



Varieties of Civil Religion:

By Robert N. Bellah

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In 1980, *Varieties of Civil Religion* was the latest statement in the field of civil religion pioneered by Robert Bellah. Over thirty years later, scholarly interest in the field continues to grow. By examining the force of religion in politics and society, this book offers a comparative treatment that deepens the understanding of American civil religion and provides a lens for exploring civil religion in other societies, particularly those of Italy, Mexico, and Japan. Bellah and Hammond trace the historical development of the peculiarly American brand of civil religion as they unravel its sometimes baffling intricacies. Themes include the conviction that America is a chosen country and American power in the world is identical with divine will. The book also examines the vigorous counterbalance that has opposed unjust wars or demanded racial and social justice. Altogether, the health of a civil religion may be a prime indication of the overall health of any society. The authors state that when civil religious symbols are co-opted by ultraconservatives, and the philosophy of liberalism seems less adequate as a guide for public or private lives, a revival of public philosophy is urgently needed. *Varieties of Civil Religion* supports such a revival by making the religious aspect of our central tradition understandable in a nonreactionary way. It also reaffirms that American civil religion, with its deeper tradition of openness, tolerance, and ethical commitment, can make an essential contribution to a "global order of civility and justice"

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Robert N. Bellah (1927-2013) was Professor of Sociology Emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley. He was educated at Harvard University, receiving the BA in 1950 and the PhD in 1955. His publications include *The Broken Covenant*, *The Robert Bellah Reader*, and most recently *Religion in Human Evolution* (2011). In 1985 he was coauthor of *Habits of the Heart*. Phillip E. Hammond (1931-2009) was Professor of Religious Studies and Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara. A graduate of Willamette and Columbia Universities, Dr. Hammond held positions at Yale and the Universities of Wisconsin and Arizona. He was the author or editor of *Sociologists at Work*, *The Campus Clergyman*, *Religion in Social Context*, *The School Prayer Decisions: From Court Policy to Local Practice*, *The Structure of Human Society*, *The Role of Ideology in Church Participation*, and numerous articles.

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