RECONCILING RELIGION AND PUBLIC
LIFE: ESSAYS ON PLURALISM AND
FUNDAMENTALISM IN THE UNITED
STATES AND GERMANY

AICGS GERMAN-AMERICAN ISSUES

07

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FOREWORD

This edited volume is the culmination of an AICGS project examining perceptions of religious pluralism and religious fundamentalism in the United States and Germany, generously funded by the Transatlantic Program of the Federal Republic of Germany through the European Recovery Program (ERP) of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. The essays that follow focus on several issues pertinent to the question of how society in Germany and the United States has responded to an apparent increase in religious diversity and a seemingly concurrent rise in religious fundamentalism among many different religious denominations. For Western countries that have, generally speaking, embodied the theory that modernization leads to secularization—in the sense of the withdrawal of religion from the public sphere to the private sphere—a steady return of religion as a matter to be addressed in relation to politics and policy-making is indeed a challenge. As the essays in this volume show, the public sphere in both Germany and the United States has been and will continue to be significantly impacted by this "religious" phenomenon and it will need to be reconciled with long-held notions about public life in both countries.

In his essay on "Religion in the United States," Charles T. Mathewes explores the "breadth of American religious life," touching on the many ways in which religion has always been a part of American public life, shaping it from the nation's very beginning. Mathewes uses the mottos on the Great Seal of the United States, *e pluribus unum* (from the many, one) and *novus ordo seclorum* (a new order of the ages), to guide his discussion of the complexity of the interaction between religion and American public life, where the ideal of a society united within its diversity is set within a vision of a country defined by its faith and propelled by its conviction that it can serve as a beacon for freedom and democracy.

While Mathewes' essay operates from the position that religious diversity and pluralism are on the rise and therefore impacting the relationship between religion and politics, Patrick J. Deneen's essay on "Growing Religious Pluralism: A Contrarian View" argues that religious diversity is, in fact, *not* increasing. Rather, Deneen asserts that Western societies may, in reality, be facing a *decrease* in religious pluralism. Societies in Western Europe, which are historically Christian, are confronted with a growing population of immigrants and their descendents who practice Islam. Deneen argues that the "increasing religious pluralism" connected to the influx of Muslims into Europe actually refers to an increase in the number of individuals practicing a non-Judeo-Christian religion in Europe. While currently perceived as increasing religious diversity, eventually, Islam could become the dominant religion throughout Europe, supplanting historical religions and thereby decreasing religious diversity.
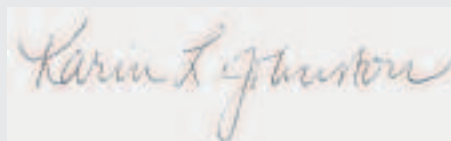
Following Deneen's exploration of the relationship between increasing Muslim populations in Europe and "religious diversity," Türkan Karakurt's essay on the situation of Muslim women in Europe provides an interesting context within which to reflect on Deneen's remarks. Karakurt addresses an issue not yet thoroughly explored, namely, the role Muslim women play in the delicate balancing act that is the relationship between immigrant Muslims and their European host societies. As Karakurt points out, Muslim women are beginning to find their voice(s) in the debates about Islam's interaction with Western society. Surprisingly, many Muslim women are rejecting the notion of women's liberation that their European counterparts embraced so enthusiastically over the past several decades, choosing instead to protest the headscarf bans being passed in countries like France and Germany. While Europeans may have seen Muslim women as a potential ally against Islamic traditions

perceived as violations of women's or human rights by Western societies, these same supposedly oppressed women often choose to affirm their religious 'obligations' over the 'freedoms' offered them by their host society. Karakurt's essay points out that Muslim women will, can, and do play a pivotal role in determining, over the long-term, what the relationship between Islam and Western Enlightenment-based society will be; although attempts have been made to guide them in the same direction as their European sisters, many Muslim women have realized that they have choices, and they may ultimately choose a path different from that taken by Western women. Obviously, the choices Muslim women in Western countries make regarding their relationship to their religion and the society in which they live will have enormous repercussions in the long run.
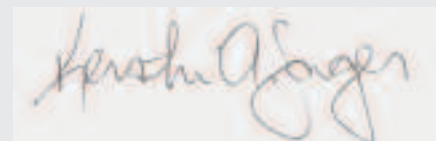
Societal repercussions also follow decisions made in Germany and the United States with respect to religious education in public schools. In his essay about "Religious Education in Germany: A Model for the Future?" Rolf Schieder explores the German religious education system for continued relevance in a world where the separation of church and state has become a precondition for "modern" statehood. Unlike in the United States, where the separation of church and state has been interpreted as excluding religious education from public schools, German students receive voluntary religious education throughout their public school careers. Schieder's essay argues that, although some consider religious education a throwback to times long past, it teaches younger generations to use their religious freedom responsibly, in the same way that the young are educated about the responsibilities that come with political freedom. Religious education, Schieder argues, helps students understand not only their own faith's traditions and proscriptions, but explains the relationship between that faith and the reality of a multi-faith environment, helping students to learn tolerance and respect with regard to religions that are not their own. This is particularly important when religions with different views share the same social environment and when questions of religion and religious rights are questions of politics and political rights as well, a condition that seems to be defining the opening decade of the twenty-first century.

Erik Owens' essay about "Religious Freedom and Civic Education in American Public Schools" echoes some of the themes broached in Schieder's essay, particularly that teaching about religion in public schools is a matter of civic duty. For Owens, teaching about religion in public schools is necessary in order to protect religious freedom in the United States. Like Schieder, Owens argues that living in a multi-faith society requires learning about religion in order to preserve civil society: religions must be explained in order to be understood, as must the principles behind the right to freedom of religion. Owens' thorough essay puts this requirement into perspective both historically and within the contemporary context.

With religion becoming ever more visible on the world stage, both as a matter of faith and as a matter of politics, it is important to examine closely how religion has been a factor throughout history and how we might expect it to factor into the future. The five essays in this volume each provide a glimpse of how various aspects of religious diversity and religious fundamentalism are shaping not only our modern understandings of religion and its place relative to public life and politics, but also how these current understandings must be revisited in order for the net impact religion is having on society in the United States and in Germany to be more positive than negative. We hope that reading through this volume will provide you with some tools for better formulating your own understanding of religion's place in our modern world and perhaps lead as well to productive and fruitful discussions with others about these issues.

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ESSAYS

RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES

CHARLES T. MATHEWES

Prologue[1]

In June 2006 I visited the United Kingdom, where one morning, on the "Corrections" page of the *Guardian*, I read the following remarkable statement: "We were wrong to say that American evangelists read the Bible apocalyptically. We meant to say American Evangelicals. An Evangelical is a fundamentalist." Well, I thought, that's not a correction, but just replacing one mistake with another.

For informed observers, European understandings of the American religious scene are worse than American understandings, which is to say that they are in very bad shape indeed. In a volume on religious pluralism and fundamentalism in Europe and the United States, then, it is worth spending a bit of time trying to ensure a somewhat less deplorable account of the basics of religion in the United States.

Preliminaries: Distorting Lenses and Imperfect Concepts

Exploring the "basics" of religion in the United States is not, however, without its challenges. It requires recognizing two peculiar distorting lenses through which many Europeans see American public life, and working to correct them. It also requires recognizing that the concepts with which such an analysis may be undertaken are wobbly in and of themselves and are only imperfectly applicable to the American context.

The two lenses through which typical overseas understandings of American life are distorted are as understandable as they are lamentable. The first lens results in a tendency to see the current President of the United States and his policies as intrinsically representative of the sentiments and desires of the American nation as a whole. Yet, today more than ever before, given razor-thin election margins and polarization between the political parties, such a view is a mistake. Bill Clinton did not win a majority of the vote in either the 1992 or 1996 elections, and had 500 Jewish retirees in Florida not (apparently) voted for Patrick Buchanan in 2000, things would look quite different today. Whatever else he or (one day, possibly soon) she is, the President of the United States is not a composite image of America as a whole.

The second lens creates the assumption that the American "media-entertainment complex" adequately represents the nation in its film and television productions. However, most Americans do not have children out of wedlock with their step-dads who were just released from prison, nor are they all heavily armed and eager to shoot, as one could be led to believe by watching daytime television talk shows. The United States is represented no more adequately by hip-hop gangsta rappers, televangelists, or desperate housewives than it was by the Clinton administration or than it currently is by the Bush administration. A nation comprised of three hundred million people whose heritages connect them to all the corners of the globe simply cannot be fully characterized by sitcoms produced in Burbank, California or New York City.

Despite their obvious inadequacy in giving an accurate portrayal of "the American people," these two distorted views of the United States are often taken to be truthful. They have produced a schizophrenic picture of the United States as a country of "Puritans and Pornographers," in the words of Peter Berger. The United States is often accused by those abroad of both profane materialism and medieval masochistic piety.[2] Yet, it is the very disparateness of these charges that speaks against their veracity. In truth, America is everything it has been accused of, as well as the opposite of those accusations and much more besides. The nature of the American polity is such that any adequate understanding of the character of American religion's role in public life will inevitably be complex. This paper gestures at the breadth of American religious life in order to highlight its opportunities, its challenges, and the way that it shapes public life today, both in America and abroad.

Understanding American religion is made even more complicated by the complexity and capaciousness of the term "religion." In one sense, remarking on the breadth of the term is platitudinous: religion is an all-encompassing reality, and hence it is naturally about much more than public order. But this breadth is more directly challenging for our purposes when we reflect on the fact that religions typically refuse to "play nice" by acquiescing to a society's received understandings of the meaning of individual human life and of the nature and purpose of human community. After all, precisely because they are all-encompassing, religions offer their own understandings of the content and form of public life, and those understandings by no means cohere either across all religions or across the various "secularisms" available today. This is not just a matter of dealing with differing opinions about what constitutes the "common public good"; much of the time, such differing opinions are rooted in deeper disagreements about the scope of what is legitimately a "public" concern and what is permissibly "private." Indeed, in some of its most devout forms, religion can be what Jason Bivins labels "politically illegible"—that is to say, so incomprehensible from within the dominant categories in which public life is usually understood in a society as to be intellectually indigestible and hence perceived as a threat to the proper functioning of social order in that society.[3] Therefore, one cannot uncritically assume that all individuals share the same foundational understanding of the bounds,

nature, and structure of public life, for it is precisely those foundational understandings that are contested.

Religion's role in public life is further complicated by the particular character of public life in the United States. America is always as much a yet-to-be-realized ideal as it is a given reality. There is no agreed-upon standard of what constitutes "Americanness," and so the concept of "Americanness" is constantly evolving. Moreover, the concept of "America" is not amenable to a simple nativist reduction, and those who use it in that way operate in massive avoidance of the realities of their own history and of the fundamental nature of the "American project." The United States is not a fact, a given reality; it is a destiny, a dare, a mission, a matter of goals and ideals. It is a project with millenarian hopes, namely, the full realization of liberty on earth. No land or blood makes America; ultimately, the nation is an imagined idea—perhaps even a regulative ideal—more than a lived fact.

Hence, to ask about the nature of religion in American public life with particular reference to the concepts of pluralism and fundamentalism is to sail some very treacherous waters. To help us negotiate them, I have organized my thoughts around two different foci, happily captured by two very famous, though rarely understood, mottos on the Great Seal of the United States. The first, *e pluribus unum*—"from the many, one"—expresses the ideal of American unity derived from plurality and diversity. The second, *novus ordo seclorum*—"a new order of the ages"—speaks to the faith and hope that America is a crucial—perhaps the crucial—actor shaping the destiny of the world as a whole. As we will see, these two mottos capture a great deal of the complexity of religion in American public life, not least the way in which that public life, even in its secular aspects, bears within it what can only be thought of as properly religious themes.

E Pluribus Unum

E pluribus unum expresses both the hope and the fear of American unity. The hope is of an uncoerced unity, a singleness of purpose and steadfastness of intent that harnesses the differences that color American life and brings them to symphonic integrity. The fear is that the differences will not bring diversity,

but divergence, and cause the whole to collapse into a pile of diffuse parts. It is hard to overemphasize the way in which this concern colors American public thinking. Because America is an ideal, not a given, its citizens will always ask whether they are really living up to that ideal, whether they are really being American. Unlike the older nations of Europe and Asia, America is, in a way, contingent.

America is a project of nation-building; it is a religious, indeed millenarian, project, because the nation has been imagined as a quasi-theological reality since the time of the Pilgrims. Yet this Americanness is not, at least not straightforwardly, narcissistic. As G. K. Chesterton said, America is a nation with the soul of a church, and this nation serves an ideal higher than itself, namely, the idea of "liberty." It is precisely this term's wild diversity of potential meanings that give both the "puritan" tendency and the "pornographer" streak a place in the American ethos. As a millenarian project, there can be no rest until the people have achieved the full apotheosis of the nation: the absolute realization of human liberty on earth. This project, based as it is on a powerful hope (bordering on anxiety), brooks little dissent; indeed, it is especially concerned that skepticism could turn into faithlessness or heresy.

Thus, while America's religiosity may be pervasive, it is also anxious about the unity of the nation, seeking any forces that can help secure that unity as well as its people's piety. Such anxiety has its powers, but it also has its perils. The genius of American public life is that the nation's anxiety over its contingency, its fear of not being "American enough," can be mobilized and turned into the will to prove ever more indubitably one's "Americanness." But this anxiety is also a deeply problematic element of the civic psyche, for it permits no relaxation of vigilance and no cessation of effort.

The nation has always used churches to help generate civic capital and has understood its churches as being in service to the transcendental ideal of liberty. The principle of disestablishment, famously (though contentiously and imperfectly) captured in the phrase "separation of church and state," was adopted in an attempt to secure a certain understanding of religious liberty—liberty for the churches from the national government and (though to a lesser extent) liberty for the national government

from the churches. For political thinkers, the point of this disestablishment was also to ensure that the churches continued to be teachers of morality and thus factories for producing republican virtue. From the beginning, the churches felt great indirect pressure to cultivate liberty and civic fellow-feeling in their members. This has at times benefited the churches, while at other times, it has not. When the churches (i.e. religion) are seen by many not to be cultivating citizens for the larger project, the civic covenant is threatened, and ugly things can happen. Roger Williams (a seventeenth century theologian), Mormons, Catholics, and, today, Muslims, have, at one point or another, fallen out of favor for this very reason.

In sum, religion has been harnessed to the civic cause in the United States. However, the sources of the success of religious disestablishment are also sources of danger for both religion and the nation. There are three major dangers:

A. IDEOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AMERICAN

The first peculiarity of American public religion is, on the surface, not about religion at all. "Americanness" is not fundamentally a matter of blood or land, heritage or location, but rather a matter of professed convictions about the nature of human beings, the destiny of humanity, and the role of America in that destiny. To be American is to profess "the American creed," which is, loosely, a collection of affirmations about freedom and hope, and—more prominently since World War II, but visible even in the Republic's earliest days—a commitment to the United States as a central, if not *the* central, vehicle for the global advance of freedom and the cultivation of hope.

The United States' continuing success at welcoming and assimilating an enormously diverse civic population is testimony to the sociopolitical advantages of the American creed. Conversely, the dismal failure of most other nations, with the possible exception of Canada, to effect a similar wholesale assimilation, suggests the remarkable nature of this fact and the difficulty of achieving such a condition.[4]

The strengths of this approach to civic life are pretty clear: anybody can be an American, and they can be

so entirely by their own assent. American identity is a radically open concept, amenable to any number of embodiments, so long as the creedal core is affirmed. Nativism or racism, more than just "temptations" throughout American history and today, always pay a certain tax to this ideology. Even the most parochial nativist or racist does obeisance to the creedal character of the United States, for they argue that those whom they dislike and would expel—for reasons of race, religion, ethnicity or simply because they are more recently arrived on American shores—are perennially unable to affirm the American creed. Such groups, which may openly acknowledge their racism, justify it by saying that it has civic and ideological reasons. Such are the conceptually roundabout routes which American nativism must walk to be intelligible in the American context.

Along with its advantages, the creedal character of American identity also creates some challenges and dangers. First of all, it demands an exhausting and relentless perfectionism. From the Puritans' "errand into the wilderness" forward, the project of "becoming American" has entailed an endless process of repeatedly demonstrating one's commitment to the American project. (This is one reason why American civic discourse is dominated by a constant appeal to "the founding fathers" as transcendental ideals.) Because the goal of American life is millenarian, a matter of "building the kingdom," severe sacrifices for the good of the project are expected. In fact, the ultimate proof is only given by one's blood, in the classic republican motif of self-sacrifice for the sake of the greater good. Yet inside this affirmation of sacrifice, there is a quiet theological protest never too far from the surface. America is hard work indeed, requiring utter dedication, but at times, people can see that it threatens to become a false god, though this fact is only quietly acknowledged.

Placing this ideological definition at the core means that the essence of the nation is contestable. From the beginning of the Republic forward, there have been serious debates about what is "un-American" and what is acceptable. European debates about "Frenchness" or "Germanness" seem like old hat in the United States because debates about "Americanness" have been going on for so long. To be an American is to be always in a condition similar to

that of a Puritan seeking signs of divine election—things might look good, but one can never be fully sure that one is on the right path.

It is the creedal character of American identity that creates both the nation's remarkable openness to others and the remarkably vehement character of debates about what is truly American. American culture combines a remarkable openness to conversation partners with a kind of fanatical commitment to the conversation as a matter of life and death; this openness and fanaticism are really two sides of the same coin: the coin of American identity.

B. VOLUNTARY INDIVIDUALISM

The second characteristic of American culture that impacts religious belief is its commitment to fundamental voluntary individualism as the best picture of human agency. This voluntarism lies behind some of the most powerful organizing myths of the culture.[5] The ideal of the pioneering homesteader or the self-made man or woman who steps out from behind the reassurances of tradition and family, setting out to make of themselves a new person by force of will alone, remains deeply powerful. What matters in America, the myth says, is what individuals choose to do. This is, of course, far from the whole truth about the nation—government "pork" has always helped citizens who needed jobs and created crucial economic and social infrastructure, and the homesteaders out on the frontier always knew that just over the horizon was a log fort occupied by a detachment of U.S. Cavalry. But the myth of voluntary individualism nevertheless captures something crucial about the way in which many Americans think of themselves. Americans are authentic when they self-consciously affirm all that they do, and all that they do only becomes properly their own when they have voluntarily affirmed it.

While it drew from many sources, this myth's deepest roots are religious, drawn from the Puritan insistence on the individual's unmediated encounter with God. This inheritance was taken in many directions by later thinkers, but the evangelical religious movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave it its decisive form. The philosophical anthropology assumed in America's public philosophy is funda-

mentally evangelical: the individual must ultimately affirm his or her beliefs, and the shape of that affirmation requires the whole-hearted assent of the individual. The strength of this vision is simple: it honors human autonomy and agency in the most fundamental way imaginable. Any proposal for compulsion or constraint of agency is immediately confronted and resisted on a rhetorical level alone, with a demand that it explain and defend itself. America is not without its repressions or its constraints, but such limitations are always couched as supporting the fundamental rhetoric of voluntary individualism.

However, the dangers of this vision are substantial. Most fundamentally, its emphasis on individual choice can encourage a flaky and fickle religiosity because it makes religion a matter of choice. This is why American Christianity, while vigorous, is also astonishingly syncretistic and unorthodox. It is difficult to talk about God's absolute and unconditional demands if religion is fundamentally a choice or a lifestyle option. Examples and statistics illustrating this point are not hard to find. In the summer of 2006, *The Washington Post* published an article about Rod Dreher, a self-proclaimed "crunchy con,"[6] who admitted that during the Roman Catholic Church's priest sex-abuse scandals, he and his wife had considered converting to the Eastern Orthodox Church, although they ultimately decided to stay Roman Catholic. Under traditional conditions of religious affiliation, "switching teams" is literally unthinkable; loss of faith meant something altogether different than simply attending a church from a different denomination on Sunday morning.[7] Statistically, among Americans who call themselves Christian, 59 percent do not believe in Satan, 42 percent believe Jesus sinned during his life on earth, and only 11 percent believe that the Bible is the source of absolute moral truth. In 2005, when asked "[c]an a good person who isn't of your religious faith go to heaven or attain salvation?" fully 79 percent of Americans said 'yes.'[8] For a religious nation, these are surprising statistics.[9]

The voluntary individualism of American society not only shapes how Americans believe, but also privileges some forms of believing over others. While voluntary individualism was (relatively) beneficial for a heterogeneously Protestant society, it is not as beneficial under pluralistic conditions because of the latent Protestant bias in the assumed anthropology. Because this view gives incredible import to "free will," all religions in a society where this view prevails must in some way come to resemble quasi-Protestant denominations.[10] Much of the history of American legal grappling with "religious freedom" comes down to how various judges have tried to determine what is "religious" and what is not. Not infrequently, those determinations have left some groups out in the cold, unprotected by the "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment. The legal issues express a deeper struggle; they indicate that, speaking in the broadest civic context, America is not absolutely tolerant, despite the common rhetoric. Instead, the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable religious practices are constantly (re)negotiated. In the past, Roman Catholicism found itself at the margins of society; today, religions such as Santeria, Wicca, Christian Scientology, and Native American religions are marginalized.[11] Rarely do disputes concerning Presbyterian religious practices come before the Supreme Court, but disputes about statistically marginal religions are heard regularly.

Furthermore, America's voluntary individualism puts self-proclaimed non-religious people, particularly atheists, in a complicated and precarious position. Since the 1950s, American tolerance of various religions, ethnicities, and races has increased, but atheists are the one group that seems less tolerated now than it was fifty years ago.[12] To put it bluntly, the celebrated idea of "American tolerance" has boundaries, and for those who find themselves outside those boundaries, "tolerance" is actually intolerant, and doubly frustrating for the unconscious way in which it refuses to recognize the limits to its own exercise. The myth of voluntary individualism makes it difficult for its adherents to recognize the boundaries of the very tolerance it enables. That is to say, it entails a common-sense epistemology which is dangerously unconscious of its own limits, which can lead to intransigence and intolerance and an inability to imagine that others quite literally see things differently than you yourself do.[13] Thus American open-mindedness is coupled with a perennially vexing, deliberate ignorance.

C. NEUTRAL AND CONSTRAINED STATE

Alexis de Tocqueville said that religious leaders had no role in public affairs, but that religion was the first of American political institutions. Something like the reverse may also be asserted: the state, the explicit structure of government, is often the least of American political institutions. The third characteristic of American culture that impacts religious belief is the nature of the nation's political institutions and culture. American political culture is far more self-proclaimedly libertarian than that of other Western nations, and it is marked by a certain skepticism about the state. The United States' political institutions are defined and, at least rhetorically, restrained by this cultural basis. This is the foundation for American constitutional republicanism: the government does not pretend to determine the absolute or total environment of American culture. The state tries, if it can, to stay out of things. Again, the United States is, at least rhetorically, a true liberal republic.

The advantages of such a political structure for religious life are substantial. The government knows its place and thus refrains from interfering too much, which permits the churches to provide their members with an identity fundamentally different than that offered by the nation, and these religious identities can at times come into conflict with political affiliations. Think of the way that some Christian organizations today lobby against the persecution of Christians in the Sudan, the Middle East, and China; how various Christians argue against restricting immigration on the arguably theological grounds of "caring for one's neighbor" (whether or not that neighbor be Christian); how many Jewish groups lobby in favor of Israel; or how Muslims' commitment to Islamic charities causes them to identify with Muslim causes in Indonesia or Chechnya or West Africa. These are examples of the way in which religious identities mobilize their adherents to political action, sometimes in ways that overtly override purely nationalist concerns.

The astonishment of scholars from Europe who work in the United States at the differences between American and European attitudes toward education is yet another example of how religion can conflict with politics. In the United States, there can be no publicly-funded teaching of religion, and the courts have made it clear recently that a student cannot use government-funded scholarships to study theology in college. Despite the controversies about "prayer in schools," very few of even the most religious people in the United States feel that public education should involve religious education, thereby leaving religious education to the churches and securing broader ecclesiastical self-governance, which in turn leads to healthier (that is, more vibrant) churches.[14] In contrast, throughout the nineteenth century and, in some countries, even in the twentieth century, churches in Europe were allied with very strong and often repressive states. This turned out to be detrimental for the churches, for when the state came under severe pressure to democratize, the churches became targets of suspicion and hostility. For example, the dominance of republican secularism in France today; the damage done to Christianity in Germany by the Third Reich's *Volkskirche*; and the collaboration of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Czar, the Soviet Union, and now Putin's Russia have done serious damage to traditional Christianity's grip in those nations. In the Middle East, repressive and strong state structures did not ally with religion, but with secularism, which, as we are currently discovering, fostered the rise of religious extremists for whom the state is an enemy. Given these alternatives, the American model of a state minimally involved in direct religious and moral cultivation of its citizens has a certain logic, for both civic and religious life.

But, as did the other factors, the factor of a state neutral and constrained in religious matters has its dangers as well, mainly through the indirect damage it does to religious belief by tying it too tightly to political controversies. Fundamentally, the winner-take-all structure of the American two-party system makes political fights more brutal and ideological polarization more viable. Recent concerns about "culture wars" in the United States are rooted, in part, in this institutional fact. If the churches are seen by some to be allied with one side or the other in these debates (for example, siding with "red state" against "blue state" America, as some evangelical Protestant churches are perceived to be, or siding with "progressives" against the "orthodox," as some Mainline Protestant churches are perceived to be), this will mean that their ability to preach a broader message, speaking to the whole of life, is potentially disastrously narrowed.[15]

Furthermore, and more importantly for religion, the state has expanded massively in the past sixty years. The crises of the Great Depression and World War II required this expansion, and the Cold War secured it as a given fact of American public life. The demands of modern society require the state to be an ever-greater presence in society, and as a result, the state has become a significant player in the nation's public life in new ways. This reality has challenged both the effectiveness and the accuracy of American republican individualism.[16] Some have even seen evidence of a decline in the civic republican ethos in recent decades, without a concomitant decline in the role of republican ideology in Americans' thinking about public life and the role of churches in society.

As the state expanded, it began to see itself as particularly responsible for areas of social life that had previously been generally the province of churches, such as social services. This has led to what Robert Wuthnow calls the "restructuring" of American religion: as churches lose their social role, they become sites of explicit theological-ideological contestation, so that in the United States today, conservative Roman Catholics, evangelical Protestants, and Jews all have more in common with one another than with liberals of their own faith, and vice-versa. This fact has, once again, aligned religious disputes roughly along the lines of political-ideological conflicts.[17]

Equally significantly, the state's expansion into more aspects of American public life has occurred alongside the secularization of American elites, a process that happened with surprising speed between 1875 and 1925.[18] The sociologist Peter Berger has a wonderful joke that sums up the American situation nicely: if Swedes are the least religious people in the world, and Indians are the most religious, then America is a nation of Indians ruled by Swedes. This situation, exacerbated by the general anti-intellectualism of the American population as a whole, was always ripe for conflict, and it has further aggravated the "culture wars" of recent decades. Hence, since World War II, the state, which Americans represent to themselves as being fundamentally "neutral" and quite restricted in its influence on civic life, is no longer quite so restricted and has arguably lost its neutral character as well.

Conclusion to Part One

The upshot of this general though vague approval of religiosity can be called "the Eisenhower Consensus"; it is encapsulated in Eisenhower's (in)famous claim that "our government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith and I don't care what it is." This attitude remains prevalent in America even today. In a January 2001 poll of individuals who wanted religion to have a more influential role in the nation, 76 percent said they didn't care which religion it was.[19] Indeed, one can find similar sentiments as far back as Washington's "Farewell Address" of 1797, wherein he urged a cultivation of religion for "publick morals."

Given the changes in American life over the past two centuries, the stability of that attitude is remarkable. Religion's role in American public life remains, as ever, largely indirect but very powerful, and its power has both good and bad effects on civic life. At the same time, certain pressures on public life in general, such as the rise of a very large centralized state, possibly portend momentous changes in the decades ahead.

Novus Ordo Seclorum

Now that we have seen the great extent to which American religion and public life are concerned with sustaining or re-achieving unity, we can address America's relations with the rest of the world. This examination revolves around a second motto on the reverse side of the Great Seal, *novus ordo seclorum*, "a new order of the ages." This motto speaks to the external or international aspect of the American mission, which rests upon the hope and faith that America's existence has implications for the destiny of the world as a whole. This is a deeply religious mission, one whose virtues and vices are two sides of the same coin. In light of this motto, one may call the United States a messianic project whose canvas is the world.

While *novus ordo seclorum* can be interpreted in other ways, the interpretation given here captures the central truth that the motto tries to convey, a sentiment that is apparent, in a celebratory way, in a letter composed by Thomas Jefferson. The letter, dated late June 1826, is addressed to a committee that had asked him to come to Washington, DC to celebrate

the fiftieth anniversary of July 4, 1776. Jefferson's letter says: "May [the celebrations of that day] be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all), the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.…All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man." Colonel Pogue, a character in Stanley Kubrik's black comedy about Vietnam, *Full Metal Jacket*, expresses a similar truth, although more laconically and in a sinister fashion, when he says, "We are here to help the Vietnamese, because inside every gook there is an American trying to get out."

This attitude that America will bring liberty to the world can be interpreted in two different ways. America can be understood as "the light to the nations, a city on a hill," the shining exemplar of moral and civic rectitude, which, by the power of example, serves as an inescapable causal force for the advance of "liberty," however broadly construed. America can also be understood as the "arsenal of democracy," the agent of manifest destiny and the invulnerable fortress of liberty—the muscle backing up people's desires for liberty, often through the use of force. This bipolar understanding of America's purpose explains why the United States seems sometimes to oscillate between periods of muscular involvement in other nation's affairs and periods of greater domestic focus. This oscillation also gives the lie to common arguments that isolationism is a "default" or "natural" position for the United States. Such arguments are, in my mind anyway, not very solid. The core of the "historical pattern" of U.S. isolationism is really the 1920s and 1930s. In the nineteenth century, the United States was busy with expansion into the west and southwest, a process that culminated in the Spanish-American War. In the twentieth century, America became an international power in a way it never was in the nineteenth century. Although some, such as William Appleman Williams, argued that this was a fundamental rejection of the "isolationist" American creed, it was in fact simply another stage of the same ideological development—once the continent was made safe for democracy, the next step was making the world safe for democracy.[20]

Of course, the United States' moralistic posturing and ethically based geopolitical dynamism is hardly unique among nations. America is far from alone in using moral or religious reasons for geopolitical action. In the nineteenth century, the British Empire stopped the transatlantic slave trade and forced the Ottoman Empire to back down from several threatened Armenian genocides for religiously-based moral reasons. All European countries and the United States protected Christians during the Boxer Rebellion in China. Even today, some of the rhetoric around the "European way" in politics and social order—so often contrasted to the "American way"—has more than a hint of the utopian about it, so that European accusations about naïve American "crusading messianism" and idealism are countered by American accusations of "Venusian" European utopianism. The truth is that both sides are right in recognizing crucially moral motivations in the other sides' behavior, though both are wrong to use that recognition as a way of dismissing the viability (or even seriousness) of the other sides' visions.

Still, the United States is unique in that it offers a relatively messianic account of the deep forces driving its foreign policy. More interestingly still, the United States' understanding of itself in millenarian terms means that its attempts to be a messianic agent in the international arena will be perennially challenged, and perhaps subverted, by its own anxieties. Indeed, on the geopolitical level, it is worth noting the anxiety displayed during American messianistic projects abroad. There is an apparent desperation in Americans' desire to convert others to democracy. Here is an (admittedly flip) example: Americans and the French are often both quite self-consciously concerned about their superiority to others. The French, however, would never dream that others could ever truly be French—*quelle horreur!* Were that the case, they would have no one to look down upon. In contrast, Americans can hardly imagine that anyone could really be happy not being American. The idea that not everyone is a potential American, i.e. that not everyone is hoping to become an American, is difficult for Americans to incorporate into their geopolitical imagination. Perhaps realizing that fact will be America's lesson for the twenty-first century. That, however, is unlikely, for if Americans do learn that lesson, they will lose a crucial part of the quasi-

religious ideology that is central to the nation's identity. If that goes, who knows what else might follow?

However, the present vexations of this messianism by no means portend its demise. Even recent geopolitical frustrations—Iraq for example—are possibly countered by a new source of inspiration for this belief and its continued cultivation in America: the rising global consciousness of evangelical Protestantism. This still-nascent yet remarkably traditional movement may portend significant changes in coming decades. Over the past decade, major evangelical figures like Rick Warren, Richard Cizik, and others have been pressing the greater evangelical community to take a broader approach to matters of religious faithfulness. They urge their audiences to expand the agenda beyond the domestic "family values" concerns that have occupied evangelicals for the past thirty years to include international concerns and matters of domestic poverty. Evangelicalism seems to have begun a process of geopolitical consciousness-raising, and a generational shift seems to be occurring within the community. Although it is unclear at present where this new momentum will lead, it is an important development.[21]

In fact, things may not be so bleak for the future of the American missionary impulse. Even as one (largely but not exclusively secularized) version of this impulse meets an ignominious end in the deserts of Iraq, another seems to be rising in the suburban mega-churches of the United States and on evangelical mission trips to all four corners of the globe. Perhaps, then, despite its current trials, the *novus ordo seclorum* will continue to govern American foreign policy, whether in an overt or covert "faith-based" manner, for the foreseeable future.

Conclusion: After the Eisenhower Consensus?

The conditions of American civic life and the "civic religion" of the American polity may well face more serious challenges at home than they do abroad, due to the vast material changes that have been occurring both in the American body politic and in political institutions over the past half-century. Through the 1970s, the principled pluralism of *e pluribus unum* remained fairly stable. But, starting in 1976 with the election of the first evangelical president, Jimmy Carter, things

began to change. American political culture polarized in the wake of the tumultuous changes of the 1960s and 1970s. Up to that point, the two political parties had accommodated a good deal of ideological diversity, such that Democratic conservatives were significantly more conservative than Republican liberals, while Republican liberals were at times more liberal than Democratic conservatives. However, for complicated and not fully understood reasons, the parties began to divide ideologically, in a process that William Galston and Elaine Kamarack call the "Great Sorting Out." This "sorting out," which is essentially a complicated feedback loop between elites and the general populace, led to the ideological purification of the parties.[22] As overall voting levels decline and the centrist populace loses the moral conviction that their votes matter, ideological purists on the extremes become significantly empowered; it is not the true believers who become demoralized, but the moderates. Opposing parties therefore find competing for the center is less and less rewarding as that civically-engaged center gets smaller and smaller. Parties consequently re-center themselves to attract and mobilize their true believers. This produces the feedback loop, in which cynicism among the majority leads to increasing polarization on the extremes. Politics as a whole becomes trivialized, and the demonization of political opponents becomes mutually reinforcing.[23]

Because of these factors, political polarization looks to be a long-term condition. In this setting, religion really has become a predictor of how people vote in the same way that social class may have been a predictor in the past. (For example, in 2004 for the first time, more secularists voted Democrat than did White Catholics.) This situation is further complicated by changing religious demographics that involve the decline of Mainline Protestantism, the rise of Pentecostalism, and the emergence of evangelicals at the center of society. Since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, a steady stream of religiously conservative immigrants has also served to alter religious demographics in the United States. While some, such as Diana Eck, think that this immigration makes America more richly pluralistic, others point out that most of these immigrants belong to religions already long-present in the United States; most are orthodox Christians from Africa, Asia, and Latin America or, although to a lesser extent, orthodox Muslims.[24] Whether or not their religious conservatism presents

a serious challenge to the relatively moral liberalism of the American polity, immigrants contribute to the rising religiosity of the nation and increase the number of ways in which that religiosity is manifest, even among Christians—African Pentecostals worship in ways quite different than Presbyterians do. These differences will likely create unforeseen challenges in the American civic, political, and legal realms.

The reality that the increase in religious pluralism does not occur in a vacuum further complicates the issue. Many thinkers worry that religious developments intersect with other transformations in American public life, moving citizens away from active concern with one another towards a consumerist relativism. Critics worry that in such a setting, growing religious pluralism will not lead to a richer understanding of others' faith or even of one's own, but will rather result in an apathetic, laissez-faire indifference to the religious dimensions of human existence. Structurally, the regnant attitude of "multiculturalism" may trivialize differences in a lame attempt to honor them, and there is evidence that this may already be happening.[25]

Can civic life be sustained in a time of ideological polarization when faced with such complex new pressures? At present, we do not know. One thing, however, is certain: the future of religion in American public life looks no less challenging, and no less important to both the nation and the world, than it has in the past. Americans may be both "puritans" and "pornographers" for some time to come.

NOTES

1 A version of this piece was delivered at a seminar on "Religion and Politics: Concepts, Definitions, and Trends," held at The American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, July 7, 2006. I am grateful for the comments on my presentation by all participants, and for the conversations and presentations throughout that day. I also thank Kerstin Jager, Slava Jakelic, Karin Johnston, Kevin Schultz, Jeffrey Vogel, and Joshua Yates for critiques of drafts of this work.

2 "Puritans or Pornographers?" *The Economist*, February 25, 2006, 42.

3 Jason Bivins, *The Fracture of Good Order: Christian Antiliberalism and the Challenge to American Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

4 Alexandra Marks, "Radical Islam finds US 'sterile ground': Home-grown terror cells are largely missing in action, a contrast to Europe's situation," *The Christian Science Monitor* (October 23, 2006).

5 By "myth" I do not mean to disparage the belief as false; it is partially true and partially false. I mean instead to suggest something of the depth at which this conviction operates to shape Americans' imagination and language.

6 "Crunchy cons" is a phrase coined to describe conservatives who believe that their "conservative" values (religion, family, small government) fit well with more "leftist" ideals (environmental protection, less materialism, a more communitarian lifestyle).

7 See Hank Stuever, "Crunchy Culture: Author Rod Dreher Has Defined A Political Hybrid: The All-Natural, Whole-Grain Conservative," *The Washington Post*, Wednesday, May 3, 2006.

8 Cited in Laurie Goodstein, "It's Not Just a Movie, It's a Revelation (About the Audience)," *The New York Times*, May 21, 2006.

9 For further information, see Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (New York: Anchor Press, 1979) and Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live our Faith* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

10 José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

11 See John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: Norton, 2003); Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Winifred Fallers Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

12 See Penny Edgell, Joseph Gerteis, Douglas Hartmann, "Atheists as 'Other': Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 2 (April 2006): 211-234. On the other hand, the recent upsurge in atheist critiques of religion seem rhetorically to mimic some of the worst intransigence of the dominant anti-secularist pietism; for example, in his book *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006), Sam Harris attacks moderate religious believers as essentially fellow-travelers who protect their more hard-core co-religionists. Such McCarthyite attacks are depressing, to be sure, but entirely of a piece with the severity of the "faithful" vs. "atheist" battle-lines, at least as experienced by the more militant atheists in the United States.

13 For more here, see Stanley Fish, *The Trouble with Principle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) and Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

14 See Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

15 For a good discussion of the "culture wars," see James Davison Hunter and Alan Wolfe, *Is There a Culture War? A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press / Pew Forum Dialogue Series on Religion and Public Life, 2006).

16 See Anthony King, "Distrust of Government: Explaining American Exceptionalism," pp. 74-98 in Susan J. Pharr and Robert D. Putnam, eds., *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), and more generally, Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

17 Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

18 See Christian Smith, *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

19 For Eisenhower see *The New York Times*, December 23, 1952. For a wonderfully puckish source-criticism of this quip, see Patrick Henry, "'And I Don't Care What It Is:' The Tradition-History of A Civil Religion Proof Text," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XLIX, no. 1 (1981): 35-49. See also Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983 [1955]). On the contemporary statistics, see Steve Farkas, Jean Johnson and Tony Foleno, *For Goodness's Sake: Why So Many Want Religion to Play a Greater Role in American Life*, (New York: Public Agenda, 2001).

20 Robert Kagan's recent book *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Random House, 2006) makes this point very well.

21 See Alan Cooperman, "Evangelicals Broaden Their Moral Agenda," *The Washington Post*, Thursday, October 19, 2006.

22 See William Galston and Elaine Kamarack, "The Politics of Polarization," available on the web at: http://www.third-way.com/products/16 .

23 See *The State of Disunion: Survey of American Political Culture, Volume Two* (Charlottesville, VA: Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, 1996)

24 For the more optimistic view, see Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001); for a more pessimistic reassessment, see Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Peter Gardella, "Pluralisms in the United States and in the American Empire," *Religious Studies Review* 29, no. 3 (2003): 255-259.

25 See, e.g., Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) and again Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion*.

"GROWING RELIGIOUS PLURALISM": A CONTRARIAN VIEW

PATRICK J. DENEEN

I have been asked to respond to the question of whether modern democracies and democratic institutions can adequately address the phenomenon of "growing religious pluralism." It is difficult to answer the question, in part because I do not, in the first place, automatically assume the existence of "growing religious pluralism." It is perhaps appropriate first to address the unstated assumption in the question: in what way, if at all, can it be said that religious pluralism actually is "growing"?

Part of the difficulty in recognizing the validity of this question lies not in the existence of religious pluralism *per se*, but rather in the long history of the problem itself—the prevalence of religious pluralism in democracies is far older than modernity, dating back at least to the execution of Socrates by the Athenian democracy after being convicted of, among other things, introducing new gods to the city. If history suggests that religious pluralism has always been with us and was perhaps even more problematic in the past—after all, modern democracies do not regularly execute individuals who introduce new gods to the city—then why is there a widespread assumption that religious pluralism is "growing"? Why is the growth of religious pluralism taken to be a simple observable fact?

Perhaps what underlies the perception that "religious pluralism" is increasing is the implicit acknowledgement that, in reality, what is increasing are the numbers of people following religious traditions that have not previously had a significant presence in Western societies, particularly Islam, but also Hinduism, Sikhism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. This reformulation of the question suggests that what modern Western democracies are labeling an increase in religious pluralism is, rather, an increase in the numbers of people of non-Western religious traditions, not those traditions *per se*. Many of these traditions have, however, been acknowledged by Western societies for a long time. For example, John Locke argued for the need to tolerate the Jewish, Hindu, and "Mohammandan" traditions in his 1689 treatise, *Letter Concerning Toleration*.[1] So, again, are modern democracies actually experiencing more religious diversity than before?

Religious pluralism has been part of Western societies to one extent or another for their entire existence. It can therefore be suggested that the perception that religious pluralism is a "growing" phenomenon is not necessarily based on increasing numbers of religious sects, but is instead inspired by an underlying assumption that religion, as a phenomenon, would decrease in salience and significance with the advance of modernity.[2] Underlying observations about increasing religious pluralism is the subtle realization that the "secularization thesis" has not come to pass.[3]

Put another way, the sense that religious pluralism is a "growing" phenomenon may not be the result of any actual increase in pluralism, but is rather the consequence of unconscious disappointment borne of the realization that long-standing Enlightenment assumptions about the results of certain historical

processes—particularly, that "modernization" would result in "secularization"—have not come to pass. What is perceived as "growing religious pluralism" in Germany and the United States may not be an increase in religious pluralism as such, but rather the awareness that a) religion does not seem to be withering away as expected, neither its Christian variety in America, nor its Muslim variety in Europe, and that b) the kind of religion that seems in particular to be maintaining its hold and remaining visible in the public sphere is that with a "traditional" or "conservative" bent, that is, oriented to a greater or lesser extent against "modernization" in general and liberalism in particular.[4] Perhaps, then, what is growing are religious voices that stand directly against certain long-standing assumptions held by modern intellectual elites about the undergirdings of modern liberalism, including the privatization of religion, the preeminence of conscience, individual autonomy, and formal legal equality.[5]

A rather striking potential implication of the above scenario, if it is in any way correct, is that it may very well be the case that religious pluralism, in every significant sense, is actually shrinking. This suggestion requires justification. Historically, religious pluralism has created problems by inspiring clashes within religious traditions, a situation often referred to as "sectarianism." Indeed, the most ferocious forms of sectarianism have often occurred not between different religious traditions, but within the same tradition. The Thirty Years War between Christian sects in the Middle Ages and the current conflagration in Iraq between Shiite and Sunni Muslims are powerful examples of this phenomenon. The word "sectarianism," which is not commonly employed in contemporary discourse, might be understood as a less benign form of religious pluralism. The term denotes far more religious intensity than "pluralism" can convey. Traditionally, the problem with pluralism is that it results in sectarianism, that is, divisions both between and within religious traditions.[6]

Relatively recent instances of religious sectarianism in America provide a way to draw contrasts between earlier forms of sectarianism and the contemporary belief that the world is in the throes of "growing pluralism." Consider the title of an essay written in 1967 and published in a well-known book by American sociologist and religious historian Sidney Mead: "The Fact of Pluralism and the Persistence of Sectarianism."[7] Only forty years ago, Mead could write about "pluralism" and "sectarianism" as essentially the same phenomena.

The challenge for liberal societies at that time was to negotiate the differences between religious traditions. For much of recent American history, this amounted to negotiating some of the differences between Protestant sects, but from the mid-nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century, it meant, above all, addressing the differences between Protestants and Catholics. Catholics were long regarded as traitorous and downright evil by many American Protestants. Suspicions of Catholics date back to colonial times, when the state of Virginia banned "popish priests," Georgia forbade the inheritance of land by Catholics, and a relatively tolerant Maryland circumscribed the public celebration of Mass, forbade Catholics the ownership of firearms, and placed a special tax on new Catholic residents in order to discourage growth in their numbers.[8]

Hostility towards Catholics can be traced back into English history as well as to theological contests in the times of Martin Luther in Germany and John Calvin in the Netherlands.[9] The height of Protestant-driven anti-Catholicism in the United States occurred in the 1840-50s, following a large influx of Catholic immigrants into Northeast urban areas. This circumstance led to the rise of the nativist "Know-Nothing" Party, which sought to prevent Catholics, who were viewed as pawns of the Vatican, from undermining American values and democracy; for a time, this party enjoyed considerable electoral success.

For their part, Catholics tended to separate from the dominant Protestant society, building an extensive network of "alternative" institutions, a Catholic sub-culture that is still discernible in some large Northeastern cities. Indeed, Catholic identification with the faith was so intense that many American Catholics fought with their Catholic "compatriots" on the Mexican side during the Mexican-American war.[10]

Occasionally, violence broke out between Protestants and Catholics. Anti-Catholic violence was frequently perpetrated by the Ku Klux Klan, which was started primarily as an anti-Catholic organization. Another example of such violence is a pitched battle fought in

1844 in Kensington, Pennsylvania over which translation of the Bible should be assigned to students. The use of battlefield artillery in this battle resulted in fifteen deaths and over thirty wounded.[11]

Sectarianism of this sort has persisted until relatively recent times. The continued separation of Catholics from wider society was decried in a 1951 article entitled "Pluralism: The National Menace."[12] In 1955, religion scholar Will Herberg wrote in his classic study *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* that, "American Catholics still labor under the heavy weight of the bitter memory of non-acceptance in a society overwhelmingly and self-consciously Protestant. Hardly a century has passed since Catholics in America were brutally attacked by mobs, excluded from more desirable employment, and made to feel in every way that they were unwanted aliens."[13]

Nevertheless, in less than forty years, American Catholics have left behind the days when they were suspected as minions of the Pope and tradition-bound ritualists dubiously loyal to America. Today, Catholics are at the center of mainstream American society. Certainly, much of this has to do with the "mainstreaming" of Catholicism, deliberately undertaken through elements such as Horace Mann's "common schools," the rise of an identifiably non-sectarian but vaguely Christian—later, Judeo-Christian—"civic religion," and, perhaps most importantly, through the historical contingency of anti-communist sentiments among Protestants and Catholics alike.[14] Remarkably, in the 2004 American presidential election campaign, Democratic candidate John Kerry's Catholicism was almost a non-issue, except to the extent that traditional Catholics pointed out what they considered his doctrinal shortcomings.

A noteworthy new phenomenon is perceptible in this opposition against a nominally Catholic candidate by Catholics. In the contemporary American landscape, the greatest allies of self-professed traditional or orthodox Catholics who opposed Kerry—i.e., Catholics who seek to adhere to traditional teachings pre-dating Vatican II, who prefer the Latin Mass, and for whom recent sexual scandals within the clergy reveal the dangers of liberal influences in seminaries—are "traditionalist" evangelical Protestants. That is, conservative Catholics are most firmly aligned

with many whose forebears would have belonged to the Know-Nothing Party, if not to the Ku Klux Klan. Traditional Catholics, along with conservative evangelical Protestants, are now more inclined to oppose a Catholic candidate for political office if the candidate is liberal than they are to identify, above all else, with a co-religionist, as they did in 1960 when John F. Kennedy successfully ran for President. As further evidence of this striking shift, consider that although five of the nine current Supreme Court Justices are Catholic, the nominations of four of these Justices—Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Chief Justice John Roberts, and, most recently, Samuel Alito—were successfully vetted largely through the efforts of conservative Protestant evangelicals.

Doctrinal and sectarian differences between Protestants and Catholics have not disappeared, but, in the context of contemporary America, these sects are united through shared views on key political issues such as abortion, stem cell research, euthanasia, and the strict separation of religion and politics. Opposition to certain aspects of liberalism, particularly those that emphasize lifestyle choice, individual autonomy, and moral relativism, have also united conservative Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. The journal *First Things* serves as the sounding board for the continued political alliance between conservative Catholics and evangelical Protestants.[15] The journal's editor is Father Richard Neuhaus, a former Lutheran minister who converted to Catholicism and is now a priest.

All in all, there is little evidence of "growing religious pluralism," at least not in the most important classic historical sense, where religious pluralism manifests as outright sectarianism between and among various religious faith traditions. Rather, in the United States in particular and to a growing extent in Europe, one sees two great "parties" forming: on one side, an increasingly unified "traditional" party of religion, and on the other, a secular-minded party of "progressives." In the United States, the division between these two parties is captured by the colors on election coverage maps, where the country is divided between "red states," most of which are located in the interior of the country and whose populations are comprised largely of religiously-minded individuals, and "blue states," located primarily along the East and West Coasts and whose populations are

comprised mainly of more secular-minded "progressives." In contrast, Europe is decidedly more "blue" than "red," a fact regarded with jealousy by denizens of blue states and with dismay, if not outright disdain, by citizens of red states. Nevertheless, given the demographic shifts taking place in Europe as a result of high rates of immigration and high fertility rates among immigrant populations, the majority of whom are Muslim, it may well be expected that Europe too will eventually be divided between conservative "red" and progressive "blue."

The issue at the core of the division between "red" and "blue" is reflected in the question, "Can democratic norms, institutions, and practices be reconciled with growing religious pluralism?" In this question too lurks a set of assumptions, in that what is at issue is the very definition of "democratic norms, institutions, and practices." Should the definition be based on traditional religious principles or on the secular values that have long been assumed to be the bedrock for democracy? Basic assumptions about how human beings are to conceive of themselves in relation to other human beings are being called into question. Are human societies conceived of primarily as autonomous individuals coming together by choice and agreement, under the philosophic aegis of "voluntarism," or are they constituted primarily through relations with others as defined by specific duties and obligations that stress family and community, nation and generation? The first model is captured in the Social Contract theory inaugurated by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke in the seventeenth century; the second is, at its core, Aristotelian, and was described by Edmund Burke in the eighteenth century This model has been defended by more contemporary thinkers such as G.K. Chesterton, Alasdair MacIntyre, Christopher Lasch, Wendell Berry, and Jean Bethke Elshtain.

The question, as posed above, suggests that, at the very least, there is a tension, if not an outright contradiction, between "growing religious pluralism"—which might more accurately be described as growing religious traditionalism—and the "practice, norms, and institutions" of democracy. However, it also begs the question that lies at the heart of the difference between the two dominant "parties" on the scene today—whether secularists can assume, as they so often do, that their position comprises the funda-

mental definition of democracy.[16] Indeed, the hostility between adherents of "red" and "blue" positions may be stoked by the unconsciously dismissive nature of the question, "Can democracy be reconciled with religious pluralism?", which just fuels the anger of religious adherents whose views are often automatically regarded as thoroughly anti-democratic, if not entirely unreasonable, by secularists.[17]

Whether questions about democracy and religious pluralism can be addressed in a more productive and peaceful manner in coming years in the United States is an open question. There are some grounds for hope that secularists will move away from their most condescending and dismissive positions and that religiously based voices will move beyond defensive reactions and playing the victim. These positions are being moderated by religious and secular voices alike. The Democratic Party, which once claimed the great preacher, William Jennings Bryan, as a standard-bearer, is seeking to reclaim that historically-based religious voice.[18] Conservative evangelicals and Catholics alike no longer view their affiliation with the Republican Party as having been ordained by God, a fact demonstrated in the recent 2006 mid-term Congressional elections.

It may very well be that the "norms, practices, and institutions" of democracy lie somewhere between the secular and the religious positions, in an area of creative tension that accords respect to individual autonomy while also acknowledging its limits, and that views tradition with a healthy suspicion while simultaneously acknowledging it as a rich source for a sense of community and mutual obligation, not only between members of families, communities, and nations, but also between generations, including those generations as-yet unborn.

Issues of democracy and religion are no less relevant to contemporary Europe. It may well be that the relative triumph of the secular worldview in European countries such as Germany will have unique implications for these issues in Europe. The United States provides an example of one possible implication, which centers on demographic issues. It is interesting to note that birthrates in America's "blue" states are similar to those in Germany and Europe, that is, below replacement rate. However, birth rates in "red" states are regularly above replacement rates, which

suggests that there may be a connection between a worldview that rejects the idea of complete individual autonomy, one that embraces traditionalism—including religious traditionalism—and the willingness to compromise ones' "freedom" for the joys and burdens of bringing up children. It might be concluded that those holding a religious worldview are more willing to accept values of duty and self-sacrifice, and might therefore be less susceptible to appeals to more individualistic forms of self-satisfaction. Thus, those people less wed to a "progressive" worldview are more likely to produce families in larger numbers. Ironically, one might conclude on this basis that conservatives have a greater belief in the future than progressives![19]

Although the United States faces its own demographic challenges, they are slight in comparison to the inability of most European nations to repopulate their cities and towns through reproduction. Financial incentives for starting families have proven largely ineffective, suggesting that devotion to bringing a new generation into the world ultimately has little to do with monetary compensation and therefore has a difficult time registering in the liberal mindset so dominated by market considerations. Europe faces a profound challenge, arguably arising not from religious pluralism, but from its absence, divided as it is between two great parties, the party of secularism and a growing party of Islam. This absence of religious pluralism may contribute to the "Islamization" of Europe in approximately half a century, given current demographic trends, and this may have the ironic result of creating a religiously singular Europe in several decades time. It may very well be that the "norms, practices, and institutions" of democracy, rather than being hindered by "growing religious pluralism," in fact depend upon the creation of actual religious pluralism for their continued existence. Ironically, what Europe may need in order to remain Europe is a genuinely growing religious pluralism.

NOTES

1 John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983).

2 A classic argument on behalf of secularization can be found in Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

3 Peter L. Berger repudiated his earlier belief in the "secularization thesis" in "The Desecularization of the World: A Global View," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1999).

4 See R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

5 The elite fostering of the "secularization thesis" is chronicled in Christian Smith, "Introduction: Rethinking the Secularization of American Public Life," in *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests and Conflict in the Secularization of American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

6 While John Locke notes the need for toleration of non-Christian religious sects, his main emphasis is upon the need to tolerate the variety of Christian religious sects, including "Lutherans, Calvinists, Remonstrants, Anabatists, and other sects…," *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 57.

7 Sidney E. Mead, "The Fact of Pluralism and the Persistence of Sectarianism," in *Nation With the Soul of a Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 29-47.

8 Thomas H. O'Connor, *Religion and American Society* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 25-6.

9 In his "Letter Concerning Toleration," Locke disallows toleration toward two distinct groups: atheists and religionists who acknowledge a foreign Prince, and thus, presumably, Catholics. Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 50.

10 Rosemary Ruether, "When the Irish Were Mexicans," *National Catholic Reporter* (September 1, 2006).

11 O'Connor, *Religion and American Society* , 79.

12 "Pluralism—National Menace," *Christian Century* 68 (13 June 1951): 701- 11

13 Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 232.

14 Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 86-7, 96-7, 137-53; see also Stephen Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust: Civic Education in a Multicultural Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 41-148.

15 See "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Christian Mission in the Third Century," *First Things* 43 (May, 1994): 15-22.

16 While examples that conclude that religious belief is incompatible with democracy, take this recent instance drawn from a scholarly article: "Christian fundamentalism also makes a virtue of submission to this truth and to the authority that speaks or wields it. It is anti-democratic and anti-intellectual insofar as it devalues not merely facts but also deliberative autonomy and deliberation themselves." Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34 (December, 2006), 708.

17 The classic statement that would bar religious claims public legitimacy based upon their lack of universal "reasonableness" is John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). Richard John Neuhaus critiques this general view in *The Naked Public Square* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's, 1986).

18 For a reminder of Bryan's importance in the Democratic party, and in American politics, see Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

19 Ralph Waldo Emerson contrasted the worldviews of conservativism and "innovation" thus: "it is the opposition of the Past and Future, of Memory and Hope…." (Emerson, "The Conservative"). By contrast, see Christopher Lasch's argument that associates middle-class religious conservatives with the virtue of "hope" in *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1995). See also Peter A. Lawler, *Aliens In America: The Strange Truth About Our Souls* (Wilmington, DE: I.S.I. Books, 2002) and *Stuck with Virtue: The American Individual and Our Biotechnological Future* (Wilmington, DE: I.S.I. Books, 2005).

MUSLIM WOMEN IN EUROPE: BETWEEN MODERNITY AND ISLAMIZATION

TÜRKAN KARAKURT

Ever since the Western world became preoccupied with radical Islam following 9/11, public opinion and the media have perceived Turkish, Arab, and other migrants from Muslim countries in Europe as "Muslims," regardless of differences in class, education, and religious practices.[1] This is true for both men and women immigrants. The potential danger and security risk that Muslims pose to Western democracies is being assessed by attempts to identify common patterns of thinking and behavior in a single distinctive group, but a closer look reveals that "Muslim" immigrants are a multifaceted amalgam of national, ethnic, social, and political backgrounds.

For example, the majority of Muslims in the United Kingdom comes from South Asia while the majority of French Muslims is of North African origin and the largest Muslim minority in Germany is of Turkish heritage. All in all, Muslims in Europe come from eighty different countries, each with its own political and cultural traditions determining the degree of separation between state and religion, and each with its own interpretation(s) of Islam.

Muslim men are the main focus of public awareness and political analysis, not only because of their perceived potential to become terrorists, but also due to their failure to succeed in school and find employment in most European countries. Muslim women, on the other hand, were, for the better part of the last fifty years, stigmatized as uneducated, oppressed, and voiceless individuals within Muslim societies.

This perception of Muslim women has changed since debates about the headscarf (or veil) have entered the public sphere in most European countries. All of a sudden, Muslim women are seen demonstrating against the headscarf ban and engaging in political debates about their rights both as Muslims and as

women. Moreover, they are also engaging in scholarly debates over the principles of their faith. Most irritating for the greater part of the Western political and general public is the fact that well-educated Muslim women are defending their right to cover their heads because, in the West, the veil has been received as a symbol of Muslim women's subjugation to a patriarchal system that could be easily imposed on traditionally uneducated and male-dependant Muslim women.

There have, of course, been protests against these "defenders" of the Islamic headscarf from both secular and feminist Muslim women in Europe, who out-number their veiled counterparts. These secular, feminist Muslim women have been very clear in their analyses that there is nothing to associate with the headscarf other than the subjugation of women, but their arguments do not receive as much attention as those presented by women in favor of the headscarf, whose voices and arguments are so unprecedented in the public debate.

The headscarf debate first surfaced in France in the late 1980s, ending after a long and heated conflict

with a 2004 law banning the headscarf and other symbols of religion in French public schools. Surprisingly, there has not been much protest against the law since its passage. In Germany, the headscarf debate is still ongoing; some of the federal states have opted for laws prohibiting the veil—for schoolteachers, for example—although other states have been more reluctant to pass such laws.

Even in multicultural Britain, which has been perceived as being on the right track with its communitarian approach, the headscarf is viewed with increasing skepticism; Prime Minister Tony Blair has called it a mark of separation. Similar rising skepticism can also be observed in the Netherlands, where confrontation between the Dutch and their immigrant Muslim population is accompanied by a rise in the popularity of right-wing and populist political parties.

At present, European societies feel a certain uneasiness about the headscarf question, as it has had a polarizing effect for both political and emotional reasons. First, it poses a challenge to Europe's concept of tolerance, which has always been understood to be a more advanced concept in Christianity than in Islam. If tolerance towards a different religion with different concepts of faith and virtue is required, what then makes it so difficult for the majority of Christian or secular Europeans to accept veiled students, educators, doctors, or administrative workers?

The answer lies in a shared European mistrust of the intentions of Muslim activists. Europeans, religious as well as secular, fear that the veil might be nothing less than the beginning of the Islamization of their societies and that by winning this battle, Muslims will be encouraged to challenge even further the existent social consensus within their societies, which is based on enlightened Christianity and a liberal and secular political order. Europeans' fear, to be more precise, is that tolerance might be abused for political aims that could eventually lead to "backward" social and political developments.

The veil also contradicts the Western concept of women's liberation and universal equality of the sexes. Muslim women were believed to be potential allies of progressive Western democracies, which could offer them equality and individual freedom instead of the

oppression they presumably experienced in their male dominated culture and religion. Europeans understood the veil as a traditional symbol worn by women from largely rural and uneducated backgrounds, believing the practice of wearing a headscarf would disappear in the generations of girls born and raised in Europe. This did not happen; in fact, the opposite did. The outright rejection by some Muslim women raised in European societies of the "well-meaning" European expectation that Muslim women would become like their liberated European sisters has created a rift between the majority and minority societies. If Europeans were wrong to assume that Muslim women wanted to be equal, then what do they actually know about Muslim women? Could it be that Muslim women have become allies of their male compatriots, who seem to oppose the fundamental European value of gender equality?

To take things a step further, if the West loses a considerable number of Muslim women to traditional Islam, how will that affect the way they raise their children? Will Europe have a growing number of German, British, French, and Dutch girls raised in subordination to a religion that contradicts so many of the most vital elements of the secular political structure of European democracies? Given the demographic forecasts, which show growing Muslim minorities all over Europe, what will Europe look like in thirty to fifty years?

This article does not attempt to give easy answers to complex questions. On the contrary, by highlighting a few processes that have been taking place in Europe as a result of the arrival of the "East in the West"[2] via mass immigration, a few more questions will be added to the list that Europeans must debate thoroughly in the near future. How can a sufficient consensus on religious, political, and social issues in European societies be reached that will ensure the peaceful coexistence of Christians, Jews, and Muslims in these societies? While this debate has to some degree already started in all major European countries, the issues at hand, despite their similarities, may nevertheless be discussed in entirely different ways throughout Europe.

Notwithstanding the efforts on the level of the European Union to harmonize immigration and integration policies, different historical traditions for

settling conflicts and finding consensus, and differences in the organization of political and social life, will determine in a very decisive way the type of understanding that can be reached in each European country, as well as within Europe as a whole. In some societies, values will be at the forefront of discussions, while others might opt to adapt their concepts of citizenship and political integration to accommodate their Muslim minorities in the given national framework. French society, for example, has for some time been trying to create a "French Islam," and even Germany has finally acknowledged its status as an immigration country and started a formal dialogue with representatives of the Muslim community.

Muslims in Europe: Searching for Identity

Why are more and more Muslims in Europe turning to religion? What are the reasons for and the impacts of this phenomenon? The view shared by many political analysts and scholars is that the search for identity is the primary reason for this phenomenon. Religion has become a touchstone in the uprooting process that immigrants experience and is a connecting tie to their homeland; religion shields immigrants from the danger of assimilation, the ultimate loss of identity. There are no data showing differences between the rates at which men versus women turn to Islam. Both sexes are believed to be following a similar rationale with three major causes that are further explored below. A few singularities specific for Muslim women will be explored later on.

Islam has emerged as the second largest religion in Europe as a consequence of the massive influx of migrant workers (and their families) and political refugees from a variety of Muslim countries. The number of Muslims in Europe has tripled over the last thirty years, but, in fact, the Muslim population makes up not more than 5 percent of the total population of Europe. The rising visibility of Islam is therefore not so much due to the quantity of Muslims living in Europe, but rather to a different perception of Muslims after 9/11, and equally important and parallel to this, a change in Muslim self-perception. The first and second generation of immigrants left not only their families, but also their religion back home—they intended to work in Europe for a limited period of time and then return to their home country. They had a clear vision of their future that was motivated by the

wish to save as much money as possible with which to build a better life back home. These immigrants did not voice demands for political, cultural or religious rights, because they did not feel they belonged to the society in which they were living.[3]

This situation has changed with the third and fourth generation of immigrants' descendents, who have never lived in their parents' and grandparents' countries of origin. An unfortunate combination of reluctance on the part of host countries to pursue integrative policies from the beginning of the immigration process and a preference on the part of the immigrant population for staying within their ethnic group has led to the fact that a majority of young women and men of immigrant background live in two separate, often contradicting worlds. The option to integrate fully is being rejected by many because it implies assimilation. However, in contrast to their parents or grandparents, the third and fourth generations of Turkish, North African, Middle Eastern or South Asian descent feel they have a right to a place in society. They derive this right from the existing legal systems in Europe, which grant equal individual and social rights to people with foreign citizenship even if they forgo legal status as citizens of the country in which they live. Additionally, the European states grant a multitude of opportunities (and financial support) to civil society to organize in ways that accommodate different social or group interests. Immigrants have in that sense integrated very well— they understand that they can become a part of European civil society by forming their own social groups, and they demand that specific rights be attached to those groups. Immigrant organizations were initially focused on social issues, but with the prospect of a long-term immigrant presence in Europe, more and more organizations have been set up to cater to the initially neglected spiritual needs of these populations.

The majority of immigrants feel they have a right to be in Europe because their ancestors were brought to Europe as workers. In some cases, such as that of Algerians in France, the ties are even deeper: Algeria was a French colony, and following Algerian independence in 1962, Algerians were invited to live in France. In all European countries, Muslim communities have become more self-assured. With the financial support of both their home and host countries,

Muslim communities have established religious groups and mosques. Thus, the practice of Islam has ceased to be an individual phenomenon taking place privately at home and has become a visible religion organized in an institutional framework of associations running mosques and educational activities.[4] Supportive of these changes is the loss of good economic prospects for a large part of the immigrant population all over Europe. At present, an average of 25 percent of the immigrant workforce is out of work for very long periods of time. Relatively high levels of unemployment combined with European countries' generous social benefits mean that hundreds of thousands of men and women of immigrant backgrounds live without the socially stabilizing framework provided by regular employment. Religion has become a substitute for the lack of other occupations and socially stabilizing factors in a time of economic uncertainty.

The increasing religiosity of greater numbers of immigrants in Europe is due also to a global process in which Islam has become both an asset and a player in the global competition for power and influence. Islam is the Muslim world's answer to the technical, military, and economic superiority of the Western world. Nasr Abu Zayd, professor of humanism and Islamic studies at the University of Utrecht, describes this process as follows:

> The relationship between Muslims and the western world is plain for all to see from the history of Islamic scholarship in modern times: the confrontation between the two worlds was the challenge posed by modernity with its values such as progress, power, science and reason. These values placed tough demands on the traditional Islamic societies and thereby questioned and injured the long-held self-image of these societies.[5]

A feeling of having lost significance and power in the world and the failure to compete successfully in the globalized economy provide more general incentives for Muslims to turn to Islam. This incentive has grown even more since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Until then, socialism and communism were the ideologies that many in Muslim countries, but also in Europe, turned to when looking for defense against the omnipotent capitalist Western world. They could find a place for themselves in the East-West confrontation by taking sides in the global competition between systems. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union, Islam has replaced the socialist anti-model to the West as far as Muslims are concerned. Ever since the Soviet collapse, Islam has been the only source of vision and ideology for those parts of society in the Muslim world that are disappointed with the Westernization of their countries, which did not bring about real progress and better living conditions for the masses.

Last but not least, many of the newly religious Muslims in Europe cite 9/11 as the turning point in their lives. The horror that was caused in the name of Islam and the Islamophobia that resulted from it in the West make them feel the urge to both defend Islam and show that it is peaceful. This is particularly true for the young, who say that after 9/11, they started Koranic study circles and set up youth and women's centers. These young people want to act against radicalism and violence and integrate into their host societies but say they do not feel acknowledged by the Europeans. In this context, Islam can serve also as a culture of protest against a mainstream culture from which young Muslims feel excluded.

Muslim Women in Europe: Between Modernity and Victimization

It is within this context of both internal (European) and external (global) factors that Muslim women in Europe are resorting to Islam. According to figures from the German-based Center for Turkish Studies, the percentage of Muslims describing themselves as very religious has risen from 8 percent in 2000 to 28 percent in 2005. Also, the number of Muslims stating that Muslim women should be veiled has risen from 27 percent in 2000 to 47 percent in 2005.[6] Islam has become a comforting force that mitigates immigrants' feelings of alienation and their perception of a cultural gap between their traditions and those of their host countries. As a result, Muslim communities have been seen exercising growing social pressure to create uniformity among female members. The massive campaign for the headscarf among the Muslim communities in all major European countries, which includes even young girls, can be seen as a clear strategy to install conservative Muslim practices in families and to foster segregation; in fact, it is largely

interpreted in the majority society as a symbol saying "we do not want to mingle with others."

Religious Muslim women generally do not hold European women in high esteem, regarding them as less virtuous and alienated from women's traditional roles as wives and mothers. These stereotypes not only make Muslim women's lifestyle look more accommodating, but are also intended to prevent contact between their female children and non-Muslim girls in school, contact that might disrupt the Islamic traditions being taught at home. With regard to Turkish students in Germany, surveys show that a high level of religiosity correlates with a low level of contact with members of other ethnic or religious groups, with a poor command of the German language, and a low level of performance at school.[7] The same is obviously true for adult women—religious women tend to have a relatively low level of education that correlates with very little knowledge of the language and the customs of their host country. Due to a lack of real insight into the majority society's way of life, these Muslim women and girls create stereotypes about European women. This is, however, also a defensive strategy, since veiled women are regarded by the majority society at best as victims and at worst with a growing hostility.

Finally, young women may choose to veil themselves as a pre-emptive strategy. In contrast to Muslims in the United States, the majority of European Muslims come from poor socio-economic backgrounds and traditional family structures that favor concepts of honor in which non-conformity can lead to severe punishments. Although more and more families are putting an emphasis on the educational achievements of their children, including that of daughters, the majority of girls in traditional Muslim families grow up knowing that non-conformity with the social and religious rules of their community can be disastrous for themselves and for their families alike. Every girl knows a story about another girl who wanted to live a different, European lifestyle and had to pay a very high price for doing so. The pre-emptive strategy of becoming, with the help of the veil, as pious as their parents (or even more so) considerably alleviates the social pressures on these girls. The veil protects from the "dangers" and attractions of the outside liberal world; it states clearly, "We are separate from the non-Muslim world." Within their own communities, women gain more respect through this strategy, but more importantly, they also receive less pressure and

gain more freedom to pursue their own way. Why would parents and brothers have to watch a girl who has proven herself faithful to the rules of Islam?

The growing number of veiled women is also a result of "importing" brides, as socilogist Necla Kelek puts it in her recent book *Die fremde Braut*,[8] which addresses the issue of forced marriages in the German Turkish community. Kelek points to the reinforcement of cultural and religious patterns of underdeveloped, rural Turkey through the influx of imported brides who do not speak German and are systematically withheld from any contact with German society. Kelek argues that as a result, especially in areas densely populated by Muslims, the children of imported brides are raised in parallel societies within which extreme and sometimes violent pressure to conform to Islamic traditions is exerted on young women. A report issued by the German Federal Ministry for Family, Women and Youth in March 2006 stated that 47 percent of the women who take refuge in "women's homes" as the result of domestic violence are women of immigrant background.[9] All major cities in Europe provide shelters for young Muslim girls who decide to flee the violent repercussions that can stem from their refusal to marry a man chosen by their family or for other acts of nonconformity.

Still, open violence is generally an isolated occurrence, and individual families are generally not able to exert sufficient pressure on children to make them conform. Instead, Islamic cultural associations and mosques have been extremely important and successful in spreading Muslim practice among Muslim youth. These institutions and organizations have involved themselves in an unprecedented way in the religious education of girls and boys alike by adapting their institutional structures to the administrative requirements of their host countries. Schools that provide after-school religious education, as well as boarding houses segregated by sex, have recently been widely criticized in Germany for indoctrinating their pupils against the West and Israel, and for segregating Muslim children from the social environment of the host country. These relatively recent developments in Islamic religious education, which will have long-term psychological effects on both male and female children, must be observed very closely. They have a negative effect on children's performance at school and later on in life. Education in the host

country's school-system is the best means, particularly for girls, for providing the opportunity for a more self-determined life.

Are authors like Necla Kelek and Seyran Ates, who wrote a book denouncing violence against Muslim women, painting an overly gloomy picture of life as a Muslim woman in Europe?[10] Are the individual stories they recount stories that one can find in any other society? Most academics working in the field of immigration and Islam argue that the prospects for Muslim women in Europe are far from being as gloomy as they are painted by these authors. They argue that such personal horror-stories are not contributing to a rational debate on issues related to immigration but, rather, are crystallizing existing stereotypes within German society. In an open letter in the weekly *Die Zeit* (February 9, 2006), a large group of researchers attacked Seyran Ates and Necla Kelek for their books. Empirical research, the academics argued, reveals different pictures.

Professors Ursula Boos-Nünning and Yasemin Karakasoglu, for example, in first-of-its-kind field-research, portrayed the outlook on life of 950 young women of Greek, Yugoslavian, Italian, and Turkish backgrounds, aged fifteen to twenty-one.[11] They discovered that the majority of these women share an optimistic outlook on life, have a strong inclination towards education and economic independence, are family-oriented but search for equality in partnerships, and are interested in inter-religious dialogue. Three-quarters of the Muslim girls surveyed feel very much at home in Germany and intend to build their lives there. Muslim girls feel a strong attachment to their own ethnic group, but the same is true for the group of young women of Greek origin. Two-thirds among them regard partnership as possible only within marriage, but decline the traditional gender roles. Eighty-three percent of these women believe that both partners should contribute to the family income, and 79 percent believe that employment is the best way to independence. They do not consider their parents to be hindering them; 80 percent of the Muslim girls questioned say that their parents put a lot of hope into them and place particular emphasis on their educational accomplishments. Three-quarters of the girls surveyed believe they are being treated in the same way as their brothers by their parents. Almost a fourth of the Muslim girls could accept arranged marriage, but 75 percent would decline such a marriage.

All things considered, do Muslim women contribute to a reconciliation of Islam with modernity or are they instead turning away from it by clinging to their traditions? The truth is that they do both: the majority of Muslim women have accepted the basic elements of European secularism and liberal democracy and enjoy their double identity. In a Pew Center study, 42 percent of French Muslims say their identity is based on belonging to the French nation, while 46 percent identify first with Islam.[12] According to the same study, the majority of French (Muslim and non-Muslim alike) do not see a conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society. For the rest, who prefer their religious identity over others, the controversy between Europe and Islam will gradually fade away once Islam is institutionalized within the given framework of religious institutions in each country, alongside Christianity and Judaism. With fifteen million Muslims, as diverse as they may be, "European identity" will have to be redefined and understood in terms of cultural diversity.[13]

In return, Muslims in Europe and their religious bodies must accept that they must function within the given setup determining the relationship between religious institutions and the state in Europe. They must face the challenge that is posed to any religion in a democratic, pluralistic, and secular society, namely, coming to terms with a critical debate about the interpretation of aspects of the Koran that contradict the basic values of European societies—tolerance, equality, and peaceful coexistence with members of other faiths. It is also in European Muslims' best interest to help fight terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam.

Olivier Roy, a French expert on Islam, interprets the religiosity among Muslims in Europe as a sign of their Westernization and individualization. Their religion no longer corresponds to a specific territory, ethnicity or culture. As a result, the cultural heritage of immigrants' home countries is being translated into a purely religious context. This is, according to Roy, a significant step towards secularization, while what we witness at present is immigrant populations' striving to find a place for themselves and their faith in the pluralistic culture of European societies.[14]

Muslims have a good chance of finally settling in to European modernity if their host societies come to terms with the challenge of assisting in this process in a constructive way. More space must be made for political representation of immigrant populations. European societies must also acknowledge the legitimacy of Islam existing in their midst and help to create a spiritual and organizational base for Islam in Europe.[15] An important step in this direction is the training of imams and religious education teachers in European academic institutions. One can hope that Muslim women, who are already participating actively in this process of becoming part of Europe, will become confident enough to interpret the Koran from a more feminist point of view and feel free to practice their religion without feeling obligated to use the veil and other segregating elements as a demonstration of their "right to difference." They may still be different, but they must also be equal.

NOTES

1 Latifa Ben-Mansour gives a personal account of this shift in perception in her book, *Les mensonges des intégristes* (Le Serpent à Plumes/Edition Rocher: Monaco 2004), 1-5.

2 According to Olivier Roy the tensions that Islam raises at present derive mainly from its "Westernization." See Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam. The search for a new Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

3 In France and Britain, the situation was initially different because of the influx of immigrants from former colonies and overseas departments who were already in possession of citizenship or already members of the Commonwealth. Although this relatively easy entry was restricted in the 1970s, France and Britain have still been more generous to their immigrant populations with regard to granting citizenship than countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, and others.

4 For example, in France, the number of mosques has increased from 100 in the 1970s to 1600 at present.

5 Christian W. Troll, "Progressives Denken im zeitgenössischen Islam," *Islam und Gesellschaft* 4 (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung: Bonn 2006), 4.

6 "12 Maßnamen zur Förderung des Zusammenlebens mit dem Islam in Deutschland. Stärkung und Verantowortungsübernahme des Islam als Integrationsstrategie." Standpunktpapier des Zentrums für Türkeistudien, Essen, September 5, 2006.

7 Klaus J. Bade and Michael Bommes, ed., "Migration – Integration – Bildung. Grundfragen und Problembereiche," *IMMIS-Beiträge* 23 (2004).

8 Necla Kelek, *Die fremde Braut* (Köln: 2005).

9 Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, www.bmfsfj.de/Politikbereiche/gleichstellung,did:73032.html.

10 Seyran Ates, who is of Kurdish origin and is the author of a recent book, *Grosse Reise ins Feuer* (Berlin: 2005), recently had to give up her career as a lawyer for female victims of violence as a result of several attacks and death-threats.

11 Ursula Boos-Nünning and Yasemin Karakasoglu, *Viele Welten leben. Zur Lebenssituation von Mädchen und jungen Frauen mit Migrationshintergrund* (Waxmann Verlag: Berlin 2005).

12 Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project, "Survey Report: The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other," June 22, 2006, www.pewglobal.org/reports.

13 A rather important step in this direction was set by the decision of the majority of the EU member states to safeguard the neutrality of the state vis-à-vis religious questions. The preamble of the "European Constitutional Treaty" refers to a cultural, humanistic European heritage, thus declining to underline the predominant Christian heritage, as was demanded by many. See http://europa.eu.int/constitution/download/print.de.pdf.

14 Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam*.

15 In many European countries, the institutional settlement of the Islamic faith has already begun, with a vast number of associations and councils mainly organized legally under the auspices of association acts. Given the diversity of confessions and currents in Islam, which differ along national and ethnic lines, and the lack of hierarchies organizing these bodies and religious leadership, a formula for integrating Islam into the respective national frameworks of state-church relations has yet to be found.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN GERMANY: A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE?

ROLF SCHIEDER

Religious education in Germany has acquired a bad reputation. The concept seems to be too unique and too closely connected to the former *"landes-herrliches Kirchenregiment,"* a structure formed in the Middle Ages under which, for centuries, kings or princes ruled the church and determined the religion of their subjects. The ruling paradigm in present-day Germany is that of the separation of church and state and the acceptance of religious pluralism. Given this paradigm, religious education in public schools is no longer the straight-forward matter it may have seemed to be in the past.

To many, such religious education seems anachronistic because one is free to practice the religion of one's choice without interference by the state. However, what is true for political freedom is also true for religious freedom: one must learn to use these freedoms responsibly. This requires passing down lessons-learned, whether about political responsibility or religious responsibility, from one generation to the next. How do societies fulfill this obligation? Does the "separation of church and state" paradigm make families and churches the only authorities on matters of religious education, or does the state also retain some responsibility for the religious education of its citizens?

The differentiation between church and state is one of the most fundamental achievements of modern states. Religious freedom is guaranteed by the state. However, the notion of "separation of church and state" can easily be misinterpreted as the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. The totalitarian regimes of the twentieth-century that tried to reduce religion to an exclusively private function eventually learned that religion has a claim on the public sphere that cannot be suppressed forever—religion returned to the public sphere when these regimes were overthrown and, in some cases, was even a catalyst for

their demise. A politician does not have to be a religious believer in order to understand the value of guarding the free exercise of religion, as this protection can help ensure the stability of the state.

Because the enforced division between the secular state and religious authorities is seen as one of the hallmarks of a modern state, to argue that religious education in Germany merits more than its reputation as an outdated remnant of past centuries can be viewed as a rather bold move. Nevertheless, the argument here is precisely that: the public nature of German religious education, which attempts to balance the influence of the state, the churches, and individuals, creates an inclusive "civic religion" that contributes to the stability of the state through its embrace of multiple religious traditions and its efforts to teach tolerance through public religious education. It allows the state to practice a friendly partnership with churches, which are legally defined as important civil society actors, despite the reality that church and state are separate in Germany and the secular state is supposed to be strictly neutral in religious matters. Cooperation between the state and the churches in Germany includes the area of religious education in public schools. Additionally, about 80 percent of German pre-schools are run by churches,

as are most private schools, and churches are the most important employers in the social services field. The challenge for the model of public religious education in Germany today is to do for Islam what it has already done for Christianity and Judaism—provide Islam with an identifiable position within the public sphere and ensure that the practice of Islam in Germany occurs against the background of religious tolerance and the civic values that have shaped European nations and that form the core of the German approach to "civic religion."

The Legal and Historical Frameworks of Religious Education in Germany

Religious education in Germany is governed by Article 7 of the German Constitution and is therefore included on the list of constitutional articles (1-19) outlining the fundamental human rights (*"Grundrechte"*) that the state is obligated to respect and to which every citizen has the right to appeal. Some argue that Article 7 should not be lumped together with articles pertaining to human rights. Others make the case that Article 7, in conjunction with Article 4, which guarantees religious freedom, is an expression of the state's respect of the freedom of religion and of parents' will in matters of religious education for their children. The essence of Article 7 is that the state has no right to impose religious beliefs on pupils in public schools.[1] Religious education is therefore not a compulsory subject, but a voluntary one. Although Article 7:1 states that the school system in Germany is under the supervision of the state, religious education is a special case. Article 7:2 reserves for parents the right to decide whether or not their children will take part in religious education. Article 7:3 rules that no teacher shall be forced to teach religious education and also determines that religious education must be taught in accordance with the principles of the religious communities being represented.

The prominent role of religious education in the German Constitution can best be understood within the historical context of the post-World War II era. The "fathers and mothers" of the German Constitution were deeply influenced by their experiences under the totalitarian Nazi regime. The Nazis established a political religion that was anti-pluralistic. It extinguished the Jewish religion, but was also anti-

Christian. It intended to destroy and replace all traditional religions with worship of the nation. Consequently, post-war German politicians tried to keep the state free from religion. The churches seemed well prepared to manage religion in a positive way without state interference, and it therefore seemed plausible for the state to cooperate with the churches with respect to public religious education.

Post-war German politicians also took into account the historical experience of the religious wars of the seventeenth century. At the conclusion of these wars, France, Spain, and Italy remained Catholic, while Sweden, Denmark, and Norway became Lutheran. Germany, however, was and remained split between Catholic and Protestant. In order to 'keep the peace' domestically, German politics needed to avoid religious conflicts while also integrating the churches into the political system by offering them opportunities for cooperative engagement in education and social services.

A major development in religious education policy occurred in 1969, when the so-called *"Ersatzfach Ethik"* (alternative ethics course) was created. In the late 1960s, large numbers of students, in the revolutionary attitude typical of the 1968 generation, made use of their right not to attend religious education courses. Religious education teachers complained that pupils were essentially choosing between religious education classes or the ice-cream parlor. In response, almost all German states established ethics classes as an alternative to voluntary religious education; those who chose not to take a religion class were required to attend an ethics class instead.

Despite the particular factors that have influenced religion's role in the public sphere in post-war Germany, the case of religious education in Germany is not made unique by the nation's history—religious education in all European countries reflects each country's particular historical context. France, for instance, has not had religious education in its public schools since 1905, when the concept of *"laïcité"* (essentially, the separation of religious and government affairs) was adopted by the state. In Great Britain, the system of religious education only works because the country has an official state-church, the Church of England. Islamic religious education has existed in Austrian public schools for decades

because of the history of coexistence between Christians, Muslims, and Jews under the long-reigning Habsburg Monarchy. Each European country's history has helped shape its present-day approach to the issue of religious education in public schools.

"Civilizing Religion Through Education"

The German system of religious education allows the state to influence the religious system without violating its secular neutrality. However, the mere fact that religion is taught in public schools and not in the churches deeply affects the practice of teaching religion. One might call the system of religious education in public schools the state's strategy for creating civic religion through education. The state's rationale for investing money in religious education, therefore, is not motivated by charity. The state needs citizens who are well educated about religion because such citizens are better prepared to cope with the reality of a religiously plural society.

Although religious education is called "confessional religious education" in Germany, this description is misleading. In addition to supervising the religious education of students in public schools, the state also oversees the education of religious education teachers and clergy at the university level. Teachers of religious education are trained at public universities, teach other subjects in addition to religion, are supervised by the director of the school at which they teach and not by a church official, and qualify as civil servants because they are employed by the state. Religious education in Germany is not a church event held in school classrooms; the churches' influence on religious education is limited, and religious education curricula are developed jointly by the churches and the state educational organizations. Churches are allowed to certify that teachers of religious education are members of the denomination about which they teach. Empirical studies show that although religious education teachers feel loyalty towards their religious denomination, they nevertheless keep a considerable distance to the church congregation to which they belong. Religious education teachers generally stress that the type of religious education given in public schools must be different from the way religion is taught in the churches.[2]

Theology departments are integral parts of German universities, and professors in these departments, just like professors in other university departments, are paid by the state. The theology departments are largely independent of the churches. Following in the tradition of liberal scholars such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, Adolf von Harnack, and Ernst Troeltsch, German theologians feel as indebted to the ideas of the Enlightenment as to biblical tradition. When students of theology graduate from university, they have gone through an intense process of self-critical reflection on their traditions, beliefs, and attitudes. This methodology, called the historical-critical method, which was developed in German theological faculties, puts biblical teachings into historical perspective. Its creation triggered the fundamentalist Protestant religious movement in the United States in the nineteenth century.

The historical-critical method integrates theology into established fields of scientific study at German universities, guaranteeing that German religious education teachers will be able to respect and relate to different religious worldviews. Today, this training is more important than ever. A growing Muslim population in Germany is increasing its demands that Islamic religious education be incorporated into the curriculum at German public schools, in accordance with the rights guaranteed by Article 7:3 of the German Constitution. Calls for the establishment of Islamic theology departments at universities are also increasing. In response, the first Chair for Islamic Religious Education was established at the University of Münster in 2004. Many argue that incorporating Islamic religious education in public schools would provide an alternative to religious education in the mosques, where some fear that Islamic fundamentalism is being taught.

Aims and Standards of Religious Education: Comparing Germany and Great Britain

Public religious education sponsored or run by the state can play a valuable societal role, a role that can be illustrated by comparing religious education in Germany and Great Britain. Religious education is voluntary in Germany and compulsory in Great Britain. Both countries have distinct philosophical

approaches to the notion of religion and toward "teaching" versus "teaching about" religion. In the end, however, these differences reveal to us that whether there is division or cooperation between the state and religious authorities, the stated aims of religious education are strikingly similar. Although the German and British modes of religious education are distinct and separate, they both seek to achieve the same goal: to foster inter-religious understanding.

VOLUNTARY VERSUS COMPULSORY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In Germany, where religious education classes are voluntary, both the churches and the state emphasize that religious competence is indispensable for creating and maintaining a peaceful, pluralistic society. Education should enable pupils to participate in the modern world, and the ability to interact with a plurality of religions and worldviews is a necessary component of this view. In keeping with that spirit, the preface of the new curriculum for religious education in Berlin states: "Today, an enlightened dealing with one's own religion as well as the religion of others is important in order to make living together in a multicultural society possible. This is why religious literacy is one of the fundamental aims of religious education."[3]

Standards for German students taking (Christian) religious education classes during their school career are designed to promote religious literacy. Throughout the various stages in their educational careers, the curriculum is designed to ensure that students grasp a number of different religiously based concepts. By the end of second grade, for example, students are expected to express their own ideas and images of God. By the end of fourth grade, students learn that there are different, even contradictory, images of God and that Jesus was a Jew and came from the Jewish tradition. At the end of sixth grade, students are expected to be able to interpret the plurality of images of God as an expression of a plurality of religious experiences. Eighth-grade graduates are expected to be able to express their understanding of God, to relate religion to the human life cycle, to accept different religious positions, and to understand the historical character of the biblical tradition. After completing tenth grade, students are expected to grasp the relationship between funda-

mental texts of the New Testament and the teachings of the churches, to understand the relevance of Christian liberty in opposition to totalitarianism, to discuss ethical issues by taking biblical advice into consideration, to know the arguments of the critique of religion, and to reflect on the correlation between faith and doubt.

When German standards are compared to the standards of religious education in Great Britain, no major differences can be discerned. At level 1, students in Great Britain "use some religious words and phrases to recognize and name features of religious life and practice…Pupils talk about their own experiences and feelings, what they find interesting or puzzling and what is of value and concern to themselves and others." At level 5, pupils "explain how religious sources are used to provide answers to ultimate questions and ethical issues, recognising diversity in forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression, within and between religions." At the highest level "pupils use a complex religious, moral and philosophical vocabulary to provide a consistent and detailed analysis of religions and beliefs. They evaluate in depth the importance of religious diversity in a pluralistic society. They clearly recognise the extent to which the impact of religion and belief on different communities and societies has changed over time. They provide a detailed analysis of how religious, spiritual and moral sources are interpreted in different ways, evaluating the principal methods by which religion and spirituality are studied…They give independent, well-informed and highly reasonable insights into their own and others' perspectives on religious and spiritual issues, providing well-substantiated and balanced conclusions."[4]

It is interesting to note that religious education in both Germany, where it is voluntary and taught in cooperation with churches, and in Great Britain, where it is compulsory and state-run, is designed to foster inter-religious understanding and to strengthen students' ability to change perspectives and to reflect on their own and others' beliefs. While religious education in Germany begins with the religion that children were taught at home and then gradually expands their knowledge about other religions, in Great Britain, religious education focuses on comparing religions from the very beginning and ends when the student is

supposedly able "to synthesize" the various forms of religious expression.

"TEACHING RELIGION" VERSUS "TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION"

No significant difference between the German philosophy of "teaching religion" and the British philosophy of "teaching about religion" can be found when the content and aims of religious education in Germany and Great Britain are compared. Differences do arise, however, when questions are asked about who attends religious education; where religious education teachers acquired their knowledge about religion and how they define their role; and which notion of religion is used.

Religious education in Great Britain is compulsory, while in Germany, students and their parents have the right to choose between Protestant or Catholic religious education or an ethics course. It is interesting to note that in the eastern states of Germany, about one-third of the students who voluntarily attend religious education are not baptized. Their parents are of the opinion that it is useful to learn about the history of religion and its impact on culture and society, lessons they themselves were not taught under the socialist East German school system. Some parents argue that they send their children to religious education classes because they expect them to become "decent" people. While this may seem a better argument for sending a child to an ethics class, religious education is perceived to do a better job of developing good habits, virtues, and values.

Religious education teachers in Germany usually teach two subjects. At university, they studied theology and another subject. High school teachers must learn Latin and Greek and are trained in Biblical literature, history of religions, systematic theology, and religious studies, as well as in didactics of religion. A teacher who wants to teach Protestant religious education must belong to a Protestant church, a Catholic teacher to the Catholic Church. In Great Britain, courses on religious education can be attended by prospective religious education teachers "who have a good honours degree in Religious Studies or Theology. However…graduates in other subjects, such as Philosophy and Anthropology, where the degree has included some opportunity to

examine issues related to religious beliefs, [are also welcome]."[5] Graduates in Sociology or Social Studies may be considered "if they are able to provide evidence of relevant study within the context of world religions." The religious education program at the University of Warwick invites graduates who are interested in "the diversity of religious and cultural experience in the modern world," in "universal questions about the nature and meaning of life," and "in contemporary spiritual, ethical and political issues." The program is open "for graduates of all faiths or none."

As becomes apparent from the expectations for religious education teachers described above, although the aims of German and British religious education are similar, the ways in which they fulfill this aim are different indeed. While German religious education teachers gain a considerable familiarity with the religion they teach, religious education teachers in Great Britain may or may not have a theological background. Their interest in religion can be a purely sociological or philosophical one. While parents and students in Germany get a clear picture of the religious background and the professional training of their teachers, a teacher of religious education in Great Britain may even be an atheist. While the British religious education teacher is more or less a mediator between diverse religious traditions, the German religious education teacher is expected to identify with the religion he or she teaches. The German religious education teacher serves as a role model: he or she is a religious person who is able to cope with religious diversity but teaches about religion from an insider's perspective. The British religious education teacher, in contrast, looks at different religious traditions from the outside, or, in the worst case, from above.

From the perspective of parents and their children, the German system is more liberal because it gives them the right to choose which religious tradition they will learn about and because they know the religious and theological background of the teacher. For Germans, it would seem strange for a teacher with a strong interest in ancient Germanic religion and mythology and a political right-wing orientation to teach a Jewish child about the religious meaning of the Holocaust, or for an anti-clerical socialist to explain the meaning and practice of confession to a Catholic child. It seems less-than-useful for a superficially informed teacher to try to instruct students on a matter as

complex as religion. Every theologian knows how difficult it is to understand the nature of one's own religious culture, how much time it takes to grasp even a small part of that tradition. How can someone who does not know how religion "feels," what the practices and doctrines of a religious tradition mean for daily life, teach about religion? How can something which is strange to the teacher be meaningfully conveyed to students?

THE NOTION OF RELIGION

The core differences between the German and the British systems lie in their understandings of "religion." The phenomenological approach presupposes that despite the diversity of religious teachings, practices, and forms, a common set of functions performed by religion can be identified. All religions raise questions about identity and belonging, meaning, purpose, truth, values, and commitments. While pupils learn about the different teachings, practices, and forms of religion, they implicitly learn to raise questions about meaning, purpose, truth, values, and commitment. The differences between the world religions, then, are just the external forms taken by a common essence. This, however, is a very Protestant approach to religion.

The German approach takes the differences between religions more seriously. Just as it is impossible to eat "fruit," but only *an* apple, *a* banana, or *a* strawberry, no one can practice "religions" as such, but only one specific religion at a time. Even the best religious studies department cannot provide a point of view that describes all of the world's religions objectively because the study of religion is automatically situated in a particular religious-cultural tradition. Therefore, the starting point for the scientific study of religion is a thorough reflection upon one's own religious tradition in order to discover its similarities to and differences from other religious cultures. Reflection on one's own 'situatedness' in a religious culture seems to be a more promising avenue for religious understanding than a merely superficial overview of religion.

From this perspective, the difference between "teaching about religion" and "teaching religion" shrinks to a minimum. The teacher who teaches about religion, as well as the teacher who teaches religion,

have a distinct perspective on their topic. In other words, both types of teachers have integrated religious material into their own worldview or religion. All human beings rely on certainties about the origin, condition, and purpose of life that cannot be proven, but which are necessary for making choices and decisions. Whether connected to the idea of a deity or not, these certainties are the basis upon which judgments are made about the certainties expressed by others. A teacher teaching "about" religion cannot avoid this reality; rather, teaching about religion means employing a civic religious approach, while teaching religion employs a denominational approach. Teaching about religion actually is teaching religion, but from a civic religious perspective.

The appeal of the concept of teaching about religion comes from the idea that public schools must be religiously neutral, as neutral as the state. This, however, begs the question of whether a distinction should be made between a "public school" and a "state school." While the state must remain religiously neutral, religion cannot be excluded from the public sphere. A current debate in Germany concerns school development and how schools can be better integrated into their communities. Better integration with the community may mean being more interested in the religious life of the neighborhood in which a school is located. Schools should develop a profile in inter-religious communication by offering courses in all of the major religions practiced in Germany—Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam. As school subjects, these courses are not designed to proselytize, but to give useful information about a religion and its way of relating to other religions.

Current Challenges for Religious Education in Germany

While similar religious education structures are established in most German states—Bayern, Baden-Württemberg, Hessen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Niedersachsen, Schleswig-Holstein, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, and Thüringen—Berlin and Brandenburg follow different models. When Berlin was conquered by the Soviets in 1945, Marshal Zhukov, the Soviet commander-in-chief, ruled that religious education should be excluded from public schools. Surprisingly, the Protestant church of Berlin-

Brandenburg welcomed this decision. Bishop Otto Dibelius, the Evangelical Bishop of Berlin and Brandenburg, was of the opinion that the church should become independent of the state. Since the church suffered oppression under the Nazis, he felt it should gain new autonomy and organize religious education on its own. After the division of Berlin in 1961, politicians in the West offered state cooperation with the churches in Berlin on the basis of Article 7:3, but the Protestant Church refused. The small minority of Catholics sent their children to private Catholic schools anyway. Recently, however, the Protestant Church changed its mind and asked the Berlin Senate to again establish religious education in Berlin, but the majority of Social Democrats and Socialists did not approve the proposal. Instead, a compulsory subject called "ethics" was instated. The difference between Berlin's ethics course and those in other states is the compulsory character of the subject in Berlin. Religious education in Berlin is not under supervision by the state, and religious communities have the right to use school classrooms for such instruction.

The state of Brandenburg also refused to adopt the West German model, instead introducing a new subject called LER or *"Lebensgestaltung-Ethik-Religionskunde"* (approximately, life formation-ethics-religious awareness). The course was intended to be compulsory, but after several lawsuits were filed against the compulsory nature of the course, the state of Brandenburg decided instead to exempt children taking religious education class from the LER course. One of the reasons Brandenburg decided not to adopt the West German model of religious education was the fact that only a minority of children belonged to one of the Christian churches; religious education would have reached only that minority. In the end, even highly committed Christians opted for LER because they wanted their children to learn about world religions and value orientation.

As a result of the refusal by Berlin and Brandenburg to establish religious education in public schools, the number of church-run private schools increased considerably. Thirty such schools exist in Berlin and Brandenburg, serving more than 5,000 students and receiving about three times as many applications for enrollment as they can accommodate. Many parents do not trust the public school system anymore, and a steady decline in public school attendance has been noted. Unfortunately, this undermines one of the achievements of German public schools, namely, a social as well as religious plurality in the school community—children of different backgrounds learned to live together through their school experiences. The increase in attendance at private schools necessarily decreases the social and religious plurality in public schools and thereby, perhaps also decreases the ability of future generations to understand and live comfortably with those of other nationalities and faiths.

With about three million Muslims now living in Germany, comprising almost 4 percent of the German population, the multicultural experiences and understanding children receive in public schools may be more important than ever. While politicians in Berlin and Brandenburg would like to provide ethics and LER instruction to children from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, atheistic, and agnostic backgrounds, the German Muslim population voices a strong desire for Islamic religious education according to Article 7:3 of the Constitution. In Berlin, the Green Party has argued that ethics courses should "relativize religion" in order to promote tolerance. Muslims, on the other hand, have argued that a religiously neutral state may not attempt to influence children in religious matters. Most German states are willing to establish Islamic religious education along the same lines as Protestant and Catholic religious education. However, defining "the principles of Islam" in the same way that the principles of Protestantism and Catholicism have long been defined remains a problem. The lack of a religious authority representing all Muslims in Germany means that the state does not have a partner with whom to develop an Islamic religious education curriculum.

As a first-step attempt toward creating such a partnership, many states have established committees in which the most influential German Islamic associations can try to develop a commonly agreed-upon curriculum. A next step should be the establishment of more chairs for Islamic education at German universities. It is in the best interests of the German states that the training of Islamic religious education teachers take place in Germany. While in the past, Muslim children have received religious education within the framework of *"muttersprachlichen*

Unterricht"—instruction in their mother tongue, i.e. Turkish or Arabic—this meant that students were being taught about Islam from a predominantly non-German perspective. With a growing Muslim population, Germany must focus on the creation of an Islamic religious education curriculum that puts Islam in the context of German society, threads it more completely into the German social fabric, and gives the religion and its followers the same standing vis-à-vis the state that the Christian religions and Judaism have long held.

Through the successful implementation of Islamic religious education, the German system and German society would prove their ability to accommodate and manage religious plurality. Unfortunately, a considerable number of Germans would like to exclude Muslim culture from the German social landscape. For example, when the German Supreme Court ruled that a Muslim teacher has the right to wear a headscarf in the classroom and that school authorities may not violate that personal and religious right, several individual German states ruled that wearing a headscarf is a political statement identifying an individual with radical Islamism and the acceptance of the violation of women's rights. Consequently, Germany may one day find itself in the paradoxical situation that a Muslim Islamic religious education teacher is not allowed to wear a headscarf while teaching. Given this situation, there is a growing danger that religion will be used as a means of social exclusion. Theologians and religious historians must be called upon to remind the public that, ultimately, both Christianity and Islam can be viewed as Jewish "heresies," that is to say, both Christianity and Islam are off-shoots of the older Jewish tradition and the three religions therefore have much in common. Ensuring cooperation between different social and religious groups and fostering the integration of these groups into a sustainable, healthy society means stressing those commonalities more than the differences that are currently at the center of the debate about religious education in Germany. This must occur in order to sustain the German "civic religion" for future generations.

Conclusion

The foundations for German religious education may pre-date the modern paradigm of separation of church and state, but the model of religious education followed in Germany is not anachronistic. Rather, it has been adapted to its contemporary setting, becoming non-compulsory and incorporating ethics courses to accommodate non-religious students. The system is presently addressing the challenge of developing and incorporating an Islamic religious education curriculum, another example of how religious education in Germany is keeping pace with societal change. Although "separation of church and state" is the paradigm adhered to by Western nations, interpreting this paradigm as the exclusion of religion from public life is a false interpretation. Religion has a claim on the public sphere that cannot be suppressed, as countless historical and even contemporary examples teach us.

There is, then, a role for the state in questions of religion. It is here that the German case for religious education merits serious consideration. Just as civic education courses teach students to handle their civic liberties responsibly, religious education courses teach students how to be responsible with their religious freedom. The cooperative relationship between the state and the churches is designed to create a "civic religion" through education, one that emphasizes that knowledge of religion is the basis for teaching citizens religious tolerance and how to cope with the reality of religious pluralism.

NOTES

1 It has to be noted however, that in the constitutions of the bigger German states, "awe of God" is still one of the constitutional aims of the public educational system, but this God has no confessional profile.

2 See Andreas Feige and Werner Tscheetzsch's empirical study, "Christlicher Religionsunterricht im religionsneutralen Staat?" (Stuttgart 2005).

3 "Grundsätze und Rahmenlehrplan. Entwurf. Evangelischer Religionsunterricht in Berlin und Brandenburg," (Berlin 2006): 2. (Translation by the author)

4 Level descriptions for religious education in Great Britain can be found at www.betterreligious education.org.uk.

5 www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wie/itt/pgce/secondary/re

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ERIK OWENS

Americans have long struggled to reconcile the national ideal of *e pluribus unum* with the reality of conflict and distrust that often accompanies diversity. Today, the United States is more diverse—in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion, among other characteristics—than ever before, and the pace of this diversification is accelerating. Forging "the one from the many" is now more difficult than ever, in part because of the unique challenges presented by religious diversity, especially in the context of what is often called "public life."

Religious faith is understood by many to be comprehensive, meaning that it sets the terms by which all other aspects of life are to be assessed. In a pluralistic democracy many religious traditions co-exist, each offering different assessments of how and why its adherents should interact with others in the public sphere. This creates obvious challenges to communication and cooperation among citizens in their daily lives. Religion is not only a fundamental source of identity and meaning; it also—at least in the monotheistic traditions which dominate the American religious landscape—explicitly trumps all other allegiances, including those to the state. In an era of nation-states that claim unsurpassable allegiance to their core interests, this creates a profound tension between what has been called "the sacred and the sovereign."[1]

Religious diversity is also uniquely challenging in the United States because of its explicit yet ambiguous protection by the First Amendment to the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…." Determining the contextual meaning of religious "establishment" and "free exercise," the implications of their prohibition/protection, and the scope of the Amendment's authority has vexed legislators, jurists, and ordinary citizens alike for two centuries, but never more so than it does today.

American courts are in the midst of reversing two major staples of mid-twentieth century jurisprudence: strict separation of church and state, and federal sovereignty vis-à-vis the states. As the jurisprudential pendulum continues to swing toward greater accommodationism and federalism, the legal boundaries of religious liberty are in flux in many areas of public life.

This shift has been inspired by, even as it has inspired, an expansion of the influence of religion in public life. Judges, politicians, and policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels have expanded the nature and scope of religious accommodation in schools, the workplace, and the public square.[2] Popular culture increasingly explores religious themes in books, music, movies, and television programs. Colleges are scaling up their religious studies programs to accommodate new interest in Islam. The effects of these broader cultural events have also spilled over into the public primary and secondary schools.

Periods of such flux are not unprecedented in American history. From the eighteenth century colonists' worries over religious decline to the nineteenth century expansion of evangelicalism and the twentieth century struggles over modernism and fundamentalism, periods of flux—and the contentious public debates that accompany them—are an

ongoing feature of American life. Indeed, they are a manifestation of the religious freedom that both unites and divides this country. The present trend is neither fixed nor preordained (nor is the opposite trend[3]), and the pendulum may very well swing back toward a more secular or separationist approach to religion in public life. But this may take a very long time; current legal, cultural, and political trends suggest that this is a generation-length cycle that has yet to reach its peak.

For policymakers in education and other fields, the proper response is not so much to resist this shift toward more religion in public life as it is to channel it toward positive civic ends. This essay argues for one particular means of doing just that, namely by teaching about religion in American public schools. I argue that in light of the shifting legal and cultural context, citizens and their legislative representatives (rather than judges) are now more responsible than ever for protecting religious freedom in this country. Fulfilling this civic duty—not to mention getting along with fellow citizens in an increasingly pluralistic society—will require much more knowledge of religion than is presently conveyed to students in public schools. In the sections that follow, I present what I see to be compelling reasons why students need to learn about religion, what exactly that entails, why it serves to protect religious freedom, and why it is a properly civic endeavor. We begin with a discussion of the American legal context, since it not only illustrates the shifting tides of religion and education but also reveals the heavy civic responsibility that falls upon all citizens as a result.

Religion and Education in the Supreme Court

The United States Constitution protects religious freedom in this country primarily through two pithy clauses in its First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…." Together, these clauses institutionalize the American conception of religious freedom by prohibiting the government from discriminating on the basis of religious belief or practice. The free exercise clause outlaws government *proscription* of religious belief or practice (meaning the state cannot disfavor an activity simply because it is religious), while the establishment

clause outlaws government *prescription* of belief or practice (meaning the state cannot favor an activity simply because it is religious or religious in a certain way).[4] Though the religion clauses are closely related and inextricably joined, they nevertheless remain separate instantiations of religious freedom. In fact they are in constant tension with one another, and an expansive interpretation of one clause often requires a restrained interpretation of the other.[5]

It is widely noted that the Supreme Court's interpretation of the religion clauses has shifted dramatically in the last half-century from a strict separationist position in the 1960s and 1970s to an accommodationist stance in the last two decades. The shift has affected many areas of the law, generating ongoing debate over issues such as federal funding of "faith-based" social services and federal jurisdiction over local zoning laws that affect religious institutions. The accommodationist shift has been especially prominent and controversial, however, in the realm of public education. Schools are filled through the compulsory attendance of young and impressionable students who follow a curriculum that is highly regulated by local, state, and federal authorities. Almost 90 percent of America's fifty-three million school-aged children attend primary or secondary schools funded by the government,[6] and though only a quarter of American voters currently have school-aged children, everyone is connected in some way to the public school system: taxpayers finance it, employers hire its graduates, and more importantly, its effectiveness is widely understood to be a key measure of social and economic justice. When the balance of church and state is seen to be shifting in such an important area of society—and a key site of cultural transmission and civic education—the process is bound to be controversial.[7] A brief examination of recent decisions dealing with religion and education will illustrate the Court's shifts.

Since the early 1980s, the Court has systematically expanded the permissible areas of church-state interaction governed by the establishment clause. Reversing a number of earlier decisions, the Court has ruled that proper interpretation of the establishment clause allows states, for example, to offer parents tuition vouchers to pay for religious education in lieu of public schooling;[8] to loan computers and other equipment to religious schools;[9] to send public

school teachers to provide remedial education for students at religious schools;[10] to pay for sign language interpreters and other services to students at parochial schools and colleges;[11] and to offer tax deductions to parents who pay private school tuition and other educational expenses.[12] In each case, the state program in question was deemed to provide a benefit or service that was neutral with respect to religion, because it was provided to a broad class of citizens defined without reference to religion.[13] Though in effect these laws provide benefits to religious persons or institutions—at times, almost exclusively so—the Court's accommodationist majority found that their intent was not discriminatory, and thus the benefits passed Constitutional muster.

These changes were paralleled by an equally important transformation of free exercise jurisprudence since 1990. Over the preceding century (roughly 1878-1990), the Supreme Court had gradually asserted more authority to review federal and state laws impinging upon free exercise of religion.[14] But in 1990 (in *Employment Division v. Smith*), the Court reversed course and returned to an extremely lenient standard of review, meaning that it would not strike down laws which only incidentally burdened religion.[15] Led by Justice Antonin Scalia, the *Smith* Court ruled that a state employee who ingested peyote as part of a religious ritual was not exempt from Oregon's drug laws, and thus his firing (for that drug use) and subsequent loss of unemployment benefits did not violate his free exercise rights. The landmark decision made it nearly impossible for religious minorities to win a judicial exemption from generally applicable laws; they are now forced to seek redress in the legislatures, not the courts.[16]

The Court maintained its deference toward legislative authority in the important 2004 case *Locke v. Davey*. In a 7-2 majority opinion written by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, the Court held that when a state provides college scholarships for secular instruction, the federal free exercise clause does not require it to fund religious instruction—what I will call "teaching religion"—as well. Many observers had speculated that the Court would go the other way, mandating a broad interpretation of free exercise rights by the states that would eliminate the last major obstacles to funding private school vouchers and "faith-based" social service initiatives. Instead, by rejecting the

argument that states must treat religious and secular education equally in this respect, the Court cleared a space for what legal scholars have called "permissive accommodation," an area of state action permitted by the establishment clause but not required by the free exercise clause.[17] "If any room exists between the two Religion Clauses, it must be here," wrote Rehnquist. "This case involves the 'play in the joints' between the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses."[18]

Like the proverbial elephant in the room, federalism is never explicitly mentioned in *Locke v. Davey*, despite it being a central issue in the case. Federalism is the division of sovereignty between a central government and state or provincial governments; in contemporary parlance, "federalists" support greater autonomy for states in areas of the law not expressly claimed in the federal constitution. The conservatives on the Rehnquist Court tended to be ardent federalists,[19] so it was surprising that its most conservative members, Scalia and Thomas, were the only dissenters from a majority opinion in *Locke v. Davey* that furthered federalist ends (by granting more leeway to state legislators).

Taking a step back, then, we can see two trends at work in the Supreme Court. First, its establishment clause decisions have substantially expanded the areas in which the government may accommodate religion in the context of education.[20] Second, its free exercise rulings provide more discretion to the states to determine how much of that expanded area they wish to occupy. Put another way, the Court has baked a bigger (i.e. more accommodating) pie, and has given the states more choice as to the size of the piece they want to eat.

The important civic upshot of these legal trends is that more of the details of church-state relations will be set by citizens and their state representatives, rather than the courts. [21] Some might argue that, as a result, our precious right to religious liberty will be dangerously dependent on the whims of mercurial state legislators; others might invoke the Constitution's preamble to say that "We the People" (rather than a few judges) will finally, and rightly, control the process once again. Whatever the merits of these views, it is clear that all citizens need to be prepared to shoulder the added burden of responsibility for protecting religious

freedom.[22] That requires a kind of civic education for religious freedom that is notably absent in our nation's public schools.

Religious Freedom, Religious Studies, and Civic Education

Religious freedom is the political principle by which an indeterminate plurality of religions is legitimated in a civil polity. In the United States, religious freedom is instantiated in the First Amendment and protected through the broad range of liberties and rights that flow from it by tradition and by jurisprudential interpretation. Whatever else it does, religious freedom protects the active engagement of religion in the public life of our society.[23] As such, it is an integral component of the common good of a pluralistic polity because it protects the full and free discourse about the common good.

Though I will elaborate upon this point in the next section, it bears mention at the outset that "teaching about religion" is to be distinguished from "teaching religion," an activity otherwise known in the United States as "religious education" or, uncharitably, as "indoctrination." The locution is often reversed in English–speaking Europe, where "religious education" or "RE" is understood to be the non-indoctrinating critical study of religion.[24] This distinction—between a critical/descriptive approach and a confessional approach—is pivotal in the context of primary and secondary public education. It was also the centerpiece of the Washington law upheld in *Locke v. Davey*, which allowed the state to fund students majoring in religious studies (where professors teach about religion), but not devotional theology or pastoral ministry (where professors teach religion).[25]

How, then, would teaching about religion serve to protect religious freedom? Teaching about religion, I argue, serves to protect religious freedom by training citizens who can effectively participate in a pluralistic society in which religious reasons are given as justification in public life. We shall return to the matter of religious and public justification, and begin instead by sketching what "teaching about religion" might actually look like, and how it functions as civic education.

Broadly understood, civic education is the formation of future citizens. More specifically, it can be defined as the inculcation of knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective participation in and commitment to the political community. Each of these three capacities requires further explication.

First, teaching about religion confers many kinds of knowledge relevant to good citizenship. Citizens need adequate education to be effective in the public sphere of our liberal democracy (as decades of empirical research has made abundantly clear[26]), and an adequate liberal education simply cannot ignore the contributions and influence of religious traditions, ideas, people, and institutions. As Martin Marty has noted, religion is too important an aspect of the human experience—and especially the American circumstance—to be left out of public education: "In a culture that is anything but secular," he writes, "religion belongs in the curriculum."[27] Indeed, it is shocking to contemplate the vast gap between the importance that Americans collectively place upon religion in their public and personal lives and the near absence of the study of religion in primary and secondary school curricula. Americans routinely profess in polls that they are faithful and active religious believers, yet with few exceptions, "the [public school] curriculum all but ignores religion," either as a separate field of study or as an important influence on other topics or fields of study.[28]

But in what part of the curriculum does religion belong? This is, of course, a matter of much debate, but a classroom discussion about any of the following topics would be appropriate: religious meanings in art and literature; religious views in the debate over economic priorities, cosmic origins, genetic engineering, environmental regulation and other scientific issues; the global context of religion and religious plurality, including a comparative study of world religions and sacred scriptures; and "the Bible as literature, in literature, as history, in history, and as scripture."[29]

Education about religion should also provide more specific knowledge about the American political context. In order to make fully informed decisions about the merits of laws affecting religion, citizens must understand such things as the role of religion in shaping public debate and decision-making, the civil

rights afforded them by state and federal constitutions and laws, and the history—including the ongoing conflict over interpretations of the First Amendment—that brought these to pass.[30] This is true of any laws affecting religion, whether they regulate school voucher programs, land use, drug use or anything else; the Supreme Court developments outlined in the first section of this paper only make this kind of knowledge more important. Citizens and state legislators ought not be turned loose to "play in the joints" of the First Amendment's Religion Clauses without some education in the subject matter.

Teaching about religion can also enhance the second component of civic education, the teaching of skills relevant to citizenship. The fundamental skill-sets of active citizenship include literacy, numeracy, and reflective judgment; the civically-educated citizen has the ability to consider and articulate the knowledge needed for participation in democratic society. Religious studies can offer unique training in this area. To engage or reckon with religious claims to truth, for example, requires openness to new ideas, critical distance, skills of comparative and constructive criticism, and some measure of epistemological inquiry—all of which contribute to civic education as well as facilitating an understanding of religion in society.[31] (Like all aspects of education, of course, the level of critical engagement with religion ought to be contingent upon age and intellectual development.)

Finally, teaching about religion can also contribute to the inculcation of particular civic dispositions. Civic dispositions are those virtues or habits of character that incline one toward full participation in and support of civil society and government. There are many civic virtues (e.g. civility, patriotism, tolerance, and trust), each of which are emphasized more or less than others in a given political theory, depending upon the kind of *civitas* one seeks to sustain or achieve. One can also speak of civic virtue (singular), as the general inclination to seek the common good. Depending on the specific situation, teaching about religion could influence the development of civic virtue and the various civic virtues in different ways. At one level, simply learning about the history, theology, holidays, and rituals of other religious traditions can help to dispel students' prejudice and fear and lead to more tolerance—even if tolerance itself is not taught as a virtue. Classroom discussion about such impor-

tant and controversial issues should model the kind of civility students will eventually need to deliberate in the public square as full citizens. As Christopher Eisgruber has noted, the liberal state teaches values mainly—and most effectively—by example.[32] In this case, students internalize the virtues of tolerance and civility by both learning about different religious traditions and viewpoints, and by discussing the topic in a respectful manner.

There is no guarantee, of course, that tolerance and civility will be the upshot of the study of religion. Even a cursory introduction to the history of religion and religious thought should provide examples (and perhaps extended study) of aggressive and violent intolerance; quietism and withdrawal from public life; fundamental challenges to the concept of state sovereignty as well as to patriotism, tolerance, and mutual respect. As Charles Taylor has noted, religion has been a "poisoned chalice" in human history, and coming to terms with the possible tensions between religious and political life will have an uncertain impact.

But this discussion about the relationship between religious and political life is happening all around us in public culture, and teaching about religion is one of the best ways to prepare students to enter that discussion. To some degree, religious studies classes in schools could model the discursive practices of religious freedom by fostering the capacity to hold informed, respectful discourse across ethical and religious divides. This kind of classroom discussion about deep-seated ethical norms is what educational philosopher Robert Kunzman calls "ethical dialogue." It is premised on the notion that genuine respect for persons requires exploration of and engagement with competing moral visions. "The civic virtue that ethical dialogue seeks to foster," he writes, "cannot be detached from the study of religion or other important ethical frameworks."[33]

Here we can return to the question of justification in public discourse. I asserted earlier that teaching about religion serves to protect religious freedom by training citizens who can effectively participate in a pluralistic society in which religious reasons are given as justification in public life. While John Rawls and many other "justificatory liberals" are quick to admit that religious reasons are indeed offered in public

discourse all the time (e.g. when citizens or legislators argue for poverty relief on the basis of Christian charity, or for the death penalty as an instrument of divine justice on earth), they believe such reasons are inherently inaccessible to those who do not share those religious principles. Therefore, citizens should speak in the public realm, or on public issues, or on matters requiring coercive legal action, using secular, public reasons. The logic of public reason is compelling—to find a language all can agree upon, out of respect for others—and it is accurate that religious justifications are not universally accessible. But as Charles Mathewes has noted, it misses the fact that there is no such neutral language, no moral and political Esperanto that can serve the ends of public reason. All language combines both the particular and the universal, so the search for a purely public language is a fruitless endeavor.[34]

Rather than attempt to circumvent this fact, we ought instead to recognize that religious believers can be good citizens in a liberal democracy. They can, as Chris Eberle has argued, express themselves and support legislation based solely on religious reasons, though they should believe that any such legislation conduces to the common good and they should try to articulate a plausible secular rationale. This is a process he calls "conscientious justification."[35] The principle of conscientious justification extends into the classroom: students need to be prepared to engage with others who do not share their beliefs and who do not deign to follow a Rawlsian prescription for public justification. One of the biggest challenges of life in a deeply pluralistic society is that we lose the ability to talk to one another about the things that matter to us most. These are, not coincidentally, also the source of our deepest differences.[36]

Although teaching about religion is an important form of civic education that can serve to protect religious freedom, doing so in public schools presents special challenges, to which we now turn.

Teaching About Religion in Public Schools

One may accept the argument that teaching about religion is an important aspect of civic education and still ask why it must be undertaken in public schools rather than, say, religious communities or homes. At least three responses to this question come to mind.

First, the state—meaning, in this case, the government and the nation as a whole—has an interest in forming good citizens that may differ from the interests of individual parents or religious leaders. Eamonn Callan frames this point by arguing that children must be respected as having equal value in the family as parents, and therefore the society has an obligation to protect the prospective rights of children to personal sovereignty. This entails the right to avoid the "ethical servility" that could be inculcated by insufficient exposure to diverse moral perspectives. This argument, and others like it, which are based on autonomy as a fundamental goal of education, go a long way toward justifying a civic educational mission in schools.

Second, irrespective of its civic educational value, religion is a proper part of the academic curriculum that has been consciously ignored for many decades in the United States, though not in many other nations.[37] We essentially have left it up to parents and religious leaders, and the resulting collective knowledge about religion is unimpressive; we can do better.[38] Third, a more practical, if prosaic, response is that public schools are where the kids are: if we want every citizen to be well-informed about religion and able to effectively navigate the discursive practices of a religiously plural society, it makes sense to provide this education in the place where nine out of ten American schoolchildren spend more than a decade of their lives.

Once we begin to consider the details of teaching about religion in public schools, however, a number of further objections come into play, which may be broadly clustered into three groups: constitutional, philosophical, and pedagogical. Constitutional concerns are often among the first to be raised—wouldn't teaching about religion in public schools invariably mingle church with state?—but they are the easiest to answer. Although the Supreme Court has never directly addressed this question, several Justices have written commentary about the topic amidst discussion of another case, and these dicta clearly authorize public education about religion under certain circumstances. In *Abington School District v. Schempp*, which in 1963 struck down a Pennsylvania law requiring teachers to lead daily Bible-reading exercises in public schools, three separate opinions noted that teaching about religion in the public schools was not only permissible but advisable. "It

might well be said," wrote Justice Tom Clark for the Court, that

> one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. . . . Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.[39]

The view was reaffirmed by Justice Powell in 1987, and "it has never been challenged by a Justice in any opinion of the Court."[40]

So long as religion is "presented objectively as part of a secular program of education," the endeavor is clearly permissible under the Constitution. But therein lies the philosophical rub: can religion ever be presented "objectively"? If so, what would be the theological implications? Many parents worry that in an attempt to portray all religions as worthy of study, teachers will inculcate relativism instead of respect. Whether that relativism is inculcated directly (by teaching that religious claims cannot be adjudicated, that all religions "are essentially the same" or "are all equally true") or indirectly (by teaching about all religious traditions with equal respect, thereby implying that all are equal), these parents claim the outcome is the same: their children leave school with values opposed to the religious teachings delivered in their homes and houses of worship. Combine this fear—that teaching about religion inculcates relativism—with the oft-stated complaint that not teaching about religion inculcates secularism, and it seems we are destined to mistreat religion whatever we do. It is obvious why school administrators often run for cover when the topic is broached.

Thankfully, the situation is not so grim, because relativism is not a necessary upshot of teaching about religion. It is certainly true that exposure to religious and intellectual diversity raises questions that students might not face if they were home-schooled or if they attended homogeneous schools that did not teach about religion. But, as Eamonn Callan has argued, this is an important step in the movement from moral innocence to moral virtue. It is also the case that every aspect of schooling—from the curriculum to the classroom dynamics to the school administration—transmits values of some sort to students. Education is inherently value-laden, so it would be foolish to suggest that students can learn about religion without absorbing some value or perspective in the process. Total neutrality as to competing conceptions of the good life—precisely the sort of stance that is likely to lead to relativism—is inimical to liberal education; some views (such as racism) are inimical to liberal democracy and will be cast in a negative light. In fact, neither pedagogical fairness nor the First Amendment requires us to embrace relativism when teaching about religion.

To suggest that well-informed and conscientious teachers can avoid relativizing students' religious beliefs raises a third set of concerns and objections, namely those related to specific curricular and pedagogical strategies. The curricular difficulty is easily stated: when and where should public school students learn about religion? Should they be required (or encouraged) to take a single religious studies course that covers a wide range of topics? Or should they learn about religion as it impacts the subjects they study in other classes?[41] Neither approach is self-evidently better than the other. Creating a separate religious studies course would allow more time to take on complex issues, but it would require at least one qualified teacher in each of the nation's 27,000 public secondary schools,[42] not to mention a shuffling of the curriculum. Some other class would be lost as a result; what should it be? On the other hand, teaching about religion in courses such as history, geography, biology, economics, literature, civics, etc. would properly illustrate the historical and contemporary influence of religion, but this approach would require nearly every teacher to address the subject, despite it being outside their realm of expertise.

Given the vast amount of teacher training that apparently needs to occur, pedagogical concerns must take center stage when considering how to teach about religion in public schools. Indeed, these concerns led the representatives of seventeen prominent religious and educational organizations to meet under the auspices of the First Amendment Foundation in 1997 to develop a joint set of pedagogical principles. Participating groups included the

American Academy of Religion, American Federation of Teachers, American Jewish Congress, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Islamic Society of North America, National Association of Evangelicals, and the National School Boards Association, among others. This is not a group of organizations often found in the same room. Following the Supreme Court's (albeit indirect) guidance, and informed by their disparate theological and philosophical values, the educational principles they agreed upon distinguished between the objective study of religion (i.e., teaching about religion) and the subjective teaching of religion (i.e., religious education). Teaching about religion in public schools is welcome, they wrote, when:

■ The school's approach to religion is academic, not devotional.

■ The school strives for student awareness of religions, but does not press for student acceptance of any religion.

■ The school sponsors study about religion, not the practice of religion.

■ The school may expose students to a diversity of religious views, but may not impose any particular view.

■The school educates about all religions; it does not promote or denigrate religion.

■The school informs students about various beliefs; it does not seek to conform students to any particular belief.[43]

As difficult as it was for the group to agree upon these guidelines, they are even more difficult to follow in the classroom. The line between informing and conforming students is razor thin, if it exists at all, and teachers may not recognize (or care) when they have crossed the line. Most educators were not trained to teach about religion, and most textbooks ignore the subject—often at the request of state school boards. Yet avoiding the topic of religion is no way to "solve" the issue or avoid controversy. The result of avoidance is not simply the subtle conformation of students to the belief that religion was and is irrelevant in history, politics, literature, and science. It is also a crippling of

future citizens' capacities to participate in the full and free discourse about the common good.

Indeed the civic costs of not teaching about religion will continue to rise until changes are made in the way teachers are trained, curricula are developed, and textbooks are written. These are not easy solutions, but the civic health of our country demands no less.

NOTES

1 John D. Carlson and Erik C. Owens, "Introduction: Reconsidering Westphalia's Legacy for Religion and International Politics," in *The Sacred and the Sovereign: Religion and International Politics,* ed. Carlson and Owens (Georgetown University Press, 2003). See also Paul J. Griffiths, "Religious Allegiance and Political Sovereignty: An Irreconcilable Tension?" in ibid.

2 As Jeffrey Rosen and others have noted, the Supreme Court's decisions generally trail public opinion rather than lead it, despite its reputation as being a counter-majoritarian institution. This is true of the European high courts as well. See Jeffrey Rosen, "One Eye on Principle, the Other on the People's Will," *The New York Times*, 4 July 2004. Indeed, many political scientists argue that the Court was designed to follow settled popular opinion, rather than lead it. See Gregory C. Sisk, Michael Heise, and Andrew P. Morriss, "Searching for the Soul of Judicial Decision-making: An Empirical Study of Religious Freedom Decisions," *Ohio State Law Journal* 65 (2004): 491.

3 To the extent that proponents of the "secularization thesis" link the differentiation of religious and nonreligious institutions to the decline of religion in the modern world, they were clearly wrong. Societal differentiation has indeed challenged religious traditions to recontextualize their claims, but not to the detriment of their relevance or authority in public life. See Talal Asad, "Religion, Nation-State, Secularism," in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, ed. Peter van der Veer & Hartmut Lehmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 178–196; and José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Press, 1994).

4 Michael J. Perry, *Religion in Politics: Constitutional and Moral Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 13, 15; John Witte, Jr., *Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment: Essential Rights and Liberties* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 1-6.

5 As Justice Lewis Powell noted in 1973, "[T]his Court repeatedly has recognized that tension inevitably exists between the free exercise and the establishment clauses…and that it may often not be possible to promote the former without offending the latter." *Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty (CPERL) v. Nyquist*, 413 U.S. 756, 788 (1973). For example, those who are especially adamant that the government not favor one or more religions (meaning they take an expansive view of the establishment clause) are often on opposite sides of issues as those who are especially adamant that government not disfavor one or more religions (meaning they take an expansive view of the free exercise clause). This latter position is commonly called "accommodationism," because its proponents would have the state specially accommodate religious believers whose practices are burdened by otherwise neutral state laws. The former position is known as "neutrality" when its proponents argue that the state must be neutral in its posture toward religion, favoring neither religion or nonreligion as such, nor one religion over other religions. "Separationists" also tend to favor an expansive view of the establishment clause, though in seeking to separate religion from the state as much as possible, they are often accused of favoring nonreligion over religion. There are also accommodationist and separationist readings of each religion clause. For example, separationists interpret the establishment clause as prohibiting discrimination in favor of both religion over non-religion, and one religion over other religions. In other words, they seek to separate religion from the state as much as possible without unduly burdening free exercise rights. Accommodationists, on the other hand, interpret the establishment clause as prohibiting only discrimination in favor of one religion over other religions; they argue that strict separation amounts to discrimination against religion as such, in favor of non-religion.

6 *Digest of Education Statistics 2000,* National Center for Education Statistics (Washington, DC: United States Department of Education), Table 3, p.12.

7 On schools as "intermediate spaces of social reproduction," see Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: BasicBooks, 1983), 197; as sites of "democratic deliberation," see Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

8 *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 536 U.S. 639 (2002).

9 *Mitchell v. Helms*, 530 U.S. 793 (2000), overruling *Meek v. Pittenger*, 421 U.S. 349 (1975) and *Wolman v. Walter*, 433 U.S. 229 (1977).

10 *Agostini v. Felton* 521 U.S. 203 (1997), overruling *Aguilar v. Felton*, 473 U.S. 402 (1985).

11 *Zobrest v. Catalina Foothills School District*, 509 U.S. 1 (1993); *Witters v. Washington Department of Social Services*, 474 U.S. 481 (1986).

12 *Mueller v. Allen*, 463 U.S. 388 (1983).

13 Programs that single out religious groups or institutions for special benefit or harm are still prohibited as discriminatory. It is noteworthy that a single principle of "separation of church and state" dominated mid-twentieth century establishment clause rulings, but since the mid-1980s, individual justices have brought to bear differing principles of religious equality (including "endorsement," "coercion," and "equal treatment"), which the court is "struggling mightily to integrate." (Witte, 149-63.) [*Zelman* marked a point of some integration on the concept of neutrality as equal treatment of religion and nonreligion, but *Locke* pulled away from its logical conclusion.]

14 The Court applied increasingly strict scrutiny tests during this period. In *Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 145 (1878), the Court applied a lenient "rational basis test" that deferred a great deal of authority to legislatures. By this standard, if a law is properly "authorized," "reasonable," and "general," and it meets a legitimate interest in restricting the action in question, it is likely to be upheld. This standard prevailed until the "intermediate scrutiny test" of *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296 (1940), which protected certain areas of non-criminal religious activity from government interference. The standard of review was tightened further in *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398 (1963), namesake of the Sherbert Test by which a state must demonstrate a "compelling interest" in limiting a person or group's free exercise of religion and prove that the law in question was the least intrusive means of achieving that interest. This strict standard prevailed until 1990. (Witte, 118-25.)

15 *Employment Division, Dep't of Human Res. v. Smith* (1990) 494 U.S. 872.

16 Wexler, "Clothed Public Square," 1211; Witte, 140. It also bears mention that the Court often (unfortunately) defends religious liberty through the use of the free speech clause of the First Amendment, rather than the religion clauses.

17 The *Locke* decision presented the justices the opportunity to define the outer limits of an integrated jurisprudence of neutrality as equal treatment of religion. Its seven-member majority balked at the idea of following the concept of equal treatment to its logical conclusion, which would have required states to fund religious education if they funded any education at all. This conclusion seemed to depart dramatically from the constitutional protection of religious liberty, not to mention states' rights, and the Court was unwilling to take things that far. This kind of conservatism (in the apolitical meaning of the term) is normal for the Supreme Court; as Jeffrey Rosen and others have noted, the Court's decisions generally trail public opinion rather than lead it, despite its reputation as being a counter–majoritarian institution. Indeed, many political scientists argue that the Court was designed to follow settled popular opinion, rather than lead it. At any rate, the implications of affirming the lower court ruling in *Locke* were great enough to scare Rehnquist, O'Connor, and Kennedy from their usual accommodationist perch. [Frederick Mark Gedicks called this the "Establishment clause gag reflex."]

18 *Locke v. Davey*, 000 U.S. 02-1315 (2004), citing *Walz v. Tax Comm'n of City of New York*, 397 U. S. 664, 669 (1969).

19 The Rehnquist Court limited the federal government's power over the states in part by reducing the ability of lower courts to review state laws under the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, as noted above. Equally important is the Court's narrow interpretation of the Constitution's "commerce clause" (Art. I, §8, cl.3) in *U.S. v. Lopez* (1995) and *U.S. v. Morrison* (2000), which have considerably restricted Congressional authority to regulate actions in the states not directly related to interstate commerce.

20 Put another way, the majority opinions in *Mitchell*, *Zelman* and *Locke* show an increasingly consistent constitutional justification—viz. neutrality as equal treatment of religion & nonreligion—for greater accommodation of religion in American public life. For nearly twenty years the Court has labored to integrate the multiple principles (including "endorsement," "coercion," and "equal treatment") that its individual justices used to adjudicate religion

cases. [See Witte, p. 149-63.] Though there were still some disputes among the majority in *Mitchell* (as well as vigorous objections from the dissenters, of course), in *Zelman* they largely coalesced around the concept of neutrality as "equal treatment" for religion and non–religion. Establishment clause jurisprudence was, by most accounts, a complete mess in the 1980s and into the 1990s. (Leonard Levy marveled in 1986 that "the Court has managed to unite those who stand at polar opposites on the results that the Court reaches; a strict separationist and a zealous accommodationist are likely to agree that the Court would not recognize establishment of religion if it took life and bit the Justices." [Quoted in Witte, 182.]) By 2004, the systematic effort by Rehnquist and his conservative colleagues to streamline the Court's reasoning seemed to be having its effect, and some commentators suggested that *Zelman* would prove to be the watershed case that provides stability to the Court's future religion clause jurisprudence.

21 The courts, of course, will always play a role—and rightfully so. As Stephen Macedo writes, "To leave accommodations and exceptions to the democratic branches is virtually to insure that complaints advanced by minority religious communities will often be slighted, so the courts must play a role." ("Liberal Civic Education and Religious Fundamentalism: The Case of God vs. John Rawls?" *Ethics* 105 (April 1995): 487.)

22 Citizens will of course disagree about the nature and extent of these rights and liberties; the point is that citizens now have wider range of options as to how they choose to promote or protect those rights at the state level. For the purposes of this paper, I do not address the metaphysical question of whether we are free to choose our religious beliefs, or whether the fact of religious plurality has any meaning for the truth of one or another religious tradition. Rather, my focus is on the lived experience of religion within a diverse polity.

23 The right to free exercise (within limits) is deeply ingrained in the American political and cultural consciousness, notwithstanding the challenges that have been made to the concept of religious freedom as a coherent philosophical, legal or theological principle.

24 See, e.g., Robert Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy* (Falmer, 2004).

25 That the distinction between education and religious indoctrination is blurred in this case (because the plaintiff attended an evangelical "Bible college") does not imply a similar blurring in the context of public education at the primary and secondary levels.

26 "The notion that formal educational attainment is the primary mechanism behind citizenship characteristics is basically uncontested. A half-century of empirical evidence in American politics points to the consistent and overwhelming influence of 'the education variable' on various aspects of democratic citizenship [including civic knowledge, tolerance, and activity such as voting]." Norman H. Nie, Jane Junn, Kenneth Stehlik-Barry, *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2.

27 Martin E. Marty with Jonathan Moore, *Education, Religion, & the Common Good* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 64.

28 Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD; Nashville: First Amendment Center, 1998), 2. A useful bibliography of surveys that document the inadequacy of education about religion in public schools can be found in Wexler, "Clothed Public Square," 1164-66 notes 23-27.

29 Wexler, "Clothed Public Square," 1168-69. For additional specific curricular recommendations, see Nord and Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously…*; and Warren A. Nord, *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), chapters 6, 9 and 10.

30 Wexler, "Clothed Public Square," 1203-13.

31 Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality*, 141; Nord, 220-25.

32 Christopher L. Eisgruber, "How do Liberal Democracies Teach Values?" in *Moral and Political Education*, ed. Stephen Macedo and Yael Tamir, NOMOS XLIII (New York: NYU Press, 2002), 75.

33 Robert Kunzman, *Grappling with the Good: Talking about Religion and Morality in Public Schools* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 2006).

34 Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life During the World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

35 Re: the threat of religious warfare in the United States: "Effective legal/constitutional protection of religious freedom is the proper prophylactic for religiously-generated strife."

36 Though Kunzman subscribes to the concept of public reason in discourse about coercive political activities, he doesn't include the public school classroom in the political realm. I think he is wrong about this, but I agree with his conclusion that ethical dialogue is a key to civic education in pluralistic societies such as ours.

37 For assessments of European and North American citizenship education vis-à-vis religion, see Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg, *Education and Citizenship in Liberal-Democratic Societies: Teaching for Cosmopolitan Values and Collective Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

38 Americans are poorly informed about many of the topics discussed in this paper, including the legal grounds and extent of religious freedom itself in the United States. (Nord, 206.) The so-called "culture wars" of the 1980s and the post-9/11 national discussion of Islam are other examples of times when broader public education about religion would have helped considerably.

39 *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 225 (1963).

40 *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578 (1987) (Powell, J., concurring); Wexler, "Clothed Public Square," 1172-75, provides a detailed survey of dicta on the question.

41 This strategy is sometimes called "natural inclusion" because it takes up religion whenever it "naturally" relates to understanding the subject at hand. Nord, 203ff., 316. This way of making the point—to speak of religion as a "natural" key to understanding—is more problematic than the curricular issue itself, so I have avoided the term.

42 In 2001, there were approximately 93,000 public elementary and secondary schools in the United States, including about 27,000 high schools. *Digest of Education Statistics 2002,* National Center for Education Statistics (Washington, DC: Department of Education, 2002), Table 87.

43 These guidelines are published in Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas, *Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools* (Nashville: First Amendment Center, 2001), 75-6.