

Introduction

Taking Faith Seriously

Despite a deep reluctance in the academic and public policy world until recently to engage the subject of religion, it is increasingly apparent that religion, and all the questions it poses for a democratic society, cannot be ignored. Over the past three years, the authors of this book have engaged in a dialogue to articulate a coherent, empirically grounded perspective on the relationship of religion and liberal democracy in the United States. Our aim has been to put forth an analytical approach that would provide better ways both to recognize and to evaluate the public face of religion, which includes its extensive social contributions as well as the inescapable challenges it poses for a diverse civil society and America's evolving democracy. We believe the strategy we have developed contributes to the emerging debate and has significant implications for future research and practice. It is on the basis of it that we challenge ourselves and others, including scholars, public officials, and citizens, to take faith seriously. By this we do not mean superficially asserting the importance of religion, as has become de rigeur in electoral politics, but developing tools of thought that permit us to see public religion in all its subtlety and complexity and to begin to analyze it.*

This book has two goals. The first is to enhance understanding of the complex ways in which religious beliefs, practices, and organizations influence public life. In the studies that follow, we look at how different kinds of Americans connect – or disconnect – religion, democracy, and the public world. Our second goal is normative. We aspire to

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help shape the debate over the appropriate role of religious language of religious practice
and religious institutions in the work of enhancing of the wellbeing of our society.

Why Rethink Religion in American Liberal Democracy?

We begin with a broad question that poses a challenge. How do we understand, or fail to understand, the complex social effects of religion on liberal democracy in the United States? Given that the majority of Americans profess a form of Christianity, is the United States a “Christian nation,” where one faith undergirds national values and institutions? Or, to draw from the opposite playbook on religion and politics, does American liberal democracy require and foster a secular society in which markets, media and the state consign religious practices to the private sphere, as the secular left assumes? Or could it be that both of those positions are wrong, and that the United States, among the most religiously diverse society in the world, offers models of how religious communities can contribute to vibrant civil society and democratic participation? It is the third possibility, we believe, that requires greater attention. Before proceeding to it, however, it is helpful to examine the first two viewpoints. Neither, we believe, offers adequate perspectives for discerning and evaluating the roles of religion in public life.

Faith-based boosterism. In the first camp are those who would valorize or boost the public role of religion, in particular the traditional public roles it has played, such as serving the poor. This position, which President George W. Bush champions through his charitable choice initiatives, has become dominant in public policy. Certainly, it merits the careful attention it is receiving from scholars, policy makers and community leaders.

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School vouchers allowing parents to use public dollars for children to attend sectarian schools and public-private partnerships involving faith-based service providers are focal points of the changing relationship between public religion and liberal democracy -- constitutionally, politically, and programmatically. Yet this viewpoint, and the debate over it, tends to focus too narrowly on the role of faith-based organizations in providing social services. The material betterment of individual lives and the mending of our society's frayed safety net is necessary and noble work, but it only skims the surface of the civic and cultural influence of religious traditions that engage the deepest beliefs and values of tens of millions of Americans.

The current political focus on faith-based social services is both dangerous and inadequate. It is dangerous because it misrepresents the present and potential capacities of religious organizations to carry the burden of social welfare for the nation's disadvantaged citizens, families, and communities. It is inadequate because this narrow focus distorts the identity and mission priorities of religious organizations themselves. It fails to recognize fully that the essential independence and intrinsic faith commitments of religion limit its instrumental usefulness to the polity. Such distortions prevent leaders in secular organizations and public agencies from recognizing other important contributions that religious organizations or practices can offer. These include increasing moral and spiritual capacities, inspiring citizens to serve neighbors, building relationships across barriers of race and income, and providing a vision of what kind of society we are called to be. This book hopes to shed light on such contributions by suggesting ways in which scholars and practitioners can recognize and evaluate the multiple roles of religion more adequately.

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Dogmatic secularism. If the first paradigmatic approach would include religion or a sectarian version of it too uncritically, the second would exclude it equally uncritically. Not only does the dogmatic secularist approach devalue the effects of religious practices on democratic life, it does not even *evaluate* them, for it construes them as private, subjective phenomena that need not be taken seriously. By dogmatic secularism, we hasten to add that we do not mean the functional secular ethos that understandably characterizes many public settings of liberal democracy. All Americans – those who are deeply religious, those with scant or no religious beliefs, and those with antipathy toward religion -- find it necessary in everyday social interactions to withhold the full range and depth of their convictions in order to maintain mutual respect, cooperation, and civility in public settings. In doing so, they are not necessarily denying their convictions. Indeed, as case studies in this volume illustrate, citizens transport their convictions from religious to secular settings in a variety of ways. Yet the second paradigmatic approach, dogmatic secularism, wrongly equates a public ethos of tolerance and civility with the *absence* of religious commitments. In so doing, it fails to recognize and evaluate the multiple roles that religion does play in public life.

In recent years significant scholarly work has challenged this prevailing academic indifference toward religion.¹ This book aims to broaden these scholarly efforts, which seek to move the American academy out of an ironic predicament. The rooting of religious practices in the soil of democratic freedom has been a great achievement in the United States, both for religion and democracy. Yet many parts of the academy have neglected the historic sources and continuing practices that sustain this very achievement. Many scholars and disciplines have adopted “the separation of church and state” and

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“secularization” as uncritical dogma. Worse, some have assumed that a secularist approach is the only valid intellectual foundation acceptable in a liberal democracy. (We would argue that forms of Enlightenment secularism are comprehensive belief systems which, like their religious counterparts, should not be privileged as the unifying basis of liberal democracy.)² Consigning religion to the private sphere of individual subjectivity or private association, many consider religion to be “the single subject about which many intellectuals can feel free to be ignorant.”³ Such dogmatism is empirically obtuse in a society where approximately half of all social capital is religiously related, and in which eight out of ten Americans report that religion is important in their lives.⁴

Nevertheless, we recognize that there are solid reasons for caution, even skepticism, about the role of religion in democracy, and we believe that these potential flashpoints are not to be lightly dismissed in the interest, for example, of forging public-private partnerships with faith-based service providers. The reasons for caution include doubts about the capacity of religiously based service organizations to take on a significant share of the task of social provision, the low or at best uneven level of accountability in such organizations, and the absence of sound, comprehensive empirical research on the effectiveness of such efforts. It is furthermore appropriate to be concerned about direct or indirect proselytizing, especially of clients who are vulnerable, by faith-based providers and the potential social implications of exempting such organizations from laws banning discrimination in hiring employees on the basis of religion.

Despite these legitimate concerns, we find the dogmatic secularist posture inadequate for four reasons. First is the issue of respect for beliefs and values that a majority of Americans reports are of deep importance to them. Empirical data showing

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the United States to be a religious nation need to be taken seriously, if for no other reason than to respect the identities and values of the American citizens who are the source of that data. Second, moving beyond the black-and-white certainties of dogmatic secularism creates not only the challenges cited above but also creative opportunities to re-envision and realign the boundaries between public and private, secular and sacred, for-profit and nonprofit. Third, screening out the influence of religion disables the United States from responding adequately to the challenge of growing religious pluralism, both at home and abroad. As Diana Eck and numerous other scholars have shown, the United States is among the most religiously diverse society in the world. Legal strategies or practices adopted over time to deal with mainline Protestantism, Catholicism or Judaism may not be useful in dealing with the many other religions, new and old, taking root in American soil.⁵

A final reason to rethink religion in the context of liberal democracy is a more pragmatic or programmatic one. Taking religion seriously is the work of practitioners as well as scholars. As devolution and privatization raise expectations for the nonprofit sector to meet social needs, a rapidly growing number of organizations in communities across America find themselves competing with one another in a chaotic ground game. Like their for-profit counterparts, nonprofit organizations, both religious and secular, compete for “brand recognition,” shares of the customer market, financial resources, and legitimacy. And the ground game is becoming more complex as the boundaries between public and private or for-profit and nonprofit actors erode.⁶ In this environment, public and nonprofit leaders seek ways to form partnerships as a means to achieve greater results or to reach broader communities. But for cross-sector partnerships to prove effective,

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they will require fresh insight into what religious organizations can and cannot bring to the table. For all these reasons, we believe it is time to rethink the social contributions of religion in liberal democracy. To do that, we are proposing an analytical framework that involves six roles or functions of religion in public settings.

The Constitutional Structure of Liberal Democracy

To see those roles and functions in context and thus before presenting our framework, however, we wish first to comment on the fundamental structure of liberal democracy. It is the constitutional right to free exercise of religion and the constitutional ban on establishment, along with other rights and principles, which give life to the various roles we will describe. The First Amendment of the Constitution states:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances.” The constitutional structure of American liberal democracy thus guarantees to all citizens the freedoms of religion, speech, and association.

From the perspective of democratic polity, constitutional rights are guaranteed claims that impose upon government both obligations to act in certain ways and restraints on acting in certain other ways. The various branches and levels of government have the obligation to protect and safeguard the freedoms of religion, speech and association—particularly on behalf of minority groups that lack political power and are thereby more vulnerable to the tyranny of the majority. Constitutional rights at the same time impose essential limits on the powers and scope of government, such as any action that would appear to grant preferences or rights to one religion over another – limits not to be

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transgressed even for the sake of popular or desirable instrumental purposes. The constitutional structure of liberal democracy is thus a system of perpetual tensions engendered by conflicting interpretations of constitutional rights, by rights in conflict with other rights, and by the non-instrumental sanctity of rights conflicting with the pursuit of instrumental private and public interests.

These first years of the 21st century finds the constitutional and legal climate in the United States in a period of change, particularly with regard to the religion clauses of the First Amendment. Over the last decade, the courts have construed legal doctrine forbidding governmental establishment of religion to require not a complete separation of church and state but rather evenhandedness and impartiality on the part of the state toward religion and religious organizations. Jurisprudence involving the First Amendment's Establishment Clause has, in effect, emphasized neutrality and equal treatment of religion and secularism. The state may not privilege secularism over religion but must ensure that adherents of any religious tradition or of no religion receive the same opportunities – whether to participate in a school choice program, to use public facilities, or to obtain public aid. Coupled with the ongoing constitutional protection for individual free exercise of religion, this evolving doctrine recognizes a positive role for religion and even permits aid to religious activities as long as: a) religious ideology and practice is not privileged over secular, and b) no religion is privileged over others.⁷

The watershed Supreme Court decision for the evolving legal doctrine is the Cleveland School voucher case in 2000, which authorized the use of public funds in the form of vouchers for education in pervasively religious as well as public and private non-sectarian schools. Yet the changing climate does not mean that the old safeguards have

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less salience. In 2002, a federal panel ordered the chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court to remove a monument of the Ten Commandments from the courthouse rotunda, and when he refused to do so, the court ordered the removal of the justice from his post.⁸

Viewed from the standpoint of religious communities, the constitutional structure of liberal democracy is equally definitive and just as complex. Many religious citizens regard freedom of worship, speech, and association as rights endowed by their Creator to be safeguarded but not conferred by the Constitution. For many religious citizens, the freedom to worship is the supreme right safeguarding human freedom and limiting the proper authority of government. If human beings owe their being and ultimate allegiance to God, in this perspective, they must be free to exercise their sacred obligations of faith; and political institutions have no legitimate authority to define, impose or interfere with the sacred obligations of free citizens. But religious citizens understand their religious commitments differently. Therefore the liberal democratic structures that protect basic human liberties also protect the space of a wider civic culture in which a plurality of cultural and religious identities may flourish. Liberal democracy is thus both the child and parent of the deep pluralism generated by religion and other sources of identity.

An Analytical Framework for Taking Religion Seriously

The constitutional structure of liberal democracy thus sets the context in which religion performs multiple functions in public life. A number of schemes have been developed to analyze religion in democracy. These have often focused on a single role of religion. We are proposing a broader framework of multiple roles and functions, some of which overlap. We have chosen, with no pretense of being definitive, six interrelated roles or functions of religion within the constitutional structure of liberal democracy. We

will elaborate the roles, then suggest how the framework can be used and is used in each of the nine case studies that make up this volume.

- Religion fosters expression of personal beliefs and identity;
- Such expression forms or shapes the identities, virtues, and commitments of communities, organizations, and individuals.
- Religious groups and practices create and sustain social bonds and networks:
- They shape the character and quality of moral discourse;
- Religious participation enables civic engagement and political participation;
- Religious groups and organizations as providers of social services.

Each of these roles or functions can be analyzed from different vantages in society and through different lenses. They can be recognized or described from the standpoints of the polity, secular or religious organizations. They can also be evaluated from each of these stances in different but equally valid ways: the interpretive analysis of narrative, identity and mission; and the functional analysis of resources, actions and outcomes. We believe that this broader analytical framework advances the book's two purposes. It provides relatively clear categories that focus attention on significant features and patterns of religious practice; it contributes to the ongoing evaluation and dialogue of researchers and practitioners. Beyond serving those purposes, the categories we have chosen, which we describe in the following section, are neither novel nor definitive.

1. Fostering expression of personal beliefs and identity. In part because it is well protected by our form of government, religious practice has been a primary vehicle for self-differentiation and expression in American society. Religious adults may choose from among a variety of forms of worship, modes of moral discourse, and religious

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associations to give voice to the deep sources of their individual human identities. . While the freedom to worship as one pleases is particularly important in the United States, it is widely recognized as a fundamental human right in international law.

This function can be recognized or described from different vantages. To members of faith communities, such expression may have little to do with personal choice or the exercise of rights. Religious persons may regard worship as a duty to which they are called by God. It emerges from a relationship with the holy that utterly transcends the constitutional structure of any polity. Policy makers, leaders of secular organizations and other persons who may stand outside a faith perspective may recognize this function differently. They may see religious expression as a social good because it satisfies individuals' desires for religious experience. They may describe it as a means to achieve a higher level of social welfare in a liberal society, that higher level being the result of giving individuals freedom to define what they value and want to do and also to structure opportunities to satisfy those desires.

This expressive function can also be evaluated either instrumentally or theologically by the polity, secular organizations or faith communities. Anti-abortion activists, to take one example, may view their right to lobby legislators and to protest in public to be instrumentally useful in achieving their political goals. On a narrative level, they may also interpret such rights and opportunities as a divinely ordained means of developing and acting on deep theological convictions.

2. Forming identities, virtues and commitments. Growing out of the expressive function is the role religion plays in shaping our identities, allegiances, preferences, and obligations. Religion not only allows individuals to express preexisting desires and values

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but also provides enduring social and cultural resources through which individuals inherit their particular identities, make choices that shape their lives, and influence who the next generation will become. Formation operates not only at the individual level of analysis; it also applies to communities and political and social movements. Indeed, as Peter Dobkin Hall shows in the first chapter, 19th-century Protestant social efforts created templates of voluntary associations that persist in civil society today. The success of myriad religious organizations in formation is empirically documented by the highly diverse religiosity of the American people and by the deep pluralism of liberal democracy.

Religious formation can be evaluated through different lenses. From the normative standpoint of faith, it provides opportunities for faithfulness and discipleship. At the same time, religious communities cannot avoid functional analysis to assess if they are being faithful, whether by transmitting faith to their children or helping the poor.

It may be evaluated normatively from a secular standpoint as well – but for a different reason, namely the assumption that the state must not control the voluntary associations through which free citizens shape and express their identities, whether the desires of citizens are for consumer products or salvation. But it is also important to note that the formative function can shape preferences or commitments that benefit society and those that do not, including fear and hatred of those who are different, or justifying inequity and violence. A secular analyst may find it necessary to evaluate the formative role of religion instrumentally, as when the state has overriding interest in protecting children from abuse or educating them for civic tolerance, or when public officials must determine how best to use limited social service funds.

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3. Shaping the quality and character of moral discourse. The exploration of serious moral issues is central both to the ideal of deliberative democracy and to the practice of many religious communities. This is a potential synergy between democracy and religion that has received insufficient attention. As Brent Coffin writes in Chapter 4, religion helps to shape what he calls thick moral discourse, deliberation in community that shapes identity and judgment, being and doing, through stories, rituals and symbols of transcendence.

The polity may evaluate this role on its instrumental usefulness to liberal democracy, finding, for example, that citizens who are empowered to articulate their moral viewpoint are more able and likely to participate in public life. The same angle of vision may produce a different evaluation of this role: The fear that discourse driven by religious fervor unleashed in the public square will undermine reason and respect and thus make things worse rather than better.

From a religious perspective, this role may be evaluated as a way to go beyond abstract or fixed beliefs and engage with others in dialogue and debate that can lead to concrete actions or decisions that are in accordance with, for example, the Christian moral ideal of the “Kingdom of God.” Analyzing this function from a religious standpoint leads Mary Jo Bane to conclude, in her study, that Catholicism’s rich tradition of social and moral discourse is an underused resource in Catholic parishes and has not produced a level of social and civic engagement commensurate with its potential. As Bane demonstrates, this assessment further requires a functional analysis from the perspective of Catholic faithfulness: what resources are needed for parishes to transmit social teachings into civic life?

4. Creating and sustaining social bonds and networks. Social scientific research has increasingly recognized the role that religious congregations and organizations (like other voluntary associations) play in fostering bonds of reciprocity and trust among similar citizens and creating networks of social relationships, a phenomenon that some have called social capital.⁹ In some cases, those bonds may encourage members of religious communities to reach across barriers of race, ethnicity and economic and social opportunity in pursuit of a common theological perspective or social effort, a phenomenon that Robert Putnam has described as bridging social capital. But it also true that social bonds based on religion may, in many cases, reinforce those same divisions.¹⁰

Religion promotes social capital through rituals, narratives of meaning, shared experiences, the building and sustaining of physical locations for worship, and holy days and life-cycle events that afford repetition, regularity, and scaffolds for mutual aid and concern. These efforts provide both utility and pleasure, and they underwrite much of the connectedness of American society. Different religions teach different narratives about how that tradition interacts with the broader world, so there is no one style of social capital associated with religion. The social bonds and networks fostered by liberal Protestant churches differ markedly from those of conservative evangelical traditions. However, church life across the spectrum seems to generate a social force. It is well documented that people most involved in religious congregations are the citizens most engaged in serving the community. However, religious congregations cannot be adequately understood in terms of bonding and bridging social capital, as Ammerman shows in Chapter 5. A more careful analysis is also required to explain what Hall

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described occurring in previous centuries: how congregations in different religious traditions generate different patterns of participation.

Evaluated from the perspective of the polity, religion's role in creating social capital may be assessed as being an instrumental good or bad for democracy. Yet the same role may be evaluated quite differently from the perspective of faith communities. To them, social capital may be seen as simply a by-product, albeit a good one, that grows out of commitments and allegiances formed in their desire to be faithful in their relationship with God.

5. Enabling civic engagement and political participation. Religious groups play a significant role in developing the skills needed for participation in the political process and in providing outlets for that participation, as has been shown by Sidney Verba and colleagues.¹¹ Verba finds that religious congregations and organizations provide three kinds of help that enable involvement in political, electoral and legislative affairs: the information, the resources, and the opportunity. Indeed, for Americans with lower levels of income or education, religious communities are sometimes the *primary* place where they learn how to organize and plan a social initiative, as was demonstrated in the American South during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. But the link between religious activity and civic engagement is old; in New England, it reaches back to the establishment of the first communities of English settlers, in which the "church" was, quite literally, the meetinghouse and seat of town government.

As with the other roles with which it overlaps, the role of enabling civic engagement may be recognized by religious groups in the narrative or theological sense as an opportunity for discipleship and what progressive Catholics call *praxis*: putting

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faith into action, or it may be recognized instrumentally. An example would be urging members of a religion to vote for a candidate who has pledged to fulfill the social agenda articulated by the leaders of that tradition.

From a secular viewpoint, this role may be seen as helping to create a stable feature of any liberal democracy: the political participation of its citizens. Those who are active in churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques turn out to be quite active in politics more generally. Yet this role has long raised concerns about manipulation of the political process by religion, sufficient to make John F. Kennedy promise Protestant pastors in the 1960 presidential campaign not to take orders from the pope. Such a pledge may seem quaint against the contemporary standard of on-your-sleeve religion that has arisen in national politics, but today the concerns about the influence of religiously mobilized political movements on national issues such as defining the nature of marriage are no less real.

6. Providing social services. While we have placed this most familiar role of religion in public settings last, it has long been and remains a major one in the social welfare of our society. Historically, it spans Thomas Jefferson's decision as president to pay Jesuit missionaries to teach English to the new Americans living in the areas of the Louisiana Purchase to the most recent efforts in to allocate federal tax dollars to smaller faith-infused organizations that provide social services to the needy. Such providers are the dominant focus of current discourse on religion's role in American public life, although, as we have said, we believe that focus is too narrow and potentially distorting of the nature of communities of faith.

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Religious and secular organizations can and do recognize both dangers and opportunities in this role. Dangers include the lack of solid empirical data on the success of religious groups as social providers and also the temptation to strain the limited resources and capacity of those organizations. Opportunities include adding another dimension of lived experience to current treatment modalities, reaching out more effectively to at-risk children and families, and reducing the economic burden of social provision on the public treasury.

Religious organizations evaluate this role theologically when they ask if a particular social service truly expresses faithfulness to their traditions. A Catholic organization may, for substantive, narrative reasons, rule out working with government organizations that offer social services that conflict with Catholic teaching on abortion or birth control, while receiving public funds to serve the needy in other ways. The same Catholic group may evaluate its social service role in different light: is this program or activity serving the interest of making the Church's voice heard in the halls of public policy? Alternatively, conservative Protestant churches that judge faithfulness in terms of serving and converting the destitute may be unwilling to enter into any public-private partnerships for fear of relinquishing their religious autonomy. Evaluation not only depends on the vantage of institutional sectors; it must be seen in the context of particular organizations and social settings.

The Framework: An Introduction to the Cases

The nine empirical studies in *Taking Faith Seriously* form three groups. Peter Hall's opening chapter, an historical case study, stands by itself as the first section. He traces the rise and influence of the Protestant civic engagement tradition by showing how

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the beliefs and practices of early Congregationalists shaped their secular activities and as well the public face of their church. Hall reminds us that religion, far from ever having suddenly emerged in the public square, has always been there. Chapter 1 presents in different historical contexts all six roles in our framework and thus lays the foundation for the contemporary cases to follow. Voluntary organizations are seen as rooted in liberal Protestant theology, and participation in them is seen to have both a formative and expressive function. Faith-based social services are present, as are the risks inherent in them: here, lack of accountability and bigotry (anti-Catholicism). The formative function of religion is highly visible as Hall shows how Protestantism shaped the architecture of nonprofit organizations as the vehicles through which religious but nonsectarian citizens pursued common public goals.

The next four chapters comprise the second section of the book. In these we present case studies taking different perspectives on the public roles and functions of religion as it appears in congregations and communities. These cases take us beyond the myth of privatized religion in America's communities in order to examine religious practices and social interactions in three locations.

Mary Jo Bane leads off with her study of the empirical realities of social capital and moral discourse in Roman Catholic parishes. Bane asks why it is that Catholics, as measured according to several indices, are less involved than are Protestants in both religious and civic activities. She examines this puzzle against the backdrop of what should presumably boost Catholic civic engagement: the church's historic teachings on social justice. Bane proposes several reasons why that tradition has remained an underused resource in Catholic parish life.

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In Chapter 3, Omar McRoberts looks at a cluster of black congregations that make up what he calls a religious district in a relatively poor Boston neighborhood. His case study focuses on the formative function of religion and how it enables civic engagement and reaching out to those at risk. McRoberts explores different religious attitudes and orientations to the street and the world outside, and he shows how these attitudes affect how church members relate to each other and their neighbors.

In Chapter 4, Brent Coffin studies moral discourse in the congregations and community life of an affluent Boston suburb. He tracks the different ways three historic Protestant congregations use social capital to generate thick moral deliberation that shapes conflicting identities and moral orientations toward public issues. The question to be evaluated is whether deep religious differences, in this case over the inclusion of gays and lesbians, are compatible with the democratic values of tolerance, mutual respect and public deliberation.

In the last chapter of this section, Nancy Ammerman uses survey data to examine and evaluate styles of civic engagement within several mainline Protestant traditions. She begins by highlighting the importance of religious narratives and practice in shaping personal identity and in turn the importance of religious beliefs and activity as predictors of civic involvement. She then shows how specific traditions provide members with stories, activities and practices that link members to the world in different forms of participation.

The third section presents three cases that examine religion in larger and more diffuse settings, such as institutions, faith-based programs and movements. Together they

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demonstrate the diversity of faith-based organizations and the complexities involved in trying to understand the faith factor in organizations.

Ronald Thiemann looks in Chapter 6 at the history of two Lutheran child-serving agencies in Pennsylvania, and shows how the interaction of Lutheran theology and externally driven constraints shaped the mission and practice of a merged agency. Thiemann shows how the formative function and social provision role of religion in public settings overlap. A theologian, he focuses on the distinctiveness of church-based social efforts and their allegiance to their mission as communities called into being by God.

Next, Julie Wilson brings the perspective of a social scientist to our analytical framework, examining the roles of religion in care of the elderly, also in Pennsylvania. Her study focuses on for-profit, secular nonprofit and religious nursing homes that hold relatively stable market shares in a competitive industry. She finds interesting hints of differences in the operations and quality of care among religious and nonreligious homes, differences that could be elaborated further, she argues, if other researchers employed the framework we propose to take faith seriously.

In Chapter 8, Chris Winship and co-author Amy Reynolds present an evaluation of four programs in Boston directed at teen-age girls. One program is secular, and three have with varying degrees of religious ties. They document the complicated ways in which faith interacts with program design and outcomes, and they also find overlap among the formative and social provision roles.

In our final case, Ziad Munson studies a controversial political phenomenon, the pro-life movement. He examines the attitudes and beliefs of the participants, about both

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abortion and democracy, providing a subtle and fascinating analysis of the role of religion in enabling political participation. The individuals interviewed by Munson make strong claims for the absolute truth of their positions – and yet they remain committed to democratic processes. Munson analyzes this seeming paradox.

In the concluding chapter of *Taking Faith Seriously*, we elaborate the usefulness of our analytical framework, as demonstrated by the cases, and propose a set of three theses that are consistent with our research and that we believe are worth serious consideration. We invite readers to draw different conclusions. We are well aware that the limitations of our methodology and our studies of lived religious practices in different locations do not warrant a stronger set of empirical or normative conclusions. However that was not the scope or purpose of this book. Rather, our main argument is to “take faith seriously” by rethinking the relation of religious practices and democracy, and to encourage use of what we hope is a broader and deeper toolbox for doing so. Our approach models a flexible but constructivist process for recognizing religion in different contexts of liberal democracy and for evaluating their interactions from multiple perspectives—the polity, religious communities, and secular organizations. We believe this approach offers a promising way for researchers, practitioners and citizens to take seriously the contributions of faith – and of faiths – to American democracy.

Notes to the Introduction

¹ See Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994); Nancy Rosenblum, ed., *Obligations of Citizenship and Demands of Faith: Religious Accommodation in Pluralist Democracies* (Princeton, NJ, 2000); Christian Smith, ed., *The Secular Revolution: Power, Inters and Conflicts in the Secularization of American Public Life* (Berkeley, CA, 2003). The *American Sociological Review* published a symposium on religion in spring 2003. The *American Journal of Sociology* published about a dozen reviews of books on religion in 2002 and 2003; the *Journal of Politics* also reviewed several books on religion. Economists have also begun studying the effects of religion. The National Bureau for Economic Research recently published working papers on religion and education, religion and economic growth and religion and economic attitudes.

² John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, 1996)

³ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology in the Culture of Pluralism* (New York, 1981), 13.

⁴ George Gallup Jr. and D. Michael Lindsay, *Surveying the Religious Landscape: Trends in U.S. Belief* (Harrisburg, PA, 1999), 9-11; Robert Putnam, ed. *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society* (New York, 2002), 66.

⁵ Diana Eck, *A New Religious America* (San Francisco, 2001).

⁶ Martha Minow, *Partners, Not Rivals: Privatization and the Public Good* (Boston, 2002).

⁷ *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 536 U.S. 639 (2002). See also *Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, 533 U.S. 98 (2001); *Mitchell v. Helms*, 530 U.S. 793 (2000); *Agostini v. Felton*, 521 U.S. 203 (1997); *Rosenberger v. University of Virginia*, 515 U.S. 819 (1995); *Zobrest v. Catalina Foothills School Dist.*, 509 U.S. 1 (1993); *Witters v. Washington Dept. of Services for the Blind*, 474 U.S. 481 (1986).

⁸ *Stephen R. Glassroth v. Roy S. Moore*, 335 F.3d 1282, 2003 U.S. App. LEXIS 13412 (2003); *Stephen R. Glassroth v. Roy S. Moore*, 242 F.Supp. 2d 1067 (M.D. Ala. 2002); John Johnson, "Panel Removes Alabama's 'Ten Commandments Judge,'" *Los Angeles Times* (Nov. 14, 2003).

⁹ Robert Putnam, ed. *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society* (New York, 2002), Introduction.

¹⁰ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York, 2000); Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans, eds. *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism* (Berkeley, CA, 2002).

¹¹ Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1995).