



BOSTON COLLEGE

BOISI CENTER
FOR RELIGION AND AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE

Symposium on Religious Diversity and the Common Good **Panel 1: Historical Trajectories, 1863-2013**

November 13, 2013

Owens: Good morning, everyone, and welcome. It's a pleasure to see such a great crowd here this morning, and I wanted to thank you for pushing through the brisk and bracing cold outside, and we'll start with a word of thanks that it's not snowing again this morning. So thank you all for being here. We promise hot coffee throughout the day to keep you warm.

My name's Erik Owens. I'm the associate director of the Boisi Center for Religion in American Public Life here at Boston College, and I'm co-organizer with my colleague Alan Wolfe of all of today's events. We'd like to welcome you to this conference on Religious Diversity and the Common Good, which is the final academic event marking the conclusion of Boston College's sesquicentennial celebration. We hope you'll join us for all of the events today. We have a lunch immediately following the first panel. Whether or not you signed up early, come join us and break bread with us, also for the afternoon panel and for the closing keynote and reception afterwards at the end. We have a terrific day planned, and we hope you'll linger with us today.

A few business items before we get going to give you a few words about the conference as its potential shimmers at the outset, and first of all, to thank a few people who made it possible. First, thank you to the University President Father Leahy, to Vice President Father Terry Devino, and his predecessor Mary Lou DeLong, who successively chaired the University's

sesquicentennial planning efforts. To Joe Quinn, interim provost and chair of the sesquicentennial academic events committee, and to David Quigley, current A&S dean, all of whom, among others, have invested extensive time and money and effort – they might well say blood, sweat, and tears – to make sure that this conference goes as well as we expect it will.

Second, I'd like to thank the staff members who have made this possible today, some of whom have worked on this with us for two years now. Courtney Hough of the advancement office is back in the back. There she is. Conor Kelly, a theology Ph.D. student, back in the back, as well. Frank Murtaugh of the vice president's office, staff from the Boisi Center and elsewhere – they've been terrific to work with, and I thank you all for so much of your time over the past two years and all day today.

I'll note that we're recording today's events on audio and video. We'll have transcripts that we post of every panel as soon as we possibly can, and you'll be able to find all of these along with much more at bc.edu/150 and at bc.edu/boisi, B-O-I-S-I. We are tweeting today at #bc150, and I invite you all to do the same. And finally, I ask you that you silence your cell phones during the course of the academic events this morning so that we're not disrupting one another in the process.

Before I turn the floor over to our panelists, I'd like to say just a few words of introduction about the themes of the conference. Let me state the basic premise clearly – there is a fundamental tension between unity and diversity that cannot be resolved. Our bodies, our experiences, our perceptions, our ideas and beliefs – they are unique to each of us as individuals, even as we join others in body, mind, and spirit to live in this world together. When we come together in families or communities or nations and describe an us, we need a them, as well. There's always an other. And so one of our basic tasks today is to figure out – one of our basic tasks in our lives is to figure out what makes us us and them. What defines our shared experience and what defines our separate experience?

Religions have provided answers to that question for thousands of years, and we all know the stories of conflict and perhaps less so the stories of cooperation that religious diversity has given us. But of course, politics, too, provides an answer or answers to the question of identity and difference. In the era of nation-states, the

sovereign state makes its claim to unify its diverse citizens under the banner of shared heritage or shared values. And in some sense, the work of managing diversity can be seen as a central feature of the history of the United States.

For its first 175 years as a sovereign state, the United States took as its national motto, *e pluribus unum*, out of many, one. Of course, that changed in 1956 amidst the Cold War struggle against atheist communism when *In God we trust* was adopted by Congress as a national motto, an entirely different way of establishing or claiming unity. But we know that the sort of diversity experienced and conceptualized by our founding generation pales in comparison to the religious, ethnic, and racial diversity we see in the contemporary United States. One of our tasks today at this conference is to take a look at this journey over the past 150 years, the years of Boston College's experience, and assess how we've done, what we've learned, and where we might be headed in terms of our religious diversity.

Another task is to take up the challenge of the common good. Is there such a thing, and in what might it consist when we disagree on so many things about what is true and what is good and what it takes for individuals and communities to flourish? In doing so, our distinguished speakers today will reflect both on lived experience and on theoretical principles. It may well be that working for the common good requires that we focus on our lived experiences, our ways of getting along amidst great diversity. But as they say at the University of Chicago where I was trained, that's all well and good in practice, but how does it work in theory?

Fortunately, we don't need to choose theory or practice today. We will get both from some of the best scholars of our generation. Indeed, today's conference is a chance for all of us at Boston College to think about what we do here collectively and why we do it. And I want to invite every one of you in the audience to join that process as we share our insights, ask our questions, and participate throughout the day in the panel discussions, in the lunch breaks, in the conversations that happen on and off the stage.

So with that, I'd like to invite our moderator for our first panel, David Quigley, who is Dean of Arts and Sciences and professor of history at Boston College, and he will introduce the other panelists as they join him on the stage. Please welcome Dean Quigley.

Quigley:

Good morning. Thank you so much, Erik. I'll ask my four conversation partners to join me here on the podium in just a moment, but let me offer the introductions before we start with the discussion of this most important topic. First, let me thank Erik and his co-organizer, Alan Wolfe. The two of them have really done so much to pull together this rich set of conversations today, and to imagine in some ways the book ends for this entire sesquicentennial celebration, starting a year ago with Erik's leadership – a full day thinking about the religious aims of liberal education in a higher education context, and then today thinking about the common good, the ways in which religion shapes our politics, our public life, our connections across difference.

I'd also like to thank, as Erik did, the 150th planning team, and in particular, Terry Devino, Frank Murtaugh, and Courtney Hough, who've done such remarkable work across so many symposia, large events, a mass in Fenway Park. The logistics have boggled the mind. I think they're all very happy that we're getting to the end of our three semesters of celebrating our 150th.

We've got a wonderful program here today, and I'm very happy that the five of us will be able to kick it off by turning to the past, thinking about what the last 150 years have to say about the themes and topics today, and I hope very much to shape this afternoon's discussion. Let me introduce this morning's four very distinguished panelists.

Marie Griffith, the John C. Danforth Professor in the Humanities at Washington University in St. Louis, is currently the director of the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics. Prior to moving to St. Louis a couple years ago, she taught at Princeton University, where she was associate director of the Center for the Study of Religion, and also the director of the program in the Study of Women and Gender. She later served as the John A. Bartlett professor at Harvard Divinity School while serving on the faculty committee in Harvard's History of American Civilization program. Among her numerous important publications are *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* and *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity*. Her latest will soon appear from W.W. Norton, the compellingly titled *Christians, Sex, and Politics in American History*.

Our second speaker today will be Omar McRoberts, associate professor in the sociology department at the University of Chicago, a scholar of the sociology of religion whose interests include urban poverty, race, and collective action. His *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood* is rooted in his ethnographic work here in Four Corners, a Boston enclave, a study that highlights the complex interplay of faith and community in one particular urban location at the end of the 20th century. Omar is currently writing on black religious responses to and influences on social welfare policy since the New Deal, culminating with George W. Bush's office of faith-based and community initiatives.

Our third speaker from very close to home is Jim O'Toole, the holder of the Clough Millennium Chair in History here at Boston College. Jim previously served as archivist for the archdiocese of Boston and on the faculty at the University of Massachusetts. Among his work are *Militant and Triumphant: William Henry O'Connell and the Catholic Church in Boston*, and most recently, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America*. As part of this ongoing sesquicentennial celebration, he is completing work on a new institutional history of Boston College with a focus on students' experiences, the curriculum, the experience of being in the classrooms over these 150 years.

Finally, it's my pleasure to welcome, as well, Jonathan Sarna from across the river nearby, the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History and chair of the Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program at Brandeis, as well as chief historian of the new National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he has taught at Hebrew Union College, at Yale University, and at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Among his many prize-winning publications are *American Judaism: A History*, and most recently, and for me as a Civil War historian, especially interestingly, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews*. As we think of the historical frame of how do we think about the 1860s, I think we all might have come in here thinking, OK, the Boston Catholic piece is an important part of the story. I hope in our next 90, 105 minutes, however we go through this, we can get Professor Sarna to think about some of the reflections on the Grant expulsion and the experiences of Civil War and Reconstruction in American Jewish history.

Before calling our four distinguished presenters up to the podium, let me just take a couple of minutes to add a little bit to Erik's excellent framing of what we're trying to do, both all day, but especially this morning. How we'll proceed is, again, I'll offer up a few questions, many of them framed by Erik as he put together the conference, to spark at least the beginning of a conversation among the five of us. After a little bit more than an hour of back and forth, I'll turn to you, our audience, to help sustain the conversation. We'll have mics that'll move around the hall, and I hope that we can continue this conversation until at least noon, at which point all of you are invited to join us for lunch. The doors on the two sides of this hall will open and we'll have a buffet lunch that you're certainly welcome to enjoy.

Again, before calling the four scholars up here, let me just emphasize what our charge is for the five of us this morning – to bring a historical perspective to bear on this question of the relationship between religious diversity and Americans' historically evolving understandings of the common good. How do we think about 1863 to 2013 as both an illuminating framework and as a starting point for the later discussions in this afternoon's panel and the keynote at the end of the day?

In particular, I'd like to emphasize and call on my fellow panelists to think about questions of American distinctiveness. How can we think about the particular ways in which faith is lived and experienced in America in the 19th and the 20th and in the 21st centuries? And as I thought about this process, partly because I'm so deep in our own institutional sesquicentennial, I thought of different moments – 1863 – 1913, when Boston College moves out from the enclave of the South End here to Chestnut Hill – 1963, where in our centennial year, John F. Kennedy came and delivered his remarks as part of our 100th anniversary celebration – and then here in 2013.

What has it meant to talk about religious diversity? At the same time, what has it meant to talk about religious particularity and the relationship to the common good? In this very institution, Boston College has long aspired to contribute to the common good, but at the same time was founded out of a sense of and has been sustained out of a sense of religious particularity and particular sometimes parochial interests and concerns. How do we here at Boston College – but then I hope in our conversations, more broadly – balance, hold in tension the different aspects of religious

diversity but also particularity? The common good, but also particular interests.

With that as just a little bit way of framing, let me ask my four fellow panelists to join me up here. Choreography is a little bit of a challenge. Let's make sure we all have our mics on and that you can hear us as we go along.

Let me offer up, again – going beyond my comments and especially Erik's – the first of the questions that were put to us as we thought about this over the last month or beyond, as those of you who were invited awhile ago – this relationship between religious diversity, a central fact of the American experience across not just these 150 years, but going back to colonial times, and shifting conceptions and understandings – at times conflicting conceptions of the common good.

The first of these questions that Erik I think helpfully offers up is the question, what changes in our religious demographics as a nation – we can begin at regional levels if you want or in particular denominations and faith traditions, but the more national story I think is what we want to tease out – what changes in those demographics have we seen over these last 150 years? How have some of these shifting demographics mapped on to ethnic and racial demographics? And in some ways, before we get to the question of the common good as the organizing theme across the day, what would you emphasize in terms of the most important demographic shifts that have characterized this historical evolution? Jim, since you're the local, do you want to start off?

O'Toole:

I teach an undergraduate History of Religion in America course. Five or 600 years in one semester makes for kind of a breakneck pace always. But what I say to students at the beginning is that most of the story we'll be talking about when we think of religious diversity today – most of the time we'll be spending talking about a very narrow window of that. And for most of that five or 600 years, the story of religion in America will be not exclusively but predominantly variations on Christianity and Judaism.

That can be difficult with students at the outset, because given the nature of religious diversity today, their interests are broader than just that. So spending time trying to explain the difference

between Presbyterians and Congregationalists can – students can say, what are you talking about? Where are the more interesting subjects? But it seems to me that just demographically, other religious traditions – Asian traditions, Islam certainly – don't enter the story – if you look at it historically, don't enter the story until relatively late in the story. And so it's always a challenge to try to address that balance.

Quigley: Jonathan?

Sarna: Jumping right off from Jim's comment, I teach a class in the history of American Judaism. And I think that the essential theme is really how the coming of Jews to America broadened the sense of the commons. And it's interesting to remember that that happens very quickly. To give you a sense, there were probably 3,000 Jews in America in 1820, 15,000 in 1840, 15,000 in 1860, a quarter of a million in 1880, 6.7 million today. You begin to think about that growth and how it changes and transforms America.

When Boston College was founded, as you pointed out, David, in 1863, so that coincides with what is really the single greatest official act of anti-Semitism in American history, General Grant banning what he calls Jews as a class from his war zone in very late 1862. And very early in 1863, Abraham Lincoln overturns that order. And I think Lincoln actually is coming to grips with a changing America. I don't think it's accident that in his inaugural – there's still Christological references in the first inaugural – but by the Gettysburg Address, it's one nation, under God. That's a rather interesting reframing of America. It takes quite a while before that's accepted.

But I am very impressed at how the presence of Jews in America has transformed the way we think about America, just as the coming of Muslims and Asian religions has forced us to do that in more recent times.

Griffith: It's the coming of Catholics, too, right? In preparing for this conversation, I was thinking back to one of my former mentors from graduate school, the late William Hutchison, always pointed out that even the colonists in America always took pride – they're very proud of their tolerance for diversity. At least that's when they stopped executing Quakers. And they're always proud, touted

this as a great value, until it became difficult. And it became difficult in the New Republic with Irish immigration, with German immigration.

So it's Catholics as well as Jews that just transform Protestants' ways of imagining themselves, and I mean white Protestants. It's also slaves and African-Americans who become Christianized and take on Christianity as their own religion with the message of emancipation and liberation for them, theologically speaking and politically speaking, that also transformed this whole white Protestant mindset that was so taken for granted in so many ways prior to that time.

And since that time, I guess it seems to me our history is one of concurrent and competing trajectories. This growing diversity on the one hand has truly led over time I think to increasing tolerance and a celebration of diversity and all the things that are still here with us now. And at the same time, it led to growing intolerance, hatred, and even violence against Catholics, against Jews, against Mormons, African-American Christians, Chinese, Japanese, Muslims, and on and on.

Quigley: We were very pluralistic in our hatred.

Griffith: In our violence, yes. So I think, to me, the conversation, in a way, and the day, I take it, as you're asking us to reflect on those competing and concurrent trajectories, right, that it's sort of happening at the same time and where we end up now.

McRoberts: Yeah, I think about the arrival of Africans here under the pretence often of not even being human, let alone whether or not they're a part of the common or not. It really wasn't a question of whether these enslaved human beings were part of a common of course until after abolition, which does a couple of things from a religious standpoint. And I think about the span we're talking about here – 1863 to 2013. That's a long time. But of course, slavery wasn't abolished until 1865.

So what this makes possible is, on the one hand, the elaboration of a formal and independent institutional realm of black religion. Suddenly, African-Americans are able to form actual official

churches and denominations, which constituted, arguably, a common of its own, a black commons, the realm of the discursive space of black religion.

At the same time, though, that space was constitutively diverse. There was never simply one black church. There were theological and ritual, later even class differences that divided African-American religion in very important ways, and in ways that continually, as we go through this history, butt up against the expectation that there be a single black church, and that the black church be a profoundly public phenomenon, that the church be a thing that is the voice for liberation in all times, be the voice for social justice, be the voice challenging whatever presidential administration or social policy regime, and not a set of constitutively diverse, private realms.

So that's the tension that I'm interested in as we look at this. When we say that there are a diversity of stories and that there's diversity in general, often the items of diversity are internally diverse themselves in ways that people struggles with in crucial ways.

O'Toole: The institutionalization of religion, it seems to me, is different but the same, in a way, in the groups that we all study. The building of, from what I study, Catholic educational, healthcare, social service agencies. Same with Jewish organizations, same with African-American organizations. Those kinds of institutions, those networks that get developed, I think in the United States to a greater degree than almost anywhere else – it seems to me that's the point where religious particularity meets the common good. You didn't have to be a Catholic to get admitted to a Catholic hospital, although most people were. Ditto for Jewish organizations. Obviously there are higher barriers in black religious institutions.

But it seems to me that those kinds of institutions are where the public and the private really meet, because they are established to serve the particular sponsoring religious institution, but they necessarily have broader public impacts, as well.

Quigley: That idea of a black commons is something I want to pick up on and think about whether can we speak of a Jewish commons at

different moments, Catholic commons, other denominational commons as we move forward, and how that might shift and link up to a broader understanding of a universal commons or what you might mean by a public good.

First, though, as a historian, let me step back a little bit, because while I'd love to emphasize the grand rupture of the 1860s and emancipation and Gettysburg and not just our beloved Boston College being founded, I think we can make a pretty strong argument for something changing, a fairly dramatic series of transformations in that middle to third quarter of the 19th century. I'm wondering among the four of you, what moments from the 1860s until today would you point to as particularly transformative for our understanding of the demographics, the make up of religion in America. Jim, your initial comment about how students today respond make me think, is it 1965 and the immigration that comes thereafter and a kind of further diversification of faith life in America. I wonder, among the four of you, what would you point to as critical moments for understanding the broad sweep of faith over the last 150 years?

Sarna: Certainly the growth of immigration during the period of the Great Migration from, let's say, 1880 until immigration is cut off in 1924, is a crucial transformative moment. It's crucial for Catholicism. Think of all of those Irish and especially Italian immigrants who come during that era. And it's crucial for Jews who emerge from that period – let's say 3.7% of the population, have multiplied almost 10 times over. And that changes America.

Now, the Johnson Act, which cuts off immigration, really is not very happy about that change in America. Indeed, the quota system is designed in some ways to return America to where it had been in 1890. That was a quixotic idea. That doesn't actually happen. But I think that's an important moment. And the key, I think, is to remember that our history is not linear. It's not just one long line of progress from the days when we hung Quakers to Barack Obama. It doesn't work that way. It's a history full of ups and downs.

I'm very struck by how the late 1870s, where the unfinished revolution of freedom in Reconstruction comes to an end, we see both the beginning of Jim Crow legislation, and related to all the same logic, the introduction of social discrimination against Jews,

to a movement where America steps back. And the hopefulness, that sense that, yes, we can build a common, we can bring everybody in and educate them, is transformed, I think, into great suspicion as to whether that can happen. If one is looking at one of our sister institutions, think of the optimism of President Eliot of Harvard, and then think of President Lowell and his sense of fear, really, about the institution, about American society and the light.

So and then I think since World War II, perhaps seeing what the impact of hatred was in Germany, I think America has very much been on a trajectory that produced a very different country. And one can really see changes, changes that transformed the history of black Americans, changes that transformed Jews, changes, in many ways, that transformed Catholics. This is the 50th anniversary this week of the Kennedy assassination. That's a very significant moment in American life. And I do see that post-war era as creating, in many ways, a changed America and a different sense of the common.

Griffith:

I agree with Jon, and I would just add a couple factors. That late 19th, early 20th century period is so formative. And when I teach my courses or even the survey course, students are amazed because we linger in that period for so long, both for the reasons that you've articulated and others, too. It's the period where science is becoming such an ideological weapon and source of controversy for Protestants, in particular, but also Catholics especially. And the modernization controversy and all these things that are happening for Catholics there, too, have a broad impact on Catholics on the ground locally. The science debates, feminism, women changing gender roles, the movement for suffrage and women's rights and all these kinds of things have profound repercussions across religious communities.

So as Omar was pointing out earlier, religious communities themselves are deeply internally divided around a lot of these kinds of issues, even as new immigrants are coming in and changing their congregations and their traditions on the ground. So there's so much strife, I think, internally. And the realignments of what – the restructuring of American religion that Robert Wuthnow and many others have written about really starts to happen there over these questions of science and gender and sexuality, which I think are big debates all across the board. And the realignments take a long time coming, because there's still so much distrust of one community to another. But all of those things are happening in that period. And

certainly in the post-war period, we can talk about different moments as crisis moments in the 1960s and on forward, that I would just add those factors there to that crucial moment.

McRoberts:

Well, and as demographic shifts are concerned, I would add the importance of internal migration, as well as immigration. The African-American Great Migration begins in the early '10s, the '10 years of the 20th century, and the first wave of it extends through the '30s and into the Great Depression. Of course, you get World War I as well, which I identify as an important rupture in the story of progress through science that people are entertaining. Suddenly, the great absurdity of the blood bath taking place begins to challenge that.

But also, the arrival in urban centers and particularly Northern urban centers of millions of African-Americans begins to challenge the practice of black religion in ways that were unprecedented during this first pocket of migration and heavy concentration of religious practice for the first time. You get, for the first time, what we could call a self-conscious religious market in black religion, that is, people aware that just perhaps yards away from my church, there's another church, and they're very different. Maybe they're African Methodist and I'm National Baptist, or maybe I'm Pentecostal, and the Methodists think that I jump around too much. And you get these debates that are no longer purely theological, even, but they take place almost in this – the importance of geographical concentration cannot be overestimated here.

And so the churches become aware of competition with themselves, among themselves, of the influence of Catholics – the Catholics are trying to steal our members through their superior social service provision. Well, how should we respond to that? You get an awareness of non-Christian upstarts and influences during these several decades, of various black Jewish groups, Islamic groups beginning to appear in the '30s where the entire worldview is different, and also competing with secular institutions who are vying for the loyalty and the participation of African-Americans.

And so you get a kind of a market – not a free market, but a market nonetheless that just wasn't possible in the Southern rural experience, and an awareness of this debate about the national discussion about the nature of its own progress and the role of

scientific rationalism or scientism, really. And religious folk, on one side at least, even during that early period – and I know that this isn't unique to just black religion – but identifying perhaps for the first time that story of national progress as a kind of religion in itself. That in a sense that there's nothing really scientific about it, that it's another speculative worldview based on a kind of faith, and our faith is just as valid. Of course, on the other side, the more progressive religionists arguing that there's a way to synthesize a scientific perspective with religious perspective.

Quigley:

Let me pick up on this, Omar and Marie, this kind of focus on the discourse discussions, a kind of intellectual understanding of the first part of our charge, which is religious diversity. In some ways, it's reflective of the moment we're living in that we would title this religious diversity. If we go back to 1963 or the '50s, pluralism or some variant would have been the theme. In recent years, multiculturalism and diversity are preferred language. Other moments, it shows up in different forms. What do we talk about when we talk about religious diversity, which is, again, a key point of distinctiveness over the last 150 years, but has been understood and argued about in very different ways at different moments?

I wonder, among the four of you, are there particular intellectuals that you would point to, or times where we've had different ways of discussing this, both in terms of tolerance, intolerance? Again, the World War I era, Americanization, assimilation, and discussions in the aftermath in the great wave of migration there. How has our understanding of a problem, the reality that is religious diversity shifted over these 150 years?

Sarna:

My sense is that we began with the view that that diversity was really an evil that would eventually be overcome. Perhaps missionaries would succeed. Perhaps everybody would see the light. Yes, Bishop Hughes was quite certain that, in time, everybody would become a good Catholic. And I think that sense that we would ultimately triumph – you can see across the board, the great American Jewish religious leader, Isaac Mayer Wise, called his prayer book *Minhag America, the Custom of America*. He didn't say the custom of Reform Jews. That, too, reflected a sense of triumphalism.

It took a long time, I think, before Americans discovered that the great strength, in fact, what we're calling here diversity, and that in

fact, that market, which is new, of course, in the study of American religion, but I think a very powerful idea that also links American religion to some of our studies of American capitalism – that market, that diversity is, if we can paraphrase Churchill on capitalism, the worst system in the world except for all the others. It's what distinguishes us from places that had wars of religion.

It is that sense which emerges in the 20th century both in ethnicity and in religion approximately at the same time. People like Horace Kallen and others were writing about pluralism, that sense that the great strength of America is its religious diversity, that in fact, in competing, these various faiths also learn from one another. They borrow good ideas from one another. They are all strengthened ultimately, as is religion generally, by that pluralism.

And indeed, today, when people ask why is America so different from Europe, why have we not seen the dramatic secularization that has run across especially Western Europe, the standard answer is that free market in religion, that sense there is no state religion, there is great religious diversity – if you don't like one church, there are unlimited numbers of alternatives. It's not a dissenting church in a European sense. That that's really what made religion in America so very strong. So we moved from seeing religious diversity as a problem to actually celebrating that diversity and seeing it as a very great strength.

Griffith: Unless you're Sam Harris or Christopher Hitchens or Richard Dawkins, right? And they may have something to tell us also about thinking about this. I've been curious about this whole day and the framing of this around religious diversity – are we sure that that's always and everywhere a good thing? Are we saying, well, religion is good? It leads to the common good always and everywhere. There are a few exceptions, but on the whole, that is a good thing. So I'd be curious to think about that, as well.

O'Toole: I'd just say, connecting to the previous turning points question, it seems to me that on these kinds of issues, the period after the Second World War really is critical in a number of respects. I shouldn't attempt to practice sociology in public, especially in the presence of my colleagues, but it seems to me, suburbanization really matters for churches, certainly on the Catholic side of things. The spreading of Catholicism from the inner cities to the suburbs, it seems to me, just has all kinds of difference – makes a huge

difference. I say to students all the time, the church is a very different thing when it's something you pass five times a day as you're going to school or the market or just wherever.

There's a wonderful letter in the Boston archdiocesan archives written by Honey Fitz, Mayor Fitzgerald, to Cardinal O'Connell, the archbishop at the time. And the theme of the letter is basically what a wonderful person Rose turned out to be, the mother of President Kennedy. And Honey Fitz says in the letter, she never goes anywhere but she doesn't find a church to stop in for a few minutes and make a visit. And if you visit the Kennedy family home in Brookline just a couple of miles away, there's the home, and just down the street is the church where they all went.

Again, it seems to me the mental world for church members, for religious people – when the church is something you pass several times a day, that's one thing. When people move to the suburbs and the church is something that you get in your car and you drive to for a particular purpose, and when that purpose is over, you get in your car and drive home – and that, I think, is something that really becomes common, at least in the Catholic community in the period after the Second World War. That's a huge shift in attitude about the role of the institutional church, at least, that it plays in people's lives.

McRoberts:

And that exact phenomenon, that is driving to church – worshipping and then leaving the place, the locale where the church is located becomes – well, it's already identified as a challenge in these incredibly dense African-American Northern communities during the Great Migration, but it becomes identified even more as a problem for African-Americans for the plight of those neighborhoods after the 1970s, after the 1960s – actually, after certain kinds of civil rights legislation makes it possible for at least the best-off African-Americans to leave those areas and go somewhere else results in even higher concentrations of poverty, so that you find often in the poorest urban communities, suddenly the most religious activity taking place is sometimes in storefront churches.

And so critics begin to notice, yeah, there's religious diversity here, there's what we could call pluralism here, but we're going to read that actually as excess, that maybe there's too much religion happening here and not enough of something else. And critics

begin to talk that way much earlier in the century. E. Franklin Frazier, the great sociologist, said there are too many churches. Yeah, they're diverse, they're doing every kind of thing, but – and here comes the idea of a black common again – what is the church doing for the people? Not what are the churches doing for the peoples, but what is the black church doing for black people?

If they're not improving conditions and improving odds of upward mobility for African-Americans as a whole, then they are pathological. And so here's a reading of that religious diversity among African-Americans that takes it not as something to celebrate, but as something that's held us back. Of course all the other voices, speaking in defense of all of this religious activity – this is the only institution African-Americans have had. This is the institution coming out of slavery that's kept us alive. And so there's been that discourse among African-Americans for many decades.

Quigley:

Let me move outward here from our focused discussion on diversity to the broader relationship between religious diversity and the common good. And first, I'd like to really underscore Marie's point about what seem to be – at least as I've been thinking about it – an assumed relationship, a positive, affirming relationship that religious diversity is in service of or essential to the creation and advancement of the common good. I think what we want to think about for the rest of the morning and I hope in the afternoon is how there are enduring and sometimes deepening tensions between the religious diversity and, as I said earlier, religious particularities across the landscape and our attempt to fight for something like the common good.

Also, and maybe we can get to this in the Q&A later, it's striking to me that that kind of mid-century post-war pluralist consensus or an attempt at a consensus seems to carry forward for a good long time. I'm thinking of Tony Judt and his post-war – in a different European context, where does post-war end? When does that kind of mentality today give way to something else? When we talk about religious diversity today, are we in sympathy with a kind of 1940s, 1950s vision of pluralism in American life, or do we mean something different? Are we using similar words but conveying or articulating a different set of values? I think that it sometimes is obscured when, again, diversity becomes pluralism and it all becomes some kind of timeless, fundamental American value.

At this point, though, I really want to open up to the question of the common good, the relationship between our two organizing phrases up there, and build on something that Omar's pushed on twice now – this idea of a particular commons relating up to a larger sense of public life and the common good. Let me throw out there the kind of formal question that all five of us have been grappling with, but I hope we can link it up to some of those questions of particular commons and how it relates to the question of the common good.

Here is the question – how has the concept of the common good been conceptualized by different communities, by different faith communities, different faith traditions in the United States in the last 100, 150 years? And then are there conceptual or practical problems in doing so today? Is it different today than at past moments? How have different faith traditions tried to reconcile the two parts of our title – the ways in which fundamental religious beliefs serve, can lead to engagement with broader political or public projects related to a vision of the common good? I wonder if anyone would at least want to take a first stab at that.

Griffith:

Well, in thinking about this, again, preparing, I've wondered if we even agree on what the common good is. Fortunately, the contemporary panel this afternoon can take that up more as a contemporary question if we don't. But I think that's a really serious question. And I do think it relates to this whole concept of diversity. Appreciation for diversity, it seems to me, bears a relation to the belief in participatory democracy in some ways. So even if we say, well, one thing we can agree in as a common good enshrined in the Constitution and at least in our ideals – it's not always in our everyday practices – is a belief in participation. The right to vote, the right to have some kind of a voice in our governing structures and in our politics. And, of course, there are ways in which some of that is eroding today, and I hope the afternoon panel will talk about that.

But I think that really does have a relation that maybe we can talk about, too – appreciation for diversity. That doesn't mean we agree, we're at some kind of relativistic agreement with all the religious beliefs another group has, because that can't possibly be true. We probably don't debate religious ideas enough. We do sometimes give those things a pass, which is its own problem, in my view. But I do think, nonetheless, some kind of appreciation

for the gatherings, the practices, the traditions of other communities must have some relation to what we think of as participation in our democracy as a common good.

Sarna:

I fully agree. Indeed, way back with George Washington, and he writes through all of these religious groups, and he tells the Jews and the Catholics they're going to have rights—and to bigotry, no sanction; to persecution, no assistance—but then he immediately turns and says that of course you have to demean yourself as good citizens, giving the government effectual support, and as somebody who had to run out and put down various taxpayer rebellions, the Whiskey Rebellion and Shay's Rebellion and so on, he knew perfectly well that this experiment required good citizenship. So it really goes back to the very beginning.

But I do think that when we think about the common good, we have to remember that those ideas – we are in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the very same notion, wealth as weal, common-good of Massachusetts – but that Commonwealth ran the risk and still does of using the idea of the common good for allowing some people, the majority, to effect itself over the majority. Someone like Ayn Rand thought that the common good really just was what she had seen in Communist Russia, that you would liquidate all sorts of people for the common good, that the good of some men takes precedence over the good of others.

And indeed, in many debates, even in healthcare, that's what we see. Don't we want healthcare for the common good? But then come along doctors and others and say, oh, well, wait a minute – our common good doesn't seem to count for anything in this. So it is important, I think, even though we have this sense of the common good, to realize that very often, the common good as a phrase has had winners and losers, and that we do have to ask, at what price and what are the costs.

I think there have been times – we're talking about the post-war era – we argued it was an amazing decision on the part of Americans – we argued in the 1950s that for the basis of the common good, one of the most accepted ideas in America from its beginning, a sense of private property. It's my house. I can decide who I sell it to. I can decide who's going to live there. I can decide, if it's my hotel, who can come, who can not. We're going to throw that out – that idea of the private property and rights – because of the common

good and a desire to extend civil rights to all Americans. I'm not sure it would happen today. An amazing moment in American history, but it is worth remembering that what that meant was that a value that was deeply rooted in American individualism was considered secondary. And indeed, people felt their rights had been limited for the sake of the common good.

When it comes to gun control, we clearly would not today be able – some have tried – would not be able to say that for the common good, we will limit the individual's right to carry a gun in public or to have a gun. Those are the balances that I think we face with the common good, and it forces us to extend our thinking about it, to who's common and whose ox is being gored.

McRoberts:

Well, thinking of post-World War II, I think one of the most important articulations of common good that appears in the last century appears during the civil rights movement, which is a religious movement. It was a religious movement. But there was an articulation first of the commons as partly as a realm of contention, a space of debate and of discussion about perhaps even what the common good is. The possibility of that space can be understood as the commons. So regardless of whether your rights are being respected or not, when you enter the public realm as a protester, you are acting as a member of the commons, and even perhaps risking your life to do that. But you're holding your right to articulate, to protest, to make a point. So there's that idea of the commons.

There's another idea of the commons which I think approaches a civil religious articulation, and that is of the nation as a collection of people that is sort of marching through linear time and that is on an eschatological path of progress towards something, but it doesn't have to get there. It doesn't have to get there. That there's something that has to be done in order for it to get there, and the condition is that the nation takes special concern for a people within it, which is like a nation within the nation, which is on its own eschatological path toward freedom, liberation, and it's not there yet because the greater nation is holding it back.

And so you have a conception of African-America as a people on its own divinely ordained path, and the state of the entire broader nation hinges on whether or not it does justice to this people within it. Now obviously, resonance is with Jewish tradition, right? But

what ultimately is defined as the good is that justice be done in such a way that brings about equality among all of these peoples within this nation that's on this divinely ordained but not inevitable historical trajectory.

O'Toole: For Catholics, it seems to me, the change that occurs in the middle of the 20th century at just the same time as the civil rights movement – the change in the official understanding of Catholics in relation to other religious groups that comes with the Second Vatican Council, that moving away from a John Hughes kind of, well, at some point, Americans will just come to their senses and everyone will be a Catholic and that will solve the problem. The shift from that attitude expressed here in Boston in the 1940s and '50s by the largely justly forgotten Father Leonard Feeney – all non-Catholics are going to hell by definition – when he was finally excommunicated from the church, I think a lot of local Catholics thought, wait, isn't that what we believe? What's the problem here?

But the shift from that in a very short period of time to the documents on inter-religious dialogue as a dialogue more or less among equals – the shift in that official position, it seems to me, both has an effect on Catholics and may also have underlined senses that they had as they came to know more people who were outside their own religious tradition. So I don't want to hang too much on the official teaching kind of thing. It's not as though Catholics in the pews everywhere were reading the documents of Vatican II and understanding what many of them were. I don't want to make this too much of a top-down thing. But it seems to me that that just changed the terms of discussion for Catholics, and therefore perhaps opened them more to considerations of a broader public good.

Sarna: Certainly Vatican II is crucial, and actually I think Cardinal Cushing even anticipated some aspects of Vatican II. But I would not underestimate something like Will Herberg's book *Protestant Catholic Jew*. The very fact that it is such a bestseller for so long and that it gives a term – there it is, Protestant Catholic Jew – to America – for all of the faults of that book, and for all of what he did not see, it is very remarkable, so much so that on my campus, they built three chapels that are allegedly the same size – and actually one is larger – and don't cast shadows on one another – that is an architectural message that we accept Herberg, and we translate that into religious architectural terms. And you actually, of course,

see across the country – you bring rabbis and ministers and priests together in ways that were more unusual previously.

World War II and the need to make sure that soldiers get along certainly anticipated that, but I don't think we can underestimate the significance of Herberg and its implications. Of course, on radio, you then give equal time similarly to these three faiths and so on, and that is very shaping of a new idea of America, now largely discarded, that comes into being at that time.

Quigley: Let me jump in here and try to channel – I don't want to do this in public too often – but channel my inner Christopher Hitchens, I guess. Could one argue – again, to help clarify the matter before us – could one argue that the relative weakness of our welfare state, the relative stinginess of our provision for the neediest in our society that some could point to in comparative terms, the intense and deepening suspicion of public life in government, a kind of retreat from the public sphere that one would argue – perhaps Chris Hitchens – has accelerated over the last generation – could one argue that that is a result of religious diversity and the intense religious commitments of the American people? Anyone want to sign on to that Hitchens interpretation, or how would you counter that most strident kind of argument against maybe the underpinnings of the title up here?

Griffith: I have some sympathy with that argument – some sympathy. And that's outside my area of expertise, so I don't want to push it too far, but I would connect it back to Herberg, because the other important point to make here about Herberg is that Herberg was very critical of that Protestant Catholic Jew – what that did to religion and what that did to something genuine. Ultimately, that *Protestant Catholic Jew*, it's a critique of the kind of rah-rah civic patriotism that that 1950s religion was generating. And I think we can connect to that, also. I think Hitchens made very important points about that, as well. He was no fan of anything called true religion. He wasn't drawing those distinctions, of course.

But I do have some sympathy, and I think Christian critics themselves or liberal Protestants, the Ecumenicals, as David Hollinger calls them, are deeply dismayed at Christians on some other side, be they evangelicals or conservatives of one kind or another, how they think about the welfare state and this kind of dismantling. There's talk about internal division within a tradition.

You really almost got competing traditions calling themselves Protestant or evangelical or whatnot, not even thinking about Catholics. So I think that's a valid point. I'd love to hear what other people think about that, as well.

McRoberts:

Well, it certainly means that within the religious field can be found much political diversity. And one of the consequences of what we call separation of church and state is that religious institutions can then enter the political field as very important and vocal players, and there are plenty who have entered on the side of retrenchment of all sorts of social welfare. There are those who have entered the political field as advocates of more generous provision. But it means that we can't look at the religious field just as a field of private – as a market, that we have to look at it also as a realm of public discourse, as public religion that has specific impacts in the political realm.

And what's interesting over the decades, too, is how federal government especially has become more capable of interfacing with these religious political contenders in a variety of ways. The Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives is arguably just a recent and perhaps the most formal instantiation of that, but it clearly – part of its role is to be able to project a certain image of the state to religious populations – the social welfare state to religious populations by way of justifying whatever policies are being presented.

In the '60s, you get an Office of civil rights under the Johnson administration, which happened to be staffed mostly by black clergy who had connections to the civil rights movement, and whose actual job was to reach out to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to reach out to other civil rights luminaries, to keep trying to sway them to support the Johnson administration in the next election, to keep an eye on the emerging more radical Black Nationalist Christians of the time. Go to their conferences and try to get them to sign on to the war on poverty. That capacity has been developing – the state capacity to try to handle religious politics has been developing for decades, and it reflects the very deeply political nature of much of the religious field.

Sarna:

So I don't think Hitchens holds up either historically or comparatively. Just historically, of course the welfare state is a New Deal, more or less, phenomenon. And what's important is

actually to look earlier than that where, indeed, it was up to faith communities to take care of their own. So the Catholic community developed a rich system for Catholics, and the Jewish community for Jews, and Protestants, as well. And there was an assumption that charity and healthcare and so on was provided religiously. It's not accident that we had all of those religiously based staff named hospitals here in the Boston area.

And we have moved – and it has, I think, some good aspects and some bad aspects – to a sense that the state rather than these religious communities should assume that responsibility. Clearly, there was a sense that a lot of people were not being well cared for, and nobody would have made such a change. At the same time, I think we are being reminded that things were lost when local faith communities no longer were responsible, and that indeed the movement from faith communities, local churches and synagogues, to government created – huge bureaucracy, all sorts of possibilities for free riders and for people to game the system.

But I think rather than Hitchens's approach, what we need is carefully to understand the pros and cons of these two approaches, why we moved from one to the other, what was lost and what was gained in the move from one to the other, and is there some way of creating – and I think this is the Office of Faith Based – is there some way of creating hybrids that would better allow us to take advantage of the benefits that both state welfare and religious concern for the needy both had, and can we come up with some new hybrid that would be better than either that we've had before.

O'Toole: We shouldn't overlook the underlying politics of this, either.

Sarna: Politics? Who would've thunk?

O'Toole: There is such a thing, Jon. And there, I'm thinking particularly of the Catholic community in the United States over the last half century at least, and the huge amount of political territory it seems to me that American Catholics as a voting block have moved through. Central to the New Deal Coalition in the 1930s. Central to the Reagan revolution of the 1980s. How do you get from point A to point B in about a generation in that community? And it seems to me since then with the last several election cycles, Catholics have become the quintessential swing voting block.

Both political parties actively voting for them. It seems to me the way Catholics have broken in presidential elections has had a large effect on the outcome of those elections.

That's obviously the point at which religious particularity meets the public electoral system, and I'm not sure exactly where that's going. But I think it has this effect, then, on how much should the public welfare and educational systems and so on – how much should they be doing? Catholics have, I think, become as a voting block more ambiguous on that subject than we're used to thinking.

McRoberts: Is that because of the way that the sort of post-'70s rise of the new Christian right put sexual politics and the politics of abortion kind of at the center of things?

O'Toole: I think it's partly that. Just the other day, with a couple of graduate students, I was rereading Putnam and Campbell's *American Grace* with their idea of the revolution and two counterrevolutions. The revolution of the '60s followed by the conservative reaction to that followed by the reaction to that. There's still a lot to that argument, it seems to me. And certainly, for some Catholics at least, I think the sexual politics issue have been a part of that.

Sarna: Well, of course Hispanic Catholics were not a factor in the 1940s and are an enormous factor in the Catholic vote today, and that, I think, has much more to do with the politics of immigration than anything else.

Quigley: I'm the one of the five of us who doesn't specialize in scholarship on religion, so I'm a bit of an amateur up here. But as a scholar of American politics and the history of public life more broadly, I find it frustrating to try and engage sometimes students, sometimes other scholars with questions related to the themes today. And the one little crumb that folks will throw my way is of course Martin Luther King is a figure. It's a religious movement. There is a relationship between civil rights and religion. But there's a dismissal that many are quick to turn to in thinking about this central relationship between American faith traditions and the quality, the substance of our public life.

I'm wondering – looking back over the last 150 years, across all of this, who else would you point to as particularly prophetic voices? Again, King stands out and is the easy one – in some ways, a cliché, and for some, an exception that maybe proves the rule. Some may even prove hostile to the idea that he's primarily a religious figure. But I'm wondering, as you think back across different faith traditions, different denominations, who else have been particularly forceful visionaries imagining a richer understanding of the common good?

Sarna: In the contemporary period, Abraham Joshua Heschel would be the obvious person (inaudible) and so on. But I think one would find religious figures of various stripes. Yes, Prohibition was full of religious spokespeople, but in some ways, that was viewed so differently by Americans than, say, anti-slavery, that temperance and Prohibition led to a very different view, I think, of religion in the public square than anti-slavery or later civil rights. So if you were graphing it, I think abortion and temperance, Prohibition, would be in one place, and anti-slavery and civil rights in another. And we often don't realize that both of them were brought to us by religious leaders moving into the public square. But politically, they're viewed very differently, and people draw different results dependent on which they point to.

Quigley: Imagining that not everyone in the audience knows Heschel as well as you, what would you point to in terms of 2013? What can we learn from Heschel's imagining of public life and the place of faith within that?

Sarna: My sense is that he actually and King got along because they spoke really in some ways the same language. They drew lessons from the Bible. Each linked civil rights back to the Exodus tradition. Heschel famously feels at Selma that his legs are praying. Really an interesting metaphor that suggests that faith is not just something that you do in your house of worship, but faith is something that you do in your political activities.

If you want a different kind of movement that's heavily influenced by religion, look at the movement to free Soviet Jews in the 1960s. Heschel was involved, heavily engages religious leaders. Really one of the great human rights battles not usually considered as such – greatest and most successful human rights battles of the post-war era that, indeed, allows a whole group that's being persecuted on

the basis of religion to be free. And there, again, he, I think, moved lots of people to feel that demonstrating in Washington – it's the single largest demonstration of American Jews in all history in Washington in 1986 – that that was a religious activity no less than a political activity.

In World War II, when a few Orthodox rabbis demonstrated that the Jewish community is very embarrassed and somewhat horrified that they would do such a thing. Today view differently. By the 1980s, that notion of demonstrating to free Jews in the Soviet Union, to urge the president to move in that direction and so on, that becomes normative and the merger of religion and political action.

Griffith:

I would just say that in the liberal Protestant tradition – and I would include evangelicals outside of the new Christian right there – you have many leaders. Just as you not only had Martin Luther King, you have many visionaries besides King. And I'll quote Hollinger again, whose book, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire*, I just strongly recommend, his latest collection of essays, and this is very relevant here. He's consumed with questions, I think, about religion and the public good in that book.

But his point there is that Ecumenical Protestant and Protestant, Catholic, and Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and on and on, cooperation – these were group efforts. There were visionary men and women in these organizations, like the National Council of Churches and others. But these were collective efforts, too. So I guess I would resist slightly the who was the visionary thinker on this and say there was so much activity on the ground, in the churches, in the theological schools, in the pastoral counseling world, in all of these kinds of settings, that were really generating these larger movements against racism, for women's rights, against various wars and genocide, and so many of the progressive reforms of the latter part of the 20th century.

And just to linger on this for a moment, Hollinger's point is that they – even though it looks like the decline of mainline Protestantism today, he wants to reframe that whole argument into saying, actually, liberal Protestants won the day in terms of their reforms. And if their children and their grandchildren have become more secular, as many of us have, that's not to say that the reforms themselves weren't tremendously successful or that that

political vision didn't in some ways succeed. And that's a vision also of the common good being about rights and participation and equal access for so many things. So the struggle continues, but I think all of that is a very important piece of this discussion, as well.

McRoberts:

Yeah, on a similar note, I would throw in Reverdy Ransom, the African Methodist bishop who wanted to organize an ecumenical civil rights movement in like the '20s, and eventually was able to mobilize something in the first years of Franklin Roosevelt's first administration, so like around 1932, called the Fraternal Council of Negro Churches, which very successfully put pressure, for the first time, on a federal administration, coming from a fairly large ecumenical political organization to enact certain civil rights oriented reforms to the New Deal. A very important organization which the Southern Christian Leadership Conference basically inherited the institutional structure and the ideological stances of. So I would add that.

But I'm trying to make sense of Billy Graham and his legacy, not so much in terms of being a – well, you can't classify him as a liberal Protestant, right? But who's had a specific kind of influence on many presidents, and if not necessarily on public ideas about the common good, then perhaps somehow on the common good via their influence on a president's personal religiosity. It was interesting when Obama was running for his first term – the very public split with Jeremiah Wright, who became controversial after I guess a bunch of YouTube videos appeared where Wright's civil religious articulation did not – the question of what comprised the commons, he didn't give the right answer apparently. And Obama had to part with him very publicly, which caused a lot of emotional turmoil obviously for Wright, and perhaps for Obama, as well.

But it raises this question about what the common is, and who as a political leader you can have next to you as a religious or spiritual adviser, and what they say the common is and what the good is. It's unclear who will be declared Obama's Billy Graham. It's possible that it's Joshua DuBois, who was the head of what Obama turned into the Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. He changed the name and appointed DuBois. DuBois has just published a book called *The President's Devotional*, which was apparently a collection of daily Biblical reflections that he would send the president throughout the first administration. So it's possible that DuBois was Obama's Billy

Graham. But my concern here is these political leaders, who do they have next to them and what are they learning about the common good from religious characters that they situate very close to themselves?

O'Toole:

The Catholic figure I'd point to, I think, is probably largely forgotten today. But the Catholic figure I'd point to in this context is John A. Ryan, who was a professor at the Catholic University in the first half of the 20th century and associated with what was called at the time the National Catholic Welfare Conference to try to oversee coordinated efforts around the country. And Ryan was significant, I think, not so much for his own political effectiveness. His program included unionization and demands for the living wage and so on.

It's not so much his own successes, but the degree to which he spread out into Catholic parishes, Catholic universities, Catholic schools, the emerging papal social teaching encyclicals. It was as a spreader of those messages that I think he really had his impact, not so visibly himself, but it seems to me in terms of the broad impact. This is the man whom Father Coughlin dismissed cynically as he's just Right Reverend New Dealer – an expression, perhaps, from Coughlin that there really was some power there in the spreading out of those ideas.

Quigley:

Getting back to my earlier point about how do we imagine or formulate, understand the post-war, how far does it go, I think Billy Graham really is critical. As I was thinking about this panel, I came back to him a few times, and as much Graham, even more so his audiences, the shifting audiences over the course of the second half of the 20th century. One of my favorite studies of 19th century intellectual history is by Mary Cayton, an essay in *The American Historical Review* called "Emerson and His Audiences," where she makes more sense of Emerson than just about anybody I've ever read because she tracks the mercantile libraries and athenaeums across the Midwest and out into the West, and the folks who were showing up to listen to Emerson in the 1840s, '50s, and '60s.

And I think that there is something shifting, that there is a shifting orientation to public life that one can detect both in what Graham is saying and the relationships with those presidents, but also those folks who are coming out or tuning in and listening and finding

meaning in his pronouncements. Again, it's not – I completely agree – not just the great man, but that relationship between visionary or leader and audiences and movements that's so interesting over the last 150 years.

There's one last question that was presented to us that I just want to put on the table. Maybe we won't have four answers before turning to the audience, because I really do want to bring you into the conversation. But I think it's an important question as we wrap up this portion of the panel and open it up to a fuller discussion. And it's the question – thinking today in 2013 and looking ahead – in some ways, anticipating this afternoon's conversation – what roles should these historical narratives of change, of not quite linear progress but transformation, rupture, continuity across the last 150 years – how should these narratives inform religious leaders, religious practice, civic obligations? A sense of how we as believers or nonbelievers come into the public sphere and fight for a vision of the good, of the just.

I wonder if anybody has some thoughts about that, the historians at the table more so than others. Is there a particular kind of purchase that these historical lessons might have on contemporary conversations and action?

O'Toole:

Well, the tough thing, I think, is in some ways getting people to remember their own history. I think this all the time just listening to things in the immigration debate. It was most starkly brought home to me, I think, now some time ago during the brief rise, thankfully and fall of Pat Buchanan. And when I would listen to him on immigration policy, I would say to myself, speaking to him, you do realize that people were saying those very same words about your grandfather, right? And I think actually the answer to that question probably was no from Buchanan. But it seems to me that's an example of not remembering. And if remembering can somehow be brought back and brought to bear on the discussion, it doesn't solve the problem by any means, but it may be a starting point.

Sarna:

And I think it fits nicely into the 150th anniversary. I think the power of the historical narrative – even some of our discussion – is a reminder that history and change doesn't just happen. People make it happen. People shape history. The students who are graduating from Boston College have the possibility of shaping

history. And it seems to me there is a very powerful message from the stories that we have told and that we have written, which is precisely it's not that you sit back and watch it unfold on your computer screen or on CNN. It's those people who made and shaped history whom we are recounting. And I think we still are seeking and looking for those people who hopefully will be inspired by the past to produce more change going forward.

Griffith: I completely agree, and I'm reminding of the last line in your book about when General Grant expelled the Jews – in America, hatred can be overcome. That's the last line in your book, and it's so very powerful. I agree.

Sarna: (overlapping conversation; inaudible) [At least] someone reads it.

Griffith: (laughter) It's a wonderful book. It is a wonderful book. And it's short. It's not too long. But I do think scrutiny of these historical narratives – and I think from the Protestant side, if we're speaking from traditions of the Protestant secular side, in my case – really scrutinizing the good, the bad, and the ugly in our histories, and, yes, saying there is hope for students. We're always trying to inspire action on that front, but also not to forget the very ugly acts that have been perpetuated. And keeping in mind this present context with so much violence and hatred still amongst us, and the need to keep fighting. So absolutely, these historical narratives matter deeply, and I worry that we don't tell them enough, and that they're not enough a part of our broader culture.

McRoberts: There's a fellow named Colin Woodard, I think, who recently has gotten some attention in newspapers and on NPR with a study that he put out that said we are not one nation. We're actually 11. We're 11 geographically bounded nations with distinct cultural ways that can be identified. And he actually identifies the predominance of particular religious groups in these different sub-regions as part of what makes these distinct. And I haven't read the full study, and I'm sure there are many more nations. I can only imagine the kinds of stories, the kinds of narratives that come out of the mouths of folks in these places, and the very different kinds of stories.

I imagine, for a scholar, especially an historically oriented scholar, one of the important challenges is to discover what these narratives

are and how different they are, where they actually overlap, where the ugly parts really are. There is a tendency with every kind of narrative to focus on the moment of redemption or the moment of grace or the moment of emancipation, which has a way of beatifying the ugly parts that came before. And it's perhaps only through that kind of amnesia that people can move forward in a sane fashion and just kind of get down the street. But as scholars, we have to look at all of it and not be amnesiac.

I guess from a political perspective, the challenge is always – and this is part of what I study – the challenge is always to make these stories feed in to one seemingly seamless whole. Yes, out of many, one. And what's interesting from my own scholarly perspective is how the fishers remain, and how people will push back and want to assert their particular story, and want to join the mainstream, as it were, when it's politically expedient to do so. And that's, I think, part of our task to study these things, as well. How the attempt to make one out of many are so fraught with difficulty and challenge.

Quigley: At this point, I invite you in the audience to raise your hand if you have any questions. We have a couple of folks on the edge in the hall who will come around. All I'd ask is wait for them to come by with the microphone so we can hear your questions. We have nearly a half hour for the Q&A. So we have one in the middle of the hall here.

Cuenim: Thank you. I'm Walter Cuenin, the Catholic chaplain at Brandeis. Professor Sarna mentioned the three chapels that we have of religious diversity. Ironically, I'm in charge of all the chaplains, so as a Catholic priest at Brandeis, it kind of makes me the chief rabbi. But what's interesting – what's happened in the last few years, we hired a Muslim chaplain, just last week, a Hindu woman chaplain. So it's not your father's Brandeis, if you put it that way.

But I think the trajectory that's probably the biggest right now is no religion. (inaudible) the nones. Not nuns like sisters, but N-O-N-E-S. And I find that with a lot of students at Brandeis. They believe all religions are OK. Whatever you are, you are. One truth doesn't outshine another one. But many, many students have nothing to do with religion, whether it's Jewish, Catholic, or whatever. And when Obama was inaugurated, he said in that

speech, and for people who have no faith. That would have been impossible to say from a President of the United States.

So I think the big question now is what will be the future of religion in our country. Many of you have been to Europe, and you've seen what happened. Catholic France is hardly Catholic, which is OK. I'm not criticizing. But what will be the trajectory of the future with young people? Will they be at all interested in some sort of religion?

SARNA:

I think that we've seen this story before. That is to say, we are witnessing now the end of that remarkable religious revival that began in the 1970s, and we all talked about the Born-Agains, and we all saw students who suddenly got religion and that became very excited. Every revival – Finney knew this – every revival is followed by a period of backsliding. I think in the 1970s, there was a turn to religion because some of the promises of the much less religious '60s didn't happen, and people thought religion has the answer. Now I think, in a way, it's the opposite. Religion didn't supply the answer. It supplied all sorts of new problems. As young people look around the world, we're seeing that decline.

But I think – and here, again, it's the historian in me – we've seen it before. The 1920s and '30s, Robert Handy spoke of the Great American Religious Depression of that era. I think probably if we had figures, it would be many more people, no religion. Certainly in the Jewish community, that was the time when young Jews en masse turned to Marxism, which I suppose was a kind of religion, but they didn't think it was. And then that's followed by the return of the '50s.

So I think that the observation that you make, Grace makes, and those who read Pew Studies have certainly – they did this big study of the rise of the nones. It's a little different in the Jewish case, because you're both a people and a religion, so you have all of these Jews who are of no religion, and that's not a contradiction in their mind. But in any case, I see it in cyclical terms. I think there are a lot of parallels between our era and the Religious Depression that Handy wrote about. And my sense is, in 20 years, there'll be new conferences about people finding religion and how remarkable it is, and so on.

I think Martin Marty, who's lived long enough to see several of these swings, has written recently in his writings a lot about it, and I find that really very persuasive. And maybe that's the difference between the way historians view things and the way sociologists view them.

McRoberts: I agree, and I wouldn't be surprised if what gets identified as part of revival later actually incorporates some or much of what gets called none now. And so the spiritual and not religious set of folks who find it hard to identify with a particular institution may find many, many homes in the next revival. So I think the mistake is to think that what we identify in terms of institutional morphology as religion now, that that's the way it's always going to look. I think we can identify things about religion now that 100 years ago, people might say is simply not. That we're all nones. (laughter) Who knows? So I would avoid projecting our current institutional understandings and biases onto a future that we by definition don't inhabit.

Quigley: Other questions? Over here in the front?

Sullivan: Hi. My name is Dan Sullivan. I'm happy to be here. Thank you. Does last week's mayoral election in New York City reflect, in a sense, a cycle towards a much more common good where so much more is accepted, or does it represent the agenda of a new culture in one of our biggest cities?

McRoberts: What's the first part of that?

Sarna: I think when we look back at that election, what is most amazing and would have been frankly illegal until 1967 is here is a mayor, a white mayor with his black wife and Afro children, and that's perfectly normal, almost not spoken about – that's a very new America. It took the Supreme Court to declare that that was legal in – I think it's '67 – and just less than half a century later, that's so normative, that it's hardly commented upon.

Now, what the content of the administration will be is hard to know. And before we shift to a deep analysis of the changing nature of America, we'd want to look at a lot of different cities. But I'm sure to some extent it's a reaction against his predecessor.

That happens in cities. It happens in churches and synagogues. The new person is the antithesis of the other, and often doesn't last so long, and then you try and find someone in the middle. Nobody quite – at least I don't know what the real content of the new mayor of New York will be. It's all we can do to keep up with Boston politics.

O'Toole: Let me jump in here as someone who specializes in the politics of my home city, New York. One thing that's striking about de Blasio, the Cambridge native who becomes mayor of New York, is that the kind of shrines that he visited across the campaign, and then even when Obama came to visit, it's Junior's for cheesecake. There's a kind of secular landscape of the transcendent that he's appealing to, if I can use such language.

The other thing is that Cardinal Dolan, who has been quite assertive in a whole host of different settings, has not directed – and his predecessor, Cardinal Egan – did not direct much of their fire at Bloomberg and before them, Giuliani. It's been 20 years since we've had a Democratic mayor of New York. And if you remember back to the late Koch years and early Dinkins years with Cardinal O'Connor, there was a fairly strident opposition that kicked in, especially on the part of the cardinal, on sexual politics terms and others that we've – again, as a native New Yorker, I've been thankful that we haven't had that relationship between St. Pat's and Gracie Mansion for 20 years.

A concern that I would have going forward with de Blasio, who I think is going to champion progressive politics across various different fields – how does that play out with Dolan? Again, we're watching to see how the cardinal recalibrates his public self in the aftermath of Cardinal Francis's elevation back in the spring. But I would voice at least, as a native Brooklynite, some concerns about a return to some of that kind of inter-borough nastiness that sometimes characterizes church political relations, at least in Catholic New York.

Quigley: Other questions? We had another one here in the front row, I know, and then in the back, and then over here.

Patton: Hi, I'm Laurie Patton. I'm from Duke University, but I grew up here in Boston. I heard a number of different small comments that

each of you made about the idea of the secular and secular movements. And I'm thinking of Clark Gilpin's wonderful typology, which I'll paraphrase, in terms of thinking about different ways in which we have secular movements with different attitudes towards religious traditions – the areligious secular, the anti-religious secular, the pro, quote-unquote, religious secular.

And I'm wondering, as you think about history and the role of history and how we need to do more than simply remember, what ways in which your own historical study of secularity might integrate into your contemporary view of the present. Are there ways in which we can learn from secular movements and their relationship to religious traditions so that we think in a different way about the common good today?

Griffith:

Well, I'll take a stab at it. One thing that secularists have done sometimes better and sometimes worse is really call out religious hypocrisy as they see it. And they have also called out religious bigotry and a whole host of other kinds of things through cartoons as well as through their writing, through all kinds of different media and different engagements with the public culture, to the extent that some of our more helpful secular thinkers today are doing that. I think that's a useful critique. Now, sometimes the traditions themselves become bolder in their own self-critiques. That's helpful when they do. But some are better at that than others. So I guess that's one response to your question.

And I guess linking this to the original question about the atheists and the nones – where I see a possible change – and I agree with you, Jon, that we've seen it all before – and yet I guess I see a more intentional attempt at creating communities for secular folks who know that one thing that congregations and church traditions and synagogues give them is a focus on community, on helping the poor, on the public good. A venue to discuss that and to put that into practice in their lives and to have that kind of community.

So even the Harvard humanist chaplain is one of the famous ones, but there are others elsewhere, other leaders who are really trying to help create ethical communities for people who don't necessarily want the theology or the tradition but want something, don't just want to be out there on their own. And I think often secular movements kind of die out because there's no there there. There's nothing sustaining. There are no practices necessarily

there. So I guess I would tie that response into both of your questions.

O'Toole: I don't know if this is secularity or not, but I think one of the ways that that's had an impact on the religious communities is the professionalization of social services and education and so on. From the Catholic side of the street, the point at which it became clear that in order to run a hospital, it wasn't enough to be someone who was religiously motivated to help the poor and the sick. There were actual professional standards that were set by somebody else, and often then subsequently endorsed by the state. There were professional standards that you had to meet, so that sisters, for example, in charge of hospitals would go and get actual degrees and would actually study and so on. And so I think that may be one of these intersection points.

Quigley: In the back? And then a couple over here.

Cave: I'm David Cave with Boston College. This question popped into my head in lacuna, as well, when Dean Quigley was asking about certain pivotal figures in our history that have shaped some of the pluralistic conversation. And of course we're familiar with Martin Luther King, Billy Graham, and Heschel even. But what popped in my head was Swami Vivekananda, who was this yogi who came here for the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, and was quite a cultic celebrity across the country.

And it's not so much him, but I noticed that none of you spoke about the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, which was a significant event tied with the 400th anniversary of the founding of America and the Columbian Exposition, and that kind of injection of great pronounced pluralism within our history at the turn of the century, in aligning with Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East*, which themselves had a certain popularity. So I wondered if you could speak to the significance of the World's Parliament from your understanding in the religious discourse of our history. Thank you.

Sarna: There's now a huge literature on the World Parliament, and certainly, you're right. It introduces Americans to world religions. Obviously, it exoticizes. They come in costume. They're portrayed in exotic ways. They are not a threat. It's a very different matter when an exotic figure comes, is celebrated, than

when you have a mass migration from that religion. But it does open up – I think you're right to point to the late 1890s as a moment that opens up a new way of thinking about religion. The very fact that the literature really starts to be written a century later suggests that you're planting seeds in 1893 that we now look back at that pivotal moment. I don't think it's so very clear that in 1894, American religion was so different. And I think that brings us back to the cyclical nature.

But it is important, and actually, what's important about the episode you've mentioned is you actually have people who convert. So you have the first American convert, let's say, to Buddhism, is right after that event. And I think looking back now, we see new interest in Asian religions having their genesis there, having some impact, and then really exploding in the post-war era, when I think Asian religions have had both a significant impact on the spiritual faith of all the major religions in America, meaning all of them have been subtly influenced and have also independently risen on the American landscape.

McRoberts:

I think it's also really significant how Vivekananda himself approached pluralism by destabilizing the idea of membership and commitment to a particular faith. And so he comes to the Parliament speaking a language of scientific progress. What he's presenting is a science of spiritual transformation and not just another religion, so that one could technically – at least he thinks – one could be a Christian, even and Episcopalian, and practice what he's teaching. One would not have to necessarily accept an idea of what Hinduism is and then become a Hindu. The idea of what Hinduism is still in formation at that point in history, and he plays some role in that crystallization.

But I think it's important to keep sight of that, that the idea of membership that's being presented by him but also others at the Parliament, is destabilized in a way that makes pluralism and their own entry into the pluralistic field a little less controversial.

Quigley:

Questions right over here?

Lucca:

Hi there. My name is Marie Lucca. And what I find just fascinating here is we haven't touched on interfaith as a faith tradition. I'm an ordained interfaith pastor, and a lot of people

might not be familiar with that. And I'll get to my question in a second, but just by explanation – in the early '80s, a huge movement came about and many seminaries started for those nones or spiritual but not religious. And what basically, by people like Matthew Fox, who you might know, interspiritual – I am ordained as a Protestant pastor, but then co-ordained as an interfaith pastor after many, many more years of training in comparative religion and spiritual practices.

And what seems to be happening is we are the fastest growing tradition among the college campuses and the 20 and 30-somethings. And our worship and practices mix. So we have spiritual beliefs, traditions, practices, prayers in our worship in our get-togethers that are all mixed of different religions. And my question to the panel is how is academia, if at all, addressing this? A lot of what we do is in houses, is online, very digital based. Is it considered a bad thing, a mixing, a diluting of religious traditions, or as we would argue, we're peacemakers and bridge builders and serving those who don't fit inside a particular box?

Griffith:

I would say you've got a bunch of historians up here who don't necessarily make the evaluative claims that you're asking for, is it good or bad, but there are some wonderful scholars out there writing on spirituality, both historically but also doing ethnographic work in the present. People like Courtney Bender, who did all of her ethnographic work for *The New Metaphysicals* right here in Boston. So her book is *The New Metaphysicals*. And there's a range of folks like her, I think, more on the anthropology or sociology of religion than the history of religion, who are really looking at some of that.

So I think it's taken very seriously. I had never heard that it was the largest growing group on college campuses, so I'd be interested to see that data or how that study is going. But certainly, the Robert Putnam studies show that all kinds of new and creative things like that are happening out there, and that it's very difficult to predict where that will go. All of us have anecdotal evidence from our own classrooms of what students are interested in, and college students are notoriously – they always have been – interested in new and exotic looking things, and they sometimes do go to other services and mix things together. How sustaining that is over time will be the question, and that'll be what the historians grapple with later on.

Sarna: Yeah, just to put it in a historical context, we talked about Triumphalism as one way of solving this problem. A second way, which I think is the tradition that you're coming out of, is a synchrotistic tradition. Aren't there ways of bringing this all together? In the late 19th century, a man named Felix Adler develops ethical culture. His argument is I am going to draw from the great ethical traditions of all religions. Mine will really be the religion that unites people of religion and secular folks around the idea of ethics. That's the synchrotistic tradition. And then you have the messy pluralistic tradition.

I think that all three of those ideas, triumphalism, synchrotism, and pluralism, continue. It's not that any of them die out. I think up to now, the pluralist tradition has both gotten the most attention and the most adherence. I, too, was not aware that that was changing, and I have some questions to whether it does, but I'm very glad that you asked your question, because it allows us to remember that there is a synchrotistic tradition in America of which, it seems to me, the interfaith ministries really are kind of the latest evolution of that idea.

O'Toole: This isn't really a serious answer, but I think it speaks to the point you make. No one reads *The New York Times* wedding announcements on Sundays closer than I do.

Sarna: I thought I did.

O'Toole: I used to read them down to the fourth paragraph to find out who the bride's great-grandfather was. A descendent of the Secretary of War in the Taft administration showed up several years ago. I found it comforting as a historian that someone is still keeping track of this stuff. But what interests me now about these is who the presiding minister is. And there is a real change in that. And so as a historian, my precinct is the past, but it seems to me that kind of evidence going forward is going to be the kind of evidence that we're going to look for.

Griffith: Universal Life minister.

O'Toole: Universal Life ministers is the –

Griffith: So-and-so became a Universal Life minister.

O'Toole: Absolutely.

Sarna: I would not – having had a son and daughter-in-law whose picture even appeared in those pages – nevertheless, I have to tell you, knowing now something about it, I'm not sure that those pages are a cross-section of America, even though I learn a lot about them.

(laughter)

Quigley: I think we have time for one more question over in this corner.

Hosein: My name is Shareeda Hosein, former Muslim chaplain at Tufts University, and I am an ambassador to the Parliament of World's Religion building an ambassadorial program across the country, and I'm so appreciative that the point was made, because the Ahmadiyyas came to that conference. And where I'm going with this is the prophetic voices you were talking about – the Ahmadiyyas influenced Elijah Muhammad, and he claimed prophethood, and he was in some ways a prophetic voice for the marginalized African-Americans who couldn't fit into the Christian church spaces.

And the other leader – I'm not a historian or a specialist in this, but I think it's important to note Malcolm X. He was a leader who I believe would've taken over the Nation of Islam had he stayed in the fold. But when he went to Mecca and made the Hajj, he realized that Islam is greater than just African-Americans and the Elijah Muhammad message. And he, had he lived longer, probably could have been a second prophetic voice, because he was in partnership with MLK. MLK was the good cop, Malcolm X was the bad cop in the whole political spectrum.

So speeding up a little bit, when Elijah Muhammad passed away and Imam Warith Deen Muhammad came on the scene as the leader of this group, he switched away from his father's vision and followed Malcolm X's voice. And the largest Muslim population

is the African-Americans that started out in the Nation of Islam. So I just wanted to share that as prophetic voices.

But my question is the billion dollar question. So right now, if you had the crystal ball, Islam – we're like the newest immigrants, and we have to go through this passage of rites. So if you're looking in a crystal ball, how long do you think this is going to last and that we'll be accepted and we'll become mainstream?

Quigley:

I'll start with a response. As I was trying to think about the questions Erik set up and the specializations and expertise up here, I came back to the question of what are some of the surprises. On the contemporary landscape, how has religious diversity played out in interesting ways? And not quite the wedding page, but one of the more interesting front page stories in the *Times* in the last couple years is the ways in which Muslim students have found Catholic universities particularly hospitable. I think it's one of the unexpected ways in which the ways in which we live our faiths in our institutional lives has played out in ways that not only in 1863, Father Gasson couldn't have predicted – I think 25 years ago, people wouldn't have seen it coming.

So just from my own particular vantage point as a historian and dean here at Boston College, and talking to leaders of other Catholic universities across the country, it's one of the surprises of this moment, where as you say, one of the great challenges in terms of pluralism and religious diversity in our time as a nation and a sense of being part of a commonwealth together is the question of how Muslims will be part of our public life, how we will, if not assimilate, be part of a larger political project going forward. It's striking to me that that has shown up as a reality here at B.C. and on so many other Jesuit and Catholic campuses. I don't know if others want to take a stab at that.

Sarna:

I think the half-life has greatly shortened. In other words, look at how long it took us to embrace civil rights, then the women's movement, and the gay rights movement, which is astonishingly quick in historical terms. So America has changed very rapidly. It would seem to me that if one were tracing discussions about Islam in the American Academy or even the rise of Islam in American religion, it's very quick in terms of how that has moved. So my sense is that movements that once took 100 years now take 40. I think it will look very different in 40 years.

Griffith: I completely agree with that. And I think what we know – especially the data from the gay rights movement and the rapid transformation in American attitudes on that issue has in part to do with relationships and neighborhoods. And this is the Putnam data again, too, that when one knows someone of another blank, whether it be race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, that changes the game. And it doesn't change it instantly, because sometimes people become the token exception to a larger racist or a larger kind of ideological worldview, but that has dramatically shifted the landscape over and over and over again, is through relationships, college classrooms, interactions on local councils and that kind of thing. So I think the data's clear that the movement is happening rapidly.

McRoberts: First of all, I like your point about the Ahmadiyyas. I would add that one reason why that movement got some traction in African-American population is that, as I'm sure you know, it does have this fulfilled messianic quality that the Mahdi did arrive, which resonated with a certain kind of an African-American desire to still have a messiah, and looking at Islam, to not throw the messiah out with the bathwater.

On your question, though, this is where I start to think about the possibility of the global commons and a global common good, and the place of our nation state in the global context, especially after 9/11, and all of the grief that Muslims have endured in this country because of the stereotyping and the assumption based on one's dress or faith confession that one has a particular desire against the common good of the nation, and our continued involvement in all sorts of military conflicts with people in Muslim places far away, thus making it easy still to say that it's because of their culture. Identifying Muslim culture in general as something that is antithetical to our common good.

I like, Jonathan, your articulation of this as half-life. So yeah, things I think are getting better faster, but it's hard for me to disentangle that getting better faster from the getting better faster on the global scene. And if it's not getting any better faster there, then I worry that it won't here at home.

Quigley: Thank you. I apologize that I didn't get to all the hands around the room. I'm sure our panelists will be around over lunch and our

conversation will continue across the day. First, please join me in thanking all four of them for this remarkable panel.

(applause)

Quigley: Just to remind you, at 1:00, the second panel will commence here in this space.

END OF TAPE