

Religion and citizenship in a post-secular society

Symposium sponsored by:

The Centre for Ethics, University of Toronto
The Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity
Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics, Institute for Christian Studies
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October 2nd, 2015

The purpose of this symposium is to inquire into the ethics of citizenship in a post-secular society. The term 'post-secular' refers to the apparent failure of secularization theory's prediction that the influence of religion in public life would steadily diminish to a vanishing point. The continued flourishing of public religion raises new questions about the ongoing role of religion in society. These questions include the ways in which religious and secular citizens are to engage each other in public discourse on matters of common concern. How does a new consciousness of a post-secular society influence thought and practice regarding citizenship? In an increasingly diverse society, what are the sources of our shared identity, and what are legitimate means of promoting them? How should we consider the ethical potential present within religion to promote social and political participation? What can we learn from religious and secular practices of inclusion and solidarity extended to minority populations, non-citizens and refugees? How can they deepen a prevalent culture of human rights in society at large? Furthermore, when religious and diaspora communities are connected through transnational ties, what new pressures are placed on citizenship as it is understood and practiced?

Despite the possible benefits offered by a 'multi-faith' approach to this inquiry – which underlines differences and distinctions made among traditions of thought – we propose to pursue areas of convergence or commonality. That is, we wish to look within religious and secular traditions to develop new ways of thinking about social and political membership that can contribute to the creation of new resources for solidarity amidst religious (and other) differences.

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Draft program

9:00-9:15am

Opening remarks

Chair: Geoffrey Cameron (University of Toronto)

Prof Margaret Kohn (Director, Centre for Ethics, University of Toronto)

Dr Haleh Arbab (Director, Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity)

Prof Ron Kuipers (Director, Centre for Philosophy, Religion and Social Ethics, Institute for Christian Studies)

9:15-10:30am

Dilemmas of membership

In an increasingly diverse society, what are the sources of our shared identity, and what are legitimate means of promoting them? Does a post-secular society require new resources for solidarity to be developed?

Chair: Prof Pamela Klassen (University of Toronto)

Religion and an Ethics of Public Discourse

Prof. Simone Chambers (University of California, Irvine)

When are religious arguments appropriate and when are they inappropriate in the public sphere? This is not a question of free speech but of informal expectations of civility and public reason. By public reason I mean generally the expectation that the arguments and reasons we give for public policy appeal to the broad public rather than only a narrow sector or even sectarian sub group. I argue that it is impossible to answer these questions for religion in general because religious reason and arguments vary hugely. Some religious contributions do not violate a public reason requirement indeed they enhance democratic debate in meaningful ways. Other types of arguments have the opposite effect. We need to fine tune our criteria of appropriate speech and discard the religious/secular distinction as being helpful in sorting out this question.

Debates over Religious Accommodation and Competitive Group Formation: Evidence from Canada and Germany

Prof. Phil Triadafilopoulos (University of Toronto)

Debates over religious accommodation in liberal-democratic states are ubiquitous. I argue that such debates are best understood as instances of competing projects of group boundary construction and maintenance. Religious groups' interest in ensuring that their members be able to engage in religious rites and practices is not only based on a commitment to religious devotion but also reflects their interest

in maintaining a sense of coherent group identity – religious groups exist and persist insofar as their members engage in practices that together constitute a sense of group-ness. Liberal-democratic states are also in the business of defining a group identity through boundary activation; religious rites deemed to contradict the core values constituting a civic national identity are therefore subject to challenge, oftentimes by political actors whose putative to such values is premised on some combination of principled and self-interested motives. The success of such actors depends on their ability to advance their case regarding the incompatibility of civic and religious commitments and broker support among otherwise disinterested members of the public. Thinking about accommodation debates in this way helps make sense of their often-abrupt eruption, unpredictable dynamics, and variation across jurisdictions. I illustrate my argument through reference to debates over religious accommodation in Canada and Germany.

10:30-10:45am

Break

10:45-12:00pm

Ethics of participation

How should we consider the ethical potential already present within religion to promote social and political participation? How should religious groups communicate this potential across the religious-secular divide? What learning does secular culture require in order to appreciate this potential?

Chair: Dr Gerald Filson (Baha'i Community of Canada)

Towards a Radically Inclusive Citizenship

Prof. Ronald A. Kuipers (Institute for Christian Studies)

I will explore how the liberal understanding of religion as primarily a private belief system—a form of intellectual assent to a particular class of propositions that is irrelevant to one's public participation in common civic life—has had a tendency to alienate religious citizens who reject this privatized understanding of religion. In particular, I will explore potential strategies for overcoming such alienation, strategies that all citizens of liberal democracies, whether religiously aligned or not, could pursue to encourage alienated religious people to begin to identify more strongly with the larger political communities in which they live. What responsibilities might secular citizens bear in order to overcome this particular form of social alienation? What alternative forms of religious comportment might people of faith need to adopt in order to assume the responsibilities of citizenship in the larger political community? Finally, what cultural factors might motivate religious and secular citizens of liberal democracies to achieve such increased levels of solidarity and social cohesion?

Religion and Responsible Citizenship: Embodied Persons and Their Obligations to the Neighbor

Prof. Ingrid Mattson (University of Western Ontario)

I suggest that the search for a unifying identity or ideology of citizenship is quixotic, often oppressive and does not sufficiently bind temporary residents

to an ethical framework for coexistence. Instead, I argue that our focus should be on the citizen as embodied, rather than ideological, person, and that the religious traditions can help promote responsible citizenship in this regard. In the particular case of Islam, the responsibilities of the neighbor are moral and legal, and include prohibitions on harming and obligations to assist those persons and all living things with whom one shares an ecosystem and economic system.

12:00-1:00pm

Lunch (Provided on-site)

1:00-2:45pm

Practices of solidarity

What can we learn from religious and secular practices of inclusion and solidarity extended to minority populations, non-citizens and refugees? How can they deepen a prevalent culture of human rights in society at large?

Chair: Dr Allyson Carr (Institute for Christian Studies)

Theory and Practice of Solidarity

Prof. Howard Adelman (York University)

The paper will begin theoretically with a brief summary analysis of the role of religion and the discovery in the culmination of religious self-consciousness with the onset of modernity that the religious dream of unity is an impossibility. It was a discovery that preceded this same self-revelation for science. Solidarity then substituted for unity as a foundation of democratic thinking, religious tolerance and cooperation, including cooperation between religious institutions and secular ones. I will then clarify the understanding of solidarity and its connection with the discovery and validation of the secular clearly distinguishing between a retro view of the secular as a form of traditional religion (as in France) and a modern form of the secular. Only then will I apply this analysis as an actual reflection of actuality by a summary case study of the role of the Mennonites in the resettlement of the Indochinese refugees in Canada during 1979 and 1980 to understand how religious faith morphed into a system of rights that became the prime obligation of the state to enforce and of both religious and secular organizations to protect.

Practices of Solidarity

Dr. Mary Jo Leddy (Regis College; Romero House)

How and why do we see the earth itself as our common good? How and why do we understand the common good of this country called Canada? Sometimes we get so tangled in the language of rights that we fail to learn the practices of responsibility – of care and commitment for what no one owns but all are responsible for. I want to reflect at some length on how the discussion of rights can be limited by imagining them in terms of ownership and property. “This is mine. This is ours.” This is bound to make hospitality more difficult. However, if our sense of the world is shaped by a grateful imagination then solidarity and hospitality seem easier. “We share this world. Those who want to be responsible for it are welcome.” I take gratitude to be a fundamental religious attitude and the ground of solidarity.

Comparative religious ethics and the problem of forced migration
Benjamin Schewel (University of Virginia)

There has been a growing appreciation in recent years of the need to better understand the role that religious actors can play in alleviating the plight of displaced peoples throughout the world. This trend has been motivated by a recognition of the fact that state-centered efforts to protect displaced peoples often struggle to achieve their stated goals, as well as by an expanding awareness of the tremendous reserve of potential that transnational religious communities possess to contribute to protection and resettlement efforts. However, much less attention has thus far been given to thinking about how ethical concepts that find their origin in bodies of religious teaching can enhance our ethical discussions of forced migration. My basic argument is that distinctly “religious” ethical concepts, which is to say ethical concepts that carry within them an explicit reference to transcendence, enhance contemporary ethical discussions of forced migration by enabling us to uniquely synthesize prevalent “partialist” and “impartialist” perspectives. Religious ethical concepts help us synthesize these two perspectives by encouraging us to universally expand the basis of our moral and political communities.

2:45-3:00pm

Break

3:00-4:30pm

Keynote lecture

Chair: TBD

Religion, citizenship, and the challenge of transnationalism: Historical roots, convergences and divergences

Prof. Armando Salvatore (McGill University)

The paper will address, sympathetically yet also critically, the last question of the workshop outline: ‘When religious and diaspora communities are connected through transnational ties, what new pressures are placed on citizenship as it is understood and practiced?’ The first move would be to critique Eurocentric notions of state citizenship and civil society that do not take into account a diverse substratum—in global history and global society—not reducible to Western experiences and patterns, namely the variety of patterns of civility and of the ‘civilizing process.’ The second step is, here too, to place transnational ties in a wider perspective than just seeing them as a potential complication of the equation of citizenship within airtight national arenas, a complication allegedly caused by migrations and diasporic dislocations. The third and concluding stage of the argument will concern how religious practice and belonging as feeding into—and nurtured by—patterns of civility can enrich the public sphere.

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Presenter Biographies

Howard Adelman is a Professor Emeritus, and previously a Professor of Philosophy at York University in Toronto from 1966-2003 where he founded and served as first Director of the Centre for Refugee Studies and Editor of *Refuge* until the end of 1993. He has written or co-authored six books and edited or co-edited 19 others. He has authored 79 chapters in edited volumes, 96 articles in refereed journals, and 30 professional reports. In addition to his numerous writings on refugees, he has written articles, chapters and books on the Middle East, multiculturalism, humanitarian intervention, membership rights, ethics, early warning and conflict management.

Simone Chambers is a Professor of Political Science specializing in Political Theory at the University of California, Irvine. She received her BA from McGill University and her MA and PhD from Columbia University. She taught at the University of Toronto between 2002 and 2015, and is a past director of the Centre for Ethics. Her primary areas of scholarship include democratic theory, ethics, secularism, rhetoric, civility and the public sphere. She is presently working on a project entitled An Ethics of Public Discourse.

Ron Kuipers is Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Philosophy, Religion and Social Ethics at the Institute of Christian Studies. He specializes in the philosophy of religion, in conversation with the intellectual traditions of American pragmatism, critical theory, and hermeneutics. His research and teaching focus on the continuing social and political relevance of religious life patterns in pluralistic Western societies, and asks how this cultural context shapes the different ways that religion comes to expression today. He is the author of *Critical Faith: Toward a Renewed Understanding of Religious Life and its Public Accountability* (Rodopi, 2002), and, most recently, *Richard Rorty* (Bloomsbury, 2013), a volume in Bloomsbury's *Contemporary American Thinkers* series.

Mary Jo Leddy is a writer, speaker, theologian and social activist widely recognized for her work with refugees as director of Toronto's Romero House Community for Refugees. She has a PhD in philosophy of religion from the University of Toronto and is an adjunct professor at Regis College. She is the author of six books and several hundred articles, published nationally and internationally. In 1996, she was awarded the Order of Canada.

Ingrid Mattson holds the London and Windsor Community Chair in Islamic Studies at Huron University College at the University of Western Ontario in Canada. Originally from Canada, where she studied Philosophy and Fine Arts (B.A. Waterloo '87), she moved to the United States where she earned a PhD from the University of Chicago in 1999. She is the author of *The Story of the Qur'an* as well as numerous articles on Islamic ethics, gender and social issues. From 2001-2010 Dr. Mattson served as vice-president, then as president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the first woman to serve in either position.

Armando Salvatore is Professor of Global Religious Studies and Barbara and Patrick Keenan Chair of Interfaith Studies at McGill University. He is a sociologist of religion, culture and communication. He earned his PhD from the European University Institute, Florence, in 1994 and his professorial habilitation from Humboldt University, Berlin in 2006. Salvatore's work emphasizes connectedness, comparison and theory. His current project focuses on the notion of the "civilizing process" in inter-Asian and global perspectives, within the background of debates on axial civilizations and the underlying transformations and interactions of faith traditions. He has just completed the book *The Sociology of Islam. Knowledge, Power and Civility* which will be published by Wiley-Blackwell. He is also editing the *Wiley-Blackwell History of Islam*. His most recent books (authored, edited, or co-edited) are *Rethinking the Public Sphere Through Transnationalizing Processes* (2013), *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* (2009), *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* (2007, pb 2010), *Islam in Process: Historical and Civilizational Perspectives* (2006), *Religion, Social Practice, and Contested Hegemonies* (2005) and *Public Islam and the Common Good* (2004, pb 2007).

Benjamin Schewel received a Ph.D. in philosophy at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven under the auspices of a Fulbright scholarship. He is currently a Fellow at the Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain at the University of Groningen and a Research Associate at the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity. He has a book on the changing place of religion in the modern public sphere forthcoming with Yale University Press and is also editing a collection of essays that address the impact of religion upon contemporary European public life with Wiley-Blackwell. He has also held research positions at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia and the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford.

Phil Triadafilopoulos is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto. Triadafilopoulos received his PhD in Political Science for the New School for Social Research. His current research examines the extension of public funding for Islamic religious education in Canada and Germany. He is also interested in how centre-right conservative parties in Europe and North America are adapting to more culturally diverse electorates. Triadafilopoulos is the author of *Becoming Multicultural: Immigration and the Politics of Membership in Canada and Germany* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012)