Engaging Conscience: The Promise of Liberalism

Lucas Swaine

Department of Government

Silsby Hall

Dartmouth College

Hanover, NH 03755

E-mail: Lucas.Swaine@dartmouth.edu

Paper prepared for delivery at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Winnipeg, MB, June 3-5, 2004. Draft version: please do not cite without permission.

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Religious tribulations comprise a series of tough problems for liberalism and liberal governance, both domestically and abroad. Within liberal democracies such as the United States, a variety of religious believers disagree vigorously with liberal policies, principles, and laws. Internationally, assorted groups of religious practitioners angrily display their disgust with liberal institutions, values, and ways of life. This discord testifies to a series of moral and prudential problems that put the very legitimacy of liberal governance at risk. Is there anything that liberals can do to help to diminish these rolling crises?

I believe that there exists an affirmative answer to this question, and in this essay I shall provide an argument about what steps liberals can take to help to defuse dilemmas connected with problematic religious devotees. I distinguish at the outset a category of religious devotees who have been especially problematic for liberalism and liberal government, and suggest that philosophical debates on public reason are in danger of failing to connect to those religious practitioners' concerns. I then elaborate three strategies that liberals and liberal government conscientiously could employ to better interact with religious extremists and other ambitious religious parties. First, I discuss ways in which liberals might help to prevent those religious practitioners from turning to violence or other forms of extreme action. Second, I consider the potential of employing reason and argumentation to help bring problematic religious devotees into greater harmony with liberal institutions, focusing on the special value of principles of liberty of conscience. Third, I examine the nature of the identities of religious devotees who object to liberal values, and describe modifications to those identities that liberals could help effectuate. With these strategies in place, I consider tactics and approaches for increasing

domestic and international comity between liberal institutions and theocratic communities and polities. I close with reflection on whether, in the end, liberalism could be truly made more appealing to the nonliberal and illiberal religious practitioners of the world.

1. Reconsidering Public Reason: The Challenge of Theocrats

I begin by carving out a particular category of religious devotees whom I shall call *theocrats*. I mean to identify here persons advocating a strict, religious mode of governance and rule by religious authorities, that is, those authorities sanctioned by doctrine.[1] In modern liberal democracies, theocrats divide naturally into two different kinds; I draw for the moment upon American examples, but this classification and the argument I shall provide have a wider application. The first kind of theocrat I shall call *ambitious*. Ambitious theocrats are enthusiastic participants in democratic life, engaging in public discourse and political affairs with a view to supplant liberal institutions with strict, religious government. Religious extremists and elements of the Religious Right in America are exponents of ambitious religious conceptions of the good, as are members of Nation of Islam and other Muslims who, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "have lost faith in America."[2] Ambitious theocrats are *politically* ambitious, promoting their doctrines fervently and in earnest, and using a variety of means to try to topple the liberal establishment and the debased values that they believe its institutions enshrine. It is no secret that Western democracies have a healthy contingent of ambitious theocrats, since those religious

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[1] See Lucas A. Swaine, "How Ought Liberal Democracies to Treat Theocratic Communities?" *Ethics*, Vol. 111, No. 1 (2001): 302-43, at pp. 303-08.

[2] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," in *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: The New American Library, 1963), p. 70. See also Louis A. DeCaro, Jr., *Malcolm and the Cross: The Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and Christianity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), chaps. 4, 12.

adherents regularly are active and vocal across a broad spectrum of public matters.[3] They are a symptom of democracy's discontent, one could say, concerned with the loss of self-government, the collapse of public morality, and the erosion of community.[4]

The second kind of theocrat may properly be called *retiring*. Unlike their ambitious counterpart, these theocrats withdraw from everyday affairs; they are reluctant to participate in political or other public matters, working to live instead in small communities where they may practice their religion in seclusion. In America, examples of such communities include Old Order Amish settlements, the Satmar Hasidim of the Village of Kiryas Joel, Native Indians from the Western Pueblos of New Mexico, extant polygamous Mormon communities, and the former City of Rajneeshpuram in Oregon. Each of these groups strives or has striven to form and maintain their communities in seclusion from outside life, withdrawn into their own villages, settlements, or territories, for the purposes of their religious practice.

Both retiring and ambitious theocrats are theocratic by degree: some are more hostile to liberal values such as freedom of association or individual free expression, and not all theocrats are dedicated to replacing governing liberal institutions with strict religious laws and authorities. For instance, some retiring theocrats, such as the Amish, have neither the desire to wield the sword of secular authority, nor the will to use corporal or more extreme forms of punishment against their members. The definition I have provided allows for this variation. Furthermore,

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[3] See, e.g., Axel R. Schaefer, "Evangelicalism, Social Reform and the U.S. Welfare State, 1970-1996," in *Religious and Secular Reform in America: Ideas, Beliefs, and Social Change*, ed. David K. Adams and Cornelis A. van Minnen (New York: New York University Press, 1999), pp. 249-73. Schaefer emphasizes the social and theological diversity of both evangelical and fundamentalist Christians.

[4] Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 3.

leaders of theocratic communities within liberal democracies are legally forbidden from coercing dissenters severely, they are unable to stop those who wish to exit their communities from so doing, and their authority over outsiders is very limited. Yet despite these restrictions, theocratic communities continue to burgeon in liberal democracies, representing religious traditions and ways of life stemming from each of a variety of religious doctrines.

Theocrats present a series of difficult challenges for ideals of civility and principles of public reason as well. Ambitious theocrats are regularly critical of democratic life, speaking out on the inappropriateness of permissive legislation, the poor performance of political institutions, or the regrettable loss of morality in contemporary society. Ambitious theocrats' political participation is a source of deep discordance in liberal democracies, both with respect to the views they provide on policy issues, as well as the ways in which they contribute to public discourse. Where theocrats give religious reasons for supporting or censuring policies and laws, in particular, secular parties contend that the reasons are inadmissible in public debate. Such responses frustrate theocrats in their efforts to be taken seriously in public discussion, fostering a sense of disenfranchisement amongst private religious citizens and religious associations alike. The same is true of particular policy proposals that zealous religious parties often try to advance. To theocrats, and to religious adherents broadly, secular parties can appear to be neither receptive, nor respectful, with regard to matters of profound concern to them. From the perspectives of secular citizens and religious moderates, ambitious religious devotees often seem overzealous and simply unreasonable in their efforts to bring religious considerations to public debate, both with respect to the proposals they make and the ways in which they make them.

A number of philosophers, including Robert Audi, James Bohman, Kent Greenawalt, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, John Rawls, Paul Weithman, and Nicholas Wolterstorff, have enriched philosophical deliberations on public reason by providing interesting and thoughtful contributions.[5] The problem is that much of the debate regarding of public reason is narrowly calibrated for persons who already accept to a significant degree liberal principles of reciprocity and civility, who are "reasonable" in a Rawlsian sense, who affirm and abide burdens of judgment, or who affirm a list of primary goods similar to that which Rawls provides.[6] If arguments respecting public reason cannot be demonstrated to be relevant to theocrats and their non- or antiliberal religious conceptions of the good, they risk disengagement from one of the most serious remaining problems of simple pluralism, a conundrum that the very debates over public reason were presumably intended to help assuage.[7] Furthermore, discussions of public reason remain quite abstract on the whole, failing to identify or recommend ways in which liberals could engage, not merely reasonable people who differ over narrowly defined issues within the framework of broadly held liberal principles and values, but those roaming the theoretical space outside of that structure. And there is a cost for such continuing detachment:

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[5] See Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); James Bohman, "Public Reason and Cultural Pluralism: Political Liberalism and the Problem of Moral Conflict," *Political Theory*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1995): 253-79; Bohman, "Citizenship and Norms of Publicity: Wide Public Reason in Cosmopolitan Societies," *Political Theory*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1999): 176-202, at pp. 186-87, *passim*; Kent Greenawalt, *Private Consciences and Public Reasons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 55-65, *passim*; John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, paperback edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 212-54; Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," in *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 129-80; Paul J. Weithman, *Religion and the Obligations of Citizenship*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 65, 138; Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Role of Religion in Political Issues," in Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square* (London: Rowman & Littlfield, 1997).
[6] See Rawls (1996), pp. 54-58, 178-89, 223-30, 393-95; Audi (2001), pp. 84-86, 92-93; Weithman (2002), pp. 135 ff., 142, 208-17. Cf. Bohman (1995), arguing for a "plural" conception of public reason (pp. 255-56, 262 ff.).
[7] Cf. Bohman (1999), p. 178.

namely, a series of prudential problems and moral failures raised by theocrats whose ways of life do not harmonize with standing liberal institutions and laws.[8]

I do not mean to imply that philosophical debates over the nature of public reason are futile. To the contrary, discussions of public reason cover a string of important issues, including whether one could ever work out an adequate standard for accessible public reasons, whether inaccessible reasons should count as admissible in public discourse, the extent to which there is a duty of sincerity for those offering public reasons in favor of coercive policies or laws, or whether reliance upon the dictates of religious authorities is acceptable for liberal citizens where they vote or participate in politics otherwise. I shall not address those issues in detail here, since that is not my central concern; but I will contend that liberal arguments about elements of public reason could be joined with consideration of the strategies for treating ambitious theocrats that I provide below. I am not arguing that people should not provide accessible arguments in public debate, nor am I suggesting that it is consistent with civic virtue for one to rely on religious reasons alone, or the mere word of a putative religious authority, where one advocates or otherwise advances some particular policy or law. The question that I want to ask is what can liberals *do* about the larger problems raised by theocrats, within the bounds of propriety and right?

2. Religious Extremism: Stopping the Turn to Violence

Recent years have witnessed a surge of religiously motivated political behavior in America, in liberal democracies elsewhere, and in various other regions and nations of the world. Where that

[8] See Lucas Swaine, "A Liberalism of Conscience," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2003): 369-91, at pp. 372-82 [hereinafter Swaine 2003a].

behavior contests liberal principles and norms, it is at times overtly violent. I have to this point distinguished retiring from ambitious theocrats, and suggested that the latter category includes violent religious extremists as well as religious practitioners working through more peaceful means to supplant existing liberal institutions and laws and with stricter regulations and institutions. I shall now directly address ambitious theocrats and the problems they create; and I will take the problem of extremist religious groups first, those that present a high risk of violence or which engage in violent behavior outright. I have mentioned that those groups present very real, serious concerns for liberals and liberal democratic governance; what, if anything, can be done to assuage the problems that they elicit?

I commence with empirical analyses of extremist religious groups and their formation. Much of that activity is considered under studies of "terrorism," which has obvious drawbacks, not the least of which is that there is dispute over what should count as a terrorist organization. For the purposes of this essay, I wish to analyze groups that engage in religious violence instead of only those groups and organizations covered under a more narrowly defined rubric of terrorism. It is important to be clear that while there are extremist examples amongst new or minority religions, there is "relatively little evidence" that the vast majority of those religious groups pose danger.[9] David Tucker has argued that it is not religion *per se* that is the problem with extremist religious groups, but the "type" of religion that is most critical.[10] The point merits agreement in part: it is true that religious extremism is not limited to Islamic groups, for instance,

[9] James T. Richardson, "Minority Religions and the Context of Violence: A Conflict/Interactionist Perspective," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2001): 103-33, pp. 104, 122. See also Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1984), discussing one hundred new American religious sects. Cf. *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

since extremism is identifiable from a wide variety of religious doctrines. But for Tucker's claim to be plausible, types of religion would need to be further disaggregated; and ambitious theocratic motivations of various kinds remain a central and persistent source of grief for liberals and liberal democratic governance.

Analyses of religious extremism to date are scanty, but one must work with that which is available. In a study of terrorist group formation, Ami Pedahzur, William Eubank, and Leonard Weinberg found that new terrorist groups are largely religious in orientation.[11] They determined that of nearly 400 identifiable terrorist organizations around globe, the number of terrorist religious organizations was smaller than those of left-wing, right-wing, or nationalist groups. But religious terrorism is emerging more quickly: 71.4% of terrorist organizations established in 1990s were religious.[12] There now exists "a constellation of [terrorist] organizations with religiously-inspired agendas," as the authors describe it, with militant Islamic groups comprising the lion's share.[13] These religious groups are dangerous, even though not much is "new" in their organizational or network structures.[14]

Can liberals or liberal government do anything to defuse the tendency for new and minority religions to turn to violence? Jonathan Fox argues that data from the Minorities at Risk project show that religious institutions tend peacefully to oppose legal or political impositions

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[10] David Tucker, "What Is New About the New Terrorism and How Dangerous Is It?" *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2001): 1-14, p. 8.
[11] Ami Pedahzur, William Eubank, and Leonard Weinberg, "The War on Terrorism and The Decline of Terrorist Group Formation: A Research Note," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2002): 141-47.
[12] Ibid., p. 146.
[13] Ibid.; see Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 86-129.
[14] Tucker (2001), p. 4.

unless they perceive a threat to their institutional structure or to their very religion itself.[15] He maintains that violent opposition tends to emerge where one finds a group-level desire for autonomy and independence, resulting from perceived discrimination. Fox's analysis is consistent with Jean-François Mayer's, who contends that the perception of an assault on a religious group is a key motivational factor prompting such groups to take extreme actions against liberal citizens and institutions.[16] Mayer suggests that both the Rajneeshees and Branch Davidians displayed and "obsession with persecution," noting that the same held true for other religious communities that turned to violence, such as Order of the Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo in Japan, and Divine Light Zentrum in Switzerland.[17]

It is worth emphasizing that each of these groups was theocratic, inasmuch as each group promoted a strict, antiliberal, religious conception of the good, advocating control of their communities by religious authorities. Otherwise, the groups are interestingly heterogeneous. For example, not all of the aforementioned violent religious communities were guru-based. Furthermore, only some of these groups held apocalyptic visions of the future,[18] and not all were millenarian.[19] Certain of these groups engaged in mass casualty attacks: members of Aum Shinrikyo, for instance, killed nineteen and injured 6,100 people in two sarin gas strikes on Japanese targets in 1994 and 1995. Some commentators have argued that groups such as Aum

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[15] Jonathan Fox, "Do Religious Institutions Support Violence or the Status Quo?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 22 (1999): 119-39.
[16] Jean-François Mayer, "Cults, Violence and Religious Terrorism: An International Perspective," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 24 (2001): 361-76. See also Richardson (2001), pp. 110-12, 114-15, 123.
[17] Ibid., pp. 366-67, *passim*. See Ian Reader, *A Poisonous Cocktail? Aum Shinrikyo's Path to Violence* (Copenhagen: NIAS Publications, 1996).
[18] Mayer (2001), pp. 362, 367-69.
[19] See Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000).

Shinrikyo sit "sufficiently divorced from world" that attacks aiming to inflict mass casualties become a seemingly sensible proposition.[20] What, if anything, can liberals do about this?

Liberals could mitigate the tendency of such communities to turn to violence if they were able to lessen or remove the group's sense of persecution; and this is within the scope of liberal capability. First, liberals could use forbearance here, being careful before countenancing the putative backwardness of theocratic communities and other minority religious groups, intimating that those groups are abusive to women and children, or suggesting that such communities are otherwise "irrational" or "mad and aggressive."[21] And yet there has been no shortage of such claims and intimations in academic and other liberal discourse.[22] Non-government parties have also used "atrocity tales"—e.g., of physical and sexual abuse at Waco—as one particularly effective method to prompt reactions from government.[23] It is important to resist temptations quickly to smear new religious groups as bizarre, unjust, or violent. For doing so uses "attributions as social weapons," as Richardson puts it.[24] It matters how religious groups get labeled by others, since doing so can create a "context of violence," one marked by "interdependency, conflict, and the use of atrocity tales and labels as social weapons on both

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[20] Tucker (2001), p. 8. The Old Order Amish are a counterexample to this view: the *Ordnung* forbids them from conforming to mainstream practices and requires that they remain apart from contemporary social and political life, but their doctrine and communities have evolved such that Amish persons pose no threat of violence to nonmembers.

[21] Cf. Rawls (1996), p. 144; cf. also pp. 170, 199.

[22] See, e.g., Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), chapter 5, *passim*; Richard Arneson and Ian Shapiro, "Democratic Autonomy and Religious Freedom: A Critique of *Wisconsin v. Yoder,*" in Ian Shapiro and Russell Hardin (eds.), *Political Order: Nomos XXXVIII* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 365-411; Shapiro, *The State of Democratic Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 4, 36-48, 102-03; George Kateb, "Can Cultures Be Judged? Two Defenses of Cultural Pluralism in Isaiah Berlin's Work," *Social Research*, Vol. 99, No. 4 (1999): 1009-38; cf. Susan Moller Okin, "'Mistresses of Their Own Destiny': Group Rights, Gender, and Realistic Rights of Exit," *Ethics*, Vol. 112 (2002): 205-30; and Okin, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" *Boston Review*, Vol. 22 (1997): 25-28.

[23] Ibid., pp. 117-18; see Christopher G. Ellison and John P. Bartowski, "'Babies Were Being Beaten': Exploring Child Abuse Accusations at Ranch Apocalypse," in Stuart Wright (ed.), *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 111-49.

sides."[25] One finds support for this view in other research: John Wybraniec and Roger Finke noted a disturbing incidence of unfounded charges of child neglect and abuse levied against uncommon communal and family groups.[26] And government is hardly invulnerable to this tendency: the French Parliament published an official report in 1995 entitled *Les Sectes en France*, in which they generously identified 173 sects as displaying "dangerous characteristics"; the Church of Scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses, and even evangelical Protestants were tarred with their brush.[27]

These negative attributions are bad and undesirable in several ways. First of all, they damage the reputation and standing of religious practitioners where the claims and attributions are undeserved, and so casting aspersions in that way is morally wrong. Second, evidence indicates that such attributions are more likely to spark problems by creating a sense of persecution; this holds for extremist third parties lashing out where they believe government seriously mistreats theocratic communities, as well.[28] So there is a prudential reason to care about citizens or government parties throwing around undeserved, negative characterizations of theocratic communities. Third, the willingness to use such negative attributions without proper grounds testifies to a lack of civility and respect for religious practitioners and their conceptions of the good, whereas liberals should stand in defense of principles of conscience, religious liberty, and more vulnerable minority groups in liberal polities.

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[24] Richardson (2001), p. 105.
[25] Ibid, pp. 122-23; cf. Reader (1996), pp. 37-53, 90-92.
[26] John Wybraniec and Roger Finke, "Religious Regulation and the Courts: The Judiciary's Changing Role in Protecting Minority Religions from Majoritarian Rule," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (2001): 427-44, p. 430.
[27] Ibid., p. 431; Wybraniec and Finke note that Jehovah's Witnesses continue to face outright persecution in various European countries, despite the fact that in several nations they are the second largest religious group (p. 442, n. 7).
[28] See Swaine (2003a), pp. 376-77.

This leads to a second suggestion. Liberals could improve on the ways in which they defend uncommon religious communities, to demonstrate better respect for those persons and their ways of life. Here, liberals could speak with greater force and conviction about liberal principles of conscience and theocrats' moral right to religious free exercise. Liberals would do well to address the anti-cult movement, for instance, entreating them to refrain from using social and discursive networks to disseminate stories and rumors about theocratic communities. Furthermore, this case could be made to liberal government and courts: both government and courts have behaved in unacceptable and at times openly despicable ways when characterizing and treating minority religious practices, and liberals should fight against that tendency wherever it may exist. One must remember that very few uncommon religious communities begin violent or seek at their inception to overthrow liberal institutions, and there seems to be no reason for them to evolve in violent directions. Those groups could grow to exist in harmony with liberalism and liberal institutions, and I daresay the world would be better off if they did so.

Third, liberals could work to disseminate and infuse three liberal principles of conscience in members of minority religious groups at risk of turning to violence, to reduce the likelihood that those people come to see themselves as being at odds with liberal principles and institutions. The three principles are as follows:

(P1) Conscience must be free to reject lesser religious doctrines and conceptions of the good (the principle of rejection)

(P2) Conscience must be free to accept the good (the principle of affirmation)

(P3) Conscience must be free to distinguish between good and bad doctrines and conceptions of the good (the principle of distinction)

I have articulated and defended these principles elsewhere;[29] and argued not only that theocrats are committed rationally to these principles, but that there is reason for them to affirm the principles as well.[30] I shall not undertake to rehearse those lines of reasoning here, but I will suggest that if new terrorist groups are primarily religious in nature, then arguments from the three principles of conscience hold the promise of being commonly applicable to them, and could inform the policies and actions government takes with respect to religious groups at risk of becoming violent.

Still, external pressures and attributions are not the only contributory factors prompting religious groups toward extreme actions. Mayer points out that internal dissent and protest can trigger a turn toward violence also, citing as an example David Koresh, who turned vehemently against defectors from the Branch Davidians.[31] The same is true of Aum Shinrikyo, whose leader Shoko Asahara was charged with murdering an uncooperative Aum member in February, 1994. That slaying preceded a series of assaults, kidnappings, and murders; and in February, 2004, Asahara was finally convicted of having planned and ordered multiple killings.[32] Another example one could adduce is that of the Mormon splinter group Church of the Lamb of God,

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[29] See Lucas A. Swaine, "Institutions of Conscience: Politics and Principle in a World of Religious Pluralism," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2003): 93-118 [hereinafter Swaine 2003b]; cf. Swaine, "Religious Pluralism and the Liberty of Conscience," in *Pluralism Without Relativism: Remembering Sir Isaiah Berlin*, ed. João Carlos Espada, Marc. F. Plattner, and Adam Wolfson (Lexington Books and Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).
[30] See Swaine (2003b), pp. 95-104.
[31] Mayer (2001), pp. 366-67.

whose members killed numerous people connected with the group in 1970s and 1980s even after their leader, Evril LeBaron, had died in jail. It seems quite correct to say that under conditions of greater internal pressures and intra-group instability, "even moderate external opposition is easily translated into a narrative of cosmic persecution."[33]

What can or should liberals do about dissent and protest within religious communities? This is a complicated question, but in the end one simply cannot expect to prevent internal dissent from occurring and recurring within religious groups. What is more, it would be a fool's game to try to do so. The legacy of the Reformation leads one to understand, if nothing else, that schism and dissent are facts of human existence. However, some of the pressure toward extreme actions against group members and nonmembers could be relieved if group members better understood their right to exit from their communities. Here, Susan Okin's concerns about realistic rights of exit from theocratic communities could be addressed in part by liberty of conscience arguments: those arguments could be taught to children and youth, promulgated not just to women but to all members of theocratic communities, and enforced by law.[34] Those people need to understand their ability to exit, and their moral and legal rights thereto; that way, members will be less inclined to feel or to be trapped. But more than this could be accomplished by a proper dissemination of liberal principles of conscience to members of theocratic groups. For the effective teaching of those principles would lead group members to understand that leaving one's religious community, if conscience deems it necessary, is countenanced and

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[32] See Mark R. Mullins, "Aum Shinrikyo as an Apocalyptic Movement," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movememements*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 313-24.

[33] See Massimo Introvigne, "The Magic of Death: The Suicides of the Solar Temple," in *Millennialism, Persecution, & Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 138-57, p. 157. Cf. Richardson (2001), pp. 113-15 ff.

supported by sound moral principles. Conscience must be free to accept good, to reject the bad, and to distinguish between the two; this implies that one must affirm and reaffirm the institutions of social suasion and political control under which one lives, standing prepared to reject those institutions if necessary. In addition, if liberal principles of conscience were broadly disseminated and taught to all members of religious communities in liberal democracies, it stands to reason that there would be a lower likelihood that group leaders would contend that their own members must be forbidden from leaving if they dissent or defect, since if effective the teaching would impress upon them the primary importance of liberty of conscience. To this end, it will be critical to teach children and youth to respect liberty of conscience as a primary educational principle in liberal democracies, and to impress the common importance of that value on them.

This leads to a fourth suggestion. Allowing theocratic communities to acquire quasi sovereignty would help them to feel less threatened by liberal government, since it would show that liberal government is prepared to respect their religious practices and beliefs, giving members of those communities the option of greater religious autonomy and the ability to create a *nomos* of their own.[35] It would also require clarity and fair dealing on the part of government, if instituted and protected adequately; the lack of square dealing has not helped the sense of persecution in those groups. A semisovereign option will not stop or prevent all internal or external violence for theocratic communities, of course, but it would help. And what is more, properly providing that option would better respect the liberal commitment to liberty of

[34] Cf. Okin (1997, 2002).
[35] See generally Swaine (2001).

conscience, to which every liberal democracy pays fealty, and which is critically important to proponents of liberalism individually.

New religious communities tend to be more radical than established ones;[36] for those religious groups at risk of turning to violence against liberal citizens and institutions, or versus their own membership, government should judiciously maintain careful relations. I suspect that new law enforcement techniques would be salutary, here, since interactions with government and law will be mediated in part through the coercive arms of the liberal polity. Government will need to be sensitive to how social and legal contexts and interactions can prompt violent reactions from religious groups. But government will also have to be vigilant in watching for outbreaks of physical violence, the rapid acquisition of weapons and firearms, and other warning signs. There tends to be a lead-up stage to serious violent reactions with theocratic groups: Aum Shinrikyo began by beating wavering and uncooperative members, with over thirty Aum followers believed to have been killed between 1988 and 1995;[37] David Koresh went through a process of buying firearms; and the Rajneeshees acquired handguns early on as well.[38] Another group, The Way International, required expertise in marksmanship of their members and apparently started stockpiling weapons.[39] These are signs to watch out for; and government will have to be vigilant here, defusing such situations tactfully if groups start heading down those paths. Furthermore, such practices will have to be taken under consideration where communities wish to attempt to acquire quasi-sovereign status. Government would have to monitor potentially

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[36] J. Gordon Melton and Robert L. Moore, *The Cult Experience: Responding to the New Religious Pluralism* (New York: Pilgrim, 1982), pp. 17-18.
[37] See Mullins (1997), pp. 319-20. See also Susumu Shimazono, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 22 (1995): 381-415.
[38] Mayer (2001), pp. 368-70 ff.
[39] Richardson (2001), pp. 107-08.

problematic groups closely once they are semisovereign, as well, and could not fail to act if such behaviors started occurring in quasi-sovereign theocratic communities. While government should be chary in attributing violent or abusive behavior to religious communities, actual negligence and abuse must not be tolerated.[40] That is to say, where communities successfully gain semisovereign status, violations of basic human rights by fellow members should not simply be something with which liberals will have to "learn to live."[41]

3. Approaches to Ambitious Theocrats: Reasons and Arguments

I now turn to consider the second segment of ambitious theocrats mentioned above. Here I shall concentrate on persons holding ambitious religious conceptions of the good, but who are less extreme than members of groups such as Rajneeshpuram, Aum Shinrikyo, or the Branch Davidians. While the case that I make will apply to those uncommon groups as well, I will focus more specifically on elements of the Christian Right in America. Members of Nation of Islam and other zealous Muslims should be included by the case that I will provide, as will be similarly ambitious theocrats from other religious traditions. What is common to these theocratic religious practitioners is their political ambitiousness; still, ambitious theocrats are not all alike. They display varying degrees of extremity on a range of issues, they may be or may not be evangelical, and their cultural and theological traditions vary significantly. Nevertheless, ambitious theocrats are different than retiring theocrats inasmuch as they fight variously to repeal laws on abortion, to contest homosexuality, to bring back other socially conservative values, or to revivify a closer relation between church and state. Ambitious theocrats are

[40] Richardson (2001), p. 108.

[41] See Will Kymlikca, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 168. Kymlicka refers to violations of basic human rights in national minority groups, some of which (e.g., the Pueblo Indians) qualify as theocratic communities.

different than their retiring counterpart, in short, since they do not desire to withdraw from public life into their own nomic communities. With respect to these religious practitioners, what should liberals do?

Following the arguments given above, I propose that liberals should work to give ambitious theocrats reasons to affirm liberalism that they can accept. As a first step, liberals should provide general arguments in favor of liberty of conscience, articulating the reasons that there are for ambitious theocrats to affirm liberal institutions and laws. One might immediately object that this places too much of a burden on reason and rationality, since ambitious theocrats seem famously able to ignore or deny what seem to secular parties to be very compelling arguments. But that objection is too quick: theocrats may be situated differently than liberals, secularists, or more moderate religious parties, but they are still receptive to reasons. And it is surely morally better to give good reasons to those persons than it is to refrain from doing so at all. When it comes to coercive impositions, government should have and provide good reasons for interfering ready to hand; and here liberals can help by better outlining appropriate and justifiable principles and guidelines for government interaction with theocrats.

Principles of liberty of conscience will be integral to an adequate explanation given on this front. The three principles I have identified provide strong requirements for theocrats to affirm liberal political institutions, while other values do not; theocrats are committed rationally to those principles; and the theocrat's rational commitment is derived from entirely reasonable beliefs respecting the value of pursuing otherworldly powers and ends. The value of liberty of conscience cannot be expected to decide all possible policy controversies, of course. Nor would

liberty of conscience be the only factor worth considering, in thinking through the wide variety of controversial and divisive political issues that arise in the natural course of development of free societies. But no hopes should be dashed by this concession. Rather, I propose more modestly that the value of liberty of conscience could serve in a broader, fundamental justification for a liberal order, one that could speak to the religious devotees of the world's multicultural and multi-faith polities.

One might object that promulgating the three principles of conscience to theocrats would be unacceptable, because advancing them would undermine religious teachings and values of a wide variety of religious communities. Obligations of conscience cut against the principles I have articulated and defended, one could contend, and as such they are both insensitive to the religious values they mean to protect, as well as simply being unacceptable from a philosophical point of view.

This objection seems serious, but it is misguided: for conscience is obligated to observe the principles of rejection, affirmation, and distinction that I have identified, if it is obligated to follow any principles at all. Those principles enjoy at least a *prima facie* logically prior relation to any specific obligations or claims to conscience. To defeat the principles of conscience I have articulated, which require that conscience be free to accept the good, to reject the bad, and to distinguish between the two, one will have to marshal powerful reason indeed. While that is not a logically impossible feat, it will be very difficult to accomplish; for freedom of conscience appears to be a demand of conscience itself. Furthermore, the adoption of liberal principles of conscience would not undermine the "religiously integrated existence" that many religious

people seek.[42] Religious practitioners could treat the three principles of conscience as maxims of civic virtue, continuing to act according to religious motivations. In the end, many religious motivations and acts would be entirely consistent with the three principles I have outlined. With this in view, adopting and being motivated by principles of conscience holds the promise of an ameliorated kind of religiously integrated existence.

The view that I am advancing may be caricatured as relying upon an excessively Calvinist, Western, or liberal understanding of religion; but such complaints do not show that the argument is deficient in any meaningful way. After all, the principles of conscience that I have identified do not require thoroughgoing or continuous reflection on the part of each citizen, and so do not amount to a version of comprehensive liberalism that is somehow secretive or unaware of its design. Nor do liberal principles of conscience require self-abnegation on the part of those who adopt them; to the contrary, those principles can be integrated with robust principles of justice and equality, they allow for broad forms of religious practice and religious liberty, and they connect with people's own ends. As such, the three principles of conscience could be adopted by theocrats and liberals alike, in ways enabling people to pursue their conceptions of the good freely and allowing them to live their religion well and truly. Promulgation of the principles also has prospects for bridging gaps between persons, insofar as liberty of conscience arguments are compatible with various religious and secular views, connecting closely to reasons

[42] See Audi and Wolterstoff (1997), p. 105; cf. Weithman (2002), pp. 152-55, 159. See also Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Sandel, "Freedom of Conscience or Freedom of Choice?" in *Articles of Faith, Articles of Peace*, ed. James Davison Hunter and Os Guinness (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1990), pp. 74-93. Cf. Charles Larmore, *The Morals of Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 129-31; and John Tomasi, *Liberalism Beyond Justice: Citizens, Society, and the Boundaries of Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), chap. 2.

differently-situated people have to affirm liberalism, in a context of legitimacy and political stability.

The provision of abstract reasons alone will not suffice to quell theocratic discord or to bring ambitious theocrats and liberals into a harmonious relationship. But there is evidence to suggest that providing abstract arguments in favor of freedom of conscience could successfully alter theocratic attitudes and behavior to a modest extent. This is supported by a study by Clyde Wilcox, et al., who attempted to measure the amount of vertical constraint in mass publics, compared to elites.[43] They noted a positive correlation between people's attitudes and the abstract principles they affirmed: in examining Americans' responses to abstract questions on Establishment Clause issues, Wilcox, et al. found a "moderately high degree" of vertical constraint in the mass public.[44] This finding bolsters the expectation that abstract arguments in favor of principles of conscience would help in the effort to prompt ambitious theocrats to affirm liberalism. And if liberal arguments could be used to modify theocratic attitudes even modestly, that would, in turn, hold prospects for altering illiberal theocratic behavior. The least that one can conclude, here, is that this view is not inconsistent with the data; and it coheres with other findings, such as those of David Leege, Lyman Kellstedt, et al., who have noted that abstract beliefs about the Bible are "important predictors" of partisanship, vote choice, and attitudes toward abortion.[45]

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[43] Clyde Wilcox, et al., "Public Attitudes Toward Church-State Issues: Elite-Mass Differences," *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (1992): 259-77.
[44] Ibid., pp. 264, 268. Cf. generally John Zaller, *The Nature and Origin of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[45] David C. Leege, Lyman A. Kellstedt, et al., *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics* (Armonk, NY and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), p. 194.

Further support for this thesis comes from studies distinguishing moral obligations from attitudes, where the former are measured by the degree to which outcomes fulfill religious values, and the latter are more properly likes and dislikes.[46] There appears to be a meaningful, demonstrable empirical distinction between moral obligations and attitudes, so conceived.[47] But that is not all: Richard Gorsuch and John Ortberg, Jr. have also adduced evidence to show that a sense of moral obligation adds to behavioral intentions over and above attitudes, where a short series of criteria are met.[48] The authors find that attitude and moral obligations are psychologically independent, and that individual behavior can be changed by engaging religious values relevant to moral obligations, independent of attitude change.[49] They speculate that the "best approach to value change may be similar to, but distinct from, that used in attitude change."[50] As they put it, "[it] may be important to know not only what moral obligations people hold, but also which religious values may be salient to a given situation if behavior is to be changed."[51] In the end, evidence from the work of Gorsuch and Ortburg suggests that messages aimed at expectations of attitude as well as salient religious values can be powerful agents of behavioral change.[52]

The conclusion one draws is that liberals would do well to give ambitious theocrats in liberal polities arguments articulating the primary importance of liberty of conscience, both from

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[46] John C. Ortberg, Jr., Richard L. Gorsuch, and Grace J. Kim, "Changing Attitude and Moral Obligation: Their Independent Effects on Behavior," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (2001): 489-96.
[47] Ibid.; cf. also Richard L. Gorsuch, "Attitudes, Interests, Sentiments, and Moral Obligations," in *Functional Psychological Testing*, ed. R. C. Johnson and R. B. Cattell (Larchmont, NY: Brunner/Mazel, 1986).
[48] Ibid., p. 490; cf. Richard L. Gorsuch and John C. Ortburg, "Moral Obligations and Attitudes: Their Relation to Behavioral Intentions," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 44 (1983): 1025-28.
[49] Ibid., p. 494. The authors confirm that religious values can underlie moral obligations (ibid.).
[50] Ibid., p. 491.
[51] Ibid. Gorsuch and Ortburg determine that moral obligations "added to predicting over and above both attitude and social norms" (ibid.).
[52] Ibid., p. 495.

grounds of moral obligation and proceeding from theocrats' bases of religious values as well. Liberals could provide arguments against the viability of polities whose institutions fail to protect liberty of conscience: a turn toward theocracy should be simply out of contention, to help in cases where people are leaning in that direction. These arguments could focus on theocrats' beliefs and attitudes, also looking to modify their expectations of positive and negative outcomes.[53] Such arguments could be joined with conciliatory, prudential, and other theological reasons to affirm liberalism; and while liberals may not be expert in the theological and religious traditions of various theocratic groups, more could be done to support liberal religious figures able to articulate doctrinal reasons for particular theocratic religious groups to affirm liberal principles and laws.

4. Engagement

There is a substantial literature examining effects of social networks on individual attitudes, and facts of social interaction are crucial for understanding the nature and orientation of political and social attitudes alike.[54] Social networks influence religious attitudes and behaviors: they enhance religious participation,[55] and are "salient predictors of religiosity" even where one controls for

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[53] Ibid., p. 491.

[54] See Robert R. Huckfeldt and John D. Sprague, "Networks in Context: The Social Flow of Political Information," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81 (1987): 1197-1216; Huckfeldt and Sprague, "Discussant Effects on Vote Choice: Intimacy, Structure and Interdependence," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 53 (1991): 122-158; Huckfeldt and Sprague, *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Ronald Lake and Robert Huckfeldt, "Social Networks, Social Capital, and Political Participation," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 19 (1998): 567-584; Alan S. Zuckerman, Laurence A. Kotler-Berkowitz, and Lucas A. Swaine, "Anchoring Political Preferences: The Structural Bases of Stable Electoral Decisions and Political Attitudes in Britain," *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 33 (1998): 285-321; Richard J. Timpone, "Ties that Bind: Measurement, Demographics, and Social Connectedness," *Political Behavior*, Vol. 20 (1991): 53-77.

[55] James C. Cavendish, Michael R. Welch and David C. Leege, "Social Network Theory and Predictors of Religiosity for Black and White Catholics: Evidence of a 'Black Sacred Cosmos'?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1998): 397-410. See also Ted G. Jelen, "Political Christianity: A Contextual Analysis," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 36 (1992): 692-714; David C. Leege, "The Parish as Community," *Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life*, Vol. 10 (1987): 1-14; Kenneth Wald, Dennis Owen and Samuel Hill, Jr.,

race and various other factors.[56] Social networks do not merely reinforce norms and expectations about religious behavior, they also apparently "enhance religious expression" by fostering and maintaining the kinds of community that sustain religious practice.[57] Kenneth Wald observes that church members "[participate] in a social network," arguing that there exists a positive relation between church attendance and voter participation, even though church attendance alone does not obviously encourage other forms of political involvement.[58]

The importance of social networks at the micro-level is affirmed in a recent study of religious practitioners' attitudes conducted by Peer Scheepers and Frans van der Slik, who looked to the "primary circle" of a group of survey respondents' spouses, parents, and parents-in-law, finding that each sector of the circle impacted respondents' moral attitudes. They argue that the effects of being involved in a religious community are stronger for males than females when it comes to attitudes on moral issues. Males' moral attitudes are more strongly influenced by public interaction with their religious community, whereas females' moral attitudes are relatively strongly affected by religious contemplation.[59] Sheepers and van der Slik's findings

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"Churches as Political Communities," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82 (1988): 531-48; Michael R. Welch, "Religious Participation and Commitment among Catholic Parishioners: The Relative Importance of Individual, Contextual, and Institutional Factors," in *Church and Denominational Growth*, ed. David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), pp. 324-35; Kenneth D. Wald, Dennis E. Owen, and Samuel S. Hill, Jr., "Political Cohesion in Churches," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 1. (Feb., 1990), pp. 197-215.

[56] Cavendish, et al. (1998), p. 405.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Kenneth Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, second edition (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1992), pp. 35-36.

[59] Peer Scheepers and Frans van der Slik, "Religion and Attitudes on Moral Issues: Effects of Individual, Spouse and Parental Characteristics," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (1998): 678-91, p. 688. This study was conducted in the Netherlands, but the authors surmise that the effects of primary circles will be even stronger in less secularized societies such as the USA (p. 689).

complement those of Kevin Welch, who has argued that "intracongregational friendships" are an important measure for predicting commitment to orthodox religious belief.[60]

Given the relative importance of social networks with regard to religious practitioners' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, I propose that liberals should involve themselves in ambitious theocrats' social networks, to enter into dialogic partnerships and to provide them with arguments in favor of liberty of conscience. This entrance into theocratic social networks I shall call *infiltration*;[61] and by it I do not mean to suggest anything secretive, disingenuous, or untoward on the part of liberals. Rather, I propose that liberals should enter and enmesh themselves in theocrats' supportive social networks, discussing principles of conscience with them giving them arguments in favor of maintaining and protecting liberal institutions. Here, the voice and manner of communication will be important;[62] and it will be crucial for liberals to be respectful and fair in communicating with theocrats, instead of merely trying to hammer them with liberal dogmas of their own. To complement this effort, liberals could better support secondary organizations able to disseminate liberal principles of conscience through ambitious theocratic networks. Civil liberties groups and liberal religious organizations are fairly good candidates for endorsement by liberals,[63] but those organizations will need to be prodded and cajoled to be mindful of the importance of treating theocrats with the respect that they deserve.

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[60] Kevin W. Welch, "An Interpersonal Influence Model of Traditional Religious Commitment," *Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 22 (1981): 81-92. See also Michael R. Welch and John Baltzell, "Geographic Mobility, Social Integration, and Church Attendance," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 23 (1984): 75-91; cf. Cavendish, et al. (1998), p. 398.

[61] Wald (1992) has introduced the idea of "infiltration" where religious groups "seek to place one of [their] members in office" (p. 181). There is reason to think that a similar process could work for liberals, where they place themselves in some sector of ambitious theocrats' social networks.

[62] Cf. Audi (2000), pp. 157, 165-66, 175. Cf. Rawls (1996), describing how the duty of civility "involves a willingness to listen to others" (p. 217).

In addition, liberals could do a better job of identifying, supporting, and assisting more liberal members of ambitious theocratic groups in liberal democracies, as I have suggested. By way of an international analogue, one need only consider the position of liberal mullahs or religious figures in theocratic countries to see how tactful and delicate support of those persons would be salutary.[64]

One might object that there are too few opportunities for dialogue with members of the Christian Right, Nation of Islam, or similar groups; but that objection would be well off the mark. For where they are socially involved and politically determined, ambitious theocrats in liberal democracies will interact with citizens. This distinguishes them from retiring theocrats, since the latter withdraw from public life and retreat into their religious communities; opportunities to discuss liberal principles of conscience with retiring theocrats will therefore be limited.[65] Ambitious theocrats, in contrast, tend to be both politically involved as well as keen to proselytize nonmembers; there exist structural opportunities for dialogue and chances for liberals to communicate and reason with religious parties situated in those social networks. For

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[63] Formal symbolic or financial endorsement of religious organizations by government is another matter, of course, and government should not take that course of action. See Lucas A. Swaine, "Principled Separation: Liberal Governance and Religious Free Exercise," *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1996): 595-619.

[64] See, e.g., Nadia Abu-Zahara, "Islamic History, Islamic Identity and the Reform of Islamic Law: The Thought of Husayn Ahmad Amin," in John Cooper, Ronald L. Nettler, and Mohamed Mahmoud (eds.) *Islam and Modernity: Muslim Intellectuals Respond* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998), pp. 82-104; Azzam S. Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat Within Islamism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Husayn Ahmad An-Na'im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990). Cf. Chibli Mallat, *The Renewal of Islamic Law: Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr, Najaf and the shi'i International* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Mehran Tamadonfar, "Islam, Law, and Political Control in Contemporary Iran," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol. 40, No. 2 (2001): 205-220.

[65] Liberals should not attempt to infiltrate retiring theocratic communities, since so doing risks damaging or destroying the *nomoi* of those groups. Instead, liberals will need conscientiously to limit themselves to informal and occasional interactions with group members, and countenance only limited engagement between liberal government and leaders of retiring communities. Under an appropriate structure of quasi sovereignty, educational standards will involve teaching young members of theocratic communities facts about the rights and liberties they have, and the value of liberty of conscience; but more perfectionist civic schooling would not be warranted. Cf. James Bernard

motivated theocrats of the ambitious variety, liberals should use more speech, not silence, as John Stuart Mill argued; and specifically, liberals should employ reasons that theocrats could accept, instead of *pro tanto* reasons that elide theocrats' religious convictions or which hold only for those affirming secular conceptions of the good.[66] In short, liberals can both take and create opportunities to interact seriously with theocratic individuals, church officials, and other influential parties, making efforts conscientiously to communicate with them, moving well beyond the paucity of dialogue that exists at present or the quick and nasty position statements one encounters in mass media.

A second objection one could levy is that the social networks of ambitious theocrats are far too broad and powerful to be affected by liberal infiltration. But that objection is similarly misplaced: only 10% of Americans supported the seemingly broad-based Moral Majority in the 1980s, for instance, whereas 2/3 to 3/4 of citizens were critical of the organization.[67] The Moral Majority was a "minority movement," influential though it was;[68] so one should be careful not overestimate the breadth of popular support for similar contemporary groups in the Christian Right. Nor are ambitious theocrats territorially limited or otherwise unavailable: liberals can find them in the workplace, in churches, in their neighborhoods, and in other secondary associations. I am not suggesting that it is each liberal's duty to marry a theocrat in order to mollify and redirect their attitudes and beliefs; there are easier more reasonable ways to do this with the power of reason, with conscientiousness and fair dealing, and through the strength of good

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Murphy, "Against Civic Schooling," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2004): 221-65; see also Swaine (2001), pp. 329-31; cf. Rawls (1996), pp. 199-200.

[66] See Swaine (2003a), pp. 383-89.

[67] Wald (1992), p. 248.

[68] Ibid., p. 249. Wald notes that while the major Moral Majority programs were "not enacted," that group still "affected national policies" (1992, pp. 249, 263).

example. Indeed, with the multiple belongings and shifting involvements characteristic of a liberal-democratic citizenry,[69] there exist good opportunities for people to get involved, and ways for liberals to create dialogic opportunities of their own.

Furthermore, one needs to disaggregate evangelical Protestants by their theological convictions, just as one must for Catholics, Jews, and Muslims.[70] Theological convictions are not identical within those respective groups, and it is fortuitous for liberals that seemingly homogeneous theocratic movements such as the Christian Right are cloven by real diversity in this regard. Many Protestant evangelicals have rebuffed organizations such as the Moral Majority or the Christian Coalition; evangelical opinion is split, as it is for Catholics and members of other religious faiths.[71] The absence of a single, unified perspective for Protestants, Catholics, or Muslims, enhances opportunities for liberals to infiltrate networks of ambitious theocrats and effectuate change with new liberal arguments. That is to say, religious people differ based on "the nature and motivation of their religiosity," as Wald puts it,[72] and liberals can use this to their advantage. Take the issue of abortion, for example: there is no unanimity of opinion amongst Catholics, and, contrary to what one might expect, the most intransigent opponents of abortion are white and black evangelical Protestants.[73] Interestingly, white

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[69] See generally Nancy L. Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals: The Personal Uses of Pluralism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). Bohman supports a need for group formation to remain "open, pluralistic, and dynamic" (1995, p. 273), maintaining that religious conflict over standards of justification "demands a 'wide view' of public reason" (1999, p. 192).

[70] Wald (1992), pp. 250, 284-94.

[71] Wald (1992), pp. 251-52, 280-304. In a survey of registered American voters holding evangelical theological convictions, conducted in 1983, more than 25% did not recognize Jerry Falwell or the Moral Majority; see Stuart Rothenberg and Frank Newport, *The Evangelical Voter* (Washington, D. C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1984), pp. 100, 140.

[72] Wald (1992), p. 349.

[73] Wald (1992), pp. 294 ff., 298.

conservative Protestants are more willing to grant civil liberties to homosexuals;[74] particular religious denominations are more of a mixed bag than many acknowledge, and it would be a mistake to think that the so-called "culture war" in America is marked off with clearly defined positions, or typified by staunch and steadfast adversaries and allies.

Where one finds divided denominations, there will be reduced political unity; and with no common front, ambitious theocrats will have a lesser chance of influencing public policy in illiberal directions. Successful modification of the views of antiliberal theocrats could change their political behavior, even though, at the aggregate level, religion does not affect public opinion "simply or consistently."[75] As for theocrats' receptivity to change in their beliefs or behavior, apart from the evidence of the efficacy of influence by members of people's social networks, a precedent for modification already exists: evangelicals and other major religious groups in America have been encouraged in recent years to modify their political patterns and increase their involvement in political affairs.[76]

Interactions and discussions between liberals and theocrats will undoubtedly involve continuing disagreement and controversy; that is a natural expectation. Stephen Macedo has done some interesting work bearing on the prospects of gently transforming theocratic attitudes and beliefs.[77] But these discussions and transformations need not lead ambitious theocrats to disengage from politics, nor should that be the liberal's aim in infiltrating theocratic social

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[74] Sam Reimer and Jerry Z. Park, "Tolerant (In)civility? A Longitudinal Analysis of White Conservative Protestants' Willingness to Grant Civil Liberties," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (2001): 735-45, p. 741.
[75] Wald (1992), p. 92.
[76] Ibid., p. 279.

networks. Weithman has argued that criticism of religious practitioners' religious reasons for participating in politics, or for supporting particular policies and laws, will force them to disengage from politics.[78] But the view is flatly implausible and surely false. For there is no reason to think that religious citizens will be pushed out of politics if their political positions or their reasons for them are questioned or criticized, even if they are newcomers to political participation. Those citizens could rethink their views, participate in different ways, or simply back off of attempts to codify in law their more illiberal external preferences. Indeed, challenging the contributions of those relying on exclusively religious reasons not easily accessible to others could enliven and charge debate, prompting change in stagnant pools of religious and nonreligious comprehensive doctrines and conceptions of the good.

But what is more, for people currently active in religious institutions, there is evidence to indicate that civic skills they acquire at church simply do not increase political participation.[79] Those skills are superfluous with respect to political participation; they give religious devotees a chance "to practice skills gained elsewhere."[80] In addition, James Cavendish, et al., report that the single most powerful predictor of traditional participation in traditional devotional styles is "social integration," tapped by measuring feelings of attachment to one's parish, the number of close friends a respondent has who are members of that group, and the frequency of

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[77] See Stephen Macedo, "Transformative Constitutionalism and the Case of Religion: Defending the Moderate Hegemony of Liberalism," *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1998): 56-80.
[78] Weithman (2002), pp. 65, 138.
[79] Paul A. Djupe and J. Tobin Grant, "Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (2001): 303-14, pp. 303, 309, 311.
[80] Ibid., p. 310. Djupe and Grant find that churches can "recruit members to participate in politics" (p. 311), but that is very different than the suggestion that criticism of new participants' reasons for participating will require their disengagement from politics. Liberals disseminating and discussing principles of conscience could of course encourage the involvement of religious practitioners, *inter alia*.

conversations between the respondent and his or her pastor or fellow parish members.[81] Other work by Ronald Lake and Robert Huckfeldt lends weight to the view that personal networks generate politically relevant social capital and enhance the likelihood that a citizen will be politically engaged, at least where the citizen's networks are not laden with vehement disagreements over political matters.[82] This suggests that thoughtful criticism of religious practitioners by other members of their social networks will not require or entail "[withdrawal] from democratic politics"; nor will such critique make people shy away from political involvement with respect to specific issues, whether or not the criticism speaks to the kinds reasons a person has for participating in political life.[83] And the point holds even if liberals infiltrate and embed themselves in such networks so as to engage ambitious theocrats more directly, using appropriate and respectful methods of communication. Generally speaking, there appears to be no reason to think that ambitious theocrats or more common religious practitioners will refrain from participating politically if they face carefully and conscientiously articulated criticism from nonmembers of their communities, whether they are new to political participation or not.

5. Aiming to Impact Identity

The third strategy that liberals could take with respect to ambitious theocrats, building upon the two suggestions I have provided, is to aim to impact their identities. What recommends this strategy is the fact that ambitious theocrats' identities are more malleable than one might expect, at least insofar as their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are concerned. This point requires

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[81] Cavendish, et al. (1998), pp. 401, 403-04.

[82] Lake and Huckfeldt (1998), pp. 581-82; cf. Richard E. Petty, et al., "Attitudes and Attitude Change," *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 48 (1997): 609-47; Wendy Wood, "Attitude Change: Persuasion and Social Influence," *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 51 (2000): 539-70.

explanation. First of all, Leege and Kellstedt, et al., have adduced evidence supporting the thesis that religious identity is a "strong source of political attitudes and orientations."[84] Whether one self-identifies as fundamentalist, Pentecostal, or post-Vatican II Catholic, they argue, religious identity is a good predictor of political attitudes and behaviors.[85] Other analyses similarly maintain that members of religious groups have common identity drawn in substantial part from social networks.[86] Fellow congregants' religious values matter when it comes to an individual's acceptance of liberal or conservative politics, just as those values matter for liberal or conservative identification.[87] Controlling for social traits such as education, income, urbanization, ethnicity, occupational status, and other such factors, differences between religious groups' attitudes remain.[88] With respect to white conservative Protestants in particular, a group that is less liberal than other white Americans or white Christians, longitudinal analysis of their attitudes on civil liberties shows that even regional effects are weakened by "greater transience and communication."[89] Reimer and Park argue that committed, conservative Protestants are more prone to develop a shared sense of the existence of an "ingroup" and "outgroup," and are more likely to try to maintain a distinctive identity that allows for ongoing tension with outgroups.[90]

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[83] Cf. Weithman (2002), pp. 65, 138; Audi (2001), pp. 169, 180, 206.
[84] Leege and Kellstedt, et al. (1993), p. 89.
[85] Ibid., pp. 88-90, 94-95.
[86] Benton Johnson and Richard H. White, "Protestantism, Political Preference, and the Nature of Religious Influence," *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 9 (1967): 28-35.
[87] Wald (1992), pp. 112-13; see also Kenneth D. Wald, "Evangelical Politics and Status Issues," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 28 (1989): 1-16.
[88] Ibid., pp. 96-97.
[89] Reimer and Park (2001), pp. 741, 743. See also James L. Guth, "The Politics of the Christian Right," in *Religion and the Culture Wars: Dispatches from the Front*, ed. John C. Green, et al. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996); cf. Mark A. Shibley, *Resurgent Evangelicalism in the United States: Mapping Cultural Change Since 1970* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).
[90] Reimer and Park (2001), p. 743. See also Christian S. Smith, et al., *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Clyde Wilcox, Ted G. Jelen, and Sharon Linzey, "Rethinking the Reasonableness of the Religious Right," *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 36 (1995): 263-76; Arthur Miller, Patricia Gurin, and Gerald Gurin, "Group Consciousness and Political Participation," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25 (1981): 494-511. Some scholars have gone so far as to argue that support for the Christian Right has been motivated by hatred of outgroups; see Ted G. Jelen, *The Political Mobilization of*

Changing even modestly theocrats' beliefs about their identities, and the manner and extent to which they see themselves at odds with outgroups, could bring positive political results: as Richard Rose and Derek Urwin have argued, countries with the strongest religious divisions tend to have more strain, violence, and political instability.[91] Liberals could work to modify theocratic notions of religious ingroups and outgroups and the non- or illiberal senses of identity that they imply. One way to make a positive impact, here, would be through the promulgation of principles of conscience I have articulated. The goal would not be to stop ambitious or conservative Protestants from participating in their church communities or to cajole them not to belong to any religious organizations. Rather, liberals could engage members of ambitious theocratic groups in constructive dialogue, working to reduce the incidence of illiberal "activist corps" forming in churches and communities.[92] While liberals cannot prevent these illiberal subgroups from sprouting up, they could lessen the phenomenon of extremism with the sort of dialogue and involvement in religious networks that I have described. Here it is helpful to mind the distinction between church involvement and other forms of commitment: church involvement is demonstrably separable from more abstract beliefs, such as beliefs about the Bible,[93] and it has no obvious bearing on political identity. Distinguishing between church attendance and church involvement, Leege and Kellstedt demonstrate that more intensive involvement in church has no

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Religious Belief (New York: Praeger, 1991). Cf. Kai Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley, 1966), pp. 3-29, discussing the idea of "boundary maintenance."

[91] Richard Rose and Derek Urwin, "Social Cohesion, Political Parties, and Strains in Regimes," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 2 (1969): 7-67.

[92] See Djupe and Grant (2001), outlining various ways in which religious institutions promote political participation of members (p. 303).

[93] See Leege and Kellstedt, et al. (1993), p. 135 ff.

impact on the political identity of person, but it does strongly impact social traditionalism, moralism, and pro-life positions for Protestants and Roman Catholics alike.[94]

Second, if political elites were encouraged to refrain from propagating the view that liberal societies discriminate against so-called fundamentalist lifestyles, fundamentalists may be less likely to take positions more extreme than other evangelicals.[95] The distinction between fundamentalists and evangelicals is quite important: self-identified fundamentalists tend to be "more conservative than other evangelicals," but the differences appear to be significant only among those with a developed, politicized religious identification.[96] Liberals could counter messages of discrimination within fundamentalist networks by including more discourse on the value of liberty of conscience, by demonstrating the concordance of liberal institutional principles with demands of faith, and by endorsing a quasi sovereign option for retiring theocratic communities. Principles of conscience could, in short, be employed as a central part of a larger effort to demonstrate the existence of common, fundamental interests of persons, whether those persons currently support liberal, nonliberal, or antiliberal forms of identity. For there are reasons for nonliberal and antiliberal ambitious theocrats alike to affirm liberal institutions that protect liberty of conscience, and liberals could promulgate those reasons while at the same time affirming and promoting institutions that rightly honor the liberal commitment to religious liberty.[97] And this is consistent with the nature of religiosity itself: intolerance

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[94] Ibid., pp. 131, 132, 135.
[95] See Wilcox (1989), p. 55. Wilcox discusses differences between fundamentalists and evangelicals at pp. 56-58.
[96] Leege and Kellstedt, et al. (1993), p. 74. Wald (1992) distinguishes fundamentalists and evangelicals at pp. 252-53 ff.
[97] This would be better than simply attempting to rely upon changes to laws in liberal polities; as Wald has noted, the incidence of morning prayer readings in American public schools remains significant, despite the existence of laws disallowing the practice. See Wald (1992), p. 160. Sound principles of separation of church and state prohibit morning prayers in public schools; see generally Swaine (1996).

simply is not built in to religious commitment, despite the protestations of commentators like Stanley Fish.[98] Clyde Wilcox and Ted Jelen have attributed narrow-mindedness to doctrine;[99] but as Robert Wuthnow points out religious commitment is not always socially conservative, by any means.[100]

Third, liberals might also modify the attitudes and beliefs of ambitious, antiliberal clergy if they effectuate changes in the beliefs and attitudes of members of the respective religious communities, since there is evidence to show that clergy are affected by what their membership desires.[101] And the relationship works in the other direction as well: pastoral cues are important for understanding church members' behavior and attitudes, especially for evangelical Protestants.[102] There is no shortage of exposure to political messages for American churchgoers: American religious services have a "relatively high amount of political content,"[103] a finding consistent with numerous others that churches are important sources of political cues.[104] Wald notes that even doctrinally conservative Protestants do not report less political direction than others.[105] This leads one to expect that modifications to the identities of members of antiliberal

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[98] See Stanley Fish, "Mission Impossible," in *The Trouble with Principle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 162-86; cf. Wald (1992), p. 345.
[99] Clyde Wilcox and Ted Jelen, "Evangelicals and Political Tolerance," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 18 (1990): 25-46; see Wald (1992), p. 345.
[100] See Robert Wuthnow, "Religious Commitment and Conservatism: In Search of an Elusive Relationship," in *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, ed. Charles Y. Glock (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1973), pp. 117-32. In fairness, psychological experimentation shows that religious commitment certainly does not automatically motivate resistance to tyranny; see Wald (1992), p. 360.
[101] Djupe and Grant (2001), p. 311; see James L. Guth, et al., *The Bully Pulpit: The Politics of Protestant Clergy* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1997).
[102] Leege and Kellstedt, et al. (1993), p. 248.
[103] Mark D. Brewer, Rogan Kersh and R. Eric Petersen, "Assessing Conventional Wisdom about Religion and Politics: A Preliminary View from the Pews," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2003): 125-36, p. 134.
[104] Leege and Kellstedt, et al. (1993), p. 87; Kenneth D. Wald, Dennis E. Owen, and Samuel S. Hill, Jr., "Churches as Political Communities," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82 (1988): 531-48; Wald, Owen, and Hill, "Political Cohesion in Churches," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 52 (1990): 197-215.
[105] Wald (1992), pp. 241, 242.

religious communities could be brought about by impacting both ministry and church members, and not simply one or the other. As for the viability of such a strategy, Catholic pastoral letters such as *The Challenge of Peace* are a good example of how written works and arguments have been effective in changing attitudes of Catholic clergy and then other Catholics in turn.[106] This gives further reason to think that liberals would do well to support more liberal pastoral pens and voices in religious organizations and communities with theocratic leanings.[107]

One might accept this case in theory, but object that any effort to impact ambitious theocrats' identities will be unsuccessful since those people tend to display psychologically or socially pathological characteristics.[108] That claim does not bear up under empirical scrutiny, however. Admittedly, a study focusing on members of the Moral Majority found 40% of respondents reporting feelings of "alienation" from society or stating that they live on social fringes.[109] Also, and interestingly, the majority of members polled did not report having positive self-images.[110] But while socially pathological characteristics may be important factors for recruitment into Moral Majority or similar groups, activism in the Moral Majority was not generally attributable the same sources.[111] As Wilcox, et al. maintain, the single strongest predictor of active support was "a set of conservative positions on social issues."[112] Furthermore, the study found that both authoritarianism and feelings of inadequacy correlated significantly and positively with inactive membership in the Moral Majority, which might indicate that the

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[106] Ibid., pp. 288-92.
[107] See Andrew M. Greely, *American Catholics Since the Council: An Unauthorized Report* (Chicago: Thomas More, 1985). See also Wald (1992), pp. 289-91.
[108] See Wilcox, et al. (1995), pp. 263, 264-65, *passim*.
[109] Ibid., p. 267.
[110] Ibid., p. 269.
[111] Ibid., pp. 270-72.
[112] Ibid., p. 271.

Moral Majority attempted to keep members with those low self-assessments at the periphery of their organization.[113]

So liberals could encourage liberal views in churches and in religious networks, in order to modify non- and antiliberal religious practitioners' conceptions of "ingroup" and "outgroup," their sense of the degree of difference between themselves and nonmembers, and by implication, their understandings of their own identity. For communities of ambitious theocrats within liberal polities advocating and advancing illiberal views or policies, engagement and argumentation might produce very real and salutary effects. Even if zealous theocratic behavior were linked to lesser educational opportunities, lower socio-economic status, or other factors, liberals could join treatment of those issues with new arguments and reasons, and new, liberal institutions of conscience, to make a positive impact.

In advancing this case, I do not claim that liberal government should strongly promote a robust version of autonomy to retiring or ambitious theocrats, however. To the contrary, liberal government has no business promoting or enforcing any comprehensive conception of the good, secular, religious, or otherwise. For even if a deeply autonomous way of life were in some sense the best life for persons, government has no right to promote or enforce that way of life on its citizens. And while one affirms the permissibility of liberals individually promoting autonomous ways of life, the advocacy of liberal principles of conscience is decidedly political inasmuch as it is not perfectionist. The principles of conscience to be affirmed are skeletal with respect to the identity of persons, but they could be affirmed as part of people's determinate conceptions of the

[113] Ibid., p. 272. This could provide recommendatory support for the thesis that similar ambitious groups will, for organizational reasons, relegate members with authoritarian tendencies and feelings of inadequacy to the periphery.

good.[114] That is to say, the three principles can be affirmed by liberals, as well as by persons striving to live what Wolterstorff calls a "religiously integrated existence."[115] In this way, they hold the promise of being beyond rational contestation, diminishing the need for compromise at the moral level that Bohman advocates.[116] Nevertheless, the liberal principles of conscience are purposive only in part: they dictate no *summum bonum* or particular end for persons, and so not force integration or unity at the price of diversity.[117] As such, while the three principles structure reasoning and dialogue, they are not themselves discourse principles *per se*. By encouraging people to adopt principles of conscience in their own lives, liberals could advance greater respect and understanding amongst persons of faith, between the faithful and those marked by unbelief, and perhaps even between citizens of liberal democracies and other peoples and nations around the world.

Nor am I demanding, expressly or otherwise, that theocrats must be made to accept some version of covenant theology.[118] To the contrary, theocrats' theology and ways of life are up to them, within the particular institutional limitations I have described. A liberalism of conscience prescribes no specific codes; at most, it asks for the adoption of a small set of specific beliefs and allowances regarding freedom of conscience and the right of persons to reject inferior religion, none of which rises to the level of a code in any meaningful sense. Is this tantamount to promoting a new civil religion? It is not: there are no rites, no requisite practices or beliefs; so a

[114] Cf. Rawls (1996), pp. 310-14.
[115] See Audi and Wolterstoff (1997), p. 105; cf. Weithman (2002), pp. 152 ff., 159.
[116] See Bohman (1995), pp. 265, 268 ff; Bohman (1999), pp. 183-87.
[117] Cf. Bohman (1995), p. 257; Bohman (1999), pp. 176-77 ff.
[118] See Wald (1992), p. 48.

liberalism of conscience would not be a civil religion in any standard sense.[119] A liberalism of conscience affirms metaphysical principles of conscience, but it does not endow the country or the nation with supernatural attributes; it prescribes no rites; and it advances no rituals for its citizens.[120] Nor does the argument I have given have any direct bearing on religious practitioners' images of God; and it has few implications for the questions of obedience to God versus skepticism and dissent.[121] For even if God were knowably stern and vengeful, that would not eliminate the difference between strict piousness in one's personal life and the imprudent and apparently ungodly attempt to foist a strict and pious conception of the good on an entire polity using political institutions. Furthermore, even with the adoption of the principles of conscience I have identified, theocrats would still retain the theological and epistemological ability coherently to claim that other religions are misguided. And such claims are important to members of a wide variety of religious faiths: Joseph Smith, Jr., for example, maintained as much, contending that he was commissioned by God to prepare the way for the "dispensation of the fullness of time."[122] With the affirmation of the principles of liberty of conscience I have outlined, such views are logically consistent and should be psychologically unproblematic.

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[119] If civil religion were merely a "code subscribed to, in varying degree, by all religions in the nation," then perhaps this would count. But that is too lax to count as a civil religion in any meaningful sense; see Wald (1992), p. 58.

[120] Wald (1992), pp. 59, 61, 64. Cf. Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond, *Varieties of Civil Religion* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1980), *The New Religious Consciousness*, ed. Robert N. Bellah and Charles Y. Glock (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976).

[121] See Wald (1992), 101 ff.; see also Milton Rokeach, "Religious Values and Social Compassion," *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 11 (1969): 24-39. Cf. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (New York: Athaneum, 1965), pp. 56-57 ff.

[122] Lawrence Foster, "Cults in Conflict: New Religious Movements and the Mainstream Religious Tradition in America," in Robert N. Bellah and Frederick E. Greenspahn (eds.) *Uncivil Religion: Interreligious Hostility in America* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), pp.185-204, pp. 193 ff.

This essay does not preach liberty of conscience as a religious revival, nor are its arguments constructed out of inaccessible religious reasons. For the arguments that I have provided are accessible to persons, whether or not a precise set of necessary and sufficient conditions of accessibility for public reasons is available.[123] However, promulgating a liberalism of conscience honestly and conscientiously could be facilitated with rhetorical techniques. The Great Awakenings in America employed techniques of mass persuasion, using parades, tent-meetings, and other means of conversion.[124] A liberalism of conscience could employ numerous possible means in this regard, provided that persuasive methods were tactful, appropriate, deliberative, and underpinned by solid reasons and sound arguments. Indeed, the American Founders spoke openly of the importance of conscience and the need to respect it;[125] liberals could enliven people's motivations by appeals to great historical moments and insights of that kind. Furthermore, the American example holds a rich Protestant Social Gospel tradition upon which to draw, and an auspicious history of liberal clergy involved in civil rights and other worthy causes, despite obstruction from theocrats and conservatives of various kinds.[126]

6. Prospects for International Comity

It remains to consider briefly some approaches that liberals and liberal government could employ in the international realm, in hopes of making headway on the various problems of conscience and theocratic religious devotion that I have outlined above. There seem to be several reasons to be attentive to international components of theocratic issues; but a sufficient reason for concern presumably can be found in recent cases where extremist Islamic groups have lashed out at

[123] Cf. Weithman (2002), pp. 9, 132.
[124] See Wald (1992), pp. 44-45.
[125] Ibid., pp. 58, 136, 139-40, 141.
[126] Ibid., pp. 304 ff., 307.

liberal institutions and citizens, motivated in part by theocratic aspirations and perceived maltreatment of their Muslim brethren.

I shall offer three tentative suggestions on possible directions for a new international approach. First, I suspect that international policy platforms and communications agencies could conceivably be transformed to help express reasons for theocrats around the globe to affirm liberalism. Parties speaking in those fora could try to offer, first of all, well-constructed arguments to support the policies that liberal governments employ, speaking to the concerns of theocratic religious parties on terms that they might accept. In the course of those communications, liberal government could also encourage other governments, institutions, and religious practitioners openly to affirm liberty of conscience at the political level. That is, liberal governments could use their expressive organs to promote a healthy liberty of conscience internationally, encouraging theocrats to devise and build institutions protecting religious free exercise, along with basic human rights and other values. To be sure, government would need to be careful and respectful in stating such messages, using an appropriate voice in communicating with theocrats,[127] and listening to their concerns as well. What is more, government would have to take pains to promote its messages and ideas consistently across countries, instead of doing so in a partisan or merely cynical way.[128] As for agencies that may be of service, here, liberal

[127] See Audi (2000), pp. 165-66, 175.

[128] Liberal government will need to work to ensure that its allied countries respect religion, endeavoring to promote a fair and even-handed treatment of religious groups and peoples around the world, so as to avoid charges of favoritism or partisanship with existing allies.

democracies could perhaps employ institutions detached from particular governments to develop and strengthen international law.[129]

Second, this effort to give theocrats reasons to affirm liberal institutions need not be limited to government agencies or spokespeople. Liberal citizens might also strive to speak to theocrats by employing secondary organizations in civil society that have an international reach. International non-government organizations could be of crucial assistance here as well, as would be friends of religious liberty located around the world. Liberal religious figures within theocratic polities and traditions, for example, could be better recognized and supported in their efforts to provide theological reasons in favor of liberty of conscience, or to promote institutions protecting freedom of conscience and basic human rights in their respective countries. In each of these three kinds of examples, non-state parties might help to promote liberal institutions and liberty of conscience internationally; this is markedly different than liberal state agencies promoting such values and institutions themselves, and would stand as an important addition to the endeavor that I have outlined here.

Third, alongside arguments aiming to give theocrats moral and theological reasons to affirm liberal institutions, liberal government could provide prudential reasons for more militant theocrats to disavow full-blown theocracy, outlining the dangers associated with living under unqualified theocratic regimes. Included here could be benefits offered for nonliberal governments cooperating with liberal polities, in their efforts to dismantle networks of religious extremists, as well as penalties for noncompliance, where appropriate. It is worth mentioning

[129] The United States' new Office of Global Communications, an institution similar to the now defunct United States Information Agency, could be of service here as well; but first it would have to work to secure greater

that while I have argued that liberals and liberal government should rethink the ways in which they handle theocracy and religious extremism at home and abroad, such does not imply that the international effort to eradicate terrorism is misguided. Nor does it mean that liberal states must refrain from taking strong and decisive action against religious extremists who resort to terroristic means to achieve their ends. In fact, liberal government's preparedness to act forcefully where citizens and institutions are attacked by theocratic forces could indeed help to dissuade religious extremists of the view that such attacks are viable or worthwhile. The point that I wish to emphasize is that such actions and policies could be joined with reasons that justify them, along with a demonstrated affirmation of religiosity *simpliciter*, an authentic willingness to help polities and peoples in the development of liberal institutions, and a disposition to be conscientious and fair in the promotion of these values.

Of course, shoring up the failures of liberalism by providing adequate, accessible, and acceptable reasons for theocrats to affirm a liberal order will not solve all of the problems associated with zealotry in modern liberal democracies, nor would it immediately or easily harmonize the values and practices of retiring theocrats with those of other citizens in a well-formed liberal order. It would be sanguine to hold that the provision of such reasons will suffice to quell all religious discord, if only because new theocratic groups continually burgeon forth in democratic societies, as new flora in the simple pluralistic array. Nor do I wish to suggest that it would be desirable or reasonable to expect that theocrats and liberals ultimately converge on a shared conception of the good; conflict and disagreement is an important condition of politics itself, and free societies will never do away entirely with political and participatory discordance.

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credibility with foreign nations and peoples.

Rather, the point is that theocrats' objections to liberalism appear to be serious and profound, but they may well not be irresolvable; and it still too early to suggest to that the provision of reasons for theocrats to affirm a liberal order can only fail to mitigate the prudential problems associated with the legacy of theocracy in democratic polities.

There are good resources available for those wishing to develop a political liberalism of conscience. First, theocrats and liberals alike appear to share a commitment to normative principles of freedom of conscience. A political order constructed around shared principles of the kind I have identified could rise above a mere *modus vivendi*, since in it liberals and theocrats would both be able to see the fundamental legitimacy of government, on terms acceptable to them. Second, insofar as liberal government is itself committed to the value of religious free exercise, it could cohere well with central theocratic values and commitments as I have described them. Liberal government would need to refrain from its historically invasive tendencies, with respect to theocratic communities, but one expects that government could accomplish this task. A commitment to religious free exercise would not rightly give theocrats *carte blanche* to enforce any practices or punishments on their members that they wish, or sanction their liberty to strike out against citizens of the larger polity, however. There is no absolute right to liberty of conscience, of course: absolute liberty of conscience would allow for no interference in one's pursuit of good, even in cases of conflict where one causes palpable injury to another, or where a religious conception of the good calls for extreme punishments, or where it would deny others' basic liberty to pursue dictates of conscience. Some modification of the existing views of both theocrats and liberals will be necessary; but I suspect that it may be possible to create a clear and well-reasoned case on this front, beyond what I have argued here,

one that would lay out in greater detail the boundaries of acceptable religious practices and protections, to the satisfaction of liberals and theocrats alike.

7. The Ultimate Appeal of Liberalism

With these considerations in hand, I turn now to the final question: Could liberalism be made more appealing to theocrats? I am hopeful that it could; and if the arguments that I have offered to this point are sound, there is some reason to think that liberalism could hold appeal for theocrats, as well. First of all, liberal government appears to be the only sort of government that could meet the criteria that theocrats require with regard to liberty of conscience. Other kinds of government are hostile to religion, or they fail to provide the resources to protect religious free exercise to the extent that the theocrat requires. Not all theocrats may be aware of this, but an effort to present them with the case, working with the friendlier elements of the various doctrines they affirm, could change that situation. Liberal political philosophers could be of assistance here, working to provide theocrats with reasons for accepting liberalism, following the early attempts of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Bernard Bosanquet, and Thomas Hill Green. Reasons to affirm liberalism could be communicated broadly, through various institutional and colloquial channels, and to numerous parties and stations both domestically and internationally.

Furthermore, a quasi-sovereign option of the sort I have described could appeal to theocrats, while at the same time invigorating liberalism and the liberal commitment to religious free exercise. Semisovereignty would not liberate theocratic communities from the influence of other groups or institutions, but it could deliver theocratic communities from the injustices of

excessive entanglements that they presently endure, endowing their members with the capacity to build the normative worlds that their religious doctrines require.

One factor contributing to theocrats' present disaffection with liberal government is the way in which theocrats have found themselves treated under liberal institutions. Liberal government has at times appeared to be partisan, disloyal, imperialistic, and disrespectful of the theocrat's values and aspirations. But a political order constructed around the value of liberty of conscience might motivate theocrats and other citizens to develop an understanding of the value of liberal institutions, and it could foster a deep attachment to government that protects and honors religious free exercise. An order of that kind could rise above a mere *modus vivendi*, since in it liberals and theocrats would both be able to affirm the fundamental legitimacy of government, on terms acceptable to them. What is more, on the sort of liberal political theory toward which I am hinting here, government would not simply begrudge the protections for religious practice that theocrats could garner. Instead, those defenses would be among the highest, most fundamental protections that government would provide to any of its citizens. In that way, liberal government could prove itself respectful of theocrats, and not partisan in advocating some particular comprehensive conception of the good. Government would instead be willing to provide an equitable treatment for a wide variety of religious devotees, and also prepared to take seriously and discuss matters of deep importance to religious practitioners. Government would need to refrain from its historically invasive tendencies with respect to theocratic communities; and theocrats and liberals both would have to modify their existing views somewhat, but these do not seem to be quixotic goals.

One might object that this prospective approach can only fail, since theocrats simply will not accept any of the arguments, the reasons, or the policies it would embody. After all, one might say, relations between liberal and theocratic nations have been notoriously difficult in recent years; as such, the program described here would be impracticable and ultimately unsuccessful. However, even if many of the world's zealous religious devotees were to refuse to accept reasons for them to affirm liberty of conscience and to support liberal institutions, it is surely plausible to believe that some will. Many burgeoning theocrats might accept the principles, arguments, and reasons outlined here: peripheral members of theocratic organizations, children and youth, those unimpressed with religious extremists, as well as members of religious faiths maltreated by others are examples of groups of people that could be receptive to the reasons I have outlined. They might be impressed positively by principles and institutions favoring liberty of conscience, along with a demonstration of liberal government's authentic affirmation of religiosity and the value of religion in people's lives. Especially resilient theocrats may be more difficult to reach, it is true, but one expects that these efforts could yield valuable results for broad swaths of persons with theocratic leanings. Even incremental advances here would be worthwhile; and it is not obvious that a program of the sort I have described would need to be especially costly, troublesome, or time-consuming. Furthermore, it is hard to see how such a program would worsen relations between peoples or do damage to the interests of liberal polities. In addition, the effort to speak anew to theocrats should be important to liberals and liberal government for moral reasons, since theocrats within and outside of liberal democracies continue to contend that no sufficient or compelling reason has yet been given to them for them to affirm liberalism. A liberalism of conscience will need to address this matter directly.

Of course, a theory of government constructed around principles acceptable or appealing to theocrats would not make the theory justified by that fact alone. For an adequate liberal theory would need to be grounded more extensively, taking into consideration the reasonable values and commitments of people other than theocrats, and addressing a series of other political, moral, and legal concerns as well. It is worth emphasizing, however, that a liberal theory based on liberty of conscience, one which respects theocrats' most fundamental commitments, would not obviously need to disavow its other hallmark values and institutions. Whereas a liberal theory of the kind toward which I am hinting here probably would not be able to appeal to some of the more unreasonable or irrational persons in the modern world, it is unlikely that any theory could hold appeal for all people equally well. But a liberal theory that builds upon the foundation of liberty of conscience holds the promise of being able to bring theocrats into the fold, to assuage centuries of conflict, and to rectify the injustices to which theocrats are subjected. With a more solid basis upon which to build institutions and law, liberals and theocrats may be able to lay down their swords, to live together finally under government that they can both affirm. Surely, a proper theory of government, one relevant to the problems and prospects of modern democratic life, ought to try to accomplish this feat.