Religious Pluralism, Globalization and World Politics

Edited by *Thomans Banchoff*
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 348 pp., ISBN 9780795323412.

As the link between religion and international affairs has come under special scrutiny especially since 9/11, there has been an increase in the number of books and articles that investigate the issues of the public sphere from a faith-based perspective. Edited books have especially enjoyed considerable attention since they bring diverse voices in manageable bits. Some have explored theoretical links between international relations and religion, while others have drawn attention to more practical issues on the ground. Thomas Banchoff's *Religious Pluralism*, falling between these purely theoretical and completely practical projects, is a book worth reading especially given the diverse backgrounds of the 12 scholars it brings together. These contributors draw attention to the multiple roles religious actors have been playing in the international arena. Religious ideas constitute a market with its supply and demand side and the volume explores the actors, obstacles and possibilities in such a market. Especially with the trauma of 9/11 —and one can make the argument that the trauma actually started with the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran— there has been a disproportionate attention given to the violent manifestations of religion. Therefore, the acknowledgement of the constructive role of faith-based initiatives can still be considered a relatively new topic both to the academic and policy worlds. The authors discuss a number of contentious issues that have been subject to heated debates but due to the space limitations that pose a challenge to a thorough

review of edited volumes, only a couple of issues are highlighted in this essay.

The first issue that is explored throughout the volume is the meaning of religious pluralism and the terms of communication across faith traditions. Banchoff (p. 5) states that religious pluralism "denotes a politics that joins diverse communities with overlapping but distinctive ethics and interests". Although this sounds commonsensical and easy at first glance, Pratap Bhanu Mehta (p. 66) cautions that the challenge is to reconcile pluralism with a common political identity—how can a recognition of multiple religious identities go hand in hand with the modern aspirations of the state and the accompanying definitions of citizenship? Can we represent religious pluralism in our existing political identities, or do we need to revise our traditional conceptions such as the twinning of nation and state? How do religious groups challenge the states? In his chapter, for example, John Voll draws attention to the soft power capabilities of even violent networks such as Al-Qaeda, which work like a business corporation eliminating the divisions among its potential members. Undoubtedly, violent or not, religious organizations compete with the state in multiple settings across the world and the book notes the challenges such a competition poses.

A second related issue is the tension between religious rights and the concerns surrounding proselytizing. In her chapter, Jean Bethke Elshtain (p. 91) examines the question of whether proselytization is fully compatible with the politics of recognition

or a challenge to it. Elshtain (p. 102) argues that "opposition to proselytization is opposition to a central dimension of religious freedom and therefore incompatible with a robust international human rights regime". John Witte Jr. (p. 107) states that what we are seeing in part of the world today is a "theological war, as rival religious communities have begun to demonize and defame each other and to gather themselves into ever dogmatic and fundamentalist stands". Although Witte Jr.'s labeling is bold and contestable, the clashing insecurities of political communities, be it religious or not, result in restrictions in the market place of religious ideas which Elshtain sees as an infringement of individuals' rights. Even if not at the state level, these interreligious insecurities are overcome through peaceful religious movements and groups which are open to engagement with the other traditions. Thomas Michel notes how the Risale-i Nur movement has encouraged Muslim-Christian dialogue, and how the Gulen Movement has widened this partnership to "the conscientious followers of all religions" (p. 243). Michel cites Said Nursi's call to join forces not only with pious Muslims but also with pious Christians in the face of "aggressive atheism" (p. 236). In other words, not only interreligious insecurities are challenged, but also the gap between the religious and the non-religious is deepened in the process.

The volume recognizes and explores the diversity of religious actors in the international arena. Scott Appleby (p. 128) reminds the reader that the failure of religious leaders to perform their potential peace-building roles within the local community and the insufficient exploitation of their strategic capacity as transnational actors has resulted in a gap when it comes to peace-building in religious communities. Appleby gives the examples of Buddhist peace-building in Cambodia, the efforts of the Catholic Sant Egidio in Mozambique, and peaceful Islamic networks that are part of a trend that beats the traditional modes of thinking that see peace-building as an exclusively secular domain. Leslie Vinjamuri and Aaron Boesenecker explore how religious actors can play crucial yet diverse roles in transitional justice mechanisms of divided societies. They identify five types of religious actors (capacity-builders, peace-builders, legalists, pragmatists and traditionalists) and four types of secular actors (truth-seekers, pragmatists, legalists and traditionalists) (p. 167). Are collaborations easier between like-minded actors, such as two pragmatists, regardless of their religiosity, or between two religious actors? Given the centrality of transitional justice to post-conflict reconstruction, this is a question that warrants utmost attention.

In another chapter, Katherine Marshall explores the relevance of faith-based perspectives to economic governance and development. Marshall reports that since it began its operation in 1946, the World Bank has barely engaged with faith-based institutions, but this is now changing. The World Bank has launched partnerships with faith-inspired organizations and Guatemala, Ethiopia and Tanzania have been chosen for interfaith engagement on poverty issues (p. 201). In a number of countries, local religious organizations have been the most trusted actors, so why not tap into this resource? Elizabeth Prodromou states that all these resources must be embraced with an informed redirection of the American foreign policy. "The religious political culture of the United States, anchored in its Christian majority, expressed in its civil

religion, and articulated in its presidential rhetoric, is not going to disappear" (p. 315), Prodromou notes. What matters is how the United States will end up using its material resources to strengthen international law and global governance.

In sum, the volume is a recommended read especially for those who are curious about the new roles religious actors are assuming and what kind of challenges the inclusion of religious actors into political dialogue brings. Not that we will be able to find the answers to our questions on faith and politics anytime soon, but at least we will enrich the terms of our debates on religious pluralism and we will challenge our long-existing assumptions.

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The Ethos of Europe: Values, Law and Justice in the EU

By *Andrew Williams*
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, ISBN 9780521134040 (Pb), £23.99;
9780521118286 (Hb) £60.00.

Although the analysis offered in this book is not very innovative in its details, the overall project is of some originality. Andrew Williams's main contention is that the EU project has developed its own institutional ethos, and that this is the product of both the entrenchment in European public discourse of a number of values, and of the way in which the European legal system (and its underlying philosophy) promotes and protects such values. Williams, however, is critical of the particular ethos that to date has supported the EU polity since he finds it partly incoherent in the articulation of its central values, and relatively uncommitted in the way in which it sustains them. The ethos's incoherence lies, in his view, in the way in which the values at the heart of the EU project are both ambiguous and indeterminate; while the lack of commitment is the product of the half-hearted way in which the institutional framework (in particular European law) supports a public philosophy for Europe, while functioning more as a prop for European governance.

According to Williams, incoherence and lack of commitment are not insuperable. The aim of the book is indeed to show how this ethos has formed and is operating through a series of narratives of self-understanding and institutional practices; and how it can be reformed in order to develop into a fully-fledged public philosophy capable of inspiring and legitimating the EU polity. The book therefore engages in two operations, one more reconstructive in scope, charting the main values underpinning the European ethos, and its character as a whole; the other operation is of a more propositive kind, offering in outline a proposal for justice in the EU, or, to be more specific, a suggestion of what is needed for turning the EU into a just institution.

Chapters two to seven mainly engage in the reconstructive enterprise. Williams identifies peace (Chapter 2), the rule of law (3), human rights (4), democracy (5),