

Editors' Introduction

Welcome to Volume 6, Number 1 of *Politics & Religion*! The opening five articles offer an analysis of the intersection of religion and politics in European countries. Steve Bruce argues convincingly that British “churchgoers are not attracted by the claim that Christian interests are best served by a separate party.” British voters have “little appetite for overtly religious politics” and therefore conservative Christian political candidate may be excluded because party leaders fear such candidates would lose more votes than they would attract.

Having said that, religion is not absent in the public square. For example, Ben Clements provides evidence that, regarding British attitudes toward the war in Afghanistan, “religious affiliation had important stand-alone effects while religiosity had a significant effect when interacted with religious tradition.” Calfano, Djupe, and Wilson investigate the use of “God Talk” in British Conservative electoral discourse and argue that while United States styled Christian conservatism may not define United Kingdom politics, David Cameron’s electoral language signaled some recognition of the need to ‘cue’ social conservative constituents of his party.

Providing commentary on a broader European context, Hans Volaard maintains that in a largely secular Europe, Christians are regrouping into a “creative minority” in order to convey an “explicitly faith-based message to a broader public.” However, he argues this message should be understood as a re-emergence of Christianity as a “cultural phenomenon rather than faith in West European politics.” Egbert Ribberink, Peter Achterberg, and Dick Houtman similarly note the particularities of European political culture “where on the one hand, some of the most massively secularized countries of the world (particularly in the North West, e.g., Scandinavia, United Kingdom, the Netherlands) and on the other hand, countries where religion has retained much more of its former foothold (particularly in the South West, e.g., in Catholic countries such as Spain, Portugal and Italy).” Their enquiry focuses on changes in some countries where disbelievers have transformed an indifferent “non-religiosity” into an assertive “anti-religiosity.”

The final three articles are more theoretical in nature. Bettina Koch reflects on Marsalis and an-Na'ims conceptualization of a secular Islamic state and concludes that the Marsilian conception provides "stronger protection of unbelievers' and religious dissenters' civic rights." Justin Dyer and Kevin Stuart contrast the limits of appropriate public discourse espoused by John Rawls with the reflections on justice articulated by Martin Luther King Jr. in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Their premise, that probity demands acknowledging the impossibility of fully separating freestanding political conceptions from overall conceptions of the good life, leads them to reason that "Rawlsian arguments would vitiate public reason's ability to limit contemporary political discourse in a consistent and meaningful way." Finally, with his bid for the best title for a journal article, Patrick Schoettmer contributes an interesting analysis of Buddhist political engagement in the US as driven "by private religious practice rather than by communal or small-group religious participation."

We hope you enjoy the rich and varied research in this issue and look forward to working with our editorial board over the coming year to continue providing the most respected academic research journal in the field.

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