Tokyo Metropolitan Government (1972) *Developing Social Wellbeing Indicators for Tokyo Metropolis by Using the Two-Criteria Method*. Tokyo.
Tokyo Metropolitan Government (1973a) *Tokyo Social Trends*. Tokyo.
Tokyo Metropolitan Government (1973b) *Plan for Tokyo Metropolis with Plaza and Blue Sky*. Tokyo.

civil religion

David Yamane

Civil religion refers to the cultural beliefs, practices, and symbols that relate a nation to the ultimate conditions of its existence. The idea of civil religion can be traced to the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *On the Social Contract* (1762). Writing in the wake of the Protestant–Catholic religious wars, Rousseau maintained the need for "social sentiments" outside of organized religion "without which a man cannot be a good citizen or faithful subject." The broader question motivating Rousseau concerned political legitimation without religious establishment.

Although he does not use the term, Durkheim's work in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) was clearly influenced by his countryman's concern for shared symbols and the obligations they articulate. Recognizing that "the former gods are growing old or dying," Durkheim sought a more modern basis for the renewal of the collective sentiments societies need if they are to stay together. He found that basis in the "hours of creative effervescence during which new ideals will once again spring forth and new formulas emerge to guide humanity for a time." Civil religious ideals arise from national civil religious rituals.

Robert Bellah's 1967 *Daedalus* essay "Civil Religion in America" brought the concept and its Rousseauian-Durkheimian concern into contemporary sociology. Bellah argued that civil religion exists alongside and is (crucially) distinct from church religion. It is actually a religious "dimension" of society, characteristic of the American republic since its founding. Civil religion is "an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate and universal reality," and can be found in presidential inaugural addresses from Washington to Kennedy, sacred texts (the Declaration of Independence) and places (Gettysburg), and community rituals (Memorial Day parades). It is especially evident in times of trial for the nation like the Revolution and Civil War.

Like Rousseau and Durkheim, Bellah saw legitimation as a problem faced by every nation, and civil religion as one solution – under the right social conditions. Bellah argued in *Varieties of Civil Religion* (1980) that in premodern societies the solution consisted either in a fusion of the religious and political realms (in the archaic period) or a differentiation but not separation (in the historic and early modern periods). Civil religion proper comes into existence only in the modern period when church and state are separated as well as structurally differentiated. That is, a civil religion that is differentiated from both church and state is only possible in a modern society.

Its structural position relative to both church and state allows civil religion to act not only as a source of legitimation, but also of prophetic judgment. "Without an awareness that our nation stands under higher judgment," Bellah wrote in 1967, "the tradition of the civil religion would be dangerous indeed." By 1975, Bellah declared in *The Broken Covenant* that American civil religion was "an empty and broken shell" because it had failed to inspire citizens and lost its critical edge. Much of this nuance was lost on critics of Bellah and of the concept of civil religion, who often accused him of promoting idolatrous worship of the state, so much so that Bellah himself did not use the term in *Habits of the Heart* (1985) or thereafter, despite the substantive continuity from his earlier to his later work.

Although Bellah's concern was primarily normative, his essay stimulated considerable definitional and historical debates about American civil religion, as well as some empirical research. Systematizing and operationalizing civil religion in a way that Bellah's original essay did not, Wimberly (1976) found evidence for the existence of civil religion as a dimension of American society distinct from politics and

organized religion. Some research also tested the concept of civil religion cross-nationally, finding unique constellations of legitimating myths and symbols in Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, and Sri Lanka.

Before a consensus could emerge on the meaning and reality of civil religion, however, the concept lost favor among sociologists. By 1989, James Mathisen was asking "Whatever happened to civil religion?" In fact, in Mathisen's (1989) account, interest in civil religion peaked just a decade after Bellah's essay was published. Part of what happened was the emergence of religious nationalism and fundamentalism worldwide. This highlighted the divisive aspects of religious politics and politicized religion over and against the potentially integrative effect of civil religion. Examining the American situation after the rise of the New Christian Right, Wuthnow (1988) found not a single civil religion, but two civil religions – one conservative, one liberal – in dispute and therefore incapable of creating a unifying collective consciousness. Shortly thereafter, Hunter dramatically captured this situation in the title of his 1991 book, *Culture Wars*.

By the 1990s, other concepts began to compete in the arena once dominated by civil religion, most notably "public religion" and concern with the role of religion in civil society. Where civil religion was principally treated as a cultural phenomenon, this recent work has been much more focused on institutions (e.g., Jose Casanova's 1994 *Public Religions in the Modern World*) and social movements (e.g., Richard Wood's 2002 *Faith in Action*). Even Bellah and his colleagues in *The Good Society* (1991) turned their attention to the institutional dimension of "the public church."

Whether or not future research and reflection is conducted in the name of "civil religion," the fundamental religio-political problem of legitimation remains. Sociologists in the future, therefore, will continue to grapple with the question to which civil religion is one answer, hopefully standing on the shoulders of Rousseau, Durkheim, and Bellah as they do so.

SEE ALSO: Durkheim, Émile; Religion; Religion, Sociology of

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Gehrig, G. (1981) *American Civil Religion: An Assessment*. Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Storrs, CT.

Hammond, P. E. (1976) The Sociology of American Civil Religion. *Sociological Analysis* 37: 169–82.

Mathisen, J. A. (1989) Twenty Years After Bellah: Whatever Happened to American Civil Religion? *Sociological Analysis* 50: 129–47.

Richey, R. E. & Jones, D. E. (Eds.) (1974) *American Civil Religion*. Harper & Row, New York.

Wimberly, R. C. (1976) Testing the Civil Religion Hypothesis. *Sociological Analysis* 37: 341–52.

Wuthnow, R. (1988) *The Restructuring of American Religion*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Civil Rights Movement

Aldon Morris

Just 50 years ago African Americans were a severely oppressed group. They did not enjoy many of the basic citizenship rights guaranteed by the US Constitution. This was especially true of the American South, where large numbers of black Americans resided. In fact, state laws explicitly denied many of these rights and prevailing social customs disregarded them altogether.

In the South black people were controlled by an oppressive social system known as the Jim Crow regime. Under Jim Crow, blacks were denied the franchise, barred from interacting with whites in public spaces, and were trapped at the bottom of the economic order, where they were relegated to the poorest paying and least desirable jobs. This inequality was buttressed by the ideology that blacks were genetically and culturally inferior and thus deserved their wretched place in the social order. This racial inequality and ideology was thoroughly entrenched in the fabric of American society because it had reigned supreme for two and a half centuries of slavery and the Jim Crow era that was established after the brief Reconstruction period that ended in the late nineteenth century. This oppressive system was backed by