radio, or attend a lawmaker's "town meeting," you are likely to witness the increasing stridence and incivility of what currently passes for democratic discourse. Our elected officials seem unable to engage with each other in anything approaching a productive and mutually meaningful exchange. Cyberspace is filled with blogs where ordinary citizens post frustrated, angry commentaries. Worse, Americans seem increasingly to be talking past, rather than to, each other. We seem increasingly unable to agree about what it means to be an American.

On one hand, it is important that we not overreact to contemporary divisions, and that we place our current "red state/blue state" hostilities in perspective. This country has seen periods of very significant conflict before—the Civil War, Prohibition, the civil rights movement, and the various dislocations that we collectively refer to as "the sixties," to name just a few—and many of those conflicts have been ferocious. It is equally true that those who bemoan the loss of a former civility are indulging in a rather selective look backward; a glance at the rhetoric used during Thomas Jefferson's campaign for president, to note just one example, will confirm that nastiness and "the politics of personal destruction" are

nothing new. Nevertheless, the radical pluralism that characterizes modern life—and the new technologies that bring a certain "in your face" quality to that pluralism—pose challenges that are arguably unlike those of past times. It is not hyperbolic to say that the rifts in our body politic are deep, and their potential consequences serious.

The thesis of this book is that much of what divides Americans these days is rooted in our particular religious histories, and that our seeming inability to address our differences constructively is exacerbated by a profound misunderstanding of the ways in which those religious roots manifest themselves. The religious roots of many conflicts are obvious, of course; as this is being written, members of the Missouri legislature are preparing to pass a resolution "protecting the majority's right to express their religious beliefs" and making Christianity the state's official religion. The State of South Dakota has recently outlawed abortion, and state bans on same-sex marriage continue to receive extensive debate and media attention. But with many other issues polarizing contemporary America, the religious dimensions of our differences are equally significant but far less obvious. The Iraq war has exposed our very incompatible ideas about America's role in the world, and the different standards we employ to determine whether any particular war is just. Ongoing policy arguments about everything from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), to the drug war, to drilling for oil in Alaska, to the proper role of government and even our definitions of liberty, all have a basis in religion. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the mountains of scholarly and popular commentary on religion, religion and politics, and the nature of public and private morality—and despite the fact that we do see and recognize the more explicitly religious dimensions of policy conflicts in areas like church-state relations or abortion—most of us consistently misinterpret and underestimate the influence of culturally embedded attitudes that originated with religious beliefs. Americans will not be able to begin a genuine conversation about our differences, and about what it means or should mean to be an American, until we recognize that we are operating out of different paradigms, different frameworks of meaning.

Most of us do recognize that the labeling and insults that increasingly dominate our media and politics are not communication. While communication is not the absence of argument or disagreement, it does require that we actually hear each other, that we argue from the same basic premises, and that at some level, no matter how minimal, we be able to acknowledge what it is the other person is saying and understand the basis upon which that person is saying it. In other words, effective argumentation and democratic deliberation require a shared reality. While it is perfectly possible to have a genuine argument about values, for example—to disagree about which values are sound, or how particular values ought to apply in a particular situation—the term has become shorthand for a far different phenomenon. Even the term *values* means different things to different people; for many, it is a euphemism for arguments over religious doctrine. But the much ballyhooed values debate is not a conflict between people who are religious and people who are secular, nor is it a struggle between those who hold to different religious beliefs. It is an argument between people operating out of different and largely inconsistent worldviews, or paradigms.

These differences can be seen in a number of policy contexts. For example, President Bush has often asserted that Americans value a "culture of life." Yet citizens who would readily agree with him that government policies should respect the sanctity of life hold—and act upon—very different conceptions of what a culture of life is, and what that respect entails. Does support for embryonic stem cell research violate respect for life by destroying the human potential the embryo represents? Or does the failure to engage in such research, with its potential for lifesaving medical breakthroughs, violate that respect? Is the death penalty inconsistent with a genuine respect for life, or does insistence upon the ultimate punishment affirm such respect by sending a signal that we will not tolerate the taking of human life? Does respect for life require the continuation of life support for individuals in a persistent vegetative state, or does it require that we honor an individual's previously expressed desire to have artificial support removed in such circumstances? We need only turn on our televisions and listen to our lawmakers debate these issues to hear people talking past each other.

This inability to engage in genuine communication is seriously threatening our ability to govern ourselves, to construct a workable *unum* out of our *pluribus*. Left unaddressed, it will prevent the construction of a social order capable of dealing with the significant challenges that characterize contemporary American life. We need a truce, based upon terms that will allow us to live with a measure of civility despite our deep and inevitable differences—terms that can be accepted as fair and legitimate by most elements of our polis even when some of those terms do not favor their worldview. That is a tall order, but I will argue that it can be done. However, we cannot begin to fashion that truce or those rules unless and until we truly understand the nature of the conflict.

THE ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

No matter what our conscious beliefs or lack thereof, all of us have mental frameworks, views of the nature of reality that have been shaped in significant part by religious cultures. Those frameworks are what we call normative concepts, and they dictate our definitions of public virtue and private merit, as well as our attitudes toward work, family, and community. Theologically shaped worldviews—whether or not recognized as religious by those who hold them—frame our individual and communal approaches to issues of race, economic behavior, poverty, social justice, education, crime and punishment, philanthropy, bioethics, and just about everything else. Many of our most contentious public arguments are rooted in differing normative concepts, or realities, that are grounded firmly in religious explanations of reality into which participants in the debates have been socialized. Sometimes the religious dimensions of a public policy debate are obvious: arguments about abortion, prayer in school, or same-sex marriage are often quite overtly sectarian. Both the religious dimensions of those issues and their use as "wedge issues" by people whose real motives are economic or political have been widely noted. Less obvious examples of religious influences include ostensibly secular arguments about responsibility for poverty, the appropriate role of the state, the meaning of law, our responsibility for the natural environment, and the role of the United States in international affairs.

A concrete example of what this all means may be illuminated by a personal story. When my middle son was eight or nine, he asked me the sort of question that makes parents' heads hurt. "Mom," he began, "I say the sky is blue. You say the sky is blue. But how do we know that we are both seeing the same color? Maybe the color I see is what you call orange, and I call orange blue because I've been taught that blue is what we call the color of the sky. How can we ever know whether what you call blue and what I call blue is really the same color?" Indeed. I have frequently pondered that—largely unanswerable—question in the context of the increasingly impassioned, vitriolic pronouncements about what we euphemistically call "social issues," most recently, the rhetoric surrounding withdrawal of artificial nutrition from Terri Schiavo.[1] It would not be accurate to characterize most of the opposing public utterances around these issues as a "debate." In order to debate, we need the ability to actually hear each other. We need to share a paradigm.

This book is ultimately an effort to identify the outlines of a paradigm that most Americans can—and perhaps already do—share. But before we can sketch out the elements of that overarching paradigm, or determine its sufficiency, we need to understand where we are and how we got here. We need to uncover the buried roots of our clashing policy commitments.

[1] Terry Schiavo was a Florida woman who had been in a persistent vegetative state for fourteen years. Her husband wanted to discontinue artificial nutrition and hydration, claiming that Terri had clearly expressed the wish that she not be kept alive under such circumstances. Her parents insisted that she showed signs of cognition, and that life support should be maintained. The Florida courts held multiple hearings on the dispute between the husband and parents, and the constitutionality of efforts by the governor and legislature to pass special legislation annulling the court's determination favoring the husband. When the parents had exhausted all state court appeals, Congress passed, and President George W. Bush signed, "Terri's law" to prevent the withdrawal of nutrition. (The majority leader, Bill Frist (himself a doctor), claimed he had "diagnosed" Ms. Schiavo by viewing a videotape of her, and that she clearly retained some cognitive functions.) Rallies were held outside her hospital. When she was finally allowed to die, an autopsy revealed that most of her cerebral cortex had liquefied and that no cognitive functioning had occurred for some time.

AMERICANS' CONTENDING WORLDVIEWS

Jonathan Gold has described the process by which religious cultures change in response to encounters with different belief structures, a process called a dialectic: "Religions do not have unchanging natures. They are (among other things) complex social organisms that exist in history. Thus, while they are molded by that history, they mold back in turn. When we focus on social forces that affect the development and transformation of peoples, therefore, we always remember that religions are a crucial part of that causal story" (2001, 1). In the United States, that dialectic has been dominated by two major and opposing worldviews, one that incorporates and reflects our Puritan heritage and one that began with the Enlightenment. Chapters 2 and 3 detail the genesis and contours of those worldviews. For purposes of this introductory discussion, it will suffice to say that they rest upon profoundly different conceptions of the essential nature of human beings and thus the purposes of their governing institutions. The Puritan view of human nature is grounded in the essential sinfulness of man and the centrality of the Fall. The post-Enlightenment or modernist view is that people are born innocent—the human baby as blank slate, or tabula rasa—and their subsequent development is influenced heavily by the environments within which they are raised. One consequence of these differences can be seen in the respective approaches to governing institutions and policies of Puritans and modernists. Religious conservatives (in my shorthand formulation, *Puritans*) tend to focus more on individual character and universal moral values, while secular and religious liberals (*modernists*) emphasize the importance of culture and social structure.

The struggle between these two incompatible ways of structuring reality is, of course, more complicated than this description would suggest. For one thing, very few people have worldviews that fall entirely within one neat category or another. As we shall see, the dialectic process that has characterized American social history is replicated, to a greater or lesser degree, within each of us. For another, virtually all cultures are constantly being transformed by their encounters with new and emerging realities, although the process through which such

transformations occur, and the new worldviews that emerge, will be heavily influenced by that culture's antecedent folkways and institutions. The most determinedly orthodox or fundamentalist adherent of a religious tradition today bears little resemblance to the orthodox practitioner of that same religion even a hundred years ago; instead, he is a product of the encounter between the older orthodoxy and subsequent social history.

Nevertheless—however tortured the lineage of contemporary Puritans and modernists—in their purer forms they hold significantly different worldviews, inhabit significantly different realities, and are engaged in a poorly understood struggle to control the dominant social narrative, if not through persuasion, then through political coercion. This dynamic can be vividly seen in our more extreme public rhetoric; as many observers have noted, current participants in public discourse hardly bother to pretend that they are responding to opposing views; instead they concentrate on mobilizing their supporters with emotional, rather than persuasive rhetoric. Rousing the base is a means to an end, and the end is the power to determine whose reality will control the social agenda.

DEVELOPING "HABITS OF THE MIND"

Understanding the nature of the conflict requires that we define our terms. Saying that religion is often at the root of our public conflicts is to introduce what lawyers would call a preliminary question, namely, what do we mean by religion? That is not as easy a question as one might think. As a book reviewer for the London *Guardian* (February 7, 2002) once noted, not entirely tongue-in-cheek, "Any argument about religion, whether conducted in the seminar room or the saloon bar, is likely to hit the buffers not just because people hold different religious beliefs, but because they disagree about what should or should not be counted as an instance of religion in the first place." In *The Sacred Canopy*, sociologist of religion Peter Berger wrote, "Every human society is an enterprise of world building. Religion occupies a distinctive place in this enterprise" (1967, 3). Berger defines religion as a "humanly constructed universe of

meaning" (175), and he explains, "Worlds are socially constructed and socially maintained." That is, their power to describe reality depends upon their ability to be seen as self-evident, in other words, upon their nature as "taken for granted" attributes of the real world—what Berger called their "plausibility structure" (45). When social changes or world events threaten the self-evident nature of an accepted reality, or undermine its plausibility structure, trouble arises.

In the following pages, I use the term *religion* to refer to the "humanly constructed universes of meaning" around which substantial numbers of Americans have organized their understandings of life's purpose—systems that provide individual adherents with a meaningful framework for understanding the world, establish rules governing ethical personal and social behavior, define the individual's place within society, and legitimize social policies and institutions. The definition I use encompasses such readily recognizable "life-organizing belief systems" as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, but will also include non-Abrahamic religions like Hinduism, nontraditional religions like Wicca, and nontheistic religions like Buddhism. It is important to be clear at the outset about the way I am using the term, because one's choice of a definition will always affect the nature of the conclusions to be drawn. One reason social scientists get inconsistent empirical results when they study religious outcomes (the effect of religion on health, longevity, or subjective well-being, for example) is that they often begin with quite different ideas about what religion and religiosity are (Hackney and Sanders 2003).[2]

The religious roots of our contemporary conflicts are not traditional doctrinal disputes. The mere fact that you and I attend different churches, synagogues, or mosques, or identify ourselves as members of religions holding different doctrines, does not equate to the holding of different worldviews, and does not account for our civil divisions. Ecumenical civility has largely (although certainly not entirely)

---

[2] Sociologists often divide definitions of religion into two types, functional and substantive. I am employing a functional definition.

replaced purely sectarian disputes like those that led the Puritans to leave England, Roger Williams to found Rhode Island, or Catholics to form their own schools. Today, interreligious difficulties most frequently arise when we simply do not realize that we are operating out of a particular set of assumptions about the nature of reality that may not be shared by others.

We can see the nature of such assumptions when we examine various definitions of religion. Winnifred Sullivan reminds us that "[t]he traditional American evangelical Protestant definition of religion as chosen, private, individual and believed" now shares space in a pluralist culture in which many other traditions define religion as "given, public, communal and enacted" (2004, 257). The facile references to a "Judeo-Christian" Americanism that characterize current discourse ignore or trivialize those profound and still salient distinctions. A case in point is the terminology employed to describe recent government efforts at outreach to religious social service organizations (President Bush's "Faith-Based Initiative"). The term faith-based, undoubtedly chosen rather than religious in an effort to be ecumenical and inclusive, is based upon a narrowly Protestant conception of religion—a conception and a terminology that equates religion with faith, and thus excludes (albeit unintentionally) traditionally works-based religions like Judaism and Catholicism. Similarly, people who consider themselves entirely secular and nonreligious often share significant worldviews with adherents of some religions, and virtually none with adherents of others. Religious worldviews have left indelible imprints on even the most secularized human cultures and worldviews. In *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart tell us "distinctive worldviews that were originally linked with religious traditions have shaped the cultures of each nation in an enduring fashion; today, these distinctive values are transmitted to citizens even if they never set foot in a church." To illustrate, they repeat a telling exchange with an Estonian colleague who was explaining the cultural differences between Estonians and Russians. "We are all atheists; but I am a Lutheran atheist and they are Orthodox atheists" (2005, 17).

Religious worldviews inform culture, and culture tells us what behaviors are acceptable; it establishes collective authoritative norms. A culture "nurtures predictability in social relations" by making and then propagating assumptions about human nature, prescribing norms for appropriate social conduct, establishing identity, and maintaining boundaries (Leege and Kellstedt 1993, 8). As Clifford Geertz explains, culture is an "acted document"; it consists of "socially established structures of meaning" (1973, 12). It is public, because meaning is public.

There are, of course, many economic, environmental, and situational factors that interact to shape human cultures. That said, the influence of religion on culture (even on seemingly nonreligious subcultures) has been profound. The religious underpinnings of a culture exert a far-reaching influence upon the life conduct of very heterogeneous people, and particular beliefs and rituals have different cultural consequences; as we shall see, the Catholic doctrine of sacrament, the Lutheran belief in justification through faith, and the Calvinist belief in predestination have each had far-reaching results for the fashioning of a practical way of life.

Individuals' worldviews are the mental frameworks that develop as a result of their encounters with culture and cultural norms, frameworks which we use to filter and sort our encounters with external stimuli. We might call these mental frameworks "habits of the mind" (distinct from, although related to, the "habits of the heart" made famous by Robert Bellah and his colleagues in their book of the same name). Our habits of the mind are just that: habits. Much like a path worn through the grass on a well-traveled shortcut, or ruts on a dirt road left by countless wagon wheels, our mental habits are the cognitive mechanisms through and around which each individual human learns to define and travel the way forward. Our habits describe the "path" of our perceived realities. Worldviews—our mental paths, or paradigms—result from the interaction of the public "reality structure" of the culture with the capacities and experiences of unique individuals.

Another word for these worldviews is *paradigm*, a term that owes its current popularity to Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn was a physicist who—in the course of research for his dissertation—picked up Aristotle's *Physics* and

found that it made no sense to him. Since Kuhn assumed that neither he nor Aristotle was stupid, he concluded that they were operating from such different, and incommensurable, realities that communication simply was not possible, and he proceeded to write a book about the meaning and use of these conceptual frameworks and the way science adapts or shifts its paradigms (1962). Other scientists have demonstrated that anomalies—facts falling outside one's paradigm, or frame of reference— are simply unseen. That is, if a fact is encountered for which there is no place in one's conceptual framework, that fact will not be willfully disregarded; rather, its existence genuinely will not be recognized. The way paradigms operate can be seen in the old story of the blind men and the elephant: one blind man feels the tail and says an elephant is a type of snake; one of the others encounters the animal's broad side and says it is a kind of wall, and so forth. We all use our existing frameworks to make sense of the phenomena we encounter, because they are the only tools we have. If we have no frame of reference for a whole elephant, we will not—arguably cannot—see a whole elephant.

Paradigm theory is a useful way of thinking about the normative belief structures that help humans make sense of reality. Such paradigms, or worldviews (I am using the terms interchangeably), need not be rigid, or even coherent, to perform this interpretive function; with respect to worldviews, evidence suggests that the filtering effects of normative paradigms incorporating religious ways of seeing reality persist in individuals who no longer consciously embrace (or are even familiar with) the theological propositions that originally shaped them. In other words, religious or secular, we have all been socialized into cultural and conceptual social norms that were originally based on religion and religious ways of understanding the world, and those norms continue to shape our personal worldviews. Furthermore, since "every theology embodies, either implicitly or explicitly, a *mythos*, a vision of how human communities ought to be organized" (Bell 2004, 423), our theologically based worldviews are inevitably political.

My son learned early in life that the color of the sky is called blue. Like all children, he has—as Erich Fromm might put it—soaked up

society's "givens" with his mother's milk. The cultures into which we are socialized provide the guidelines we use to categorize external realities; culture is the reason Americans regard gerbils as pets but mice as pests, the reason we eat cows but shudder at the thought of eating dogs. We acquire habits of mind, habitual ways of processing reality, that dictate what we regard as fact and what as fiction, what we designate as "public" and what as "private," what we consider relevant or irrelevant, what we think of as "natural" and what we reject as "unnatural" (Zerubavel 1997, 67).

There is lively and ongoing debate about the extent to which our individual human behaviors are biologically encoded or "hard wired" and the extent to which they have been culturally transmitted. Despite these scientific disputes over the relative contributions of nature and nurture, however, there is widespread agreement (confirmed by a variety of failed experiments in social engineering) that socialization does not and cannot produce cultural "clones"—that individual differences and experiences will always shape the ways in which individuals appropriate and employ cultural symbols and conventions to make sense of the world and to develop habits of the mind.

For much of human history, children were socialized into quite homogeneous cultures. More recently, due to modern transportation and communication media, immigration, intermarriage, and other phenomena of modernity, we experience far more cultural and cognitive pluralism. One need not accept Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis to recognize that increasing pluralism creates conflict; it threatens the *taken for granted* nature of our mental frameworks. As James Davison Hunter has written, the stridency of much contemporary debate is "inspired more by doubt than confidence, more by fear than by trust and settled conviction. The loudness of the voices is, in some ways, an attempt to drown out the droning noise of uncertainty" (2005, 3). The assault of pluralism and social change on our settled mental "habits" also threatens our ability to govern ourselves.

> The existence of alternative social paradigms may result in problems
> of communication and understanding of such magnitude they threaten

the legitimacy of the political system. It is because protagonists to the debate approach issues from different cultural contexts, which generate different and conflicting implicit meanings, that there is mutual exasperation and charges and countercharges of irrationality and unreason. What is sensible from one point of view is nonsense from another. It is the implicit, self-evident, taken-for-granted character of paradigms which clogs the channels of communication. And, where the belief in the reasonableness of the political system, and its openness to reasoned argument and debate, break down, the normal channels of petition, protest, and pressure group tactics come to be seen as inadequate. (Cotgrove 1982, 82)

Examples supporting Cotgrove's observations are all around us. In 1996, Alan Miller published a study on the influence of religious affiliation on social attitudes. As part of that study, he examined the ways in which members of different religions initially approached certain issues. Miller discovered that Jews and Christians in his sample classified several issues differently; for example, Christians addressed homosexuality as a moral issue. Different Christians resolved that moral issue differently, but most approached it through the lens of morality, placing it in the same category as atheism and communism. Jews, on the other hand, tended to classify homosexuality as a type of sexual orientation. To use a currently popular phrase, they framed the question differently. As a consequence of these differences in initial classification, Jewish attitudes toward gays did not demonstrate a relationship with their attitudes about drug abuse or pornography, as Christian attitudes did. Miller concluded that these were not mere differences of opinion, but rather "differences in the way these issues are organized in a broader cognitive framework" (Miller 1996, 230). This is a crucial insight.

The fact that people hold to what I have called incommensurate worldviews is a widely recognized phenomenon. Best sellers proclaim that "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus." A widely distributed business training video some years back used the experience of Swiss watchmakers to drive home a lesson about "thinking outside the box." According to the video, the original inventor of the digital watch

was Swiss, but when he tried to convince Swiss watch manufacturers to produce digital watches, they found his design incomprehensible. Watches have mainsprings. Your invention does not have a mainspring; ergo, it isn't a watch. Today, the digital watch industry is dominated by Japanese manufacturers. American history is replete with examples of mutual incomprehension. George Marsden nicely captured the nature of one "incommensurable universe" in a passage describing the famous conflict between William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow at the Scopes trial: "Each considered the other's view ridiculous, and wondered aloud how any sane person could hold it" (1980, 213).

It is important to underscore the independence of these mental frameworks from conscious acceptance of particular religious beliefs. Worldviews are mental habits; they are unrelated to explicit acceptance or rejection of any particular dogma or belief system. Robert Bellah has described them as "cultural codes" (2002, 13). But our cultural codes are, as Bellah and others have also noted, very largely derived from religious belief. It is in this sense that we must understand the United States as a Christian—or more accurately, Protestant—nation. (In America, as the saying goes, even the Catholics and the Jews are Protestants.) Arthur Schlesinger Jr. has wryly noted that assaults on Western tradition by minorities, academics, and others are "conducted very largely with analytical weapons forged in the West" (1991, 72). We are all products of the cultures that create our worldviews; that is what we mean when we say that certain belief systems are hegemonic.

Cultures and the cognitive paradigms they shape do change and evolve, albeit slowly and at times, painfully. Because we take our worldviews for granted, because they describe "the way things are," we rarely doubt or question them. When discrepancies do arise between our observations or experiences and our mental frameworks, we behave much like the blind men with the elephant—we try to "shoehorn" the anomalies into our existing paradigms, and to ignore the inconsistencies that result. Sometimes, however, the discrepancies are too big or too numerous to ignore, and despite our intense resistance to change, our paradigm does shift, transforming the way we see the world. As Olsen,

Lodwick, and Dunlap have noted, however, the new paradigm that emerges will not only be fundamentally different from the old one, it will often be incompatible with it, making rational debate between those holding inconsistent paradigms impossible. As more and more people shift their paradigms, the dominant worldview prevailing in a culture will change; over time, in some cases, that change is so radical that it will represent "an entirely new view of reality" (1992, 2).

> [W]e argue that new social paradigms normally emerge unintentionally, are incompletely and vaguely expressed, and only gradually gain adherents as increasing numbers of people become aware of the anomalies within the old social paradigm. The tendency for adherents of competing scientific paradigms to "talk past" one another and hence fail to communicate in any meaningful way is even more pronounced with social paradigms. (1992, 10)

We may be experiencing such a paradigm shift now.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND CHANGING WORLDVIEWS

Ironically, many contemporary scholars believe that the secularization that so offends contemporary Puritans is an all-but-inevitable outcome of Protestantism, with its new emphasis upon the individual—that a paradigm shift occurred once it was no longer necessary to have an ecclesiastic authority mediate the relationship between the individual and the sacred. As C. Wright Mills has described the consequences, "Once the world was filled with the sacred—in thought, practice and institutional form. After the Reformation and the Renaissance, the forces of modernization swept across the globe and secularization, a corollary historical process, loosened the dominion of the sacred" (1959, 32–33). The Reformation, and later the Enlightenment, ushered in new ways of thinking about science, the nature of reality, and the authority of governing institutions. The Industrial Revolution also brought major social changes. Emile Durkheim argued that industrialization brought plurality and *functional differentiation* in its wake—the separation of areas of authority and expertise that characterize modern societies. When a citizen of a modern

country breaks a leg, he is likely to call the doctor, not the priest or rabbi; when a student wants to become an engineer, she studies science at the university rather than religious texts at a monastery; when a businessperson wants to know whether patent laws will protect his company's new invention, he consults lawyers, not spiritual advisers. Religious authority has become steadily less extensive; at the same time it faces increasing competition from other centers of authority and from other systems of belief and religion. Mills and others believed that the eventual result would be a world that is more and more secular—a world in which the impact of religion would steadily diminish. More recently, other scholars—including several who originally agreed with this secularization theory—have challenged that inevitability, pointing to the reemergence of religion as a major factor in world affairs. Still others have refined the theory. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart argue that the importance of religiosity persists most strongly among vulnerable populations. They believe that fear—feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability—are the key factor driving religiosity, and they use evidence from the massive World Values Survey to argue that inhabitants of the Western industrialized nations, whatever their professed beliefs, behave in a way that demonstrates the waning influence of religious doctrine and sectarian sensibilities. They predict that affluent and industrialized nations will continue to see a decline in the influence of religion, while poorer, developing countries—with their more vulnerable populations and higher birthrates—will continue to be highly religious.

Whichever view is correct (and that is an argument for a quite different book), it is clear that America is an outlier. As we shall see in chapter 4, the historic process of secularization has changed the American civic and religious landscape in very important ways. In America, however one understands the process of secularization, there has been no steady movement from religious passion to secular rationality. Instead, American history is characterized by periods of declining religious authority alternating with periods of renewed religious zeal. Even during periods of significant religiosity, however, the sources of