

Religion and the Political Imagination

Edited by

Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
Introduction: multiple secularities	1
IRA KATZNELSON AND GARETH STEDMAN JONES	
1 Secularisation: religion and the roots of innovation in the political sphere	23
INGRID CREPPELL	
2 Regarding toleration and liberalism: considerations from the Anglo-Jewish experience	46
IRA KATZNELSON	
3 The Enlightenment, the late eighteenth-century revolutions and their aftermath: the ‘secularising’ implications of Protestantism?	70
DAVID M. THOMPSON	
4 In the lands of the Ottomans: religion and politics	90
KAREN BARKEY	
5 The Russian Orthodox Church and secularisation	112
GEOFFREY HOSKING	
6 The American experience of secularisation	132
MICHAEL O’BRIEN	
7 French Catholic political thought from the deconfessionalisation of the state to the recognition of religious freedom	150
EMILE PERREAU-SAUSSINE	

8	Religion and the origins of socialism GARETH STEDMAN JONES	171
9	From 1848 to Christian Democracy CHRISTOPHER CLARK	190
10	The disciplining of the religious conscience in nineteenth-century British politics JONATHAN PARRY	214
11	Colonial secularism and Islamism in North India: a relationship of creativity HUMEIRA IQTIDAR	235
12	The 1960s HUGH MCLEOD	254
13	Gendering secularisation: locating women in the transformation of British Christianity in the 1960s CALLUM G. BROWN	275
14	Does constitutionalisation lead to secularisation? ANAT SCOLNICOV	295
15	Europe's uneasy marriage of secularism and Christianity since 1945 and the challenge of contemporary religious pluralism JYTTE KLAUSEN	314
16	On thick and thin religion: some critical reflections on secularisation theory SUDIPTA KAVIRAJ	336
	<i>Index</i>	356

Introduction: multiple secularities

Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones

The brilliant sculptor Pietro Torrigiano mutilated a terracotta Pietà he had executed in early sixteenth-century Spain. He was convicted by the Inquisition for defiling a sacred image, and was imprisoned in Seville until he died in 1528.¹ There are moments and places where artists can still be persecuted for violating religious norms. That, for instance, is the situation of Maqbool Fida Husain, a leading nonagenarian and Muslim Indian contemporary painter who lives in Dubai, afraid to return home because of the controversy that surrounds his nude depictions of Hindu goddesses. Think also of the Taliban's wilful destruction of the monumental Buddhas of Bamyan in 2001, said to be idols forbidden by sharia law. But such instances are in the main shocking exceptions.

This book treats religion and the political imagination in the period spanning this transformation. Until quite recently, a rather simple story prevailed. 'Secularisation' purported to describe a universal transition from a traditional religious picture of the world to a rational conception. Every society was thought to be caught up in this global trajectory, even if each progressed along it at different speeds. In this approach, the division and differentiation of church and state into separate spheres was identified with a progressive separation of politics from religion, an overall shift from a religious to a rational and scientific mentality, and a waning acceptance of religious authority. This perspective has, for some time, lost its capacity to persuade. And yet, something profound did happen. How should it be understood, studied and analysed?

Just as it used to be asked, if capitalism was of a piece why were the working classes it called into life so diverse?,² so it may also be wondered

¹ Sir William Stirling Maxwell, *Annals of the artists of Spain*, vol. 1 (London: John Nimmo, 1891), pp. 125–7. Vasari gives the date of Torrigiano's death as 1522, but it is more conventionally given as 1528.

² Aristide Zolberg, 'How many exceptionalisms?', in Ira Katznelson and Aristide Zolberg (eds.), *Working-class formation: nineteenth-century patterns in western Europe and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 397. See also the chapters by Klausen and Scolnicov in this book.

why the supposedly universal process of secularisation has generated such varied relationships between religion and the political imagination. Liberated from the constraints imposed by this once-prevalent linear theory, this book presents a portrait of multiple forms of secularity by investigating a wide spectrum of interactions between religion and politics. Focusing on this borderland, the case histories found in this volume probe its shifting locations, character and permeability, paying particular attention to the implications of what John Rawls once termed 'fair terms of social cooperation between citizens' who are 'divided by profound doctrinal conflict' involving 'a transcendent element not admitting of compromise'.³

I

History has played a joke upon once-vibrant expectations that religion would wane as modern life advanced. Religion still possesses a powerful hold upon political imaginations. Ever since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, questions concerning the relationship between religion and politics have acquired an urgency unknown during the preceding century. This may be the result of a discernible global bifurcation in the pattern of relations between church and state. Throughout much of North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and North America, secular forms of polity have been under pressure. The terrorist attacks of 2001 in New York, 2005 in London and Bali, and 2008 in Mumbai have highlighted a worldwide resurgence of extreme theocratic forms of Islamism. These events have been accompanied by the growth of aggressive forms of Hindu nationalism and by the religious extremism of some Jewish settlers in Palestine. During this period, the Christian right rose to become a formidable policy-making force in the United States. At the same time, important North American social movements, notably those that have concerned civil rights and the environment, have also found important support in both mainstream and evangelical churches; while in Latin America an analogous role has been played by radical movements inspired by liberation theology.

By contrast, in much of western and southern Europe, religious observance and compliance with church doctrine, whether in Catholic or Protestant regions, has continued a decline, visible since the 1960s and not as yet showing any clear signs of reversal. In these areas,

³ John Rawls, *Political liberalism: expanded edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. xxv, xxvi.

churches have steadily lost power and influence, and the trend has been one of loosening ever further the residual ties that connect states with the inherited Christian cultures over which they preside. Most European countries now proclaim their pluralist rather than their Protestant or Catholic identities. Those regions, in which large parts of the population still define themselves in confessional terms, Ulster Protestants or Polish Catholics for example, appear aberrant or anachronistic.

But even in those parts of Europe most marked by a historic decline in the attractiveness, influence and robustness of the region's historic churches, the reduction of religion to a dwindling private commitment has been accompanied by its vivid reappearance in the public sphere. No longer just a legacy of times past, the arrival of newcomers with different and deep religious commitments has raised questions long thought dormant, including issues about public dress, the content of schooling, offensive imagery or speech, and religious architecture. There has also been pointed disagreement about the admission of a non-Christian state into the European Community, and about references to Christianity in the preamble to the proposed constitution of the European Union.⁴ Even here, the current century cannot be identified as fully secular.

The rise of political forms of militant religious sectarianism, the stubborn resistance of religion to predictions of an ineluctable disappearance, the patently incorrect ideas about a necessary linear religious falling off, and the vibrant presence of religious issues in public life as subjects of political dispute have manifestly put into question an inherited and once virtually unchallenged set of historical and comparative assumptions that equated modernity with secularisation. The historical narrative underpinning this assumption that religion ultimately could not thrive, or even survive, was built upon sweeping post-Enlightenment expectations put forward in the theories of nineteenth-century Positivists, especially Auguste Comte, with roots going back to the beginnings of the Enlightenment criticism of revealed religion – to Spinoza, Bayle, Voltaire, Hume and others. These thinkers had targeted supernatural belief as forms of superstition and ecclesiastical institutions as unwanted rivals to secular state authority. Science and the secularisation of everyday assumptions about the world, it was assumed, were progressively replacing religion and magic, just as

⁴ For a thoughtful overview of recent trends, including the role religion continues to play in the life of Europe's Christian majority, see Grace Davie, 'Religion in Europe in the 21st century: the factors to take into account', *European Journal of Sociology* 47/2 (2006), 271–96.

knowledge supplanted superstition and dogma. Religion originated in mankind's fear of the unknown. Science was the hallmark of disciplined curiosity about the world. Religion would recede as knowledge increased.

From the late nineteenth century this interpretation of the world was carried forward by social scientists. It was thought to be associated with the West's rise to global dominance through the rationalisation of its commercial transactions, its social relations and its governmental forms. By the early twentieth century, this orientation to religion within the emerging social sciences had become familiar. Variants of Comte's position were shared by most of the era's leading thinkers, including Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. In the form in which it was depicted by Émile Durkheim, the first truly modern sociologist of religion, the process of social differentiation and its impact on the reduction of religion became the prevailing orthodoxy. In the most influential account of this process, Max Weber's *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* of 1904, the meticulous Calvinist accounting of time and expenditure, originally tethered to the promise of salvation, was said to provide underpinnings for the abstinent and calculative mentality of early capitalism. That in turn supplied the crucial psychic component at the core of the extraordinary expansion of commercial and industrial capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁵ A half-century later, theories that projected a further, even inevitable, compartmentalisation and decline of religion in an increasingly disenchanting and differentiated world had achieved nearly canonical status.⁶

⁵ When canon law held sway in the West, secularisation referred 'to the legal (canonical) process whereby a "religious" person left the cloister to return to the "world" and its temptations, becoming thereby a "secular" person'. In analogous fashion, secularisation for Weber entailed the migration of such a religious calling to the worldly sphere. José Casanova, *Public religions in the modern world* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 13.

⁶ So much so, Casanova comments, that 'the theory of secularization may be the only theory which was able to attain a truly paradigmatic status within the modern social sciences... Indeed, the consensus was such that not only did the theory remain uncontested but apparently it was not even necessary to test it, since everybody took it for granted.' Casanova, *Public religions*, p. 17. An account of this intellectual history linking antagonism to religion and the birth of modern social science is provided by Jeffrey K. Hadden, 'Towards desacralizing secularization theory', *Social Forces* 65 (1987), 587–611. A fascinating intellectual history that lies just to the side of this book is the debate between Karl Löwith and Hans Blumenberg about the status of secularisation in the birth of modernity: See Karl Löwith, *Meaning in history* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); Hans Blumenberg, *The legitimacy of the modern age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983). For Löwith, the modern idea of progress represents a 'secularisation' of biblical eschatology. For Blumenberg, this central modern idea was not an extension of traditional religious positions but a novel departure, a secular answer to the same zone of questions once answered by religion. 'What mainly occurred in the process that is interpreted as secularization', Blumenberg wrote, '... should be described

The chapters brought together in this volume have been written by historians, sociologists and analysts of politics. All move well beyond the formerly influential ideas about religion and society, church and state, prevalent in the human sciences up until a generation ago.⁷ These chapters put forward not one grand historical sweep, but a diversity of paths; not one narrative, but many. They resist even residual inclusive claims, those, for example, which argue that religion has lost its efficacious capacity to motivate thought and action under modern conditions, that religion has been permanently reduced to the zone of the private outside the public sphere in much of the world, or that religion has come to reflect deeper and more important causal factors like material patterns, the diffusion of scientific knowledge, or the growing capacity of human beings to control their natural and social environments. These chapters point in fresh directions to suggest how comparative and historically informed studies of religion and politics might help us understand the interplay between religion and the political imagination under modern conditions.

But the aim of this book is not to replace unconvincing theory by a demonstration of empirical diversity. To be sure, the instances discussed penetratingly call into question the position Charles Taylor has called ‘mainstream secularisation’.⁸ Much of the raw material upon which that thesis was built was a stylised history of the seventeenth-century scientific revolution (pre-eminently the story of Galileo) and the discredit or abandonment of ‘sacred history’ which followed during the time of the Enlightenment. But even within its own terms this story is contradictory. In England, for example, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, there developed a strong alliance between science and a Christian-based natural philosophy, and there proved to be many ways there, and elsewhere, for Darwinism and Christianity to coexist. The United States shows how it is possible for an explicitly secular order, grounded not in divine right but in popular sovereignty, to house an

not as the *transposition* of authentically theological contents into secularized alienation from their origin, but rather as the *reoccupation* of answer positions that had become vacant and whose corresponding questions could not be eliminated’, p. 65. See also the influential argument put forward by Carl Schmitt, that all political concepts are derived from theology. Carl Schmitt, *Political theology: four chapters on the concept of sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁷ The book’s chapters make no pretence of covering the whole world. There is no discussion of East Asia, the Middle East, Latin America or Africa. Full coverage, though, is not the book’s purpose.

⁸ See Charles Taylor, *A secular age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 431, for the position entailing claims that religious faith and practice have weakened and that there has been a contraction to the capability, ambition and effects of religious institutions as a consequence of social differentiation, rationalisation and social knowledge associated with modernity.

uncommonly religious population and to be exceptionally hospitable to religious vitality. This is the case despite the existence of strong distinctions between the public and the private, the religious and the secular, and despite an arguably increasing commitment to the modern values of individualism, voluntarism and pluralism grown over time. Unlike France, and much of Europe, where 'the Enlightenment has been configured as a *freedom from belief* . . . in the United States, the Enlightenment became something very different . . . a *freedom to believe*'.⁹ This predominantly, but not exclusively, American experience has enabled the emergence of worlds in which doctrines, organisations, forms of worship and religious practices are only loosely coupled, with the effect that the meaning of religion itself becomes open to a plethora of possibilities.

Recognising the inadequacy of once-dominant views, the chapters in this volume press forward with a critique that has been proceeding ever since David Martin famously objected to secularisation theory as inherently facile, distorting and ideological, suggesting the concept should be purged from the lexicon of social science.¹⁰ The challenge he posed is now well advanced. Many historical studies have now offered caveats and correctives to the mechanical and one-dimensional view.¹¹ Our purpose is less to bury older unsupportable claims than it is to point to more productive theory and to help advance more persuasive ways of

⁹ Davie, 'Religion', 289.

¹⁰ David Martin, 'Towards eliminating the concept of secularisation', in J. Gould (ed.), *Penguin survey of the social sciences* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965); reprinted in David Martin, *The religious and the secular: studies in secularization* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969). The effort to rethink secularisation was motivated in part by new empirical work that raised questions about the adequacy of traditional views. Especially important was Gerhard Lenski's *The religious factor* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961). For a contemporaneous overview, identifying six different meanings and calling for a moratorium on the use of the term, see Larry Shiner, 'The concept secularization in empirical research', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 6 (1967), 202–20.

¹¹ An important instance is Hugh McLeod's *Religion and the people of western Europe, 1789–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). McLeod stresses how variations to relationships among churches, urbanisation, clerical and anti-clerical impulses, and political disputations shaped the variety of outcomes. Three years later, an influential collection edited by Philip Hammond, *The sacred in a secular age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), called for a reassessment as 'in a period of religious decline the sacred seems remarkably alive' (p. 4). A similar point has been made by José Casanova, who asks, 'who still believes in the *myth* of secularization', in the simple form of the steady and sure subsumption of the secular by the profane? *Public religions*, p. 11. Writing in this spirit, the sociologist of religion Rodney Stark has offered 'final words . . . as secularization is laid to rest'. Rodney Stark, 'Secularization, R.I.P.', *Sociology of Religion* 60 (1999), 249–73.

bringing together studies of religious change in the post-medieval world with accounts of political developments.

Such a venture, though, cannot proceed without grappling with the issues designated by secularisation and the predicaments for religion that it has identified. Not without a touch of irony, just over a decade after he counselled doing away with the concept, David Martin published a ‘general theory of secularization’ arguing that however much the too standard version fails to account for the array of modern experiences and forms, secularisation should be considered as a contextual variable, a feature of modern life that helps constitute a diversity of patterns. The religious universe of faiths, theologies and institutions did not remain constant; it developed – sometimes receding, marked by a withdrawal from churches and denominations, and sometimes marked by distinctly increased commitments and participation – within the ambit of the varieties of modern politics, economics and society. The aim, from this vantage-point, is not to decide whether secularisation exists or not, but to better specify the factors that affect the particular characteristics of religion at different times and places.¹²

This book, likewise, does not abjure any and all notions of secularisation. Rather than abandon the term and its questions entirely, it accepts as a point of departure Taylor’s observation that ‘belief in God isn’t quite the same thing in 1500 and 2000’. With belief and religious practice having lost their compulsory status, we have been taken ‘from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others ... Belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives.’¹³ These changes, moreover, came not only from outside religion, but from inside as well, especially through impulses towards reform. After the Reformation, all Christian faiths, including Catholicism against its own fierce preferences, became denominations.

It is this epochal change in the standing and character of religion in the western world – a change that transcended the way medieval thinkers conceptualised the division between the religious and the secular, and

¹² David Martin, *A general theory of secularisation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969). For a discussion of the development of his views, see David Martin, ‘The secularisation issue: prospect and retrospect’, *British Journal of Sociology* 42 (1991), 465–74. A notable contribution Martin makes is that of insisting that theory focus on differences despite similarities, rather than merely the other way around. A more recent overview along these lines building on Martin’s work is David Lyon, ‘Rethinking secularization: retrospect and prospect’, *Review of Religious Research* 26 (1985), 228–43.

¹³ Taylor, *Secular age*, pp. 13, 3.

modified the profound capacity religious organisations and doctrines possess to organise, manage and control patterns of life, thought and behaviour in the worldly realm – that orients Taylor’s magisterial rumination on what he calls ‘the secular age’. This era is distinct from times past because religion and belief have become options among other possibilities even in the most stringently devout of places, if sometimes only by means of personal withdrawal and private affirmation. While the chronology of this shift distinguishing between then and now is not fixed or the same across locations, and while religious cultures were heterogeneous before and after, the distinction between ‘yesterday’ and ‘today’ broadly holds. And there is no turning back, no prospect of a return to yesterday.

The instances the chapters chronicle lie inside this movement starting off from what Taylor calls a ‘naïve’ circumstance, in which it was not necessary to think about religion as a distinct set of commitments and practices, and where a penumbra of faith existed as a background condition for all, and ending with a ‘reflective’ framework in which God, belief, and the encompassing and directive powers of religion no longer could be taken for granted. With this transformation, claims of religious organisations, clergy and doctrines largely came to be confined to a distinct domain, but not one ever entirely divorced from nation states and their politics.¹⁴ This grand change, moreover, affected the status of religion not only in the West, but in areas of the globe touched by western conquest, by opening new options and patterns of contestation.

Before the transformation designated by secularisation was set in train, Christians, Muslims and Jews in Europe, North Africa and the Ottoman Empire had no option but to live encompassing and distinctively Christian, Muslim and Jewish lives, while conversion could rightfully move only in one direction. The existence of other faiths could be recognised, but in any given location and political space only one faith could dominate, separated by high walls from the others. After the transformation, plurality and the growth of choice became hallmarks of religious life, not in a manner that was identical across instances, and with no necessary diminution of private and public religious life.

Religion was supplanted in many places by other bases for political legitimacy. Across a range of regimes, modern states asserted their distinctive standing, rejecting claims of supremacy or control by the church over the state. Of course such claims had often been resisted by

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

kings and courts, but with the Reformation's insistence on voluntarism and liberty of conscience, the impulse towards separate or at least highly distinctive spheres was significantly strengthened. Modern states of all kinds ordinarily do not utilise religion or the clergy to ground their claims to be sovereign over people and territory, to recruit personnel, to organise their ensemble of institutions, or motivate their normative stories. In this way, the frontiers of religion and politics became more varied and more open, and more charged as sites of conflict and uncertainty. Even in the first explicitly secular constitutional state in North America, the status of Christianity in public life has been a subject of controversy and division ever since its foundation.

An affirmation of a specific historical conjuncture and a large-scale adjustment to the condition, place and possibilities for religion designated by secularisation need not imply a 'once upon a time' fixed treatment of the pre-modern period anterior to the vast changes of modern life. Such an orientation is present, for example, in the idea that once there was a moment when to be a Christian and to be a citizen was the same thing. This wooden supposition is undermined and complicated, among many circumstances, by the diversity of beliefs in late Antiquity, by the presence of the Jews in various parts of medieval Europe and by the continual battle against heresy which preoccupied the medieval church. Indeed, the idea that all citizens were Christian was always more of a brute political imposition (the continuity between Christianity and the imperial cult of Antiquity) than a sociological reality. What this suggests more generally is that 'secularisation' should not be understood as a dominant and all-encompassing trajectory, but rather as one component of a larger and more contradictory history, which contains moments of sacralisation as well.

In rejecting one-directional views of secularisation and in recognising the vast expansion of possibilities, Taylor rightly takes care to reject its mirror image – the idea that religion has remained a constant despite massive transformations to how people live. 'On the contrary', he writes:

the present scene, shorn of earlier forms, is different and unrecognisable to any earlier epoch. It is marked by an unheard of pluralism of outlooks, religious and non- and anti-religious, in which the number of possible positions seems to be increasing without end. It is marked in consequence by a great deal of fragilisation, and hence movement between different outlooks. It naturally depends on one's milieu, but it is harder and harder to find a niche where either belief or unbelief go without saying ... Religious belief now exists in a field where there is also a wide range of other spiritual options. But the

interesting story is not simply one of decline, but also of a new placement of the sacred or spiritual in relation to individual and social life.¹⁵

This, too, is secularisation, but secularisation with a difference. Spiritual life was not slain by modern conditions. It was reconstituted, reformed and recomposed in a field of possibilities that range from self-conscious and powerful reassertions of orthodox religion at one pole to militant unbelief and laicism at the other. The large space in-between has been occupied by once unheard-of combinations and configurations of lived religion.¹⁶

At issue is not whether but how religion survives, acts and influences. Understanding secularisation to compose not a single and global trajectory, but a congerie of mechanisms and social processes, the authors of the chapters in this book specify what happened, and consider the particular conditions, pressures and actions that shaped those results. By encouraging historically grounded ways to approach religion as a contingent and variable political phenomenon, they do more than call simple linear understandings into question, though they do that sharply. By constructing these instances analytically, the chapters widen the scope of our understanding of secularisation as a heterogeneous process, and encourage a more precise and more comparative approach to studies of religion and the political imagination that appreciates how secularisation broadened religion's variety. Located at the junction of history, social science and political thought, the chapters privilege questions that link the dynamics of religious change and diversity to the character and actions of political regimes, and they assess the implications of those relationships for key outcomes, especially prospects for toleration.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 437. Taylor's reflective history, which reminds us that secularity does not imply the absence but the diversification of religion and religious possibility, stops short of offering guidelines that might shape comparative-historical research. *A secular age*, moreover, is concerned in the main with themes of immanence and transcendence, with religious experience and questions about human convictions, with gains and losses for cultures as religious life has shifted in tone and character, and with the narrowing of the self and the flattening of the good under modern conditions. It is concerned less with matters that concern politics and the state, or the consequences of a variety of patterns of interaction between religious ideas and institutions and political regimes for religious persecution and intergroup toleration, each of which is a central theme of this book.

¹⁶ This process also eroded older possibilities. As religious plurality advanced with the Reformation, the central ritual of the Mass was abolished for millions of Europeans; dance, drama and music associated with worship were suppressed; and various rites of passage were downgraded. New churches insisted on more demanding tests of religious adherence. Catholicism became less open, and more doctrinaire. Impulses of reason and control established tests for valid thought, tolerable practices and acceptable forms of material and symbolic expression.

II

Among the unpersuasive features of the older approach to secularisation was a vagueness about timing and a lack of focused empirical investigation into its particular circumstances. But starting with the Reformation there were important milestones that stood out clearly, including the two earliest instances of the separation of church and state accomplished during the American and French Revolutions, followed half a century later by a supposedly terminal crisis of Christian belief provoked by the appearance of Charles Darwin's *The origin of species* in 1859, whose theory of evolution left nothing for God to do. The process of secularisation understood in this way was seen to be well on its way to completion by the end of the nineteenth century. For by then, the impact of doctrinal crisis had become intertwined with major social and economic changes, which were thought to have shattered inherited habits of religious adherence. Industrialisation meant families massed together in factory towns with few churches and little of the traditional influence or control formerly exercised by the clergy. Mass migrations from country to city after 1850, it was argued, resulted in an increasingly close association between the church and a reactionary rump of landowners and aristocrats.

Leaving aside the many points of historical detail on which this narrative might be questioned – what stands out most obviously is its acceptance of two fundamental and now certainly unsustainable assumptions. The first is that an allegedly global process can be equated with an overwhelmingly European story. The second, an assumption that goes back to the beginning of the positivist approach, is that politics is a second-order phenomenon, an effect rather than a cause of the intellectual, or social and economic developments which precede it.

In the first case, that of the European story that underpins the supposed universalism of the secularisation process, it is clear that in present circumstances not only does it not apply to most of the world of Islam, but equally that it fails to capture what is most distinctive about the religious and political culture of the United States. The conviction that there was an identity between (western) Europe, North America and modernity was strikingly exemplified by the case of Max Weber. For it was on the occasion of a visit to the industrial abattoirs of Chicago that Weber was inspired to put forward the vision of rationalisation found in *The Protestant ethic*. This idea of the New World as extension or culmination of the Old is problematic, most especially in relation to religion.

The inadequacy of the second assumption is strikingly highlighted by the different circumstances and effects attending the two earliest instances of the separation of church and state, the United States in

1791, with the First Amendment to the Constitution which forbade a religious establishment and protected the right to free religious expression unencumbered by the state,¹⁷ and France with the Constitution of 1795 guaranteeing free worship, and specifying that the Republic would not pay for any expenses of religion. Politics, above all that concerning the different inherited relationships between church and state, played a central part in explaining contrasts between Europe and North America. It is no less crucial in accounting for the diversity of religious relationships in other parts of the world.

In the United States, the division between church and state, which took place soon after the framing of the American Constitution, was, as Michael O'Brien's chapter reveals, relatively unconflictual. It arose, not from a desire to secularise the Constitution, but in order to placate the opposition to church establishments from the religious themselves. It is important to remember that separation only applied at a federal level; twelve out of the thirteen states retained religious tests for office through into the 1830s, and the country was widely regarded normatively and practically as Christian.¹⁸ In effect, the Federal Constitution represented a stand-off between different religious groups; in the nineteenth century, between Protestant groups. In the course of the twentieth century, it came gradually to encompass Catholics and Jews into the polity; and towards the end of the century and much more tentatively, other faiths as well. But even now, political leadership is virtually confined to declared believers; a public admission of the lack of a faith is effectively a disqualification for office. From the beginning, separation proceeded upon the virtually unquestioned assumption that America was and would remain a Christian commonwealth, and, for the majority of Americans, it still does. It remains the 'City on the Hill', still so often invoked by American presidents. Far from marginalising religion, therefore, the effect of the separation of church and state in United States, as

¹⁷ On the persistent and inescapable tension between these two requirements, see Jesse H. Chopper, 'The religion clauses of the First Amendment: reconciling the conflict', *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* 41 (1980), 673–701.

¹⁸ An important summary of this matter is Carl Zollman, 'Religious liberty in American law, I', *Michigan Law Review* 17 (1919), 335–77; Zollman discusses the consequences in such then legitimate practices as laws against blasphemy and Sunday closings in 'Religious liberty in American law, II', *Michigan Law Review* 17 (1919), 456–78. A more recent treatment of the same issues can be found in Philip Hamburger, *Separation of church and state* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). For a discussion of religious tests for office, see Daniel Dreisbach, 'The constitution's forgotten religion clause: reflections on the Article VI religious test ban', *Journal of Church and State* 38 (1996), 261–95.

both Marx and Tocqueville were to note, was to produce an unparalleled flourishing of religion in American civil society.

As Ingrid Creppell emphasises in her chapter, a clear distinction should be made between ‘political’ secularisation and what she calls ‘existential’ secularisation. It was as often the religious themselves who pressed for political secularisation – the removal of a specific confessional foundation for the authority and legitimacy of government and the state. But pressure to separate civil from ecclesiastical establishments did not mean the separation of religion from politics. In Britain, as Jonathan Parry’s chapter reveals, the movement for the disestablishment of the Church of England, ultimately unsuccessful but particularly strong between the 1830s and 1880s, was similarly led by Protestant Dissenters, not as a means of producing a secular society, but as a way of freeing religion from the corrupting trappings of power. This was a demand made by religious radicals, which went back to Wycliffe and the Lollards in the fourteenth century. For this reason, the demand for the separation of church and state, conventionally seen as a sign of secularisation in general, was often no such thing.

In France, a country, in which the separation of church and state also raised the question of the separation of religion and politics (although this had not been the original intention), or even the replacement of Christianity by a post-Christian creed (republicanism or the Cult of the Supreme Being), the question was altogether more traumatic and intractable. The attempt to reform the church by decreeing that the clergy be elected by the people and that their loyalty to the new civil constitution of clergy be reinforced by an oath was the main reason for the crown’s resistance to the revolution and became the justification of its rallying call to its supporters in the country. Louis XVI was strongly opposed to the reforms in the status of the church between 1789 and 1791. In June 1791, he and the royal family attempted to escape across the borders of France, but he was halted at Varennes. He left behind a document denouncing all the changes in the relation between church and state since the storming of the Bastille in 1789. The royal family’s escape and recapture helped to provoke the declaration of the republic, the intervention of foreign powers and the radicalisation of the revolution. It led to civil war and the execution of the monarch. Thereafter, Christianity itself was displaced and in 1793–4 the Cult of Reason was celebrated in Notre Dame. Robespierre’s Cult of the Supreme Being of the summer of 1794 was conceived as a moderate alternative to the Cult of Reason.

In the aftermath of Robespierre’s fall, church and state were wholly separated and an uneasy truce proclaimed. But it was only with

Napoleon's Concordat of 1801 renewing the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church, that the issue was temporarily stilled. As the chapter by Gareth Stedman Jones suggests, socialism in France was one offshoot of this conflict; Catholic ultramontaniam, as Emile Perreau-Saussine argues, was another. The place of the church in French national life and the possibility of its coexistence with a French Republic dominated French politics through to the Third Republic, to the definitive separation of church and state in 1905, and arguably through to the fall of France and Pétain's Vichy regime during World War II.

After 1848, the church turned its back on liberalism, rationalism and its former participation in the administration of the nation state. In its place, the church publicly proclaimed its ultramontaniam, its celebration of the miraculous (both at Lourdes and on the question of the Immaculate Conception), and its support for ecclesiastical hierarchy and papal infallibility. France was now polarised between a positivist or socialist-based republicanism and an explicitly dogmatic and anti-liberal church. Looked at from the perspective of conventional theories of secularisation, the church's reaction might have been construed as disastrous. But as the chapters by Chris Clark and Emile Perreau-Saussine both in different ways argue, the church's response was far from ineffective. In large parts of France, the reforms of the Revolution, the church's changing political status and its militant opposition to rationalism and republicanism did not fundamentally damage its position in French society. At a village level, its newfound endorsement of local folk culture noticeably helped it in the 1850–1950 period. Furthermore, its unambiguously reactionary stance in theological terms was accompanied by the development of modern means of communication, the founding of new confessional parties and an active engagement with organised labour. In France as elsewhere in western Europe, there was a precipitate decline in religious observance from the 1960s. But before that, in the twenty years following World War II, the French Church, forced to adopt a more positive stance towards political democracy, had shared in the growth of Christian Democratic mass parties.

Attempts to redraw the boundaries between religion and politics, church and state in other European states were sometimes no less bloodthirsty, and scarcely less conflictual, than in France. The Russian Revolution of 1917, as Geoffrey Hosking recounts, followed the pattern of the French, and more remotely the English, in its violent overthrow of sacred kingship and its attempt to repress the former priesthood. Furthermore, like the first French Republic, though much more

systematically, it tried to create a new Communist priesthood of its own, detailed to propagate an officially sanctioned 'dialectical materialism', which lasted right down to its collapse at the end of the 1980s. In southern Europe, Spain in particular, the pitting of republican sentiment against the church resulted in a succession of violent episodes, especially the burning of churches in Catalonia in 1909, and culminated in a vicious and bloody civil war in the 1930s. In Italy, the antagonism between the papacy and the newly united state produced an uneasy truce between the religious and liberals or socialists, comparable to that between Catholics and supporters of *démocratie sociale* in France.

In Germany, brought together in 1871 in the newly united Second Reich, Bismarck intensified earlier Prussian attempts to marginalise Catholics in the so-called *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s and 1880s. Secularisation of the constitution only occurred in Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. Even so, the pattern of confessional politics defensively established in the nineteenth century survived into the post-World War II period in the Catholic regions of central and southern Europe. Finally, in Britain, the site of the first overthrow of quasi-sacerdotal kingship, the post-revolution compromise negotiated in 1660 and readjusted in 1689, 1707 and 1827–8 survived. Constitutionally, Britain remains a confessional state.

The danger of applying a decontextualised model of intellectual change on its own is also exemplified in traditional treatments of the place of Darwin in the secularisation story. Popular historians are still apt to make Darwin's *Origin* responsible for a terminal crisis in Christian belief. After Darwin, so the accusation goes, it had to be accepted that men were descended not from angels, but apes. Most of this story is legend, which originated in the polemics of fundamentalist Christian preachers in the southern United States. It is a product of the parochialism of the historiography of the English-speaking world that ignores the fact that Darwin did not cause a crisis of belief in Europe, that he was buried in Westminster Abbey, and that most liberal Christians at least did not find it difficult to reconcile Darwin with their religious beliefs. This is also suggested by the fact that religious observance in Britain reached its peak, not in the Victorian, but in the Edwardian age, 1901–10.

Such an interpretation also fails to take account of a more fundamental challenge to a Christian polity, which had become manifest long before the debate about evolution, and was at its height, not in the 1860s, but in the 1790s. This was the felt threat to Christianity during the period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. During that time, faced by the rise of 'infidelism', dramatised by Tom Paine's pamphlet, *The age of*

reason, religious revival spearheaded by the evangelical movement had been responsible for a large-scale moral and political reformation. It was that period of the evangelical crusade and counter-revolutionary polemic, which had ushered in 'Victorianism' and 'the age of atonement'. Looked at, therefore, in a larger time frame, what Darwin and Darwinism threatened was not an undisturbed and age-old Christianity, but a faith which had been energetically reconstructed in the face of the rationalist and secularist threat posed by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

Traditional accounts of secularisation as a global process appeared to be triumphantly confirmed by the developments of the 1960s. The 1960s were indeed an extraordinary decade. Between 1958 and 1974 religious observance dropped precipitately all over western Europe. According to Hugh McLeod, the importance of the 1960s in the religious history of western Europe can only be compared with that of the 1520s. In this volume, he stresses the centrality of an emphasis upon individual emancipation, the right of individuals to decide for themselves in matters of belief, morals and lifestyles without reference to state, church, employers, parents or neighbourhoods. Fundamental to these changes in behaviour were migration to better-paid employment in the towns, and the general prosperity of wage earners resulting in better-quality housing, new forms of consumer spending and new leisure patterns (holidays abroad, the family as the focus of leisure). Equally, Callum Brown discusses fundamental shifts which occurred in the behaviour of women, not only the impact of the Pill, but the growing participation of married women in the labour market, increasing time spent with a spouse and a corresponding decrease in the importance of neighbourhood activities and accompanying pressures to conform. In village life, rising levels of education challenged religious authority, while the increasing earning power of the young weakened the disciplinary sanctions available to parents and employers.

Finally, there were political and institutional changes of matching importance. Students, in the 1950s still a rather conservative and religiously observant group, were radicalised both by the counter-culture which the new prosperity made possible and by destabilising political events like the Vietnam War. In Britain and elsewhere, the 1960s witnessed a series of liberalising reforms affecting divorce, homosexuality, abortion, school discipline and capital punishment. In the Catholic world, there were even more momentous changes presaged by Vatican II. But by angering conservatives (through the abolition of Latin Mass and a renewed distancing from folk culture), while at the same time thwarting liberal expectations (especially on the questions of clerical marriage and contraception), the Council reforms provoked serious splits in the Catholic world.

The changes of the 1960s were fundamental, and forty to fifty years later show little sign of being reversed. But the relationship between these changes and conventional conceptions of secularisation is less straightforward than might at first appear. In no European state has there been a complete separation of church and state. Instead, individual states have negotiated pacts with dominant national confessions. In return for compliance with or support for existing constitutional and political arrangements, national churches have continued to discharge important social and educational functions and enjoy a privileged position within the state. However strong the principle of *laïcité* in France, the state continues to pay the salaries of all teachers in religious schools. Similarly, in the Netherlands, now one of the most secular of European states, welfare services continue primarily to be the responsibility of religious denominations. Moreover, as Anat Scolnicov demonstrates in her chapter, the European Court has been extremely anxious not to disturb existing relationships between church and state in particular member countries. To a surprising extent, except where the immigration of non-Christian peoples has significantly modified pre-existing residential patterns, the religious map of Europe remains that established by the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. According to Jytte Klausen, Europeans do not think that the church should decide their values, but their behaviour nevertheless remains Christian. Her statistics suggest, for example, that while only 20 per cent of the European population attend a place of worship, 88 per cent belong to a religious denomination. Similarly, in Sweden, while fewer than 50 per cent believe in God, 83 per cent belong to a church. Even when not religious themselves, a large majority of Europeans expect churches to continue to preside over rites of passage, especially weddings and funerals. The growth of a non-Christian population, particularly Hindus and Muslims, in recent times has put these arrangements under increasing pressure. But so far, whether because of conservatism or fear of the electoral consequences, governments have acted with great circumspection and have been reluctant to do more than deal with individual issues as they arise.

Far from presaging the next universal stage in the progress of secularisation, the 1960s really tell us more about a history specific to western Europe. In the period between 1848 and the 1950s, communities based upon confession and class became differentiated from one another by means of churches, political parties, trade unions, religious groups and neighbourhood organisations. Family relationships were crucial for the securing of work, and women played essential roles in tying together neighbourhoods, establishing local forms of reciprocity and enforcing customary expectations. Newfound prosperity, less insecurity of employment

and unanticipated opportunities for mobility, both geographical and social, were primarily responsible for the decline of the various forms of collectivist ethos, whether political or religious, that became visible in the 1960s.

The changes and clashes of the 1960s were also related not so much to questions of religious belief as to questions of religious, moral and political authority. Such questions, as David Thompson's chapter reminds us, had accompanied the history of the Christian Church in Europe, ever since the bishop of Rome had assumed the Roman title of Pontifex Maximus after the proclamation of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire under the Emperor Constantine in AD 364. The relative powers of popes and kings, magistrates and bishops produced recurrent conflict in the Middle Ages, leaving aside crusades against the infidel, growing repression of heresy and periodic violence against the Jews. Luther's emphasis upon scripture rather than the church as the source of truth, and his insistence that there were no intermediaries between God and the individual soul (hence, the priesthood of all believers), brought these conflicts to the centre of the stage.

During the French Revolution, these questions were posed again in the attempt of the National Assembly to place the government of the French Church in the hands of the people. It was the disastrous failure of the revolutionary attempt at reform that helped to generate civil war, de-Christianisation, the Terror and European war. Hence the search for a new *pouvoir spirituel* (spiritual power) capable of replacing the role played by the church under the *Ancien Régime*. The chapter by Gareth Stedman Jones on the place of socialism in the history of religion in Europe argues that the attempt to replace religious and political authority by the authority of science, signalled by the advent of socialism and positivism in the early nineteenth century, was a direct response to this revolutionary crisis.

In Europe, socialism, ultramontane Catholicism and nationalism were three of the most distinctive and lasting responses to the French Revolution, together with various combinations among them. In France after 1848, a particular combination between socialism and republican nationalism, *démocratie sociale*, dominated the politics of the left. In Ireland and Poland where nationalist movements were bent upon breaking away from large multinational empires, Catholicism became the primary form of national identity. Socialism was also notable because of its ability to enlist mass support for creeds which ignored the boundaries of the nation state. For this reason, it is not surprising that both these creeds clashed with major nineteenth-century programmes of state building: in Germany and Italy for example. The conflict was particularly clear in the post-1871 German Reich, where Bismarck waged an open battle against Catholics

and socialists as *Reichsfeinde* (enemies of the Reich). Bismarck's principal parliamentary allies were the National Liberal Party, of which Max Weber was a prominent and committed member. Weber's equation between Protestantism, rationality and modernity was very much in tune with the secular liberal and Protestant assumptions, which underpinned the arguments of the *Kulturkampf*.

The supposedly global developments of the 1960s, therefore, were the outcome of the crumbling of distinctively European antagonisms and polarities. Once the rest of the world is taken into account, there is a strong case for turning this argument on its head. Far from providing the embodiment of a universal model, the Christian religion and the history of Christianity in Europe is one particular and rather unrepresentative case. The emphasis upon creed found in Christianity is not shared by many other religions, in which practices and rituals are considered more important. As Sudipta Kaviraj argues in discussing the 'thick' religion of his grandfather in Bengal, a formalised credal list does not capture either what his religion was about or what it meant to him. In some religions, worship is polytheistic, in others the existence or non-existence of God is not a salient question. Similarly, in other religions, in Islam or Judaism for example, there is nothing comparable to the Christian ecclesiastical hierarchy, an inheritance from the ancient Roman Empire. For these reasons, most religions have not produced comparable tensions between church and state. What was crucial in the relationship between western Europe and the rest of the world was not the inherent superiority of its religious institutions and beliefs, but the fact of conquest, domination and empire building on the part of European powers from the early modern period onwards.

Arguments in defence of the values of 'the free world' during the period of decolonisation and the 'cold war' often treated religious toleration as an intrinsic part of the liberal inheritance of the West. But as Karen Barkey demonstrates, the most successful and enduring forms of peaceful coexistence between confessions in the pre-modern age were to be found among the Ottomans rather than in Christendom. As Ira Katznelson argues in the case of the changing treatment of the Jews in England, there was no intrinsic connection between liberalism and toleration. *De facto* toleration existed in some periods for pragmatic reasons, but it remained reversible. In the British Empire in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there were also shifts in attitudes towards toleration taken for similar reasons of expediency. From the chapters by Humeira Iqtidar and Sudipta Kaviraj on South Asia, it seems clear, moreover, that forms of religious codification introduced by the British for administrative reasons helped to reshape the

religions of the Indian subcontinent, both Hinduism and Islam, along the lines of the credal religions of Europe, and helped to provoke an array, not a single set, of responses. Furthermore, whatever its reputation in Europe, secularism in colonial and non-European contexts could play an intolerant and authoritarian role. In these ways, the colonial experience helped to produce the ‘thin’ but fundamentalist versions of Islamism and Hindu nationalism, which play such powerful roles in South Asia today.

III

Scholarship about religion and politics, these chapters counsel, should worry less about whether an older meaning of secularisation is ‘true’ – manifestly it is not – than about developments inside the boundaries of a revised conception of secularisation. In this book, secularisation as a complex and multiple process has been characterised by a wide spectrum of convictions and practices that range from an overwhelming religiosity to a biting rejection of God. Understood in this way, the term designates a distinctive field marked by heterogeneous forms of religion (and irreligion), including a host of revivals, which often place religion at the centre of the thoughts, convictions and feelings of modern people across the globe. In this sense, ‘secularisation’ makes this continuum possible, and exerts pressures that become constitutive of each of the options. Each of these situations, moreover, is rich with implications for toleration, and for the fate of minority religions and the security and liberty of their adherents.

These chapters also trigger questions about how a comparative approach to religion and the political imagination might be further developed. Such questions suggest that the drift in direction that has taken place over the past half-millennium has been far more permissive and less determinative of particular outcomes than the straightforward and uncomplicated single pathway designated by traditional theory. As the overarching meaning and context for religious beliefs, theologies, institutions and behaviour changed both in the West and more globally, each key site of analysis considered in this book became more heterogeneous, especially with regard to the relationships that link political regimes to religious institutions, doctrines and practices. Significant outcomes like the character of toleration have been shaped by an array of factors and mechanisms, including matters of sequence and timing, the character of governance and the degree of religious pluralism.

It is this multiple secularity that these chapters explore. They do more than complicate, contradict or revise teleological accounts of

secularisation. Rather, they propose a richer and more complex deconstruction and reconstruction of the idea of secularisation – not so much the abandonment of the concept *tout court*, as a rethinking of the cluster of approaches and assumptions that have generally accompanied it. These include a flat and unchanging portrayal of religion, an overly integrated picture of modern political thought and the separation of a history of ideas concerning religion from the analysis of religion as an institutional site in a field of power and influence. What these discussions offer is the treatment of key terms – whether secularisation, religion, political regimes or toleration – as conceptual variables, with each characterised by a spectrum of alternatives. Each particular situation is constituted by a combination of these elements.

Much is at stake in pursuing the openings offered by these case histories and by the wider approach to secularisation they authorise – not just better history and social science, but better prospects for religious comity, free expression and social peace. Mainstream secularisation theory projected the growth of toleration as a result of the reduction of faith from truth to opinion, of the loss of passion for religious worship and doctrine, and of the growth of scepticism and pluralism. By diminishing the thrust and appeal of religion, it was thought, the harm perpetuated by intolerance would diminish. Of course, we know better. The chapters in this book help us understand why, by providing materials that bring together both a particular focus on things political and an orientation to research that constructs individual cases in ways which make possible meaningful comparison.

Regrettably, a comparative orientation has been notably missing in regard to crucial areas of inquiry. These include the movement out of the seemingly fixed status of religion in the western medieval world. It is striking how few comparative historical studies of secularisation there are.¹⁹ Another concerns the effects of cross-cultural colonial contact. Here the terms of interaction also varied considerably, and resulted in

¹⁹ In *Public religions*, pp. 24–5, Casanova underscores how, if one views secularisation as a modern historical process and accepts the view that, above all, these four simultaneous developments – the Protestant Reformation, the rise of the modern state, the rise of modern capitalism and the rise of modern science – set in motion the dynamics of the process by undermining the medieval system and themselves became at the same time the carriers of the processes of differentiation of which secularisation is one aspect, then it follows that one should expect different historical patterns of secularisation. As each of these carriers developed different dynamics in different places and at different times, the patterns and the outcomes of the historical processes of secularisation should vary accordingly. Intuitively, even a superficial knowledge of the various histories tells one that this is the case.

a spectrum of different patterns of exchange, ranging from learning to rejection, syncretism to purity.

Both in Europe and beyond, a crucial boundary line invites comparative study – the frontier of religion and political regimes (including their norms, patterns of justification, institutional ensembles and rules of transaction with civil society). This is an especially significant zone where a comparative approach has been insufficiently present. If we are to better understand not just why, but how, diverse emplacements and patterning of religion, across instances and within the dynamics of individual cases, came to characterise different post-medieval times and settings, we have to attend to points of contact and conflict between religion and political regimes, with each understood as complex constellations of elements, without making the European experience a global model based on a supposed linear decline of religion.²⁰

Once simple secularisation is set aside, systematic comparative analysis becomes not just inviting but obligatory. A key aim of the book is to suggest that future work should further develop an analytical template that both directs and draws from the cases it considers. Such scholarship would seek to advance ideas and propositions about how a determinate number of characteristics concerning the qualities of religion, the degree of confessional pluralism, and institutional rules governing transactions between religion and the state within specific types of political regime shape relationships linking religion and politics. Such characteristics in turn shape the content of secularisation and the possibilities and extent of toleration. Bearing in mind the alleged last words of the ‘utopian socialist’ Henri de Saint-Simon in 1825, ‘religion never dies out; it only changes its form’, much remains to be accomplished.

²⁰ Defying spatial provincialism, the criticism is not simply of an underlying and often unexamined Eurocentrism, but questioning how much of the original platform of secularism was targeted against eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forms of Christian fundamentalism, and therefore might have only a tangential relevance to other locations and different creeds. The chapters dealing with circumstances outside the West reject any simple effort to transpose the assumptions of *Kulturkampf* liberal nationalism through to the rest of the world, where the context for such struggle was not present.