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BEYOND TOCQUEVILLE: A PLEA TO STOP "TAKING RELIGION SERIOUSLY"

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Emile Perreau-Saussine, *Catholicism and Democracy: An Essay in the History of Political Thought*, trans. Richard Rex (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012)

Thomas Albert Howard, *God and the Atlantic: America, Europe, and the Religious Divide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

We have all heard the admonition to "take religion seriously." It is a perplexing command, since AHA statistics indicate that graduate students have been flocking to religious topics for years. Library shelves groan under the weight of recent works that take religion seriously. What, then, might it mean to take religion more seriously, as it has been such a booming academic field for decades now? As Elizabeth Pritchard has pointed out, the imperative is not a methodological recommendation at all, but an ethical–political one.[1] To take religion "seriously" is to grant it its rightful place as an independent variable amidst others, without reducing it to the old categories of politics or class or gender. It is implicitly frivolous to see religion as a superstructural manifestation of a deeper social or economic reality, as have many functionalist theories from Marx onwards. These accounts are routinely pilloried as condescending towards the past, and as failing to take historical actors at their word when they claim to act for religious reasons. There is much to this; nonetheless, the currently reigning assumption of religious autonomy, like that of other cultural artifacts, has been perilously undertheorized.[2] In this joint review, I would like to show how this understanding of religion impedes historical understanding. It might be the case that, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, religion is too important to take seriously.

[1] Elizabeth Pritchard, "Seriously, What Does 'Taking Religion Seriously' Mean?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010), 1087–1111.

[2] William H. Sewell Jr, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, 2005), esp. chap. 2.

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This shift in our understanding of religion has coincided with the new prestige of Alexis de Tocqueville, who was himself committed to treating religion as an independent variable: one that might affect other things (democracy, most prominently) but was not affected by them in turn. He was widely ignored for decades after his death, as sociologists and historians customarily interpreted religion as a dependent variable, or at least one that dialectically engaged with nonreligious phenomena. Karl Marx, Werner Sombart, R. H. Tawney, Max Horkheimer, and, later, E. P. Thompson and Jacques Le Goff were interested in religion as an ideology, explicable primarily through reference to the social and economic order. For them, religion was not granted an exemption from the violent, mundane world of historical change and political–economic domination. This understanding was uncongenial during the Cold War, when religion was imagined as a "civil religion" that bound us together, and not as a feature of the class, race, and gender struggles that tore us apart. Tocqueville was perfectly suited to this new moment, and in the 1940s and 1950s *Democracy in America* duly emerged as a master analysis of democratic politics. His aura has since been burnished by Raymond Aron, François Furet, Claude Lefort, and Pierre Manent in France, alongside Robert Bellah, Louis Hartz, Robert Putnam, and David Riesman in the United States. This constellation of scholars set up Tocqueville as the "anti-Marx" in American social sciences.[3]

Even as the Cold War has ended, there has been surprisingly little pushback against Tocqueville's ever-rising star. Indeed, it may be more on the ascendant than ever, as multiple trends in cultural anthropology, religious sociology, and public life have militated against putatively "reductive" treatments of religion. This essay will consider two recent manifestations of his influence on historical scholarship, but he is just as present, for instance, in the sociology of religion and its emergent "strong program." This rising school of sociological scholarship shares his cardinal assumption: to "take religion seriously" means to treat it as an independent variable that cannot be reduced to others. According to one recent study, about 75 percent of sociological studies of religion between 1978 and 1982 treated religion as a dependent variable, measuring how religious practice was affected by other social, political, or economic processes. Since then, this

[3] For an account of American intellectuals' embrace of Tocqueville see Matthew Mancini, *Alexis de Tocqueville and American Intellectuals: From His Time to Ours* (Oxford, 2006). For Tocqueville as "anti-Marx" see Sheryl Gordon, "In the Shade of Tocqueville," PhD diss., 2011, Department of History, City University of New York, iv. For some recent contributions to a burgeoning literature on American civil religion in the Cold War see Kevin Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*: *How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York, 2011); and Jason W. Stevens, *God-Fearing and Free: A Spiritual History of America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 2011).

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un-Tocquevillean approach has been in freefall: between 2003 and 2007, over half of sociology articles treated religion as the independent variable, presuming that religious belief will affect social behavior and not vice versa.[4]

There are, nonetheless, serious problems with Tocqueville's method, which survive into much of the work that he inspires. Religious culture, from his perspective, is deeply embedded in a nation's DNA and is not in a dialectical relationship with politics or economics. While ideas about gender or politics might change in relation to wars or financial crises, "religion" is an unchanging inheritance. For Tocqueville, our religious culture was settled at the time of the Mayflower Compact, and we can learn a great deal about Jacksonian democracy through a consideration of the Puritans. "If we could trace societies back to their elements and examine the earliest records of their history," Tocqueville instructs, "I have no doubt that we would discover . . . every aspect of what has been called the national character."[5] There is, it goes without saying, tremendous reason to doubt this. Tocqueville was, of course, writing before the *Sonderweg* debates, before Marc Bloch and others had inveighed against the "myth of origins," and, indeed, before history as a discipline truly existed. Nonetheless, contemporary scholars continue to use Tocqueville's method.

Two recent works in the history of religion—the late Emile Perreau-Saussine's *Catholicism and Democracy* and Thomas Albert Howard's *God and the Atlantic*—demonstrate particularly well the pitfalls of Tocquevillean analyses. For all of their many virtues, these works both imagine with Tocqueville that religion is fundamentally static and independent of other processes. Bruce Lincoln, in his provocative "Theses on Method," declares to the contrary:

> The conjunction "of" that joins the two nouns in the disciplinary ethnonym "History of Religions" is not neutral filler. Rather, it announces a proprietary claim and a relation of encompassment: History is the method and Religion the object of study.[6]

Religious practice should enter the all-consuming maw of historical analysis, and not be gingerly treated, as the religious actors themselves might prefer, as *sui generis* phenomena with one foot on earth and another in the heavens. Religion, Richard Rorty famously wrote, can be a "conversation-stopper." The historian's duty is to keep the conversation going by showing that religions are constantly evolving, responding to the same political and economic conjunctures

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4 David Smilde and Matthew May, "The Emerging Strong Program in the Sociology of Religion," SSRC Working Paper, New York, Feb. 2010, available online at "The Immanent Frame."

5 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, 2004), 32.

6 Bruce Lincoln, "Theses on Method," available at http://religion.ua.edu/thesesonmethod.html, accessed July 2012.

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as other institutional and emotive phenomena. To grant them a special reprieve from history is to adopt the transcendental claims they make for themselves. "However unworldly medieval Christian monks and nuns may have been," Talal Asad reminds us, "they too lived in the world (where else?)."[7]

Perreau-Saussine's work was cut short by his tragic death, which is a true loss to the historical community. His last monograph charts the relationship between Catholicism and democracy in France from the 1680s to the present. His goal is to show that a fruitful relationship between the two is possible, and to recover a hidden tradition of *rapprochement*. He is not alone, of course. In response to strident French debates over the character of *laïcité*, a stream of books have appeared interrogating Catholicism's importance to France, past and present. Following Tocqueville in the 1830s, and Jacques Maritain in the 1940s, Marcel Gauchet, Pierre Manent, and Rémi Brague have all been attempting, in their own ways, to demonstrate the centrality of religion to the republic (politically, one thinks of Robert Schuman, Jacques Delors, and even the Nicolas Sarkozy of "positive *laïcité*"). Perreau-Saussine's innovation is to focus on a particular, French, tradition of political theology, instead of relying on "religion," "the West," or "Christianity" as a unit of analysis.

This tradition was Gallicanism, and Bossuet its muse. The key moment came in 1682, when the French clergy declared that the monarch was, in temporal matters, independent of papal sovereignty. The Gallicans' original insight had, Perreau-Saussine believes, immense consequences for the future: the idea that religious and political sovereignty are fundamentally separate laid the seed of democracy. This did not happen immediately, of course, primarily because the democrats themselves, during the French Revolution, usurped the Church's proper spiritual role. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy attempted to subordinate the Church to the state, denying the cherished independence of the Gallican Church. In the aftermath of the Revolution's excesses, both Catholics and republicans retreated into opposing, intransigent positions. Catholics followed Joseph de Maistre's torch to the anti-Gallicanism of Vatican I, while, on the republican side, "intolerant secularism" reigned under inspiration from Auguste Comte. This reached its apogee with the Law of Separation, which formally sundered the French Church and French state.

Perreau-Saussine insightfully shows how these two opposed, illiberal phenomena—Vatican I (1870) and the Law of Separation (1905)—had unintended, positive consequences for the Church. While they were each undertaken out of fear and intolerance, they played into the hands of the "liberal Gallicans." This did not become clear until the aftermath of World War II. The

7 Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, 2002), 194.

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Church, Perreau-Saussine writes, "did not grasp the kinship between their views and liberal democracy until the last moment. In the end it was totalitarianism that led the church to turn its back upon political antiliberalism." At Vatican II, finally, "the church effectively deferred to Tocqueville" by declaring support for religious liberty and lay control of politics.[8] The Church, that is, discovered that it had been liberal all along. When it properly understands its mission, the Church is opposed to all forms of theocracy, and can accommodate perfectly well with democracies so long as the Church's rights and privileges are recognized (for, as Perreau-Saussine offers without argument, "Churches are among those social institutions whose existence public authorities simply must acknowledge"[9]).

As is probably apparent, the story is Tocquevillean to the core—the opening question, how religion relates to democratic order, was Tocqueville's question and did not especially interest the other students of religion mentioned above. Indeed, Tocqueville is Perreau-Saussine's textbook liberal Gallican, and also "the greatest political thinker of the nineteenth century."[10] Moreover, like Tocqueville, Perreau-Saussine assumes that this form of apolitical religion is extremely beneficial to the functioning of democracy, insofar as it forces the political sphere to chasten itself and restrict its claims to run roughshod over the commonweal. "Dechristianization," he warns, "could undermine the foundations of democracy."[11] While Tocqueville gives Perreau-Saussine the tools to make a political intervention, he also denies him the opportunity to think historically. Just as Tocqueville uncovered the seventeenth-century Puritans as the key to nineteenth-century America, Perreau-Saussine unveils the seventeenth-century Gallicans as the hidden truth of French Catholicism. While he is surely alive to surface-level changes within Catholicism, these appear more as successive flowerings of the original kernel than as genuine modifications: "Christianity," he writes in one telling example, "has a marked tendency toward the apolitical."[12] While this is highly debatable historically, Perreau-Saussine assumes it to be true, which allows him to interpret the Church's long political history as a series of deviations.

He does not engage with the mountains of research into French Catholicism that have appeared in recent decades, which would be necessary if he were to defend his claim as historically sound. The relationship between Catholicism and the French Revolution has been explored by Dale van Kley, Timothy Tackett,

8 Emile Perreau-Saussine, *Catholicism and Democracy: An Essay in the History of Political Thought*, trans. Richard Rex (Princeton, 2012), 127.

9 Ibid., 91.

10 Ibid., 74.

11 Ibid., 144.

12 Ibid., 12.

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Roger Chartier, and others; the story is far more complex than Perreau-Saussine lets on. French Catholics' later antipathy to democracy has been well explored in the works of Philip Nord, Robert Paxton, and Kevin Passmore (in English), and in French, above all in the magisterial three-volume work by Gérard Cholvy and Yves-Marie Hilaire. These scholars have shown us a Catholicism that was always evolving, responding to political and economic transformations no less adroitly than did its opponents. The behavior of the French clergy in the 1950s, in other words, cannot be chalked up to Bossuet any more than the behavior of French Radicals can be explained through reference to Robespierre. The Catholic transition to democracy, from the historian's perspective, had far more to do with the exigencies of geopolitical cataclysm than with the ancient Gallican tradition: how else to explain the fact that Catholics in 1942 were lined up behind Pétain and his authoritarian corporatism, while in 1946 they were just as enthusiastic in their support of the new Christian-Democratic MRP? Perreau-Saussine's national focus blinds him to the relevant international context: at around the same time, Catholics in Austria, Germany, and Italy were undergoing a similar transition. While Catholics in these places did not have Gallicanism to draw upon, they were experiencing similar geopolitical pressures from America, the Vatican, and their own parishioners. Current historical scholarship indicates that these were behind the Church's sudden shift to democracy, and not the Church's innate tendency towards the apolitical.

The main currents of the Catholic experience are simply missing from Perreau-Saussine's account. In one glaring instance, he compares the fate of the Church after the Law of Separation to the fate of the Jews under Pétain.[13] The fact that this is a galling moral comparison is only half the problem. Perreau-Saussine does, and must, ignore the fact that Pétain and the other anti-Semites of the 1940s were precisely the mainstream French Catholics that he is trying to rehabilitate as closet liberals. More specifically, Perreau-Saussine tells us that he will ignore "social Catholicism" because it is "impossible," in a single volume, to "paint a complete picture."[14] Social Catholicism, though, is not like innovations in organ music: it is not one minor facet of Catholicism that can be ignored in the interest of brevity. It is, in fact, a more important tradition than Catholic political theory, which hardly exists. Leo XIII declared that Catholics can accommodate themselves to any variety of state, and should not, qua Catholics, support any particular political form, whether it be democracy or monarchy. For the most part, Catholics followed his advice: Perreau-Saussine has a devilishly difficult time finding genuine Catholic political thinkers to discuss between Leo XIII and Vatican II. Most Catholic intellectuals had turned to the "social question,"

[13] Ibid., 90.

[14] Ibid., 4.

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responding to the spirit of the times and Leo XIII's call for a Catholic social science. Perreau-Saussine ignores most of these figures (Le Play, for instance). When he discusses one of the premier social(ist) Catholics, Charles Péguy, he underplays the author's apocalyptic socialism and insists on seeing him as a neo-Gallican: an invented category, based in the seventeenth century, that hardly does justice to the Pyrrhic, and only occasionally Catholic, polemicist.

This emphasis on Catholic political theory, despite its near-total absence from the French Catholic scene, follows Tocqueville's example. For Tocqueville, religion was a factor in political life, and he was not interested in the social question—he assumed, as Perreau-Saussine does, that democracy automatically leads to social equality.[15] Religion was not, however, to be equated with politics. Like his many epigones, Tocqueville teaches us to see religion as a necessary limit to the potentially dangerous will of the people. Those who try to combine theological and political authority in an anti-Gallican manner, from either left or right, enter the violent realm of political theology. This leads Perreau-Saussine to equate socialist Catholicism with Maurrasean monarchism as mirrored deviations from the imagined neo-Gallican consensus (chapter 4 is devoted to the dubious proposition that worker–priests and Action Française reactionaries are essentially identical). This argument, which so neatly recapitulates the antitotalitarian pieties of the Cold War, provides the structure of the second book under discussion: Thomas Albert Howard's *God and the Atlantic.*

Howard—the author of an exemplary study on theology and historiography in nineteenth-century Germany, and another on the rise of the German university—here turns his attention to European intellectuals' understandings of American religiosity. Tocqueville may be the most famous European chronicler, but he was far from the only one. Howard digs up an entertainingly wide array of critics, persuasively showing that Europeans saw the American religious experience as a uniquely significant site for thinking about modern life. For the most part, Howard suggests, Europeans were hamstrung by their belief that religion was in zero-sum conflict with modernity. This kept them from truly understanding the dynamic religiosity at work across the Atlantic: America seemed to most of them like a curious mixture of snake oil and Standard Oil, and to very few like an aspirational model. Like Perreau-Saussine, Howard wants to show that the French Revolution's excesses led Western Europeans to adopt polarizing, radical political positions. Nonetheless, a centrist position, supportive of religious liberty, pluralism, and America, existed and is worthy of recovery.[16]

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[15] Ibid., 1.

[16] Thomas Albert Howard, *God and the Atlantic: America, Europe, and the Religious Divide* (New York, 2011), 10–24.

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He refers to the two polarized traditions as "traditionalist" and "secularist." The traditionalists are all of those Tories, Romantics, and reactionaries who held their noses at the messiness and vitality of the American religious scene. Following Joseph de Maistre, in particular, these figures were nostalgic for the "throne and altar" religiosity of the *Ancien Régime*, and saw American vulgarity as the lamentable outcome of its lack of an established Church. Howard, with varying degrees of persuasiveness, lumps figures as diverse as Frances Trollope, Heinrich Steffens, and Martin Heidegger into this category. The secularists are those, like Comte and Marx, who view Christianity as an obstacle to be overcome, and believed that the logic of history would consign it to the dustbin. For them, America was a problematic case, as its hyper-modernity and hyper-religiosity seemed to conflict with their secularization theory: thus, in Howard's telling, they adopted a disdainful attitude towards the nation that was not modernizing correctly. Like Perreau-Saussine, Howard is quick to declare that these two deviations—Marx and Maistre—are fundamentally similar, in that they both assume a strictly linear relationship between religion and modernity (the first group seeking to move backwards, the other forwards). The insight, familiar to us from the totalitarian theory of the Cold War, is repeated ad nauseam. "Functionally," Howard explains, "the two lines of critiques, Right and Left, look a lot alike . . . Extremes oddly meet, as I have been arguing . . . At several levels, *les extrêmes se touchent*."[17]

Between these extremes, Howard uncovers a third tradition dedicated to a muscular, pluralist liberalism. As in the Cold War, America was its privileged home, and Howard focuses on those individuals who actually traveled to America, showing how the scales fell from their eyes as they encountered our city on a hill. Tocqueville was the most prominent, of course, but Howard focuses instead on the comparatively neglected Philip Schaff and Jacques Maritain. They understood that American religious life was not structured by the binary of Europe (revolution versus reaction), but rather appeared as a "double helix," a metaphor that "seeks to capture the fastidious separation of religion *from* the political order in the new American republic, but, in consequential paradox, its enduring proximity and influence *on* the political order."[18] Schaff, a Swiss German Church historian, argued this from the Protestant side, and Howard intriguingly shows how Schaff's experience of America tempered his traditional German anti-Americanism. Maritain, a French convert and Thomist philosopher, makes similar claims from the perspective of Catholicism.

While their illustrious predecessor is not discussed at length, it is clear that Schaff and Maritain were working in the shadow of the "indispensable

[17] Ibid., 113, 137, 199.

[18] Ibid., 197, emphasis in original.

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Tocqueville."[19] The reader is constantly reminded that their insights mirrored those of Tocqueville, and Howard himself "sneak[s] in the confession" that Tocqueville's work "does remain, in many respects, unrivaled" in its understanding of American religious life.[20] The book, therefore, suffers from some of the same defects as Perreau-Saussine and Tocqueville himself. Religion, they all teach, is unaffected by events. It is no coincidence that the arresting image of the "double helix," which structures much of Howard's theoretical discussion, comes from genetics, not history. America's religious nature, Howard suggests, is embedded deep within its DNA, and will manifest regardless of contingent historical relations. With the exception of the chapter on Maritain, which admirably surveys interwar French anti-Americanism, there is a lack of nuanced historical analysis here. Howard does not draw upon the vast and ballooning literature on America's image in Europe: to understand, for instance, Heidegger's problem with America, one would need to look at Mary Nolan's work on America and Weimar Germany, and not only at the intellectual history of conservative reaction. Moreover, Howard's image of European intellectual history is cramped, as legions of figures do not fit into the "traditionalist versus secularist" rubric he sets up. Europe in fact provides a vast array of resources for thinking about the problem of religion and modernity, which is effaced by putting them into two absurdly simplified camps (what of Constant, Hegel, Newman? What of Schmitt, Benjamin, Berlin, Levinas, Taubes, Milbank, Badiou?). Of course, Howard is aware of this, and "lumping" of some sort is necessary to any argument. Howard's scaffolding, though, is integral to the argument he wishes to make—namely that Europeans operate with an overly simplistic understanding of religion.

Howard's image of America, too, is somewhat lifeless: following Tocqueville, Howard believes that the American tradition is peculiarly free of conflict and struggle. Spared both feudalism and its revolutionary overthrow, Americans have avoided the ricocheting radicalisms of Europe and settled into a vital center. This thesis was famously put forth by Louis Hartz, one of the originators of the Cold War Tocqueville. Howard "take[s] as a starting point that Hartz was essentially correct." Hartz assumed with Tocqueville that America's special genius was encoded in its founding. Like Manent, Perreau-Saussine's inspiration, Hartz was engaged in a struggle against Marxists: in this case, historians like Charles Beard who were alive to the struggles at America's heart.[21] Howard, like Hartz, holds fast to the notion that American culture has avoided the counterproductive struggles of the old continent: he approvingly cites Trilling's 1950 contention

[19] Ibid., 7.
[20] Ibid., 137.
[21] Ibid., 11.

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that liberalism is "really America's 'sole intellectual tradition.'"[22] Since Hartz wrote, sixty years ago, historians have turned on him almost unanimously. The historiographical revolutions of J. G. A. Pocock, Bernard Bailyn, James Kloppenberg, and others – ignored by Howard – have undone the Hartzean consensus, vigorously reasserting, in Bruce Lincoln's sense, the substantive "history."[23]

Perreau-Saussine's and Howard's Tocquevillean approach to religion has political consequences, insofar as they tilt against "secularism" and seek a wider role for religious rhetoric in the public square (here they align with a torrent of similar works, from both the traditionalist right and the post-structuralist left). This political intervention is closely linked with their operating assumptions: if religion is a key component of the nation's genetic code, and if religion is primarily a force for social inclusion, it should surely have a robust public role. Perreau-Saussine writes at length of religion's new intellectual and public respectability in France, yet he also claims that the "citizen is now, bizarrely, being forbidden any longer from speaking on the basis of his or her personal convictions"; he sympathetically cites some Catholics' concern over "the risk of persecution or even martyrdom."[24] Howard, too, believes that religion is under assault. Citing the Catholic conservative Richard Neuhas and ignoring noted legal historians like Sarah Gordon, he claims that the Supreme Court since the 1940s has "severely circumscrib[ed] the public exercise of religious expression." His operating assumption is that this irreligion must be of European origin, as America is religious to its DNA. As such, he claims that the left endorses secularism because of its "longstanding, internalized patterns of deference and self-assessment before the bar of Old World 'high culture'"; elsewhere he cites Peter Berger's account of the "Europeanization" of the American intellectual class.[25]

Their methodology— and it is one they share, to reiterate, with many working historians and sociologists of religion—leads them, in some sense, to deny the claims of history. As William Sewell has convincingly argued, it is precisely the historian's understanding of time—as eventful, as fateful, as complex—that she can add to the social-scientific discussion.[26] As historians, we should be emphasizing the ever-changing character of religion, and not importing the

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22 Ibid., 10.

23 James Kloppenberg, "In Retrospect: Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*," *Reviews in American History* 29 (2001), 460–78; Rogers M. Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America," *American Political Science Review* 87 (1993), 549–66.

24 Perreau-Saussine, *Catholicism and Democracy*, 137.

25 Howard, *God and the Atlantic*, 202, 134, 202; Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Spirit of the Law: Religious Voices and the Constitution in Modern America* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

26 Sewell, *Logics of History*, chap. 1.

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atemporality of Tocqueville and the "strong program." Luckily, there are other trends at work in religious history, and a new generation of scholars is moving briskly beyond the Tocquevillean pieties of the Cold War. Gaines Foster, Jonathan Herzog, David Hollinger, David Sehat, and Jason W. Stevens, among others, have been revitalizing a truly historical account of religion, showing that religion has been strategically employed in pursuit of specific political projects, and that it has been a force for exclusion as much as for inclusion. Rogers Smith, an inspiration to Sehat in particular, has used Tocqueville as a foil to his own "multiple traditions" account of American religious and cultural life. Hollinger has provided something of a manifesto for these scholars, arguing that we cannot afford to "give religion a pass," as he puts it, especially as religious language increasingly muscles its way into public discourse.[27] This need not involve an understanding of religion as a pure, unmediated reflection of national or class interests (this is, after all, not what Durkheim or Marx thought). It does mean, though, that religious utterances, like any other, need not be taken at face value by historians.

This exciting trend, which hearkens back to older approaches, courts the risk of being unserious about religion, translating the ineffably sacred into the mundane language of power. Perhaps, though, this is precisely what it means to take religion seriously. Perhaps, in other words, Marx took religion significantly more seriously than Tocqueville did. Neither of them were believers, of course. Tocqueville decided that religion's falsehoods were an important salve in a frightening world of equality, and in essence he shares a great deal with more reactionary figures (Charles Maurras, for one) who see in religion a necessary component of a stable social order. Marx, who draws on Tocqueville in "On the Jewish Question," instead saw religion as the organic product of a world in which that equality had yet to appear. Religion, for Marx, was not an unchanging, national inheritance, but a social form that was constantly being renewed—regenerated—from within the very world it claimed to transcend. It was also closely tied to certain structures of political and economic domination, an angle that is foreclosed once we assume, with Tocqueville and many of his followers, that religion is first and foremost a force for social cohesion. Religions, as both Marx and the most promising strands of current religious scholarship teach us, are best understood as expressions of

[27] Gaines M. Foster, *Moral Reconstruction: Christian Lobbyists and the Federal Legislation of Morality, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002); Jonathan Herzog, *The Spiritual–Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York, 2011); David Hollinger, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture* (Princeton, 1996); Hollinger, "Religious Ideas: Should They Be Critically Engaged or Given a Pass?" *Representations* 101 (2008), 144–54; David Sehat, *The Myth of Religious Freedom* (New York, 2011); Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, 1997); Stevens, *God-Fearing and Free.*

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the social, economic, and political projects that remain the historian's primary interest. This may be reductive, but not every reduction is *ad absurdum*. While study after study demonstrates the continuing "enchantment of the world," historians must not neglect their duty to, as Dipesh Chakrabarty puts it, "render this enchanted world into our disenchanted prose."[28]

[28] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000), 77.

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