

# Introduction

*Linda Hogan*

Religion has once again re-emerged as a significant force in the public square. Whereas in the twentieth century it was assumed that religion would become ever more marginal to political life, the events of the last decade suggest a more complex reality. The once dominant secularization thesis has had to be re-thought in light of the evidence that social and technological progress does not inevitably lead people to abandon 'the naïve superstitions of faith'. Rather it appears that, around the globe, many people are turning again to religion, although for the most part they are not returning to the traditional religious institutions, but instead are attracted to its more informal manifestations. However, nor can one simply conclude that secular world-views are under threat while religious ones are again on the rise, since there are also countries like Malta and the Republic of Ireland, once renowned for their religiosity, where the social and political influence of religion is dramatically in decline. Rather there is in evidence a complex global political reality, in which the nature of religion and the character of religious affiliation are changing and in which one can no longer identify a simple trajectory towards either secularism or religiosity. Indeed our world is simultaneously secular and religious, with the political implications of this ambivalent reality evident across the globe. Secular Turkey now has an Islamist President, Abdullah Gül, while France's President Nicolas Sarkozy, in a radical departure from the country's long-established secular republicanism, has spoken of the need to allow for a more public role for religion.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, notwithstanding the constitutional separation of church and state, religious voices play a significant role in the determination of policy, especially relating to family, gender, and reproduction, while in many Asian, African, and South

<sup>1</sup> Late in 2007 and throughout 2008 President Nicolas Sarkozy made a number of speeches in which he elaborated his view of the role religion ought to play in political life. The most significant of these were at the Lateran Church of St John, Rome, on 20 December 2007 and in Riyadh on 14 January 2008 before the Saudi Arabian Consultative Council.

American countries the political influence of the more informal strands of evangelical Christianity and fundamentalist Islam is growing even as the influence of the more established denominations is in decline.

Alongside this resurgence of religion is the parallel phenomenon of the reassertion of violent religion. We see examples of this in India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Israel–Palestine, and the Balkans, although in each case religion is but one among a myriad of factors fuelling political conflict. Indeed the presence of violent religion, in its local and global forms, has fuelled what *The Economist* has called a ‘secular fury’ against religion.<sup>2</sup> Associated with analysts like Christopher Hitchens,<sup>3</sup> Sam Harris,<sup>4</sup> and Richard Dawkins,<sup>5</sup> this perspective lays at religion’s door the blame for much political turmoil worldwide and regards it as ultimately pernicious in nature. Nor is this negative assessment limited to violent religion; rather it is a charge laid against all religion, with sexism and the persecution of minorities, including sexual minorities, being named as examples of its destructive influence. According to this view the real clash of civilizations is between the superstition of religion and the enlightenment of modernity. Moreover, in this perspective the hope for humankind resides therefore in the abandonment of religious world-views in their entirety, and, in the interim, in the banishment of religion to the private realm.

Even the most tolerant of secular liberals tend to prefer a political order in which religion plays a predominantly private, rather than a public role. However, for most religious believers religion is inescapably political and cannot meaningfully be relegated to the private realm. In common with citizens who have no religious affiliation, religious believers expect to have the opportunity to express their views on matters of critical public interest within the usual deliberative processes of the polis. Nor is it clear that the unambiguous distinction between the public and the private can be sustained in the terms advocated by many secularists. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to delineate where the public and private realms begin and end. Moreover, many of the pivotal issues on which the debates about the political influence of religion revolve are precisely those that cannot be easily categorized thus. Few issues are more obviously simultaneously political and private than abortion, euthanasia, or gay marriage. Thus notwithstanding the risks to the polity posed by intolerant or violent religion, the solution cannot be

<sup>2</sup> This is a phrase used in *The Economist* in its special report on religion and public life, 3 November 2007, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

the privatization of religion. Such a remedy finds no resonance among the self-perception of the majority of religious believers, and conflicts with the dominant understanding of the nature of political participation.

## 1. THE FACT OF PLURALISM

This present age is characterized, not by the triumph of either religious or anti-religious world-views, but rather by the fact of religious pluralism. Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*<sup>6</sup> maps the political and philosophical contours of the journey from a society in which belief in God was unchallenged to one in which it is one option among many, arguing that if one can talk of this age as being a secular one it can only be in terms of religious uniformity ceding to religious pluralism. For Taylor the most significant element in understanding the manner in which our world can be called secular lies in the changed nature of belief. There has been, he claims, a modification of what it means to believe. Thus the critical factor globally today is that 'belief in God is no longer axiomatic . . . [that] there are alternatives.'<sup>7</sup> Believers and unbelievers alike live with the fact of religious pluralism and have to cope with both its theological significance as well as its political ramifications. According to Taylor we inhabit a global context which contains different milieux, 'within each of which the default option may be different from others, although the dwellers within each are very aware of the options favoured by the others, and cannot just dismiss them as an inexplicable exotic error.'<sup>8</sup> 'Secularity in this sense is a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual and religious experience and search takes place.'<sup>9</sup>

It is true that that many public spaces have been emptied of any reference to God (in contrast to earlier times), and that there is a falling off in religious belief and practice (at least in some parts of the world). However, although these factors are pertinent to our discussion, it is the plural nature of the presence of religion, and the fact that all citizens—and especially religious believers—have to contend with that pluralism, that makes the debate about the role of religious voices in the public square so critical, and so contested. In every jurisdiction one can discern the political implications of this religious pluralism, especially in policy debates on issues such as education, health, and family law. In Europe, debates about the political implications of religious

<sup>6</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 3.

pluralism are affected by the multiplicity of institutional arrangements between individual states and the various majority and minority faiths represented therein. Moreover the construction of the EU as a political entity has also provided the occasion for a re-energized debate about the role of religion in the liberal polity,<sup>10</sup> with the case for Turkey's admission to the EU being especially contentious. In the United States the issues debated mirror those that preoccupy Europe, whereas in Asia and in the Arab world, although a different dynamic is in play, nonetheless the common concerns of education, health (especially at the beginning and end of life), and human rights are among the issues through which the debate about the proper role of religion in public life is conducted. Thus despite certain regional particularities we can discern a certain commonality in respect of the issues through which the role of religious voices in the public square is considered.

The fact of religious pluralism raises a number of sensitive political questions for each state, among the most important being the extent to which the common good requires the regulation of particular religious practices (especially those that may be regarded as discriminatory or repressive of individuals within the communities in question), and the extent to which a society should adapt its existing norms and legislative provisions to accommodate religious practices that are untypical of those of the host communities. The controversy evoked by the Archbishop of Canterbury's suggestion that British society needs to have a debate about how it could accommodate some aspects of Sharia law is an example of just how contentious such issues have become.<sup>11</sup> States deal differently with these fundamental political questions, with a variety of approaches observable worldwide. In liberal democracies, two dominate: the assimilationist approach, most strongly associated with France, with its republican ideal of *laïcité*; and various versions of a multiculturalism, typical of the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States.<sup>12</sup> In spite of the differences of emphasis both approaches share some fundamental assumptions, including a separation of the spheres of

<sup>10</sup> See for example 'Degré de modernité des états en Europe', *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale, Le Supplément*, 226 (September 2003); 'Religions et nations', *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale, Le Supplément*, 228 (March 2004); and Jürgen Habermas, 'Vropolitische Grundlagen des demokratischen Rechtsstaats?', in *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), 106–18.

<sup>11</sup> For the full text of the interview given by Archbishop Rowan Williams on 7 February 2008 see <<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1573>>.

<sup>12</sup> See the various essays in Stefan Heuser and Hans Ulrich (eds.), *Pluralism in Europe? One Law, One Market, One Culture?*, Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Societas Ethica in Ljubljana, August 2004 (Münster: Lit, 2006); Marie-Jo Thiel, *Europe, spiritualités et culture face au racisme* (Münster: Lit, 2004); and *Islam and Enlightenment: New Issues*, Concilium 2005/5 (London: SCM, 2005).

religion and politics (although this does not necessarily imply an unambiguously formal separation of church and state); a constitutional democratic government; the presence of multiple religious communities; and a thriving civil society in which policy issues are debated. In Islamic and Muslim majority states the proper role and functioning of religion is also of concern, although the framework in which even the most fundamental questions are posed, and the political options delineated, is very different. Currently dominating public discourse is the view that an Islamic state involves an Islamic religious establishment, on the ground that it is the responsibility of rulers to put in place an order that will secure peace with justice.<sup>13</sup> The theological rationale for this conclusion is developed especially by a number of twentieth-century theorists, including the Egyptian intellectual Sayyid Qutb, whose position is discussed in Nicholas Wolterstorff's chapter in this volume. Nonetheless there are alternative voices, beginning with Ali 'abd al-Raziq,<sup>14</sup> who argue for the development of new forms of Islamic governance that are consonant with many of the features of modern life, and especially with the fact of religious pluralism.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. THE LIBERAL PUBLIC SQUARE

The political context with which this volume is concerned is that of the liberal polity, within which the question of the role of religion in public debate takes on a particular hue. The essays herein recognize that within liberal democracies the formal arrangements between church and state may vary, as for example between the USA which imposes a formal separation, and England and Scotland where there are established churches. Notwithstanding these differences however, what characterizes the political contexts with which we are here concerned is the conviction that the state has an obligation to manage

<sup>13</sup> Here I rely on an unpublished paper by John Kelsay entitled 'The Christian Sources of Liberal Democracy: An Islamic Perspective', which was presented at the conference 'The Christian Sources of Liberal Society', held at Trinity College Dublin in June 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Ali 'abd al-Raziq, *Al-Islam wa usul al-hukm* (Islam and the Fundamentals of Government), is available in a French translation by Abdou Filali Ansery, *L'Islam et les fondements du pouvoir* (Paris: Éditions de la Découverte, 1994). Further details are available in John Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 239.

<sup>15</sup> See for example Abdulaziz Sachedina *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).

the reasonable pluralism (including religious pluralism) that inevitably occurs in democratic societies, and that it ought to do so in a manner that supports ‘the underlying ideas of citizens as free and equal persons and of society as a fair system of cooperation over time’.<sup>16</sup> Within this context it is reasonable to expect that citizens, motivated by different theological and philosophical world-views, will forward a diversity of perspectives on the meaning and purpose of human existence; on the values by which individuals ought to live their lives; and on the nature of the human goods by which a society ought to order itself. Moreover the paradigmatic model has come to be the Rawlsian one, which proposes an understanding of liberalism in which any viable conception of justice must ‘allow for a diversity of general and comprehensive doctrines, and for the plurality of conflicting, and indeed incommensurable, conceptions of the meaning, value and purpose of human life [or what Rawls calls for short “conceptions of the good”] affirmed by citizens of democratic societies’.<sup>17</sup> Given, as Rawls sees it, the political fact of the incommensurability of these diverse conceptualizations of the good, and that there is no political basis on which citizens can adjudicate among them, a well-ordered society must develop a political conception of justice (namely justice as fairness) which is independent of and free from any consideration of the good.

Rawls is confident that the liberal polity can forge ‘an overlapping consensus’ on fundamental political matters among people with diverse religious and philosophical commitments. The means by which this is achieved in the Rawlsian polity is by public reason, namely a process by which citizens replace their comprehensive doctrines of truth or right with an idea of the politically reasonable addressed to citizens as citizens.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, underlying the concept of public reason is the criterion of reciprocity, namely a commitment by which ‘viewing one another as free and equal in a system of social cooperation over generations, [citizens] are prepared to offer one another fair terms of cooperation according to what they consider the most reasonable conception of political justice; and . . . agree to act on those terms, even at the cost of their own interests in particular situations, provided that other citizens also accept those terms’.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> John Rawls, ‘The Idea of Public Reason’, reprinted in *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 141.

<sup>17</sup> John Rawls, ‘The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus’, *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 7/1 (1987), 4.

<sup>18</sup> Rawls, ‘The Idea of Public Reason’, 132.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 136.

### 3. RELIGIOUS VOICES IN THE LIBERAL PUBLIC SQUARE

The concept of public reason is fundamental to Rawls's understanding of how the just and equitable liberal democracy ought to function. Public reason specifies 'at the deepest level the basic political values and specifies how the political relation is to be understood'.<sup>20</sup> More explicitly public reason is the form of reasoning that citizens ought to adopt when they deliberate on matters of constitutional essentials and on matters of basic justice. In short it is the mode through which political deliberation on the most significant of issues ought to be pursued. Within this framework a form of public reason is regarded as essential because the mutual incompatibility of comprehensive doctrines is presumed. Moreover it is assumed that the differences among these comprehensive (including religious) doctrines can only be managed by the systematic reservation of such doctrines, that is, by ensuring that they are aired only either in private or in the background culture of civil society. However, Rawls does enter a caveat here in that he accepts that citizens may introduce aspects of their comprehensive doctrines, religious and non-religious, into political discussion at any time, 'provided that, in due course, we give properly public reasons to support the principles and policies our comprehensive doctrine is said to support'.<sup>21</sup> Rawls calls this 'the proviso'.

Whether and how far the concept of public reason resonates with theological (especially Christian) understandings of the liberal polity and Christianity's role therein is the central preoccupation of this collection. It is addressed from a number of theological and philosophical perspectives, through a range of issues in public policy, and in a variety of national polities. Each of the authors considers the extent to which responsible dialogue involves the systematic reservation of religious doctrines, or not. It probes too the underlying question of whether religious, or other metaphysically committed speech, is indeed unintelligible to non-believers, as many proponents of political liberalism would have us believe. The contributors attend to the issue of how consensus can be achieved, many challenging the Rawlsian assumption that the route to such agreement on constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice is via (Rawlsian) public reason. Indeed, running throughout the volume is an affinity for approaches that believe that the route to a durable political culture lies in serious and systematic engagement with different, and even opposing, comprehensive doctrines.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 144.

**(a) Religion and public reason: philosophical issues**

All of our essayists share the view that the context in which liberal societies must function is one in which there is no prospect of religion disappearing, or of citizens agreeing on the fundamental principles of justice and of social order. From this shared diagnosis this collection proceeds to consider the relationship between religion and politics in the liberal polity, first of all, by foregrounding a set of philosophical questions. Of primary importance here is the question of ‘which principles of social organization must a non-confined exclusivist religion affirm if it is to embrace a liberal democratic polity for a society in which there are other such religions?’<sup>22</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, Raymond Plant, and Maureen Junker-Kenny all consider this fundamental issue, each maintaining a confidence in the liberal polity, but each also, for different reasons, rejecting the view that Rawls’s overlapping consensus, advanced through public reason, is the way to identify such principles. Indeed, notwithstanding his evident support for the liberal polity, Wolterstorff rejects the Rawlsian, Rortian, Hickian, Kantian, and Derridean proposals, while Junker-Kenny and Plant conclude that the procedural approach of Rawls cannot secure the allegiance of those for whom religion is the fulcrum of their moral ideals. Plant’s subtle paper highlights the paradox within Rawlsian liberalism, which is reluctant to accept a comprehensive or perfectionist justification of the liberal political order, but which is nonetheless committed to particular (comprehensive) principles such as liberty and equality. In his essay entitled ‘Citizenship, Religion, and Political Liberalism’ he is not only critical of the pragmatic approach of Rawls, but also pessimistic about the prospect of a more comprehensive, perfectionist liberalism being able to provide the basis for an overlapping consensus.

Instead of the Rawlsian framework, Junker-Kenny prefers that of Habermas, especially as evident in his most recent work. She argues that Habermas endorses a form of deliberative politics in which citizens are not expected to reserve their systematic doctrines, but rather to explain and translate them.<sup>23</sup> She has reservations about the adequacy of translation as a mode of engagement, however. Nonetheless she finds much within his analysis to give comfort to those who recognize the legitimacy of the presence of religious voices in the public square. This concern with whether there are, within each religion, resources for affirming the basic principles of the liberal polity arises

<sup>22</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff’s analysis in ‘Why Can’t We All Just Get Along with Each Other?’, p. 26 below.

<sup>23</sup> Maureen Junker-Kenny, ‘Between Postsecular Society and the Neutral State: Religion as a Resource for Public Reason’, p. 76 below.

for Plant too. His response lies in a natural law approach in which one would probe ‘whether there is some kind of common, shared moral and political space for reasoning about the nature of goods that have to be presupposed by any comprehensive doctrine.’<sup>24</sup> Wolterstorff too is exercised by this issue since he is firm in his conviction that the stability of liberal democracy depends, not on the ability and willingness of citizens to appeal to public reason, but rather on ‘the great majority having reasons based on their own perspectives for accepting the principles of political organization’ that are fundamental to a liberal polity.<sup>25</sup> Wolterstorff does not explicitly endorse the natural law proposal of Plant, or the universal morality idiom of Junker-Kenny. Yet in his conclusion one can see affinities with these other essayists when he speaks about the moral basis of democracy consisting in the protection of rights, which, in turn, is grounded in the worth of persons—that is, in something that all human beings share.

### (b) Religion and public reason: theological issues

How Christians should engage political liberalism, particularly that of the Rawlsian kind, is the primary focus of Part II. In his ‘Translation, Conversation, or Hospitality?’ Luke Bretherton dismisses both the translation mode advocated by Rawls and Habermas, as well as the conversation mode proposed by MacIntyre. Although Bretherton is sympathetic to many aspects of the latter, which he regards as a model that attempts to take seriously the particularities of different traditions, he concludes that the MacIntyrian version of conversation is ultimately unsuccessful. This is because, he claims, MacIntyre gives no account of how the process of conversation is possible when there are significant power differentials between various traditions, either in terms of access to the public square or in terms of a historical affinity with particular forms of public engagement. Instead, he regards Stout’s prescription as the most hopeful, and he sees his own ‘hospitality’ model as a development of Stout’s proposal that ‘a common morality can only be achieved by gradually building discursive bridges and networks of trust in particular settings.’<sup>26</sup> The hospitality model ‘attempts to make explicit the commitments implicit in a community’s practices as an aid to self-reflective understanding,’<sup>27</sup> while seeing the embodied practices of distinct traditions

<sup>24</sup> Raymond Plant, ‘Citizenship, Religion, and Political Liberalism’, p. 56 below.

<sup>25</sup> Wolterstorff, ‘Why Can’t We All Just Get Along with Each Other?’, p. 35 below.

<sup>26</sup> Luke Bretherton, ‘Translation, Conversation, or Hospitality’, p. 96 below.

<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 12.

as being, in themselves, direct contributions to deliberation about the common good.<sup>28</sup>

While Travis Kroeker's messianic ethics also focuses on the embodied practices of communities as the way in which Christians can best engage in the public square, his assessment of the nature of that secular public square is far more negative. Indeed he argues that 'the notions of neutral technology and juridical state sovereignty that underlie current conceptions and embodiments of the secular are themselves dangerously totalitarian, exclusivist, and violent, even while hidden beneath the veneer of progressivist liberal assumptions.'<sup>29</sup> Reminiscent of the compelling analysis of both Stanley Hauerwas and Grace Jantzen, that the political formations of modernity are based on the production and denial of death,<sup>30</sup> Kroeker argues that the Christian diasporic ethic ought to be neither isolationist nor accommodationist, but rather ought to live out of a moral orientation towards a shared *shalom*. Inevitably this means not being coerced into the adoption of a contrived language of public reason. Instead it involves religious and other citizens in a form of political deliberation pursued through their own languages, while also 'learning the languages of others in order to communicate about the shared good'.<sup>31</sup>

Robert Gascoigne begins his reflection from a different place, arguing that Christians can bear witness to their religious identity and discern the ethical and political meaning of their faith without imposing the content of that faith on others. Meditating specifically on the virtue of Christian hope, Gascoigne argues that service to others in a shared historical existence *is* an expression of Christian identity and that an explicitly Christian hope can be expressed in three key ways: a discernment of human capacities that evoke moral virtue; a conviction of the openness of the future to human striving; and a certain detachment from the fruits of that striving.<sup>32</sup> Gascoigne's analysis presents yet another model for Christians within the liberal polity. This is focused neither on the practices of local communities, nor on the prophetic witness of diasporic communities, but is rather based in the conviction that Christians can maintain their transcendent witness through the virtue of hope, and especially in its expression of solidarity and service of others.

<sup>28</sup> Bretherton, 'Translation, Conversation, or Hospitality', p. 109 below.

<sup>29</sup> Travis Kroeker, 'Messianic Ethics and Diaspora Communities: Upbuilding the Secular Theologically from Below', p. 116 below.

<sup>30</sup> See most recently Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles, *Christianity, Democracy and the Radical Ordinary* (Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade Books, 2008); and Grace M. Jantzen, *Foundations of Violence* (London: Routledge, 2004), 10.

<sup>31</sup> Kroeker, 'Messianic Ethics', p. 126 below.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Gascoigne, 'Christian Hope and Public Reason', p. 132 below.

(c) Religion and public reason: public policy issues  
and national contexts

Parts III and IV consider these philosophical and theological issues as they find expression in controversies about public policy and in different national political contexts. In Part III the policy issues of religious education, euthanasia, and human rights are discussed, while in the final part controversies in a variety of national polities are considered, namely: the formal role of Anglican religious leaders in the UK parliament; the role that religion played in the US presidential election campaigns of 2008; and the political role of Islam in democratic societies, European and North American.

The essays in Part III share a conviction that the presence of explicitly religious voices enhances rather than diminishes the nature and quality of political debate. Each is also aware, however, of the limits of such speech and of the fact that all citizens, including religiously motivated ones, share in responsibility for ensuring that the norms of civility and mutual respect are kept in view at all times. Paul Weithman's 'Religious Education and Democratic Character' argues that a religiously based education actually inculcates, albeit with a different rationale, the norms that ground deliberative democracy. In 'Not Translation, but Conversation: Theology in Public Debate about Euthanasia', Nigel Biggar probes the question of whether or not theological arguments about this controversial public issue are accessible to non-Christians. Biggar makes a theological argument against the introduction of euthanasia, and then goes on to reflect on the nature of that argument, asking if and in what ways such religiously based arguments can contribute both to political deliberation, and ultimately to consensus on policy, in its own terms. His conclusion is that 'public discourse should not require the translation of theology into secularist language', but rather 'should allow contextually sensitive, dialectical, improvisational, candid conversation about public goods between genuinely different points of view, which articulate themselves in their own terms while seeking to be persuasive to others.'<sup>33</sup> However he enters a caveat, in line with the spirit of Bretherton and Gascoigne—namely that 'if fruitful conversation does not need a common language or a uniform public reason (beyond the terms of public goods), it does need a common manner or a public reasonableness. . . . It needs a shared ethic of communication, a shared commitment to care more for the truth than the ego, and to care at once for the truth and for the dignity of those who seem not to recognize it. And it needs a shared belief that this human dignity actually exists.'<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Nigel Biggar, 'Not Translation, but Conversation: Theology in Public Debate about Euthanasia', p. 192 below.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

The final essay in this section takes the discussion from the national to the global political forum. In 'Religions and Public Reason in the Global Politics of Human Rights' Linda Hogan considers the existing language of global political debate—that is, that of human rights—and assesses its potential. She argues that 'although traditional human rights language operated as a version of public reason (expecting eventually that individuals would abandon their comprehensive doctrines), this understanding of human rights discourse has been modified significantly in the twentieth century. Moreover she claims that 'contemporary human rights discourse is more properly understood as a language of situated individuals who carry with them their comprehensive doctrines . . . [and that] as it moves from being a global version of public reason to being a deliberative discourse, it is fit for the task of generating a variegated and nuanced consensus on matters of basic justice and constitutional essentials in the global public square, and as such is worth supporting'.<sup>35</sup>

Following consideration of the concrete policy issues of religious education, euthanasia, and human rights, the final part of this collection focuses on controversies where the question of the significance of religious affiliation has been central, as these have arisen in a variety of national polities. These three essays, while dealing with different national jurisdictions, focus on the ways in which different religious actors conceptualize the relationship between religious belonging and the exercise of some form of political influence. Peter Sedgwick considers the case of England, where Anglican bishops have a role in the legislature through their participation in the House of Lords. He concludes that the English experience demonstrates that holders of comprehensive doctrines can indeed participate fully in public and political life, while respecting the requirements of public reason, through respect for the criterion of reciprocity. Brian Stiltner and Steven Michels look at the United States. They analyse aspects of the presidential races of 2008, focusing on how various candidates express, comment on, and make use of their religious affiliation, and consider how this has been theorized and politicized. Their conclusion is that on balance 'candidates' religious ideals, rationales, and motivations should be out in public view, if [the candidate] thinks them relevant.<sup>36</sup> Moreover they conclude that the four candidates they studied—namely Barack Obama, Hillary Rodham Clinton, John McCain, and Mitt Romney—'did not violate the basic requirements of Rawlsian public

<sup>35</sup> Linda Hogan, 'Religions and Public Reason in the Global Politics of Human Rights', p. 225 below.

<sup>36</sup> Brian Stiltner and Steven Michels, 'Religion, Rhetoric, and Running for Office: Public Reason on the US Campaign Trail', p. 284 below.

reason in their use of religious language',<sup>37</sup> and that ultimately 'the way should be kept open for candidates and citizens to use religious language if they feel it is important to do so, assuming they also accept their civil duty to make their views intelligible to others in the public forum'.<sup>38</sup> In the final essay Jocelyne Cesari looks at a different group of religious actors, namely Muslim organizations. Her analysis, in 'Islam and the Secularized Nation: A Transatlantic Comparison', highlights both the diversity of views among Islamic actors in Europe and the USA regarding how their religion should inform participation in politics, and the diversity of national political contexts that define what kind of participation is *prima facie* acceptable.

Much excellent work has already been published on the role of religion in liberal democracies. Originating in a conference held at the University of Leeds in June 2003, *Religious Voices in Public Places* seeks to make a distinctive contribution to this well-developed discussion in the following three ways. First, all our authors address the element that distinguishes Rawlsian liberalism from other perspectives, i.e. the requirement that political debate (on constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice) be conducted through public reason. This focus specifically on the norm of public reason facilitates a deeper, more nuanced assessment of the merits and limits of Rawls vis-à-vis religion, and is the starting point for a more creative response to this still pressing political debate. Second, this volume combines philosophical and theological discussion with consideration of the dimensions of public policy and political context. Whereas many discussions of this kind confine themselves exclusively to the theoretical level, half of the contributions in this collection consider the issue of religion and public reason in relation to particular public policies and particular polities. Finally, third, our collection extends the geographical scope of discussion in this field, which has tended to be centred on the USA. We have deliberately enlisted contributors from Canada, Australia, France, England, Wales, and Ireland—as well as the USA—in the hope of bringing to light how different national political contexts shape answers to the question of how religious voices should behave in public places.

There can be no privileging of religious voices in the public square. Nonetheless religious and other traditions do have an important public role to play. Moreover they can only properly engage in political life if they do so as substantive, situated narratives. Whereas Rawlsian liberalism confronts Christians (and other religious believers) with a choice between retiring to a cultural enclave or participating in political life by keeping from public view

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

their comprehensive doctrines, no such choice is envisaged by the authors in this collection. Although they come from different disciplines and different national contexts, and represent a variety of philosophical and theological viewpoints, the essayists in this collection share the conviction that religious believers can take their responsibilities as citizens seriously without jeopardizing either their heritage or their social practices. We hope that our discussion here will contribute to the development of a form of liberalism that is genuinely hospitable to religion—and so much the stronger for it.