Religion and Nation: Modernity, Secularism, and Politics.

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The papers published here are the result of a multidisciplinary symposium with contributors dealing with issues regarding the political nexus of religion and the modern nation-state. The symposium aimed to highlight the nuances and complexities of the politics of religion. We therefore asked the presenters to examine socio-political problems rather than questions of doctrine. In their varying approaches the participants rose to the occasion and moved discussion beyond the simplistic equations of the "rise of religion" in the face of globalization. Some of the specific issues included, legal-constitutional questions, religious and political violence, the role of religion in East-Central European Politics, political identities influenced by religion, political religions in the contemporary world, civil society and the role of religion, and a number of other considerations. The relationship between politics and religion was treated as something that was not merely a "straight-line" narrative depicting religion on one side and secularism on the other; one as pre-modern and "savage" and the other as modern and rational. At times such simple dichotomies emerged in one or two papers, but this was mostly a matter of the logic of the issues being tackled by those papers. That caveat notwithstanding, the symposium generated a variety of analyses, interpretations, and considerable debate. Each of the participants entered into the spirit of the symposium and delivered an agenda for further research. In opening up this vista, we sought to broaden the conversation around religion and politics in the modern era.

On the day, the symposium opened with early versions of John Tate's paper "Liberalism, Blasphemy and Religion" and closed with Jim Jose's "Political Rule: Still in Thrall of Gods and Masters?" While the revised versions of each of these will be discussed in due course here we note that both presentations took the issue of modernity as their *leitmotif* inasmuch as both explored, from quite different philosophical perspectives, paradoxes of modernity. Their papers thus served as bookends for the rest of the papers presented at the symposium, though this only emerged once all the proposals for papers had been submitted and the symposium program was being finalized. Hence this in no way constrained the themes developed and presented by each of the scholars attending the symposium.

After the symposium each presenter was asked to revise and refine their arguments for

publication in this special issue of Nebula. Two other papers in this special issue, Guy Charlton and Barry Brunette's "Colonialism and Civilization" and Christine Doran's "The Chinese Origins of Democracy" were not actually presented on the day as their authors were unable to get to Newcastle in time. However, we decided to include them in this special issue because both papers, very much in the spirit of our brief to participants, took the discussion away from a preoccupation with the West's narcissistic frames of reference with clashing "civilizations" and other simplistic conventions of analysis (a concern that we have already raised elsewhere, see Imre & Jose 2010), and instead turned the analytical spotlight on the modernity's colonial others. Their contributions to the volume here round out the themes and added to all of the papers in terms of their opening up of new vistas for discussion and debate.

With these points in mind we now turn to a brief overview of each of the revised papers. Interestingly, while there is considerable overlap between the papers, they also fall into five distinct groupings: modernity, liberalism and issues of separation; religious influences on the development of ideas about democracy; the impact of religious values on practical politics; nationalism, identity and state-building; and issues of political and religious violence. It will be seen that each of the papers opens up the vista for understanding the intersections and multiple sites of contestation between religion and politics. Within each paper the themes of modernity, secularism and the state loom large. And so we begin with the first of these groupings, the papers by Jose, Tate, and Stephen Chavura respectively.

Jose's paper "Political Rule: Still in Thrall of Gods and Masters?" examined what he called an "enduring aspiration" of political rule that he suggests emerged from the French revolution. This was the idea of *"ni dieu, ni maître"* (loosely meaning neither God nor master) which he argues is foundational for modern political rule in the sense that since the French revolution our understanding of the basis for political rule derives from neither gods nor masters but from self-actualizing citizens. For Jose this can be regarded as the *sine qua non* of modern political rule. Jose focuses on the putative secularism of modern political rule and explores what he regards as a paradox at its core. On the one hand, in the spirit of "neither god nor master", religion is separated (and its institutionalized mouthpieces allegedly excluded) from political rule; on the other, is the curious phenomenon that contemporary leaders remain committed to embracing some degree of religious affiliation as a mantle of

legitimacy. Jose recalls the oft-quoted remark by Foucault that political theory has not yet managed to cut off the king's head. Jose takes this idea further and suggests that not only has political theory not managed to remove the king's head, it has also been unable to dispense with king's soul, the religious foundations of political rule. As such, political rule remains beholden to the hierarchies of gods and masters.

From an entirely different perspective, Tate's paper, "Liberalism, Blasphemy and Religion" explored a different paradox, though one just as concerned with the dynamics of religion, secularism and the modern nation-state. His paper investigates the liberal tradition and the complexities it encounters when confronting minority religious and cultural claims. He asks whether the modern liberal tradition is sufficiently capacious, in its conception of rights and toleration, to accord competing religious views equal respect. He suggests that clashes between minorities and democratic majorities are intractable because they involve unconditional commitments on both sides, making equal respect difficult to uphold, and hence we are left with what amounts to a "clash of civilizations." Though risking reducing his analysis to this stereotypical dichotomy, for a way out of this paradox Tate turns to a reading of the foundational work of seventeenth century political philosopher, John Locke. He suggests that Locke's approach provides insights and lessons for contemporary politics. It provides defensible reasons why in a liberal democratic society legitimate limits could be placed on both the state and the church to ensure civil peace. He argues that "this older liberalism still allows for the diversity characteristic of multiculturalism, but does so in ways more conducive to civil peace, by relegating such diversity to a private sphere where it is no longer a matter of civil dispute."

Likewise, Stephen Chavura also turns to a discussion of Locke in his paper, "The Separation of Religion and State: Context and Meaning." Chavura also examines the ideas of Thomas Jefferson to clarify how we might best understand the meaning of "separation of religion and state." He argues that the best way to understand the meaning of the separationist doctrine is to place it within the context of the liberalism of Locke and Jefferson. Chavura examines what Locke and Jefferson were trying to avoid by positing a separationist thesis, and in so doing he shifts the emphasis back to the religious roots of their solutions. *Pace* Tate, Chavura argues that "by returning to the foundations of the liberal tradition to illuminate discussion of religion and the state" we can find "a model of religious freedom that allows dissent from the

majority religion and religion itself without alienating religious citizens from the state." This is important, concludes Chavura, because it might enable non-Western and post-colonial nations to steer a middle course between religious domination on the one hand and "a godless or religiously indifferent state" on the other.

Still on the early modern focus, but more concerned with the connection between religion and democracy, Tod Moore and Graham Maddox's paper, "Participation, Democracy, and the Split in Revolutionary Calvinism, 1641 − 1646," examines an early phase of the revolutionary period in seventeenth century Britain. They demonstrate that an ideological divergence took place between factions labelled Independent and Presbyterian. They examined over one hundred primary printed sources for this period and found that these debates were centrally concerned with the meaning and relevance of the Greek term "democracy." Moore & Maddox map these emergent ideologies within revolutionary Calvinism and suggest that such debates prefigured a parallel development that did not occur until a century and a half later with France's secular revolution. They found a contested social terrain with the Presbyterians supporting the revolutions from a socially conservative position and the Independents favouring radical social change. Interestingly, their analysis points to both sides use of theology and Scripture to support their arguments. For the Presbyterians and others at this time religion was a central means to articulate, validate and propagate ideas about the radically reconfigured political terrain that we now know as modern democracy.

In an entirely different context, early twentieth century Singapore, Christine Doran develops a discussion of how Confucian ideals featured in nationalist discourse as a means to enable the Chinese to counter the colonial domination of the British. In her paper, "The Chinese Origins of Democracy: Dynamic Confucianism in Singapore" she shows how Confucianism, through the efforts of Lim Boon Keng, played an important role in the development of democratic sentiment among the Chinese community in colonial Singapore. She shows how Lim developed an interpretation of Confucianism that emphasized its dynamic, progressive political potential for mobilizing a form of democratic politics capable of challenging British rule. She demonstrates convincingly that Lim did not look to Western concepts of democracy for the source of his ideas, but rather developed his understanding of democracy drawing on Confucianism. In this respect Doran provides an important corrective to the received wisdom of many scholars of democracy, Western and non-Western alike, who see democracy as a

product of Western traditions.

Still on the theme of democracy, Alexander Maxwell's contribution, "A Brief History of Political Legitimacy: Demotic Ideology and the Spread of Democracy," examines the prospects of democracy in the Islamic world from a long-term perspective. Maxwell claims that at the time of writing, the catastrophic American intervention in Iraq and the floundering intervention in Afghanistan continue to generate pessimism about the chances of bringing secular or liberal government to these territories. Maxwell suggests that while the immediate prospects indeed seem bleak, disastrous setbacks have long characterized the progress toward democratic government. As such Maxwell's paper argues that we need to take a long-term and global view of such political trends. It takes considerable time for people to understand and accept the ideas and practices constitutive of a democracy. The current setbacks are not grounds for pessimism, but rather to be expected because in the long term democracy will triumph, and hence "optimism about the future prospects for stable democratic government seems warranted." In time new democracies will emerge and consolidate along familiar lines.

This is precisely the problem addressed by Hawzhin Azeez in her paper "Reconstructing Iraq: Iraq State-building, Nation-building, and Violence," an insightful analysis of state-building in a post-conflict society. Azeez claims scholars have failed to appreciate the "difference between state-building and nation-building." Azeez argues that these are two distinct activities requiring separate, though often connected policies. She suggests that the traditional practice of state-building has entailed a distinct "wall of separation" between the state and religion, an artificial secularization, leading to a specific and certain type of "reconstruction" model for post-conflict societies. Azeez develops an interesting argument in stating that despite the fact that at least five of the previous state-building attempts have been in Islamic societies there is literally no attempt to understand the relevance of top-level religious actors in the reconstruction process. Indeed there is no existing study on the impact of religious leadership (Islamic or otherwise) on the success or failure of state-building missions in any past cases. She suggests that there is a limited and tentative attempt to incorporate religion into state-building doctrine although it is severely restricted and narrowed to the confines of Western liberal values of "civil society." Azeez argues that this is a depoliticizing move because it silences the voice of religious actors (or at best ignores them) because their existence often poses very difficult questions for the processes of legitimate institution and

capacity building practices of the state-centric model.

John Hopkins' paper entitled "Round Pegs Into Square Holes? Governance and Non-Territorial Identity" argues that the concept of the nation-state is so fundamental to modern governance that its impact on the politics of identity and fundamental legal norms often goes unnoticed. Hopkins discusses the concept of the "hard-border" and its inability to cope with non-national identities. He points out that the Westphalian compact of the Seventeenth Century continues to dominate current law and policy. The concept of a single sovereign unit of governance, when allied with the elevation of the "nation" as the only legitimate identity at the end of the nineteenth century, has had a profound impact upon non-national identities. Hopkins argues that nation-states privilege one element of identity (nationalist) over all others. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for those whose other multiple identities contrast with or at least overlap with those of the nation to be accommodated. Hopkins assesses some of the limited attempts at soft-bordered approaches to identity politics and considers whether these offer a future model for non-national identities. He concludes that some recognition of the soft-bordered reality of individual identity is required but how this might be realized in practice remains unclear.

Christian Wicke's paper "The Catholic Nationalist: Rethinking Kohl's Notion of Germany" offers an interesting take on nationalism. He suggests that the idea of "the nation itself can be filled with religious content." To demonstrate this he looks to Kohl's nationalism and notes that Kohl's liberal principles were often based on Catholic thinking. Wicke's suggests that Kohl incorporated these into his occidental notion of the German nation, its "pre-national" past and "post-national" future. In Wicke's view an account of Kohl's ideological conflation should not overlook the relationship between his Catholicism and liberal nationalism. These were mutually constitutive – rather than mutually exclusive. Wicke shows that for Kohl, the state was a transcendental community rooted in Christian values and hence patriotism and national self-determination were unconditionally Christian duties. For Kohl the constitution was deeply Christian and he regarded his own party, the Christian Democrats, as embodying its spirit. Kohl saw it as his duty to counter the rise of secularism and socialist atheism which he saw as contrary to all that the German nation should stand for, indeed what Europe and the West should stand for. Kohl's religious views therefore served as both "a factor of integration and demarcation in his nationalism," and hence it was "was therefore not merely a proto-

religious substitute for religion but articulated as religious *per se*."

The theme of nationalism and religion is likewise central to Dominic Fitzsimmons paper, "'But do we get our money's worth?' The Usefulness of Religion to the Nation Building Process in Australia and East Germany." Both countries are constitutionally without official religions, yet religion plays quite different roles in each. He offers a comparative analysis of how these themes play out in East Germany and Australia, juxtaposing the practices of sport and religion. Fitzsimmons offers an original approach that combines considerations of sport (in this case soccer), religion and nationalism to question whether religion has delivered on its usefulness as a means of state-building and the ongoing creation of the nation. His key point is that religion as deployed in both Australia and East Germany "is less about the rhetoric of transcendent belief systems, and more associated with the power of religious symbols, imagery, and structures in everyday society." Yet in both countries it is sport that has proved the more successful in binding the nation. He concludes that while religion has been useful in this regard, it is arguable as to whether these nations received their money's worth from privileging religion (though not in constitutional terms) within their ongoing state and nation-building.

Des Brennan's paper "The Religious Dimension of Poland's Relations with its Eastern Neighbours" discusses the large role religion has played in the relations between Poland and its eastern neighbours. Brennan notes that Poland, despite its period of communist rule, has been and has re-emerged as a defiantly Roman Catholic nation, while its eastern Slavic neighbours are largely dominated by the Moscow branch of the Eastern Orthodox Christian faith, itself controlled by Russia. The picture on the ground is, of course, not quite as simple. The role of religion and religious identity on the local, regional and national levels in East-Central Europe is rather more complex when one probes attempts to understand the allegiances and group identities of individuals and communities. Brennan points out that there will be considerable variation over time with respect to the impact and salience of the role of religion all of the countries of East-Central Europe have religious minorities, whose membership often correlates or overlaps with ethnic identities. Brennan's discussion presents an overview of the way religion has affected relations between Poland and its eastern neighbours, particularly since 1989. He concludes that while the role of religion may have diminished over the past twenty years, it still has a role to play in strengthening relations

between Poland and its neighbours.

Shifting focus to the paper by Guy Charlton and Barry Brunette entitled "Colonialism and Civilization: the Impact of "Civilization" Policies Suppressing Indigenous Religious Practices in American Jurisprudence" a different set of issues emerges. They discuss attempts by the governments of Canada, New Zealand and the United States to regulate and suppress traditional indigenous religious and cultural practices, including the use by indigenous communities of medicine men, shaman and tohungas. In the name of "civilization" and as a concerted and deliberate part of the colonization process, the political identities of tribes and their cultural sources of allegiance were systematically undermined and disregarded. The religious and cultural rights of indigenous peoples, rights otherwise guaranteed to other (non-indigenous) citizens and individuals in the society, were systematically removed. These historical efforts to suppress traditional religious and cultural practices among indigenous inhabitants has not disappeared but, argue Charlton and Brunette, continue to inform indigenous jurisprudence in each state by importing cultural and rights-based presumptions. Such presumptions are often at odds with principled aboriginal law, treaty law and rights-based jurisprudence, but as the authors conclude, they remain backed up by the courts' continued commitment, at least in the United States, "to liberal notions of economic development and property rights."

Contemporary political institutions and practices are also the themes of two other papers. Sandra Reeves in "Welfare Reform and FBOs: an Australian perspective" examines the intersection between religion and politics by exploring how Australian governments have shifted aspects of welfare support onto faith-based organisations (FBOs). Reeves' points out that for the past two decades or more, welfare policies across the OECD countries have been framed in terms of mutual obligation and individual responsibility. Within these new welfare regimes welfare recipients, who are often unable to meet the demands of their participation contracts, become subject to significant monetary sanctions. In the Australian context, a number of politicians in Australia have claimed that FBOs, because of their religious underpinnings, can use their values and moral (ie Christian) frameworks to assist welfare recipients to become responsible citizens. Reeves draws on her empirical research of FBOs in the Hunter Valley (Australia) to demonstrate that (i) people of faith are heavily motivated by their religious beliefs and that these often lead to compassionate help even in the face of

limited resources; and (ii) welfare volunteers in Hunter FBOs meet clients' immediate need for material assistance or social support irrespective of the clients' socio-economic situation and alleged moral failings. She concludes that the "Howard government was right in stating that the sector is filled with people who care," but that his government's aim of using FBOs to change the behaviours of welfare recipients through moral discipline had no basis in what FBOs actually did in practice.

Whereas Reeves analysed a situation in which governments actively sought to involve FBOS, Martin Drum considers another dimension of how politicians relate to faith. His paper, entitled "Is Faith a "no go area" in Modern Politics? A Case Study of Newly Elected MPs in Western Australia's State Parliament," offers an interesting micro-case of the interaction between the religious and political spheres. Drum examines the claim that parliamentarians are invoking Christian beliefs with increasing frequency within Australian public life, and that they then use these beliefs to justify their policies and decisions. In the Western Australia elections held in September 2008, a number of new Members of Parliament were regarded as having strong links to Christian churches. Drum discusses a newspaper article labeling these MPs as "a god squad of devout Liberals", and in that context reports on his post-election research in which he conducted a series of interviews with a number of these politicians. He considers what sort of rhetoric these members used in public life, particularly in parliament, when explaining their values and decisions. Drum's evidence suggests that while these Parliamentarians hold strong religious views, they are careful to use more secular language when justifying their political stances (a point also echoed in Jose's paper).

Within the liberal context Colin Wilk's offers a brief consideration of the way in which religious liberals seek to calm the turbulence that sometimes erupts when religion and politics intersect. Wilks' paper, "Religious Conflict and Interfaithism," points out that when religious liberals do intervene in this way they run the risk of igniting intra-religious conflict within the very religions they are seeking to inter-religiously harmonise. Wilks outlines the predicament this poses because it is not only one for the religious liberals. Secular liberals who call upon religious liberals as peace makers at times of religious conflict also face this problem. They presume that religious liberals have some influence over the thinking of their not-so-liberal religious counterparts, and when they try to pressure religious liberals to rein in the more radical elements of their religion may end up pushing the liberals into the arms of the very

people whose views they are trying to moderate. Put bluntly, Wilks concludes that the solution to such conflict may well serve to exacerbate it.

The question of religious conflict and violence is central to the paper by Josh Snider. In "Islamist Violence in Indonesia: Bringing the State Back In" Snider analyses the problem of religious violence in Indonesia. He notes that despite the recent success of the Indonesian police and security service in breaking the yoke of the most lethal Jihadist network in the archipelago it would be a mistake to view the problem of Islamist violence as either fully contained or as a phenomenon that can be understood through the narrative of Jemmah Islamiyah (JI) network alone. One of Snider's key points is that it is necessary to move away from a preoccupation with typologies of Islam and to focus on the role of the state, especially the state's failure to curb the street violence perpetrated by Indonesian youths in the name of Islam. This latter phenomenon should remind us that the state itself is part of the problem in Indonesia. The persistence of structural violence employed by the Indonesian state at various levels directly and indirectly creates conditions that increase the attractiveness of the groups that justify a violent agenda based on Islamist precepts. Snider also notes that while JI and loosely affiliated cell networks have succeeded in perpetrating mass attacks on targets within Indonesia it has never posed the threat that has been advanced by many in the terrorism studies community. He suggests that while JI (and loosely affiliated splinter networks) have and will without question continue to present a very serious security problem for governments of the region we must look beyond the JI network to unpack antecedents of Islamist violence in post-New Order Indonesia.

In conclusion, we would suggest that the papers generated by the symposium were able to demonstrate the inherent problem with claiming that there exists a natural and reasoned divide between a secular politics and a religious politics. In drawing out the complexities the participants' explorations remind us that such problems have been with us for centuries. Certainly, these papers, each in their own way, have questioned the seemingly natural separation of religion and politics, and its deployment within the modernist dynamics of nationalism, political identities, and state-building.

Reference

Imre, Robert & Jose, Jim. 2010. "Religious and Political Violence: Globalising Syncretism and the Governance State." *Religion, State and Society*. 38 (2): 153-168.