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Emerging Patterns in America's Political and Religious Self-Understanding

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I. INTRODUCTION

In his book *The Study of Politics* (1959), former American Political Science Association (APSA) president, Charles Hyneman (1961–1962), remarked that "religions appear to be virtually untouched" in mainstream political writing:

> Certainly, no American political scientist has provided a noteworthy analysis of the idea-system . . . that characterizes religion in general. Neither has an American political scientist carefully explored the significance for legal government of the belief-system, organization, and rituals we call Christianity.[1]

Parallel statements through the 1970s and 1980s can be found regarding study of the religious elements in early modern liberal political thought, notably that of Hobbes and Locke.[2] By any measure, the study of religion in American politics, history, and culture, and in political philosophy today, is not only flourishing, it threatens to overwhelm us. This is true not only in the bureaucratic sense of the Religion and Politics Section of the APSA, but in the focus on religion across the discipline and in the use by these political scientists of the work of political, social, cultural, racial, and gender historians and literary critics. And where enough entrepreneurial academics go, grant-giving foundations are sure to follow.[3]

Two Quick Indicators

Recently, I chaired "prize" committees for two sections in the APSA (Religion and Politics, best dissertation; and Foundations of Political Theory, best first book). While all of the entries in the former concerned religion, what struck me was the freedom and sophistication of these younger scholars, particularly in American and Comparative Politics, concerning the relationship of liberalism, modernity, and modernization with religious consciousness. While I cannot recount them here, these studies were not framed as if religion were either a premodern and atavistic ghost at the banquet of neoliberalism or a merely external mobilization link of self to politics which, having done its job (sometimes violently), can quietly fade away. Even more indicative is reading every first book published in political theory in the year 2001 – a great window to see what the next generation of political theorists are writing about. Of course, "the personal is the political" looms large, so identity politics and, especially, feminism were well represented. Eight of the seventeen books, however, directly addressed religion and religious thinkers.[4]

I would like to thank Andrew Murphy and Karen Orren for their helpful comments and suggestions in the revisions of this article.

1. From George Armstrong Kelly, *Politics and Religious Consciousness in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1984), 7.

2. On Hobbes, see Richard Tuck, "Hobbes and Locke on Toleration," in *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory,* ed. Mary G. Dietz (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990). Locke scholarship began to take his religious ideas seriously with John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the "Two Treatises of Government,"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). However, this reading has become standard only within the last two decades. For a summary of recent Hobbes and Locke scholarship, Eldon Eisenach, *Narrative Power and Liberal Truth; Hobbes, Locke, Bentham, and Mill* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 64–70, 146–54. Given the sheer amount of scholarly publishing, these statements about lack of attention usually can be refuted with many examples (this is particularly the case with Tuck's 1990 statement regarding Hobbes scholarship); however, what the authors really mean when they say "no one, or very few," is that "no one, or very few, whom one respects and takes seriously in the field of study."

3. The most notable have been the "Fundamentalism Project" at the University of Chicago and the munificence and breadth of support given by the Pew Charitable Trust under its Religion and Public Life Project.

4. On this topic, see James R. Martel, *Love is a Sweet Chain: Desire, Autonomy and Friendship in Liberal Political Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Andrew R. Murphy, *Conscience and Community:*

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These studies, and much recent work by historians, suggest four emerging theses:

> (a) The secularization thesis/narrative is not only wrong, it distorts scholarship by leading us away from some of the constitutive elements of what is political by forcing our gaze to what is decidedly un- or antipolitical, whether it be bureaucratic and instrumental rationality, economic determinism, or therapy. To study politics seriously is to take religion seriously.
>
> (b) Taking religious seriously means that religion is seen not simply as a vehicle for empowerment, moral agency, and mobilization for those previously excluded from politics. Accommodating new or newly-emergent discourses and structure of religious ideas is often constitutive and transformative of both persons and states, providing a way of discrediting frozen truths that have excluded newer values and interests and replacing them with more capacious ones.
>
> (c) The boundaries between secular and sacred in political philosophy, social and political theory, and political rhetoric and practices are permeable. And, just as there are a variety of religions and forms of religious beliefs, so there are a variety of secularisms and secular beliefs, many of which have their origins and articulations in religion.
>
> (d) Religious belief, religious/political ideas and rhetoric, and religious institutions are and will remain primary sources of both political conflict and political consensus, will remain in but not of politics, both subversive and supportive of political orders.

America's political self-understanding is gradually being transformed by and through contemporary academic scholarship on religion and American culture and politics. In the remainder of this article, I address each of these theses in a variety of contexts. First, I outline a paradigmatic and often unconscious divide in contemporary American self-understanding regarding religion and American politics. I then turn to historical studies represented by the new ways in which religious history is being written and to the ways in which cultural, gender, and political histories now incorporate religion more fully in their analysis. A third articulation of an emerging pattern in the relationship of religion to American politics is at the level of political theory. I discuss this third topic in the context of critiques of liberalism, especially that represented by John Rawls, by his many critics, most notably, Charles Taylor, the "post-modernists," and the advocates of a new pragmatism in political theory. Generalizing from these critiques, both historiographical and philosophical, one result, which I take up as my fourth subject, is a set of arguments and modes of analysis that posit "multiple secularisms." To suggest that secularism comes in many forms and intersects with value and religious pluralism in many different ways, is also to hold that there is no single or clear epistemological or analytical boundary between secular and sacred. I conclude, then, with some reflections on the ways in which "sacred" discourse and rhetoric can intervene in and interrupt more secular forms of political discourse and rhetoric, thereby resituating and redirecting political life itself.

II. TWO PARADIGMATIC PORTRAITS OF AMERICA

In a concluding essay to a collection of new writings in American political history, James Kloppenberg draws our attention to the way in which these new political historians have shifted from the liberal paradigms of Louis Hartz to the democratic paradigms associated with Tocqueville. Hartz not only missed the important parts played by race, ethnicity, and gender, he also ignored both democratic and religious beliefs.[5] Understandings of the relationship of religion to American politics reflect this same division. These portraits not only reflect this "liberal-democratic" divide, they are paradigmatic in that they often function as deep structures that guide inquiry and understanding and they are often taken for granted as common sense rather than as consciously held and explicitly defended positions.

One portrait is "liberal" in three senses: (1) it rests on highly abstract-legal distinctions between public and private (state and church); (2) it translates religion into "interests" that, like other private interests, seek recognition and advantage in political struggles; and (3) it distinguishes and isolates religion from other private interests when religion (illegitimately) seeks to shape constitutive features of the polity. This paradigm tends to reign in law and the social sciences.

The other portrait is "democratic" in three senses: (1) it focuses on national-consensual and moral-civic values lying underneath and inside external political

Revisiting Toleration and Religious Dissent in Early Modern England and America (University Park: Penn State Press, 2001); Daniel Engster, *Divine Sovereignty: The Origins of Modern State Power* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois, 2001); Robert C Bartlett, *The Idea of Enlightenment: A Post-Mortem Study* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Anthony Simon Laden, *Reasonably Radical: Deliberative Liberalism and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); John Tomasi, *Liberalism Beyond Justice: Citizens, Society, and the Boundaries of Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World.* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001).

5. James Kloppenberg, "From Hartz to Tocqueville: Shifting the Focus from Liberalism to Democracy in America," in *The Democratic Experiment,* ed. Meg Jacobs, William Novak, and Julian Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 352. As developed, this distinction somewhat echoes that between "humanist" and "reform" liberalism in David Greenstone, *The Lincoln Persuasion: Remaking American Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

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forms and practices; (2) it stresses struggles and conflicts over the definition and import of these shared values; and (3) it concerns inclusion in, exclusion from, and assimilation into the larger society, culture, and polity.[6] This paradigm tends to be powerful in the humanities and the human sciences, represented strongly by culture and gender studies.

A. The Liberal Portrait

America has become increasingly religiously pluralistic, just as it has become increasingly racially and ethnically pluralistic. Divisions within a still dominant Protestantism have divided us still more, making any attempt at creating a new religious consensus on the order of previously existing informal and voluntary establishments (successively, WASP Protestant, Euro-Christian, Judeo-Christian) both quixotic and dangerous.[7] American political and cultural unity must derive from Constitutional values that are, in turn, grounded in universalistic ideals of human rights, equality, and representative government. While both the American past and the American present have been witness to many religiously motivated social and political movements (running the gamut from the good to the bad and the ugly), and while some of these movements have even resulted in major legal and constitutional changes, all of these political-religious movements can be understood and integrated into a larger "moral interest group" model of political action and conflict. In short, the presence of religion in politics is marked by the claims it raises, the political-cultural conflict it causes, and the political victories it wins and the defeats it suffers, sometimes with regime changing effect and sometimes without.

Like the individualism assumed in voting, religion is understood politically as religiously-motivated individuals coming together in groups or social movements and seeking to translate those understandings into political influence. Analysts (or psychoanalysts) of these phenomena are presumed to be able to stand outside these phenomena and to convey the results of their studies in replicable, scientific form. Running parallel with this universalistic posture of the scientific analyst is the universal posture of liberal constitutional rules and principles that keep these claims and conflicts within the bounds of civility and good order.

6. Here, Olivier Zunz, *Why the American Century?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), chap. 7, is a useful addendum, particularly where he compares Tocqueville's "voluntarist" ideal of integration into a shared but local democratic culture with the "pluralist" (and Progressive) ideal of assimilation into a shared and national democratic culture. This shift entails the more familiar one between a society of small producers and one of hierarchic production but mass consumption. Also see Eldon Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1994), chaps. 2, 5.

7. This is the formulation in Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

B. The National-Democratic Portrait

This more internal and historical portrait begins by asking us to set aside particular churches, religious interests, and "faith traditions" interacting with politics or taking sides in contemporary political battles. We are asked to look instead to the larger patterns and spirits in our national history and culture. America, proclaimed the English Catholic, G.K. Chesterton, in the 1920s, is "The Nation with the Soul of a Church."[8] From the Puritan Commonwealth to the American Revolution understood as an Anglo-American religious civil war, Americans evidenced from the start a pervasive religiosity that was built into their political culture.[9] Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, as attested by foreign analysts such as Tocqueville and Phillip Schaff, religious belief was a constitutive feature of republican citizenship, inseparable from politics in the sense of creating the very preconditions for political institutions and practices. Students of the "partisan period" in Jacksonian American, as well as analysts of the origins of the Republican Party and the Civil War and in the party-stalemate period that followed, further attest to the religious structure of contending partisan and regime values.[10]

Given this interweaving of religion and politics, this portrait makes religion so pervasive, so deeply embedded in U.S. culture and practices – ranging from politics to entertainment, from philosophy to literature, from consumption patterns to music and sport – that to be distinctly American is to be distinctly religious, even for those who proclaim to hold only "secular" values. These long-standing foreign observations and historical studies are increasingly being rediscovered and restated in new keys by contemporary American scholarship – fulfilling what was, until the twentieth century, a common understanding that the American nation itself – not its particular churches and not its particular religiously-inspired interests and social movements – is the proper object of inquiry about the relationship of religion to politics in America.[11]

8. This became the book title for Sidney E. Mead, *The Nation with the Soul of a Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

9. Sacvan Bercovitch, "How the Puritans Won the American Revolution," *The Massachusetts Review* (1976); 597–630; and *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975); Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966); Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins' Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty, 1660–1832: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (New York: Cambridge University Press. 1994).

10. For example, Robert L. Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics: The First Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pts. 2–3; Paul Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850–1900* (New York: Free Press, 1970); William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852–1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

11. Here is evidence of the pervasive influence of Bercovitch's *Puritan Origins* and "How the Puritans Won the American Revolu-

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Once one begins with the assumption that religious ideas and understandings are as constitutive of our political culture and political discourse as are formal constitutions some interesting intersections and comparisons seem to suggest themselves. Religiously inspired political and social movements and political and social interests must be seen as both external and internal to U.S. politics. Religion is, from portrait A, contestable "from the outside" in the name of constitutional and secular political values and institutions. Religion is, from portrait B, also contestable, but from the inside, when particular religions and religious practices are deemed outside a shared American faith.[12] Religion is, from portrait B, often "incontestable," again from the inside, when it is atmospheric or hegemonic, when secular political values and institutions are themselves so interwoven with religious assumptions and nationalist-religious discourse that there is no place to stand outside of its purview. Religion is, from portrait A, also incontestable, but from the outside, when it is seen as an individual and constitutionally-protected right.

When Americans have attempted to keep religion permanently "outside" of politics in the name of liberal-constitutional order and individual rights, these attempts have been not only short-lived and in vain, they have often served to suppress the very resources and energies that power democratic politics and political change.[13] Conversely, when we attempt permanently to place religion "inside" politics in the name of national consensus and patriotism, these attempts have also been short-lived and in vain, often suppressing new spirits and new revelations as religion comes to buttress existing secular powers and interests.

Both portraits intersect in our histories and in our self-understandings, even as each understanding seems to confound itself as it seeks to become definitive – as if each paradigm harbors, within itself, subversive features. While these self-subversive features will be taken up more fully later, they can be briefly outlined here. Portrait A is vulnerable to the argument that political liberalism as a historical and theoretical project was itself the particular secular product of a very specific kind of Protestant Christianity, that it remains a "comprehensive moral doctrine," and that it, therefore, seeks a philosophical religious imperium over competing religious beliefs (and participatory democratic values) under cover of fairness and neutrality. Portrait B is also vulnerable to self-subversion. As the "embodying" churches of "Christian America" became an ever smaller slice of the American faith salami, so, too, does the distinctly Protestant-Christian content of the religion of America. The more pluralistic the number and variety of churches and faiths, the more need for theological modernists (i.e., liberal Protestants) to set the conditions and norms for getting along. As these conditions and norms became stated in increasingly secular and liberal terms, they were transformed into a civic religion of tolerance and mutual respect standing above all particular creeds and churches. The ironic result (and happy coincidence) was an almost exact restatement of American liberal constitutional and moral values and a formidable barrier to distinctly religious voices in future democratic contestations and struggles.[14]

These self-subversions and ironies are only visible and the source of lively intellectual differences and argument at particular moments in our history. The fierce cultural wars between constitutionalist Jacksonians and evangelical Whigs[15] and the party-stalemate period between 1876 and 1896[16] are the clearest examples of mutual incomprehension and deep partisan-ideological-religious division in America. With the demise of the liberal establishment that dominated American political and intellectual discourse through the 1970s, portraits A and B have again become the battlements of deep political, cultural, and intellectual division. However, as this battle

tion" on studies of colonial and early America. The recent reinterpretations of America by the political scientists James E. Block, *A Nation of Agents: The American Path to a Modern Self and Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) and James Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003) are good recent examples.

12. R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); William R. Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); and, more broadly, David A. Hollinger, "How Wide and Circle of the We? American Intellectuals and the Problem of the Ethnos since World War II," *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 317–37.

13. Eldon Eisenach, *The Next Religious Establishment: National Identity and Political Theology in Post-Protestant America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), chap. 2. The paradigmatic case is that of slavery. The most poignant statement of the costs of removing religion from politics in the case of slavery is Robert Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 177:

> Arguably, the Revolution inflicts another disservice on the slave population of America by separating church and state with such rigor . . . the most dynamic opponents of slavery in eighteenth-century America are ministers.

14. The contestations in constitutional law and political philosophy are within the disciplines themselves and are voluminous. For a sample, see Eisenach, *Next Religious Establishment,* 134–36. The literature contesting these issues in political science is more between political scientists and their outside critics. Internal disagreement seems to be between those who argue that the claims of the Christian right are legitimate, as is the role of religiously-based interest groups and social movements generally, and those who argue that such "identity" groups and movements always constitute a potential threat to liberal democratic values. See Justin Watson, *The Christian Coalition: Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

15. Lawrence F. Kohl, *The Politics of Individualism: Parties and American Character in the Jacksonian Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Greenstone, *Lincoln Persuasion,* pt. 3; Kelley, *Cultural Pattern,* chap. 6.

16. Kleppner, *Cross of Culture;* Richard J. Jensen, *The Winning of the Mid-West: Social and Political Conflict, 1888–1896* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

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has begun to play itself out, the self-subversions and ironies become more visible and make possible new and more subtle forms of analysis.

III. SOME HISTORIOGRAPHICAL MOVES

In outlining these two portraits and their potentials for self-subversion, it is apparent that historical understanding is deeply implicated, both as paradigmtic historiographical foundations and as ways to contest, amend, and transform these foundations. In this section, I consider both these implications in looking at religious history, women's history, regime change theory, and religious sociology. I stress the latter implication, however, because the "liberal" portrait A had become the dominant paradigm in the mid-twentieth century, while the new histories have tended to reconsider the salience of portrait B.

A. Religious History

One area of scholarship that is important for understanding the relationship of religion to American politics, is – after the title of a recent book collection – new directions in American religious history.[17] This body of inquiry contends that, through most of the twentieth century, American religious history was, in fact, written as "church history." Produced mainly by professors in denominational divinity schools tied to major national research universities, this history treated dominant liberal or liberal-evangelical Protestant churches as Protestant religion, Protestant religion as Christianity, and Christianity as the religion of America. The "church history" story that was told about the nineteenth century, however, tended to discount the role of particular (Protestant) church creeds and doctrines, stressing instead a sort of pan-Protestant evangelical "spirit" that left in its wake freedom loving republican citizens. And, while certain churches (i.e., Congregational, American Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Unitarian) more clearly embodied these values than did other Protestant bodies, this embodiment was usually confirmed sociologically by patterns of cultural, social, and intellectual deference and hierarchy. Furthermore, when Americans were true to their authentic national purposes, these hierarchies would be confirmed by national political dominance as well.[18]

One must note first that the teachings of this church history were two-sided. From the constitutional and liberal outside, state and church were clearly separated; however, from the national and democratic inside, this separation released the energies and spirits of evangelical Protestantism in its project to "Christianize" both America and the world.[19] The institutional meeting point was not the separate and separated churches, but the many reform causes undertaken by the ecumenical institutions of an evangelical united front, institutions that successively included the Whig, Liberty, Republican, and Progressive parties. The major tension that emerged within church history as it addressed the twentieth century, was between a rearguard and hagiographic defense of the older Protestant ascendancy (too much religious pluralism is a threat) and an attempt by this Protestant ascendancy to adapt to a more pluralistic environment by increasingly secularizing its doctrines and its methods of study. This latter solution, however, not only made the resulting "American religion" thin, it tended to submerge distinctly Christian and, arguably, distinctly religious content.[20]

So long as the implicit political theology of church history was safely tied to constitutionalism and moderate reform, it melded easily into prevailing academic political science and sociology. Indeed, the "political science" that church history embraced for twentieth-century America was a kind of political sociology in which denominational markers were demographic markers that could, in turn, be translated into partisan political commitments. In short, the older church history both supplemented and confirmed

17. Harry S. Stout and P.G. Hart, eds., *New Directions in American Religious History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

18. The best summary of the forms of this scholarship is Jerald C. Brauer, ed. *Reinterpretation in American Church History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), containing critical reflections by divinity school church historians or their students. See especially, essays by Jerald Brauer, Winthrop Hudson, Sidney Mead, and Martin Marty. See also Richard W. Fox, "The Culture of Liberal Protestant Progressivism, 1875–1925," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (1993): 639–60, and his essay in Stout and Hart, *New Directions.*

19. William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and see discussion of Lyman Beecher and Josiah Strong in Eldon Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1994), 67–71, 112–13.

20. Martin Marty, *Modern American Religion. Vol. I: The Irony of It All, 1893–1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), and *Modern American Religion. Vol. III: Under God, Indivisible, 1940–1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992). This latter move toward "modernism" began early in the last century. Here is one of America's leading church historians, Frank Foster, writing in 1911:

> Though Jesus should be proved never to have existed, the truth which has come down to us, and which we have received because of its own self-evidencing value, and which we have found to work out such great results in the liberation of our spirits . . . it would still be true, and its effects would remain unaltered. In this sense a historical Christ is unnecessary. (Foster, "The Christology of a Modern Rationalist," 1911; qtd. in Henry Warner Bowden, *Church History in the Age of Science: Historiographical Patterns in the United States, 1876–1918* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971], 215)

Another phrase that captures this shift is "Protestantism without Christianity," Howard Murphy, "The Ethical Revolt against Christian Orthodoxy in Early Victorian England," *American Historical Review* 60 (1955): 800–817; and Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 28, 32, 45.

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mid-twentieth-century pluralist political science. Both disciplines legitimated an increasingly secular liberal establishment. Translated into political theory and constitutional values, this mode of church history posited an elite consensus of secular liberals presiding over and providing an inclusive political consensus for increasingly diverse sets of believers and faith communities, often overlapping with racial and ethnic differences.[21]

The entry of a new and different scholarly spirit in American religious self-understanding can be quite clearly marked. In 1990, the journal *Religion and American Culture* was founded to serve the growing constituency outside of divinity schools to address issues of religion in history, religion, and humanities departments.[22] In 1998, the most distinguished academic journal in the field, *Church History,* not only moved from the University of Chicago to Duke – a significant symbolic shift – but added a new subtitle: *Studies in Christianity and Culture.*

Almost exactly one-hundred years earlier, there was a comparable series of events involving scholarly journals, but with much wider import. Prior to the rise of professional academic disciplines and graduate schools at the turn of the last century (including the academic discipline of church history), the journals that represented the highest intellectual/academic culture in America were religiously based: *Princeton Review; Bibliotheca Sacra* (Andover Seminary, then Oberlin); *Andover Review; Unitarian Review* (Harvard), and *New Englander* (Yale). Although nominally tied to liberal or liberal-evangelical denominations, their main contributors were not denominational ministers. While almost all of their contributors and readership had ties to these denominations, they also broadly represented prevailing America national academic, cultural and intellectual leadership. Symbolically put, these journals embodied nineteenth-century American academic culture, which was also American national intellectual culture. By that fact, they also represented the intellectual heights of an informal national religious establishment.[24]

In a way, these journals perfectly embodied religious history in America *before* it became academic-professional church history and before professionally trained academic historians came on the scene.[25] Once the academic disciplines and their corresponding graduate schools and professional journals were in place – once Johns Hopkins, Cornell, Chicago, and Michigan were founded on German models and the older universities converted to that model – these explicitly church-related academic/intellectual journals successively died. First to go was the *Princeton Review* (1888); between 1891 and 1894, *The Unitarian Review, New Englander,* and *Andover Review* also folded. And now the irony. The one journal that remained standing, *Bibliotheca Sacra,* added a subtitle to its name: *A Religious and Sociological Quarterly.* It did not, however, stand alone: from the graves of its platoon of journal brothers arose a battalion of academic journals, also founded by German-trained professors, but now under the banner of scientific research and secular knowledge.[26] But was this movement a "secularization" of the American intellect or a reconquest by liberal Protestantism as it migrated from previously dominant churches, to previously dominant church-founded colleges and universities, to increasingly dominant public and private national universities.

However we read this earlier transition and its ironies, the "new religious history" is telling us something beyond the negative message that the older church history has reached a series of unproductive dead ends that now are barriers to American self-understanding. As befits the journal name change, the issue is not (and perhaps never really was) the relationship of churches to each other and to the state, and is not the role and effects of organized religious movements, interests and institutions on politics. The positive message is that we must study how religion and politics intertwine and interpenetrate each other in and through the larger culture.[27]

21. An ironic student of this short history from liberal protestant church history to multiculturalism might say that this phenomenon was less a movement from sacred to secular than a migration of the same religious spirit from church, to divinity school, to university.

22. The website for the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, the journal's sponsor, lists six other centers at University of Southern California, Princeton, Notre Dame, Baylor, Hartford Seminary, and Calvin College engaged in similar studies of religion in the United States.

23. Many contributors to these publications (e.g., John Dewey, Richard Ely, Arthur Hadley, Vida Scudder) went on to become prominent academics and authors of defining books in their respective academic fields. See Eisenach, *Lost Promise,* chaps. 1–4.

24. The same is true with more popular magazines with particular denominational sponsorship in post-Civil War America, such as *Outlook, Independent,* and *Chautauquan.* In the 1880s and 1890s, they became general purpose weeklies with large advertising revenues and circulations (Eisenach, *Lost Promise,* 13–14).

25. See Bowden, *Church History,* especially chapters on Phillip Schaff and Walter Rauschenbusch. According to Bowden, in 1880, there were only eight professors of history in American colleges and universities. The American Historical Association (AHA) was founded in 1884 and the American Society of Church History was founded in 1889, to merge with the AHA seven years later.

26. Among the earliest were *American Journal of Sociology* (1885); *Publications of the American Economics Association* (1885); *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1890); *American Historical Review* (1884). The church historians, under Schaff, formed their own professional organization and journal in 1889 (see fn. 26 above).

27. In addition to the contributions in Stout and Hart, *New Directions,* see Bloom, *The American Religion,* William Dean, *American Spiritual Culture and the Invention of Jazz, Football, and the Movies* (New York: Continuum International, 2002); Eisenach, *Next Religious Establishment;* Fox, "Culture of Liberal Protestant Progressivism;" Philip Hamberger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997). Louise L. Stevenson,

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B. Women's History

Another area of scholarship that indicates this newer approach to religion and politics is women's history. How did women – who could not vote and were not church ministers – become active agents in American political life and religious culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? The very question moves the meaning of what we might mean by politics and political regime away from parties, elections, and constitutional-legal structures and toward civil society and patterns of authority and practices in the culture and society. This question simultaneously alters the meaning and location of religion out of separate and separated churches as ministerial-led institutions for Sunday worship and into moral reform associations, evangelism, philanthropic institutions, and even popular fiction.[28] These parallel shifts are paradigmatic and suggest that agency and power in the larger culture set the terms of political discourse and action more than does overt political struggle itself. They further suggest that participants at the overt level of political conflict are operating within a set of tacit understandings over which they have little control.

While it could be said that women turned to religiously-based political activity because they were excluded from formal political participation, so were they without formal authority in churches. In neither case would marginalization or prejudice explain why so many men participated along side them and why the implicit antiparty ideas contained in these new forms of politics became such a large part of electoral-political argument both before and after the Civil War.[29] Moreover, the explanation from marginality cannot explain the role of religiously-motivated men and women in creating and sustaining rich and powerful philanthropic institutions that were crucial in amassing domestic capital for large scale industrial and public works investment.[30] In short, moral-religious discourse and its organizational expression were not only constitutive of women's individual and collective agency, the innovations they and their male allies launched, and the cultural-political victories they won, carried this discourse and its organization into the larger civil and political society.

C. Regime Theory and Constitutional Transformations

Another body of scholarship that tends to carry some of these same implications regarding the deeper relationships of religion and politics is the study of American national politics as a series of distinct "regime periods" that define the contours of our political life. While critical elections (e.g., Lincoln, 1860; McKinley, 1896; Roosevelt, 1932) mark the demise of one regime and the start of a new one, the values, purposes, and discourse of each of these new regimes were not created de novo in and by the electoral campaign. Rather, they were found embedded in the larger culture, now made articulate, public, and ruling in the national government.[31] New regimes represent "new" agendas, authoritative warrants, and discourses, but their rhetorical and intellectual components must already be present for the discourse of the new regime to be comprehensible.[32] New regimes can be occasioned by particular issues or disjunctive events but these issues and events must themselves be interpreted in ways that discredit not just the policies of standing regime, but the authoritative and prevailing understandings that sustained them. The "reconstructive discourse" of the new regime, then, makes visible and public what was before opaque or deemed nonpolitical or private.[33] The critical actors lying behind and before this transformative process might not be party-political activists at all, but reform lead-

Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends: The New Haven Scholars and the Transformation of Higher Learning in America, 1830–1890 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); George M. Thomas, *Revivalism and Cultural Change: Christianity, Nation Building, and the Market in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1989).

28. Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Kathi Kern, *Mrs. Stanton's Bible* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press., 2001); Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Alison Parker, *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873–1933* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1988); Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) and *Women, Philanthropy, and Civil Society* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2001).

29. John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828–1996* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865–1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Douglas W. Jaenicke, "The Jacksonian Integration of Parties into the Constitutional System," *Political Science Quarterly* 101 (1986): 85–107.

30. McCarthy, *American Creed* and *Women, Philanthropy, and Civil Society;* and, more generally, Schmidt, *Consumer Rites;* Thomas, *Revivalism and Cultural Change;* and Moore, *Selling God.*

31. Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970); Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Gerring, *Party Ideologies;* Gienapp, *Origins of the Republican Party;* Howe, *Whig Political Culture* and "Protestantism, Voluntarism, and Personal Identity in Antebellum America," in *New Directions in American Religious History,* ed. Harry S. Stout and P.G. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Kohl, *Politics of Individualism;* Eldon Eisenach, "Reconstituting the Study of American Political Thought in a Regime Change Perspective," in *Studies in American Political Development,* 4 (1990): 169–228, and *Lost Promise of Progressivism;* Fox, "Culture of Liberal Protestant Progressivism."

32. Thus the astute remark in Greenstone, *Lincoln Persuasion,* 75, that the seemingly predemocratic and untenable moral elitism of New England, represented by John Adams, was a pattern that "kept repeating itself," most obviously in Whig political culture and then in Lincoln.

33. See Skowronek, *Politics Presidents Make,* on the many passages from disjunctive to reconstructive presidencies.

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ers, social movement activists, intellectuals, journalists, and writers, where the lines separating public and private, secular and sacred, or church and state are much less salient.

In this sense, the new religious history, women's history, and regime period political history are implicitly "interpretivist" or "hermeneutical," addressing ideas of identity and meaning that combine and fuse sacred and secular, spiritual and material, private and public. This fusion is both at the psychological and the intellectual-ideological level. Religion is not only implicated in these cultural modes of understanding our politics, it is in many ways constitutive of the identities and meanings that go into the constructions of the meaning and purpose of politics and the meaning and purpose of civil society.

D. Religious Sociology

Like religious history, contemporary religious sociology is less church or "denominationally" oriented than it was, and more anthropological and intepretivist in its understandings. Earlier sociology of religion tracked church history and political science in assuming that the progressive narrative of liberalism, pluralism, and secularization was the larger truth behind the proximate truths of their studies and teachings. While there were many internecine battles, especially as Jews and Catholics entered mainstream sociology departments, they tended to share the same master narrative that drove church history and political science. This is no longer the case. The many studies by Rodney Stark and his associates and by Robert Wuthnow; the reconfigurations of the meaning of "church," "sect," and "cult"; and the more anthropologically-oriented studies of the role of religion in everyday lives and communities, have combined both to discount many of the findings and assumptions of the older sociology of religion and to reveal and to cast doubt on the assumptions built into its organizing narrative of America.[34]

Two recent books by political scientists indirectly confirm some of the spirit of this new scholarship.[35] In *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History,* James Morone's reading of three epochs in American political life is premised on the religious and moral resources in the larger culture that make possible our capacity of mobilize nationally to undertake – for good or ill – the political projects we have undertaken. In *A Nation of Agents: The American Path to a Modern Self and Society,* James Block probes even more deeply behind this religious and moralistic culture to uncover the religious dimension in the very concept of "the self" that constitutes the actor or citizen in a free society. In America's early modern philosophical foundations in Hobbes and Locke, in the seventeenth century Puritan Revolution, and in the political ideas of the Revolutionary and Constitutional founding, citizenship and political agency are a complex amalgam of philosophy and theology, of hard-earned experience and visionary hope, of body and spirit. From Jonathan Edwards through John Dewey, in the words of a now classic book, the American churchman and the American philosopher combine.[36] Perhaps the most vivid recent example of combining political and religious ideas in American self-understanding, however, is found in Ronald White's *Lincoln's Greatest Speech.*[37]

IV. SOME THEORETICAL CONTESTATIONS

Political theory both causes and reflects changes in our understandings of the relationship of religion to American politics. It is causal in two ways. Political theory articulates and helps to make consciously paradigmatic the different forms of understanding. In so doing, however, especially when articulating and extending the logic of the dominant or conventional understanding, it reveals anomalies and other difficulties, helping to cause, as it were, its critique and even its overthrow as hegemonic. Political theory reflects changing understandings when it seeks to articulate new or emerging ideological and cultural divides in the polity. Like the earlier discussion of historiography most attention here will be paid to the dominant liberal paradigm and then to three main forms through which it is critiqued: phenomenology and the human sciences, civic republicanism, and pragmatism, all of which are often grouped under the rubric "antifoundationalism."

If any two contemporary political philosophers could be said to stand for different styles of contemporary liberal-democratic political theory, they would be John Rawls and Charles Taylor. Rawls asks to be judged on the truth and internal logic of his argument. In *A Theory of Justice*, especially, the "God of reason" speaks, independently of the persona of the truth teller. In contrast, Taylor's *Sources of the Self* asks us to interrogate our own intuitions and reflect on our own individual and collective experiences, first to discover intimations of, and then to articulate philosophically, the moral orientations and moral sources that shape our overt principles and practices. If *A Theory of Justice* is, like the first half of Hobbes's *Leviathan,*

34. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religious Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); on anthropology, see chapters by Fox and by Hollinger in Stout and Hart, *New Directions.*

35. Morone, *Hellfire Nation;* Block, *Nation of Agents.*

36. Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); and see Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edward's Philosophy of History; The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

37. Ronald C. White, Jr., *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002).

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simply true and comes to ground our political life, reason's revelations would essentially end, having nothing more of importance to tell us about the grounds of our common life. In prophetic terms, it would be the last Word and the end of a politics of becoming. Conversely, if *Sources of the Self* is true, it only means "*la lotta continua*" – the struggle continues and revelation is not at an end. In prophetic terms, it keeps the Word alive. Echoing Max Weber's distinction, Rawls comes to us as the "ethical prophet" with fixed principles and rules, while Taylor comes to us as the "exemplary prophet," calling us to destinies and destinations yet unknown. In more conventional terms, Rawls articulates the core ethic of liberalism and Taylor, the many-sided moralities of democracy. Today, Rawls represents the solid centerpiece of a well-wrought liberal theory of justice, while Taylor stands for a series of energetic and sometimes incongruent peripheries seeking more transformative forms of politics.

Taking John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) as a touchstone and tracing the fate and standing of its leading arguments, gives one a fairly clear picture of the state and direction of academic political theory in America.[38] *A Theory of Justice* seeks to express in universal-philosophical form the internal logic and principles of individual rights, their ranking and their distributions. Rawls' theory not only "takes rights seriously," it makes them the foundation of a theory of justice. This larger theory of justice serves, in turn, as a complete theory of politics. In response to criticism that this theory was premised on a Kantian and natural rights foundation, Rawls later argues that the political and moral power sustaining these rights lies in an overlapping political consensus that is neither metaphysical nor religious. This consensus is nourished by, but not constituted from, "comprehensive moral doctrines" that are the particular belief systems and commitments, both religious and philosophical, of a morally and religiously pluralistic citizenry.

For America, Rawls's theory encodes a narrative of secularization and cosmopolitanism. No matter what our historical past might have been and no matter what our own felt experiences of political agency might be, our political present and future should be guided by public principles that are neutral and fair. Public/democratic discourse and the standards regulating action and decision in the public realm must not be contaminated by privately-held religious and other comprehensive moral doctrines. When major political choices are contested, holders of those doctrines are to constrain themselves (or be constrained by others) not to use those comprehensive arguments directly. Legitimate political discourse must be a translation of what is "privately" felt and believed true into secular, scientific, and pragmatic forms. The resulting discourse produces a "public reason" that is "political" and not metaphysical or religious: "it neither criticizes nor attacks any comprehensive doctrine, religious or nonreligious, except insofar as that doctrine is incompatible with the essentials of public reason and a democratic society." Shielding the public realm from these doctrines prevents that realm from claiming that its decisions regarding fundamental political questions are decided "according to [some] idea of the whole truth."[39]

While many of Rawls followers have not been as modest as he, especially in refraining from more imperious Kantian and Enlightenment claims that liberal-democratic justice is "the whole truth," they combine in completely rejecting a political standing or a political place for supernatural religious belief in the American polity. It was this rejection that gave rise to the charge that Rawls's theory would sustain its regime of liberal rights by repressing democratic expression of ideas judged "incompatible" with this reading of liberalism – in effect, using political power to prevent challenges and alternatives to its proclaimed truths. Most of these arguments center on this rejection or "bracketing out" of religious belief and moral commitments grounded in religious beliefs.[40]

Rawls's liberal theory is pitted against two alternatives, one stressing more open-ended theories of political democracy and limited government (to stop an imperial secularization penetrating all the way down) and the other, more historically and sociologically grounded arguments about the American polity and the origins of liberal democratic states. Both types of alternatives charge that a Rawlsian self-understanding of America would drive many people out of politics. By making second-class citizens of those who had previously participated in politics because of and

38. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). Prominent writings in this same tradition would include Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Amy Gutmann, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); and all defenses of multiculturalism as a principle. On the relationship between liberal principles and multiculturalism see Lind, *Next American Nation,* 97–138, 217–45; Stanley Fish, *The Trouble with Principle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), chap. 4; and Eisenach, *Next Religious Establishment,* 100–103.

39. John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *University of Chicago Law Review* 64 (1997): 765–807; quoted from Owen, *Religion and the Demise of Liberal Rationalism,* 108–9, 112.

40. While this is the major argument in Owen, *Demise of Liberal Rationalism,* it can be found in a wide variety of other writings, including William Galston, *Liberal Pluralism: The Implications of Value Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Fish, *The Trouble with Principle,* chaps. 9–11, 15; and Patrick Neal, *Liberalism and its Discontents* (New York: New York University Press, 1997). For an excellent overview of Rawls, Taylor, and William Connolly on issues of democracy, religion, and secularism, see Mark Redhead, "Alternative Secularisms," (unpublished APSA paper, Philadelphia, 2003).

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through their religious and moral commitments, the polity would deprive itself of the insights and interests of a good portion of its citizens.[41] Second, this self-understanding would authorize less democratically responsive institutions and the political and intellectual elites who dominate them – especially the courts, bureaucracies, and national law schools – to declare which forms of political discourse and the beliefs that inform this discourse are compatible with "the essentials of public reason and a democratic society." To empower a particular subculture with this kind of universalizing power, as if their shared doctrines make them immune to the temptations of interest and power, defeats the claim to neutrality and fairness among comprehensive moral doctrines and would, paradoxically, undermine popular loyalty to the very institutions that this theory holds central to maintaining liberal equality.

Shifting the ground of this critique, these alternatives question whether one can treat "comprehensive moral doctrines" as static "things" – as if each person at some stage in his life were given a wardrobe selection of religious and metaphysical doctrines from which to clothe his identity.[42] This abstracted self is posited as disembodied and unencumbered and yet is assumed to be free to choose and has the intellectual and moral resources to do so—provided perhaps by the addition of an appropriate and compulsory "democratic education."[43] Lastly, and more comprehensively, this understanding of America and of liberal democracy is charged with being itself a comprehensive and particular moral doctrine of man and society that claims to stand above the battle, to be a political "universal" standing above and in judgment of the benighted and particular "others" burdened with narrow interests, prejudice, ignorance, and false consciousness.[44] Viewed historically, this pretension is only another instance of the well-known hegemonic strategies of all ruling establishments (and colonial powers) attempting to turn their particular values and interests into universal truths and common sense. Against this, democratic politics insists that the contemporary "culture wars" are battles between epistemological equals, both in the larger society where the challenge is from the right and in academia where the challenge is from the left.[45]

Without addressing all of the forms in which these arguments are embedded, I want to highlight four of these forms and suggest how they bring religion, or at least a religious sensibility, back into politics.

A. Phenomenology and the Human Sciences

The first form is the most firmly grounded in the language of philosophy and its history, namely, a critique of the liberal-enlightenment project in philosophy from the standpoint of phenomenology, tracing its roots back to Hegel.[46] This critique holds that the "human sciences," which include political philosophy, are inescapably both "interpretivist-experiential" and historical: understanding must come from within attempts to discover meaning in the world we experience. In political philosophy, the touchstones are Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (1989) and his writings on Hegel and on language and human agency.[47] This critique of Rawlsian liberalism holds that the very capacity to act as a citizen in a democratic society requires moral sources that are not "chosen" but constitutive, and that these moral sources (also termed the "social imaginary") of meaning are the starting point, not the end point, of philosophical reflection. To view both personal and collective identity as constituted from these moral sources integrates ideas and values from religion, philosophy, literature, and history as well as politics and political ideologies. Understood in this way, the human sciences seek to move political philosophy away from its hyperabstractions and hidden imperiums and toward ideas immanent in prevailing forms of political, moral, and intellectual culture, and to move political science and sociology away from its scientism and behaviorism and toward a more culturally situated understanding of social and political institutions and human agency.[48]

B. Civic Republicanism

The second form of criticism is in the form of an alternative understanding of the foundations of contemporary America and liberal-democratic societies generally: the discovery/invention of "civic republi-

41. For a formal classification of American citizens into a four-tiered hierarchy based on Rawls and Amy Gutmann, see Tomasi, *Liberalism Beyond Justice,* chap. 2 – as if confirming the worst fears of liberalism's democratic critics.

42. This is one of the main criticisms by Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America In Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). And see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) and "What is Human Agency?" in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

43. Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

44. See, for example, Judith Butler, "Universality in Culture," Martha C. Nussbaum with respondents, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism,* ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

45. Fish, *The Trouble with Principle,* 191, charges that those who refuse to play the liberal "theory game" are consigned to an "epistemological criminal class."

46. Lewis P. Hinchman, *Hegel's Critique of the Enlightenment* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1984); Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975) and "The Immanent Counter-Enlightenment," in *Canadian Political Philosophy: Contemporary Reflections,* ed. Ronald Beiner and Wayne Norman, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 386–400.

47. Taylor, *Hegel,* and "What is Human Agency"; and see James Tully, ed. *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

48. Quentin Skinner, ed., *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

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canism" as an alternative model to a rights based liberalism.[49] Originally articulated by students of early modern political thought and of the political ideologies of the 1640s Puritan Revolution, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and the American Revolution, civic republicanism as a general theory subordinates individual rights, both philosophically and in its social theory, to the participatory political community. The bonds of this political community are both deep and constitutive of the individuals within it. These bonds authorize this "community of equals" to engage in extensive moral and civic education and democratically decide on the distributions of rights compatible with communally generated purposes. Conversely, it seeks to protect this communal liberty by instilling suspicion of any elites, be they judicial, intellectual, economic, or cultural, who claim authority from sources outside the political community. These ideas and values powered the revolutions creating liberal democratic nation states, and it is these same ideas and values that are undermined by Rawlsian liberalism.

Like the original Antifederalists and many forms of Populism, it is an open question whether civic republican critiques are from the right (to protect traditional and often morally backward ways of life) or from the left (to penetrate and discredit great inequalities of wealth and power). The civic republican alternative began as an attempt to reread the history of liberal-democratic political thought beginning in early modern England, continued as a way of reinterpreting the American revolutionary founding, and only later found its most secure institutional home among "critical legal theorists" in the national law schools. As a countertheory of politics it is at once "conservative" (protecting the ligaments of community and loyalty; rediscovering the moral and religious bonds necessary for concerted political action) and "radical" (extending the powers of the democratic community against elites; creating newly empowered political movements). Civic republicanism, from either direction, is highly skeptical of "rights talk" abstracted from political democracy, whether this talk is used to shore up established interests and powers or to legitimate self-appointed judicial and bureaucratic elites in creating clienteles dependent upon their sponsorship and good will. One powerful element of civic republicanism is a deep critique of the rights talk underwriting contemporary church-state jurisprudence, particularly noteworthy in view of the fact that critical legal theorists think of themselves as critics of liberalism from the democratic left.[50]

C. Pragmatism

In the search for alternative bases for American political thought and American self-understanding, pragmatism has emerged as a powerful source of ideas critical of Rawlsian understandings.[51] On its face, pragmatism as a philosophical legacy and as an active philosophical enterprise would seem to leave little place for either religion or the voice of spirit in its conception of man, society, and politics. The conventional equation of pragmatism with utilitarianism, interest-group politics, materialism, techne, and social engineering was one reason that Rawlsian theory was so attractive in the first place: if the choice for America is between Bentham and Kant, give us Kant.

Clearly, a different set of readings of American pragmatism underwrites its current appropriations and uses. These different readings come from a variety of directions. The most obvious is establishing the Hegelian and evangelical Protestant features in the initial shaping of American pragmatism. Equally important are recent studies of Dewey showing the relationship of his pragmatism to the need for strong political democracy premised on the ratification and authority of shared experience and communication.[52] Next are critiques of prevailing theories of education and calls for a revitalized pragmatic education in which Dewey's theories are reworked to provide an experiential and thus a distinctly American grounding for democratic education and democratic citizenship.[53] Allied to these "Americanist" or ethnocentric/experiential groundings of liberal-democratic theory is the articulation of what Michael Lind calls "liberal nationalism" in explicit contrast to

49. An excellent summary and discussion is James Kloppenberg, *The Virtues of Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3–70.

50. See, for example, Mark Tushnet, "The Constitution of Religion," *Connecticut Law Review* 18 (1985): 701–38; Steven D. Smith, *Foreordained Failure: The Quest for a Constitutional Principle of Religious Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Fish, *The Trouble with Principle* chaps. 9–11. Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) and Eisenach, *Next Religious Establishment,* 29–49, show that nineteenth-century arguments for separation of church and state were powered mainly by defenders of de facto Protestant common schools and against Catholics. To some extent, civic republican critiques are modern restatements of Antifederalist thought – at once insisting that the national government, especially the imperious judiciary, stay out of religion and insistent that states and local communities can control moral and religious teaching by reaching ad hoc political settlements. This same sensibility is found in the economic realm; e.g., Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent,* who would empower local communities to ban Wal-Mart and other chain stores in order to protect main street and the local economy.

51. Indeed, some would claim that Rawls's later revisions of the arguments in *A Theory of Justice* go in the direction of pragmatism and are a testament to its enduring power in America.

52. Most notably in the writings of Richard Rorty and Cornel West but most clearly in Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); and see John J. Stuhr, *Genealogical Pragmatism: Philosophy, Experience, and Community* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), and Herbert Sussman, *Philosophy and the Reconstruction of Culture: Pragmatic Essays after Dewey* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

53. See the collection of essays in Robert Orrill, ed. *Education and Democracy: Reimagining Liberal Learning in America* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1997), especially those by Orill, Kimball, Menand, and Smiley.

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the cosmopolitanism inherent in the claims of Rawlsian theory and by those who claim to speak for America in a language of democratic universalism.[54]

Implicit in pragmatism and codified in some of Dewey's work is testimony to the life of the spirit. Pragmatism never fully rejected its phenomenological and its Hegelian origins, any more than those origins rejected its evangelical-Protestant ones.[55] No clearer example of this is found in the role of transcendent ideals encoded in Dewey's *Experience and Nature*. These ideals are not abstract and frozen "principles" to guide action but are the voices of spirit discovered in and through the very process of using reason to seek for meaning in our experience and in our choices.[56]

D. Antifoundationalism

The relationship of all three of these alternative understandings to religion is both complex and indirect. Insofar as each is a critique of Rawlsian theory and "rights talk" grounded in claims of moral and religious neutrality, each of these alternatives is, at a minimum, less hostile to claims of the spirit, to religiously-based identities, and to forms of political obligation grounded in contingency and history. Beyond this minimal conclusion is an openness to discussions of nationalism and patriotism that situates discussion of equality, rights, and freedom inside of traditions, discourses, and feelings that frame all politically salient thinking. The radical historicism that pervades some of these writings and the "antifoundationalism" that feeds their critiques, often replicate and restate deeper theological perspectives on politics. Just as Nietzsche lies at the foreground of antifoundationalism, so Augustine is in the background.[57]

IV. MULTIPLE SECULARISMS AND SECULAR-SACRED BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

It is important to adumbrate one issue in the critique of Rawlsian theory that was raised at the very start of this article but not discussed as a set of general propositions. This issue is the charge that the claims of secular liberal political theory are not (and cannot be) universal, based on "a view from nowhere" or from behind some veil of ignorance that screens out self-serving interests and values; rather, they are made by particular historic subcultures with particular traditions and roles and with particular interests and values. This critique takes many forms. One flows simply from the naïve question of who authorizes this set of political and legal theorists to speak for America and its core identity and political values.[58] Put differently, what historical background or legacy is assumed by this particular theory community such that they can claim an a priori right to speak and to be heard regarding who we are and what we should be about?

Earlier, I had suggested that a progressive-liberal establishment prevailed in American politics and intellectual culture from the Progressive Era through the 1970s. Even the electoral victory of Franklin Roosevelt and the rebirth and dominance of the Democratic Party did not significantly blunt this dominance.[59] And, despite the many and grievous religious, racial, and gender exclusions by Progressivism and the New Deal, both the liberalism outlined at the start in portrait A and the democracy outlined in portrait B flourished in tandem: This is the very definition of a successful establishment. This simultaneous flourishing, however, was increasingly articulated in liberal-universalistic terms, while its religious, assimilationist, nationalist, moralistic, and patriotic elements were subordinated.[60]

This liberal establishment came under siege by the left beginning in the late 1960s and was joined by forces from the right soon thereafter. The left charged this establishment with betraying its own proclaimed ideals of universal rights; the right charged it with betraying Americanist ideals of individual and family responsibility, national patriotism, and limited government. The result was perplexing. The left won most of the intellectual, cultural, and elite institutional battles, largely by converting the prevailing establishments from the inside and gradually occupying their seats of authority. The result is a secular liberalism combined with a principled multi-culturalism that still wins important victories in non-democratic electoral settings. The ideological right, however, increasingly consolidated its democratic electoral victories that it began in the 1980s.

54. Most notably Lind, *Next American Nation,* 259–347; and see Eisenach, *Next Religious Establishment,* 147–50. See also Kelly, *Politics and Religious Consciousness,* 270–75 on Josiah Royce on loyalty. The clearest difference on this issue is Judith Butler's critique of Martha Nussbaum's defense of cosmopolitan patriotism in "Universality in Culture."

55. Stephen Crites, *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel's Thinking* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

56. Victor Kestenbaum, *The Grace and the Severity of the Ideal: John Dewey and the Transcendent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) and Westbrook, *John Dewey,* chap. 10. Both suggest that Dewey should have titled this book *Experience and Culture* because his reading of nature is the humanly created world that we experience as given and that largely constitutes who we are and how we think.

57. William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), and *Politics and Ambiguity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), best suggest this relationship.

58. Neal, *Liberalism and its Discontents,* 125–26, 128, 158.

59. David Plotke, *Building a New Democratic Political Order: Reshaping American Liberalism in the 1930s and 1940s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 113, 187–88; and Morone, *Hellfire Nation* on the New Deal as Social Gospel.

60. Even the Cold War was construed by this establishment more as a battle of enlightened civilizational values against an atavistic totalitarianism than as a national-religious crusade. Louis Menand astutely called Harvard's general education curriculum in the 1950s and 1960s "a benign substitute for a national ideology in the Cold War era" (qtd. in Eisenach, *Next Religious Establishment,* 129).

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What the twentieth-century Progressive and New Deal liberal establishment successfully joined, the left and right combined to tear asunder. In the process, however, each side has found it necessary to use arguments from the opposing camp in order to extend its range of victory. We are familiar with this set of strategies: The right uses first amendment and diversity arguments to enhance the voice of religion and morality in schools and in national institutions (even in the name of multicultural inclusion). The secular-liberal left, on the other hand, is seeking to rediscover national narratives that will lend popular meaning and power to its truths.[61] The important point, however, is that this strategy of mutual encroachment tends to confound the boundaries between sacred and secular and to question the autonomous standing of both religion and politics. To put it somewhat cryptically: the religious right has had to become less pietistic/moralistic and more Augustinian while the liberal left has had to become less arrogantly enlightened and more humbly Augustinian and skeptically Nietzschean. This strategy of mutual encroachment has not gone unnoticed by those who would seek to theorize it. The result is a theory of "multiple secularisms" that, in turn, suggests more unifying ideas of the sacred.

Many Secularisms

Historians of voluntary religious establishments in America have little trouble in tracing the genealogy of today's liberal intellectual and cultural establishment to liberal evangelical Protestant sources that have been alluded to above. Indeed, much of the confidence, reforming zeal, and even alleged arrogance of liberalism (see the many writings of Stanley Fish) might be traced to this background. These intellectual ancestors came to dominate the professions, finance, education, the foundations, and later the federal bureaucracy and judiciary. They were overtly nationalistic and overtly Protestant, and envisioned America as incarnating both enlightened reason and a world-redemptive spirit. Their confidence was buttressed at the start by the dominant churches and churchman who shared the secularizing hopes that an ethical, noncreedal, ecumenical, and liberal-evangelical Protestantism spirit would triumph in every sector of American life from the family to the business corporation to foreign policy.[62] These earlier religious and academic elites, often spoke in a secular, philosophical, and social-scientific language, but the meaning and power of this language was deeply embedded in sacred narrative and nationalist rhetoric. The Progressive undoing, and perhaps the undoing of contemporary liberalism, came from their increasing confidence that they could disavow and suppress "contingent" sacred narrative and even national-patriotic rhetoric if it stood in the way of their projects and power.

This argument can be restated in broader terms, taken from arguments increasingly found in post-colonial studies, in intellectual history, the history of philosophy, and in religious studies. The reigning liberal-enlightenment understanding of the distinction between secular and sacred is that rational-secular understandings are one and sacred understandings are many. The social sciences, history, and philosophy that shape and articulate this secular understanding are united in a shared and "public" epistemology derived from Kant that stands against the almost infinite varieties of "private" world views that are produced by the historical and contingent nature of bodies, hopes, fears, and events. The sacred understandings that result, they conclude, cannot be the products of reason, any more than its symbols and expressions can be understood from the standpoint of reason: imaginative literature, "imagined communities" (nation states), the "social imaginary," art, ethnicity, and religion are all contingent facts that await their ratification and ranking by secular reason.

This Kantian or enlightenment understanding is rapidly collapsing. In contemporary scholarship the Enlightenment is being deconstructed into "rival enlightenments"[63] or into distinct national enlightenments[64] and secularism itself is increasingly discussed as discrete and often "rival secularisms," each with its own origins, experiences, and narratives.[65] The

61. Here, I refer to the many recent books, the most noted being Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), seeking to rediscover the secret of the many successes of the Progressives in order that they might be replicated. Many of these books are discussed and critiqued in Jeffrey C. Isaac, *The Poverty of Progressivism: The Future of American Democracy in a Time of Liberal Decline* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

62. Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in America;* Robert Handy, *Undermined Establishment: Church-State Relations in America, 1880–1920* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Fox, "The Culture of Liberal Protestant Progressivism," Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America since World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Julie Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996);. Eisenach, *Lost Promise of Progressivism;* Stevenson, *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends;* Curtis, *A Consuming Faith;* and Andrew Feffer, *The Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

63. Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments; Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); T. J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Knud Haakonssen, ed. *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ferguson, *American Enlightenment;* and see Taylor, "Ímmanent Counter-Enlightenment."

64. Ferguson, *American Enlightenment.*

65. Taylor, "Modes of Secularism"; Janet R. Jakobsen, "World Secularisms at the Millennium: Introduction," *Social Text* 18

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truths produced by secular knowledge are subject to this genealogical critique and reinterpreted as part of the particular narratives of meaning in which they are located. Somewhat parallel to Kuhn's argument concerning paradigms that successively transform and structure scientific truth, the argument concerning truths in the human sciences posits separate and simultaneous ethnocultural and religious paradigms that inform, differentiate, and empower a variety of secularisms. Needless to add, postcolonial studies is practically premised on this assumption.[66]

Once one begins to look more closely at the critiques of Rawlsian liberalism from this perspective, it becomes apparent that something like a "multiple-secularisms" argument is implicit in many of these critiques. Whether in the name of political democracy to level the political playing field or to cast doubt on the claims of philosophical and political imperium, the antifoundationalist assumption carries with it the claim that secular reason is neither self-creating nor self-authorizing. And the new religious and cultural historians would add an addendum to this reading directly relevant to our current politio-religious condition:

> A key paradox of [American] liberal Protestantism – one that must be a cornerstone of any history of liberal Protestantism – is that its goal has always been, in part, to sanctify the secular, to bring forth out of the natural and human worlds the divine potential contained within them. Secularization can be seen, in some of its forms, as a sign of success for liberal Protestantism, not a marker of defeat.[67]

Read this way, and in view of the relative weakness of the church base of contemporary liberal Protestantism, this victory becomes an increasingly hollow one if, as they have, new religious energies and new religious spirits and new personal identities rise to the fore. The forms of secularization these new spiritual energies might produce are now open because they have not, apart from some national electoral victories, penetrated into much of the larger national culture. In some respects, however, from the left and at the most sophisticated level of the American intellect, we already have some provisional indications.[68] What relationship these secularizations from the academic left might come to have to the secularizations of the religious right is, needless to add, a very open question.

VI. CONCLUSION: SACRED DISCOURSE AND POLITICAL TIME

It may seem odd to conclude a research note with a discussion of the attack and destruction of the World Trade Center, but a consideration of the contending rhetorical constructions and popular responses to that event helps amplify some of the patterns of scholarship discussed earlier.

After the attack on the World Trade Center, a struggle immediately began over how to characterize that event. Was it an act of war or a crime? Those who wanted to contain the event within the framework of ordinary politics and ordinary (diachronic) time, to be handled by properly designated officials within preexisting and familiar procedures and language, said the act was a crime, the perpetrators were criminals, and those who aided the criminals were to be apprehended and tried in a court of justice. The resulting punishment would complete the event and everything would then proceed within the prevailing framework of ordinary time and incremental policymaking.[69]

The lyrics of *God Bless America* that spontaneously sounded throughout the country immediately drowned out this diachronic discourse of crime in the synchronic discourse and sacred rhetoric of war. The country began to speak in a different voice and entered a different mode of time – a synchronic time in which past, present, and future become mixed up, reversed, and conflated. The song was in fact a late and generic coda to a host of patriotic hymns written by Unionists in the period of the American Civil War. The most famous is Julia Ward Howe's *Battle Hymn of the Republic* (technically, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*) whose verses track the path of the nation through the apocalyptic Book of Revelation. Equally famous is another hymn of that same era, Samuel F. Smith's *My Country, Tis of Thee*. It begins with the Puritan nation founders and ends: "Our father's God, to thee, / Author of liberty, / To thee we sing; / Long may our land be bright / With freedom's holy light; / Protect us by thy might, / Great God, our King."[70]

The word "homeland" entered the public vocabulary, carrying with it what Sacvan Bercovitch calls America's "Christianography," a merging of biblical

(2000): 1–27, for a summary discussion of these writings; Redhead, "Alternative Secularisms," comparing Rawls, Charles Taylor, and William Connolly; and see James Alexander, "An Essay on Historical, Philosophical and Theological Attitudes to Modern Political Thought," *History of Political Thought* 25 Spring (2004): 116–148.

66. Wendy Brown, "Tolerance as/in Civilizational Discourse," (unpublished APSA paper, Philadelphia, 2003), using this literature in deconstructing the idea of tolerance as a universal principle.

67. Richard Fox in *New Directions,* 400; and see Fox, "The Culture of Liberal Protestant Progressivism."

68. Rorty, *Achieving Our Country;* Connolly, *Why I am not a Secularist;* and Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," and "Immanent Counter-Enlightenment."

69. Long after the crime description was overwhelmed by that of war, Democratic Party leaders in the House and Senate were vainly insisting that the first priority remain the apprehension of Osama bin Laden.

70. Julia Ward Howe (1819–1910); Samuel F. Smith (1808–1895). And see James Russell Lowell (1819–1891), *Once to Every Man and Nation*. For an analysis of the lyrics in *Battle Hymn of the Republic,* see Ernest Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

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prophecy and providential nature.[71] A whole host of policies, symbols, and rituals arose as witness to the call. American flags appeared everywhere and on everything; blood banks were besieged with donors; hundreds of millions of dollars flowed into aid and charitable organizations. This massive response was as disproportionate to the need as it was to any realistic assessment of immediate further physical threats to our safety – as if to say that Americans entered so fully and spontaneously into these activities with a sense of relief, a release from their entrapment in the ordinary time, ordinary laws, and ordinary lives that divide and separate them. And this transformative release from ordinary time and ordinary priorities set the stage for a new configuration of policies constructed from the new repertoire of possibilities contained within synchronic time.

Many Americans were frightened by this outburst of patriotic-religious rhetoric and symbolism. They saw this release of feeling and emotion as a pretext for breaking faith with our legal and constitutional principles, propelling us into the darkness of political extremism. While this response is understandable, some reflection will remind us that the present set of legal and constitutional principles being defended were themselves the result of earlier transformative moments, beginning with the election of FDR and the institution of the New Deal, followed by World War II, the Cold War, and, finally, the Civil Rights movement. Indeed, those transformations were predicated earlier on the nationalization of the federal government occasioned by the Civil War and the long period of Republican Party ascendancy begun with the realigning election of McKinley in 1896.[72] As dramatic as this most recent explosion of sacred rhetoric, it followed familiar patterns, most obviously in the rhetoric of antislavery and the Civil War.[73] Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric following our entry in World War I was repeated in World War II (Eisenhower's history was called *Crusade in Europe*) and sustained American internationalism in the Cold War era and the later Civil Rights movement. Here is Woodrow Wilson:

> Our participation in the war established our position among the nations . . . the whole world saw at last . . . a Nation they had deemed material and now found to be compact of the spiritual forces that must free men of every nation of every unworthy bondage. . . . The stage is set, the destiny is disclosed. It has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God who led us into this way. We cannot turn back. We can only go forward . . . to follow the vision. It was of this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth show the way.[74]

While not all transformative moments in our politics are marked by the sudden insertion of sacred rhetoric (there are powerful secular rhetorics as well), all of these moments require a discourse to discredit and overthrow the previous political ideology within which priorities are decided and policies are made.[75] One can draw a parallel by distinguishing between normal eras of policy making that are incremental, with existing hierarchies of values, interests, and purposes protected, and what one political theorist has termed "synoptic" policy driven by hard choices and highly contentious consequences.[76] In both cases, "constitutional" issues are being decided outside the (prevailing) constitution. This is as true when the Supreme Court rules, as it was when the North won the Civil War, when FDR was elected in 1932, or when we remained militarily mobilized to fight Communism after World War II.

Religious belief and sacred rhetoric are not only powerful cultural and intellectual resources that make these moments conceivable, they legitimate the changes and help us bear the sacrifice and loss (material, psychological, and intellectual) in ways that legal-constitutional principles, standing alone, cannot begin to do. And these same limitations apply to philosophical articulations of American political self-understanding and to histories of liberal political theory read as a seamless and secular "just so" story. Like philosophy, diachronic time fixes the past, orders the present, and severely limits the future.

Liberal Young and Democratic New

Perhaps the various articulations of America's emerging self-understanding can best be summarized by reflecting on the tensions implicit in the question of whether America is to be understood as "young" or as "new."[77] By "young," I mean that we see ourselves on a preordained path toward maturity within a fixed set of principles and ideals. By "new," I mean that we see

71. Bercovitch, *Puritan Origins,* 98–108.

72. Bruce Ackerman, *We the People: Foundations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), and *We the People: Transformations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), has written an entire constitutional history of America premised on extra-constitutional transformative events.

73. Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation;* White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech.*

74. Speech to the Senate, July 10, 1919. Here is earlier Wilson, the political scientist:

> Constitutional government can exist only where there is actual community of interest and of purpose, and cannot, if it be also self-government, express the life of any body of people that does not constitute a veritable community. Are the United States a community? In some things, yes; in most things, no. (*Constitutional Government in the United States* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1908], 51)

75. Eviator Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

76. Jennifer Hochschild, *The New American Dilemma: Liberal Democracy and School Desegregation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).

77. Kelly, *Politics and Religious Consciousness,* 63–90, discusses these metaphors and their differences in the context of religion.

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ourselves as capable of democratic renewal/rebirth in ways that we cannot know in advance. Perhaps the best example of the former is that of John Dickinson, one of America's most powerful spokesmen for colonial rights against the British in his *Letters from a Farmer.* An enlightened gentleman, thoroughly conversant with Whig political thought and British constitutional principles, he was entirely unprepared for the revolutionary call for independence. His plaintive question, "Where shall we find another England to supply our loss?" illustrates the vision of America as young and destined to mature within the prevailing European political framework. Dickinson's God was a providential keeper of rational order in diachronic time. Tom Paine, Dickinson's Philadelphia tormentor in this period of decision, illustrates the vision of America as new. In his "Appendix" to *Common Sense,* Paine sees independence as an apocalyptic moment in time that redeems past struggles and failures even as it promises to create a new future for the world: "We have it in our power to begin the world over again. . . . The birth-day of a new world is at had."[78] Needless to add, Paine's God is the prophetic judge of righteousness, breaking through ordinary time and altering its meaning and direction.

78. John Dickinson, *The Writings of John Dickinson,* Vol. 1. *Political Writings 1764–1774,* ed. Paul Leicester Ford (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania 1895), 1:326; Thomas Paine, *Common Sense,* ed. and intro. by Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin, 1976), 120.

American identity exists in the tension between these two poles, poles that implicate politics and religion, the secular and the sacred, providence and prophecy. The metaphor of "young" with its ideal of maturity has the advantage of rational discourse and common sense because the framework and the future is known and assumed settled. This metaphor sustains the "order of preservation" even as it entails a necessary incapacity to imagine possibilities outside its authorized purview and hides from itself its origins in war, military or electoral conquest, or new political and religious spirits and movements. The metaphor of "new" sustains our transcendent hopes – the "order of salvation" – and calls us to undertake transformative projects. Yet these transformative moments in politics entail levels of risk and possibilities for tragedy that threaten the goods and purposes provided by stable political and social institutions.

Religious belief and language can accommodate and serve to ratify either metaphorical self-understanding. I would suggest, however, that religion in the service of a "young" America on a path to maturity will always be a rather tepid civil religion, often in moral and ethical thrall to present powers and interests and, therefore, never quite true to itself. Religion in the service of a "new" America is not only more true to itself, it provides a much more realistic understanding of our political condition, anchored as it is in the necessities of contingency and risk, and of coercion and death.

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