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978-0-521-14734-7 - Religion and the Political Imagination

Edited by Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones

Frontmatter

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Religion and the Political Imagination

The theory of secularisation became a virtually unchallenged truth of twentieth-century social science. First sketched out by Enlightenment philosophers, then transformed into an irreversible global process by nineteenth-century thinkers, the theory was given substance by the precipitate drop in religious practice across Western Europe in the 1960s. However, the re-emergence of acute conflicts at the interface between religion and politics in the later twentieth century confounded such assumptions. It is clear that ideas about secularisation must be rethought. Yet, as this important collection of essays reveals, not everything contained in the idea of secularisation was false. Analyses of developments since 1500 reveal a wide spectrum of historical processes: partial secularisation in some spheres has been accompanied by sacralisation in others. Utilising new approaches derived from history, philosophy, politics and anthropology, *Religion and the Political Imagination* offers new ways of thinking about the urgency of religious issues in the contemporary world.

IRA KATZNELSON is Ruggles Professor of Political Science and History at Columbia University and Research Associate at the Centre for History and Economics, King's College, Cambridge. A fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, Professor Katznelson has published widely on the history of the western liberal tradition.

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Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
Introduction: multiple secularities	1
IRA KATZNELSON AND GARETH STEDMAN JONES	
1 Secularisation: religion and the roots of innovation in the political sphere	23
INGRID CREPPELL	
2 Regarding toleration and liberalism: considerations from the Anglo-Jewish experience	46
IRA KATZNELSON	
3 The Enlightenment, the late eighteenth-century revolutions and their aftermath: the ‘secularising’ implications of Protestantism?	70
DAVID M. THOMPSON	
4 In the lands of the Ottomans: religion and politics	90
KAREN BARKEY	
5 The Russian Orthodox Church and secularisation	112
GEOFFREY HOSKING	
6 The American experience of secularisation	132
MICHAEL O’BRIEN	
7 French Catholic political thought from the deconfessionalisation of the state to the recognition of religious freedom	150
EMILE PERREAU-SAUSSINE	

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi	Contents	
8	Religion and the origins of socialism GARETH STEDMAN JONES	171
9	From 1848 to Christian Democracy CHRISTOPHER CLARK	190
10	The disciplining of the religious conscience in nineteenth-century British politics JONATHAN PARRY	214
11	Colonial secularism and Islamism in North India: a relationship of creativity HUMEIRA IQTIDAR	235
12	The 1960s HUGH McLEOD	254
13	Gendering secularisation: locating women in the transformation of British Christianity in the 1960s CALLUM G. BROWN	275
14	Does constitutionalisation lead to secularisation? ANAT SCOLNICOV	295
15	Europe's uneasy marriage of secularism and Christianity since 1945 and the challenge of contemporary religious pluralism JYTTE KLAUSEN	314
16	On thick and thin religion: some critical reflections on secularisation theory SUDIPTA KAVIRAJ	336
	<i>Index</i>	356

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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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