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**“Exploring Religious
Pluralism”**

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Exploring Religious Pluralism

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Editorial

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This inaugural issue of the International Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS) is opening the floor for the scientific debate of democratic governance in multireligious societies. The contributions collected in this inaugural issue address a variety of issues related to the main theme of religious pluralism under conditions of contemporary social transformations. These include the analysis of the relation of religious values and human rights, the study of patterns of social integration in modern societies and their effect on religious identities, and the formulation of public policies aimed at managing religious diversity. Whereas the disciplinary background of all contributions is the sociology of religion, especially its theoretical field, the inaugural issue offers a broad perspective on the main theme and thus a starting point for further interdisciplinary discussion.

James Spickard, in his article "Human Rights, Religious Conflict, and Globalisation. Ultimate Values in a New World Order", analyses the contemporary emergence of a global system of universalistic norms as expressed in human rights, and the concomitant rise of religious and ethnic particularism. He demonstrates that both developments can be explained by structural effects of increased globalisation, and argues that the political management of religious pluralism therefore needs to pay attention to such underlying social structures.

In his contribution on "Modes of Religious Pluralism under Conditions of Globalisation", Ole Riis explores conceptual, theoretical and empirical issues of analysing institutional frameworks and public policies of religious pluralism. He shows that different socio-historical conditions may lead to different responses to the challenge of increased religious pluralisation as induced by contemporary social transformations.

Paul Weller's review of the book "*Religion in Prison: Equal Rites in a Multi-Faith Society*" by James Beckford and Sophie Gilliat, finally, provides an example for an empirical case-study of problems in the development of policies of religious pluralism within the context of Western European immigrant countries.

While following issues of the International Journal on Multicultural Societies will focus on the exemplary analysis of religious pluralism in specific regions and on the discussion of context-sensitive policy strategies, readers are invited to continue the debate on questions raised in this inaugural issue by writing co-articles, by commenting on the arguments through the mailing list attached to this Journal, or by suggesting themes to be included in further issues of the Journal.

Human Rights, Religious Conflict, and Globalisation – Ultimate Values in a New World Order

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The belief in innate human rights has achieved quasi-religious status in the late-modern world. Despite its Western philosophic origins and the active opposition of some Islamic, Confucian, and indigenous anti-colonial regimes, the idea that all individuals possess inalienable rights to life, liberty, and a basic economic livelihood is widely venerated. Surprisingly, this has occurred in a time of increasing religious fragmentation and discord. Religiously based conflict is more common now than at any time since the mid-1600s, and has torn many societies apart. Why is there a simultaneous growth of both religious divisiveness and quasi-religious unity? This article suggests that increased globalisation and the growth of an international division of labour have fostered both trends. Such structural characteristics of our global late-modern social order have made plausible key themes of the human rights discourse, especially its universalism. The same characteristics have spurred religious and ethnic particularism as an anti-systemic counter-trend. If this battle between universalism and particularism – the theological battle of our age – is as much social as intellectual, then democratic governance of pluralistic societies can only succeed by paying attention to such underlying social correlates.

This article seeks to explain the growth of a major quasi-religious belief system in the late 20th century: the principle of universal human rights. Rare throughout world history, that doctrine has so pervaded global society in the last half of the present century that it has attained considerable ideological force. Everyone, it seems, now talks about human rights – rights which many see as "sacred". Such extensive influence surely demands explanation.

At the same time, the post-Cold War era has been typified by increased religious and ethnic conflict – of which the religio-ethnic wars in the Balkans and Sri Lanka are only examples. These conflicts set neighbour against neighbour, and deny the validity of human rights ideals.

In the paragraphs that follow, I suggest that both the notion of universal human rights and these various particularisms and fundamentalisms stem from the same social causes. Growing economic, social and technological interconnectedness – the creation of a true world society – have both systemic and counter-systemic ideological counterparts. The veneration of human rights parallels these social transformations on the religious level just as various fundamentalisms seek to overturn them. Any efforts to govern such a multireligious situation democratically must heed these underlying trends.

I highlight the quasi-religious aspects of both human rights beliefs and ethnic particularisms in order to subject them to the tools of religious analysis. These tools allow one to identify such idea-systems' core themes, and relate these themes to the realities of their believers' lives. Though there is a long tradition of such analysis (see McCoy 1980), it uses an approach to religion that is unusual for sociologists. For the purposes of this article, "religion" refers to a socially-affirmed worldview: a set of beliefs and values that give people an ultimate account of their place and purpose in the world along with a set of ultimate goals to pursue. To avoid premature judgement, we shall admit natural beliefs as well as supernatural ones, so long as they are ultimate – i.e., so long as they are the beliefs and values toward which people orient their lives. And we shall admit polytheisms along with monotheisms, for people may worship more than one "god". We shall even admit henotheisms, as H. Richard Niebuhr called the ultimate worship of the group itself.

This definition leaves out much, particularly religious institutions, but it has two key virtues. First, it focuses on religious and quasi-religious ideologies, and thus grasps a central aspect of an increasingly multireligious age. Second, it includes ideologies that act like religions, which exposes the common features of the beliefs under discussion. Seeing such commonalities lets us uncover their causes.¹

1. The Veneration of Human Rights

The belief in innate human rights has enjoyed increasing currency world-wide. A product of the European Enlightenment, it grew out of the West's struggle against monarchy, where it proved a useful weapon for a bourgeoisie eager to develop a new and less restrictive social order. Once established at home, rights-language was exported to the rest of the world along with the other staples of Western dominance: trade goods, guns, and Coca-Cola. At times it helped justify Western conquest by appealing to non-western insurgents who were eager to overthrow their despotic rulers. It has also proved a useful tool for those natives who wished to escape Western control. If all peoples "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," to quote the United States Declaration of Independence, then

¹ Seeing religions as idea-systems also lets us bypass the question of secularisation. Though secularisation debates are important, they can obscure wider issues – and it is those wider issues we seek.

any power – Western ones included – that threatens people's life, liberty, or pursuit of happiness deserves to be felled.

Concern for human rights thus seemed an easy way to moralise politics and to undermine tyranny. The tide ran swift, reaching a high point with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. That and later UN documents specified a host of political, civil, social and economic rights that the world's governments were to guarantee to their citizens.² Human rights became a theoretical, if not always a practical, force in the world.

Yet such agreements have brought neither universal rights nor international peace. The Cold War pitted the capitalist/democratic “First World,” with its tradition of civil and political rights, against the communist “Second World,” which preferred rights to economic and social equality. These two types of rights are usually called “first-generation” and “second-generation” rights, respectively, because of the order in which they entered Western civic philosophies. The Universal Declaration contained both, and from 1948 to 1989, the “West” and the “East” traded charges of rights violations almost continuously. Each accused the other of violating its favourite rules. Each conveniently ignored its own flaws.

Recent years have seen a push for a third generation of rights: the rights of cultural groups (Symonides 1998). Though not often found in international treaties, the notion of “third-generation rights” supports various groups' claims to land, to cultural practices, to the use of their own languages, and even to quasi-sovereignty. Just as the land demands of Brazilian and Canadian aborigines depend on notions of group rights, so do the pro-French language laws of Quebec and the Latvian denial of full citizenship to ethnic Russians. In each case, groups assert rights both against other groups and against individuals.

These three types of rights seem often to be in conflict. How, for example, can English-speaking Quebecois exercise their rights to free speech if they are banned from using their own language because of French-speakers' group rights to maintain their French linguistic heritage? Does the dominance of one or the other language disadvantage French- or English-speakers socially, economically, or educationally? If so, does this constitute a violation of their individual rights? Or does it constitute a fulfilment of a cultural group's rights to political, social, and economic dominance in its own territory? The complexities will only be compounded if Quebec secedes from Canada, as many French-speaking Quebecois

² The UDHR (cf. General Assembly Resolution 217 A III) proclaimed human rights as a universal and transcultural concept. In 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) grounded these rights in agreements between contracting states (cf. United Nations Treaty Series, vol 999: 171 and vol. 993:3). Further treaties and declarations have sought to protect the rights of women, the rights of ethnic and cultural minorities, the rights of children, the right to economic development, and so on. It should be noted, however, that not all countries have signed all documents.

apparently hope. Will the Native peoples who inhabit the northern two-thirds of the province themselves secede? And will the French-speakers let them? Settling such rights conflicts is not a task for the faint of heart (see Taylor 1993).

Despite this, the call for human rights has achieved what amounts to near universal veneration. It has become a cultural icon, even for those who are not particularly clear about the grounds on which they base their claims. My local newspaper – in Texas, no less – contains frequent stories about people who claim that their “rights” have been violated: the right to privacy, the right keep the money one earns (and thus not pay taxes), animal rights, the rights of the unborn. People now use the idiom of rights to support anything that they think necessary for dignity and freedom, however defined.

There is, of course, a counter-trend. The growth of rights-discourse has occurred despite the opposition of some non-Western regimes, who argue that rights-language stems from Western philosophic principles and is thus not applicable to other civilisations. For example, Iran has announced that Islamic law requires an interconnection between religion and the state; so Iran represses Baha'is, whom it accuses of heresy. China and Singapore have similarly claimed that a focus on individual rights undercuts the Confucian ethics on which their social orders rest; those who criticise their governments are often jailed. As Kishore Mahbubani, of the latter country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, put it:

Value systems, such as human rights and freedom of the press, are choices which each society must make. In the United States, individual rights are placed ahead of law and order. In Asia, law and order have priority over human rights. These are simply alternative value systems. None are superior over the other. Asians and Westerners must emancipate themselves from notions that Western value systems are superior to Asian value systems. (Quoted by Chew 1994, 936)

To Mahbubani, individual rights are not universal because different societies believe different things and there are no overarching principles to compel assent. In a world of cultural diversity, the veneration of human rights is thus simply one worldview among many.

Yet, even the most repressive regimes recognise the power of the human rights ideal. Their opposition to Western human rights notions has had to take the form of alternative rights philosophies, the development of which has become a something of a growth industry among Asianist intellectuals. Considerable effort has gone to describing systems that supposedly provide much the same protections as human rights, but without cultural imperialism. (I am of course speaking only of principled opposition, not the opportunistic kind that uses anti-rights arguments to support dictatorial power: see Thompson 1980; UNESCO 1986; Hall and Ames 1987; Little, et al 1988; Rouner 1988; Berting, et al 1990; Dwyer 1991; Mayer 1991; Rosemont 1991; An-Na'im 1992; De Bary and Tu 1998; De Bary 1998.)

Why has this happened? What makes human rights so sacred in today's world? For that is what rights are: sacred ideals. People treat human rights as hallowed organising principles for life: as prior and superior to ordinary legal and social rules. They feel that human rights are sacrosanct, that they must be protected against corruption. To accuse a government or a person of violating human rights is to accuse them of more than a crime; it is to accuse them of boundless evil. To rape is a crime, for example, but to rape as an instrument of warfare or state policy should be – so argues Catherine MacKinnon (1993) – a human rights offence, even though there is already no society on earth that condones it. This puts human rights violations beyond mere criminality; it makes them sacrilege. The concept of human rights is thus literally iconic: it connects people to something beyond and greater than themselves; it invokes feelings of awe, reverence; and it may even motivate people to act in ways that may endanger their lives.

All this suggests that human rights beliefs are essentially religious – not institutional religion, to be sure, though human rights institutions also proliferate world-wide, but religion just the same. The human rights movement has its sacred histories and texts, its holy discourses, its rituals, its saints and demons. It is, in short, wide open for religious analysis. The details of that analysis do not concern me here. Granting the religious or religion-like aspect of human rights ideals, I want to know what the current sacred prominence of human rights ideals tells us about our late-modern social order. For the wide reverence for this social ideal is something new on this planet. There have been religions before, and lots of them. There have been social philosophies of equivalent scope; Marxism, indeed, expressed the aspirations of a large portion of humanity and did much to shape the century now closing. But its age has passed, and the age of human rights has dawned. What can we learn about late modernity from this fact? Why, in an age of increased inter-religious contact, has this set of beliefs come to the fore? Why this particular philosophy? And why now?

2. Four Themes In Human Rights Beliefs

To answer these questions, we must take a closer look at the idea-system surrounding human rights. We shall explore four themes: moral individualism, human equality, social interconnectedness, and universalism. As the first two are frequently coupled, we shall view them jointly before addressing the others.

2.1 Moral Individualism and Human Equality

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) clearly presumes that individuals are the key unit of society; it also affirms these individuals' equality and ultimate worth. That document begins with the claim that the

recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Article 1 proclaims *inter alia* that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” and the articles that follow guarantee individuals the rights to life, liberty, security, legal recognition, and freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile. They ensure rights to free speech, thought, and religion, to peaceful assembly, to marry at one’s own choosing, to education, to free choice of employment, to rest and leisure, and to an adequate standard of living. Though these latter clearly depend on social life – and the Declaration notes the role of the community in each individual’s personal development – Article 28 affirms that

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Such language clearly makes society the individual’s servant rather than the other way around.

As the above-mentioned religious opposition to Western human rights views shows, these assumptions are far from being self-evident. Traditional Islam, for example, has a more communal sense of social life than do the European principles out of which human rights beliefs have evolved. Where Christianity – especially Protestantism – sees individuals as alone responsible for their sins, Islam sees Allah commanding everyone to maintain the social order. Where Enlightenment philosophers began with individual sense experience, Moslem philosophers began with the nature of community. Thus in traditional Islam one may not have an absolute right to marry whom one pleases, and Moslems arguably do not have the right to change their religion.³ The Qur’an builds community around religion and marriage, making them not just a matter of individual choice.

Yet Islam does not abandon the individual; it just provides different protections. Where human rights advocates seek to protect individuals by using “rights” as lines beyond which governments cannot go, Islam protects the person by emphasising the collective need to maintain a just society. Both conceive of persons and think that they need protection, but only the former sees “rights” as the solution. In Jack Donnelly’s words,

the [Islamic] right to justice proves instead a duty of rulers to establish justice, whereas the right to freedom is merely a duty not to enslave unjustly. In fact, economic rights turn out to be duties to earn a living and to help provide for the needy, whereas the right to freedom of expression actually is an obligation to speak the truth; i.e., the right is not an obligation of others but an obligation of the rights holder! (1982, 306).

Traditional Islam thus puts society above the individual, while still counting “justice” as a core value. Human rights ideals, on the contrary, presume that

³ The representatives of various Moslem countries made these points in the UN debates on the 1948 Declaration. They were developed more fully before the Committee on Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Questions than was possible before the General Assembly.

individual's ultimate worth. This difference well underscores these ideals' theological particularism.

A look at traditional Confucianism shows a similar situation, though with a greater emphasis on inequality than is typical of Islam. Since the Shang period (1766?-1122? B.C.E.), Chinese society has been based on norms of hierarchy and mutual responsibility. The ruler must care for his subjects (the *min*), by maintaining the rules of ritual propriety (*li*) that govern his relationship with them. Only thus can he actualise virtue (*te*) and retain the Mandate of Heaven (*t'ien ming*). Making the people suffer will lose him that Mandate, and his regime will fall.

Even this way of putting it fails to capture fully the traditional Chinese view, however. As Henry Rosemont (1991, 71-74) has shown, Confucians have long seen themselves as interconnected sets of roles rather than as individuals. From this point of view, the person is not primarily an atomized, isolated, rights-bearing individual, equal to all others, to whom social relationships are addenda. Rather, each person is social to the core: in my case, for example, first and foremost a husband, father, son, colleague, teacher, student, and citizen. These relationships – some equal, some not – define me, even constitute me. Each is governed by *li*. Because I am – and everyone else is – a manifestation of such relationships, the collective practice of *li* creates a social world that exhibits *te*. As Confucius put it, a man of *jen* (benevolence, humanity), “wishing to establish his own character, also establishes the character of others.” This view is anti-individualistic to its core.

Though *te* and *li* clearly support human dignity, they just as clearly do not support a concept of individual human rights. That is, they do not support the notion that people are equal individuals who possess specific rights-claims on others. A society practicing *li* may not treat its members equally, though it expects to treat them fairly and is (according to Confucians) more than likely to reward them well. But it does not do so through the medium of individual equal rights; it uses another philosophy.⁴ Again this underscores the distinctiveness of human rights claims. Clearly, the human rights themes of individualism and equality are religious values, not universal.

2.2 *Social Interconnectedness*

If traditional Moslem and Confucian thought are anti-individualistic and if the latter is anti-egalitarian as well, they are both open to social interconnectedness, our third theme. Though neither religion would use such individualistic language, both agree with the ideal found in Article 25 (1) UDHR:

⁴ Dr. Peng-Chun Chang, the Vice-Chairman of the original Human Rights Commission, pointed this out in the early UN debates. His speech to the General Assembly during the final debate is a masterpiece of subtlety and well worth reading (General Assembly Proceedings, Summary Version: 182nd Plenary Meeting, pp. 895-6.)

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

This standard of living is only possible in a healthy social order, in which people take care of one another and in which social relationships are strong. For can one have such security without social ties? Money can buy much, but “unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood” rules out money as a solution. This “right” demands that people take responsibility for each other, that they create together a society that supports them all.

The ideal of social interconnectedness finds its best expression in the notion of economic and social rights – the “second-generation rights” that were championed by the former Communist regimes. These include, in the Declaration, rights to work and an education, as well as to the adequate standard of living just mentioned. They also include the rights to participate in cultural and political affairs. “Second-generation rights” are particularly well expressed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which the Chinese government – among others – has argued must be achieved before extensive political and civil rights are possible.⁵

An interconnected social order supports individuals, but does not exalt them. Instead, it sees their co-operation as essential to a healthy society, which in turn lets individuals flourish. It claims that one cannot go directly from moral individualism to prosperous individual lives; only a strong society can bring forth the latter.

Many Western human rights activists would accept this argument, though not as an excuse to deny civil and political freedoms. Yet, the way in which they support such freedoms shows their own implicit respect for social interconnectedness – and on a practical level. Activist networks now extend world-wide, and to them a crime against one person is a crime against all. According to Amnesty International, Americas Watch, Asia Watch, and other international NGOs, human rights activists cannot afford to let rights violations occur anywhere, no matter how obscure. Thus one does not protest and lobby just on behalf of Chinese dissidents, African victims of clitoridectomy, or American death-row inmates. One certainly does not work just to impose Western standards of rights on others. Instead, one works in tandem with rights advocates everywhere to make the world conform to a universal human rights code.

Just as environmentalists – whose ideologies have emerged during the same period – argue for the mutual dependence of species and for the ties between peoples and

⁵ The 1993 Bangkok Declaration on Human Rights – put forth at the height of the “Asian challenge” to the Western accent on individual liberties – not only proclaimed the primacy of economic and social rights but stressed “the significance of national and regional particularities” in limiting individual rights claims.

their ecosystems, so human rights activists see the interconnectedness of societies world-wide. Alongside the explicit social concern for a healthy social order contained in second-generation rights claims, this enshrines social interconnectedness as a human rights ideal. The fact that the theme of social interconnectedness is shared with other religious traditions, however, is no guarantee of its universality. Instead, this religious theme – like the belief in individualism and equality – helps define human rights discourse in the modern world.

2.3 Universalism

Yet, human rights principles see themselves as universal. They claim that they apply to everyone, everywhere – and they champion one world, indivisible. Their enemies are the world's particularisms: the nationalisms, ethnic patriotisms, and limited visions that exalt one group or society above another. It was no mistake that the first major human rights document was named “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” It promised to be the first set of universal ideals, toward which all governments and peoples could strive.

Again, not all belief systems see themselves this way. Judaism, for example, sees itself as the religion of a particular people: though it accepts converts, it does not seek them. Various tribal religions similarly speak to their own group rather than to outsiders and recognise different principles as applying to different peoples. Such beliefs are particularistic rather than universalistic.

However, human rights discourse makes a consistent enough case for its universality that we must include this theme in our description, even though human rights ideals are in fact neither universally shared nor supported by all of the world's peoples. Along with individualism, equality, and social interconnectedness, the theme of universality helps us distinguish the human rights “religion” from other ways of seeing the world. It is to these other belief-systems that we now turn.

3. Nationalism and Fundamentalism as Counter-Ideologies

Though the belief in innate human rights has made great strides in the last half-century, there is also a counter-movement. I have referred at length above to the Moslem and Confucian challenges to “Western cultural imperialism.” In addition, a new ethnic consciousness infects societies on almost every continent – often dividing people on religious lines. Conflict wracks Sri Lanka, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia, just to name three spots that have put ethnic and religious killing on the nightly news. All three were once peaceful, even progressive, but now they are aflame. The last alone has seen four wars or quasi-wars in eight years: Croats against Serbs (twice), both against Bosniacs, and now Serbs against ethnic Albanians. Whatever their causes, they have eradicated pan-Yugoslav society and

set its inhabitants at odds along ethno-religious lines (Ignatieff 1993).⁶ India and Northern Ireland continue to suffer religious strife, while many of the various former Soviet Republics have split ethnically.

Not all such revivals are violent, however. Scottish nationalism is peaceful, and even Basque nationalism has not thrown Spain into civil war. Belgium seems resigned to federalism between Flemings and Walloons. Canada has carved out an Inuit-run hinterland, and Catalonia now calls itself “a nation within Spain.” The long-contested state/nation relationship seems increasingly up for grabs – at least in the developed West (Llobera 1994; Wicker 1997).

The same period has seen a growth of religious fundamentalism in several traditions. Though different in scale and scope, Christian, Moslem, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and other faiths have found new vigour in a self-conscious return to “tradition”. Various authors have charted this resurgence (e.g.: Marty and Appleby 1991; Lechner 1993) and noted their similarity to interethnic strife (e.g.: Beyer 1994).

Ethnic and religious wars, violent or non-violent nationalism, fundamentalisms of various stripes: each of these movements exalts the group above humanity, the local above the transcendent, the particular above the universal. As such, each moves directly counter to the universalism embodied in human rights ideals. How can we reconcile this with a world that has so ennobled the universalistic rights tradition?

This question has no easy answer, though some suggested answers are perhaps worse than others. “Primordialists” claim that ethnic and religious divisions have always been present and are only now erupting because the Cold War’s end has loosed the imperial hands that kept them down. This might hold for Eastern Europe, though strife there seems more goaded by politicians scrambling to maintain their power than a response to pre-existing social divisions. What divides Serbs from Croats, after all, but some imagined history, a few demagogues, and the guns those demagogues command? Yet, such “instrumentalist” answers themselves fail to account for Western European nationalisms and cannot alone explain why people are willing to follow such leaders. Leaders must have divisions to work with – and it is precisely the salience of the religio-ethnic divisions (and not others) that we need to explain.

On better ground are the various “constructivists,” of whom Benedict Anderson is the best known. Anderson (1983) argues that the world’s various nationalisms are the product of an historical imagination that attempts to replicate the cultural underpinnings of the European state system. Literacy and printing made language the root of “nationality”; museums gave that nationality a past; maps located it in a territory; and the theory of state sovereignty gave it a wish for territorial control.

⁶ Religion marks the various Yugoslav groups, not because any of them are very religious but because there is so little else to distinguish them.

The equation of “one-nation/one-state” in Europe – honoured more often in the breach than in reality – proved a model for the rest of the world, but a dangerous one. Genocide is a brutal way to make multiethnic realities conform.

Constructivism, though, focuses on methods, not reasons. It tells us how particularisms arise, but not why they do – and certainly not why they do now, of all eras. Josep Llobera (1994) calls nationalism “the God of modernity,” claiming that it is one of the ruling ideas of the age. But why? What is it about the modern era – particularly the late-modern era – that encourages ethnic conflict, nationalism, and fundamentalism at the same time that it encourages notions of universalism, social interconnectedness, and individual rights?

For the ideological particularisms before us are strangely parallel to the underlying themes of the human rights “religion” we considered above – though inverted. Their anti-universalism is obvious; indeed, it is part of their definition. The other three human rights themes suffer similar opposition. The various ethnic nationalist and fundamentalist movements that we are considering are group-oriented rather than individualistic. They deny equality to those unlike themselves. And they seek to cut their ties with their perceived enemies. They thus deny each of the four themes described above.

Take the theme of individualism. In contradistinction to moral individualism, the particularisms under consideration spend great effort dividing the “saved” from the “damned” and deal with each category based on group rather than individual characteristics. Long-standing Serb and Croat neighbours turn on one another not out of individual hatred but because group membership has become more important than individuality. Indian Hindus, Moslems, and Christians tear down each other’s shrines and even kill one another not because they think of each other as individuals but because such individuality is no longer significant. Especially in situations of conflict, group membership overrides all.

It is the same for equality: particularists do not treat as equals those whom they oppose on group grounds. They deny them political, civil, economic, and social rights simply because of their group membership. International pressure can sometimes reverse this, as has recently happened with Latvia’s denial of citizenship to ethnic Russians. But the particularist emphasis on serving the in-group is clear.

Social interconnectedness is even more at odds with particularist thinking. Everyday ties have long been known to promote cross-group solidarity – and are thus a standard target for those who seek division. Ethnic militias in the various Yugoslav wars, for example, especially targeted inter-group marriages, “cleansed” villages where groups had long lived side-by-side in harmony, and otherwise sought to erase all evidence of inter-group co-operation. The same has occurred in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, India, Central Africa, and other spots. Not all ties die by violence: boycotts have targeted “outsiders’” businesses; universities have been split by language; professionals have been forced to specialise in serving one or

another community. However justified, such acts result in lowered inter-group solidarity – a goal that most particularistic groups approve.

This much should be clear: such particularisms are not “conservative” in the sense that they wish to retain a traditional world. Instead, they seek to create a world that never was – a purity in which only their own kind lives freely. Given the multiethnic, multicultural, and multireligious reality of almost every society on earth, they are clearly radical, but in a direction opposite to that advocated by human rights ideals. They reject diversity rather than embracing it. And they do so for idealistic reasons. This makes even the formally atheist particularisms “religious” in the sense that I defined the term at the beginning of this essay.

Why should this be happening now? Why do individualism, equality, and interconnectedness make so much sense to people now, in late-modernity – and why do ethnic conflict, nationalism, and fundamentalism also typify our era? Why do universalism and particularism share the world stage? The following section analyses how these cultural trends are connected to the late-modern social order.

4. The Structure of Late Modernity

Both human rights ideals and the ideologies that oppose them have been spread across the globe. Clearly, this has been fostered by the late-20th century communications revolution. It is trite but true to say that ideas fly around the world faster than ever before. For example, during the Chinese information blockade at the height of the Tian'anmen crisis in June, 1989, I was in constant touch with China by telex and fax; both networks proved to be crucial links between the demonstrators and the outside world. Communications media are now so decentralised that few borders block ideas. A dictatorship's walls may have ears, but it would need to fit its citizens' ears with walls to keep foreign ideas away.

Despite Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum, however, the medium is not the message. At least the mere existence of global information networks does not tell us why those networks are abuzz with both human rights ideas and renewed particularisms. For if mere communication were the issue, would not one expect all ideas to profit equally? There are certainly lots of other ideologies to proclaim.

Three structural aspects of late modernity seem to me to encourage both cultural particularism and the veneration of universal human rights. These are globalisation and two results of our highly evolved division of labour: increased personal individuation and heightened social interdependence. By a kind of elective affinity, these three systemic changes make the themes of human rights discourse plausible. And the same affinity lets them serve as lightning rods for those who resist global unity.

4.1 *Globalisation*

The increasing relevance of global social processes is much in the popular press and has been analysed at length by many social theorists (e.g.: Featherstone 1990; Robertson 1992; Turner 1995; cf. Wallerstein 1983). In general, these theorists use "globalisation" to point to the growth of a world economy, the development of multinational institutions, and increased interactions across state borders by both governments and private citizens. Other eras have involved disparate parts of the world in each other's affairs, but only in late modernity has such involvement come to dominate economic, political, and social life. The recent meltdown of world financial markets has shown how economic institutions are now interrelated. The relative impotence of national governments in the face of this crisis is a sign of a shift of power between economic and political spheres.

Globalisation is not just a new term for Western hegemony, though no one doubts the West's privileged position. As Peter Beyer (1994, 9) points out, globalisation

is more than the spread of one historically existing culture at the expense of all others. It is also the creation of a new global culture with its attendant social structures, one which increasingly becomes the broader social context of all particular cultures in the world, including those of the West.

Globalisation transforms the West by meshing its division of labour with the world's. This subjects the West to the economic forces that have long distorted others. Such a structural shift has consequences on the cultural level.

In his analysis of the effects of globalisation on religion, Beyer notes that globalisation elicits two seemingly opposite responses from the religious sphere. Religions may embrace the global world or they may resist it. The former is the path of universalism: a cultural outlook that says, in effect, that we are all in this together and we'd better learn how to co-operate. This may involve a celebration of cultural diversity, but it does so within a meta-celebration of universal equality and interconnection. Human rights ideals are of this type, as are environmentalism, one-worldism, and various ecumenisms. Such religious and quasi-religious ideologies all stress the unity of the human family.

Beyer notes that a countertrend is just as likely, however. Religious and quasi-religious ideologies may respond to their new global context by retrenchment – by emphasising their distinctness. Fundamentalist Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and the various "fundamentalist" nationalisms are not religions of the past; in fact they are ideologically new, merely pretending to preserve "the good old ways" (Marty and Appleby 1991). And they generate qualitatively new social forces – such as armed and unarmed terrorism – as a way of revitalising an imagined history. To use Beyer's felicitous phrase, theirs is "a 'fundamentalist' response that allows change under the insistence that nothing fundamental is changing" (1994, 10). Though they oppose the human rights movement's universalism, they arise in response to the same social trend.

4.2 Individuation

A second structural characteristic of late modernity is an increasingly complex division of labour. Economic specialisation is increasingly widespread, but cultural specialisation is not far behind. The increased training needed by the skilled labour force, as well as the declining fortunes of unskilled labour of any kind, demonstrate the trend. Where Marx thought that capitalism could be brought to its knees by the efforts of unskilled labourers, recent history has shown that highly trained specialists wield much more social and economic power.

But what is the ideological correlate of this training? In a radical updating of Durkheim's *Division of Labor*, Anthony Giddens (1991) proposes that the changed structure of modern social institutions requires a new pattern of self-identity based on greater reflexiveness and freedom of choice. Whereas members of traditional societies found their identities through their social roles, which were relatively stable, modern individuals are just that: *individuals* who must find their own ways and identities in a shifting world. Early modernity opened up the identity-creation process by dissolving the ties that bound people to place, to work and to kin. Late modernity has accelerated these changes. Marriage and family, ethnicity, and other important components of self-identity have become ever more open and malleable. One's gender roles, even one's biological sex, can now be matters of individual decision. The consequences for the process of personal identity-formation are immense. Identities are no longer given; they are constructed. Specifically, self-identity in pluralistic societies means the relative freedom to choose one's symbols, values, communities of identification, patterns of emotional and bodily expression, and to transform or selectively adapt elements of one's traditions. Self-identity is thus an ongoing project. Individuals vary and transform its content over their lifetimes.

It is natural for those who embrace this situation to embrace human rights, for the ideals of individualism and equality provide ideological support for such lives. Not only do these notions justify what they have made of themselves, but they justify their right to such self-making. To the degree that people know that they are different from others – and that they have developed those differences through the hard work of training for a socially differentiated career – they will be more likely to find plausible the notion that there is something unique about each person. Finding themselves of value, they will be more likely to see all people as seats of value. It is but a small step from this apprehension of each person's special worth to the ideology of innate individual and equal rights.

Yet, it is also a small step from the rejection of this state of affairs to fundamentalism, whether religious or nationalistic. For what are such fundamentalisms if not denials that identity may be changed? Do they not deny the equality of the “unsaved”? Religious fundamentalism claims that its god gave one unchanging message that all must obey. Ethnic nationalisms claim that ethnic identity is sacred and trumps all others. Both deny outsiders any worth. The vehemence with which they fight – along with the fact that they are not really traditionalists – is a sure sign

that they are resisting larger trends. And, of course, fundamentalists create an identity for themselves in the process.

4.3 Interdependence

Yet, the division of labour does not just affect individuals; it effects society too. An increased division of labour makes people depend on each other more. Wider networks of goods and services tie people to one another. Borders become less relevant as a growing division of labour increases international communications and commerce. The result is an interconnected world – just the world that globalisation theorists describe. Inhabitants of this world are prone to see their ties with others, their similarities despite differences, and their mutual dependence. Human rights beliefs are again made plausible, this time at the level of their acknowledgement of human interconnection. It makes sense that philosophies of interconnectedness would arise to reflect an increasingly functionally integrated world.

Again, particularists resist. But their resistance again demonstrates the strength of the world against which they fight. They retreat to enclaves, they cut ties and burn bridges, they try to turn back the clock to an imagined simpler time. But those who fight must raise money for their weapons on international markets, and those who merely proselytise must learn organising and media skills at workshops that draw people from across the globe. Despite their ideological opposition to globalisation, they are globalized just the same.

5. Thinking About Democracy

Earlier in this article, I identified four core themes of the “human rights religion”: moral individualism, human equality, social interconnectedness, and universalism. I have suggested that these respond to three social causes: globalisation, increased individuation, and social interdependence, the latter two driven by a growing world-wide division of labour. The belief in universal individual human rights makes sense to people enmeshed in a globalized, functionally differentiated and interdependent world because it speaks to their condition. Its underlying themes match the universalism, individualism, and interconnectedness that they experience in everyday life.

Yet, social structures do not necessarily bring forth the same responses in all people; in this case they are just as likely to result in counter-systemic as in systemic reactions. Those who resist globalisation, individuation, and interdependence are likely to resist the ideological themes that support them. They are, indeed, likely to embrace their opposites, so alongside human rights advocates we have various kinds of cultural fundamentalists. With increased attention to universal liberties, we also have increased nationalism and particularism. If the foregoing analysis is right, both are driven by the same cause: the social changes underlying the emergence of late modernity.

This has implications for the democratic governance of multireligious societies. Peaceful democracy depends on people's willingness to co-operate with one another, which in the last analysis depends on a shared sense of community. If the 20th century has taught us anything, it is that people can do unspeakable things to those for whom they lack community feeling. This is especially true of people who see themselves threatened: by outsiders, by economic forces, or by things they do not understand.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was designed to prevent such unspeakable acts by creating a standard of behaviour that expressed all peoples' ideals. It was to be a vehicle for community, tying people together. Though it has proved powerful and resilient, it has not stopped genocide – in part because it is itself but one belief-system among many and in part because some groups oppose the very ties that it was designed to create. Like all religions, it appeals to those who find it plausible. Many today find that various fundamentalisms more cogently express their wishes and fears. We therefore cannot assume that multireligious societies will live in peace, based on the shared principles of justice, human rights, and mutual toleration. Some support these goals, but others oppose them, finding them antagonistic to their own ultimate views.

Yet democratic governance is not just a matter of finding common principles; it is also a matter of responding to social change. If both universalism and particularism are at some level responses to late modernity – to the social forces that characterise our global age – then democratic governance requires the management of social structures. One can encourage tolerance by developing interconnected, globe-spanning communities, but in doing so one must simultaneously minimise the negative impact of this development on those whom such globe-spanning threatens. Otherwise, fundamentalisms will appear. This is to say that the triumph of human rights ideals is not just an intellectual, but a social-structural matter. It involves the creative shaping of a social order that encourages people to value their stake in each other's lives.

Seen in this light, the fight for universal human rights and against nationalist particularisms is more than the theological battle of our age – it also has social implications. Human rights beliefs are popular now because they speak to the changed circumstances of a globalized, multicultural world. Yet those changes also arouse beliefs that are not so benign. Though I hope that the universalising impulse is ultimately stronger, it is not yet clear whether the universalising or the particularising "religions" of late modernity will triumph in the end.

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Modes of Religious Pluralism under Conditions of Globalisation¹

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This article argues that there is a variety of modes of religious pluralism. Rather than different approaches to a common ideal, these modes of pluralism are political responses to different historical challenges. Policies developed to manage religious pluralism may stress religious toleration, rights for denominations, or individual religious freedom. In so far as either of these aspects may be given priority in policy strategies, the challenge of religious diversity as highlighted by recent processes of globalisation can be solved in different ways. On the basis of theoretical approaches to religious pluralism as developed in the sociology of religion, this article shows that pluralism may, on the one hand, lead to peaceful co-existence and even to ideological convergence. It demonstrates that, on the other hand, pluralism may also lead to social dissolution, since it intensifies the awareness of fundamental differences between religious world-views and might provoke social conflicts along religious lines. The outcome of a specific policy of religious pluralism therefore depends on various sociological aspects, including the distribution of political, economic and cultural resources.

The process of globalisation accelerates the general awareness of the plurality of religions. As a side effect of international communication, trade, politics and mobility, people become increasingly aware of the existence of a vast multitude of world views and are led to critically reflect on their own taken-for-granted assumptions. Traditions legitimating the religious identity of a homogeneous region are thus challenged by globalisation, in so far as supposedly universal normative standards change into insular peculiarities. Such a change of perspective may also challenge the status of religious organisations; a unit which has been a regional church for centuries becomes sect-like when seen in a global framework.

These phenomena have been analysed extensively in recent studies of globalisation (see e.g. Beyer 1994 and Robertson 1992). The principal aim of this essay is to

¹ I wish to thank Lene Kühle, research assistant at the Institute for Religious Studies at the University of Aarhus, for inspiring conversations on this topic.

show that religious pluralism can develop in several modes. Whereas globalisation can be expected to intensify religious pluralisation, it is far from evident that it results in only one general type of religious pluralism. Instead, it is more probable that globalisation is leading to a plurality of pluralisms. In the following discussion, this problem will be approached from the perspective of the sociology of religion. After a brief review of definitions of pluralism (1.), I will elaborate the concept of religious pluralism by introducing a distinction of different levels of analysis (2.) and by situating the concept in recent theoretical debates in the sociology of religion (3.). The remaining sections (4. and 5.) will analyse different modes of religious pluralism at a national and a European level.

1. The Concept of Pluralism

The very term of 'pluralism' has several meanings, depending on the respective discourse to which it refers. The concept was initially coined by Enlightenment philosophers such as Christian Wolff and Immanuel Kant, signifying a doctrine about the plenitude of possible world-views combined with the invitation to adopt the universal view-point of a world-citizen. In present philosophy, the concept of pluralism refers to the standpoint that the world may be interpreted in several ways, or to the evaluation that science is enhanced by competition between several interpretations. In ethics and in normative sociology, it refers to the problem that modern society is no more based on an authoritative set of norms, so that all ethical questions are, following the terminology of Jürgen Habermas, subject to open-ended and rational discourse.

From philosophy the term has spread to other academic discourses. At the turn of the 20th century, pragmatists such as William James re-used the concept stressing empirical implications of a pluralistic ontology. Traces of this usage of the term can still be found in cognitive sociology. At the same time, the concept of pluralism became popular in political considerations about the conditions of democracy as opposed to a monistic state apparatus, especially in the work of Harold J. Laski. Hence, in political discussions 'pluralism' may refer to multiple political parties, to the decentralisation of the state apparatus, or to the distribution of power resources in society. In economic theory and in sociological theory inspired by models of rational choice, the term 'pluralism' is associated with the idea of a free market system which may ensure open competition for suppliers and the free choice for customers.

Pluralism may refer to all these meanings in sociology as well. However, social science has added further varieties of pluralism. In cultural sociology and ethnology, 'pluralism' may refer to a fragmentation of culture into a set of sub-cultures demarcated by ethnic, linguistic, religious or other boundaries. In cognitive sociology, which studies the human interpretation of everyday life and the world at large, the concept of pluralism describes a social situation where several meaning systems are simultaneously presented as plausible interpretations of the world. In functional sociology, pluralism refers to the differentiation of

society, which can be observed at the individual level as a differentiation of roles, at the organisational level as increased competition of formal organisations, and at the societal level as limitations of the functions of institutions.

Within the context of social science discourse, pluralism in the sense of a recognition of multiplicity in society and as a precondition for individual choice and freedom is contrasted by two extreme opposites. First, it is opposed to any form of monism, i.e. a theocracy, an absolutist state, a monopoly, a total society, an alienated consciousness, a petrified cultural monolith et cetera. Second, since the idea of pluralism implies an identifiable structure, it is simultaneously contrasted by amorphousness, i.e. anarchy, anomie in a cognitive or normative sense, epistemological relativism, incoherent post-modernism, and so forth. Since social fields are often homologous, pluralism in one field often has correlates in other fields of society. However, this homology is not an outcome of a mechanical law as demonstrated by many examples of economic, political, cultural and social fields diverging in their respective degree of pluralisation within a society.

This brief sketch suggests that the concept of pluralism is used both in a descriptive and in an evaluative sense. It may, on the one hand, refer to an awareness of a multitude of sub-entities, while, on the other hand, it may express the positive acknowledgement of plurality. However, it would be a primary example for a naturalistic fallacy to conclude from the empirical fact of plurality that such plurality should be embraced normatively. Furthermore, one may argue that there is a fundamental difference between tolerating a concrete range of differing attitudes, beliefs, values and life-styles, and holding an abstract, universal ideal of toleration. The latter expresses indifference rather than toleration, since it accepts anything in principle and therefore nothing in practice. The point of this sketch is to stress that pluralism is a term with several meanings and associations and that it is therefore necessary to clarify its meaning.

2. A phenomenology of religious pluralism

While all religions are characterised by referring to a supra-empirical source of truth and purity, it is useful, at the outset, to distinguish between different religions by assessing the scope of their symbolical claims. Whereas *universalistic* religions, e.g. Christianity and Islam, claim to contain the whole spiritual truth, *particularistic* religions have more specific aims and only claim partial access to that truth. While the former confront the individual with a fundamental choice and demand total commitment from their members, the latter are less demanding and may even be combined in functional mixtures, which, for the universal religions, would be perceived as eclecticism, syncretism and heresy.²

² The membership of a religion can be divided according to their acceptance of and commitment to universal claims of their respective religion.

As a consequence, religious pluralism seems to be less problematic when particularistic religions are involved. In this case, it is the functional limits of each religion and their appropriate combinations, and not the general principle of religious pluralism that may cause controversy and conflict. Examples of religious pluralism involving particularistic religions stretch from ancient Rome to present-day Japan. In such settings, the claims of universalistic religions are seen as undermining the whole system of religious pluralism, as shown by the critique of Emperor Marc Aurel against early Christianity. In turn, religious pluralism involving several universalistic religions, each of which claims to be the exclusive vessel of truth and purity, is precarious. It may, in fact, evolve from a state of peaceful co-existence to open conflict or a majority-minority domination.

Religious pluralism can be analysed at three consecutive social levels: At the macro-level, religious pluralism implies that the societal authorities recognise and accept a plurality within the religious field. At the meso-level, pluralism implies the acceptance of a multitude of religious organisations which function as competitive units. And, finally, at the micro-level, pluralism implies an individual freedom to choose and developed one's own private beliefs. These modes of pluralism correspond with *religious toleration*, *denominalisation* and *religious freedom*. However, these are not interrelated in a mechanical manner. In principle, religious toleration could be organised in the framework of a latitudinarian church, denominalisation could be organised by ascribing each individual to the religion of her or his parents, and religious freedom could imply an individualisation dissolving all denominations.

Issues of religious freedom are mostly discussed as prohibition of state interference in the individual's religious beliefs. However, religious freedom also implies the freedom to practice one's religion. This is not problematic as long as religious practices are regarded as rituals, confined to the limited space of a church or a temple. Problems only arise when religious practices include ethics. Most religions do not accept to be classified merely as abstract philosophies of life. They aspire to provide a practical ethical guidance for living, and are thereby confronted with the forces of other social fields. If the authorities of the political, economic or cultural fields feel challenged by the authorities of the religious field, they may react by narrowing its domain. In other words, they may limit religious freedom to the right to believe in something by restricting the right to act in accordance with this belief in society. Although such a reaction may be considered rational with regard to the efficiency of the economy and the state, it results in a delimitation of religious freedom in its basic sense.

All modern constitutions, including those of totalitarian states, grant religious freedom.³ For instance, the 1949 Constitution of the German Democratic Republic

³ The individual's right to the freedom of religious beliefs and practices is guaranteed in many instruments of international human rights law, most notably in Art. 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Art. 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966).

granted in Chapter V, Articles 41-44 full freedom to religion and belief for each citizen as well as the right to organise denominations. Although it even offered state protection of religious practices, religious freedom was limited by one, important proviso: that religions were not to be misused politically for opposing the (socialist) constitution. Such conditional limits to religious freedom are, in fact, not a special feature of totalitarian states. They are also provided in democratic states, in so far as it is recognised that an unfettered freedom of religion may dissolve society. It is therefore imperative to pay attention to the conditions as well as to the limitations of the principle of religious freedom and its practical protection.

Religious pluralism at the individual level has several forms. It is articulated in the individual's right to choose attachment to or disattachment from a denomination. Yet, it may also refer to individuals formulating their own view of life, by picking or mixing elements of religious belief systems according to their own preferences. In the sociology of religion, this process has been labelled 'religion a la carte' (Bibby 1987) or a religious 'bricolage' (Luckmann 1967). It should be noted that these terms implicitly acknowledge the expectation that individuals associate themselves with one specific denomination which claims to represent universal truth. However, global history provides many examples of a functional mixing of particularistic religions. The term 'bricolage' does by no means adequately describe a typical Japanese mixture of Shinto baptism, Christian marriage and Buddhist burial. Despite their universal claims, individuals may regard specific denominations as appropriate for specific aspects of life and engage in a reflective compartmentalisation of the religious field.

To some commentators (see Hick 1985), religious pluralism implies the recognition of the common foundation of all varieties of the religious quest and the possible convergence of world religions. To others, pluralism implies mutual respect among well-specified world views, in full recognition of their differences. Both varieties support toleration. However, the first one would stress religious freedom of individuals while the second would stress recognition of denominations as carriers of specified answers.

3. Religious Pluralism from the Perspective of the Sociology of Religion

The views on pluralism among sociologists of religion depend on the theoretical background assumptions of their analysis. For the sake of the following argument, we may broadly distinguish between three major strands of theoretical schools in the sociology of religion, which are associated with three main founders of sociology (see Riis, 1996a): functionalism (Emile Durkheim), cognitivism (Max Weber) and critical theory (Karl Marx). Functionalism regards religion as an institution constitutive for social integration, cognitivism sees it as a world view providing meaning for both individuals and groups, and critical theory interprets it as an ideology legitimating the power structure of society.

Talcott Parsons, a major representative of the *functional* approach, analyses pluralism as a 'systematic differentiatedness at all levels' (see Parsons 1967 and 1995). These levels include a differentiation of roles, as well as a social and cultural differentiation. Religious pluralism means, according to Parsons, a differentiation which provides religion with a more narrowly and clearly defined place in the social and cultural system. Membership in religious organisations being based on a voluntary decision, the content and practice of religion is privatised. This does not necessarily lead to the secularisation of society but rather to a development of a 'civil religion' (see also Bellah 1967). Together, the various denominations form a 'moral community' in Durkheim's sense, by referring to generally shared norms and values of society. In the American case, these values include freedom, toleration, justice, equality, achievement-orientation, and responsibility. The value system simultaneously stresses individual values, such as freedom and achievement, and collective values which safeguard freedom. According to Parsons, the strength of the American system lies in its ability to absorb particularistic moral movements in the greater, pluralistic system through value generalisation. In Europe, a similar tendency is fettered by the nation states.

From the perspective of the *cognitivist* school of sociological theory, represented for instance by Peter Berger, "...the phenomenon called 'pluralism' is the socio-structural parallel to the secularisation of consciousness" (Berger 1967: 127). In his view, secularisation leads to a de-monopolisation of religious traditions and to an upgrading of the role of lay people. On the religious market, denominations are increasingly forced to compete among themselves and with non-religious world views. As a consequence, in order to survive and grow, religious organisations must be rationalised and bureaucratised. The religious market, which is influenced by the dynamics of consumer-preferences, needs and fashions, most notably by the preference to products harmonised with a secularised consciousness, influences the content of religious belief systems. The products become standardised as the denominations adapt their products to the majority of the consumers. Nevertheless, the denominations maintain a marginal distinction by referring to their 'confessional heritage'. Pluralism therefore implies that world views are relativised and that plausibility structures become precarious. Religions can no more legitimate the 'world' at large, instead several religious groups seek to legitimate their particular sub-worlds through their respective belief systems. For Berger, there are only two possible strategies for religious denominations to respond to an increased pluralism. Either they adapt to the dynamics of the religious market or they withdraw from it. While the first option leads to a crisis of religion, the second undermines the social basis of the church.

Critical theory, finally, regards society as subject to struggles for power and accordingly interprets religion as an instrument for legitimating group-specific interests. Although, this tradition of sociological theory is bifurcated in many twigs which also differ in their views on religion (see e.g. Houtart, Habermas, or Bourdieu), the general view can be summarised as follows. Whereas religious monopolies are generally based on an alliance with the political power, religious

pluralism is characterised by contrasting channels of legitimisation and, hence, by struggles for domination in the religious field. Religious organisations may have more or less influence and resources, being associated either with the majority or with minority groups. Among critical theoreticians, however, religious pluralism is not a theme which attracts much attention, especially since within the Marxist tradition religion is not ascribed an important potential for structural change and human emancipation. Yet, some sociologists of religion influenced by the critical school are trying to rectify this view (i.e. Beckford 1989).

The three theoretical approaches just outlined stress different aspects of religious pluralism, but converge on certain points. For instance, both Parsons and Berger draw attention to the privatisation of religion, to the democratisation of society with its influences on denominations, to the marketisation of religion, and, as possible reactions to this development, to the re-emergence of orthodoxy and fundamentalism. In addition, their theories are based on similar empirical foundations, namely on the American experience. Nevertheless, their conclusions differ considerably. Expecting popularisation, relativisation, bureaucratisation and cartellisation in the religious field, the Bergerian view is rather dark, pointing to anomic threats lurking behind pluralism. The Parsonian view, on the contrary, is optimistic, in so far as its scenario contains the development of general, humanitarian values which support a moral community transcending the particular interests in society. This divergence can be explained by their underlying theoretical approach. While Berger holds that through religion a sacred cosmos is constructed and maintained and, consequently, interprets religious pluralism as a relativisation and profanisation of this cosmos, Parsons regards religion as provider of norms and values for society and therefore claims that pluralism encourages the formulation of basic values for heterogeneous societies. Berger's view may be criticised for postulating a basic human need for a comprehensive world view. It can be argued, furthermore, that it neglects the possibility that a confrontation of different world views may lead to a clarification of their differences rather than to relativism. The Parsonian view, on the contrary, may be criticised for balancing social development by counter-posing two vaguely described forces: the centrifugal process of societal differentiation versus the centripetal counter force of value generalisation. Behind such a theoretical move lies the hidden assumption that religion has a high potential for formulating a set of shared and, hence, integrating values. Critical theory points out that this very assumption is related to the problem of legitimation, although it tends to underestimate the role of religion in modern society.

In addition to these three classic approaches, rational choice theory has increasingly informed recent studies in the sociology of religion. Its theoretical line of argumentation is not yet well-established, and it is far too early to speak of a new 'paradigm' in the Kuhnian sense (cf. Warner 1993). However, this approach takes a new and instructive angle on the issue of religious pluralism. Based on the assumption that any social behaviour is an outcome of decisions of actors optimising their chances in market-like social situations, rational choice theory

elucidates some of Parsons' considerations on the functioning of religious markets and corrects some of the assumptions of Bergerian theory. According to rational choice theory, religious pluralism implies a vitalising competition on the religious market. The dynamics of the religious market in a pluralistic society is highly influenced by the demands of consumers. The suppliers are forced to provide those services which are in demand by the consumers. This argument is supported by a series of empirical studies which presumably demonstrate that religious commitment is stronger in societies where many denominations compete unimpeded by state intervention, as is the case in the United States (Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Although some empirical evidence for this view can also be found in Western Europe, the rational choice approach to religious pluralism may be criticised for being based on vague assumptions about rationality and the compensatory functions of religion (see e.g. Bruce 1996: 129-168). To be sure, the metaphor of the market might illustrate some aspects of religion in modern society; but a market of eternal, spiritual goods differs substantially from a market of short-term material goods.

These theories present different aspects of pluralism. Either of them is able to elucidate certain social aspects of pluralism, which may be relevant under specific social conditions. For instance, rational choice theory may be quite illustrative for major aspects of the religious field in the USA, whereas it is less adequate for analysing the role of religion in social conflicts. In other cases, critical theory seems more promising, such as for an analysis of the role of religion in the former Yugoslavia, where religion has re-emerged as label for ethnic identity after two generations of socialist rule.

4. Public Recognition of Denominations as a Mode of Religious Pluralism

In the sociology of religion, the American mode of religious pluralism, granting undeniably religious freedom and minimising state intervention, is sometimes depicted as a universal ideal. However, the American model also has its drawbacks, such as continuing legal struggles about the borderline of the religious field. In Western Europe, religious pluralism has evolved within a completely different socio-historical context. Appeasement after the religious wars of the 16th and 17th century was based on territorial religious homogeneity. The principle of "*cujus regio, ejus religio*" implied a continental pluralism combined with national homogeneity. Within this social context, the struggle for religious freedom was aimed at the liberation from ideologies which were supporting the hegemonic state system. In turn, religious freedom was perceived by spokesmen of religious conformity as a temptation of the people, since they feared that such freedom could lead to the dissolution of the social order.

Religious freedom has eventually been embraced by all Western European states in their respective constitutions. Nevertheless, a close connection between the state and an established church remains in some countries (see e.g. Davie & Hervieu-

Léger 1996, Dierkens 1994). This may be seen as an anachronism, especially if contrasted with the model of the USA. It may be argued that competition is skewed on the religious market, if one denomination is supported and privileged by the state. A nearby example for the contradiction between the principles of religious pluralism and the continuation of established churches, can be found in Denmark (see Riis 1996b). Before the democratic constitution of 1849, all citizens were subjugated to the King's confession, i.e. to the Evangelical-Lutheran church. The King mercifully gave some confessions a right to practice within his realm, such as the Huguenots, Remonstrants, Bohemian Brethren, and Mosaic Jews. These rights were, however, restricted to pre-existing members within selected cities. The democratic constitution of 1849 granted full rights to the freedom of religious beliefs and practices and to the freedom of organising congregations. At the same time, it granted the Evangelical-Lutheran Church a special status as the 'Church of the Danish People'. This compromise was due to ideological and practical considerations. The church was (and still remains) an institution of public services which is expressed, for instance, in demographic registration procedures and in the administration of grave-yards. The state church has neither a synod nor an archbishop, it is rather formally headed by the Queen as represented by her Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs. It is not only advantageous to the privileged denomination to be elevated to the status as a state church, since carrying a national religious tradition and its memories of indoctrination and suppression can be a heavy burden.

Official recognition of a denomination implies granting it the status as a public institution. In Denmark, for instance, recognition is formally achieved by being awarded the right to sign marriage certificates by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs.⁴ Other privileges follow from the status as a publicly recognised denomination, including the right of denominational members to have their taxes deduced for their membership fees (a privilege which members of the state church are not granted). Furthermore, recognised denominations have an improved access to state funds for cultural activities. The Danish policy of public recognition has been quite liberal in the past decades; about one a hundred religious organisations have been recognised as public denominations. The list, going far beyond traditional Christian denominations, includes Jehovah's Witnesses as well as Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim congregations. The demands of the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs for awarding recognition are mainly directed at securing that the applicant can be held legally responsible, that the applicant will not misuse the status, and that the applying organisation can be expected to continue. Until 1998, applicants were screened by the Bishop of Copenhagen, but this task has since been given to a committee of independent councillors.

The practice of public recognition just described may be criticised for being bureaucratic. A seemingly simple solution would be to take all privileges away from all religious organisations, including the Lutheran church. This, however, would imply a secularisation of all public services which currently remain under

⁴ Although the legal nomenclature changed in 1969, the general principle continues.

church administration. It would also necessitate a revision of the constitution, a re-evaluation of church properties, a re-organisation of the entire state apparatus, and a complete re-organisation of the Lutheran church. Hence, such solution is far less simple than it sounds. It can be concluded that the present model expresses a specific mode of religious pluralism by elevating all major religious groups to the status of a publicly recognised denomination.

Besides individual religious freedom and denominational pluralism, the Danish system grants an internal pluralism within the state church. It is possible to establish free churches and free congregations which are affiliated with the state church, and it is possible for a group of dissenting members to employ their own pastor. The local pastor and the congregation have a wide latitude of freedom of practice as long as they agree. This policy of internal pluralism has been challenged recently by some borderline cases. Church council members who have publicly expressed beliefs contradictory to the confession have been evicted, and a pastor has been censured for publicly objecting to child baptism and formulating his own version of the ritual. Yet, being defrocked with a pension can hardly be described as a 'severe punishment' for deviating from one of the central dogma of the church, it rather demonstrates that latitudinarianism has its limits. The state church remains a broad canopy for the large majority of Danes. The majority of members only use the church for the rites of passage, is not especially committed to its creed but believes that most of the great religions hold basic truths. Their basic outlook is one of privatised religiosity, and their membership of the state church is based on its internal pluralism.

5. Pillarisation as a Mode of Religious Pluralism

Another way of establishing religious pluralism is to fragment society into subcultures according to religious, ethnic or other criteria. There are many varieties of this general model. A first variant is based on the isolation of religious minorities, either through enforced insulation in ghettos, or through voluntary retraction in order to avoid corrupting influences from the majority. A second variant is based on social separation of sizeable subcultures. In an ideal-type subcultural 'pillar', each religious community is enabled to live a whole life from the cradle to the grave according to its own ethical standards (see Monsma & Soper 1997). All social services are covered by internal institutions from kindergarten over schools and hospitals to graveyards. It is possible to point out several historical cases which come close to this ideal type. The Dutch experience during the first half of this century, for instance, can be regarded as an example for the peaceful co-existence of different pillars.

The development of the Dutch system of pillarisation was a reaction against liberal politics aimed at privatising religion and at dissolving confessional schools. The Calvinist prime minister (1901-05), A. Kuyper, outlined 'parallelism' as a social ideal ensuring the right and freedom of the major religious and ideological groups to develop independently of government influence. This corresponded with the

Catholics wish for equal rights, and consequently the hitherto divided religious fractions agreed on pillarisation as the great socio-political compromise. The basic idea is that since religion touches all aspects of life, the religious or secular beliefs of people are relevant for every aspect of their life. The pillars should accordingly provide schools, newspapers and broadcasting networks, a trade union and a political party, recreation clubs, et cetera. Through these efforts of restructuring, liberals and socialists became distinct pillars instead of representatives of general social interests. The Dutch constitution assures religious freedom for individuals, as well as rights for religious groups on the basis of standards of non-discrimination and equality, and therefore represents a very high level of religious pluralism. The Dutch courts, for instance, recognise non-Christian holidays or burial rites.

More recently, however, tensions have evolved between the established Dutch pillars and immigrant minorities, especially from Muslim countries. Furthermore, the system of pillarisation seems to have eroded during the last decades. Since church-membership rates are declining and more and more people cross different pillars. By no means does this indicate that the system of pillarisation contradicts religious pluralism. On the contrary, it precisely indicates its success, in so far as that system seems to have given Dutch people a better understanding of and respect for religious diversity. In fact, the state has not taken over the whole complex of non-governmental organisations affiliated with the pillars, be they religious, ethnic or other; instead these organisations now operate on the basis of an internally pluralised clientele.

The Dutch experience represents but one example of pillarisation. The relationship between the pillars in different social contexts ranges from co-existence to conflict. A prime example for social conflict that is sustained and symbolised by a pillarised structure can be found in Northern Ireland. The Netherlands and Northern Ireland both display a similar structure. In both cases, Catholics and Protestants (and Non-Confessionals) form separate subcultures with attached social services, including schools. Yet, the split between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland represents a case of pillars in conflict. These contrasting cases demonstrate that the system of pillarisation does not in itself lead to peaceful co-existence or social conflict. Rather, the *modus vivendi* between the pillars depends on other social factors, not least the distribution of power and resources in society at large.

This point is even more important, because Western Europe is presently experiencing the development of a novel pillar. For a millennium, Western Europe has been dominated by Christianity, and the emergence of different pillars has therefore pertained either to Christian denominations or to non-confessional positions derived from Judaeo-Christian world-view. As a consequence of international migrations flows, however, a large number of Muslims are being incorporated into Western Europe societies at the end of the 20th century (see Dassetto & Bastenier 1988, Leveau 1994). They not only share beliefs in the Quran and in the Prophet's words, they also share the experience of belonging to a

religious minority in a *diaspora* situation. Muslims are confronted by a vast range of taken-for-granted symbols which relate to the Christian background of the majority culture. The most obvious example is, of course, the calendar system which in Western Europe is fixed by reference to the birth of Christ rather than by reference to the Prophet's *higra* from Mecca. Muslim immigrants also share a common experience that their ethical norms and values are majorised in the Christian-secular society. Through politico-legal systems and cultural expectations, the Muslim minority is thus brought under pressure to form a proto-pillar. However, European Muslims do not belong to a unified denomination (*umma*), nor do they share a unified culture, they rather form a linguistically, ethnically and socially fragmented group, which even disagrees over several ethical views. Moreover, efforts by the majority to confine religion to a narrowly prescribed field, i.e. as an abstract belief system held by private individuals, go against the self-understanding of Islam as a practical religion providing templates for good life and for a good society. Attempts by faithful Muslims to live in full accordance with Islam within Western Europe in many ways conflict with interests of the majority.

A possible compromise for this situation which is intimately related to globalisation processes and their impact on mobility and migration would be to form a publicly recognised Muslim pillar. Such a solution, however, goes against the majority interest of integrating the Muslim immigrants into Western society, especially held in France. It also goes against the minority interest of maintaining particular Muslim traditions as symbol of an ethno-cultural heritage. If Islam in Western Europe has to transform into a sub-cultural pillar, it will be confronted with the intellectual challenge of reinterpreting its ethical norms and values so as to be adaptable to the new societal background. It will hence be confronted with the challenge of 'internal secularisation' (Willaime 1996).

6. Conclusion: The Dilemma of Pluralism

Religious pluralism is a term with several meanings, and accordingly there are many forms of pluralism. These forms may stress religious toleration, denominationalisation or individual freedom to different degrees. While a certain mode of pluralism stresses the individual's right to religious freedom, another emphasises collective rights awarded to denominations. Religious pluralism as expressed in the right to religious freedom is based on an individualistic concept of universal rights and the principle of formal equality. Religious pluralism as articulated in collective rights of denominations builds on the idea of partial and group-specific rights and, hence, presupposes formal inequality.

These different positions are typically expressed by two opposed interests, which run parallel to the controversy between communitarian versus libertarian philosophies. On the one hand, élites of minority groups would argue for collective rights as a strategy for defending traditional identities, on the other, the élites representing societal institutions of the majority would defend abstract individual rights as an offensive strategy for the functional integration of society. Whereas

defenders of collective rights may criticise the principle of individual rights for leading to assimilation and homogenisation, defenders of individual rights may criticise the principle of collective rights for leading to an internal conformisation by subordinating individual identities to the prescribed group standards as well as to an exclusivist distance between groups.

These opposite positions which represent the interest of different social groups, display a basic dilemma of religious pluralism. The total range of religious variation in society depends on a combination of the variation between groups and the variation within groups. Given a certain total range of religious variation, optimising the variation between groups inevitably leads to a reduction of variation within groups. Correspondingly, toleration of a wide range of permissible religions in society does not necessarily lead to an enhancement of the options available to individuals. Religious pluralism at the societal level does not necessarily imply more religious freedom at the individual level. A policy of toleration may institutionalise totalitarian organisations which restrict the options available to their individual members. To use Kymlicka's terminology, it will be hard to find a practicable balance between prohibiting 'international restriction' and guaranteeing 'external protection' (see Kymlicka 1995).

The latent danger of pillarisation is that it may lead to a post-modern caste-system, where the life-world is entirely based on ascribed identity and status, while the pillars are unified at a systemic level through a common functioning of the state apparatus and the globalised economy. There are serious doubts as to whether ascribing certain collective privileges to a minority group will solve the material and political discriminations to which its members are subjected. This is Habermas' basic argument for accepting cultural rights only as rights of individuals (Habermas 1994). One may even argue that ascribing a minority group with certain special privileges may solidify the basic discrimination of the social system. The issue of the structural distribution of power and resources is thereby redirected to questions about corrective re-distributions. Furthermore, it is also questionable whether individual rights will inevitably lead to a homogenisation. It may be argued that one comprehensible reaction to the embarrassment of choice is a commitment to an absolutist position such as religious fundamentalism.

Religious toleration presupposes a foundation of shared values. However, not all values are compatible. Even within a religion, the celebration of conflicting values may limit internal pluralism. More importantly, the values forwarded by different religions may be antagonistic. Because these religions may refer to an undisputable authority and a single truth, such value differences express a tensions which may erupt in an open conflict. The optimistic vision of Parsonian theory tends to disregard such tensions. The policy of toleration is based on an expectation that the religions may co-exist peacefully and that eventual tensions may be solved through democratic legislation, i.e. by majority rule. A general policy of toleration would include religious groups which are fundamentally intolerant due to their theocratic aspirations. However, such minorities may feel that their values are suppressed

despite the democratic procedures of majorisation. As this dilemma is unavoidable, even democratic societies are sometimes forced to set limits to religious toleration.

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Book Review: *Religion in Prison*

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Religion in Prison: Equal Rites in a Multi-Faith Society, by James Beckford and Sophie Gilliat, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, xiv, 232 pp.

The origin of Beckford and Gilliat's book lies in a two year research project (see James Beckford and Sophie Gilliat, *The Church of England and Other Faiths in a Multi-Faith Society: Summary of the Report*, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, Warwick, 1996) which was funded by the General Synod of the Church of England and the Leverhulme Trust. James Beckford is Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick and, at the time of the research, Sophie Gilliat was Research Fellow in the Department of Sociology, also at Warwick University.

The focus of this book is on religion in prisons in England and Wales (the prison systems and ecclesiastical situation in Scotland and Northern Ireland being different), although with some comparative study of the position in the USA. The research that informs the book was conducted by means of a combination of review of official documents relating to religion in prison and of relevant background literature; questionnaires distributed to the chaplaincies of the 130 prisons in England and Wales; and qualitative interviews and on-site observation in a sample of these institutions.

Following the book's preface (pp. xi-xiv), Chapter 1 on „Equal opportunities and multiculturalism in prisons" (pp. 1-24) explores some terminological issues and the research methods employed, against the background of a discussion of the wider social and religious changes in British society. Chapter 2 on „Chaplaincy, chaplains, chapels and other faiths" (pp. 25-55) draws upon the results of the project's empirical research into the nature of chaplaincy, the rules and traditions governing its operation in English and Welsh prisons, and the physical spaces made available in prisons for religious activities. Chapter 3 on „Church of England prison chaplains" (pp. 56- 88) describes the pattern of Anglican chaplaincy provision within the prison system, including the training of these chaplains in relation to the needs of religious minorities. Also, it records and discusses the views of the Anglican chaplains concerning their interaction with both religious minorities among the prisoners and with the part-time Visiting Ministers of other

than Christian faith traditions. Chapter 4 on „Visiting Ministers of other faiths" (pp. 89-115) does the same from the perspective of the minority Visiting Ministers.

In these opening four chapters, the authors highlight the historically central role of chaplaincy, and of the Church of England as the established Church in England, in a prison system inherited from the nineteenth century. Today, the activities of chaplains are co-ordinated by the Prison Service Chaplaincy which is a formal section of the Prison Service itself. Of the 480 chaplains, 132 are full-time, whilst 348 are part-time and there are, in addition, also voluntary helpers. Of the full-time chaplains, 104 are Anglican, the others being Roman Catholics and Methodists. At the same time, the 1952 Prisons Act makes provision for the appointment of other Visiting Ministers where the numbers of prisoners justify this.

There are more than eighty „permitted religions" that are recognised by the Prison Service in England and Wales. Beckford and Gilliat point out that there are problems with the detail of the figures on registrations. Nevertheless, it is still clear that, since 1975, the proportion of inmates of other than Christian faith has more than doubled. As a consequence, by 1997, 11% of all those registering a religion in prison were of other than Christian faith.

The first four chapters of the book evidence the considerable extent of the accommodations which the Prison Service and the Prison Service Chaplaincy have facilitated in order to try to meet the legal obligations of the Prison service and the needs of prisoners of minority religious traditions. These include the appointment of part-time Visiting Ministers of other than Christian traditions; the adaptation of worship facilities; the production of a helpful *Directory and Guide on Religious Practices in HM Prison Service* (originally produced in 1988, revised in 1996); and the provision of in-service training opportunities for Christian chaplains to learn more about people of other than Christian religions etc.

Nevertheless, Beckford and Gilliat underline that it is still the case that „the Church of England plays the leading role in prison chaplaincy" . As a consequence, its chaplains are „ in the best position to influence the kind of access that prisoners belonging to other faiths have to appropriate religious care and specialists". (p. 15). It is precisely this position of Anglican chaplains as „gatekeepers" with significant roles in „facilitation" and in „brokerage", which provides the central analytical focus of the remaining chapters of the book. Chapters 3 and 4 had already highlighted the discrepancy of perspectives between Anglican chaplains' view of their own role and the evaluation of this by Visiting Ministers of other faiths. For example, whilst 75% of chaplains understood themselves as having contributed to the induction, within the system, of Visiting Ministers of other faiths, only 6% of the latter shared this perception. Beckford and Gilliat comment, significantly, that, „This is only one of several areas of chaplaincy life in which a gulf seems to separate the perceptions of chaplains and Visiting Ministers." (p. 69).

In Chapter 5 on „Facilitation’ or ‘dependence’ ?" (pp. 116 -141) and chapter 6 on „Inclusion and exclusion" (pp. 142-170), Beckford and Gilliat wrestle with the structural issues posed by the current institutional parameters for the operation of chaplaincy in the prison system. Although many incremental and helpful changes have been made in respect of specific issues, the basic structural power and privilege of the Christian tradition remains and representatives of other than Christian faith traditions are increasingly challenging these structural imbalances. For example, the authors quote (p. 55) one Visiting Minister as saying, „*Christian prisoners aren't expected to pay for chapel chairs, so why should Muslim prisoners be expected to buy their own prayer mats*". A group of other than Christian faith leaders involved in chaplaincy work have argued, in a March 1996 paper to the Secretary of State at the Home Office, that „*the central role of one particular religious denomination in the prison system is unacceptable within a multi-faith society*", arguing that in future, matters of religion in prisons should be co-ordinated by an Advisory Council on Religion in Prison, with a multi-faith membership.

As Beckford and Gilliat explained at the beginning of the book: „The reason why the issue of equal opportunities for religion has become so important in prison is that it arises at a major point of tension between the state, the Church of England and other faiths. It is an issue which epitomises and, by virtue of being an extreme case of a general phenomenon, clarifies some of the underlying difficulties facing the UK's transition to a religious mixed society" (p. 3). They emphasise that the prison system, and the Prison Service Chaplaincy are „... one of the few points at which the complex and subtle relationship between established church, state and nation in England can be examined in their day-to-day operations" (p.16).

Chapter 7 on „Prison chaplaincy in the United States" (pp. 171-200) describes, by way of comparison and contrast, the position with regard to religion and prisons in the USA where there is no established church but formal separation between religion and the State. Beckford and Gilliat summarise the position in England and Wales as being „*relatively opaque*", „*ad hoc*" and „*dependent on unequal relations of patronage*" as compared with the position in the USA which they see as both more „*transparent*", but also as more „*inflexible*". They nevertheless see the English and Welsh position as ultimately „*more generous*" with regard to the position of religious activities within the prison system. Chapter 8 on „Conclusions: state, church and diversity" (pp. 200-219) brings the book full circle back to one of the principal concerns which informs both it and the research that lies behind it.

Religion in Prison is an important book in at least three respects. Firstly, because how a prison system operates is surely one of the key indicators of a society's broader underlying values, attitudes and structures. Debates concerning the theoretical, policy and practical differentiation between "assimilation" and "integration" have been current in the United Kingdom over many years. However, until the mid-1990s, these debates had mainly been conducted in terms of issues arising from a plurality of *cultures*, rather than in relation to those which arise

specifically from *religious* plurality. How a society relates to religious plurality poses a challenge to the inheritance of modernist social and political projects which seek to assign religious belief and belonging merely to the sphere of what are seen as private options which should not have a bearing upon public policy. In the United Kingdom today, across a whole range social institutions, the inadequacy of this approach to cope with the challenges of religious plurality is becoming increasingly apparent.

Secondly, it is to be hoped that this book will act as a stimulus to the conduct of other, similar, empirical studies - both comparative studies on religion in prisons conducted in relation to the prison systems of other countries, but also complementary empirical studies of a range of other social institutions in the United Kingdom. Finally, by its empirical study of a specific sectoral institution within the society of the United Kingdom, *Religion in Prison* enables wider questions to be asked concerning the relationships between religion(s), state and society, but in a way which is rooted in the actual dynamics of real social relationships rather than in purely abstract or rhetorical demands for change.

About the author

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