

ACTA UNIVERSITATIS UPSALIENSIS  
*Studies in Religion and Society*  
3



# The Challenge of Religion

Colloquium on interdisciplinary research programmes  
3-5 February 2010, Uppsala University

Editors: Anders Bäckström, Per Pettersson



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The main sponsors of the colloquium are The IMPACT of Religion Programme, The Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre (CRS), and The Faculties of Theology and Law at Uppsala University  
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# Introduction

Research within the area of interaction between religion, law and society has grown extensively during the last decade. There are now several programmes going on in Europe with the aim to investigate the place of religion within the private and public spheres of society.

This collection of articles is the result of the first colloquium in Uppsala where researchers from the different Research Programmes around Europe have contributed. The initiative to the colloquium has come from The Impact of Religion: Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy, an Uppsala-based research programme running over ten years.

An outline of the programme of the colloquium is enclosed in order to give an understanding of the scope of the meeting. The list of participants also illustrates the broad representation from different disciplines in the Faculties of Theology, Law and Social Sciences around Europe.

We would appreciate any comments on the content of this report.

Uppsala, spring 2011

Anders Bäckström  
Programme Director

Per Pettersson  
Programme Coordinator



# Contributors

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*im*PACT  
THE IMPACT OF RELIGION

*Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy*

2010-02-02

## **Colloquium on interdisciplinary research programmes 3-5 February 2010, Uppsala**

### **Theme: “The Challenge of Religion”**

#### **Aim**

The aim of the Colloquium is to bring together representatives for research centres of excellence in Europe focusing on the study of religion and society, and to discuss relevant theories, methods and scientific challenges in this field.

The Colloquium is to be a closed forum and open only to invited participants, with the exception of Thursday afternoon starting at hrs 15.00 when all researchers from the IMPACT-programme will be invited to take part.

#### **The research programmes in focus**

- “The Impact of Religion – Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy” (IMPACT). A Linnaeus Research Programme at Uppsala University 2008-2018. [www.impactofreligion.uu.se](http://www.impactofreligion.uu.se)
- Religion and Society Research Programme, (collaboration AHRC/ESRC) [www.religionandsociety.org.uk/](http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/)
- Religion in Pluralistic Societies (PluRel), University of Oslo, Norway [www.tf.uio.no/plurel/english/](http://www.tf.uio.no/plurel/english/)
- Religion, the State and Society. National Research Programme, NRP 58, Switzerland. [www.nfp58.ch/e\\_index.cfm](http://www.nfp58.ch/e_index.cfm)

- The Role of Religion in the Public Sphere, A comparative study of the five Nordic countries. (NOREL), Church Research Centre, KIFO, Oslo, Norway <http://www.kifo.no/index.cfm?id=266100>

### **The following are personally invited to participate**

- Theme leaders and professors in the IMPACT-programme.
- Representatives from other major research programmes.
- Specially invited experts.

### **Participants**

#### *From the IMPACT programme*

- Anders Bäckström, Theme 1
- Grace Davie, Uppsala and Exeter University, Theme 1
- Per Pettersson, Theme 1
- Iain Cameron, Theme 2
- Mattias Gardell, Theme 2
- Maarit Jänträ-Jareborg, Theme 3
- Rolf Nygren, Theme 3
- Valerie DeMarinis, Theme 4
- Mats Kumlien, Theme 4
- Fred Nyberg, Theme 4
- Elisabeth Rynning, Theme 4
- Margareta Brattström, Theme 5
- Ninna Edgardh, Theme 5
- Bengt Gustafsson, Theme 6
- Mikael Stenmark, Theme 6
- Carl Reinhold Bråkenhielm, Theme 6

#### *Representatives and experts*

- José Casanova, Professor, Director of Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World, Georgetown University
- René Pahud de Mortanges, Professor, Director of the Institute of Religious Law, Fribourg University and member of the steering committee of the programme Religion, the State and Society, Switzerland
- Linda Woodhead, Professor, Director of the Religion and Society Programme, Lancaster University
- Tarald Rasmussen, Professor in Church History, University of Oslo, Research Leader Faculty of Theology, member of PLUREL board

- Inger Furseth, Professor, Director of NOREL
- Pål Repstad, Professor, Agder University
- Hugh McLeod, Professor, School of History and Cultures, University of Birmingham and SCAS, Uppsala University
- Tore Lindholm, Associate Professor, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo.

*Staff-support from the IMPACT office*

- Barbro Borg
- Anders Sjöborg
- Martha Middlemiss
- Annette Leis-Peters

# Programme

**Chair:** Grace Davie

## Wednesday 3 February

(Faculty of Law, Trädgårdsgatan 1)

### 17.00 *Introductory addresses*

Margaretha Fahlgren, Vice-Rector, Uppsala University

Anders Bäckström

Maarit Jänterä-Jareborg

*Short presentation of the participants.*

### *Forming a Colloquium platform*

Brief presentation of the participating programmes, 10 minutes per programme (five programme representatives). Please provide:

- a. Aim and brief outline of the research programme;
- b. What are the expected/unexpected contributions and/or results of the programme?
- c. What can be learnt from the difficulties experienced in your programme?

*Discussion*

### 19.00 *Dinner at the Faculty of Law*

## Thursday 4 February

(Faculty of Theology, Thunbergsv. 3B ground floor, Eng 1-0062)

### 09.00 *The challenge of religion, historical considerations*

Hugh McLeod (15 min.)

*Response:* Mats Kumlien, Mattias Gardell (5 min.)

*Discussion*

### 10.00 *Coffee*

**10.30** *The challenge of religion, theoretical considerations*  
Inger Furseth (15 min.)  
*Response:* Ninna Edgardh, Elisabeth Rynning (5 min. each)  
*Discussion*

**11.30** *The challenge of religion, methodological considerations*  
Linda Woodhead (15 min.)  
*Response:* Iain Cameron, Carl-Reinhold Bråkenhielm (5 min. each)  
*Discussion*

**12.30** *Lunch* (At Café Alma, in the main University building)

**14.00** *The challenge of religion in a pluralist society*  
Tarald Rasmussen (15 min.)  
*Response:* Maarit Jänterä-Jareborg, Mikael Stenmark (5 min. each)  
*Discussion*

**15.00** *Coffee*

(All researchers in the IMPACT-programme are invited to take part 15.00-21.00)

**15.30** *Studying the challenge of religion in northern Europe. What are the crucial issues to study? – an outside perspective – José Casanova (30 min.)*  
*Discussion*

**16.30** *Break*

**16.45** *The challenge of religion to fundamental human rights*  
Tore Lindholm (30 min.)  
*Discussion*

**18.00** *Dinner at the Faculty of Theology*

(20.00        End of the day)

**Friday 5 February**

(Faculty of Theology, Thunbergsv. 3B, ground floor, Eng 1-0062)

**09.15** *Interdisciplinary challenges to the study of religion* – José Casanova (15 min.)  
*Response:* Margareta Brattström, Fred Nyberg (5 min. each)  
*Discussion*

**10.15** *Coffee*

**10.45** *Future frontiers in the study of religion. What are the most important topics (theoretical and empirical) to be engaged?*  
Pål Repstad (15 min.)  
*Response:* Bengt Gustafsson, Valerie DeMarinis (5 min. each)  
*Discussion*

**11.45** *Lunch* (At Café Alma, in the main University building)

**13.15** *What are the implications for the Impact of Religion research-programme?*  
*- Summary and questions from the previous sessions.*  
Grace Davie  
*Discussion*

**14.00** *Future options and plans for networking and collaboration*  
Anders Bäckström and Linda Woodhead

**14.45** *Coffee*

**15.00** End of the Colloquium

# The study of the Challenge of Religion in Europe – an introduction

ANDERS BÄCKSTRÖM

In February 2010, the Uppsala based research programme The Impact of Religion – Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy, IMPACT, hosted a colloquium on interdisciplinary research programmes dealing with aspects of the challenges of religion to society. The IMPACT group has felt that there is a growing need to bring together different Centres of Excellence in Europe, which have somewhat different structures and themes, but which share the aim of studying the processes of religious change that we see in the Western world today. Such changes are caused by many different legal and social factors among which religion is becoming increasingly prominent.

Those of us who are working in the IMPACT-programme are aware that there are a number of different developments taking place simultaneously at different levels of society. As a result, we are able to observe both a movement towards greater secularization in the European North (including the strengthening of the secular state), but at the same time – especially in recent decades – the greater visibility of religion both in the media and in the public debate, movements that draw religion back into the public sphere, often at a global basis. Statistics show that religious activity is still decreasing in Sweden, though this is not the case with regards to immigration and formation of new communities like, for example, Syriac Christians from Turkey or Muslims from a variety of places (mostly Iran and Iraq). Tensions regarding values, and the legal interpretation of human freedoms and rights, are occurring in most countries in Europe. Uncertainties regarding the future and the place of religion within this demand careful investigation – always paying careful attention to the particular historical circumstances which surround each case.

I suspect that the happy outcome of our application to the Swedish Research Council in 2008 and the inauguration of the Impact of Religion-programme in Uppsala reveals a desire to better understand the complexities surrounding both the gradual fading of religion in (parts of) the Western world, but at the same time, religion's new and unexpected visibility in the same context. This visibility not only concerns social and political discourse but additionally, it relates to the sphere which we have labelled "private" –

as quality of life issues and existential questions reveal the possibility that religion might become a resource as well as a “problem”.

We have deliberately avoided talking about a return of religion in our application, as we are fully aware that religion has been present in the Nordic countries throughout the last century – in the majority churches as well as in minority denominations and smaller religious groups. At one and the same time, Swedish society can be regarded as almost totally secular, as Phil Zuckerman (2008) puts it, or very religious (given that a large majority of the population belongs to churches); it all depends on what definition of religion we use (Bäckström and Davie, 2002). What we have observed, however, is a growing complexity in the relationship between religious and secular understandings of freedom, equality and tolerance. This complexity is highlighted by a growing religious pluralism, where the presence of Islam plays an important role.

With this in mind, we think that the concept of secularism (and the secular), just like religion, requires clarification in order to fully understand what is happening. It is clear, for example, that secular pluralism and religious pluralism interact in complex ways, which require further investigation.

Whatever is happening, we need a very thorough research process, from many different points of view, in order to get a wider understanding of current developments. One can say that the IMPACT-programme grew out of the need – in many different disciplines and departments at Uppsala University – to investigate religion and its relationship to different parts of society as broadly as possible. The notion of interdisciplinarity is, therefore, central. In order to make such a broad approach workable, we divided the Programme into six areas of study – or *themes*, as we call them. I will summarize their content very briefly:

**Theme 1** looks at religious and social change through existing data banks (the WVS and the ISSP), and through the media as a significant carrier of information about religion. Analysed statistically, is religion actually appearing more frequently in newspapers? What is the image of religion portrayed? Is there a disproportionate focus on Muslims and in particular Muslim women? What is the constitutional place of religion within the European Union? Can the results of the IMPACT-programme help to promote a model which restores the place of religion in mainstream academic discourse?

**Theme 2** links multiculturalism and religious diversity to civil society and political life. Why has visible religion become a source of anxiety and mistrust in Sweden? How are notions like freedom and human rights linked to religious freedom? How are the relationships between religion, secularism and democracy to be understood? This theme is directly linked to the effort to understand European identity.

**Theme 3** focuses on family law, religion and society. The law relating to the family forms a cornerstone in every society and has shaped the daily life of individuals. Family legislation in Sweden today is considered progressive and women friendly. However, we can observe growing conflicts between secular and religious interests regarding the concept of marriage, to give but one example. Immigration has resulted in different value systems in Sweden. How, then, should the possibility of “legal pluralism” be approached?

**Theme 4** looks at health and well-being as part of an individualized society. This theme relates strongly to the subjectivisation thesis and to questions of meaning-making for individuals who are living with stress disorders. Of special interest is the well-being of immigrants who are in the process of moving between cultures. The aim is to find new tools for a better understanding of quality of life and meaning-making for all Swedes, both resident and in-coming.

**Theme 5** focuses on the welfare state and its development. European welfare models are under increasing strain, due to demographic factors, gender roles and patterns of family life. The growing interest in research on civil society is reflected in this theme. With this in mind, is religion considered primarily as a critical or prophetic voice (a voice for the powerless), or is the growing interest in religion a more practical (financial) issue in the sense that churches and religious organisations should become providers of care?

**Theme 6**, finally, considers the interactions between science and religion. How is the relationship between these two powerful cultural forces to be understood? How are world views constructed in a post-modern and relativist culture where grand narratives are increasingly questioned? What part does science and religion play in the formation of world views?

Taken together, we think, the factors studied in the different themes provoke new cultural and religious questions that challenge our understanding of democracy, international co-operation, law, health care and existing outlooks of life. It is for this reason that our study requires interdisciplinary approaches.

As the funding for the IMPACT-programme is for ten years, until 2018, perhaps the most significant outcome of the programme is the fact that we will be able to follow closely the interaction between state, religion and society during a longish period of time. That is a result in itself. So, in sum, the aim of this colloquium is:

First, to bring together expertise within the study of religion, law and society with experiences of research from programmes that have more or less the same object as our programme, but which are (in some cases) structured differently;

Second, to consider the different disciplines which are represented in each programme and for what reasons;

Third, to discuss theoretical ideas that can be deployed in order to make sense of the evidence produced by different work packages in the IMPACT-programme or in its partner programmes;

Fourth, finally, to discuss methodological questions in order to understand better *both* the subtle processes of “normality” in a modern northern European context (often at an individual level) *and* the more complex shifts of values and religious, legal, social and political patterns which operate at an organisational or national level. In this way the colloquium will become a platform for comparative analysis of the interacting between religion, law and society across countries and a forum where gaps in knowledge can be identified and further research objectives outlined. Therefore, I regard this meeting as an extremely important undertaking.

## References

### Printed

Bäckström, Anders & Grace Davie with Ninna Edgardh & Per Pettersson  
2010 *Welfare and Religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Europe: Volume 1: Configuring the Connections*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Zuckerman, Phil  
2008 *Society without God*. New York: New York University Press.

### Internet resources

[www.impactofreligion.uu.se](http://www.impactofreligion.uu.se)  
[www.issp.org](http://www.issp.org)  
[www.worldvaluessurvey.org/](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/)

# The Challenge of Religion: Historical Considerations

HUGH MCLEOD

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the religious differences between, and often within, west European societies grew wider. From the 1960s onwards there was an increasing convergence as all these countries experienced phenomena which had previously been more localized. All Western European countries saw a drop in church-going – including countries like Ireland or regions such as western France or the southern Netherlands where the levels had previously been very high. All experienced an increasing religious pluralism, including countries like Italy or Denmark which had for centuries been religiously homogeneous. This was mainly a result of immigration, but partly caused by a widening of religious options, as Buddhism and Hinduism, not to mention neo-Paganism, won converts. Secularists became more vocal and influential, adding a potent new ingredient to the religious mix – even in countries such as Britain, where secularism had been historically weak.

In the 1980s and early 1990s a series of events in the wider world dashed the hopes of those who had believed that the world was undergoing a gradual process of secularization and raised the possibility that religion, far from disappearing, or even surviving as a largely beneficial life-style choice for those who wanted it, had become a “problem”.

In this paper I shall argue that the essence of this “problem” lies in the difficulty of living with pluralism, and I shall mention two specific aspects of these difficulties, namely its implications for the relationship between morality and the law and for the education and welfare systems, and its impact on politics. I shall suggest that what we are experiencing now is in most respects the most recent version of very old problems. I shall conclude by suggesting that these problems may be misunderstood if they are seen as arising from “religion”, rather than being particular forms of more general issues, which might also arise in a society that was completely “secular” – if there were such a society.

The problem of how to live with the fact of religious pluralism goes back, in Western Europe, at least to the time of the Reformation. Out of the conflicts of the 16th century there arose in southern Europe a belt of homogene-

ously Catholic countries and in northern Europe a belt of countries that were homogeneously Lutheran; but in between, Catholic and Protestant, and Protestants of different kinds, were mixed together in the same territories, leading sometimes as in France to civil war, but in other cases to the construction of forms of co-existence, as happened, for instance, in many of the German city-states. Governments preferred a religiously united people, but if there were no realistic way of achieving that they would make whatever compromises were needed to preserve the peace. Religious leaders often gave priority to the defence of truth – which could be a justification for intolerance, but might also lead to a principled irenicism. (The first places in the western world where religious toleration was instituted as a matter of principle, rather than of pragmatic necessity, were Baptist Rhode Island and Quaker Pennsylvania). “Ordinary people” often had hostile stereotypes of those adhering to rival religions, but they also recognized the need to work with them and to live with them peacefully (if not amicably) as neighbours.<sup>1</sup>

In many parts of Europe, the problems arising from this de facto pluralism remained a major issue at least into the 19th century and often into the 20th century. The basic difficulty lay in the unwillingness of the dominant religion to grant the subordinate religion or religions full equality. (The dominant religion was usually also the majority religion, but there were cases such as Ireland where the Protestant minority was for long dominant). This unwillingness had a variety of motives. Most fundamentally there were rival truth claims. But even if the dominant religion did not make claims to exclusive truth there were other justifications for a measure of discrimination. Catholics, Protestants and Jews, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Anabaptists, worshipped in different ways, cherished different religious symbols, cultivated different virtues and were offended by different sins. Sometimes they even dressed differently. Especially in the 19th century, with the development of deeply felt national identities and of powerful nationalist movements in many parts of Europe, specific religious traditions often came to be seen as an integral part of these identities.<sup>2</sup> The fears provoked by Catholics in the 19th century in religiously mixed, predominantly Protestant societies, strongly conditioned by liberal politics, provides a good illustration of these problems. It is interesting to note too that these fears parallel in some ways the contemporary fears of Islam.

The specifically liberal form of anti-Catholicism was particularly influential in Germany, though it was also found in, for instance, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Britain and Ireland. The basic complaint was that Catholicism was an authoritarian religion, which denied the freedom of the individual

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<sup>1</sup> The history of religious violence in this period is very well-known, but there is also a growing literature on the alternatives. See for instance, Luc Racaut and Alec Ryrie (eds), *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation* (Aldershot 2005).

<sup>2</sup> See William R. Hutchison and Hartmut Lehmann (eds), *Many are chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism* (Minneapolis 1994).

conscience. More specifically it was “priest-ridden”, and it was also “foreign”, as the Catholic’s first loyalty was said to be to the Pope, rather than to the government of his or her country. It was superstitious, and thus an affront to enlightened and progressive modernity. Furthermore, in the Jesuits the church possessed a secretly organized international task-force dedicated to undermining all Liberal and Protestant states.<sup>3</sup>

The process by which religious minorities gained something approaching full equality was thus very long drawn-out. Moreover, from the later 18th century a new factor was entering the equation, namely the growing power and pretensions of the state and its claims to gain control over areas which had previously been the preserve of the established church. In the 19th century one can thus think in terms of a three-sided battle for power involving the state, the majority religion and the various religious minorities. This is to over-simplify since, for example, the state was never a completely independent entity and was often in alliance with, or even to a considerable degree under the control of, one of these religious groups. Yet as most western European states in the 19th century introduced systems of registration of births, marriages and deaths, imposed universal compulsory education and expanded provision for the support of the poor, the sick and the old, the line of demarcation between church and state and the rights of minorities within these systems became a major political issue.

The most bitterly contested field was of course education, because it was seen as holding the key to the nation’s future. Different states found very different solutions. In Prussia, for example, the system was state controlled, but within the state system there were Protestant schools, Catholic schools and later (under the Weimar Republic) secular schools. In France, Catholics and anti-clericals fought for control of the state system, with victory ultimately falling to the anti-clericals who secularized the state schools in 1882. In England and Wales the “dual system” introduced in 1870, and still operating today, provided for public funding of both schools managed by local authorities and those run by religious bodies.<sup>4</sup>

As the French example illustrates, from the 1790s onwards the religious mix in many parts of Europe included not only Christian minorities and Jews, but anti-clericals, secularists and atheists – a diverse group, but all likely to contest claims that their society was Christian and that its institutions and laws should reflect that fact. Beginning in France in the 1790s and then more gradually in other countries during the 19th century (and in some cases only in the 20th century), the question arose of how far the laws should be an expression of and a means of enforcing Christian morality, or how far

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<sup>3</sup> A useful overview is Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (eds), *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge 2003).

<sup>4</sup> For an overview, see Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe 1848-1914* (Basingstoke 2000), ch 2.

they should recognize that a degree of moral pluralism existed – and should therefore permit some forms of behaviour that many Christian moralists would condemn. It should be recognized that this was not an entirely new problem: for instance, Christian legislators had for long differed among themselves as to how to deal with such admitted evils as prostitution. Moreover, divorce (which was forbidden in Catholic states) was possible in some Protestant states. But from the 1790s onwards there was diminishing consensus as to what was moral and what the rights should be of those who deviated from the morality of the established church. In predominantly Catholic countries, divorce was for long the most explosive issue, and the legalisation of divorce during the French Revolution was the start of a battle which would continue until the 1970s in Italy and until the 1980s in Ireland.<sup>5</sup> “Blasphemy” raised issues which have not yet been entirely resolved: should the right to religious freedom include the right to ridicule the beliefs and desecrate the sacred symbols of other people’s religions? In the United Kingdom, for instance, there was recent controversy over Tony Blair’s introduction of a law prohibiting the stirring up of religious hatred (to parallel the laws relating to racial hatred). The law was mainly a response to Muslim concerns, but it was only the latest stage in an argument which has been continuing since the early 19th century, when any blanket ban on atheistic propaganda was no longer acceptable to liberal opinion, but it was still felt right to protect believers from gratuitous offence. In a famous case of 1882, which interestingly anticipated recent events in Denmark, the editor of the *Freethinker* magazine was jailed for publishing a *Comic Bible*, comprising a series of cartoons in which biblical stories were retold in a way intended to highlight their absurdity (and the “Semitic” appearance and dress of the characters).<sup>6</sup>

The problems of diminishing moral consensus became more acute from the 1960s when – as a result of the “sexual revolution”, of the Women’s Liberation Movement and of new thinking about the scope of individual rights and the private sphere – old moral certainties, for instance that abortion is only morally acceptable in extreme circumstances or that heterosexuality is both “normal” and socially more beneficial than homosexuality, came under attack. Abortion is a particularly acute example of an issue where two incompatible sets of deeply held moral beliefs are in collision with one another.<sup>7</sup> But even here one should not exaggerate the novelty of this situation. For instance, throughout the early modern period and into the 19th century duelling was condemned by the church, in whose eyes the man

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<sup>5</sup> On this and related issues, see René Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe* (English translation, Oxford 1999)

<sup>6</sup> See David Nash, *Blasphemy in the Christian World* (Oxford 2008).

<sup>7</sup> As well as the extensive literature on the international 1960s, there are many books discussing the current debates on these topics in the USA. See for instance James D. Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to define America* (New York 1991).

who killed another in a duel was a murderer. Yet the practice continued to be very widespread, as in the eyes of many aristocrats he was simply a man who had shown a proper concern for his honour: the real opprobrium fell on those men who avoided such contests.<sup>8</sup> Another example is that of conscientious objection. From the time of the Anabaptists in the 16th century, right up to present day, there have been those who, on religious or moral grounds, have refused to bear arms on behalf of the government of their country. In the eyes of many of their fellow-citizens they were traitors and they have often been harshly punished. While abortion, duelling and conscientious objection are extreme cases, involving as they do life and death, there are many other examples in 19th and 20th century history of conflicts between those adhering to incompatible sets of deeply held beliefs – often, but not necessarily, rooted in religion. A good example would be the movements to ban alcohol in the United States, Sweden and many other predominantly Protestant countries.

The subtitle of the IMPACT-programme refers to “Challenges to Society, Law and Democracy”. At first sight it was not clear to me why religion should pose a challenge to democracy. However, it is true that ever since the beginnings of mass politics around the middle of the 19th century there has been a fear, especially on the part of ruling elites, of “politics in the pulpit”. During the Prussian Kulturkampf, Bismarck introduced a “Pulpit Law”, leading to the imprisonment of Catholic clergy accused of introducing political propaganda into their sermons.<sup>9</sup> Similar accusations (though without the threat of imprisonment) were levied against Welsh Liberal Nonconformist ministers and Irish Nationalist Catholic priests. There was then, and continues to be, a widespread objection to any attempt by religious leaders to influence the votes of their followers, or even to express an opinion on controversial political issues – though it should be noted that politicians then and now will encourage such expressions if they think they might benefit from religious support.

However, studies by political scientists in the 1970s showed that in the majority of western democracies, religious variables were the best predictors of voting behaviour.<sup>10</sup> This was partly because of the importance of issues relating to the place of the church in society; partly because religion was the most powerful shaper of social identity and influenced people’s stance on a wide range of issues; partly because the historical experience of particular religious groups had a long-term influence on their political orientation. His-

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<sup>8</sup> See for instance Victor Kiernan, *The Duel in European History: Honour and the Reign of Aristocracy* (Oxford 1988).

<sup>9</sup> See for instance Ronald J. Ross, “The Kulturkampf: restrictions and controls on the practice of religion in Bismarck’s Germany,” in Richard Helmstedter (ed), *Freedom and Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford CA 1997), pp 172–195.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Rose (ed), *Electoral Behaviour: A Comparative Handbook* (New York 1974).

torical studies of voting in Britain and Germany have shown the central importance of religion in the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>11</sup> And if in the 1920s and -30s the biggest growth seemed to be of parties with little interest in religion, the period from 1945 to 1970 (and in some countries this phase lasted longer) saw the hegemony of Christian Democracy in large parts of Europe.<sup>12</sup> The often stated claim that “God is back” after a period of invisibility is in many way a misnomer. God has always had a significant role in European politics. In so far as there was a period of invisibility, it refers to a brief phase in the later 1960s and -70s.

Yet in conclusion I would suggest that to focus too specifically on the problems or challenges posed by “religion” may be a mistake, since these are only one form of problems faced by every contemporary society and which many societies have been facing for centuries. For instance, the reality of pluralism confronting the elusive ideal of a nation universally orthodox or enlightened was as big a problem for atheist governments in the Soviet Union and elsewhere as it was in Louis XIV’s France. In both cases, a government convinced that it had the best interests of the people at heart was confronted by a recalcitrant minority refusing to recognize what was good for them and moreover undermining the faith of the majority and potentially threatening the stability of the state. And the challenges to democracy posed by highly disciplined or militant religious groups are small by comparison with those posed by the totalitarian political movements that were so powerful for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ban on the Communist Party imposed in West Germany and the United States in the 1950s could well be regarded as an affront to democracy, but was of course advocated as being in defence of democracy. Similar issues are raised by contemporary demands for restrictions on Far Right parties.

Freedom of religion has been widely accepted as a universal human right since 1948. Yet the problem remains as urgent as ever of how far individual freedom should be taken if it appears to conflict with the interests of society as a whole or with the strongly held moral convictions of the majority or of powerful groups within society. These strongly held moral convictions often derive from religion but they may equally arise from socialism, feminism, nationalism, or a range of other belief-systems. As always, the tendency is to take for granted one’s own deeply held beliefs while regarding other people’s beliefs as a problem. Moreover, there is the difficulty inherent in any doctrine of individual rights of how to reconcile incompatible claims to rights. This is seen in rather acute form in the United States, where abolitionists pleading the “right to life” have been trumped by the “victim’s rights

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth D. Wald, *Crosses on the Ballot* (Princeton NJ 1983); Jonathan Sperber, *The Kaiser’s Voters* (Cambridge 1997).

<sup>12</sup> See for instance Emiel Lamberts (ed), *Christian Democracy in the European Union (1945/1995)* (Leuven 1997).

movement”, which has become the most powerful advocate of the death penalty.<sup>13</sup> These issues became more pressing in the 19th century with increasing religious and political freedom and a growing pluralism of belief-systems and moral values. They became more pressing still in the period since about 1960, not only because of increasing religious and ethnic diversity within each country but because of the powerful influence of ideas of individual rights and consequent objections to attempts by the state, the church, or other authorities to invade the private sphere. None of these issues is in any way new, and all of them concern more than “religion” – unless a very wide definition of religion is being used.

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<sup>13</sup> See Hugo Bedau (ed), *The Death Penalty in America* (New York 1997).



# Response to Hugh McLeod

MATS KUMLIEN

## A Swedish Model

I am honoured to be asked to comment on professor McLeod's excellent paper. My point of departure will be his reflections about the alliance between politics and religion.

In Sweden, the central power and the Lutheran Church embraced each other for a long time. Pluralism was not there until quite recently. The country was Christianized around the year 1000 and gradually integrated in the Catholic Church's firm organization and ideology. The scholastic theory of the state, which for long dominated Western European thinking, emphasized that the family, or the household, was the most important unit for the creation of social order and for the benefit of the general commonwealth.

In official rhetoric, all phenomena had their determined, divine purpose and they were to be co-ordinated under one superior principle. Since social conscientiousness and religious right-thinking were depicted as two sides of the same thing, political coercive measures could always be justified as means of reaching the divine aims (Lindberg, 1992). The task of the church was to save the parishioners' souls – not least by supervising their social conduct. Accordingly, the clergy was entrusted an important position in the implementation of the doctrine. Already in medieval times, the central power, i.e. the Catholic Church, with the Pope in Rome, could oversee a network of dioceses, which were divided into parishes, each under a vicar. Already in medieval times, the Church had a far-reaching insight into family life:

*Das vorhandene Quellenmaterial hat das mittelalterliche kirchliche Visitationsinstitut als ein gut entwickeltes Schutz-, Kontroll- und Regierungsorgan ausgewiesen, das, wohl vorankert in dem kanonischen Recht, jede Einzelperson, jede Gesellschaftsgruppe, ja das gesamte mittelalterliche Leben und Gemeinwesen betraf. (Inger, 1961)*

The Swedish Reformation in 1527 managed to break the power of the Catholic Church, to confiscate its property and to reshape doctrine along Lutheran

lines. However, the Catholic Church's well elaborated organization was preserved. In a sparsely populated country like Sweden, the new State Church's servants turned out to be useful officials for implementing central legislation at the local level. Moreover, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the clergymen became deeply involved in the local self-government, not only on church matters. From the pulpits in the parish churches, the priests read the King's new regulations and his reasons for them. A parish assembly chaired by the local vicar was in charge of poor relief, schools, public order and safety, labour life, education. Additionally, the priests reported crimes and vagrancy to the King's county governors, who in turn passed the cases on to the secular authorities and courts.

By the introduction of the Church Law (Kyrkolagen) in 1686, a system of national registration was firmly established. The system presupposed that the local priests reported not only births, marriages or deaths, but also when people moved into or out from a parish. Once covered by that register, one could never escape, which was a factor that promoted the state's means to collect taxes and soldiers, as well as capture vagrants and delinquents. Thus, every parish was intended to function as a filter of social and criminal policy, with which the priests, allied with local trustees, would control the measures for upbringing and supervision carried out by the individual families (Kumlien, 1997).

And, as professor McLeod claims, the government preferred a religiously united people. Every person in Sweden was expected to be subordinate to the Lutheran State Church, and it was a crime to convert to any other congregation. At the same time society had to deal with the issue of pluralism. Thus the law-givers, although reluctantly, admitted foreign tradesmen who belonged to a non-conformist communion to reside in Sweden, provided that they did not practice their religion (Dahlman, 2009).

## We and the Other

From the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century this omnipotent orthodox State Church was legally marginalized; in 1860 Swedes were allowed to leave the State Church, provided that they joined another Christian communion. A few years later, in 1866, a two-chamber Parliament (*Riksdag*) was introduced, which meant that the clergy was abolished as one of the four Estates in the Diet. However, parallel to the emergence of a new Swedish model, the function of the State Church slowly moved to new positions. This gradual shift illustrates an interaction between continuity and change, as well as between ideology and pragmatism.

The historian Bo Stråth has pointed out that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a number of popular, non-conformist movements emerged as protests criticising the old society, and declaring an individual-oriented Protestant responsibility

and ethic rather than holistic collectivism. This specific “Scandinavian” Protestant ethic was openly hostile to Catholic cultures and based upon a peculiar merger of images of individual freedom on the one hand and those of collectivism and state authority under the *folk* (people) concept on the other hand. During the 1910s, the concept of a *folkkyrka* (people’s church) was developed by a conservative reform tendency within the State Church, trying to respond to pressures from the protesting popular movements.

In 1932 the Social Democrats came into office for an almost unbroken period of 44 years, which started the classical period of the Swedish model. At that time – when new statutes were still read from the pulpits – the Social Democrats appropriated the conservative metaphor of a “people’s home” as well as of “people’s church”. However, they gave them a new content. A self-image emerged, which was new and old at the same time. A demarcation with continental Europe took its point of departure in a specific ecclesiastical policy: instead of crushing the established church, the aim was to take it over.

It has been said that Swedish Social Democracy, as the German one, was a kind of secularized Lutheranism. However, it is worth noting that the Swedish *folk* connoted much more pragmatism and much less holism than the German *Volk*. This pragmatism went hand in hand with an underlying morality and the honouring of virtues such as conscientiousness, industriousness and temperance. Instead of coming out against the throne-altar coalition, the Swedish Social Democrats transformed the old State Church into a modern *folk* church, based on liberal theology. In this framework of emphasizing Swedishness, they conjured up the image of a Catholic threat. A protestant, progressive and labour-oriented Sweden, juxtaposed against a stereotype of a Catholic, conservative and capital-oriented continental Europe.

This mental demarcation with the dangerous “Continent” has had a long lasting impact. Freedom of religion was not introduced in Sweden until 1951, and when Parliament debated this legislation, several Christian Members of Parliament saw the vision of establishment of Catholic monasteries as being almost as threatening as de-Christianization and secularization.

So, on the one hand, it is obvious that continuity has been strong. The previously mentioned national registration was handled by the Church until 1991. And even if the Swedish state and the Lutheran Church were formally separated in 2000, people who have not left this church still have to pay an annual fee, which is administrated by the state’s public tax authorities. Swedes have confidence in the public sector, and the image of Europe as the Other was present in Swedish debate well into the 1970s.

On the other hand, society and mentality are constantly shifting positions. Beginning in the mid-1980s the situation changed, and one decisive factor was a growing insight that the preconditions of welfare politics under national auspices had changed radically, which was a fact that called for expanded international co-operation. And in this process “the EC was seen in a

more positive light and the old Catholic–Conservative–Capitalist image faded away” (Stråth, 2000). In the light of these observations, we have to consider issues on the role of religion in a changing Sweden.

## The increased visibility of religion?

The IMPACT-programme takes a point of departure in the observation that religion is said to be increasingly visible in Swedish public life. This statement leads us to three questions: Since when has religion been more visible? What do we mean by Swedish? What do we mean by religion?

Professor McLeod points out that the 1960s started a transition period. It is true also concerning Sweden. Many established conceptions of society in general, and of family life in particular, were challenged. Contraceptive pills, free abortion, female priests and female police officers were introduced. The concept of “illegitimate children” was rejected, divorce facilitated, pornography and blasphemy were decriminalized, etc. These phenomena can be interpreted as being steps towards secularization. However, it would be a great mistake to conclude that God was taking a break in the debate of the 1960s. The records from the Swedish *Riksdag* are filled with references to religion, and this topic was far more present in the parliamentary debate than it is today. In this respect, “religion” is less visible in public life today than it was 40 years ago.

It is also worth noting, that around 1960, The Swedish Church started changing its positions – from superior authority to a resource for individual choice (Bäckström, Edgardh, Pettersson 2004). Since roughly about the same period, it has continuously lost members and church-goers, and this process still goes on and even accelerates.

One has reason to ask whether the observation that religion is increasingly visible in public life is more an effect of increased internationalization than of changed positions among members of the Swedish Church. First to consider, of course, is the increased immigration and the emergence of a multicultural society. Second, one should pay attention to the phenomenon that Karen Armstrong has called “The battle for God”, when referring to the fact that since the 1970s, religious fundamentalism has gained ground among not only Muslims, Jews and Christians, but also among Buddhist, Hindu and even Confucian supporters, who “fight and kill in the name of religion and strive to bring the sacred into the realm of politics and national struggle” (Armstrong, 2000).

The Arabic–Israeli conflict began as a secular issue, but today both Muslim and Jewish fundamentalists interpret it in an exclusively religious way. In the US, representatives of the Christian right-wing movement long considered themselves as outsiders. However, gradually, in particular from the 1970s, they used their political potential, which has influenced national poli-

tics as well as foreign politics in the Middle East. Islam replaced the Soviet Union. Satan is as important as God.

Sweden, however, does not reflect the same kind of polarized “two-nation state” as the USA. The existing legislation on abortion, for example, seems to have a general support and there is no visible collision between, what professor McLeod calls, “two incompatible sets of deeply held moral beliefs”. Moreover, there seems to be neither a real *Christian* right-wing movement in Sweden, nor any hegemony of Christian Democracy. It is true that a Christian Democratic party was founded in 1964, but it did not attract many votes until the party during the 1990’s played down its Christian components. It might be symptomatic that the bill to a law of 2009 which permitted foreign women to get free abortion in Sweden was signed by party leader of the Swedish Christian Democrats, who was also minister of health and social affairs (Prop. 2006/07:124).

Recently, the same Christian Democratic leader made an effort to draw the image of a “two-nation state light” when he said that Swedes are divided into one intellectual, left-wing élite, and “the people from reality”. Even if this political move can be considered an effort to attract a silent majority, one must keep in mind that it did not contain any explicit references to “religion” whatsoever.

So, from one angle, we could conclude that “religion” is not a political sales argument in Sweden. This state of things might be due to historical factors. In Swedish legal history the church, and by that “religion”, was for a long time dependent on the aims of the secular central power. Consequently, “God” was linked to the political machinery, to the priests as civil servants, to supervision, to sanctions and also to repression and intolerance, for example concerning criminal law and children born out of wedlock, so-called illegitimate children.

From the perspective of a Swedish legal historian, it might be tempting to unreservedly agree with professor McLeod’s statement that religion’s visibility is less arising from religion than from particular forms of more general issues. This conclusion would also be in line with the results from The World Value Survey, which tells us that religion is of little significance to Swedes.

From a different angle, however, there might be more to say about Swedes’ attitude to religion. The word “church” also promotes associations to spiritual values, solidarity, contemplation, rituals, christening, confirmation, marriage, *julotta* and comfort. Still, in 2008, when we are living in an allegedly secularized, late-modern society, more than 80 % of all funerals take place according to the rites of the Swedish Church ([www.svenska.kyrkan.se/statistik](http://www.svenska.kyrkan.se/statistik)).

It is clear that the meaning of Sweden has changed, as well as the self-image of the Swedish Church. What about religion? Maybe it covers some-

thing more than the five or six established movements, state subsidies and court decisions on human rights? Maybe this is the challenge of religion?

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# The challenge of religion, theoretical considerations

INGER FURSETH

Whereas the study of religion a few decades ago was a marginal field within the social sciences and the humanities, religion has become an issue of public debate, public policy and scholarly interest. When attending receptions and parties in the 1980s, fellow sociologists tended to choke on their white wine when they learned that I wanted to specialize in the sociology of religion. The common question was: "Why? Are you religious?" These days, a sociologist of religion receives another, admittedly more pleasant, form of attention, which frequently goes along the line: "How interesting! We sociologists should know more about religion. What do you think about....?" The issue raised is often one discussed that week in the media.

As funds for research on religion have become more available, as the programmes mentioned here imply, there has been a trend towards interdisciplinary studies of religion. The trend towards interdisciplinary research is evident in other scholarly fields as well. This development has benefited the study of religion in several ways. It has allowed scholars to take theories and methods from other fields and apply them in their own field. On the one hand, the social scientific study of religion has been adopted and is now applied within theology and religious studies. On the other hand, the social scientific study of religion in the West has expanded its field by turning more towards studies based on qualitative data, using humanist methods (for example discourse analysis), broadened its area of interest from majority Christian religions towards various religious movements and non-Christian religions, and looking more to the importance that legal aspects have for the role of religion in society.

Nevertheless, the trend towards interdisciplinary studies of religion poses specific theoretical challenges, especially for social theory, which will be my focus. An important issue is the lacking knowledge of social theory. There has been a growing institutional movement of the social scientific study of religion from departments of sociology and anthropology to departments of religious studies and schools of theology. As a result, contemporary students and even scholars who conduct social scientific studies of religion have a limited knowledge of fundamental concepts and theories within the social

sciences, such as theories of social action, structural theories, system theories, et c. A common strategy for students is, therefore, to use fragmented perspectives from for example Bourdieu, Habermas, Bauman, Beck, and other theorists, or perhaps even more so: Beckford, Stark, and Bruce, to “shed light” on their data. The limited knowledge of social theory leads to superficial debates on theory. Chapters on theory often conclude with a summary of the fragmented perspectives that are used, and systematic debates on fundamental differences, contradictions, and problematic issues in social theory are seldom raised or discussed.

Why is this troublesome? Let me point to two issues. First, it isolates the study of religion from the social sciences, so that new developments within social theory have little effect upon the study of religion. Secondly, it prevents the study of religion from representing a contribution to social theory. When social scientists attempt to analyse religion, they have few tools available, since the social scientific study of religion is largely absent from social science departments and in curricula. This is evident in various debates where social scientists, meaning sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists, attempt to analyse the role of religion in contemporary society. One example is when migration researchers call for Bellah’s civil religion to provide common values and function as a fundamental glue in society. This debate tends to skip the fact that Bellah’s argument is based on functionalism, and that functionalism represents a specific view of society.

## The challenge of difference – gender, race, and ethnicity

The challenge of difference is an important issue in contemporary social theory. Indeed, the question of difference is fundamental in all forms of social life. I will first focus on gender before I turn to race and ethnicity.

Issues of feminism, gender and religion have received a great amount of scholarly attention during the past three to four decades, especially within religious studies and theology, but also in the sociology of religion. In spite of this fact, theories within the sociology of religion still appear to be relatively gender blind. This is evident, for example, in more recent contributions to “theorizing religion”, where issues of gender are ignored. This is surprising, given the empirical evidence of gender difference in practically all studies of religion in the West.

When gender is included in the sociological analysis of religion, it is often added as one variable that has few implications for theory. This stands in contrast to, for example, the sociology of knowledge, where debates on gender is related to fundamental debates on whether knowledge is based on the experiences of actors in particular social positions or whether objective knowledge is possible. Women scholars of religion have begun to address questions of possible implications gender has for “the big questions” within

the sociology of religion, especially the secularization and modernization theories. Gender is also important in other debates within the sociology of religion, especially debates on social action versus structural theories. Although many empirical studies of religious communities or organizations that focus on gender tend to include a theoretical debate on agency versus gender regimes and gender structures, this debate is to a very small degree incorporated into debates on theory within the sociology of religion. One example is the debate on rational choice theory, which in the sociology of religion is reduced to a question of supply and demand, or growth and decline of religious communities. Indeed, rational choice theory raises a number of questions relating to individual motivation, rationality, knowledge, structure, and choice, where the issue of gender has implications for all these questions.

The second challenge of difference, race and ethnicity, was a central theme in classical sociology, especially in the works of Weber, who also included them in his analysis of religion. Later, this theme more or less disappeared from the European social sciences, whereas American social scientists continued to focus on race and ethnicity. In the US, several studies of religion stressed how race and ethnicity formed religious traditions and developments. However, few attempts were made to deal with possible theoretical implications of these issues.

After World War II, ethnic studies and the sociology of religion developed into two different camps with few overlapping issues. Sociologists of religion were preoccupied with the secularization and privatization of religion among the white majority populations in the West, and largely ignored what evidence there was of connections between race, ethnicity and religion. Beginning in the 1960s, social theorists began to focus on racial and ethnic difference, which led to revisions and new developments in social theory. In the 1970s and 80s, sociologists of religion continued, however, to pay little attention to ethnicity and race. They were preoccupied with the appearance of new religious movements and the different ways in which they challenged the widely accepted secularization thesis. Since these movements largely found support among white, middle class youth, little importance was attached to ethnicity and race. However, during the past two decades, there has been a growing overlapping interest among scholars of religion and ethnic studies. An important factor that impacted this trend was the war in ex-Yugoslavia in the 1990s that brought to the forefront the relationship between various dimensions of difference, such as ethnicity, religion, and nationality. Another significant factor is the rapid immigration from non-Western countries to the West. In particular, the growth of Muslim populations and other religious minorities that have publicly addressed the significance of racial, ethnic, and religious identities has led to an interest in the interplay between these identities. The fact that Muslims and other religious minorities have made claims for political and cultural recognition based on

those identities has also resulted in a growing interest in sociology, ethnic studies, political science, as well as religious studies and theology for issues having to do with multi-religious societies.

In the study of religion there is a need to theorize difference, which involves thinking about the role that ideas of ethnicity and race have in structuring not only society, but structuring religious communities, and structuring the interactions between religious minorities and the majority at an individual, organizational, political, and state level. Dealing with this question means understanding the role that religion plays in constructing, legitimating or contesting categories of race and ethnicity. It also means addressing the social implications of the associations that people apply to these categories. For example, many religious communities are formed by means of assumed difference based on ethnicity and race, which create certain sorts of interactions. The assumed differences also challenge basic understandings of solidarity, which has implications for notions of the nation.

My conclusion is not that interdisciplinary studies of religion should come to an end, or that we should return to sharp demarcations between different scholarly traditions. However, I do think that the study of religion and its ability to theorize on religion will suffer if it becomes too isolated from social science theory and analysis, and so will the social sciences in their ability to understand the role of religion in contemporary society.

# What approach to inter-disciplinary research?

ELISABETH RYNNING

Yesterday, when our esteemed Swiss colleague, professor René Pahud de Mortanges, presented the research programme “Religion, the State and Society”, he humbly commented on how interesting he found the interdisciplinary approach, being merely “a simple-minded lawyer”.

After these first few years with IMPACT-programme, I am very familiar with that feeling. From the field of medical law, I am quite used to multi-disciplinary research collaboration, but it has been extremely interesting to hear about the research on various aspects of religion that is carried out in the fields of sociology, psychology, social medicine, political science, theology, philosophy et cetera, based on theories and methods I have been more or less unfamiliar with.

In her thought-provoking talk on theoretical considerations in studies of religion, professor Inger Furseth has drawn our attention to the fact that the lack of a shared basis of theories and fundamental concepts can put interdisciplinary research at risk of becoming superficial, following isolated parallel or even diverging tracks, instead of bringing the deeper understanding of truly combined knowledge.

There is no doubt that cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary studies will always run a certain risk of becoming superficial at least in some aspects or – in the worst case scenario – even in the overall results. This is a problem that should be given appropriate attention, but maybe not one we can hope to fully resolve. To fulfil the task of taking in, correctly understanding and successfully combining the theories and concepts of all relevant disciplines may certainly be a lot to ask of any individual researcher. In a group effort, where representatives of different disciplines are able to pool their scientific knowledge and experience, the risk of superficiality becomes less prominent. However, since this kind of truly joint inter-disciplinary research will give rise to other challenges, it may not always be a realistic alternative.

Does this mean that interdisciplinary research should then be avoided, except in the rare settings where extremely high standards of scholarly achievement and interaction can be met? I would disagree with that conclusion, since I believe there may be less demanding ways of engaging in inter-

disciplinary work, which could still be scientifically justified and worthwhile.

Firstly, the multi-disciplinary context can be used to convey a fundamental understanding of different scientific approaches, theories and methods. Even though this understanding may be somewhat superficial, and representatives of the different disciplines cannot be said to share a common basis of theories and concepts, they will still have gained something valuable by broadening their respective horizons, in relation to the joint study object.

Secondly, new disciplines of an inter-disciplinary character may also evolve, in response to scientific development, as well as societal changes and needs. When they do, it should be expected that at least to some extent, they must develop and refine their own particular theories and methods, sometimes diverging from established traditions in their search for more fruitful approaches. Without the possibility of such explorative renewal and inter-disciplinary inspiration, scientific research would become unnecessarily restricted.

So, while I fully agree with Inger Furseth that we should be very careful to make the best possible use of relevant theories and concepts already available, in a serious and scientific way, interdisciplinary studies can of course never hope to meet the requirement of observing them all. In the IMPACT-programme, we come from very different research traditions and must be careful to keep our inter-disciplinary ambitions at a realistic level, without ever becoming amateurish or unprofessional.

# The Challenge of Religion in a Pluralist Society

TARALD RASMUSSEN

More so than most European countries, Norway has a history as a *non-pluralist* society – this is especially the case with regard to our religious culture. As a monocultural Lutheran state since 1537, we were (even more effectively than our neighbouring countries Sweden and Denmark) safely protected from any kind of religious challenge from the outside, be it from Catholics or from Calvinists.

In Norway, the first step towards a religiously defined pluralism was taken in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a slowly emerging and ever deeper growing division between a more urban and liberal Lutheranism on the one hand, and a rural and confessional (often also more emotional) Lutheranism on the other. This division manifested itself not only as different points of view within a common public debate. The consequences were far more fundamental. Separate public spheres with separate journals and publications were built up on each side, along with institutions like publishing houses, schools, teacher training seminars, theological faculties and youth organizations. Since the 1920s, few, if any, common institutions and no common public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*) were available to connect these spheres.

Based on my research background as a Church Historian and on my national background as a Norwegian, I will use this short paper to discuss two cases related to my overall theme: First, I would like add some further reflections to Hugh McLeod's historical contribution, and secondly, I will discuss Norway's way to meet the challenge of religion in a pluralist society through its new politics of religious education since 1996.

## Historical reflections on religion and pluralism in Early Modern Europe

One way of asking the historical question in this connection could be: What is due to religion and what is not in the emergence of pluralist societies in Modern Europe? The case taken from Norway in the 19<sup>th</sup> century certainly has to do with religion in a very fundamental way: even though the two main parties in this division may very well be defined in terms of social class, religion nevertheless most often comes out as the fundamental dimension of self identification.

The Reformation period is an interesting case for further reflection on the relationship between religion and a pluralist society. The fundamental experience both of the popes of the 1520s and 1530s and of Emperor Charles V was the experience of an imperial structure – the medieval *unum corpus Christianum* – falling apart due to a growing religious division. The Imperial Diets in the period from 1521 to 1555 can be regarded as a continuous struggle to deal with this new situation, first in terms of a heresy which had to be abolished, but then – gradually facing the unavoidable truth that the heretical party had established itself in the Empire on a permanent basis – more and more in terms of a new politics for religious diversity. This new peace politics was expressed at the Augsburg Diet in 1555 with the new jurisdiction about religion, confirming for the first time in the history of the German Empire the principle of religious diversity within its territory. It was now legal, and not criminal, to belong to another religious confession than the Catholic Christianity. This jurisdiction was, for good reasons, extensively celebrated in Augsburg 5 years ago as a milestone in the development of peace politics in Europe.

The other side of the picture is less encouraging. The liberal room thus opened for religious diversity in Early Modern Europe legalized the growth of competing confessional parties, and the new imperial legislation of 1555 was gradually extended by territorial laws presupposing once again the logic of *unum corpus Christianum* within each territory. In this way, the religious pluralism present and recognized on the level of the Empire was overshadowed by the growing importance of the territories, which in their turn were all based on a *non-pluralist* and one-religion principle. This process, which has during the last 30 years been studied in terms of the “confessionalization of Europe” (Heinz Schilling et al.), dealt with the reality of religious pluralism primarily in terms of antagonism. Schilling has recently introduced the term “confessional fundamentalism” to characterize the attitudes typical of confessional Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## Religious Education in Norway after 1997

Religion, thus, has no doubt been an important factor for developing not only underground diversity and heresy, but also open and legally accepted pluralist structures in Modern Europe. When discussing pluralism due to immigration in our present North-European societies, religion is still a decisive factor for identifying and preserving pluralist structures. But at the same time, in contemporary European societies the “challenge of religion” is more often interpreted to mean something quite close to the “problem of religion”. Religion is not – as it was in the Reformation period – an indisputable basis for the fundamental political discussions of cultural and political pluralism. Rather, religion tends to be defined more in terms of a complicating factor in dealing with contemporary pluralism, and the subtext is often that it would have been much easier without it.

The debate about a new curriculum and also a new legislation for religious education in Primary School in Norway after 1997 is an interesting case in this connection. This debate can be regarded as a test-case of how to handle the religious and cultural pluralism which is new in Norway since the 1980s, and which during the 1990s represented an increasing political challenge to the formerly very monocultural society.

In this short paper, only a few aspects of the quite complicated and long-lasting debate can be touched upon. The new plan for religious education aimed at meeting the challenge of religion in a pluralist society by trying to define a common curriculum which included not only knowledge about Christianity, but likewise about the other world religions and about secular humanism. The political initiative behind this new curriculum came from the Labour Party in Norway, *Arbeiderpartiet*, and I am quite familiar with the process because I was the leader of the group which was responsible for making the new common curriculum. The fundamental presupposition behind this political initiative was, I think, the aim of preserving the Public School as a common arena for all inhabitants in Norway, in spite of the quickly increasing religious and cultural plurality, and further of preserving a certain amount of knowledge-based religious education as part of the common curriculum. On this basis, the alternative of leaving the whole (and not only the confessional) task of religious education *either* to the churches and the religious communities *or* to private, religiously defined schools, was rejected. This way of thinking might be said to reflect the monocultural tradition of Norwegian society.

Part of the political opposition to this plan, especially from the Conservative Party in the Norwegian Parliament, argued that the topic of religion was too complicated and too much loaded with conflicts to be left to common education and common discussion in public schools. Instead, the alternative of leaving all of this either to the churches and the religious communities or to private, religiously defined schools was to be preferred. This way of look-

ing at the problems had some support, but no chance of political victory in Parliament.

Still, the challenge of handling religion in a pluralist school was confronted with several further problems. Two of the most important were: How is the border between knowledge-based religious education on the one hand and confessional and emotionally based religious education on the other to be drawn? And: How is the quantitative distribution to be taken care of within a common core curriculum? Should all religions have the same weight according to the fact that they are, from a Human Rights point of view, to be regarded as equally important? Or should Christianity have more weight in the curriculum, due to the fact that Christianity has dominated the religious tradition in this country and the fact that the majority of the population still belongs to the Lutheran Church? The consequence of this latter view would be, then, that all Muslims and Buddhists in Norway would have to learn a lot more about Christianity than about their own religion at school. Could a priority like this be defended by referring to a similar practice in a school subject like Literature, where the pupils from Non-European cultures also have to learn a lot more about Norwegian literary tradition than about the literary traditions of the countries which they themselves or their parents come from?

Questions like these point out some of the difficulties connected with the political project of a common core curriculum for Religion in the Primary Schools. The subject still exists, the legal and political framework for a common religious education has been improved during the last few years, and the conflict level connected to this school subject has gradually decreased. At the same time, there has been a considerable international interest in this Norwegian type of public Religious Education, based on the fundamental conviction that one has to learn about and discuss matters of religion in the common arenas in school, also in the lower age levels.

In conclusion, my two cases – one from Early Modern European history and one from very recent Norwegian society – have been presented to illustrate the vast topic of religion in a pluralist society from two very different angles. Together, they might throw light on the close relationship between the emergence of pluralism and the development of religion in North European Protestant Societies in the Modern Period. Both cases also demonstrate the political importance of common arenas for discussing the relationship between religion and pluralism.

# Response to Tarald Rasmussen

MIKAEL STENMARK

Tarald Rasmussen's paper raises a number of important issues when it comes to understanding the relationship between religion and pluralistic societies in Europe, both from a historical and a contemporary perspective.

Norway and Sweden as well as many other countries can be characterized as more or less pluralistic societies. Norway has been less pluralistic than Sweden, and Sweden less pluralistic than say the United States. A *pluralistic society* can be defined as the coexistence and social interaction of people with different beliefs, values and lifestyles or with different religions or worldviews.

My first point is simply that these countries are not just pluralistic societies. They are also *liberal democracies*, or more or less liberal democracies. Liberal democracy is that kind of governance that grants to all people within the territory of its governance equal protection under law, that grants its citizens equal freedom in law to live out their lives as they see fit, and that requires of the state that it be neutral in some important sense with regard to all the religions and worldviews represented in society. In short, a liberal democracy attempts to offer equal protection, equal freedom and equal voice for its citizens and to be neutral in respect to the citizens' religions or worldviews. So the issue is perhaps more exactly about religions as a challenge to a pluralistic-democratic society in Europe.

The second point I want to make is that Rasmussen identifies something very interesting when he says that "in contemporary European societies the 'challenge of religion' is more often interpreted to mean something quite close to the 'problem of religion.' Religion is not – as it was in the Reformation period – an indisputable basis for the fundamental political discussions of cultural and political pluralism. Rather, religion tends to be defined more in terms of a complicating factor in dealing with contemporary pluralism, and the subtext is often that it would have been much easier without it".

Why? One kind of answer would be that the new visibility of religion challenges some deeply held European assumptions: namely that religion is primarily a private matter and should therefore take no (or at least a very small) part in public life, politics and the education system. A growing num-

ber of immigrants, especially Muslims, challenge these assumptions with the consequence that European societies have been forced to re-open debates about the place of religion in the public sphere. So it is public and non-Christian religion and not primarily private or Christian religion that is a challenge to a pluralistic-democratic European society.

In Sweden at least the new visibility of religion in public life also challenges a kind of indifference to religion. Religion (at least in its traditional form) has not been of much interest to people in general. It is not that people typically are negative towards established religion or say the Church of Sweden, it is rather that it does not really seem important for their personal identity and life project. This stance is challenged by religious communities which actively try not to adapt themselves to the alleged requirements of the secularized European society. Communities which take religion to be the most important thing in both private and public life.

Thus the new visibility of religion in the public sphere is a challenge also to secularist ideas. Secularism comes in many forms but I would say that all of them aim at minimizing the influence of religion on society (or on all aspects of life) and the vision is that religion one day hopefully will cease to be a live option for people. So the re-emergence of religion in public life in Sweden, at least, is a challenge to assumptions about secularization – or more exactly, to secularist ideas. Therefore we can today also see the growth of a new active atheism, the so called “New Atheism”. The message of these atheists is that religion – all religions – is not just false, but a threat to democracy. Religion should therefore not be respected and tolerated, unless it steers clear of politics and the public sphere.

At the same time *relativism* has become a pervasive feature of the contemporary Western world. The relativistic qualifier – “for me” or “for us” – has become almost a reflex in our days. Relativists maintain that both the absolute truth claims of religious fundamentalism and militant atheism should be opposed. Who are we to say who is right and who is wrong? Everyone has a right to his own beliefs and values. There is a growing suspicion in a pluralistic society (“awareness”, as the relativists would say) that what we earlier thought was fixed and universal when it comes to morality, religion, knowledge, truth and science actually is malleable and local depending on human interest, gender, class, ethnicity, culture or worldview. What is true – and not merely what is taken to be true – depends upon person, group, society, culture and the like, and is not just true in a universal way, that is, the same for everyone and everywhere. Relativistic attitudes then undermine both religious fundamentalism and militant atheism.

Perhaps a sociologist like Peter Berger is right in that both relativism and an uncompromising affirmation of this or that absolute truth are, to a significant extent, products of the same process of modernization and pluralization, going to opposite extremes. Either way, crucial differences between the situation in the Reformation period and the late-modern period is not merely

that religion today is seen as a problem and not, as then, as a non-disputable basis for the discussion of plurality, but that a secular worldview in the form of New Atheism provides an alternative, and that at the same times many people seem to have lost their faith in absolute truth, be it of a religious, an atheistic or a scientific kind.



# Interdisciplinary Challenges to the Study of Religion

JOSÉ CASANOVA

“The Challenge of Religion” is the broad theme of our colloquium, but we have been going back and forth between two different ways in which “religion” may be a challenge. The first and most important sense in which religion may be a challenge is the multiple ways in which this thing or phenomenon we call religion may have an actual impact upon reality and thus it may present challenges for society, law, or democracy. Religion is understood here as a force or an agency that has the power to challenge reality, or at least our perception of reality, and therefore it is a force that must be reckoned with.

But there is another different way in which “religion” may be a challenge for anybody trying to study it. It is the very attempt to study it, that is, to turn religion in the abstract into an object of study that presents fundamental interdisciplinary challenges. It is this second aspect, “the interdisciplinary challenges to the study of religion”, that I’ve been asked to address in my introduction. Until very recently, we social scientists – particularly in my own discipline, the sociology of religion – have functioned with a rather unproblematic conception of religion. We have been aware of course of the fact that from the very beginning, the two theoretical-analytical foundations of the discipline, that of Durkheim and that of Weber, offered rather different, one could say almost opposite, theoretical and analytical strategies and programmes for the study of religion. Durkheim, for all practical purposes, equates “the religious” and “the social”, or at least the religious and the socially sacred, while neglecting all individual, or sub-societal, religious dynamics and needs, in fact demoting them to the socially irrelevant category of “magic”. Weber, by contrast, is primarily interested in the dynamics of religious community formation and religious differentiation that emerge out of the different needs of individuals and social groups for salvation, justification and meaning.

We could overlook this fundamental difference in the very definition of religion, as long as we were studying primarily religion in Western societies,

and as long as there was an unproblematic overlap in the ecclesiastical, legal-political, scholarly-academic and ordinary common sense definitions of religion. The judge, the priest, the theologian, the scholar, and ordinary people all functioned with a similar taken for granted definition of religion that came from the Western Christian historical experience. Today, within our contemporary global present, it is not possible anymore to function with such an unproblematic and unreflexive category of religion, not only because we are increasingly aware of the fact that our Western category of religion may be problematic in non-Western contexts, but even more so because our own Western context has been radically altered by processes of secularization, of religious individuation, and of ever more expanding pluralization.

The younger discipline of “religious studies” was the first to reflect this new global condition. In the last two decades the very category of religion has undergone numerous challenges, as well as all kinds of critical genealogical deconstructions, to the point in which prominent voices within the discipline have put into question the very validity of the category of “religion” as an analytical-theoretical concept, questioning the very existence of it, that is the existence of a thing called religion. What has been questioned is the notion that religion is a thing with a particular substance or essence, or something that has a history or development across time and space, or a phenomenon that has definitive characteristics or properties, or produces predictable effects. The most extreme voices have even proposed to stop using the term religion altogether, which amounts of course to a call for the self-dissolution of the discipline of religious studies.

This is not the place to revisit the debates of the last two decades concerning the competing genealogies of the “modern” category of religion, and its complex relation to the pluralization of Christian confessions and denominations, to the Western colonial expansion and the encounter with the religious “other”, to the triumph of “secular reason”, the hegemony of the secular state, and the disciplinary institutionalization of the scientific study of religion, as well as to the Western “invention of the world religions” and the classificatory taxonomies of religion which have now become globalized.

But this contemporary hyper-reflexive and hyper-critical moment is beset by a fundamental paradox, namely that scholars of religion are questioning the validity of the category of “religion”, at the very same moment when the discursive reality of religion is more widespread than ever and has become for the first time global. I am not claiming that people today everywhere are either more or less religious than they may have been in the past. Indeed in this presentation I am bracketing out altogether the question which has dominated most theories of secularization, namely whether religious beliefs and practices are declining or growing as a general modern trend. I am only claiming that “religion” as a discursive reality, indeed as an abstract category and as a system of classification of reality, used by modern individuals as well as by modern societies across the world, has become an undisputable

global social fact. Personally, one may bemoan this global fact, as many religious studies scholars seem to be doing, but as social scholars we have the obligation to understand the coming to being of this new social phenomenon and to analyse it in all its global complexity.

It is obvious that when people around the world use the same category of religion they actually mean very different things. The actual concrete meaning of whatever people denominate as “religion” can only be elucidated in the context of their particular discursive practices. Indeed the primary task of the social scientific study of religion should no longer be to attempt to develop a general theory of religion. I am rather sceptic not only about the possibility, but even more so about the desirability of developing such a general theory as a scientific project. Yet, at a time when the writing of world history has become an unavoidable task, the writing of the global history of religion would seem to be also unavoidable. But in this context, one could at best attempt a narrative analytical history of world religion as a kind of collective biography of the human species, the kind which Robert Bellah is pursuing with his ambitious project on “religious evolution”. But as any collective biography, it has to be multi-vocal, indeed full of cacophonies, as well as of contested, counterposed and even contradictory memories. The task of a reflexive social science of religion can no longer be to write a definitive, objective or authoritative version of the global human history of religion, but to reconstruct all the practices, discursive and non-discursive through which the various realms of phenomena we classify as religion are continuously constituted, that is, to reconstruct the ways in which at any time the social construction of religion takes place.

In any case, as social scientists and scholars of religion, we have a disciplinary obligation to be as analytically clear as possible about the manifold and very different discursive ways in which we today in our contemporary global age use the category of religion, namely what counts and does not count as religion, to which kind of diverse phenomena (beings as well as things, groups and institutions, beliefs, practices and experiences) we may attach the attribute or qualifier “religious”. Included in this latter “we” are not only us, scholars of religion, but all the religious practitioners (religious elites as well as ordinary people) who denominate what they do, what they believe, or what they experience as being somehow “religious”, but also all the secular political authorities (legislators, judges and administrators) as well as citizens who have to make constantly decisions concerning what, when and where something is constitutionally protected or prohibited precisely for being or not being “religious”. After all, practically every state constitution in the world today makes some reference to religion, to religious freedom or to the freedom to believe or not to believe.

The very fact that the same category of religion is being used globally across cultures and civilizations testifies to the global expansion of the modern secular-religious system of classification of reality which first emerged

in the modern Christian West. This implies the need to reflect more critically upon this particular modern system of classification, without taking it for granted as a general universal system. Indeed, we should remind ourselves that “the secular” emerged first as a particularly Western Christian theological category, which has no synonym not only in other religious civilizations, but even within Eastern Christianity.

But thereafter, the category of the secular not only served to organize the particular social formation of Western Christendom, but also structured the very dynamics of secularization, that is, how to transform or free oneself from such a system. Eventually, however, as a result of this particular historical process of secularization, “the secular” has become the dominant category that serves to structure and delimit, legally as well as scientifically, the nature and the boundaries of “religion”.

Yet, while the religious/secular system of classification of reality may have become globalized, what remains hotly disputed and debated almost everywhere in the world today is how, where, and by whom the proper boundaries between the religious and the secular ought to be drawn. There are in this respect multiple competing secularisms, as there are multiple and diverse forms of religious fundamentalist resistance to those secularisms. For example, American, French, Turkish, Indian and Chinese secularism, to name only some paradigmatic and distinctive modes of drawing the boundaries between the religious and the secular, represent not only very different patterns of separation of the secular state and religion, but very different models of state regulation and management of religion and of religious pluralism in society.

Above all, always and everywhere the religious and the secular are mutually constituted through socio-political struggles and cultural politics. Not surprisingly, everywhere one finds also diverse resistances to attempts to impose the European, or any other particular pattern of secularization as a universal, teleological model. Indeed, if one finds that European patterns of secularization are not simply replicated either in the “Christian” United States or in Catholic Latin America, much less should one expect that are they going to be simply reproduced in other non-Western civilizations. The very category of secularization becomes deeply problematic once it is conceptualized in a Euro-centric way as a universal process of progressive human societal development from “belief” to “unbelief” and from traditional “religion” to modern “secularity” and once it is then transferred to other world religions and other civilizational areas with very different dynamics of structuration of the relations and tensions between religion and world, or between cosmological transcendence and worldly immanence.

We should think of processes of secularization, of religious transformations and revivals, and of processes of sacralization as ongoing mutually constituted global processes, rather than as mutually exclusive developments. Much of the difficulty in analysing processes of secularization, reli-

gious transformation and sacralization in our global age as simultaneous rather than as mutually exclusive processes derives from the tendency to use the dichotomous analytical categories sacred/profane, transcendent/immanent, and religious/secular, as if they were synonymous and interchangeable, when in fact they correspond to historically distinctive, somewhat overlapping but not synonymous or equivalent social systems of classification. The sacred tends to be immanent in pre-axial societies, transcendence is not necessarily religious in some axial civilizations, and obviously much contemporary secular reality (the nation, citizenship, the individual, inalienable rights to life and freedom) have become variously sacralized in our modern secular age.



# Response to José Casanova

MARGARETA BRATTSTRÖM

As many of my colleagues from the Faculty of Law already have been pointed out, the topics that have been discussed at this colloquium contain aspects, such as theoretical and methodological considerations, that we are not so familiar with in our fields of research – at least not in the way they have been discussed here. Neither will lawyers be of great help in the study of religion in the meaning that José have discussed now. We are much more operative.

However, one thing that we are familiar with is how to coop with changes – and changes seems to be the overall theme for both our different research programmes and for this colloquium. The law can be rewritten in accordance with social changes, and if an old rule has not been rewritten, one has to be able to interpret it in relation to modern phenomena. Statistic data, sociological and psychological studies and so forth, can be used in this process. During the last decades, human rights have had a great impact on national legal systems, and we are in the middle of a process. I think that the outcome of the study of religion can influence to what extent the freedom of religion and other human rights will affect the law in different countries.

I will mention an issue in connection to religion that has occurred in my field. I work with family law, and as you know I am a Swede. Our marriage code is known as progressive and pragmatic. One example is the freedom to get divorced – a marriage is seen as a voluntary union between two persons. There are no special grounds for divorce, as in many other countries – the wish to get divorced is enough in Sweden. If the spouses agree to get divorced and do not have children under the age of 16, their marriage can be dissolved at once. If the court is not busy with other things, the couple can be divorced the same day they ask for it. However, if the spouses do not agree or if they have children under the age of 16, a reconsideration period of six months must precede the divorce.

Even if one spouse has been forced into a Swedish marriage we do not have any rules to nullify a marriage since it is so easy to get a divorce in Sweden. The marriage will not be nullified – but can be ended by a divorce. In this situation there is never a reconsideration period.

In a case some years ago, a Catholic woman who had got divorced went to the district court to get the marriage nullified because the civil status in the national registration – divorced – made her feel bad. She wanted to be registered as unmarried. The court dismissed the case as obviously groundless. The case is interesting. The woman's church and the Catholic churches court had nullified the marriage. What would have happened if her reason to nullify the marriage in the district court was based on religious considerations instead of just "feeling bad"?

# Future frontiers in the study of religion: What are the most important topics (theoretical and empirical) to be engaged?

PÅL REPSTAD

For a scholar who was a student during the most intense critique of positivism in Scandinavia in the 60s and 70s, it is not easy to say anything about the future. In our academic habitus, many of us have a deep resentment towards prediction, as our basic view of human beings and societies is that they can change, also in an unpredictable manner. Historic development is not deterministic, and people can, to some extent, transcend their social and cultural environment and change their material conditions, for good or for bad.

So, when I try to point to some possible lines of development in the future study of religion, I do it with a lot of humility. It is an invitation to talk together, to a real colloquium. I am a bit sorry that we had to submit our papers some days before this meeting, as I will no doubt have received new ideas during the colloquium. Luckily, none of us are in the position to decide what turns and directions the study of religion should take in the future.

I will first talk a little about the organization of the study of religion and some possible consequences of that, and then come up with some suggestions for future studies that I find interesting and important. Finally, I will say something about the role of the academic researcher of religion in our times.

## The study of religion – from disciplines to thematic organization

In such a short text as this, you have to paint with a broad brush. I do that many times in this introduction. First of all I do it when I claim that the study of religion, like many other academic fields, has developed – both on a national and an international level – from a discipline-based organization of academic work to a more thematically based organization. Different disciplines seem to converge in thematic studies, and there is a certain blurring

and relativization of the borders between the disciplines that developed in the humanistic and social sciences in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. We see that not least in studies of religion. Different disciplines contribute to a thematic subject which is often called religious studies. This very colloquium is a good example of the trend. Furthermore, because of the immense volume of scientific work, such thematically organized fields tend to be divided into subfields, like ritual studies, pastoral studies and so on.

There is no reason to have a too respectful attitude towards the older borders between disciplines. They are historically contingent results of institutional interests, power structures, cultural ideas and sheer coincidence. A restructuration of science along the lines I have sketched will result in some gains and some losses. We may find it favourable to organize academic work thematically in order to make it more directly useful to solving real problems in the contemporary world. No single discipline alone can claim to have the solution to pressing problems like religiously inspired violence, the climate crisis and so on, and representatives of disciplines can develop a certain nearsightedness. When you have a hammer, you tend to exaggerate the number of and significance of nails in the structuration of the world. On the other hand, preciseness in methods and concepts, and the rigour and intellectual discipline that has developed in academic disciplines over the years, may get lost in thematic studies. In the long run, there is also a risk that we as sociologists, psychologists and so on drift apart from the rich heritage of our respective disciplines and become nearsighted in the sense that we see religion as a too special phenomenon in society. A personal remark: I spent many years as what you might call a general sociologist and also as a sociologist of society's welfare system. I still experience some lucky intellectual moments drawing on insights from that field, which can be transferred to the field of religion and shed new light on old phenomena.

The isolation from real problems that can represent a risk for an established discipline can be replaced by a new isolation, a study of religion *per se*, religion without social context. The risk of losing intellectual qualities is especially great when the thematic organization develops as a result of a weaving together of scientific work and political and economic power and interests. I am not necessarily talking about undue external influence over perspectives, conclusions and communications of results in research. Such processes are usually much more subtle. Scholars in the humanities and social science are of course not shielded from being influenced by their social context, and borrow ideas and topics for research from their lifeworld, their academic lifeworld as well as their everyday life. The most well-known example in sociology of religion is of course the close interplay that traditionally existed between church organizations and the discipline. These bonds have gradually been loosened, but these connections should still be food for reflection and self-criticism, both on an institutional and personal level. And today, it is also necessary to remind ourselves that the liberal, rather secular

intellectual hegemony in many academic milieus can be as important premises as the old church ties for shaping the perspectives we use studying religion. Sometimes academics studying religion seem to exaggerate the strength of the power structures and lack of freedom in religious organizations and religious socialization existing far from their own life-world, and correspondingly rather naively accept people's own accounts of their completely individualized and free religious or spiritual life, ignoring for instance the social (in my opinion often commercial) basis of this strong ideology of individualism.

Empirical research can, schematically speaking, be theory-driven, or driven by conspicuous empirical material, or problem-driven, or interest-driven, or (sadly) fashion-driven. These categories are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive, but they can be used as heuristic concepts. Based on them, let me put forward a couple of claims for discussion. Firstly, I have already pointed to some dilemmas and challenges for problem-driven research, without the critical distance and the fresh look offered by a scientific discipline.

Secondly, I often see a division in my own discipline (sociology) between general social theory and empirical studies, and I am not happy about it. Here is a border that needs to be blurred more often. We need both theorizing and down-to-earth empirical work, of course, but the distance between the two is often too long these days. In our discipline, we often relate to classics like Marx, Weber and Durkheim, and it is worth to note that they all developed their impressive theories in a close dialogue with empirical studies. Today, there is sometimes a tendency to develop grand and sweeping theories without any serious correction and grounding in meticulous empirical studies. At its worst, theory-driven research can become a very internal matter, academic in the dubious sense: "How has Bourdieu's concept of class been interpreted among Norwegian sociologists over the last twenty years, and what has been the Swedish influence on this understanding?"

## Important topics in the study of religion – some reflections and suggestions

After all these introductory manoeuvres, maybe disclosing that I am hesitant to venture specific suggestions, let me mention a couple of topics that I think deserve attention in the years to come. Problem-driven research can be subdivided in intellectual, academic problems and social problems; even if we again must add that the lines between them are not sharp. I have warned against too close ties between academic work and the power centres of the world, be they religious, financial or political. But at the same time, I find it completely legitimate, even necessary, for researchers to address real prob-

lems in the world. There is not much originality in what I have to say now: Based on an ideal that research should focus on important problems in the world, it seems to me that the problems of the cultural and religious pluralization of the world, and the polarizations and conflicts that often stems from that development, should be given great attention by researchers of religion. This does not mean, however, that we should copy the actors' points of view, and even more, the mediatized pictures of such conflicts. In fact, research should take place in a highly critical dialogue with such pictures. We may easily be contaminated by the media, and focus too narrowly on what they focus on, in an attempt to become relevant. We should be open to the possibility that the impact of religious and cultural pluralization can go in many directions: dialogue as well as conflict, indifference as well as polarization. As researchers we have to steer away from two ditches, one on each side of the road: Ignoring the impact of religion (as has been the case among some secular academics for some time) or exaggerating it and isolating religion from other sources of impact (as we may do now, inspired by current media storms).

I would like to mention another topic that is important from a problem-oriented point of view, the global divisions between rich and poor, powerful and powerless. Presently, this is much less visible in the media and in public discourse in the West at the moment than the issue of cultural pluralization. But the fact that there is much poverty in the world, and religion's positive or negative role in that context, remains, as a more silent and constant challenge. Let me add that the same warnings about finding a way between ignoring and exaggerating the role of religion, apply here as well.

Thirdly, let me say that the perspective of class analyses should be reintroduced in the study of religion, as it has indeed been in general social science in the last decade or so. It should be introduced in a more subtle way than in the Marxist heydays of European sociology in the 70s, and we should try to trace the interplay between gender, ethnicity, social class and religion. When sociologists of religion seemingly have been hesitant to do class analyses of religious life, it may be due to a fear of reductionism that may have to do with the religious convictions that many sociologists of religion have or respect. The ignoring of class may also be a result of the life-world context of sociologists of religion, at least in large parts of Europe. They tend to have some present or former attachments to majority churches, dominated by active participants from the middle class in a broad sense. This does not exactly sharpen the attentiveness to class differences and tensions.

I have spoken about religion in an undifferentiating way, and even a time limit of 15 minutes cannot excuse that. Religion is many things, and we need useful typologies, like Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas' religions of difference, religions of humanity, spiritualities of life and so on. We also need updated typologies of the different aspects or dimensions of religion. I am now leading a project that has as a working hypothesis that religion in Nor-

way (including organized, even conservative religion) moves away from stressing the cognitive, theological, dogmatic dimensions of religion in the direction of stressing the emotional, expressive, aesthetic sides of religion. If this hypothesis is true – or partly true – this is not without its social, practical implications. I have thought for some time that this development will facilitate religious dialogue and weaken religious conflicts. People can come together from different faith traditions and share a common experience and common wonder without worrying so much about differences in their dogmatic interpretations. On the other hand, Grace Davie may be right, when she recently stated in a discussion with me that the aesthetization and emotionalization of religion also may work in another direction, as this development reduces knowledge about religion, and hence makes people an easier prey to stereotypes of the others. This discussion, among many others calls for empirical studies: Under what social and cultural conditions do we see the emergence of conflict, and ditto of peaceful co-existence, or even indifference? We can ask similar research questions about the social facilitation of secularization and sacralization, privatization and so on. When does religion become a public issue, and what kind of religion tends to end up on the political arena? Methodologically, such questions of course beg for comparative studies – necessary to do, often complicated and tedious to plan and organize.

## Back again into the world of academic studies of religion

Trying to interpret empirical material in order to shed light on research questions like the ones I have recommended, we are soon back into the classical issues in many social science disciplines, and (perhaps more implicitly) in the humanities as well. I am thinking of everlasting debates on agency/structure, conflict/consensus, ideas/material forces and others. Just to mention one example, in describing a multicultural situation, how do we find the way between describing human beings as a-contextual and overly individuated, and on the other hand reifying cultures as closed, deterministic and static entities? Again, such basic discussions should not be carried out in the thin air of theory, but connected to empirical studies. Furthermore, I have limited faith in scholars (even if they are famous) that claim to have transcended such dichotomies and made them irrelevant. I believe that we are stuck with these tensions and cannot define ourselves out of them. Therefore it becomes even more important to maintain an academic plurality and pluralism, and a vivid critical discussion, within and across disciplines.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to one of Zygmunt Bauman's early and maybe lesser known books. In *Legislators and Interpreters* from 1987, he presents his thoughts on the role of intellectuals in our time. A core theme in the book is how researchers, academics and intellectuals have changed their role from shaping legislation or at least giving advice to the powerful, over to a role as interpreters, with a calling to improve mutual understanding in increasingly more heterogeneous and complicated society. His description of this change of role seems to me to be correct, even if we maybe should make an exception for economists, who seem to have more access to people in power than they always deserve according to the quality of their work. In any case, here is my favourite researcher on religion: concerned with future global and local development, not pretending to predict it in detail, and critical towards many kinds of doxa in society, including the doxa in his or her own academic surroundings.

# Response to Pål Repstad

VALERIE DEMARINIS

I want to first thank Pål Repstad for creating, through his astute humility, a paper that has provided an inviting opportunity for reflection and response.

There are three points in particular that have captured my attention. The first is the importance and perhaps even, in our busy scholarly worlds today, the urgency of knowing and being able to clearly communicate where you are and how you are located as a researcher in any given project. This requires being mindful of the double-dangers: of being too respectful of older models from one's central discipline(s) with the risk of missing new opportunities, and at the same time being too enticed by new thematic and inter-sectorial/political models, with the risk of having a too unstable theoretical ground. Some kind of calculated risk-assessment model is needed.

This point, for me, is experienced almost daily through my contact with psychology of religion, clinical psychology, psychoanalytic psychology, and transcultural psychiatry. This means I do not have to even leave my daily research work to experience theoretical and empirical systems that have diversified, if not in some respects, substantially contradictory approaches to recognizing and if so, then defining religion, religiosity, and virtually every other concept that can be imagined as an object of research appropriate in this kind of gathering.

To maintain some form of basic sanity, though I am sure not approaching the recommended norm levels in Antonovsky's sense of coherence measure (Antonovsky, 1987) I have devised my own ritualized activities to help me literally and symbolically negotiate the geography of these research spheres: here in this building of the theological institution with my colleges in theology and religious studies, with colleagues on the other side of the historical Uppsala graveyard where transcultural psychiatry is located, and finally with a group of hardcore psychoanalysts in Stockholm for whom Swedish secular expression is indeed a sign of Freud's evolutionary dream.

Some days my devised ritualized activities for moving among these different geographic not to mention symbolic research contexts work and sometimes they don't. When they don't – I have to think about things more than I had planned to do – but this thinking comes only after recognition of the

embodiment of my feelings of discomfort. And this illustration links to, as Pål notes, the inescapable dynamics of tension in the work we do as we create on the page a still frame of the living reality we are engaging.

The second point is the plain and simple, yet often under-recognized, fact that empirical research is never without an interpretive underpinning, not necessarily theoretical per se – but always there and needing to be exposed. I would like to illustrate this with a very recent conversation I had, in the data-gathering phase of one of the research evaluation projects in psychiatry. In an interview with a person of refugee background formerly using psychiatric services, the following was noted:

There are some things that puzzle me here in Sweden, and I say this as a person, a Muslim man: Can psychiatrists in Sweden understand that being Muslim can actually provide resources for mental health?

These words point to a number of different concerns of which researchers in cultural psychology and psychology of religion need to be concerned. These include the culturally-based implicit or explicit assumptions about religion's function and religiosity in general. If in certain cases religiosity is an important part of a person's worldview and shapes his or her way of understanding both illness and health, then this information is important for clinicians to gain access to and possibly make use of in treatment planning. However, in order to ask the relevant questions that would get to this kind of information, the clinician would need to be trained in understanding how existential worldview information, including but not limited to religious worldviews, can be attained and its daily life function assessed in the clinical context (Josephson & Peteet, 2004). And this would need to be done with respect to the cultural context background in which the clinical work is taking place.

As religion as well as politics are considered in Sweden to be private areas and as the majority culture has become more secularized there has virtually been no training in clinical areas relating to accessing or assessing the actual function of a person's religious or other type of worldview. In addition, there is not infrequently an attitude of suspicion relating to religiosity, for example, linked to religiously-associated symptoms in a diagnosis such as schizophrenia. As one psychiatrist has pointed to in an interview about this topic:

I have worked with persons whose symptoms have been connected to religious manifestations. So we often have this kind of association. However, I also have some experience with persons who have been able to use their beliefs and symbols to help themselves in therapy. I wish, especially with immigrant patients but not only with them, that I had a short instrument or set of questions I could use to get at this religious or other kind of information around meaning in the clinical context. I think it could be of use in planning therapeutic strategies.

As the psychiatrist's words indicate, this existential dimension of worldview assessment is not included in the standard training of clinicians (DeMarinis, 2003). However, as is also indicated, there is an increasing awareness of the need for such training and, for example, in an elective medical school course in transcultural psychiatry here at Uppsala University, existential worldview assessment is included through cooperation with the area of psychology of religion at the Theological Institution. One of the central objectives of this section of the course is working with medical students to understand how psychiatric diagnosis as well as treatment planning areas influenced overtly or less so by the attitudes and understandings of religion's functions in the wider majority cultural context.

The third point I want to raise is what Pål highlights via Bauman's challenge as the possibility of scholars understanding their role as interpreters, "with a calling to improve mutual understanding in increasingly more heterogeneous and complicated society". Applying this idea to research in the clinical context can have fruitful results especially in the applied area of research. Introducing the existential worldview dimension and tracking its different effects in the Swedish clinical context is on the research agenda of one of our Impact studies. Finding the way to do this in this cultural context is a challenge. Sometimes, the simplest way may be the most effective as the words of another person indicate:

The turning point for me, or at least as I see it, was when the psychiatrist simply asked me one day "What is most important to you that helps you make meaning and sense of things?" When he asked me this I felt respected, I felt that for the first time since I've been in the mental health services, someone actually cared to hear about what gives me hope.

This simple, open question is one of the existential worldview access questions that has emerged from an ongoing pilot study on finding a way to gain entrance to this type of information in the Swedish cultural context. It is one of the "results" that underscores the need to gain clarity on how theoretical, empirical, and culturally-tested strategies need to be integrated into applied research in this area.

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# Studying the Secular<sup>1</sup>

LINDA WOODHEAD

Because I only have a short time, I want to make a single point: in order to study religion in Europe, perhaps especially Northern Europe, you must study the secular. I think this is implicit in your title: *The Impact of Religion – Challenges for Society, Law & Democracy*.

Why is it so important in studying religion to study the secular? Three reasons:

- 1) The secular creates the category of religion (in the renaissance and enlightenment periods, in comparative, humanistic studies) and the secular is brought into being by the religious (the secular constructs itself in opposition). The secular can only be defined *qua* secular as that which seeks separation from the religious, a reduction in power of the religious, or an elimination of the religious. That is all that secular actually means. The terms are mutually constitutive like masculine and feminine.
- 2) In late modern European societies, power largely lies with the secular. The main spheres of social power – law, politics, the economy etc. – and probably also the cultural sphere. Thus the secular forms the inescapable context of existence for religion, and sets many limits and possibilities for religion.
- 3) We are witnessing a new phase in the ongoing struggle between religion and security. Certainly not a reversal, but a very slight turning of the tables:

Modernity was the triumph of secular power over religion – the minority became majority (many churches, as in Sweden and the UK surrendered power voluntarily).

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<sup>1</sup> This text was written for a WaVE (Welfare and Values in Europe) conference in 2009.

In modernity, some minority groups, like women, *had* to clear a secular space in order to fight their cause and gain power.

But now various forms of religion (the marginalised minority) are challenging the majority – back to your Programme title. How does this translate into actual research projects? It suggests the following:

- 1) Comparative secularities – e.g. Esping Anderson, David Martin – there are significant difference between e.g. laïcité, secularism in communist countries, in Sweden etc.
- 2) A nice lens for looking at the issue is that of national variations in the implementation of EU religious equality and anti-discrimination law.
- 3) How do the powerful secular actors and opinion formers construct religion: politicians, the media, artists, scientists, feminists, social scientists?
- 4) Who/what is most threatened by religion? And why?
- 5) Where are the frontlines of the battles? Schools, law courts, national legislatures, the arts and media (Rushdie, Danish cartoons)?
- 6) Where is there co-operation rather than conflict, and hence, where does the religious/secular line get blurred and confused?
  - E.g. local and sometimes national welfare provision
  - Families
  - Individuals, personal lives and identities
  - Alternative medicine and wellbeing practices
  - Ecological movement/civil society etc.

So, to understand religion today and in the coming years, I suggest paying more attention to secularity. It is currently the “unmarked”, unstudied term. Once you mark the unmarked term, you disrupt its hegemony, and see things afresh.

# Summary of Themes Addressed

GRACE DAVIE

I have been asked to put in writing my summary of the cross-cutting themes addressed in this Colloquium and the discussion that these provoked. The original summary was made orally in the final session of the February meeting – the paragraphs that follow are based on my notes from that session. My aim has been to develop a selection of themes touched on by a number of presenters and where appropriate to indicate the relevance of these themes for the work of the IMPACT-programme. The material is organized under the following heading: interdisciplinarity; the continuing relevance or otherwise of the nation state; law and relativism; normativity and value judgments; and the significance of history.

## Interdisciplinarity

The spread of disciplines found in the IMPACT-programme is one of its greatest strengths. Most of these disciplines were also present at the Colloquium and included theology, philosophy of religion, history of religion, social sciences of religion, law, natural science and medicine. Bearing this in mind, IMPACT almost certainly contains the broadest interdisciplinarity of the research programmes on religion that are currently running in Europe, thus offering new opportunities for innovative approaches to religion, but at the same time presenting new challenges. Each discipline comes with its own set of assumptions, indeed its own agenda – working together effectively will require considerable give and take. All that said, the spread of disciplines within IMPACT is by no means “complete”: in particular the absence of anthropology and geography was noted. Interestingly, both are more present in the UK AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme than they are in IMPACT.

Important points from the discussion included: the notion of “hierarchies of knowledge/disciplines”; different disciplinary agendas in different national contexts (what is important where); different definitions of religion in different disciplines; different research questions; contrasting (even conflict-

ing) methodologies; and the return of “religion” to disciplines that for several decades had paid little or no attention to this topic.

## The continuing relevance of the nation state

On one point, all those present at the Colloquium were agreed: to work in the field of religion in twenty-first century Europe means to engage an international, indeed a global agenda. Researchers in the IMPACT-programme – in whatever theme – have to recognize the influence of external factors on the religious situation in the Nordic countries and in Europe as a whole. In both the European Union and its constituent nations, for example, law and law-making increasingly reflect the religious diversity of the continent – a “fact” brought about by the economic flows of people as well as of goods and capital across the world. At the same time European law as such must increasingly be taken into account in the framing of policy (legal, economic, political, social and religious) in each of Europe’s constituent nations.

Attendees at the Colloquium were less agreed about the continuing or ongoing significance of the nation state in this situation. On the one hand were those who argued from an inter- or supra-national perspective, insisting that the major reference points are now found outside rather than inside the borders of the nation state; on the other were those who maintained that – whilst external influences were indeed a reality (a growing one) – such influences would for the foreseeable future continue to be filtered by, and mediated through, the nation state itself. It was not difficult to locate examples of the latter in the research themes of IMPACT (and other research programmes): they can be found in the work that relates to the mechanisms of the state itself, as well as to law, education, health care, welfare and so on.

Additional points followed from this discussion. The two approaches outlined above lead, it is clear, to different research agendas – notably whether the principal unit of comparison for European research in this field should or should not be the nation state. And if the nation state is seen as obsolete in this respect what should replace it? A second issue concerned the continuing distinctiveness of certain cases. Norway was taken as an example: why is it that the human rights agenda is pursued with particular attention in this relatively small country on the edge of Europe which is not, itself, a member of the EU? Is this simply a coincidence, or is there something definitive about Norway that invites this kind of work?

## Law and relativism

A number of the points already referenced (notably interdisciplinarity and pluralism) can be focused in a different way. Why is it that some disci-

plines/fields of enquiry are able to tolerate pluralism and/or relativism more easily than others? It was noted more than once, for example, that ideas relating to cultural, philosophical, moral or religious pluralism are more easily addressed than their legal equivalents. That is not to say that everyone agrees about the former: issues that arise in these various fields undoubtedly provoke strongly held views, which lead in turn to robust debate (usually deemed a good thing), but also at times to damaging political conflict. Few dispute, however, that such discussions are entirely appropriate and constitute an important element in a healthy democratic society. Conversely, any challenge to the rule of law (meaning the application of one body of law to all those who live within the borders of a nation state) raises immediate protest. Whilst Europeans are mostly very ready to embrace diversity in many aspects of their lives (including those listed above), they react with vehemence regarding even the hint of parallel legal systems. The possibility must, however, be addressed, as populations become increasingly mixed and when external bodies, including the European Union, begin to suggest different ways of doing things. Interestingly, the arguments become particularly tense when the religious factor forms part of these discussions – the more so when the latter is seen to challenge the values of the host society.<sup>1</sup>

The increasing and mutually beneficial collaborations between legal scholars and social science is an important element in these discussions: it is a collaboration found in almost all the research programmes now taking place in Europe, and is well represented in IMPACT. Through collaborations such as these, it is easier to see that the law is not simply a fixed reality, but is continually made and remade. Conversely the precision of the law offers a very clear focus to the debate, which is not always present in social-scientific discussion. In short, general questions of principle and points of legal detail need continually to be brought together.

## Normativity and value judgments

As Linda Woodhead made clear in her presentation on methodological approaches to the study of religion, work in this field necessarily involves both a normative element and value judgments.<sup>2</sup> Specifically – and somewhat in

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<sup>1</sup> An interesting event coincided with the Colloquium. This was the defence of a doctoral thesis in international private law which raised controversial issues regarding inheritance law in Sweden. The press attention to this thesis provoked a debate very similar to that in Britain following a lecture by the Archbishop of Canterbury in February 2008 on the possible application of some aspects of Islamic law in Britain. See Sayed M. (2009). *Islam och arvsrätt i det mångkulturella Sverige. En internationellt privaträttslig och jämförande studie. [Islam and Inheritance Law in Multicultural Sweden. A Study in Private International and Comparative law.]* Diss. Skrifter från Juridiska fakulteten i Uppsala, 113. Uppsala: Iustus Förlag. See also <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1575>.

<sup>2</sup> The written version of Linda Woodhead's presentation is not available.

the face of the accepted norms of social science – she invited us to consider ways in which we might overcome a dominant “methodological secularism” and an associated captivity to western norms. Values, moreover, should always be articulated – be they secular or religious – given that they are *always* there. These points resonated in a number of ways, not least in the discussions surrounding the dominance of the West, in terms of both colonial expansion (now quite clearly coming to an end) and of the agendas of social science (which are less ready to move over). José Casanova used the opportunity to open up the debate on the secular: concepts such as secular, secularity, secularization and secularism need to be distinguished; more work needs to be done on understanding the nature of the secular, recognizing both its diversity and its moral qualities; and secularism in particular must learn to become self-reflexive rather than self-affirmative. Very big questions follow which go to the heart of a modern democracy. These include the manner in which religion is regarded (as a problem or as a resource), and the evident and unresolved tensions between liberty and equality – at times these are irreconcilable and not only in relation to religion. Gender issues are central to these discussions, as they are to the IMPACT-programme itself.

## The significance of history

An historical perspective was important to all our discussions. The different trajectories of religion in the modern world, including the variations within Europe, between Europe and the United States, and between the developed and the developing world, can only be understood with this in mind – these pathways are set by “crucial events” (in David Martin’s phrase). Did the pivotal struggles in the lives of different nations/global regions occur over religion, against religion or through religion? As part of the same discussion Hugh McLeod drew our attention to previous instances of the significance of religion in public debate, reminding us that the present situation was not entirely new. Almost all of the challenges highlighted in IMPACT and the associated research programmes have occurred before – their current “form” may be distinctive, but not the challenges as such.

A parallel theme was captured in the following question: is there a genuine and substantive revival of religion in the modern world taken as a whole (and/or in Europe), or is this primarily a shift in perception on the part of Western social science, and other disciplines, which now take notice of what they had chosen to ignore for many decades? The answer, surely, is “both”. Something *has* changed in the nature as well as the visibility of modern religion, though differently in different places – a shift which has led in turn to a growing awareness of the significance of religion in a wide range of academic disciplines. A virtuous circle ensues, in the sense that there has been a marked increase in activity in a previously neglected field. Quite

clearly the IMPACT-programme, together with its partners in Europe, is in itself part of this shift. It is important to point out, however, that certain lobbies in the West (and indeed elsewhere) regard the so-called resurgence of religion in public life negatively – for them, therefore, this circle is more vicious than virtuous.

The significance of the 1960s – as a pivotal decade in the post-war period – should be seen in this context. This, after all, was the moment when secular confidence reached its peak and when distinctive philosophies of social science – those which were most likely to exclude the religious element in understanding what it means to be human – took hold in the academy. The institutional churches, conversely, were on the defensive: their taken-for-granted authority was questioned more radically than ever before and attendance figures declined markedly. A careful reading of McLeod's work on *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* is, however, recommended before jumping to too many conclusions. It is correct to talk about a *crisis* in institutional religion at this time, but it came at the end of the decade rather than the beginning. It is equally important to remember that religious institutions were by no means the only structures under attack. The challenge to authority was widespread.

The particular combination of factors brought together in the 1960s has had, however, an enduring effect. If, in global terms, it is clearly inaccurate to say that “God is back” – in most parts of the world, God never went away – it is at least plausible to suggest that God appears to have taken a break in Europe, and most of all in the 1960s.

One final point is important. If it is clear that some forms of secularism and secular ideology can distort our thinking about religion, it is also the case that the reverse might be true. As early as the 1960s David Martin urged caution in the use of the term “secularization”, noting the manifest confusions surrounding this term, not to mention its ideological overtones. Interestingly, Martin is now urging similar prudence regarding the term “*post*-secular”, fearing that the same thing might happen again – not least the reassertion of (this time) rather different ideologies. Clearly, the indicators regarding religion in the modern world need careful and empirical scrutiny (an important task of the IMPACT-programme): the shorthand of “God is back” does not do justice to this important and complex agenda.



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