

Religion and Liberalism: Theoretical Considerations

Heba Raouf Ezzat

‘The United States is a society in which religion has a prominent presence,’ said Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, which was written in the first half of the 19th century, and many Arab writers in recent times have concerned themselves with the rise of Christian-Zionism, the religious right in the United States and its effect on America's foreign policy. Many studies have focused on the nature of religious discourse, ranging from the conservative to the apocalyptic, while others have addressed the nature of political decision-making in Congress and Senate, the influence of the Zionist lobby and the ascendancy of the religious right since the Reagan era.

This paper aims to consider another theoretical plane, moving the debate from the political and journalistic arenas to the academic field. American thinking is the product of many influences, of which the opinions of university academics are one of the most significant. This explains the concern of the neo-con right regarding a perceived shift towards an academic discourse more openly critical of American policy,¹ which in turn has resulted in the stifling of criticism and, in some cases, intimidation of professors by putting them on blacklists and accusing them of supporting terrorism and failing to defend the country's 'national interests'. Hence the importance of a renewed focus on the topic of religion in the social sciences and a consideration of different theoretical positions on democracy and liberalism as a means of gaining a wider understanding of current thinking on these matters in the United States of America.

Sources of Liberalism: Major Issues

Liberalism is a multi-faceted concept that cannot simply be reduced to the components of liberty, egalitarianism and citizenship. Indeed, there has been much debate on the definition of liberalism and its relationship to other concepts, such as religion. While it is true that liberalism has been identified with the individualist school of thought in that it prioritises the individual over the community on the basis of core values such as reason and liberty, it is important to point out that this paradigm has become controversial, as has the definition of who or what constitutes a liberal thinker. The origins of liberalism are many and varied; for example one of the most prominent liberal thinkers, Brian Turner, has claimed that there are three, sometimes conflicting, formulas of individualism that all subsume the concept of citizenship. 'Individualism' refers to an individual's property rights, historically identified with the concept of equality and empowerment of the individual as an owner with social and political status formerly denied

him in a society where wealth and power were exclusively owned by the aristocracy. 'Individuality' focuses on an individual's freedom and his independent will vis-à-vis society and its traditions, underlining the importance of liberty and self-fulfillment in the scheme of liberal values. 'Liberation' on the other hand derives from the republican view of positive freedom and positive citizenship.²

In point of fact, the roots of liberalism have long been a battleground between utilitarian materialistic and transcendental immaterial tendencies, according to which its origins have been discerned in widely divergent phenomena ranging from Romanticism to religion. Nancy Rosenblum considers that the Romantic movement conferred important status on the individual but she also stresses the role of the emotions, claiming that reason alone is not enough to remedy the pragmatic shortcomings of classic liberal individualism. She finds that Romanticism is a necessary pre-condition for

the study of liberal thought, which is approached by others from the perspective of Kantian ethics or Social Contract theory in all its manifestations. The nearest Social Contract philosophers to the ethical and religious perspective are John Locke and James Mill, father of John Stewart Mill (leader of English enlightenment). A third group has approached liberalism from a Benthamite utilitarianism point of view.³

In the early 1970s John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice* in which he made a serious attempt to give new impetus to liberal individualist thought by appeal to a ‘contractual spirit’ based on social and cultural values. This work, which aims to make classical social contract theory relevant to the modern era, is essential to the understanding of contemporary thinking on liberalism.

Rawls chose to cast his theory under the banner of justice in view of the earlier

prioritising of liberty by liberal theorists. Approaching the subject from the discipline of philosophy, he wished to provide liberalism with a solid philosophical grounding and developed a Social Contract theory in which individual will is balanced by social obligation. Drawing inspiration from Locke, Rousseau and Kant, he sought to restore the moral balance to liberalistic studies, long dominated by utilitarian considerations.⁴

In his analysis of the concept of justice, Rawls stresses that like the concept of ‘the law’, it is better to regard it as a group of concepts rather than a single entity. Hence his theory aims to construct a blueprint in which an individual’s options for self-fulfilment can be plotted in terms of values that guarantee both freedom and justice. These values derive their meaning from the institutions that embody them and from the factors according to which choices are made, as well as scenarios illustrative of justice, such as the

social distributional sector and its relation to politics.⁵

In spite of the centrality of the contract and reason in Rawls' thinking, he also — because of his Kantian tendency — lays emphasis on the individual's ethical responsibility towards others on the basis of overriding general virtues.⁶ Furthermore, he calls for the necessity of abiding by the law and opposing civil disobedience — even if that law is not just — in deference to the principle of commitment originally enshrined in the social contract. The principle of justice cannot be overthrown or compromised even if some of the law's measures are unjust — and this was a point of disagreement between him and Walzer, as we shall see later.⁷

After refining his ideas over a period of twenty years, Rawls brought out, in the early 1990s, *Political Liberalism*, in which he sought to make his vision of the

individual/citizen and the political grouping a more dynamic one. In his original formulation in the *Theory of Justice* the group is seen as part of a well-ordered society and the individual is merely a passive player in conflict resolution in society ie. conflict is basically objective. This, however, is at variance with the changes that have occurred in liberal societies, in particular with regard to the concept of identity and the increase in pluralism, quite apart from changes in the meaning of liberalism and its differing interpretations. Thus Rawls' second book was written to address certain shortcomings in his *Theory of Justice* and to expound his new ideas on rational pluralism, which respects diversity without sinking into subjective relativism.⁸

Clearly Rawls' theory is a complex one that cannot easily be synthesized, and his eloquent style is reminiscent of the founding fathers of liberalism with its density of ideas and depth of philosophical perspective. However, what

concerns us here is his concept of justice which overlaps with ideas of citizenship and reason, the importance of democracy and, in particular, the role of ethical concepts that go beyond a narrow utilitarian perspective and thus prepare the way for a discussion of the relationship between religion and liberalism in American political thought.

Individual ... Group ... Ethics

In 1950, David Riesman published an important book in an effort to bring back the concept of the group into American theoretical discourse, which was a pre-condition for the rehabilitation of the notion of religion. This book, *The Lonely Crowd*, did not claim a wider role for the state in providing welfare, as was the trend in liberal polemics at the time, but rather advanced the notion that human welfare could only be achieved through the social group and not simply by conferring social rights on the state. This was essentially

a critique of capitalist economic doctrines with their emphasis on the self and an affirmation that merely providing individuals with a minimum degree of welfare was not enough to drive them to participate in society socially and politically.⁹

While Riesman's work can be viewed as an attempt to analyze the American personality and his degree of political affiliation in the light of cultural and political developments, three decades later Robert Bellah and his working group attempted to complement these efforts through a sociological analysis of changing values as they affected individuals' political commitment as a basis for political participation.¹⁰

Bellah's central concern was the rationale for political commitment in an increasingly individualistic society. What were the impediments to effective citizenship and how could such commitment be maintained when

individualistic utilitarian ideas tended to dominate? Bellah found that the key to the problem lay in the growth of cosmopolitan cities, which encouraged parochial and local attitudes and hypothesised two types of motivation for the creation of active citizens: civil motivation and religious motivation. He saw no inevitable conflict between these two types of motivation and recommended harnessing the voluntary spirit still extant in American popular culture in creating effective citizens in the cities.¹¹

While Bellah sought to analyse the loosening of social bonds towards a greater individualism, Christopher Lasch's aim was to chart the breakdown of the family unit (an essential building block from a religious perspective) with the resultant social and political changes regarding individuals' loyalty towards society. Lasch was one of the American sociologists who championed the idea of the self in an era of increasing modernisation but who criticised the negative

effect of individualism on social solidarity and had reservations about notions of women's liberation with its philosophical and social implications.

At the end of the 1970s, Lasch produced two important works critical of individualism and analysing the power structure of the modern state, especially the welfare state, which he criticised for providing services with one hand and taking away the rights and powers of the political group with the other. He urged that the family unit should be at the heart of social and political analysis at a time when it was absent or had been excluded under a sociology strongly influenced by the individual in the behaviorist era.¹² We find him proposing a political sociology of the family in a capitalist society, in which the public remit of the state was prioritised with consequent diminution of the role of the family. While Talcott Parsons had charted the diminution in the role of the family unit since the 1960s in an increasingly modernised society in which many family

duties were taken over by state organisations,¹³ Lasch focused on the decline of the family as a socially productive unit whose functions, largely taken over by schools and educational institutions, had been reduced to social welfare and care for the elderly, and even those areas were becoming increasingly institutionalised. In other respects also, the role of the family was becoming circumscribed and, with experts and educationists taking over provision of counselling and privatisation of everyday activities such as provision of meals, the family was reduced to being no more than a provider of emotional support.¹⁴

Lasch also saw a connection between the loosening of social bonds and the falling off of religion in the public domain. He considered that the exclusion of religion as a social determinant led to the decline of collective tendencies and the emergence of individual goals as the motivator of social change (reminiscent of John Locke's dictum 'he who has no religion has no commitment and no

trust can be put in him'). This reflected a turning point in sociological studies in the 1960s, in parallel with other changes in academia regarding approaches to interpretative and analytical tools. Lasch was of the opinion that under the aegis of liberalism, humanitarian studies could only explain reality and were in no position to discern underlying truths — which is the proper task of science.¹⁵

Bellah can be viewed as representing those who consider religion as a necessary factor in the analysis of political groupings while Lasch is more concerned with social and economic structural changes and their effect on the group. Lasch also adopts an ethical viewpoint in the sense of civic responsibility and alludes to the global challenges presented by capitalism. However, there are other voices seeking to defend liberal democracy with its social networks and its notion of the social grouping as fertile soil for civic values. They incline to utilising the democratic discourse as

a means of sowing a pluralistic theory of democracy under the aegis of liberalism rather than being seen as inimical to it. The champion of those who wish to situate this expanded version of liberalism in the context of the new paradigm of social studies, with their attendant ideologies and approaches, is undoubtedly Michael Walzer.

In parallel with John Rawls, Walzer sought to locate justice at the heart of the new critique of individualism in a revived liberalistic discipline. He proposes a new concept of 'fields of justice' since it is not possible to draw up uni-dimensional criteria for such a complex notion. The definition of justice in the legislative field differs from that in human relations, and both differ from the interpretation of justice in the civil domain. Walzer considers that the neutrality of the state is the best guarantee of democracy but he also regards religion as an integral and inalienable component of the social group insofar as

religion is an expression of personal freedom.¹⁶

Walzer's idiosyncratic approach — his background is political science — posits a group of ideas drawing their validity from the centrality of the state rather than the centrality of the group, as advocated by the sociologists. In an early work he wrote about political obedience and strikingly referred to the right to disobey if the state's policies conflicted with principles of freedom, especially in times of war, and, drawing inspiration from the premises of Social Contract theory, he discussed the rights and obligations of citizenship and concluded that the state must preserve the lives of its citizens.¹⁷

With regard to the role of ethics, Walzer considers an overly strict ethical convention as inimical to tolerance and insists on the right to disagree. He believes that social, civil and national ethics are global values that work

against democracy, and for this reason he proposes a light rather than heavy ethical framework in accordance with his view of cultural pluralism and global civil society.¹⁸

The Return of Religion and the Rise of Sociological Studies

A wide reading of literature in the field of liberal political science reveals a conspicuous absence of religion at the heart of liberal discourse. Religion may be mentioned now and then to exemplify a point or to confirm an opinion but generally in a pejorative sense as an element that threatens democracy or a cultural variable that must be treated with caution. There is a sense of disconnection between the religious variable and political science although, of course, it remains an important consideration in sociological studies as an existing phenomenon, rather than as a functional component. However, in mainstream political science discourse and

liberalistic theory, religion remains somewhat marginalised.

Undoubtedly this is due to historical reasons since liberalism was originally seen as the longed-for solution to religious disputes insofar as it led to the creation of an equal society in which all were members of a social and political polity, irrespective of their religious affiliations. This contributed to the secularist monopoly over liberal thought, as evidenced in Brian Turner's attitude to religion in *Citizenship and Capitalism*, written in the 1980s, in which he refers to the problem of the religious dimension. Although religion has a global dimension, it tends to be exclusionist because of its absolute nature, which conflicts with the concept of equality implicit in the notion of citizenship.¹⁹ On the other hand, the roots of citizenship can also be seen to lie in Christian values, and Turner enthusiastically endorses the view of Talcott Parsons, doyen of sociolinguistic studies, that Christian values have an important role to play in modern

industrial society. He also alludes to Max Weber's analysis of the link between Protestant ethics and capitalism in society, in which Christian values underlie the separation between church and state and equality among citizens, as well as promoting a global humanitarian dimension.²⁰

In spite of this, Turner has no hesitation in advancing a human rights rather than citizenship-based theory as a basis for determining the rights and freedom of citizens,²¹ and asserts that Christianity and freedom have only been conjoined at rare moments in history.²²

A careful reading of the history of liberal thought reveals that liberalism did not originate in opposition to religion per se but rather as a corrective to the arbitrary power of the church, civil violence and instability. Both Heller and Taylor concur that atheism was not an issue for the fathers of enlightenment, for

whom theology and divine inspiration were givens and whose main concern was to promote the dignity of man, social peace and the end of war. From this point of view, we can see that the values of enlightenment were firmly grounded in religion. Heller observes that equality was not a Roman or Greek concept but a by-product of Western Christian thinking, deriving its inspiration from the equality of worshippers. The same applies to the ideas of freedom of choice, deriving from the transcendental nature of Christianity, which confers on man the faculty of reasoning and independent action. The fathers of enlightenment prioritised doctrinal freedom to counter religious strife and the political influence of the church, but a society without religion was an idea that never occurred to them.²³ This is also the contention of Charles Taylor for whom the marginalisation of religion at the end of the 19th century was the logical outcome of a long process of locating religion in the mind of man, which only reached its apogee in the 20th century. Nevertheless, Taylor contends that this era is

in need of examination and research, since the imposition of the secularist paradigm cannot be explained solely by materialist progress.²⁴

The researcher into liberal thought will find that religion has been frequently addressed in recent years but generally outside mainstream academic research in the field of political science.

Thus, religion was viewed from a sociological standpoint as a component of American culture and its spirit of solidarity, but the discourse we wish to focus on here is one that characterises religion as a reference point for the individual citizen in a liberal society and elevates this to a theory. One of the best-known proponents of this trend was Ronald Niebuhr in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, which addresses the subject of the status of the citizen with ethical/religious affiliation in a secular capitalist founded on utilitarianism.

With an increase in secularism in society in the 1960s it seemed that religious discourse could no longer prevail, a factor that led Niebuhr to distinguish between communal and individual ethics. He claimed that social and political realities imposed difficult choices on the individual, but instead of trying to reform the system he advocated that the individual should retain his ethical integrity, remaining true to higher ideals in the face of utilitarian communal values.²⁵ Although Niebuhr describes his proposal as realistic, there is something redemptive about a system in which the individual has limited ethical obligations in a changing society. Another ethical thinker was Paul Tillich who, in *Morality and Beyond*, put forward the view that unless morality was anchored in religion and in the human psyche then it could not escape from relativism; in this he diverged from Niebuhr's realistic theory, instead prioritising the problem of ethical relativism, which should not be the basis for conflict resolution in society. For Tillich, the

more religion was excluded from human ontology, the more utilitarianism and relativism would prevail.²⁶

The 1980s witnessed a shift in the relationship between liberalism and religion, as evidenced by the groundbreaking work of Richard Neuhaus on religion and democracy in the United States, which is considered a classic in the literature on the subject. Neuhaus asserted that political liberalism was in the unprecedented position of excluding religion from public discourse. He considered that a public domain without religion was meaningless and liberalism was by no means incompatible with religion, and he strongly advocated a social system in which an individual retained his moral and religious affiliation and rejected the naïve contention that liberalism and religious affiliation were mutually inimical.

Neuhaus thought that liberalism should be reconfigured²⁷ — far from expressing reservations about religion as subverting civic equality or democratic pluralism, the return of religion to the agenda was a means whereby a large sector of society, alienated and marginalised by secular policies, would return to participatory democracy. Rehabilitating religion would not lead to a recurrence of theocracy but rather a recalibration of liberalism on the basis of individual freedom and pluralism. Thus liberalism is continually undergoing reinvention and redefinition.²⁸ To proscribe religion would be to deprive society of a vital element in the development process.²⁹ Furthermore, a return of the theocratic tyrannical version of religion was not possible since Christianity had now evolved into new democratic and humanitarian paradigms.³⁰

Neuhaus attacked the rise of the religious right and acknowledged the legitimate concerns of liberals in this regard, but he did

consider that this warranted exclusion of religious affiliation from democratic discourse. He emphasised the link between religion and daily life, and thought that the increasing involvement of politics in a citizen's routine concerns favoured the inclusion of religion as a component of citizenship.³¹ It is clear that Neuhaus' predictions about the increasing influence of religion on democratic agendas over the past two decades have been more than amply fulfilled.

The Catholic priest Neuhaus' presentation of the role of religion in a cohesive theory has been echoed in the field of academic research in several ways. Firstly, researchers in the fields of religious and sociological studies have begun to develop their ideas using the matrix of religion, liberalism and democracy. Secondly, the increasing interest of political and legal science researchers in religion as a factor in political choice. A representative of the first group is Robert Wuthnow, who studied the limits of religion and the

mechanisms of secularism from a sociological perspective. He demonstrated how the dispute over the role of religion in society was not simply between liberal secularists and their opponents but was also conducted among different religious schools of thought. Overall, Wuthnow sets out an evangelical perspective, which is not dissimilar from Neuhaus' Catholic approach.

Wuthnow considers that religion is present in society at the very least in voluntary work, which he terms public work and not simply charity. He notes a rapprochement between Jewish and Christian agendas in the public domain since the Second World War and discerns two trends: multi-confessional conservative and liberal. Religion is no longer simply a subject of theological dispute but an important component in the search for improved political systems. Religion has, thus, an important input into the political agenda and is no longer simply a means of attenuating the shrillness of political debate but a vital

element enabling those who hold religious views to participate fully and effectively in the democratic process.³²

Wuthnow attempted to chart the religious and state debate in Protestant and Catholic schools of thought and their differing views of the balance between religious and temporal power. In so doing he did not merely examine the place of religion in the public domain, but also in terms of the government and its policies. Hence he considered not only internal sociological issues but also the role played by America in armed conflicts in Latin America and the effect of United States' policy in the Middle East. His analysis is all the more relevant since it addresses the question of the relationship between church and state at a time of increasing individual and collective religious commitment. However, while he admits that religious fundamentalism presents real dangers, he asserts that this does not mean ignoring the democratic aspirations of religious people.³³

On the other hand, Greenawalt, from the perspective of law and political studies, deplors the marginalised role of religious affiliation in political choice as a result of the predominance of the Wise Choice School. He considers the effect of religion on moral choices, which the political agent must make, whether a decision maker or a citizen exercising his democratic right. He is not only concerned with the relationship between an individual and his belief but also that between the individual and the religious grouping and the attitude of the church towards political issues.³⁴

By the end of the 1980s research efforts from differing viewpoints united in discussing the term ‘Civil Religion’ and whether it referred to the role of religion in the public domain and the politicisation of religion or whether the concept was put forward as an alternative to Christianity as a kind of secular

citizenship.³⁵ Discussion of religion, its relationship to politics and the meaning of citizenship was mainly confined to departments of philosophy and religious studies or occasional debates between individuals and professors of civil and constitutional law.

The 1990s witnessed a considerable resurgence of interest in the role of religion in the public domain and the citizen's political options. Wuthnow himself published on this subject and the impact of an increasingly religious American society in the political arena. Greenawalt also contributes to the debate with reference to the legal aspects of religious affiliation and religious rights.

As part of a general move to reinstate the republican concept of the positive liberal citizen, there was renewed interest in examining the relationship between religion and state. Galston, a prominent liberal

theoretician, hypothesised that the separation of religion and state was linked to the theory of progress, which predicted that religion would become weaker as the modernisation process gathered pace. This, in turn, led to the inability of liberal thinkers to take sufficiently seriously the problems of secularism and the failure of politicians to be neutral in regard to religion, since political theory was traditionally hostile to religion, as was liberalism to the expression of religion in the public domain and since there was a legal and constitutional bias against religion.

Galston called for a reinterpretation of the doctrines of the liberal fathers, for example Locke's view of the separation of church and state should be seen in the context of an age when the power of the church was supreme and the democratic experiment was tentative. Now that democracy was well established in liberal societies it was time to re-examine the place of religious identity and affiliation in the public and political domains, and whereas in

the past a liberal would have asked ‘What is my political status in society?’ today the same question could be posed by a citizen with a strong religious affiliation.³⁶

Galston also called for a re-interpretation of Jeffersonian secularism and the constitutional separation of the power of religion and state, on which secularists rely. He stressed that religious equality meant respect and sympathy for all types of religious commitment without distinction, rather than neutrality or hostility towards any particular religious or ethical allegiance.³⁷ Religious affiliation could be re-integrated in the civil sphere without fear, especially in the legal field; in fact there was an increasing need to incorporate religion into political theories of ethics in order to confront problems arising from the loosening of social bonds against a background of calls for a return to civil-republican values in the democratic process. Indeed, assigning a central position to religion in constructing new public

ethics of a liberal society would restore the true meaning of positive liberty.³⁸

Religion and Citizenship

In the mid-1990s, new voices arose claiming that it was not enough to analyse the variables of religion and ethics from the standpoint of sociology, theology or political empiricism, nor was it enough to subsume them in a return to republican principles and the concept of positive liberty of the citizen. The liberal academics who subscribed to this view sought to place citizenship at the heart of the debate and to include religious affiliation as a basic component of citizenship, in addition to cultural and racial diversity and gender orientation. One of the pioneers of this approach was the Yale Law Professor Stephen Carter who wove religion into a complex discourse that went considerably beyond simply regarding religion as a motivational or moral variable. Far from adopting a defensive

stance, Carter went on the offensive to claim that religion had been marginalised and trivialised in American political culture to the extent that citizens with religious affiliations were prevented from contributing fully to the democratic process. He did not simply call for a renewed debate on the distinction between church and state, but asserted that historically the state had controlled religion and interfered in the rights of citizens to practice their faith. Far from being neutral in this matter, the state was in thrall to the concept of non-religious liberty, which effectively proscribed the degree of religious freedom permitted. Religion should, however, be an essential element in the concept of citizenship and a basic constituent of its meaning. Carter called for a distinction between the troubling rise of the religious right on the American political scene and the need to allow religion to play a political and legal role in the public sphere since this enmity towards religion in the name of separation of church and state had led to a double standard. Those citizens of religious faith were forced to act publicly and

sometimes privately as if religious affiliation was not a significant part of the democratic process; indeed, the political discourse seemed to suggest that religious belief was an impediment to and a distraction from the proper exercise of citizenship.³⁹

Building on Neuhaus' contention that a state without religion is 'a state without values', Carter seeks to flesh out this principle legally and constitutionally by quoting examples of legal precedents that have marginalized religion and religious affiliation in the United States. In other words, the public domain has become devoid of justice by the exclusion of religion as a legitimate collective option. He makes a clarion call not simply for tolerance of religion in liberal discourse but for religion to be respected as a cornerstone of American democracy and an integral part of the Constitution.⁴⁰

Carter develops his ideas further in his book *Dissent of the Governed* in which he views American democracy in the vision of its founding fathers as essentially based on conflict management rather than national consensus. He considers that those of religious affiliation should no longer be considered as external to or in conflict with civil polity but rather should be fully fledged participants in the democratic process. He contends that the legislative problematic in dealing with religious affiliation is essentially interpretative since there is a conflict between the law and its formulators on one hand and religious groups who apply their own systems of reference on the other.⁴¹ The religious movement has, in recent decades, elaborated a broad explicatory synthesis of religion and civics, using nuanced and eloquent language, respectful of the Constitution and the legitimacy of America's founding ideals, and this discourse can no longer be ignored in the political and theoretical debate on citizenship.

Religious discourse can further be viewed from Protestant and Catholic perspectives. Representative of the former is the writer James Skillen, who called for the return of the religious dimension in public life insofar as it is an essential component of the American experience. He claims that America faces two crises. Firstly, a constitutional crisis in which citizen's beliefs are ignored in a legislative system biased towards secular individualism and, secondly, an undermining of the democratic process as a result of the absence of the religious factor in determining positive civil values. He believes that religious discourse is an integral part of citizenship, citing Locke's ideas in this regard, and calls for new enlightenment that takes account of multi-cultural and multi-faith developments in American society, including Islam. He also advocates a multi-referential system of morality in which no party is coerced into giving up his values in the name of tolerance, especially on issues concerning bodily rights and sex education in schools.⁴²

The Catholic view is exemplified by David Walsh who considers that modernization is facing a profound crisis since it inevitably leads to a collapse of the moral imperative and the failure to create a new ethical system in the absence of religion. However, he does not think that the solution lies in a return to pre-modernism but rather in a synthesis of ontological transcendentalism.⁴³ It is as if he is seeking to recalibrate democratic liberalism on spiritual foundations since he argues that the Christian roots of liberalism combine self-fulfillment with self-realisation. He cites Locke's view that individual rights are legitimate as long as they do not lead to infringement of morality or impairment of the common good. In this sense, liberalism can serve as a moral reference in a pluralistic society searching for new post-liberal discourses.⁴⁴

Conclusion

We believe that different factors have combined to create a climate favourable to renewed consideration of religion and liberalism. Not all these factors are internal — such as, for example, the shrillness of the secularist discourse or the reaction of religious thinkers and their search for religious rights in a democracy. We contend that there are two external issues that are relevant in this regard. Firstly, the Iranian revolution, which confounded sociologists' predictions of the eclipse of religion and led to a shift in American perceptions about radical Islam all over the world — even if Iran represented the most radical example. It also aroused the interest of academics in questions of religion and politics, in a similar way to the philosophical discussion of secularism in France ignited by the wearing of the hijab. Secondly, the rise of globalisation with the realisation that religion was not invariably excluded from social and political discourse and the consequent necessity of maintaining an

international perspective in liberalist studies in spite of the impact of Fukuyama's ideas about the end of history and the triumph of liberalism. Religious sociology has undergone a seismic shift in orientation since Stark and Bainbridge's study on the spread of religion within the United States in the 1980s⁴⁵ and the subsequent admission of a leading academic, Peter Berger, of the error of his hypothesis that religion was about to disappear.⁴⁶ Globalisation and the concomitant renewed interest in the world's social and cultural systems has played a leading role in bringing about this shift. A further factor is the increasing use of the Internet in theoretical discussions and the opening up of new forms of communication, which have enabled prominent philosophers and academics with different religious and cultural backgrounds to air their views about the relation between religion and democracy, in turn leading to a plethora of comparative studies and academic research.⁴⁷

However, for the moment, we are still hiding behind ideological discourses in our role as observers rather than creators of novel ideas and concepts in academic research.

References:

1. See Martin Kramer's *Ivory Towers on Sand* in which he considers Middle Eastern Studies
2. professors as one of the reasons for the occurrence of the 9/11 tragedy since they did not pay
3. attention to the dangers of Islam and Islamists, calling instead for them to be assimilated into
4. the democratic process – a factor which led to this outrage against the United States.

5. See also the black listing and intimidation of academics by their colleagues and supporters of
6. Israel, led by Kramer, Daniel Pace and others amounting to a violation of academic rights.
7. Turner, B 1986, *Citizenship and Capitalism*, Allen & Unwin, London, pp.117-118, 132-133.
8. Rosenblum, N 1987, *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal*
9. *Thought*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, pp.1-6.
10. Rawls, J 1972, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, ppvii.
11. Ibid., pp.5-9.
12. Ibid., pp.114-117.
13. Ibid., pp.350-355.

14. Rawls, J 1993, *Political Liberalism*, Columbia University Press, New York, pp.xviii-xx.
15. Riesman, D 1950, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, Yale University Press, New Haven, pp.3-31,285-306.
16. Bellah, R et al 1985, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*.
17. Ibid., pp.167-195.
18. Lasch, C 1977, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged*, Basic Books Inc., New York, pp.12-21.
19. Parsons, T 1960, *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, The Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois, pp.301-302.
20. Parsons, T 1960, *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, The Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois, pp.301-302.

23. Lasch, op.cit., pp.117-121.
24. Lasch, c 1978, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing*
25. *Expectations*, New York, pp.xiii-xiv,3-7,13-16,33-36.
26. Walzer, M 1983, *Spheres of Justice*, W.W.Norton, New York.
27. Walzer, M 1970, *Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War and Citizenship*, Harvard
28. University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts.
29. Walzer, M 1994, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*, Notre Dame
30. University Press, Notre Dame. Walzer M (ed.)1995, *Toward a Global Civil Society*,
31. Berghahn Books, Oxford, pp.7-27.

32. Turner, op.cit., pp.74-75,79-82.
33. Ibid., pp100-102 .Parsons, T 1979, 'Christianity and Modern Industrial Society' in Tiryakian,
34. E (ed.) 1979, *Sociological Theory: Values and Socio-cultural Change*, Free Press, New
35. York, pp.33-70.
36. Turner, B 1993, 'Introduction' in Turner, E (ed.) 1993, *Citizenship and Social Theory*, Sage,
37. London, pp.x-xii.
38. Turner, B 1994, 'Outline of a Theory of Citizenship', in: Turner, B & Hamilton, P 1994,
39. Vol.1., Routledge, London, pp.200,207.
40. Heller, A 1978, *The Renaissance Man*, trans. Allen, R E., Routledge & Kegan Pau, London,

41. pp.5,12.
42. Taylor, B 1989, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge
43. University Press, Cambridge, pp.309-310.
44. Niebuhr, R 1960, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Charles Scribner and Sons, New York,
45. pp.xi-xxv.
46. 26 Tillich, P 1963, *Morality and Beyond*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, pp.31-46.
47. Neuhaus, R. J 1984, *The Naked Public Square; Religion and Democracy in America*,
48. William B. Erdman Publ. Co., Michigan, pp.ix-6.
49. Ibid., pp.8-14.
50. Ibid., pp.6-17.

51. Ibid., pp.23-25.
52. Ibid., pp.63-66.
53. Wuthnow, R 1989, *The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals and Secularism*,
54. Willian B. Erdman's Publ. Co., Michigan, pp.10-17.
55. Ibid., pp.39-57.
56. Greenawalt, K 1988, *Religious Convictions and Political Choice*, Oxford University Press,
57. New York, pp.30-48.
58. 35. Check for example: Rouner, L. S (ed.) 1989, *Civil Religion and Political Theology*,
59. University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana.
60. 36. Galston, op.cit., pp115-117.
61. 37. Ibid., pp.78-279.

62. 38. Ibid., pp.281-289.
63. 39. Carter, S 1994, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize*
64. *Religious Devotion*, 2nd ed., Anchor Books, New York, pp.1, 6-7, 15.
65. 40. Ibid., pp.20-21, 34-39, 93, 268-273.
66. 41. Carter, S 1998, *The Dissent of the Governed: A Meditation on Law, Religion and Loyalty*,
67. Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, pp.103-157.
68. 42. Skillen, J 1994, *Re-charging the American Experience: Principled Pluralism for Genuine*
69. *Civic Community*, Baker Books, Michigan, pp.15-21,29-33,40-43,76-82.
70. 43. Walsh, D 1995, *After Ideology: Recovering the Spiritual Foundations of Freedom*, Catholic

71. University of America Press,
Washington D.C, pp.xiv,17-20,194-199.
72. 44. Ibid., pp.228-233,248,265-
270.
73. 45. Stark R & Bainbridge, W.S
1985, *The Future of Religion: Secularization,
Revival and Cult*
74. *Formation*, University of
California Press, Berkeley.
75. 46. Berger, P et.al. (eds.) 1999,
*The De-secularization of the World: Resurgent
Religion and*
76. *World Politics*, Eerds Publishing
Company, New York, pp.1-18.
47.
http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame/