

Editors' Introduction: Historical Reflections on Religion and Politics after 9/11

An introductory discussion of religion and politics in recent history could start almost anywhere with any number of topics: the strained relationships among local communities, governments, and foreign missionaries in places like China, Yemen, or Somalia; the complex historical relationship of religion and the state in Mexico, Ireland, or Japan; the territorial and civil wars and armed conflicts with religious overtones in Kashmir, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, or Palestine and Israel; the significant rise of Pentecostalism in Africa, Australia, and Latin America. Here, we will focus on the consolidation of a discourse surrounding religious conversion that has emerged since 9/11. As the work of Gauri Viswanathan has shown, conversion is an act with many political dimensions and consequences, so we will frame our introductory remarks by taking a look at the intersection of the discourse of religious conversion with the politics of the U.S. war on terror.¹

In the past six years, a somewhat muted but nonetheless important discourse has emerged around conversion, especially between Christianity and Islam. This discourse has arisen within the interstices of the more pronounced public representations of Islam in the United States, which have either demonized Islam altogether, argued that it was “hijacked” and corrupted by terrorists with aims political rather than religious, or viewed Islam and Christianity as monolithic and competing civilizations headed toward an inevitable cultural and geopolitical clash. Prominent evangelical Christians such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson are among those who have railed against the “evils” of Islam after 9/11. In November 2001, then president of the Southern Baptist convention James G. Merritt urged Baptists to pray and fast

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during Ramadan for the miraculous conversion of Muslims, stating that “every other religion [besides Christianity] gives a false hope of having a relationship with God.”² Such sentiments have encouraged U.S. evangelical organizations to mobilize missionaries in addition to soldiers in the fight against global (read: “Middle Eastern” or “Arab” or “Islamic”) terrorism.³ Not unlike corporate interests such as Halliburton, evangelical Christianity has aggressively seized on the horrors of 9/11 and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as new opportunities for growth and expansion. But despite claims that we inhabit a globalizing world in which cultural identities are increasingly fluid, interwoven, or ambiguous, the call for Christian missions to convert Muslims signals a moment in the historical construction of Christianity that threatens to harden cultural and religious boundaries and relations.

The reification of religious difference can be seen in the deep contradictions present within the discourse of conversion, which, on the one hand, declares a militant Christian triumphalism that imagines the inevitable spread of Christianity across the globe and, on the other hand, articulates a profound anxiety about converts lost to other religions, especially to Islam. This anxiety surfaces in repeated media and governmental representations of converts to Islam as potential terrorists. For example, news reports mentioning Richard Belmar and Martin Mubanga, both British detainees in Guantánamo, Cuba, who were eventually extradited to Great Britain, consistently reminded the public that the two were converts. Likewise, the media and the U.S. government repeatedly called attention to a third convert in Guantánamo, the so-called Australian Taliban David Hicks, who, after five years of imprisonment without a trial, finally entered a plea bargain with a U.S. military tribunal in March 2007, in which he pled guilty to the charge of material support for terrorism so that he could be returned to Australia in order to carry out the remainder of his prison sentence. There is also an “American Taliban,” John Walker Lindh, who adopted Islam in 1997 and was captured on the battlefield in Afghanistan in November 2001. A speech by then attorney general John Ashcroft that announced the indictments against Lindh included the following statements: “In the summer of 2001, John Walker Lindh swore allegiance to jihad. . . . The United States is a country that cherishes religious tolerance, political democracy and equality between men and women. By his own account, John Walker Lindh allied himself with terrorists who reject these values.”⁴ In the end, the federal government could not convict Lindh on the most serious charges brought by Ashcroft. Another high-profile case, at present still in the judicial pipeline, against the Brooklyn-born convert José Padilla made headlines this February when his defense lawyers argued that his isolation and interrogation in a military brig in South Carolina for three years and eight months left him mentally unfit to stand trial. Padilla claimed that after converting, he left the United States in 1998 on a spiritual journey, but prosecutors argued that he abandoned his home country on a mission of “global jihad.”⁵ The state framed the choices made by both Lindh and Padilla to convert to Islam as a rejection not only

of their previous religious affiliations but also of their affiliations with the United States and their belief in democratic values. In the implicit logic of this discourse, U.S. citizens who become Muslim seem not too far from having committed treason and appear on their way to becoming terrorists.

In Great Britain, converts to Islamic terrorism have also made headlines. For example, Richard Reid became famous worldwide as the would-be “shoe bomber,” who in December 2001 tried to ignite explosives hidden in his shoe on a flight from Paris to Miami. And just last year, the Indian-born Londoner Dhiren Barot confessed to British authorities that he had been planning to bomb targets in the United States and Britain. Interestingly, although most news reports mentioned that Barot was a Muslim convert, some failed to note that he had been raised as a Hindu, a silence which effectively configures all conversions to Islam as an inherent threat that can be decontextualized from the contingencies of a convert's particular life history.⁶

Do these few cases of converts becoming radical Islamists reveal some pattern? Or do the thousands of other converts whose names do not capture the attention of the media represent a more quantitatively definitive sociology of conversion, one in which law-abiding citizens seeking some sort of spiritual alternative continue to live without event in Germany, France, Great Britain, or the United States?⁷ Unfortunately, at this point, without rigorous and systematic analysis, the sociological patterns of conversions to Islam remain less telling than the troublingly consistent patterns in media- and state-driven languages of representation, which build the image of these “converts to terrorism” on the uncritical assumption of Islam as an inherently warlike religion of violence, hatred, and intolerance. Based on a handful of high-profile cases, the media and the state have propagated a metanarrative that frames conversion to Islam as a process of political radicalization leading inexorably to terrorism. This metanarrative has even infiltrated the entertainment industry, with Showtime's *Sleeper Cell: American Terror* providing a fictional account of terrorist activities that includes two converts as characters. One is a Latino gang member who converts to Islam in prison, the other a European woman who converts after ending her career as a prostitute. Both converts cooperate with other Muslim terrorists in a plan to build and detonate a dirty bomb in Southern California. This anxious discourse of conversion has come to operate in geopolitical as well as individual, personal terms, as exemplified by the popularity of Bat Ye'or's pejorative use of the word *Eurabia* to designate a traditionally Christian Europe converted by the growing influence and presence of Muslims.⁸

The flip side of this anxious discourse of conversion is the heroic status that some Christians assign to Muslims who convert to Christianity, especially those facing oppression in their Islamic home countries. A former Egyptian sheik who changed his faith, Bahaa el-Din Ahmed Hussein el-Akkad, became a cause célèbre among Christians when he was arrested in 2005 purportedly for his apostasy, although his

Christian advocates assert that he has been imprisoned without charges. But the case of Abdul Rahman received even greater attention in the U.S. and European press. In 2006 an Afghan court charged Rahman with the capital crime of apostasy after his estranged family reported that he had become Christian while living in Pakistan some fifteen years prior. The family pressed their claim against Rahman after he sued for custody of his children from his former wife. Under intense international pressure, the Afghan court eventually dropped the charges, claiming that Rahman could not stand trial because he likely suffered from mental illness. Later, despite opposition from some Afghan hard-liners resentful of foreign interventions, the government allowed him to leave the country for Italy, where the prime minister Silvio Berlusconi had offered him asylum. During the trial, the U.S. presidential spokesman Scott McClellan stated that the criminalization of Rahman “clearly violates the universal freedoms that democracies around the world hold dear. And we are watching it very closely.”⁹ President George W. Bush was quoted as saying “I’m . . . deeply troubled when I hear that a person who has converted away from Islam may be held to account. That’s not the universal application of the values that I talked about.”¹⁰ Such noble rhetoric declaring the universal values of democracy must, of course, be contrasted with the heavy presupposition of suspicion directed against Muslims, including recent converts to Islam.

But the contradictions and tensions in the discourse of conversion are not just expressed in U.S. political rhetoric at the highest levels. They exist on the ground as well. Evangelical Christian organizations bombarded the White House with messages of concern for Rahman. Yet arguably their concern was not for the universal application of religious tolerance; it represented instead a particularistic intervention on behalf of a presumed coreligionist half a world away. How else to interpret the fact that many evangelical organizations have promoted and justified their missionary efforts directed against Muslims because they explicitly view Islam as “evil”? What does it mean when such explicitly illiberal groups claim liberal values?

Framing the question this way significantly shifts the media analysis of Rahman’s case. Much of the media reporting focused on the contradictions in the Afghan government, noting that while the constitution incorporated some measure of liberal religious freedom, the Afghan courts continued to enforce a rigid form of sharia. Other reports noted how Rahman’s case highlighted the failure of Bush’s intervention in Afghanistan to bring substantive democratic change to the country. We would point out a different problem. What does it mean for the Bush administration and evangelical Christians of the United States to champion Rahman, quite rightfully declaring the court case as a violation of the religious freedom afforded in pluralistic democracies, when the United States perpetuates far larger-scale travesties of justice in its war on terror? Can we really delineate a substantive difference between what the U.S. government condemns in others (the Afghan court’s egregious violation of the conscience and body of a convert to Christianity) and those

acts it itself is guilty of committing (a war resulting in tens of thousands dead, as well as human rights violations at Abu Graib, Guantánamo, and elsewhere) in the name of preserving “our way of life”? In this world order, Christian converts are seemingly accorded “special rights” (ironically, an accusation that the religious Right hurls at queer folks), while Muslim converts deserve reproach. In this world order, it is not simply *religion* that is being mobilized for *political* ends, as some critics of Bush’s “faith-based presidency” have argued.¹¹ Rather, the liberal, democratic value of the inviolability of the private conscience (supposedly a hallmark of *secular* democracy) is *selectively* called on and *instrumentally* used by evangelical Christians in the United States to police non-Christian polities and societies.

Of course, this contemporary discourse of conversion has many complex layers. After Pope Benedict XVI apologized for delivering a speech in September 2006 in which he cited a medieval source critiquing Muhammad’s teachings as evil and inhuman, one of Muammar el-Qaddafi’s sons rejected the apology, suggesting that a truly sincere one would be accompanied by the pope’s conversion to Islam. Al-Qaeda also issued a video declaring that President Bush and U.S. citizens should become Muslims or “suffer the consequences in this world and the next.”¹² Significantly, the narrator in the video was Adam Yahiyeh Gadahn, also known as Azzam the American, a man who grew up in California, converted to Islam in 1995 at the age of seventeen, and then moved to Pakistan where he joined al-Qaeda. The language of conversion has strangely woven itself into a global discourse that increasingly generates a cultural imaginary mapping the world along simplistic religious divisions. In the process, theocratic positions within both Christianity and Islam erase the more complex lines demarcating the geographies of imperialist exploitation, environmental devastation, and the global health and wealth disparities between the world’s haves and have-nots.

Some might argue that the resolution of the clash of world religions on the global stage resides in reclaiming a secular position in which religion ought to be fully extracted from politics. That secular position — the marginalization of religion from politics — helped Europe extricate itself from its internal religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but while it still may be useful as one position in a critical debate about our present circumstances, secularism embodies its own contradictions and tensions. What is so troubling about the current religious discourse propagated by the Christian Right is not simply its injection of religion back into modern politics but ironically its extraction of a particular human-centered view of politics out of contemporary religion. The religious discourses we have outlined above operate on competing axes of salvation and damnation, and as such, any substantive understanding of political power and political solutions is absent. The recognition that power operates to secure the interests and advantages of real people over and against other real people, and that real people have engaged in a multitude of historical struggles to transform the world into one that is more just

and equal, is effaced on both sides of this discursive war pitting Christianity against Islam, which in turn obliterates the fact that real people are dying on the battlefields, in the homes, schools, hospitals, streets, and neighborhoods indiscriminately targeted for military raids or terrorist bombings. It should therefore not surprise us that George W. Bush offers no *political* solutions for Iraq (or for Afghanistan or Palestine or the United States, for that matter), but rather rallies citizens at home to support troop surges and increase spending on the war machine with a fear-based theocratic vision of the world divided between good and evil, one empty of politics in the classic sense of women and men struggling to transform their lives, their communities, and their world on the ground. Without a space for politics—a space where people can engage in dialogue and debate, in negotiation and compromise, in struggle and hope—there is only the will of God and the power of bombs to transform the globe. Meanwhile, cloaked in a theocratic vision of global and domestic politics, conservative Christian Right groups like the Council for National Policy and Focus on the Family are mobilizing their financial and organizational resources to prepare for the 2008 presidential elections. Despite growing fractures within the U.S. Right, the prevailing discourse of the United States as a nation of (Christian) faith during the Bush administration, a discourse that emptied any truly transformative, people-centered politics out of religion at the same time that it infused religion within politics, has provided a space for religious conservatives to rally around antichoice and antigay legislation, regressive education and immigration policies, as well as the war on terror.

Of course, as the articles that appear in the pages of this issue of *Radical History Review* demonstrate, it would be wrong to think that the imbrication of religion and politics has only emerged in the post-9/11 moment. Rather, the contemporary discursive prominence of and anxiety over religion demonstrate the current need for progressive historians to engage thoughtfully with religion as both a historical category of analysis and as a productive, constitutive element of experience for the vast majority of human beings. While most historians of pre- and early modern societies—along with many scholars of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East—have long accepted that religion and politics are inextricably intertwined, the Western liberal commitment to secular modernity has generally relocated religion out of the public and into the private sphere to domesticate, tame, and depoliticize religious faith. Consequently, faith and belief often appear inaccessible to systematic historical analysis, making it all the harder for many professional historians to provide a language to comprehend our contemporary situation. We must recall, however, that this version of a secular modernity was a form of Western, post-Enlightenment mythmaking. As Peter van der Veer has argued, religion has constantly erupted into the public sphere and thus was never fully relegated to an apolitical private sphere beyond the reach of historical explanation.¹³ Dismissing religion as ideology, irrational superstition, or as tradition—a term often used as a euphemism for *back-*

ward—has only inhibited critical analysis and dialogue. Yet because the historical discipline is so bound within the secularist ideology of Western modernity, many historians often have defined religion in precisely these terms by opposing it to a modern secularism, which they envision as the necessary historical successor to the religious excesses of Europe's past or much of the rest of the world's present. What this model inevitably fails to comprehend is the way in which Europe's and North America's secular modernity has participated in the invention of the very categories of "traditional" religions, cultures, and societies—often through its colonial projections on the rest of the world—while claiming that such "tradition" was chronologically prior to and historically distinct from the so-called modern West.¹⁴

Certainly, there is an urgent need for us to recognize the dangers of theocracy, of absolutist religious discourses that annihilate difference and dissent, of the mobilization of religion by political authorities to secure their power base. But we must also avoid reducing religion to these things. The political vitality and significance of religion has not only taken the form of hegemony or ideology or instrumental assertions of power by the few over the many. A radical history of religion must also account for the ways in which religious institutions, practices, discourses, and commitments have provided sources for powerful critiques of modernity, the nation-state, the market, slavery, European colonial rule, and racial supremacy. In other words, we cannot simply view religion as infiltrating and interfering with politics; we must also try to analyze the relationship between political and religious spheres from a variety of positions that will reopen the space for a critical and radical political engagement within religion.

A brief editorial introduction does not offer the space for a fully theorized, analytically rigorous redefinition of religion that would account for all of its tensions and paradoxes. However, we might begin by taking up the challenge posed by the work of Talal Asad, who has insisted that we think about and *think through* the dichotomy of religion and secularism by recognizing that secularism, religion's apparent diametric opposite, exists *not* as a sphere apart from religion. Instead, Asad asks that we consider how the two operate as mutually constitutive categories.¹⁵ Liberal, progressive, and radical scholars who refuse to engage religion as historical category, as shared lived experience, or as important political terrain take their secularism for granted, not only as an inevitable historical outcome that maps onto the (teleological) narratives of social evolution, progress, the rise of modernity, and the nation-state but also as a fundamental, unquestionable good in and of itself. Rather than posing a truly radical alternative to the power hierarchies in the spheres of religious and political life, secularism has at times served as a project of state power to impose a particular vision of political subjectivity and morality tied to the process of defining inclusion within and exclusion from the national community. In order to see this at work in the two nation-states with supposedly the clearest legal structures promoting a secular stance toward citizens and their choice of faith, we

need only consider the historical prejudices toward Jews, Mormons, Catholics, and more recently Muslims in the United States, or toward Jews and Muslims in France. Of course, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that accompany the complex interplay of citizenship and religion have also arisen in other nation-states around the world, notably in Turkey and India.¹⁶ This tension is in some sense bound to arise whenever so-called secular democracies attempt to govern religiously pluralistic populations.

Ultimately, the modern secular, democratic nation-state, which claims to treat all religions within its territorial boundaries equally and fairly, has not necessarily succeeded in adopting a true position of neutrality vis-à-vis religion and is certainly far from promoting diversity and difference as positive qualities for society. Indeed, the appearance of being secular has often served merely to mask rather than actually to dismantle the cultural depths of religion and religiosity in post-Enlightenment liberal societies. Thus the apparent separation of church and state in the Bill of Rights, when taken for granted as a natural and inherent element of the national character of the United States, erases the long historical struggle that has constantly defined and redefined the boundaries between religion and politics and among competing religious communities.¹⁷ Counting secularism as a defining ontological feature of Western modernity or modern democracy ignores the fraught historical process of contestation and deliberation, conflict and negotiation, that has taken place in the United States over the past two hundred years concerning matters of disestablishment. Thus a certain version of secularism can operate as an ahistorical ideology that, by its internal logic, makes it impossible for historians to think through the changing relationships between religion and politics over time without a teleological endpoint already in mind.

We emphasize that this is true of a certain vision of secularism, for there is not just one version of the secular. In fact, secularism in Western Europe and the United States, as expressed in state policies and legal doctrinal frameworks, does *not* rest on a coherent or consistent theoretical foundation. Different nation-states have differently configured the relationship between church and state; between religious spheres and political spheres; and among the private realm of personal beliefs, the semipublic/semiprivate realm of civil society, and the public realm of governance.¹⁸ There is no one form of secularism, no single way to be secular in those societies that claim to be the heirs of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, even though secularism is supposedly one of the West's most highly prized and foundational political virtues. And yet, when the so-called West speaks of religions with strong connections to the contemporary non-Western world, it frequently deploys the language of fundamentalism, which labels the religious Other as backward and anti-modern. In the process, it fashions an apparently clear-cut opposition between the religiosity of the non-West and the West's theoretically pristine secularism. In other words, if we take the time to examine the historical relationship between religion

and politics within Western nations, secularism emerges as quite a fuzzy and highly variable category, but when the West opposes itself to the non-West, its own sense of itself as secular emerges with an illusory clarity and precision. This seemingly stable opposition between the secular West and the religious non-West, exemplified for instance in the debacle over the cartoons of Muhammad published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005, discursively reinforces a sense of global cultural hierarchies. Within this problematic comparative framework, Western secularism suddenly achieves an imaginary coherence, which it actually lacks in practice within the nation-states of the West.

As a whole, this issue of *RHR* demands that we resist the tendency to think of religion and its dialectical, mutually constitutive counterpart, secularism, uncritically. Because both are contested categories in the terrain of social struggles, both religion and secularism create spaces of oppression and resistance, of hierarchy and critique. The task of the historian is to sort through a variety of historical contexts to assess what these concepts mean and how they operate in specific times and places. Our goal should be to present the multiple and manifold ways that religion has shaped the world in which we live. Scholars with a commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, peace, social justice, and radical social and political transformation must strive to make analytic sense of the complex historical conditions, meanings, practices, and legacies of religion, without simplistically reproducing the master narrative of the triumph of Western secularism, especially given the reemergence of a politically dangerous Christian triumphalism in our own times. In the pages that follow, we are pleased to present a range of essays that seek to offer precisely such critical perspectives, including three feature articles by Axel R. Schäfer, Sarah Crabtree, and Daniel Magaziner.

Schäfer and Crabtree approach the relationship between church and state through analyses of very different groups and periods. Read together, their articles on the Cold War state and evangelicalism (Schäfer) and the Society of Friends (Crabtree) provide provocative discussions of the conservative and radical potential in relationships between church and state. In "The Cold War State and the Resurgence of Evangelicalism: A Study of the Public Funding of Religion since 1945," Schäfer offers an important historical perspective regarding the strong link today between the U.S. government and the Christian Right. He argues that what became, since the end of World War II, an increasingly strong fiscal and ideological tie between government and evangelical Protestants was a constitutive element of the rise of the Cold War state. In the postwar period Protestant evangelicals, who had for years stayed at a remove from government, determined to breach the church-state divide. Motivated by anticommunism, anxieties over increased secularization, and a desire for economic support and for influence in particular sectors of society, evangelical Protestant groups by the early Cold War period had mobilized politically and secured governmental support for a wide range of initiatives. Taking a broad view

of ties between the nation's government and evangelical groups, Schäfer illustrates that the "resurgence of evangelicalism facilitated increasing cooperation" between the Christian Right and the Cold War state to the extent that we see today under the administration of George W. Bush. Today, Schäfer argues, evangelical Protestantism offers "spiritual sanction" for contemporary American foreign policy (the president's "crusade" in Iraq), as well as for the "liberal capitalist order" behind that policy. Policies and funding supporting evangelical Protestant initiatives since the early Cold War have solidified the church-state relationship, which is now stronger than ever.

Crabtree shifts our attention to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where the history of the Friends shows a religious group *rejecting* ties to nation-states and instead posing powerful religious and ideological challenges to national identities and political agendas. In "A Beautiful and Practical Lesson of Jurisprudence: The Transatlantic Quaker Ministry in an Age of Revolution," Crabtree argues that the Society of Friends, with its transatlantic networks and its conception of itself as a holy nation, disavowed the idea of the nation-state. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, as nations including Britain, France, and a young United States were working to strengthen or establish their identities, Quakers rejected national demands and established a transatlantic network rooted in notions of religious conviction. Quakers, who saw strong ties between themselves and ancient Jews of the Diaspora, established a traveling ministry to support groups of Friends in Europe and then in the United States. Public Friends who traveled the seas to build community and share religious messages increased their activities throughout the 1700s and were key in a revival of Quakerism, as well as in solidifying ties between the Society of Friends and its theology. They also served as missionaries, spreading the Quaker gospel across and beyond the bounds of the Atlantic world. While Friends rejected ties to nation-states, they nevertheless exerted political pressure on those entities. With their message of peace and toleration, and with their "allegiance to a community that defied the geopolitical boundaries of modern nations," Friends gave primacy to ties based on religion and political views (specifically, their focus on peace) and implicitly argued that "national/imperial governments were 'worldly' and thus corrupting forces in the modern world." Whereas the evangelical groups Schäfer studied supported and worked with the United States in the postwar period, the Friends challenged the state in a range of ways—demanding tax exemptions, critiquing particular legislation, resisting governmental authority. They encouraged dissent, leading in their case to a split between religion and the state. Ultimately, the Friends' history underscores not the ties between church and state, but rather a moment in which there existed a deep "tension between religion and the politics of nation and empire."

This tension between religion and the politics of the nation is also detailed in Daniel Magaziner's "Christ in Context: Developing a Political Faith in Apartheid

South Africa.” Magaziner reminds us of the simultaneously reactionary, liberal, and radical valences of religious thought and practice. When thinking of South African Christianity, one has to account for the Dutch Reformed Church’s support of apartheid; the liberal reformist agendas of multiracial Christian movements; and the more radical politics of Black Theology, which came to infuse the South African Black Consciousness movement. While focusing his story on the emergence of Black Theology in South Africa, Magaziner shows the spectrum of the potentialities of religious politics in motion, from reactionary to radical. He skillfully demonstrates that what it meant to be black and South African and what it meant to serve Jesus Christ in a revolutionary movement to end racism and oppression overlapped for a vocal group of women and men in South Africa. Thus the national struggle against apartheid contained within it a vital and creative Christian voice that sought to throw off both the racist theology of the Dutch Reformed Church and the liberal theology of some progressive white Christians who worked within a limited, and potentially paternalistic, social and intellectual framework. This Black Theology imagined Jesus as a revolutionary who stood for the marginalized and disempowered. It propagated a gospel rooted in the struggle for social justice by finding spiritual and worldly freedom in the act of imitating Jesus’ critical and oppositional stance toward oppression in his own society. Christian theology in South Africa thus no longer remained a foreign tradition with roots outside of Africa, specifically in Dutch Calvinism. Instead, black South African radicals refashioned Christianity by declaring that it embodied a situational theology that had to be made relevant to the particular historical struggles of people in local contexts. Yet while Magaziner points to the ways in which black anti-apartheid activists in South Africa appropriated and radicalized Christianity within their own local milieu, he also hints at a much larger story, specifically the transnational history of Black Theology, which he acknowledges derived at least in part from theological currents in the United States. Perhaps the moment is right to retransmit some of the basic ideas and ideals of South African Black Theology—a theology that emphasized freedom, liberation, and unity among the oppressed—back across the Atlantic to the United States.

These three articles focus on the relationship between religion and politics in macrogeographic terms, either focusing on the nation-state or the even broader interactive space of the Atlantic world. But we also wanted to explore the very local ways in which religion and power entwined. In our forum “Converted Spaces,” we take a look at the influence of religion on the politics of space and place in a series of short essays that take us to disparate parts of the world. Yet despite the various historical and geographic contexts discussed in these essays, each tells the story of religion as transformative not only of individual beliefs and worldviews but also of social, political, and physical landscapes as well. Religion as a way of knowing the world makes claims about the transcendent, the otherworldly, the supernatural. But

as a set of cultural and social practices, religion also lays claim to knowing and configuring both time and space, once again troubling simplistic distinctions between the religious and the secular spheres of human experience.

The essays in “Converted Spaces” explore the manifold ways in which religion produces and transforms the meanings of space and place, in the process constituting a spatial politics in which differing actors negotiate and compete for the authority to define, assert, or resist hierarchies of power. Jacqueline Holler opens the forum with an analysis that juxtaposes the ways in which Catholic Spaniards attempted to rebuild Tenochtitlan in order to Christianize and Hispanicize the urban landscape alongside the ways in which Indian spatial orderings and religious appropriations continued to define the shape of the city, even if from the city’s spatial margins. Edward E. Andrews shows how African slaves transformed the colonial space of eighteenth-century Newport, Rhode Island, by transporting and preserving shared cultural and political concepts and codes, thus thoroughly destabilizing traditional meanings attached to the iconography of the liberty tree as primarily a site and symbol of European colonists’ political dreams of independence. The conflict between African and European understandings of space can also be seen in Ingie Hovland’s essay, which tells the story of nineteenth-century Norwegian missionaries who, in attempting to convert Zulus in South Africa, converted the territory of their missionary station into something more familiar to their own religious and cultural expectations. At the same time, however, she shows how the place where the missionaries had settled and their encounter with local Africans slowly changed them as well. Anna Bigelow depicts the at times tense but overall stunningly successful negotiations over the restoration and preservation of a holy site in Punjab claimed by Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims alike. She shows how recent interreligious dialogue concerning a mosque supposedly built by the Sikh guru Hargobind successfully avoided the fate of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, infamously destroyed in 1992 by a group of Hindus who believed the mosque had displaced a preexisting temple dedicated to the Hindu deity Rama. The story of the guru’s mosque thus serves as an inspiring lesson in religious pluralism. The forum closes with Kaylin Goldstein’s description of the conversion of a medieval military citadel in Jerusalem into a museum of the city’s history in 1989. Although the museum purportedly represents a broad and inclusive history of place and memory in Jerusalem, it continues, as Bigelow shows, to hold different and competing meanings, interpretations, and memories for Palestinians and Jews.

These five essays examining religion, space, and place seem exceedingly important and appropriate since at the very moment this introduction was written, hostilities between Palestinian Muslims and Israeli Jews erupted in Jerusalem around a government-sponsored construction project at a holy site known as the Noble Sanctuary to Muslims and the Temple Mount to Jews, near the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque. Palestinian fears that the construction would dam-

age the mosque or other Islamic spaces have spread to many Muslims worldwide, who collectively see this site in Jerusalem as particularly sacred. We hope that this forum might contribute to the political tools and languages available in such ongoing, real-world conflicts over the politics of spaces and places imbued with religious significance.

The three essays in this installment of “Reflections” focus on the often fraught relationship between science and religion. Two essays discuss debates around intelligent design (ID), the theory that challenges evolutionary science and insists that biological variety is so complex as to prove the existence of an “intelligent” creator. First, Bryan Le Beau explores the history of political and legal challenges to teaching evolution in U.S. public schools. In 2005, court cases in Kansas and Pennsylvania regarding the teaching of ID as an alternative to evolution gained a great deal of attention and raised passions across the political and religious spectrum. While ID was dealt serious blows in both cases, Le Beau argues (as does Melanie A. Bailey, author of the second essay in this section) that creationism and ID still need to be debated and conclusively discredited not just in the minds of scientists—nearly all of whom deny the theory’s legitimacy—but among the American public, a majority of whom still doubt the truth of evolutionary theory. Indeed, today over 50 percent of Americans reject evolution.

With conflict between fundamentalist and scientific camps so pronounced at present—and not only in terms of ID/creationism but also in the realms of reproductive medicine, stem cell research, and elsewhere—Le Beau’s historicized discussion provides an important reminder that science and religion were not always opposed. The historical rift between religion and science generated by the debate over evolution, he argues, has jeopardized education, scientific literacy, and what had once been a more fruitful dialogue between religion and science.

Like Le Beau, Bailey illuminates important moments in the history of debates between science and various incarnations of ID ideas. She offers an international perspective and contrasts debates that took place in nineteenth-century France and today’s United States to suggest the importance of combating ID today. Bailey examines the debates spurred by the arguments of Félix Pouchet, a mid-nineteenth-century French scientist who articulated a theory of “spontaneous generation.” She examines the vehement refutations of Pouchet’s ideas by journalists and scientists including Louis Pasteur. Bailey argues that commentators and scientists today should be more vocal in challenging ID because arguments against evolution—whether called spontaneous generation, creationism, or intelligent design—are dangerously tied to conservative politics and even to authoritarian ideologies that threaten free inquiry and progressive science, politics, and social practices.

The third article in this section treats a very different subject. Steve Russell, a member of the Cherokee Nation, a former Texas judge, and now a professor of criminal justice, analyzes science and religion vis-à-vis the law and the issue of

Native American repatriation. Russell examines the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and elucidates how the discourses of science and religion function in relation to NAGPRA to limit the rights of native peoples with regard to their dead. Russell lucidly contextualizes the legal and cultural issues involved in native repatriation with reference to the common law history on rights to graves and the deceased.

Given the conflicts that have arisen at the juncture of religion and politics, it is little surprise that teaching these two subjects together can be a tremendous challenge. Our section “Teaching Radical History” explores this challenge with two fascinating pedagogical essays. Yücel Demirer discusses his encounters with students while teaching Islam in a multinational, multicultural context, made even more complex following 9/11. In a far different vein, Javier Villa-Flores shares his experiences teaching about Latin American millenarian movements. Demirer, by contrasting class dynamics before and after 9/11, illuminates the “extent to which the cultural and political environment surrounding the classroom pervades and influences discussion within it.” He notes that after September 11, 2001, fewer non-Muslim students took the class and that tensions among students from different religious backgrounds heightened. He also noticed a “self-silencing” on the part of Muslim students. An environment of tolerance and open debate was another casualty of the attacks and the ongoing war on terror.

Villa-Flores’s class on millenarian movements in Latin America ranged from the rebellions of the Túpac Amaru and Túpac Katari in Upper Peru (1780–82) to the movement of progressive Catholicism in El Salvador during the brutal repression of the 1970s and 1980s. The class explored the extent to which, in several millenarian movements “driven by dreams of deliverance from suffering and oppression,” religious belief was “a potential source of political and social mobilization.” The array of millenarian aspirations in Latin America offered the class a range of movements to study and contextualize within various moments of sociopolitical change. For example, one of the questions that the class addressed was millenarianism’s transformation over long periods from being “an elite discourse of empire building to an ideology of protest.” Students learned that religious revival had many historical roots, ranging from a general anxiety about historical flux to specific reactions against local political or religious corruption, while yet other moments of millenarianism emerged in response to modernization, capitalism, republicanism, or anticlericalism.

Teaching topical and relevant courses requires that we keep up to date with current scholarship. Three pieces in “Re(Views)” authored by Peter van der Veer, Anthony Michael Petro, and Alex Lichtenstein examine recent scholarly works that engage the field of the history of religion. The range of books under review demonstrates the continuing need to examine and contextualize religion within a variety of power structures including colonialism, gender, and race.

Finally, Conor McGrady's "Curated Space" features the work of the New York-based performance artist Reverend Billy. Reverend Billy, who is the founder of the Church of Stop Shopping, leads his audiences in public interventions that unmask the hype and hypocrisy of corporate America and consumer culture. This issue's "Curated Spaces" includes photos from his recent performances along with an excerpt from his 2007 book, *What Would Jesus Buy?*⁹

In attempting to highlight a range of critical approaches to the study of religion and politics, this issue undoubtedly raises, in the end, more unresolved questions than definitive answers. But one thing is certain: we could not have completed this project without the hard work, diligence, and patience of Tom Harbison, Ezra Davidson, and Marc Goulding. Their commitment to seeing this publication through to completion deserves our unending gratitude. In addition, we would like to thank all of our contributors for making this publication project so intellectually enriching. Finally, we extend our thanks to Derek Chang, Ian C. Fletcher, Yael Simpson Fletcher, Durba Ghosh, Robert Travers, the editorial collective of *Radical History Review*, and the multitude of reviewers who shared their wisdom, knowledge, time, and energy with us.

—Duane J. Corpis and Rachel Scharfman

Notes

1. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).
2. "Baptist Head Urges Prayers for Muslim Conversion," *New York Times*, November 27, 2001.
3. Laurie Goodstein, "Seeing Islam as 'Evil' Faith, Evangelicals Seek Converts," *New York Times*, May 27, 2003.
4. Transcript of John Ashcroft's press conference regarding the indictment of John Walker Lindh, transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0202/05/ip.00.html, aired February 5, 2002.
5. Deborah Sontag, "Defense Calls Padilla Incompetent for Trial," *New York Times*, February 23, 2007, www.nytimes.com/2007/02/23/us/23padilla.html.
6. See, for example, "Bombing Figure Admits Guilt in Plot on U.S. and British Targets," *New York Times*, October 13, 2006, select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F30D17FF3A540C708DDDA90994DE404482.
7. Since 9/11 several reporters have enthusiastically written lengthy feature articles on Westerners and/or Christians who have converted to Islam. Jodi Wilgoren referenced an unnamed study that claimed twenty-five thousand people per year became Muslims in the United States. Daniel J. Warkin wrote that "nationwide, Latino Muslims number in the low tens of thousands, according to their own estimates and those of national Islamic bodies." Nicole Martin reported in 2002 that there were twenty thousand Britons who had converted to Islam in the previous twenty years, while Lutz Ackermann noted that four thousand Germans became Muslims between July 2004 and June 2005 according to a study financed by the German Ministry of the Interior. Although these articles strive to present a fair, impartial, and humane perspective of these converts, the fact that they have been written at all reflects in some measure the broader public anxiety in the

- West about individuals who choose to adopt Islam as their religion. See Jodi Wilgoren, "American Muslims: Islam Attracts Converts by the Thousands, Drawn Before and After Attacks," *New York Times*, October 22, 2001; Daniel J. Warkin, "Ranks of Latinos Turning to Islam Are Increasing," *New York Times*, January 2, 2002; Nicole Martin, "Islamic Converts Defend Their Faith against Terrorism," *Daily Telegraph*, December 9, 2002, www.telegraph.co.uk/?jsessionid=AFOKVKNHDJP4LQFIQMFSFGGAVCBQoIVo; Lutz Ackermann, "Angst—Ridden Germans Look for Answers—And Find Them in the Koran," *Spiegel Online International*, January 18, 2007, www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,460364,00.html.
8. Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005).
 9. Abdul Waheed Wafa, "Afghan Judge in Convert Case Vows to Resist Foreign Pressure," *New York Times*, March 23, 2006, www.nytimes.com/2006/03/23/international/asia/23cnd-convert.html?ex=1172552400&en=ec88a76cb5356eb5&ei=5070.
 10. Ibid.
 11. Ron Suskind popularized the term *faith-based presidency*. See his "Without a Doubt," *New York Times*, October 17, 2004, select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F30F1EF93A5F0C748DDDA90994DC404482.
 12. "Qaeda Video Demands Conversion to Islam," *New York Times*, September 3, 2006, query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C03E4D91F3EF930A3575ACoA9609C8B63.
 13. Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
 14. For the complex ways in which the various categories of religion and secularism, tradition and modernity, the rational and the irrational, the West and the non-West have mutually constituted one another, especially in colonial contexts, see *ibid.*; Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of *Subaltern Studies*," in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, ed. Vinayak Chaturvedi (London: Verso, 2000), 256–80; Derek R. Peterson and Darren Walhof, eds., *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Derek R. Peterson, "Morality Plays: Marriage, Church Courts, and Colonial Agency in Central Tanganyika, ca. 1876–1928," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 983–1010.
 15. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); and Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
 16. The scholarship on secularism in Turkey and India is constantly growing. For starters, on Turkey, see Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Alev Cinar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). A useful survey of some classic positions on secularism in India can be found in Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). On the complexity of religious pluralism and politics in India, see Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*; Ashis Nandy, *Time Warps: Silent and Evasive Pasts in Indian Politics and Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004); and Sumit Sarkar, *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism, Hindu Fundamentalism, History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

17. One interesting account of this dynamic history is Sarah Barringer Gordon's *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
18. See, for instance, Michael J. Sandel, "Religious Liberty: Freedom of Choice or Freedom of Conscience," in Bhargava, *Secularism and Its Critics*, 73–93.

