Religion and Democracy in the United States

DANGER OR OPPORTUNITY?

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Editors

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Chapter 1

POLITICAL SCIENCE, DEMOCRACY, AND RELIGION

Alan Wolfe

Political Science Catches Up

"Scarcely any political question," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville in one of the most widely cited sentences in *Democracy in America*, "arises in the United States that is not resolved, sooner or later, into a judicial question."[1] If he were writing today, Tocqueville might be tempted to say that however any political question ends up, it originates as a religious one. Scarcely an election takes place or a policy is proposed before someone brings religion into the conversation. Some celebrate its presence, while others condemn it, but both agree that to understand what is happening in American politics, religion has to be accounted for.

Since at least the writings of Seymour Martin Lipset, Tocqueville's analyses of democracy have been elevated to the status of social science classics, joining the ranks of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim.[2] Every time we talk about voluntary associations, public opinion, self-interest rightly understood, or the tyranny of the majority, we echo themes first touched on by our French visitor. Tocqueville's reputation as a social theorist can be exaggerated because he was not a systematic thinker and never really compared the United States to other countries. But his recognition of the power of the democratic forces being unleashed in the first decades of the nineteenth century lives on.

Much the same could be said for Tocqueville's writings on religion. Just as he was a Frenchman writing about America, Tocqueville was a Catholic discussing the pervasive influence of Protestantism. "There is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America," he proclaimed, a statement that not only reflects the Second Great Awakening that immediately preceded his visit but extends to the many religious revivals that have taken place since.[3] Every time we talk about the importance of the local congregation, the voluntaristic impulses of America's faith traditions, or the tendency of American religions to grow by recruiting new members, we are indebted to Tocqueville's analysis.

Tocqueville may have been the most insightful visitor to explore the relationship between democracy and religion in the United States, but he

was by no means the only one. Max Weber came to this country in the early years of the twentieth century to visit the St. Louis World's Fair, and he too kept his eyes and ears open during his visit. In an essay on the Protestant sects that seemed so prevalent in American life—and to which Tocqueville had also called attention—Weber argued that, especially in newly settled regions of the United States, religion acted as a kind of moral credit agency. "Admission to the local Baptist congregation," he wrote, "follows only upon the most careful 'probation' and after closest inquiries into conduct going back to early childhood."[4] Economic enterprise required conditions of trust, but social newness did not give people appropriate cues about who could be trusted and who should be shunned. Into the vacuum flowed the local congregation. People would prove their worthiness to each other by demonstrating their faith in God.

With historical predecessors as illustrious as Tocqueville and Weber, it might seem axiomatic that the social sciences in general, and political science in particular, would have developed a long-standing interest in religion. Yet something closer to the opposite actually took place: as religion became more important in American public life, the study of religion by American political scientists went into a tailspin. During the 1950s, for example, Billy Graham's career as a public evangelist took off; the man spoke at huge rallies, not only in rural parts of the country but in the heart of Manhattan at Madison Square Garden. At the same time, conservative Catholics, concerned primarily about Soviet influence over such countries as Poland or Italy from which their families had originally come, formed political organizations determined to push the United States in a right-wing direction, especially with respect to its foreign policy. Yet the only major work done by a social scientist during this period, Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, was written by a political activist (first of the left, then of the right) teaching at Drew University in New Jersey.[5] At more prestigious universities, scholars, having endorsed the so-called secularization thesis, simply assumed that as the United States became more modern, religion would lose its influence. In addition, the 1950s saw the spread of quantitative techniques and behavioral approaches in American political science, and the study of religion, as subjective an area of interest as one can imagine, seemed difficult to reconcile with the objectivity so important to scholarship at that time.

As a consequence of these trends, religion was assigned a second-class status among subjects explored by American political scientists. Given what was happening in America in the decade that followed the 1950s—the election of a Catholic to the White House in 1960, the Goldwater campaign of 1964, and the first stirrings of the Christian Right, the March on Washington for civil rights led by a Baptist preacher from Georgia, Buddhists setting themselves on fire in Vietnam to protest the

war, and the outbreak of spiritual fervor associated with the counterculture—the gap between the political scientists and the public only widened. In their examination of articles published in the *American Political Science Review*, for example, Kenneth D. Wald and Clyde Wilcox found that, over the course of its life, the journal on average published one article on religion every three years, and although there had been a slight uptick in more recent years (twenty-five articles dealing with religion in the period between 1960 and 2002), the attention devoted to the subject remained minimal.[6] The reason, they argued, cannot lie in the fact that political scientists had retreated into some kind of cave unaware of the real world around them because more articles on gender and race, two other subjects of wide and increasing interest during the post–World War II period, were published than articles on religion. Nor was the cause for neglect characteristic of social science in general; sociologists paid more attention to religion in their flagship journals than did political scientists. Despite the fact that larger numbers of Americans, unlike Western Europeans, continued to attend church and to have their political behavior influenced by their religious preferences, political scientists were unwilling to give religion its due.

A general dearth of scholarly articles on the subject, moreover, constituted just one area of general neglect. Political science departments are typically organized by fields of interest such as American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and political theory. The subject of religion can be taught in any of them. Yet undergraduate courses on religion and politics during the 1950s and 1960s in any of these fields were few and far between. To cite only one example, Wellesley College offered no undergraduate courses on religion at all from 1989 until 1996; starting in the latter year, it began offering "Religion and American Politics" and added courses on religion and ethnic conflict in 2000. One might think the situation would be different at Boston College, where I teach, because BC is a Jesuit/Catholic university with a distinct religious mission. To some degree it is, as BC offered one course in the earlier period on church-state relations. But it was not until the mid-1990s that a regular undergraduate course on "Religion and American Politics" was added to the curriculum. Just as political scientists were engaged in relatively little research on religion during this period, they were also not focused on religion when it came to teaching.

To be fair, it should be pointed out that a tendency to ignore religion could also be found in other fields in which the subject deserved more widespread treatment, none more so than journalism. It is not that newspapers ignored religion, but from the end of World War II until the early 1970s, they treated it in roughly the same way they treated movies: listing services taking place over the weekend or reporting on

church-sponsored charitable affairs. One study, for example, showed that, in Mark Silk's summary of its findings, "by 1975 religious news space had reached its lowest ebb in [*New York*] *Times* history."[7] It became a common complaint among religious activists, including those who would become leaders of the religious right, that the media was dominated by secularists who showed little interest in them or the faiths for which they spoke. At least for a time, there seems to have been some truth in their complaints.

In more recent years, the trends I have been describing have begun to change, in some cases dramatically so. Many newspapers, responding to the obvious importance of the subject, started hiring full-time religion reporters and assigning them to cover political developments; between 1972 and 1982, according to yet another study, the number of column inches in American newspapers devoted to religion more than doubled.[8] Such a rate of growth in religion coverage is difficult to sustain, and in just the past few years the competitive pressures on newspapers stemming from the rise of the Internet and decreases in readership have led to cutbacks in this area.[9] Still, media coverage of religion remains at a high level. Significant support, moreover, exists for such coverage. The Templeton Foundation now offers an annual prize for religion reporting. The Pew Forum on Religion and American Public Life carries out extensive surveys, conducted in conjunction with academic political scientists, that are featured prominently in the media. The Religion and Ethics Newsweekly sponsors programs on public television and does its own reporting. No one could credibly claim that religion is currently undiscovered territory in the U.S. media. If anything, newspapers and television go out of their way to find religious angles on stories that, at first glance, do not seem to have one, including stories on shopping malls and day-care centers.[10]

A similar reversal of the cycle is fortunately taking place in political science. The American Political Science Association (APSA) allows members to define areas of interest, and religion is now among the most popular of these designations. The "Religion and Politics" section, which was founded among APSA members to further research on the subject, is among the fastest growing in the discipline; 335 people joined the section in 1989 as compared to 628 in 2007. (By way of contrast, the section on "Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations" declined from 506 to 296; "Urban Politics" dropped from 347 to 344; and "Political Psychology" increased from 292 to 426.)[11] The section, in addition, has begun to publish a scholarly journal, *Religion and Politics*. Not unsurprisingly, more political science departments are teaching courses on religion and politics. Of the five colleges surveyed in the Boston area, three, Boston College, Brandeis University, and Harvard University, currently feature undergraduate courses dealing with religion.

As part of this renewed interest in religion among political scientists, Ira Katznelson of Columbia University, president of the APSA in 2005–06, convened a task force on the subject of "Religion and Democracy in the United States." APSA task forces have had a long history, going back to the publication of *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System* in 1950. In more recent years, task forces have been convened on inequality and American democracy, political violence and terrorism, difference and inequality in the developing world, civic education, and interdisciplinarity.

The aim of an APSA task force is to bring together prominent scholars dealing with a specific subject in order to pool their expertise and to write a report bringing the best knowledge on the topic to the general informed public. Katznelson asked me to chair the task force on religion and democracy. The following, each of whom has written a chapter for this volume, agreed to serve: Allison Calhoun-Brown, Georgia State University; Bette Novit Evans, Creighton University; James L. Gibson, Washington University; John C. Green, University of Akron and Pew Forum; Fredrick C. Harris, Columbia University; Amaney Jamal, Princeton University; Geoffrey C. Layman, University of Notre Dame; David L. Leal, University of Texas; Nancy L. Rosenblum, Harvard University; Kenneth D. Wald, University of Florida; and Clyde Wilcox, Georgetown University.

In assembling this task force, Katznelson and I sought to bring together scholars in three areas of the discipline: the study of American politics using primarily empirical methods; political philosophy; and constitutional law. No effort was made to ascertain the faith commitments (or lack of them) of any of the members; our objective was neither to apologize for religion or specific religions nor to join those writers well known for their criticisms of people of faith. Our intent was to select political scientists whose publications had made them leaders in the emerging field of religion and politics and to ask them to share with each other the insights yielded by their respective approaches.

Our specific focus was on the relationship between religion and democracy in the United States, asking ourselves many of the same questions that Tocqueville posed to us many years ago: Is religion healthy for democracy because it encourages civic participation and the expression of ideas or dangerous because it is associated with sectarianism and dogmatism? If religion, as our founders believed, reinforces morality, can we have a common morality in the absence of a dominant religion? How is religious pluralism best managed? Has separation of church and state posed religion against democracy or helped the two reinforce each other? In what ways will religion's role in American democracy be shaped by the inclusion of religious voices outside the Judeo-Christian tradition?

The task force met six times between 2006 and 2007. As each member developed a topic on which to write, all members engaged in extensive discussion with each other. The result, we hope, is an edited volume with more coherence than one sometimes finds in books of this sort. In particular, members made every possible effort to integrate their findings with people whose approach differed from their own, for example, by linking empirical findings with the approaches of political philosophy—and vice versa. In what follows, I offer an overview of the main conclusions that our task force reached.

Religious Pluralism and American Democracy

"With equal pleasure," wrote John Jay in *Federalist* #2,

> I have as often taken notice that Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs, and who, by their joint counsels, arms, and efforts, fighting side by side throughout a long and bloody war, have nobly established general liberty and independence.[12]

Some of what he said was true: Americans were indeed similar in their customs at the time of the founding. But they did not all belong to same religion: Jews were present in the United States from the start, and one of the original colonies, Maryland, was inhabited primarily by Catholics. Religious pluralism has been a fact of life in the United States since the time of its creation.

The extent of religious diversity in the present-day United States, of course, is much greater than it was in John Jay's time. The gold standard on the issue of religious diversity is the "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey" released by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in June 2008. Its findings are striking: 78.4 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians of one denomination or another, which seems to suggest the dominance of just one tradition in this country. But that figure is deceiving. In fact, those claiming to be Protestant constitute a bare majority of 51.5 percent, while 4.7 percent belong to non-Christian religious traditions such as Judaism, Islam, or Buddhism, and 16.1 percent of Americans consider themselves unaffiliated. Such numbers, moreover, capture a picture frozen in time and in that sense do not convey just how fluid the religious identification of Americans can be. By Pew's estimate, 44 percent of Americans are religious switchers (if one includes changing from one Protestant denomination to another). When the effects of

recent immigration are added to the picture, the religious pluralism of the United States becomes even more striking. True, the percentage of Muslims uncovered by Pew was low (0.6 percent), although, as Amaney Jamal argues in her essay in this volume (see chapter 3), this estimate is most likely too low. But Pew also found robust numbers of Buddhists and Hindus. As the Pew study underscores, not only does the United States lack a majority religion, it lacks anything even close to one.[13]

Some sense of the changing demographics of American religion, as well as the implications of these trends for American politics, is offered by John Green in his chapter for this book (chapter 2). Green takes 1960, the year in which Americans for the first (and only) time elected a Catholic to the presidency, as a point of historical comparison. The fact that 33.9 percent of Americans in 1960 were mainline Protestants is striking; here was a group sufficiently large in size to offer at least a glimmer of what it would be like to serve as an established religion. These, after all, were years in which there existed much talk about an American "establishment," the bulk of whose members—university presidents, U.S. Senators, corporate CEOs—were white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.[14] The single largest group of Catholics, moreover, were, in Green's terms, "traditionalists," reflecting the fact that pre–Vatican II Catholics lived in predominantly ethnic parishes emphasizing respect for authority and traditional gender roles. The two largest Christian groups, in other words, projected images of stability and continuity in 1960, if in very different ways. Although exceptionally diverse, American religious life at that time was also well organized. As Herberg had emphasized in his 1955 book, Americans of that era placed a great deal of emphasis on belonging; religion served, among other things, as a source of identification of community.

At the same time, the 1960s would become known for the attacks on that establishment, symbolized by "the best and the brightest" whose arrogance led the country into war—and in that way came under attack both from the New Left and the emerging New Right.[15] Challenged in the most dramatic fashion, the leading figures of the mainline Protestant establishment—John Lindsay, mayor of New York; Kingman Brewster, president of Yale; National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy—lost the authority they once embodied.[16] Also at the same time the Second Vatican Council took the first steps toward modernizing Catholicism in ways that would begin to undermine more traditional ways of life; as Green's data suggest, the percentage of traditional Catholics was cut in half between 1960 and 1984 while centrist and modernist Catholics expanded. The political consequences of both of these developments would prove enormously important. On the one hand, the demise of the New England Protestant establishment prefigured the transformation of the Republican Party into a Southern and Western party with a far more conservative

face. On the other, post–Vatican II Catholicism would prove to be both more theologically liberal but also more politically independent, breaking the link between Catholics and urban political machines and removing from the ranks of reliable Democratic voters those who were economically liberal but culturally conservative. If one is seeking an explanation of why the United States elected a liberal Democrat in 1960 and a conservative Republican in 2004, the changes in these two important religious groups ought to be viewed as major factors.

As Green's chapter suggests, the demographics of American religion look very different in 2004 compared to those of 1960: there were both more evangelicals and more unaffiliated people in the former year compared to the latter. Not surprisingly, religious diversity is accompanied by a significant amount of political diversity: three-quarters of traditionalist evangelicals believe that American democracy is based on Christian values, for example, compared to slightly more than a third of unaffiliated secularists, an accurate reflection of how Americans can be polarized over an important issue. Yet on the crucial question of religious diversity itself, there is less diversity of opinion: surprising agreement exists across the religious divide, for whereas 90 percent or more of the more liberal groups see the benefits of religious pluralism, so do 74 percent of the most conservative group. Religious pluralism is not only a fact of American public value, it is also a widely endorsed value.

The true test for American religious pluralism may emerge from groups outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, especially, in the wake of September 11, 2001, Muslims. In her contribution to this volume, Amaney Jamal provides important data on this issue. Relying on the first systematic poll of Muslim Americans ever taken in this country, Jamal demonstrates the extent to which Muslims share the same democratic values as non-Muslims in the United States. Generally speaking, Muslims tend to be socially and morally conservative but economically more liberal. Few of them endorse radical actions such as suicide bombings. They attend mosque in roughly the same rate that Christians attend churches. Although a significant number of them put more emphasis on their religion than their country (47 percent), so do a similar number of Christians (42 percent). Most important for the issue of religious pluralism, they associate with people from many religious backgrounds: a mere 12 percent of Jamal's respondents led lives essentially contained within the Muslim community. In perhaps the only somewhat jarring note, 26 percent of them believed that Muslim Americans should remain distinct from the larger American society, but otherwise, Muslim Americans are very much like immigrant groups from non-Protestant backgrounds in the past: wanting to hold onto their traditions even as they adjust themselves to the demands of a highly pluralistic society. Especially in contrast

to Western Europe, where both anti-Muslim sentiment and support for radical Islam are greater, religious pluralism, which was once more or less confined to the Judeo-Christian tradition, can be expanded to include other religious groups.

How can pluralism best be managed in the United States? This is the question that preoccupies Bette Novit Evans in her chapter (chapter 4). It is a widely accepted conclusion among scholars of American constitutional law that the U.S. Supreme Court has failed to find consistent principles for resolving the tensions built into the First Amendment.[17] Evans offers a more optimistic take. The First Amendment, she argues, is part and parcel of a much broader approach to pluralism represented by such institutional realities as the separation of powers and federalism. The way we conduct things here is to do them in ways that prevent any one group or person from monopolizing power to further parochial interests. Not all are pleased with this widespread commitment to pluralism; in the 1960s and 1970s, liberals favored more centralized authority in the presidency, for example, whereas in more recent years conservatives have done so. Arguments over the merits of pluralism are as constant as pluralism in America is permanent.

Yet there is little doubt that America's pluralist political culture makes the management of religious diversity possible. Evans discusses religious traditions such as the Amish and some ultra-Orthodox Jewish sects that seek to seal themselves off from the rest of society; generally, although not always, we seek to accommodate such groups and, in so doing, to send the message that our polity is strong enough to absorb the concerns of groups at the margins. At the same time, Evans continues, pluralism helps to check the power of majority religions in specific states or regions from imposing their views on subjects such as the teaching of creationism on those who belong to minority religions or no religion at all. When we add the important fact that courts themselves serve to reinforce pluralism because they are one political institution among three, the pluralistic bias in our constitutional system is further reinforced. No one institution tells us what to do just as no one institution tells us what to believe.

The conclusion at which Evans arrives is important to reiterate. From time to time one hears calls in the United States for a greater emphasis on common American values. This in itself is not dangerous and reflects an understandable desire to overcome the fractiousness and partisanship that characterize American life. Yet for those who believe that religion offers the most appropriate language for moral conversation, calls for a common morality can lead to calls for a common religion. This is a trap the United States avoided at its founding when it opted to separate church and state. And it is a trap that must be avoided now when religious diversity is even more extensive than it was then. It is not the job of

the task force on Religion and American Democracy of the American Political Science Association to make a normative case on behalf of religious pluralism. But it is very much our role as students of American politics to call attention to pluralism as a fact of life of the American political system. Given our history, our Constitution, and such present realities as immigration, we will always be religiously pluralistic. Finding the best way to manage our pluralism is a task that should properly engage the attention of both scholars of American politics and American citizens.

Religion and Democratic Values

When Tocqueville came to the United States in the early 1830s, he left behind a continent in which the histories of religion and politics had long been intertwined. France, Tocqueville's own country, had perfected the notion of the divine right of kings: the monarchy's claim to political legitimacy was based on the notion that the king spoke on behalf of God. Leading religious figures such as Cardinal Richelieu became simultaneously leading political figures, using their power in one realm to reinforce their influence in the other. Even after the French Revolution toppled the monarchy, France remained an overwhelmingly Catholic country shaped by the Church's deep involvement with politics. It was not until the early years of the twentieth century that France broke the long-established link between political and religious authority. What the political philosopher Mark Lilla calls the Great Separation, the rejection of a political theology that rooted the ultimate authority of the state in the authority exercised by God, took centuries to work itself out on the European continent.[18]

Although the Protestant Reformation had first promised a break with the Catholic tradition of blending religious and political authority, even Europe's Protestant countries were slow to make the great separation. Martin Luther, fearful of the radical movements that took his appeal to individual conscience too literally, moved in the direction of political authoritarianism. John Calvin, his fellow Protestant reformer, created a theocracy in his city-state of Geneva. The Church of England was officially Protestant but also the church of the realm. To this day, even Denmark, perhaps the most secular country in the world, retains a Lutheran established church. Church and state had too many overlapping interests—both sought legitimacy, codified law, punished dissent, and claimed authority—to wander off in different directions. There always existed antagonism and conflict between them, but it was caused primarily by their attempts to occupy the same space.

The American Revolution constituted the first, and to this day the most important, attempt to create separate realms for political power and religious salvation. In part this was because some of the founders, such as

Thomas Jefferson, were quite familiar with the dangerous ways religion and politics had interacted in Europe. Jefferson was a deist, someone who believes that God set the world in motion only then to refrain from playing a role in the course it took. So, too, were all the other early presidents of the United States, up to and including the fifth one James Monroe, the only exception being the Unitarian—and thus unconventional Christian—John Adams.[19] These were men who had been touched by the Enlightenment.[20] Religion, in their view, was all too frequently associated with ignorance, bigotry, and sectarianism to be trusted with official state power in the new republic.

At the same time, as a number of important scholars have demonstrated, separation of church and state came to the United States at the urging of numerous believers as well.[21] Influenced in part by John Locke, who was both a liberal theorist and a devout Christian, they argued that religion needed distance from government in order to thrive.[22] Just as avoiding the inefficiencies of mercantilism would allow the free market to flourish, bypassing the inefficiencies of a state church would allow churches to grow by recruiting new members, all attracted because religion would appeal to them personally. The delinking of church and state, in their view, would be good for religion by fostering good religion. The pure air of religious freedom would produce more authentic devotion.

Both Enlightenment-influenced liberals and free-market Protestants were raising what contemporary political scientists would call an empirical question: Does religion promote sectarianism, or does it encourage tolerance? This is the kind of question that political scientists can answer with empirical tools. Three of the chapters in this book try to do just that.

In his chapter (chapter 5), James Gibson notes that social scientists over many decades have found a pronounced relationship between religiosity and intolerance; if tolerance means, as he puts it, allowing "all ideas, even repugnant ones, to enter into the marketplace of ideas and compete for the hearts and minds of the citizenry," then on one important measure religious people manifest intolerance: they are less likely than nonbelievers to extend a welcome to atheists in the public square. For a religious person, this makes a certain mount of sense: if you passionately believe that only Jesus saves, you do not want to give equal credit to the ideas of someone who does not believe in Jesus. If such a point has a certain theological credibility, however, it lacks liberal-democratic credibility, for as citizens, we are obligated to make room for the ideas of people who believe other things than we do.

When John Green compared the religious population of the United States in 1960 and 2004, he found more religious traditionalists in the latter year (see chapter 2). Because Gibson finds that religious traditionalism is associated with intolerance, we would therefore expect that levels

of intolerance may be higher now than they were a half-century ago. That this may be the case is supported by the data Gibson has collected, for, as he puts it, "those who believe most of the problems of this world are the result of people moving away from God are, *ceteris paribus*, more intolerant." Of course it is true that nonreligious people can also be intolerant; support for hate crimes laws and speech codes reflects a tendency on the part of the secular left not to tolerate the views of those they condemn as haters and bigots. Gibson has nonetheless told us something we need to know: a society containing many religious traditionalists may be a better one in some ways (if you believe that people need to seek God), but it will likely fail the strong test of encouraging broad tolerance among all its citizens.

The question, however, does not end here. People do learn tolerance, especially when they come into contact with people unlike themselves. Many institutions encourage people to broaden their horizons, and these include not just universities and workplaces but political institutions such as parties and even single-interest groups. Both Clyde Wilcox (chapter 6) and Geoffrey Layman (chapter 7) address the issue of whether heightened levels of participation in politics on the part of conservative Christians lead them to become more tolerant and thereby to become more respectful of the norms of liberal democratic citizenship.

Wilcox has been studying conservative Christians for three decades, and some of his findings are troubling from the standpoint of democratic theory. In his chapter for this volume, for example, Wilcox compares general donors to the Republican Party with those who are explicitly conservative Christian and finds "that we have reason to be worried about the democratic values of Christian right members." As Gibson has also discovered, deeply traditionalist activists within the Republican ranks have little positive to say about atheists, Muslims, and others whom they regard as enemies in the theological and cultural wars they believe themselves to be fighting. When people take the words of the Bible as the literal truth and then seek to enter politics, as Wilcox points out, their apocalyptic sensibility stands in sharp contrast to the give and take of democratic proceduralism.

Still, Wilcox is correct to remind us that the Christian Right is not an unchanging entity. Not that long ago, conservative Protestants were explicit in both their anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism. This is no longer the case, as conservative Protestants have found common cause with Catholics over abortion and have united with conservative Jews over support for Zionism. One doubts that a similar acceptance of Muslims will occur in the future among Christian conservatives, for, as Jamal points out, non-Muslims in America know very little about Islam, yet 36 percent of them nonetheless believe that Islam encourages violence.

Yet Muslims are people of the book and also happen to have culturally conservative values. It may be political alliances rather than any change of heart that led conservative Protestants toward greater acceptance of Catholics and Jews, but tolerance is tolerance wherever it is found. It would be a step toward democratic inclusion if conservative Christians were ever to move toward a similar alliance with Muslims.

Geoffrey Layman's research also confirms this general conclusion that religious sectarianism can be modified by the experience of political activism. Unlike Wilcox, who studied religious activists who had become politically involved, Layman examined political activists who were religious. His work involves delegates to party conventions, people who, although generally not determining who will be their party's nominee, work hard enough for their party to come to the conventions and participate. Layman confirms a trend toward greater polarization between the parties than has been analyzed by others; activists in both parties tend to be recruited from the more extreme elements known as the party base.[23] He also, much as did Gibson and Wilcox, finds less attachment to democratic norms among the extremists of the Republican Party than among their secular counterparts in the Democratic Party. Democracy requires that passion and commitment be accompanied by adherence to pragmatic norms, but those attracted to the Republican Party through their religious activism tend to have less pragmatic views toward politics than others and are therefore less likely to view compromise, the quintessential activity of democratic bargaining, as legitimate.

Layman, however, finds that over time these attitudes tend to change; it is those with the least experience attending conventions who tend to be the most purist in their views. If Layman is right, and there is every reason to believe he is, mere participation in an ideologically skewed institution such as a party convention can have a moderating effect over time, even if such trends are less pronounced among conservative religious activists than they are among secularists on the left. The more one is involved in politics, the greater the tendency to adapt to political norms, including those respecting compromise.

The political scientist Jon Shields has argued that political participation on the part of conservative Christians helps inculcate democratic values.[24] All these papers suggest that this can be true or not true depending on when activists were motivated; those attracted to politics before and after the period of greatest influence of the Christian Right, Wilcox shows, tend to be more tolerant. This suggests that in the future Christian conservatives may bring to politics a less harsh and judgmental temperament than the generation that preceded them. Evidence that this is happening can be found in an extensive survey of evangelical Christian college students conducted by Corwin Smidt and James Penning.[25]

Although identifying as conservative and Christian, these students were more interested in social justice than their parents and, most importantly for our purposes, indicated degrees of tolerance similar to people in all other religious categories. A fair conclusion to all this literature would be this: traditionalist religious views are associated with intolerance but not in any fixed psychological sense, as historical and politics contexts can moderate intolerance's effects.

The conclusion that seems to follow from this work is that both the liberal deists and the religious believers who did so much to shape the founding of the American experiment had it right. The former had reasons to worry that too close an identification of religion and politics does result in intolerance and dogmatism; religious people do tend to have strong views, and when they make them known, especially when they are new to politics, they do so with the zeal of purists. But the early evangelicals who argued that separation of church and state would be good for religion were also correct; political participation does encourage people to grow, and as they grow, their views become more capacious and accommodating of others, and this in turn contributes to the stability that democracy needs to protect all freedoms, including religious freedom.

Political Diversity and American Religion

Certainly since the days of Tocqueville, and also since the time of Will Herberg, the United States has become far more diverse, not only in terms of religion but with respect to gender identity, ethnicity, and race. The years since 1960 have not only witnessed the relative declining influence of mainline Protestants and the rise of the Christian Right, they have also been accompanied by the civil rights movement, the growth of feminism, increased immigration, demands by gays and lesbians for marital equality, and other, less pronounced, efforts on the part of groups to have their identity accepted as legitimate by the majority. The term "identity politics" was unknown in 1960 when John F. Kennedy won his race for the presidency. Its use was widespread, and its political consequences significant, when John F. Kerry lost his in 2004. As the philosopher Charles Taylor explains, one of the most significant demands made on modern polities is a demand for recognition.[26] Accept us for who we are, advocates of these movements ask, not as who you want us to be.

With respect to substantive issues, one can explain the rise of the Christian Right as a reaction against the politics of recognition. The one issue that did more than any other to launch the Christian Right was abortion; *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion in all fifty states, as I have indicated above, brought conservative Catholics and conservative Protestants together in a political alliance seeking the overturning of that

decision. Because *Roe* itself was strongly supported by so many feminists, who in turn viewed a woman's right to choose as a fundamental right, abortion politics quickly turned into a conflict over worldviews: one side, influenced by the liberatory movements of the 1960s, insisted on personal autonomy; the other, reacting against those movements, spoke on behalf of obedience to authority and respect for traditional values. As Kenneth Wald and David Leege show in their contribution to this volume (chapter 11), cultural politics was fueled by "entrepreneurs" who mobilized widespread discontent over social change to advance their agenda.

Churches themselves became part and parcel of these transformations. Many of America's religious denominations—Catholicism, conservative Protestantism, Orthodox Judaism—have not been open to the idea of women serving as clergy, and despite widespread gains in gender equality over the past few decades, have not significantly changed their practices. Other identity-based movements, especially those advocating for equal rights for homosexuals, have met strong resistance in numerous religious communities; even the mainline and liberal Episcopal church found itself deeply divided over the ordination of a gay bishop. At a time when even conservative institutions such as the military and the prison system found themselves accommodating the politics of identity, churches, with a few notable exceptions, did not.

Yet the relationship between religion and the politics of identity has proven to be more complicated than this initial sketch indicates. Consider the experience of the black church in America. The large majority of African-Americans belong to denominations that can in religious terms be properly described as evangelical. Just like their white counterparts, they have strong views about the literal truth of the Bible, and on some of the leading social issues of the day, such as gay rights and abortion, they lean toward the right. True of the historically dominant African-American denominations, this is even more true of the Pentecostalist wave sweeping through so many African-American communities. And even African-Americans who adhere to faiths outside the Christian tradition, especially those attracted to Islam, share the same socially conservative and theologically more orthodox views of those who remain tied to Protestantism.

At the same time, African-American religious leaders have historically identified more with the Democratic Party. African-American voters, not surprisingly, are also heavily Democratic in their political identity, a tendency made even stronger by the election of Barack Obama in 2008. African-Americans represent one group for which the politics of recognition and the politics of religion did *not* come into conflict: prophetic religious voices, clergy leadership, and church attendance all became linked to the cause of racial justice and equality. Evangelical in tone,

African-American religion, as Fred Harris points out in this volume (chapter 8), drew on the Social Gospel tradition associated with liberal Protestantism in its general outlook on the world. Martin Luther King Jr. was both a Baptist from the South (as well as the son of a generally conservative preacher) and a seminary-trained student who learned the lessons of liberal Protestantism in the North. Compared to others, moreover, King, while generally leftist in his views, was something of a moderate. Under the leadership of thinkers such as James Cone, a black liberation theology movement developed in the 1970s and 1980s that drew on elements of Marxism and Third World anticolonialist movements. Liberals who objected to the close association between conservative Christians and the Republican Party looked the other way, or even expressed their support, when black Christians formed alliances with the Democratic Party. From their point of view, African-American religion was too steeped in traditions of justice and equality to be ignored.

Harris's chapter calls attention to the growing influence of prosperity gospel preachers in the world of African-American religion. Preaching the importance of letting Jesus into your life so that you can improve your material standing, the prosperity gospel, as Harris points out, relying on the work of political scientist Michael Dawson, substitutes an individualistic ethic for a communal one: you are to be judged by how you improve yourself, not what you do for fellow African-Americans, including the very poor. The rise of the prosperity gospel portends dramatic changes in the role that African-American religiosity will play in American politics. On the one hand, it is more likely that we will see prominent black preachers, especially those attracted to the prosperity gospel, aligning themselves with the Republican Party, even under an Obama presidency. At the same time, the appeal of the prosperity gospel depends on the actual amount of prosperity one can find among African-Americans. A severe depression, which would have a disproportionate impact on recent members of the middle class, including African-Americans, could swing the pendulum back to the social gospel tradition. Whatever happens, however, racial identity and religious identity will continue to be intertwined, each giving support to the other.

The relationship between women and American religiosity has also proven itself to be more complicated than it at first seemed. Despite the fact that so many conservative religions assign second-class roles to women, women have been instrumental in the rise of conservative religion; as Allison Calhoun-Brown points out in her chapter (chapter 9), women tend to be more devout than men by every measure of religious devotion, from church attendance to belief in the Bible's inerrancy. A number of ethnographic studies of women's religiosity uncover a curious finding: even in conservative religions where women are treated as

second-class citizens, women themselves experience through their faith a sense of empowerment.[27] It may matter less what religious denominations say about women than what they offer women. Whereas men find a sense of fulfillment in work and politics, women are more likely to do so in church.

Calhoun-Brown offers a careful and well-researched analysis of the consequences of women's involvement in religion for their sense of efficacy. She makes a distinction between two kinds of efficacy: personal efficacy, or a feeling of self-confidence and a willingness to take on tasks, and political efficacy, confidence that one can make one's voice heard in the larger society. One might think that church attendance would increase personal efficacy while decreasing the political kind, for the messages in so many churches, especially conservative ones, emphasize women's dependence on men and in that sense treat women as less than equal in public life. Yet Calhoun-Brown found the exact opposite. Frequent female church attendance often leads women to devalue their own personal efficacy, but it also increases their political sense of self-worth. The appropriate conclusion would be that institutions matter. Just as participation in nominating conventions moderates the purist views of deeply devout activists, participation in church contributes to the development of social skills that, in turn, increase political efficacy.

It is true, as Calhoun-Brown concludes, that any decrease in personal efficacy associated with religious involvement is a problem for democracy, for without personal efficacy there can be no genuine sense of empowerment. For this reason, feminists have been correct to view the power and influence of religion in America as threatening to the ideal of gender equality. At the same time, however, political efficacy is also necessary for democratic success: so long as people believe that their voices matter and that they can influence what government does, conditions of political legitimacy are met even if those same individuals may not feel very successful in their personal lives. If we believe that we are still a long way away from gender equality, there are some aspects of religious involvement in politics that set the cause back and some others that advance it. Determining which ones work and which ones do not is more important than either condemning religion because it harms women or praising it because it keeps them in their place.

What will be the relationship between religion and politics when the majority of America's single largest religious denomination, the Catholic Church, is Latino? We do not know exactly when this will happen, but as David Leal reminds us in his chapter (chapter 10), Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States, remain strongly Catholic despite conversions to Protestantism among younger generations, and are exceptionally devout; by one estimate cited by Leal, as much as 85

percent of the Catholic segment of the U.S. population will be Latino by the mid-twenty-first century. One of the most important political developments influencing American politics in the last two decades of the twentieth century was the fact that so many Catholic voters, no longer tied to the Democratic Party, simultaneously moved to the suburbs and began to identify themselves as independents. It seems increasingly obvious that one crucial political development of the new century is that the differences between urban and suburban white Catholics will pale in comparison to the influence of Hispanics. Republican stalwarts such as Karl Rove, George W. Bush, and John McCain all have recognized this fact, and they have urged their party to soften its anti-immigration stance to accommodate voters who are clearly conservative in their moral and religious views. (McCain later changed his views.) Yet they have not won their party over, and it is likely that Hispanic Catholics will, like the Catholic immigrants of previous years, lean toward the Democratic Party.

For political scientists, the increasing importance of Hispanic Catholics allows a close-up examination of identity in the making. In his chapter, Leal focuses on some of the more fascinating aspects of this process. Latinos, Leal points out, have, in contrast to earlier immigrant groups in the American experience, rarely controlled the institutions of the Catholic Church. They are more numerous and influential in some parts of the country than in others. They typically are working-class and union members rather than wealthier suburbanites. Given all these facts, does their religious identification smooth the path toward increased political participation? It is clear from Leal's chapter that religion can serve as an inspiration for organizers such as César Chávez and Ernesto Cortés, who help bring benefits to ordinary people. (President Obama's experience as a community organizer and the traditions they embody became issues in the 2008 presidential campaign.) Nonetheless, Catholicism tends to be more hierarchical than one finds among many Protestant denominations, raising the possibility that Latino Catholics may not develop the civil skills in sufficient amounts to increase their rates of participation. Leal cites evidence on both sides of this question. Still, there seems no reason to conclude that Catholicism per se creates obstacles to participation; poverty has more to do with why people do not participate in politics than faith.

Latinos, it should also be pointed out, not only reflect diversity, they are themselves diverse. There is no reason why members of a group this large will all approach politics in the same way when they or their parents and grandparents come from so many different countries. As the Latino proportion of the U.S. population expands, we will see diversity within diversity: the differences between Puerto Ricans and Cubans will be as large as the differences between Latinos and Anglos. The United States is a vast laboratory for ethnic, racial, and religious diversity, and all of these forms can be seen among those with Hispanic backgrounds.

It is ironic that so many of those who lament the fact that the United States lacks the ethnic and racial homogeneity of the past hope that religion can offer a source for a more unified morality when religion itself is part and parcel of the diversity that America has become. The reality is that the ferment produced by the rise of identity politics in the 1960s and 1970s, far from coming to an end, will extend itself to include religious groups in the near future. One can already see conservative Christians adopting the mantle of victimhood and minority rights used during the civil rights movement of the 1960s as they argue that the United States is dominated by secular humanists whose commitment to political correctness seeks to marginalize them. Yet it is a victory for free speech when conservatives who, in the past, might have argued against John Stuart Mill embrace his ideas when they seek the liberty to proclaim their dislike of homosexuality or their opposition to feminism. In a similar way, liberal democracy ought to welcome the fact that conservative religious believers view themselves as one more element in America's rainbow coalition of groups seeking recognition for their identity. The rights of all minorities are best protected when all groups are minority groups, a situation we increasingly face in the United States.

Religion and Cultural Conflict

For a number of decades now, the most common metaphor used to describe the themes that dominate campaigns, elections, and governance in the United States is the existence of a culture war. The divide that *Roe v. Wade* revealed—involving those who insist on tradition, authority, and respect for law on the one hand and those who stand for individual rights and personal autonomy on the other—was extended well beyond abortion to include such issues as prayer in schools, gay rights, stem-cell usage, and the "right to die." Whether the culture gap was deep or exaggerated became the subject of extended debate.[28] Yet it seems increasingly clear that culture war themes are lessening in importance in recent years. The 2008 election in particular, which was dominated by the economic crisis that took place in the fall of that year, suggests that Americans are at the moment more engaged with pocketbook issues than with the state of their culture. This by no means suggests that culture war themes will disappear; the vice-presidential nominee of the Republican Party in 2008, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, made them central to her campaign. But they are unlikely to monopolize American campaigns the way they did in the 1980s and 1990s.

The culture war, nonetheless, raises important questions about the functioning of American democracy. Prominent among them are these: Are issues such as abortion or gay rights less amenable to bargaining and compromise than those dealing with labor or the environment? Are the

passions unleashed by partisans in culture war conflicts dangerous to the stability democracy requires if it is to be effective? Does the prominence of "single-issue" politics produce excessive sectarianism? Will those concerned with culture war issues suffer disruptive disappointments when the utopian goals they seek cannot be achieved in the give-and-take of real politics? Does a culture war contain the potential to turn itself into a civil war?

The centrality of questions such as these to political science can be traced back to the decades just after World War II. I have already mentioned that political scientists during this earlier period paid little scholarly attention to religion. At the same time, they paid considerable attention to the conditions for stable democracy. These were years in which scholars from a number of disciplines argued that the United States faced an "end of ideology" due to the exhaustion of extreme views associated with totalitarian movements.[29] America was a consensus society, ran one common refrain, and, when compared to extremism, consensus was no bad thing. It was during this era that Alexis de Tocqueville had his greatest impact on American political science. Inspired by him, social scientists found ways to argue that class conflict, and all its attendant instabilities, could be avoided. Stability, indeed, became something of a watchword during this era. The success of a political system was measured not by how it managed conflict but by how it avoided it.

One of the key texts of the era was Anthony Downs's *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, first published in 1957.[30] The leaders of political parties are rational actors, Downs argued, more concerned about winning elections than ideological purity. Politicians understand that they need to have strong appeal within their party to obtain its nomination, but once nominated, they then need to appeal to independent voters in the center of the political spectrum. As they do, they will take care to moderate any ideological positions necessary to achieve the nomination, thereby guaranteeing that general elections will feature politicians trained in the art of moderation. The way politics was conducted in the 1950s gave strong credence to Downs's claims. The two parties in Great Britain were so similar to each other that *The Economist* coined the term "Butskellism" to characterize the general agreement between Tory Rab Butler and Labor's Hugh Gaitskell. Meanwhile in the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower governed as a centrist along with support from leading Democrats in Congress. The most disruptive conflicts took place within the parties rather than between them: Republican isolationists preferred Robert Taft to Eisenhower, and Southern and Northern Democrats took opposite positions on civil rights.

The first signs of the impending downfall of the Downs model took place in 1964, when an outright conservative, Barry Goldwater, won the

Republican nomination. Goldwater would go on to lose the election by a landslide, of course, but before long, the conservative faction of the party that selected him would become the majority current within the party. Activists inspired by their religious convictions were at the heart of this revival; the term used to describe them was that they constituted the "base" of the Republican Party. Arguably the man most responsible for the role played by "the base" in recent American politics, Karl Rove, relied on a theory about how democracy works quite distinct from that of Anthony Downs. Appeal to the extremes rather than the moderate middle, Rove urged George W. Bush, but so long as you mobilize as many of those on the extremes as you can, you will still win. Strategists will be debating Rove's ideas for decades to come. On the one hand, George Bush did win two elections by appealing to the base. On the other, one of those victories was too close for comfort, and Rove's tactics were exhausted by 2008. Nonetheless, the questions posed by Rove's success remain, and one of the objectives of the APSA task force was to try to shed light on them.

Kenneth Wald, a task force member, co-authored a chapter for this volume with David Leege addressing this issue directly (see chapter 11). Wald and Leege, building on the research of the latter, do not find the "culture war" model particularly helpful in understanding recent politics in the United States. Influenced by Aaron Wildavsky, they instead talk about how cultural concerns become politicized.[31] People will always have views about the health of their culture, and often such views will cause them great concern. But little of this matters for politics unless cultural concerns are mobilized. Cultural politics is best understood, therefore, not as populistic rages of anger coming from below but as efforts on the part of political entrepreneurs to discover what is on the minds of mobilizable citizens and to mobilize them. To do so, these political operatives develop appropriate symbols, exploit available technologies, and attempt to build workable majorities. Mobilizing cultural differences, unlike, say, mobilizing economic ones, often leads to a passionate form of politics relying on emotional appeals based on resentment and victimization. But in comparison to situations in other countries in which religious and cultural differences lead to violence and civil conflict, such as one finds in the Balkans, the politics of cultural differences is not all that different from politics in other realms of public life.

Wald and Leege therefore warn against those who view the so-called culture war as an alarming development that threatens liberal democratic political stability. Their most important insight is their challenge to the notion that cultural politics inevitably becomes zero-sum contests in which a victory for one side can only come with a defeat for the other. In fact, as the work of Morris Fiorina and his colleagues has demonstrated

empirically, even the most publicized of culture war issues, abortion, is amenable to compromise in the sense that the majority of Americans prefer a solution somewhere between the two extremes.[32] Cultural conflicts, moreover, can be, as Wald and Leege point out, prescriptive rather than proscriptive, offering ideas about how we ought to live as well as insisting on punishment for those whom we presume to live wrongly. And just because someone cares deeply about an issue such as abortion or gay rights does not mean an automatic adherence to single-issue politics: people care about many things that can be pursued in many different ways. Like Bette Novit Evans, Wald and Leege picture the United States as a pluralistic society with many inputs and outputs. It is precisely this pluralism that allows cultural politics the space to operate as other forms of politics, thereby avoiding the potential for violent conflict.

Writing from within the tradition of normative political theory, Nancy Rosenblum comes to a similar conclusion in her chapter for this volume (see chapter 12). How should a liberal democratic society accommodate the views of strong religious believers? The answers given by political theorists tend to congregate around two kinds of responses. One, which Rosenblum calls the logic of congruence, claims that a democratic polity requires groups that are themselves democratic to function well. Associations are, from this point of view, training grounds for the obligations of democratic citizenship. Through our participation in the groups that compose civil society, we learn to get along with others and to see the world from a broader perspective. The problem with strong religious associations is that they place little or no emphasis on this kind of democratic responsibility and for this reason do not encourage liberal democratic civic virtues. Particular policy prescriptions follow from this perspective; we ought, for example, not to grant exemptions to religious groups from general requirements, such as not engaging in racial or gender discrimination, that apply to all other groups. Democracy treats all of its citizens equally. Just as we should not discriminate against religion, we should not discriminate in favor of it either.

Against this view Rosenblum discusses what she calls the logic of autonomy. Believers exist in two worlds: this one, in which they find themselves inevitably engaged with their fellow citizens, but another as well in which their obligations are to God. Democracy must make room for those with strong faith commitments because if does not accord respect to their beliefs, it violates things that those citizens consider sacred, and it loses the capacity of witness and judgment that strong believers bring to the affairs of the day. We should think of religious groups as semiautonomous in the sense that they ought to be free to govern their own affairs as much as possible. Policy implications follow from this view as well: if society in general is committed to the principle of gender equality but one of its

constituent groups prohibits women from entering the clergy, the group ought to be allowed to fulfill its religious mission as it best sees fit.

From the standpoint of democratic citizenship, there are problems with both perspectives, which Rosenblum explores at length. She nonetheless believes that although liberal political philosophers are generally sympathetic to the logic of congruence, American democracy can tolerate a certain degree of autonomy. As befits the themes explored in this volume, Rosenblum's conclusion is more empirical than theoretical. She does not search for a solution that would satisfy Kantian principles of universality in the sense that they would be correct for all times and places. Instead, in Tocquevillian fashion, she argues that American religion at this time and place is sufficiently moderate, and that American pluralism at this time and place is sufficiently vigorous, not to be threatened by demands for autonomy. Because all religions in America are minority religions, more respect for autonomy can be granted than if one religion were a majority one.

When answers to philosophical conundrums are based on empirical factors, those conditions can change, in which case the solution will have to change as well. But there is little prospect for any of the conditions discussed by Rosenblum to change in a direction that would work against her reasoning: American religion is likely to become even more diverse in the future, and the constitutional rules under which we operate resist changes in a more unitary direction. The research conducted by many of the task force members, moreover, suggests that the high point of Christian Right influence over U.S. politics has been reached. Even if the culture war continues, it is unlikely to expand. There can be little doubt that the extremist politics produced by the culture war proved to be a challenge for American democracy. And there can be little doubt that this challenge was met.

Conclusion

Scholarship on religion has now become something of a growth industry in American political science, a development that came late but, given the importance of religion in the world, is surely welcome. We hope that the work of the APSA Task Force on Religion and Democracy in the United States will stimulate even more work in the area. But our purpose in this book—indeed the purpose of our task force—was neither to synthesize existing research nor to call for the expansion of research into new areas. Instead, we wanted to take stock of what political scientists have learned about the role religion has played in American democracy and to share those findings with the general educated reading public.

In retrospect, I believe that what stand out from the Task Force's work are both the existence of widespread agreement on the dangers that

religious zeal poses for democracy as well as the strong resources that American democracy has at its disposal to ward off those dangers. It is an undeniable fact that the United States contains a considerable number of people who have deep religious convictions and who, at least in recent years, have sought to influence public policy in accord with those convictions, in many cases by becoming activists in and voters for the political party that sought their support. If you are one of these people, you are likely to believe that, in bringing your convictions to the public square, you are exercising your rights. If you happen to be a secular person who believes that people of faith are ignorant and misguided, however, you will likely fear this development and be worried that your rights will be violated if religious-inspired majorities impose their way of life on people with whom they disagree. The only way a democratic society can include both is by finding ways for them to live together.

Our work suggests that such ways do exist. From the standpoint of democracy, it is far better to have citizens with strong views inside the tent, even if conflict results, than angry and alienated ones outside, where the potential for violence always looms. We have found strong believers, especially on the conservative Christian end of the political spectrum, to be more intolerant and less willing to compromise than the ideal of democracy citizenry expects. For this reason, our findings resemble those of 1950s social science, which was also concerned with intolerance and sectarianism.[33] In those earlier years, liberals, having witnessed totalitarianism in the 1930s, war in the 1940s, and McCarthyism in the 1950s, properly wondered whether intolerant and authoritarian views were compatible with democracy. Should liberals today share their concerns? After all, not only can one still find intolerant people in the United States, but, unlike in 1964, when conservatives lost their bid for national office, they have at points controlled all branches of government forty years later.

Yet the very success of conservative politics is what makes the participation of deeply religious individuals less of a threat to democracy than many earlier social scientists believed. A recurring theme running through these chapters finds that institutions are important for shaping individual attitudes. Much as de Tocqueville suggested, the institutions of democracy further democratic citizenship. They do not necessarily do so by making everyone a liberal or a democrat; they are not strong shapers of individual character in that sense. Their more important roles are two: religion encourages people to develop personal self-confidence; and religious political activism leads to the acceptance of the need for bargaining and compromise. A liberal democracy does not need, and should not want, all its citizens to be liberal democrats. Its political needs are more modest than that: it requires citizens who want to win but who have learned that from time to time that they must suffer defeat.

The 2008 presidential election, which brought the Democratic Party back to power and signified a shift from conservatism to liberalism, suggests that the highpoint of the Christian Right has passed. Will those who sought influence through their strong religious convictions accept their political defeat? The question remains at this point an impossible one to answer; we are in no better position than anyone else to glimpse into the future. But based on our research and deliberations, we are persuaded that although what Wald and Leege call the politics of cultural differences can be intense, American democracy can accommodate them. We should be thankful that in the last few decades of the twentieth century religious Americans made demands on their political system. Some of their demands were met, and others were not. But democratic rules of the game need to be challenged so that democracy can be reinvigorated. They were and it has been.

Notes

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