Regimes of Religious Pluralism in 20th-Century Europe

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European societies have dealt with religious pluralism in a variety of ways in the course of the 20th century. Especially during the 1960s, the way religious differences have impacted society seems to have changed dramatically. Has religion been banned from the public sphere by a secular regime since? Such transformations were the subject of an interdisciplinary conference on Regimes of Religious Pluralism hosted by the University of Amsterdam and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, April 19–21 2012. During the conference, a more subtle perspective on 20th-century religious pluralism arose, highlighting the constant reassessments societies make in dealing with religious expressions in the public sphere and with the position of religious minorities.

The conference took its vantage point from the Dutch historian PETER VAN ROODEN (Amsterdam), who has introduced the concept of religious regimes in order to point towards the different societal roles which have been assigned to religion in Dutch history. He thereby linked religion to the broader perspective of social history on the one hand and to the concept of power on the other.[1] In his keynote lecture, he argued that around 1800 the locus of religion changed from a natural part of the public order to the hearts and minds of the people. Religion thus became a dominant agent for establishing communities of moral selves. In the Netherlands, this resulted in a regime of segmented pluralism at the end of the 19th century. Separate religious communities proclaimed themselves to be the moral heart of the nation. Yet, Van Rooden argued, this regime came to an end during the 1960s. Religion made way for a new regime based on the production of moral selves through mass consumption, new forms of communication and, most notably, through education. Similar transformations occurred throughout Europe. Since then, religion has been banned to the remote corners of society.

This depiction of the 1960s in the history of religion was challenged by PETER VAN DAM (Amsterdam). In reaction to Van Rooden, Van Dam argued that in post-war history religious communities have redefined their faith, seeking to strike a new balance between their own communities and other societal groups. Against the backdrop of these processes of redefinition, the radical rupture of the 1960s and the a-religious nature of the regime which emerged, are doubtful. During the course of the conference, it became apparent that it is by no means feasible to speak of a one-sided dissolution of religious regimes during the 20th century. Provided that a secular regime is not seen as neutral or simply a-religious, rather as a specific view on the societal role of religion, post-war Europe can be analyzed by focusing on secularity or on the continuing relevance of religious pluralism.

The case for the viewpoint of a secular regime was made by MONIKA WOHLRAB-SAAR, MARIAN BURCHARDT and CORA SCHUH (Leipzig). They argued that different forms of secularities in the Netherlands existed subsequently in time and were in competition with each other. Firstly, from the 16th century onward, they distinguished a model of secularity for the sake of pacifying religious diversity. This model supposedly lasted until after the Second World War, after which, under pressure of the rise of individual liberties and the rejection of confessional and ideological divides, two new models came to the fore. These new secularities served either the strengthening of individual liberties or national integration and development. Increasingly, the individual liberties of the secular majority are seen to be in stark contrast with the values of religious minorities.

In the case of Sweden, CARL REINHOLD BRÅKENHIELM (Uppsala) argued that the state for long has adopted a secular regime. To him, this means presupposing the constitutional autonomy of religious communities and the individual believers, as well as de-

[1] Peter van Rooden, Religieuze regimes. Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1570–1990, Amsterdam 1996.

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noting a set of legal rules for faith-based organizations. Sweden has adopted a 'positive active secular regime', which refers to the existence of a strong link between the Swedish state and the Swedish Lutheran Church. This ended in 2000, however not by cutting its strong ties to the Swedish church, but by awarding other groups of believers the same privileges as the Church of Sweden. Recently the 'positive active secular regime' is fiercely contested by humanists who are negative towards religion. A similar opposition could be found with CHARLES GLENN (Boston), who demonstrated that the entanglement of Western democracies with faith-based organizations and most notably with confessional schools, is often considered to be problematic. At the heart of the problem lies the question whether or not a person has the right to submit to the authority of a tradition or a religious community under a secular regime, as opposed to the idea that secular states are obliged to help its citizens to become autonomous and liberated from any indoctrinated view of the world.

This ideal of individual fulfilment has produced two completely different outcomes in the public realm of the United States and the Netherlands. STEPHEN MONSMA (Grand Rapids) spoke of an 'American-Dutch paradox' concerning the relationship of the state with faith-based organizations. Whereas in the US religion is still strong, the public realm is strictly secular. Conversely, in the Netherlands the production of religion by individuals is declining and yet the public realm is organized to support religious pluralism. As is the case in Sweden, subsidizing one religion means subsidizing them all. This Dutch dedication to a pluralist society may be threatened by a dwindling number of religious citizens, by the difficulties of new minorities finding a way into the established system, and by the debate on whether the Dutch state should continue to promote pluralism at all.

Even the speakers who took the secular as their vantage point demonstrated that secular regimes implicitly or explicitly pertain to religion. HUGH MCLEOD (Birmingham) showed that in 20th-century England, religious pluralism existed on an abstract and a concrete level. Although a notion of religious belonging along the lines of education, in the home, politics, culture and ethics did exist, intense religious opposition primarily existed *within* the minds of the people. McLeod therefore reminds us that, when looking at the various forms of religious pluralism, we need to look at the 'pluralism of everyday life' as well. Of course, there were conflicts between English religious groups, most notably between Catholics and Protestants, but these tensions were far less acute than often assumed. The most salient divide, however, came to be between church-goers and non-church-goers. In the second half of the 20th century denominational identities weakened. At the same time, three new dividing lines were deepening; between liberal and orthodox believers, between Muslims and non-Muslims, and between secularist and 'religious believers of all kinds'.

BENJAMIN ZIEMANN (Sheffield) followed up on McLeod's argument. At first glance, 20th-century Germany was characterized by the confessional divide between Catholics and Protestants and by the legal arrangements of 1919 which abolished the Protestant church as a state church, but continued to treat the established churches as bodies under public right. Yet, this general narrative obstructs the view on the pluralism of everyday life. Firstly, German regional religious styles were very different, especially within the Catholic Church. Secondly, after the First World War, the number of non-believers rose rapidly, thereby effectively creating a 'fourth confession', next to Protestants, Catholics and Jews. Thirdly, the Nazi's tried to reconcile faith and nationalism by redefining the Protestant Churches. After the 1960s, German society increasingly turned pluralistic along the lines of the four aforementioned groups, yet Protestants still seem to enjoy a weaker, cultural hegemony.

Pluralism within religious segments, most notably among Catholics, has also drawn little attention. MARJET DERKS (Nijmegen) showed that conflicting perceptions between reformists and conservatives already existed during the pre-war years within the Catholic segment. These grew into full-fledged antagonisms in the 1960s. Eventually, the arguing between the two led to an overall religious in-

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difference within younger generations. Conversely, according to ANDREA MACCARINI (Padova), in Italy the Catholic Church has continued to show an ability to internalize cultural diversity through its own differentiation at the structural, cultural and interactional levels. And even though Catholic identity is weakening in Italy, the Catholic Church is now the strongest participant in Italy's civil society, primarily because of a loss of trust in the political institutions by other minorities. However, its attempts to promote internal secularization and de-traditionalization have not been successful. Despite the Church's contribution to Italy's social cohesion and solidarity, it has not been able to provide a seed-bed for an innovative civic and political culture. A younger generation of Catholics has therefore taken up the cup, but shies away from ethically sensitive discussions, focussing on common goods and universal goals instead.

The managing of difference under different religious regimes was discussed by PETER GESCHIERE (Amsterdam). He showed that in Cameroon in the 1960s, ethnic differences were pacified by legally recognizing and facilitating regional differences under the umbrella of the nation, whereas up until the 1960s in the Netherlands, national unity was established by legally formalizing religious differences. Geschiere pointed out that societal strife in both instances took place mostly within the various segments of society. MARKHA VALENTA (Amsterdam) also called attention to different interpretations of diversity. According to her, even in countries favouring pluralism, minorities (most notably Muslims), struggle to assert themselves. She observes that in present-day Netherlands not all minorities are considered to be equal in their claims of religious freedom. Focusing on the current Dutch debate on ritual slaughtering, she identifies a tendency to deaccommodate religious minorities with arguments relating to bio-scientific findings about animal welfare. Neither secular, nor religious parties have an interest in applying a similar perspective to religion. The current debate thus takes religious minorities to be voluntary minorities, as opposed to involuntary minorities such as homosexuals, and circles around the question to what extent such minorities can rightfully claim civil liberties.

In his closing talk JAMES KENNEDY (Amsterdam) signalled four key questions for future research on religious regimes. Firstly, how do we apply the abstract notion of religious regimes to concrete research? Are regimes tied to state policy, or can they also be traced to civil society and even to the everyday life of individual citizens? Secondly, what are the sites and who are the agents of religious regimes? Can we regard states and churches as single actors in this respect? And to what extent are civic organizations and the media a factor? Thirdly, to what periods can religious regimes be applied? When did religious pluralism become accepted and how did secularists establish their views? Fourthly, what is the influence of globalization on religions regimes? How has the growing transnational interactions changed the ways people have defined the societal roles of religion?

The conference thus made clear that the concept of religious regimes points out many fields of society besides the churches which can fruitfully be studied in relation to religious pluralism. In such analyses of the history of religious pluralism in Europe, secularism should be regarded as a notion which informs against specific regimes of religious pluralism. Future research will likely benefit from also taking non-religious markers of pluralism (such as ethnic identities or class) into account.

Conference Overview:

Keynote:
Peter van Rooden (Amsterdam): Regimes of Religious Pluralism

Reaction by Peter van Dam (Amsterdam)

Chair: Markha Valenta (Amsterdam)

Session: Religious communities

Hugh McLeod (Birmingham): The Pluralism of Everyday Life

Benjamin Ziemann (Sheffield): Limits of Diversity in the German Religious Landscape, 1900-1960

Chair: Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (Leipzig)

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Session: Politics and Governance

Carl Reinhold Bråkenhielm (Uppsala): Transformations of Secular Regimes in Sweden

Cora Schuh, Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (Leipzig): Contested Secularities: Religious Minorities and Secular Progressivism in the Netherlands

Charles Glenn (Boston): Unstable Patterns of Religion and Education

Chair: Stephen Monsma (Grand Rapids)

Session: Civil society

Marjet Derks (Nijmegen): Claiming the Authentic. Dutch Religious Antagonism and International Networks in the long 1960s

Andrea M. Maccarini (Padova): Re-entering Pluralism, Emptying the Public Sphere? Secularization and De-secularization in Italian Civil Society

Stephen Monsma (Grand Rapids): Faith-Based Organizations in Civil Society: An American-Dutch Paradox

Chair: Charles Glenn (Boston)

Session: Global society

Peter Geschiere (Amsterdam): Nation-states and the Managing of Difference – Examples from Africa and Europe

Markha Valenta (Amsterdam): Religion on the Move and Secularism in Place: The Geopolitics of Pluralism

Chair: Hugh McLeod (Birmingham)

Workshops, first session

Migration and Religious Pluralism: Non-Christian Minorities in European Societies

Ekaterina Kolpinskaya (Nottingham): Religious Minorities' Interest Groups in British Politics: A Win-Win Strategy?

Bart Wallet (Amsterdam): Religious rites in a secular society. Ritual slaughter, religious diversity and Dutch politics (1919-2012)

Doutje Lettinga (Amsterdam): Framing the hijab. Explaining national differences in policies and debates on Islamic veiling in the Netherlands, France and Germany

Chair: Matthias Kortmann (Amsterdam)

'God is now my Neighbour'. Transmitting religious traditions since 1945

Bram Mellink (Amsterdam): Individualization

Paul van Trigt (Amsterdam): Professionalization

Pieter Fannes (Leuven): Creativity and self-expression

David Bos (Utrecht): Comments.

Chair: Stephen Monsma (Grand Rapids)

European Identity Politics and the Memory of Paganism

Jacob Christiansen Senholt (Aarhus): Identity Politics of the European Right: Pagan Challenges to the Secular-Christian Regime of Modernity

Colin Duggan (Cork): Religious pluralism and national narratives in late 19th and early 20th century Ireland

Julian Strube (Heidelberg): The Aryan Jesus from Outer Space: New Age Adaptations of völkisch Christianity

Chair: Egil Asprem (Amsterdam)

Workshops, second session

Religious Pluralism in the Welfare State

Amos Zehavi (Tel Aviv): How do individual-level religious trends impact religious welfare delivery? In search of a comparative framework

Robert Vonk (Amsterdam): Dancing around Mammon's Altar? The curious absence of religious involvement in health insurance, 1900-2000

Andreas Kurschat (Münster): The religious grammar of social security. The impact of religious communities on formation of European welfare states

Chair: Wouter Beekers (Amsterdam)

Religious Pluralism and Perceptions of the Past

Herman Paul (Leiden): The Fourth Man: Historicist Perceptions of Secularization in 1950s

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Europe

Peter-Ben Smith (Utrecht/Amsterdam): Being Old in a New World: Old Catholics and their Appeal of the Early Church in the Context of a „Broken Tradition“

Daan Beekers (Amsterdam): Reworking religious community in a pluralist society: young Dutch Christians and Muslims beyond 'survivals of the past'

Chair: Hugo den Boer (Kampen)

Global Christian networks within European contexts

Miranda Klaver (Amsterdam): Negotiating Religious Authority: Dutch Born Again Christianity and the Power of the Internet

Marten van der Meulen (Groningen): The Continuing Importance of the Local. African Churches and the Search for Worship Space in Amsterdam

Kim Knibbe (Groningen): African missionaries in Amsterdam: a meeting of modernities?

Chair: Markha Valenta (Amsterdam)

Closing

Closing lecture by James Kennedy (Amsterdam)

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