REASON, RELIGION, AND DEMOCRACY

The rise of religious fundamentalism in different parts of the world in recent years and its association with terrorism has led to a renewed interest in the nature of religion and its compatibility with Western institutions. Much of the focus of this new interest has contrasted religion and science as two different systems of knowledge. This book also emphasizes the difference between religion and science as a means for understanding causal relationships, but it focuses more on the challenge religious extremism poses for liberal democratic institutions. This book contains a discussion of human psychology, describes the salient characteristics of all religions, and contrasts religion and science as systems of thought. Historical sketches are used to link modernity and the use of the human capacity for reasoning to advance human welfare. The book describes the conditions under which democratic institutions can advance human welfare and the nature of constitutional rights as protectors of individual freedoms. Extremist religions are shown to pose a threat to liberal democracy, a threat that has implications for immigration, education policies, and the definition of citizenship.

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To Laurence, Jacob, and Adrienne
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Shortly after the completion of the final revisions to this book, a front-page article appeared in the Austrian newspaper *Die Presse* reporting estimates of some 250 million Christians worldwide threatened by violence or death for their beliefs. Most of the countries where this repression is taking place are not democracies – for example, Iran, Vietnam, China. Some countries such as India and Turkey are certainly democracies, but cannot be called *liberal democracies* because of the violations of religious freedom rights that occur within them. These instances of religious persecution illustrate a major theme of this book – the incompatibility of strong religious views and liberal democracy.

Most of the countries in which religious persecution is taking place can be characterized as nonmodern, traditionalist societies – for example, Pakistan, Burma, Yemen, Kenya. Traditionalism and religion go hand in hand, as does to a large extent traditionalism and dictatorship. The examples of India and Turkey indicate, however, that democracy is no guarantee of liberalism. Wherever extremist religious beliefs exist, liberalism is at peril. It was the growing importance of religious extremism in the United States, South America, the Middle East, and other parts of the world and the potential for religious extremism to arise even in Europe that led me to write this book. No one who values liberalism and democracy should assume that they are invulnerable to attack from religious extremists.

In several places, data have been taken from Internet websites with the website addresses given as sources. These website addresses change from time to time, so we cannot guarantee that the address given is still current.

Alan Hamlin and an anonymous referee offered some helpful comments on an early draft of the book. Bob Tollison and Roger Congleton read the book thoroughly, and made many suggestions for improvement. Jacob Mueller, my son, also read the manuscript and caught many errors of style.
and substance. Elizabeth Raab gave it a careful reading and made many suggestions for improving word choice and punctuation. To all of these people, I am most grateful. Finally, I would like to thank my secretary for the last fifteen years, Heidi Wurm, for her diligent effort to bring the manuscript into shape for the publisher. She made my side of the project immensely easier.

One often adds a perfunctory disclaimer to such acknowledgments of help to the effect that the previously named do not necessarily share all views of the author. In this case, the disclaimer is definitely needed and is not perfunctory.

If this book has any positive impact, it may alert some people to the dangers traditionalism and religion pose for liberal democracy and help protect it against these threats, thereby producing a better future. With this hope for the future in mind, I am dedicating this book to my children.

Dennis C. Mueller
Vienna, Austria
May 2009