
Politics and religion in the modern world

Edited by
George Moyser



London and New York

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Preface

Political science, like most academic disciplines, tends to focus research according to fashion. There are, in any given period, areas of the subject that receive a lot of attention, and those which attract less. The study of religion and politics, in these terms, has moved rapidly in recent years from one of neglect to one of relatively intense scrutiny. Institutionally, one can see this in the swelling of the research committees and papers delivered at professional meetings both nationally and internationally. But this is, I suggest, no more than its due. Twenty years ago, a writer suggested that however imprudent it might seem to grapple with the complexities of the relationship between religion and politics, its importance demanded such an endeavour. Today, this is even more clear, and fortunately, it is being recognized. In contradiction to those in the western world who thought that secularization had removed religion from the realm of political affairs, it has remained a vital force. In First, Second and Third Worlds, one can find in most countries evidence that religion still has a substantial imprint, worthy of critical scrutiny.

This volume is a contribution to that task. Its theme, ‘politics and religion in the modern world’, captures its goal—to undertake a survey of the field of religion and politics over the last half century. This is, obviously, an ambitious task for one book. Inevitably, therefore, it cannot be definitive. The regions and countries covered are selective. Nevertheless, by focusing on key areas and countries, the authors collectively provide a substantial commentary on what has happened, and is happening, to religion and politics in the world today. Many of the contributions provide a holistic regional focus, such as on Latin America and Eastern Europe, to give a broad perspective. But they also incorporate detailed case studies of given

countries so that the reader can appreciate some of the rich variety of particular national situations.

As editor, I would first of all like to thank those contributors for their time and labours in making this volume possible. Their individual expertise in their chosen regions gives the book a scholarly authority that could not be otherwise achieved, and for that they alone are responsible. The deficiencies and shortcomings of the whole, where they are perceived, are mine alone.

I would also like to thank Stella Moyser, Barbara McGray and Gail Hampton for their typing assistance, and the staff of the Bailey—Howe Library at the University of Vermont for helping me complete the occasionally incomplete reference. Last, but certainly not least, I wish gratefully to acknowledge the support and forbearance of the editor at Routledge, Peter Sowden. He first commissioned this volume a considerable time ago. Since then, the world of religion and politics has moved on in sometimes dizzying fashion, but he never lost hope that we would stop observing and start writing!

George Moyser
Burlington, Vermont

Politics and religion in the modern world: an overview

George Moyser

INTRODUCTION

It is very difficult in the modern world to ignore the presence of religion in public affairs. Virtually on a daily basis, the media provide instances demonstrating that the people, institutions, and ideas that make up the religious sphere have a continuing and important relevance to the political realm. A glance at the morning newspaper as I write is as good an illustration as any.¹ In it there is a story from Britain concerning a broadcasting bill going through one of the legislative stages on the way to becoming an Act of Parliament—the law of the land. The focus of the story is about the problems of drawing up new rules restricting access to television by religious institutions, rules that have caused ‘a great deal of concern among Christians’, according to a campaigner for religious programming. Another, from the Swiss sub-canton of Appenzell Inner-Rhoden, relates how male voters meeting in the annual *Landsgemeinde*, or town meeting, of this strongly Roman Catholic area had refused for the third time to give women the vote in local affairs. There is also a report from Harare, Zimbabwe, in which an Anglican priest, ‘prominent in the ranks of anti-apartheid activists and a member of the African National Congress’ was injured by a booby-trapped parcel, allegedly sent by right-wing political elements from South Africa. Perhaps most noteworthy of all is an article about reforms in Albania, famous for its attempt to eliminate systematically all trace of religion from its society. In this article, mention is made of a new generation of younger technocrats described as supporters of religion, and unwilling ‘even in public, to state the official line that the Albanian people were “never religious”’.

These momentary examples could be extended almost indefinitely

to others, both great and small. The role of the Christian Churches in legislative controversies over abortion; the *rapprochement* between the Kremlin and the Vatican; and the more familiar events in the Middle East where religion, in the shape of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is a significant factor in the domestic and international politics of the entire region.

What they demonstrate, unequivocally, is that religion and politics have a lot to do with each other: they interact in a number of important but complex ways. Whether it is at the local, national or international level; whether it involves ordinary citizens, activists or major leaders; whether it concerns legislative institutions, pressure groups or competing political parties and ideologies; whether it is the First World of liberal democracy, the Second World of state socialism, the Third World of developing countries or the Fourth World of abject poverty, religion and politics relate.

This ongoing reality is, therefore, the basic motivation for this book. The view is taken, in other words, that ‘secularization’, or ‘modernization’, have not marginalized religion in the modern world—at least not to the extent that it ceases to have much relevance to politics, or politics to religion. Clearly, vast changes in the relationship have taken place even over the last few decades, but those changes have by no means sundered the connections.

It is, indeed, in that context that the second part of the title of the book ‘in the modern world’, has been cautiously added. This has narrowed the focus to relatively recent times and so given each contributor scope to provide greater detail about issues and events in given contemporary relationships between religion and politics than would otherwise have been possible. At the same time, it allows them room to indicate the dynamics of those issues and events and, not least, to set them in a broader historical context. Those dynamics and that context are always an essential part of understanding the whole.

To assist in that understanding, this introductory chapter sets out some general considerations which might be used to compare, contrast, and derive significance from the various case studies. To that end, we must turn first to basic definitional questions, for it is from definitions that clear, analytic understanding must proceed.

THE BASIC ELEMENTS

Politics

What is politics? A simple question, but one difficult to answer in a precise way. Nevertheless, if we are to begin to appreciate the various elements that make up the relationship between religion and politics, some answers, however imperfect, must be given.

In that spirit, one encyclopedia's definition is as good a start as any: 'a process whereby a group of people, whose opinions or interests are initially divergent, reach collective decisions which are generally regarded as binding on the group, and enforced as common policy.'² From this, we can derive a number of important elements and so flesh out what the realm of 'the political' is that 'religion' might engage.

First, politics is a process, a complex set of activities that form part of a 'group of people's' shared existence. The purpose of those activities is, as noted in the definition, essentially the making of collective decisions—the exercise of power. Our particular focus, therefore, is with the interconnections that exist between the religious life of the group and any or all of those activities, always bearing in mind that they take place within a broader social, cultural, economic and geographical context defined by the character of the group. But what 'group of people' are we talking about here? In principle, one could be speaking of a wide spectrum ranging from small primary groups such as family units, through to the entire human race. All to a greater or lesser degree have a corporate life, containing individuals to some degree divergent in opinion or interest. All, therefore, have formal or informal 'political' processes whereby collective decisions are made.

Hence, we might, indeed be interested in how 'religion' affects family decision-making, or the 'politics' of the workplace, or other groups of people. Indeed, one particular set of groups is that defined by religious membership. And so we might well ask how these groups formulate collective decisions. We might then also ask how those patterns impinge upon the way those groups engage in political processes outside the group. Studies have in fact been done on this, showing that such internal political practices do indeed affect the manner of external engagements. They also show that internal power arrangements tend to reflect patterns in the secular political world.³ All of which serves to emphasize that the

relationship between religion and politics is not a simple one; there are many complex features that must be taken into account.

Normally, however, 'politics' is reserved for decision-making processes among large spatial groups, collectivities of people that inhabit a given local, regional or, above all, national territory. Numerous studies have focused on the contribution of religion at each of these levels. At the small end of the spectrum, they include reports of the way religion intersects with the political processes of particular villages or cities—what some call 'communal politics'.⁴ They also include many more that look at provinces or regions; many are very large and significant entities yet sufficiently distinctive to be an important focus of religious and political life in their own right.⁵ But most common, perhaps, are 'country studies' of the relationship between religion and politics in sovereign nation-states.

In part, this is because of the nature of a 'nation', defined in one dictionary as follows:

a nation is a body of people who see part at least of their identity in terms of a single communal identity with some considerable historical continuity of union, with major elements of common culture, and with a sense of geographical location at least for a good part of those who make up the nation.⁶

Hence, to the extent that religion is a part of that communal identity, that common culture, that historical continuity, so religion and 'nation' become closely entangled: religion can be a means through which a nation expresses its identity and aspirations.⁷

However, perhaps the key interest in nation-states lies in their sovereignty—their capacity, theoretically at least, to make binding and enforceable collective decisions for generally large aggregates of people. The world has become dominated by such entities, as is attested by the collapse of empires and the ending of colonialist regimes. Though in some regions, nation-states are initiating the creation of super-states, as yet power lies substantially at the national level. Thus it is national politics which in a sense counts the most and hence it is relationships between that politics and the religious sphere which generate major attention. This book, organized substantially in terms of national case studies, is testament to this.

At the same time, significant collectivities exist at the international level where, in consequence, interesting linkages with religion can be examined. Here we are dealing with such topics as the contribution of religious agencies as actors in international

relations. We are also reminded at this level that religion expressed in the domestic political arena may spill over into cross-border disputes and other types of international difficulties.⁸

The second key element in a definition of politics besides the character of the collectivity is the process of decision-making itself. As noted, this entails the reconciliation of divergent opinions and interests in mechanisms of conflict resolution. How this is achieved varies considerably. In some contexts, it is a matter of the direct use of violence, coercion and terror. In others, methods based on historical tradition and custom may prevail. In yet others, a conscious attempt is made to devise a written formula, or constitution, that lays down clear legal rules whereby power is wielded.

The formal institutions at the heart of this process constitute 'the state', 'the set-up of authoritative and legitimately powerful roles by which we are finally controlled, ordered, and organized'.⁹ It includes the agencies that make up the national political executive ('the government' narrowly construed), the legislative and judicial organs, and an administrative or bureaucratic apparatus ('the civil service'). The state also includes the means whereby its decisions are ultimately enforced—the coercive apparatus of police, militia, and army. Authoritative institutions at the sub-national level function analogously as 'the local state', although their power is subordinated to a greater or lesser degree to the national level. Similarly, the term should sometimes perhaps be stretched to include formally authoritative supranational institutions where there has been a significant transfer of decision-making from the national level. The European Community is a case in point.

It is because of the centrality of these state institutions to the political process that their relationship with religion has received close scrutiny. Indeed, 'church and state' was, for a long time, taken to be what 'religion and politics' was essentially all about. Connections between religion and the constitution form one important aspect. In the United States, for example, as in other countries, the relationship between religion and the national constitution has been an important focus of study.¹⁰ The US constitution lays out the basic legal framework within which state institutions operate. In doing so, it also reflects important symbolic elements and ideological preferences. This in turn raises the question of the role accorded to religious bodies in the constitution, and the extent to which its symbols and values have a religious provenance. Similar considerations can also be raised in every other national context.

Constitutional studies, particularly in the United States, also draw into view the relationship between religion and the judiciary, which in that country has a major responsibility for deciding constitutional issues.¹¹ Beyond that, such a focus raises the whole question of the contribution of religion to understandings of the law. In many Islamic countries, for example, the contribution is very explicit.¹²

The other state institutions also may have important links with the religious sphere. Studies have looked at the religious motivations of legislators, for example, as well as their treatment of a wide range of issues that relate specifically and directly to religion.¹³ It is true, of course, that religious outlooks may have a bearing on any or all issues on a given legislative agenda. But the impact of religion is perhaps most visible in law-making within such areas as education, the family, sexuality, and capital punishment. The same can be said of the other central apparatus of the state—the political executive of presidents and prime ministers, cabinets and councils of ministers.

Politics, however, is much more than the exercise of power within the state apparatus. Indeed, one of the problems of defining ‘the state’ lies precisely in the fact that power and influence over decisions is often diffused well beyond these officially authoritative institutions. As part of the play of power, agencies and individuals outside the state seek to affect the nature of the collective decisions—public policies—as they are made. Indeed, some achieve a status that can rival and even overshadow officially-designated institutions. This necessarily extends the scope and complexity of the relationship between religion and politics. It is indeed about far more than ‘church and state’.

In recognition of the broader political reality, political scientists tend to speak as much, if not more, about ‘the polity’ or ‘the political system’ rather than ‘the state’. As David Easton, and others, have conceived the term, it includes all those who generate ‘inputs’—demands, resources and support—as well as the authorities who ‘allocate’, that is make and implement decisions.¹⁴ For present purposes, these other elements may be divided into three: political parties, pressure groups, and the mass of citizens itself. What then has religion to do with them?

The relationship between religion and political parties has, in itself, been the subject of numerous inquiries. These include, *inter alia*, the religious composition of their mass base, the religious outlooks of party activists and leaders, and the religious character (or lack of it) of the party’s ideology and programme.¹⁵ Of course,

such studies have achieved particular prominence in the Second World, where the ruling Marxist parties are constitutionally recognized as the leading force in society and the state itself. The key relationship in those contexts has been that between Church and party and, in particular, the policy adopted by the party towards those religious bodies.

Pressure groups have been a rich, if generally less decisive, part of the story. These are typically defined as structures, formal or informal, that try to influence public policy without (unlike most parties) seeking to become themselves the political office-holders in the state. Only in exceptional instances, most notably the military, do they come to hold the reins of power. Religious groups themselves may become institutional pressure groups promoting their particular views of issues on the current public agenda. This may take the form of lobbying the legislature, making contacts with the executive apparatus, or even going to court. It may also entail building and using links with political parties and forming alliances with other like-minded pressure groups. Not least, action may extend to the mobilization of religious adherents, the formation of religiously-inspired political movements, and the attempt to sensitize public opinion through the mass media.¹⁶ In extreme instances, at least in the modern world, religious leaders may even actively seek office themselves. But equally, there are religious groups who seek no engagement at all in the political realm, who see it as a corrupt and corrupting arena.

At the grass roots of the pyramid of power are the mass populace. Though in many ways the least powerful in the play of power, here too a rich array of interconnections exist between the religious and the political. Perhaps the most significant act is that of voting which, at least in competitive systems, is the major means through which citizens as individuals come to participate in the play of power. Under this heading a variety of important questions are raised. To what extent, for example, are voting decisions founded upon, or influenced by, religious criteria? A classic study of western party systems revealed that religion retained a remarkable saliency in fixing voting alignments.¹⁷ This is not to claim, however, that overtly religious issues and identifications are necessarily always at the centre of the voting decision. But it is to say that religion continues to play at least a passive role in influencing voting behaviour in many countries, being interwoven with ethnic, linguistic, racial and sometimes economic interests. To put it another way, religious

groups may form moral and indeed political communities, shaping and mobilizing their members' electoral activities as they react to the candidates, parties and issues within the campaign.¹⁸

Mass political behaviour is by no means, of course, confined to voting, even if it is the commonest mode of expression in many countries. One other particularly significant activity is that of protest. Hence, as with voting, we might inquire as to the religious roots of this phenomenon, and indeed of even more 'extreme' activities grouped under the term 'political violence'. To the extent that religion functions as a mechanism of social control and political integration, the relationship is a negative one. A study in Britain conducted by the author, for example, found this to be the case: religious adherence generally reduced the propensity for protest.¹⁹ However, in other milieux, it is apparent that religion can serve to promote very active rejection of government policies and personnel—as in the case of the peace movement, or abortion, for example. Furthermore, religion can be the means of focusing and intensifying alienation from an entire political regime which can lead to political violence and insurgency. This type of linkage can be found not only among liberation movements of the left but also to some degree of the extreme right.²⁰

Although political actions may be the most visible imprint that citizens make in the political system, those actions reflect important underlying beliefs, values and opinions—the mass political culture. This, too, extends the relationship between politics and religion. To what extent, for example, are religious orientations linked to the national political culture and/or given subcultures? Are religious belief systems, such as they are at the mass level, systematically associated with ideological dispositions in the political realm? In general, the answer seems to be positive. In numerous countries and contexts, religion and politics do indeed connect in this way. Religion and nationalism, fundamentalism and political conservatism, and, not least, the political witness of those committed to liberation theology are all examples.²¹

From the foregoing, it is apparent that 'making collective decisions for a group of people' is a complex, multi-faceted matter. From local level to international level, and from ordinary citizen to political elite, the modern polity encompasses a wide range of elements susceptible to religious influence. But what is the character of the religious side of the equation? How might we define its basic essence (if we can) and what does this further reveal about the linkages under review?

Religion

In one usage, the term 'religion' simply specifies extant world religions—Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity and so forth. But this begs the question—what distinguishes these 'religions' from other 'isms' like fascism or Marxism, or indeed from magic and superstition? A more generic approach is called for and this sees religion as being defined in terms of one or more of three related themes said to be characteristic of religion and the religious experience: the notions of transcendence, sacredness and ultimacy.²² Transcendence emphasizes the religious as being associated with a supernatural reality, in the sense that within the mundane world *homo religiosus* 'encounters powers that are impressively greater than (transcendent to) his own'.²³ In this way, the religious order is seen as having a pre-eminent claim over the believer and the social order of everyday life. This in turn extends to an influence over the political domain when collective decisions concerning that social order are being made.

Sacredness is a second theme, emphasized by Durkheim in his now classic distinction between the sacred and the profane:

Sacred things are those which the interdictions protect and isolate; profane things, those to which these interdictions are applied and which must remain at a distance from the first. Religious beliefs are the representations which express the nature of sacred things and the relations which they sustain, either with each other or with profane things.²⁴

This has been a very influential approach. For example, Berger argues that 'religion' should be demarcated as those systems of belief that invoke a 'sacred canopy'.²⁵ Paden also suggests that 'the term religion is generally used to mean a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed sacred.'²⁶ To the extent that the sacred is used by people 'as the organizing points of reference for defining their worlds and lives',²⁷ this too entails a relationship with the social and political domain. The feeling of extraordinary power evoked by 'the sacred' compels the believer to try to order 'the profane' in a manner consistent with those greater imperatives.

The same might also be said of the idea of religion as ultimacy. This has been propounded in terms of religion as articulating the core values of society which address the very foundations of

meaning through a sense of superordinate purpose and significance. As Bellah puts it, religion 'relate[s] man to the ultimate conditions of his existence'.²⁸ In that way, religion as ultimacy also commands the believer; it sets all other aspects of human existence beneath, and in the context of, that ultimate concern. Politics, once more, is made relative to, and is validated by, religion. But religion, by its very claims, also becomes subject to the exercise of political power.

How this dialectic is worked out varies greatly from religion to religion, and even with given religious belief systems, widely different 'political theologies' are espoused. In a classic study of the problem, Niebuhr speaks of a dialogue between Christ and culture, the sacred and the profane which 'proceeds with denials and affirmations, reconstructions, compromises, and new denials'.²⁹ And as if to underscore these ambiguities, he then goes on to outline as many as five different answers as to how Christ and culture come together. But, important as these themes are in understanding how religion and politics fit together from a religious viewpoint, there is clearly more to it than that. Though belief may be at the core of the religious experience there are other aspects which need to be brought into view in order to grasp the varied ways in which religion reaches out to the political realm.

First, religion is also a matter of personal experience and, not least, of action or practice.³⁰ This adds visibility to religion, in terms of rituals, such as prayer and religious ceremony, a visibility which can become deeply enmeshed with the political realm. One thinks, for example, of the symbolic religious anointing of the British monarch at the coronation, or the use of prayer to invoke the support of the deity in connection with some governmental policy or the interweaving of political and religious ideas in the American pledge of allegiance.

In many instances, religious ceremonies necessitate the designation of particular places or buildings as sacred arenas in which these activities are conducted—temples, mosques, shrines, synagogues, churches and the like. Indeed, in popular culture, some equate 'religion' with those physical appurtenances. Here too, points of contact with politics arise, as the conflicts surrounding the Golden Temple at Amritsar and the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh (both in India), or the Ka'bah at Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, all attest. Albeit in different ways, the same might be said of Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral in England.³¹

As these sacred places suggest, religion does not simply have meaning at the individual level, it also, like politics, has a corporate or communal character. This, in turn, presents another level at which religion and politics engage. Here it is a matter of group solidarities. It is also a matter, in many contexts, of inter-group tension and conflict. Both solidarities and conflicts may have a religious element, revolving around shared or discrepant images of the sacred. But in addition they also may acquire other elements, either cultural (ethnicity, language, race, etc.) or economic (wealth, occupation, class, etc.), or a complex mixture of both. That is why, so often, inter-group 'religious' cleavages are complex divisions to analyse. Once more, it points to the need to set the relationship between religion and politics in its proper social, cultural and economic context.

To speak of a community of believers is to imply, more often than not, some role differentiation, between rank and file believers and those who take some leadership position, as priest or prophet, pastor or spiritual guide. In Catholicism, role differentiation has resulted in a highly elaborated ecclesiastical institution with numerous levels of authority and a multiplicity of component agencies, both intra-national and international. In Hinduism, on the other hand, there is very little role differentiation, and hence very little of what could be called a specifically Hindu religious institution. But where institutionalization takes place, the relationship between those religious elements and the political world tends to become very diverse and varied. The Roman Catholic Church, despite its centralization of authority in the person of the Pope and the organs of the Vatican state, is a case in point.

Clearly therefore, to bring together the political and religious spheres in all their varied aspects and then to discern significant patterns and trends within 'the modern world' is not a simple task. But, in attempting it two final points are perhaps worth emphasizing. First, there is something of a distinction to be drawn between looking at the relationship in terms of the impact of religion on politics, and that of politics on religion. In so far as we are concerned with the way in which power is exercised in society, then the relationship tends to be focused on how religious believers, leaders and institutions influence the play of power. But, in all contexts, and not least the Second World, it is also a matter of how political authority treats religion. Both causal directions need to be held in view.

The second and perhaps more fundamental point is that these

various linkages change their general character over time. In other words, they have a dynamic aspect, an evolutionary pattern. It is to this important topic that we now briefly turn.

PATTERNS OF CHANGE

In the preceding pages, the tacit assumption has been made that religion and politics constitute at least analytically distinct spheres of meaning and action. In traditional cultures, however, this was in practice generally not the case. It is only with modernization and its associated process of secularization that religion became distinguishable from politics. As a result, in those societies less touched by modernization, religion and politics still retain a close, overlapping relationship. Indeed, some religions and religious outlooks specifically try to deny the compartmentalization of religion and politics, a dualism which is common in modern western cultures.³² It is therefore appropriate to consider first these earlier arrangements which still provide a significant context in many nation-states today.

The traditional, or pre-modern, relationship between religion and politics was one in which the two were closely integrated, one with the other. Religious beliefs and practices underpinned and entered into the heart of the political process, supporting and sustaining the exercise of power. But, by this very token, political concerns also extended throughout the religious sphere. The two formed, in effect, one co-terminous set of beliefs and actions. It was a system in which social and political life was touched at virtually all points by religious considerations. Smith characterized it in the following terms:

The sacred permeates the principal social institutions. Laws are divine commands, based on sacred texts or otherwise revealed to man. Where social classes and orders are ranked hierarchically, this pyramidal social system is divinely ordained. All education is religious in content and transmitted by religious specialists. Divine regulations govern economic behavior and ecclesiastical centers frequently wield extensive economic power. Above all, government is sacral. Religion and government, the two major society-wide institutions of social control, form an integrated religiopolitical system.³³

This pattern applied to Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic societies. In the medieval west it was a basic feature wherever the Roman Catholic

Church was in the ascendancy. It was also normative among tribal societies and within ancient civilizations.

There were, however, some variations around this basic pattern, depending upon the particular institutional features of given religions and polities. The key factor lay in whether religious authority and political authority was exercised by the *same* leadership or by complementary but *distinct* leaders. The former, ‘the organic model’, is more characteristic of historic patterns within Islamic and Hindu cultures. By contrast, a ‘church model’, representing distinct religious and political structures, is more typical of earlier arrangements involving Christian and Buddhist institutions.³⁴ Where such differentiation occurred, a greater variety of power relationships between religious and political structures became possible. In some societies, integration was achieved on the basis of the political authorities extending control over the religious institutions. (The eastern Orthodox societies discussed in Chapter 3 represent such a pre-modern tradition.) In others, the religious leadership created a theocratic form of decision-making. In yet others both co-existed in a pattern of symbiotic parity. (Here, the history of the Papacy in relation to the Holy Roman Empire is instructive.)

In the modern world, however, the situation is now generally much changed. The detailed arrangements of the integrated pattern are mainly of significance as an historical and cultural legacy. But their echoes can be found in contemporary patterns and assumptions. In Britain, for example, the monarch is still technically both head of state—the political realm—and Supreme Governor of the Established Church of England. Many still view Christianity (and especially Anglicanism) as an important normative ingredient of social and political identity. The pattern can also be seen vestigially in the Shinto rites conducted at the funeral of Emperor Hirohito, stripped by the US government of his status as a near-deity only at the conclusion of the Second World War. And in relatively traditional Nepal, King Birendra is still seen as an incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu by the more traditional sectors of society.

One of the few remaining important examples of the pattern is, perhaps, Saudi Arabia. The Saudi state itself came into being on the basis of an eighteenth-century alliance between a political leader, Muhammad ibn Saud, and a muslim activist, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Present-day Saudi Arabia retains the centrality of this religious element in its state affairs: there is no secular constitution

and few secular laws. Furthermore, the basis of the legal system is the *shari'ah*, the 'Straight Path' of muslim life, derived from the *Qur'an* and the life of the Prophet Muhammad.³⁵ The Saudi (and Nepali) case is, however, exceptional. Over the last century, and especially in the period since 1945, the substance of such arrangements has in most cases been drained away.

The key process that has contributed to this end is secularization, seen by Smith as 'the most fundamental structural and ideological change in the process of political development.'³⁶ As a concept, however, it is somewhat controversial, being viewed by some as anti-religious, rather than neutral, in nature.³⁷ Equally problematic is the variety of specific meanings given to the term by different authors.³⁸ Yet others object to secularization being construed as a strictly linear, uni-directional process. Nevertheless, despite these problems, it does point to a seemingly general trend whereby societies around the world have gradually moved away from being focused around the sacred and the numinous. In that sense it does indicate a certain loss of power and authority of religion in society and, in consequence, indicates a slow transformation in the basic relationship between politics and religion.

Some sense of the nature of the changes this process entails can be seen if we distinguish some of its constituent parts. These include the following:

- 1 Constitutional secularization: the process whereby the official character and goals of the state cease to be defined in religious terms, or whereby religious institutions cease to be given special constitutional recognition and support.
- 2 Policy secularization: the process whereby the state ceases to regulate society on the basis of religious criteria, and expands the policy domains and service provisions of the state into areas previously the reserve of the religious sphere.
- 3 Institutional secularization: the process whereby religious structures lose their political saliency and influence as pressure groups, parties, and movements.
- 4 Agenda secularization: the process whereby issues, needs and problems deemed relevant to the political process cease to have overtly religious content, and whereby solutions developed to resolve those issues are no longer constructed on the basis of religious principles.
- 5 Ideological secularization: the process whereby the basic values

and belief-systems used to evaluate the political realm and to give it meaning cease to be couched in religious terms.

It is, in short, a multi-faceted process whereby the political and the religious partially disengage from each other. This in turn creates tensions as political power is reformulated in new terms and the religious domain constructs new and somewhat different relationships with society and the state.

Such tensions are further heightened by other developmental processes. For example, the politicization of the mass population through the extension of the suffrage presents novel challenges to both religious and political leaders. The growth of the mass media also disturbs traditional patterns of religious and political communication. The state, and even religious leaders, also face far-reaching problems of social and economic development which undermine established power relationships.

Some idea of what these general changes entail can be seen in three models proposed by Medhurst and representing different stages in the modification of the integrated polity.³⁹ The first he calls 'the confessional polity'. Political leaders continue to legitimate their rule in religious terms but do so, in an increasingly pluralistic context, by giving official preference to one religious option. Equally, religious leaders mobilize support against threats to their communal hegemony. The intended result is to hold back the tide of pluralism so as to preserve as much as possible of the traditional monistic pattern that served the established political and religious elite alike. Colombia and Iran, and in some respects Ireland too, are offered as contemporary examples.

A further pattern arises when secularization removes religion as the major basis of the political system. The state comes to view the forces of religion as just one group among many contesting for power. It therefore becomes in Medhurst's words, a 'religiously neutral polity'. It should be emphasized, however, that secularization does not *eliminate* religion from the political realm. It is more a matter of religious communities finding themselves in a more politically pluralistic context in which their particular agendas and claims are given less recognition. It is a context, therefore, in which those religious bodies turn, where possible and appropriate, to parties and/or pressure groups to defend and promote their interests.

So far, the impression may have been given of an inevitable one-way movement towards an age in which religion and politics will

cease to have any effective claims over each other. However, history does not seem to support this. Without suggesting that religion will ever return to the centrality accorded it in pre-modern eras, there seems good reason to believe that the relationship between religion and politics has not and will not become moribund. For example, Second World polities have been far from indifferent to the political claims of religion. This is encapsulated in Medhurst's final model, dubbed 'the anti-religious polity'. This is in some respects the mirror image of the traditional integrated arrangement—the active attempt by the state to eliminate any religious presence within the political arena. In most cases (notably in Albania, referred to at the beginning of the chapter), moreover, the state tried to eradicate any visible public religious presence whatsoever. Society and polity were to be reconstructed on an entirely secular ideological basis of Marxist materialism without any religious institutions, symbols, or practices. Yet these various attempts to eliminate religion have failed. Indeed, in some instances, political oppression seems to have the opposite of the intended effect.

Even in liberal-democratic polities, it is by no means clear that religion and politics continue to lose mutual relevance. Hadden and Shupe go so far as to propose a cyclical theory of secularization in which the process of removing the sense of the sacred from society contains the seeds whereby religion is eventually revived and revitalized.⁴⁰ This-worldly, secularized answers to the meaning and purpose in life, they imply, are alienating and unsatisfying. Hence, they see religious ideas finding fresh relevance and power, albeit possibly within new structures and patterns of belief: a kind of post-secular religion for a post-secular society.⁴¹

Whether these ideas stand up to the test of history remains to be seen. Some forms of religion do continue to decline and the forward movement in the secularization of political life can be detected in many places. But, at the same time, there are also signs of growth and revival, a resurgence that renews and reinvigorates the religio-political relationship.⁴² Islamic fundamentalism, reacting to overly-secularized western values, is a case in point. As I write, Sheikh Abassi Madani's Islamic Salvation Front has achieved a decisive electoral victory over the ruling National Liberation Front in Algeria. In many Second World countries, secular Marxism has been decisively rejected. And in the First World, new religious movements are creating novel but potentially significant political pressures. In all these ways, therefore, we must indeed retain a healthy scepticism

about the rapid and early demise of the relationship between religion and politics. Let history be the judge of that while we get on with the study of what is clearly a far from comatose subject.

THE REGIONAL AND COUNTRY STUDIES

The first contribution, Chapter 2 by John Madeley, discusses religion and politics in Western Europe, with particular emphasis upon its most populous constituent nation-state, the Federal Republic of Germany. As he notes, we are essentially speaking here of a relationship between Latin Christianity and liberal democracy. We are also speaking of a relationship, therefore, in which the religion takes an incarnational and Church-like form: God intervening in history and society through a distinct set of ecclesiastical institutions.

Those institutions, however, vary in the different countries of the region. In some, Roman Catholicism is in the ascendancy, in others the Protestant Church, in yet others there is a rough balance. This latter situation was true of West Germany, for example, which comprised 42.9 per cent Roman Catholic and 42.6 per cent Evangelical Protestant (mainly Lutheran) adherents. After unification with East Germany, a traditionally Protestant area, in October 1990, however, the numerical balance once more slightly favours Protestant denominations by approximately 42 per cent to 35 per cent. But the political dangers such an ascendancy once posed under the Second Reich (1871–1918) no longer obtain. In part, this is because in Germany, as elsewhere in Western Europe, there has been a slow diminution of active church commitments. This process has reduced but by no means eliminated the political role of religion, which remains, in Madeley's view, a diminished but still significant force.

The nature of that impact is detailed at many levels. There are constitutional and legal arrangements, reminiscent of the integrated polity, that continue to tie Church and state together in varying degrees. One German manifestation of this is the Church tax whereby the state collects what are in effect membership subscriptions and distributes the proceeds to the relevant denominations. There is also a rich array of pressure groups and, above all, political parties who represent an evolution toward a confessional, and now more religiously neutral, polity. These groups, together with the Churches themselves, make contributions to a range of more traditional public issues, such as educational policy, and legislation on abortion and divorce. The continuing vitality of the religious input is further

emphasized by the involvement of Christian activists in the 'new politics' of environmentalism, disarmament and aid for the Third World. Not least, in Germany, the Churches and their leaders played a role in assisting the process of national re-unification.

In Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the dominant pattern for most of the time since 1945 has been one of the 'anti-religious polity'. As Sabrina Ramet points out in Chapter 3, the state's policy has been to privatize religion so that it makes no contribution to the public realm. In the Soviet Union, for example, the Council for Affairs of Religions ensured that religious activities were highly restricted. A majority of churches were closed and all social, educational and charitable works were prohibited. In Albania, perhaps the most extreme case, religion was officially abolished: the 1976 constitution eliminated all religious organizations and the ruling party forbade all public religious rituals.

The ascent to power of Mikhail Gorbachev has, however, begun to transform the relationship between religion and politics in the Soviet Union. During the celebration of the Christian Millennium in Russia in 1988, Gorbachev met with the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and began the process of applying *glasnost* and *perestroika* to the religious domain. This culminated in a new law on 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations' approved by the Supreme Soviet in 1990. The law, if fully implemented, will end state funding for atheistic propaganda, allow the establishment of Sunday schools and other proselytizing activities, and even permit religious services to be held within the armed forces. In short, it would confirm the changed posture of the state towards religious organizations in the Soviet Union which so far has only appeared in more ad hoc and informal ways. In Eastern Europe, equally drastic changes have occurred. The arrangements of atheistic state-socialism have largely collapsed. In Poland, for example, the Roman Catholic Church has regained its full legal status, removed forty years before. Even in Albania, although as yet only partly untouched by democratization, changes in the attitude of the state towards religion can be detected. In short, the age of the anti-religious polity is largely dead in Europe. A new age, in which religion can once again operate as a relatively legitimate political force, seems to have dawned.

In the Middle East, as Glenn Perry indicates in Chapter 4, politics and religion have long formed a close, intimate relationship at every level. Indeed, for Islam, there is ideally no sphere of religion

separable from the political, no 'Islamic Church', only the state itself. In practice, however, modernization, nationalism and westernization, have created a situation within which religion has had both a somewhat autonomous status and a complex, and at times very violent, relationship with the political arena. This is not least true of Egypt and Iran, the two countries given particular attention in Perry's essay.

Thus, in Egypt, one finds religiously inspired conflicts at the most fundamental level. The 1952 Revolution itself, which formed the present state arrangements, was in part inspired by the Islamic ideology of the Muslim Brothers. However, the relationship between the state authorities and the Muslim Brothers has always been a traumatic and full of conflict. Leaders of the Muslim Brothers have been imprisoned and executed; and militant Islamic factions were responsible for assassinating political leaders, including President Sadat. On the other hand, Islamic forces have also entered the 'conventional' political arena in the shape of electoral alliances with political parties, alliances that have found considerable success. In this way, religious perspectives on such policy areas as the family, education and the law have achieved some political resonance. Meanwhile, however, fundamentalist groups continue to rail against what they see as the apostate political leadership of the country.

Iran, of course, has been the epicentre of such radical ideas. There, the forces of a militant Islam collided with the modernizing and westernizing regime of Reza Shah and ended in the 1979 Revolution. Since the advent of a quasi-theocratic Islamic Republic, religion has been at the very centre of Iranian political life. Religious parties and authorities (scholar-jurists) have dominated the national political leadership. Equally, religious differences between moderates and hard-liners over the handling of the government's agenda are a key element in the struggle for political power. As the events surrounding the publication of *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie show, religion continues to play a very powerful role in Iranian politics and elsewhere in the Islamic world.

The same is also true of India, as is revealed in Ian Talbot's discussion in Chapter 5. Although officially a secular state, secularization has *not* led to the marginalization of religion in Indian political life. On the contrary, both before, during and after Independence, religion has intruded into the political domain at every level. It has been the basis of Indian communalism, and communalism has in turn been an important contributor to the

formation of political loyalties. The result has been a public arena in which, if anything, religion has gained in importance in recent years rather than declined. Radical Hindu groups, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (involved in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad, exercise considerable influence at the mass level. Issues, such as the control of religious sites, the regulation of religious rituals (notably *sati* and *cunari*) and the application of religious laws have produced controversy and violence. Equally, militant muslims in Kashmir have agitated for its Islamicization while similar experiences have also marked the Sikh community in the Punjab. Not least, the Indian government of V.P.Singh was itself brought down in 1990 over a dispute between rival religious communities. All in all, Indian politics will no doubt continue to be heavily influenced by religion as the country moves forward through the myriad problems of social, economic and cultural change.

As Adrian Hastings demonstrates in Chapter 6, Southern Africa is also an arena in which religion and politics have entered into relatively close relationships. In Zimbabwe, one of three country studies included, the Anglican Church formed what Hastings calls an unofficial or quasi-establishment for Rhodesians. This, however, ended when Robert Mugabe came to power since when the Churches have enjoyed a varying but never particularly influential position. In Mozambique, a 1940 Concordat had given the Roman Catholic Church an even more clearly privileged position. But it too suffered a loss of political authority when the Marxist Frelimo movement came to power. Indeed, the new rulers' anti-religious policy, compounded by the country's involvement in an internal civil war, have resulted in a situation in which the Churches' very existence has been threatened.

The most significant regional power, however, is South Africa which receives Hastings' greatest attention. The story since 1945 is in part one of a close confessional association between the Dutch Reformed Church, or more accurately the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK), and the white Afrikaner Nationalist ascendancy. But it is also a story of Churches organizing opposition to a regime committed to racial apartheid. Religious leaders, like Dr Allan Boesak of the reformist *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk* and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Primate of the Anglican Church in South Africa, have been leaders in confronting the Nationalist government. On the other hand, right-wing Church-based