# Muslims, Catholics, and the Secular State: Alt-Right Populism and the Politics of Citizen Recognition in France

*Robert Hefner*

## Abstract

Any attempt to explore the relationship between representations of Muslims and public advocacy in modern Western societies must situate both processes in relation to the broader crises of liberal citizenship currently afflicting Western democracies. Calls heard in the 1990s for multicultural citizenship and pluralist "recognition" have given way to demands for the exclusion of new immigrants and the coercive assimilation of those—especially Muslims—long since arrived. This essay examines French Catholic and Muslim perspectives on secularism and citizenship in contemporary France. It highlights disagreements among progressive secularists as well as mainline Catholics and Muslims over how to engage the secular state as well as one's fellow citizens. The examples show that contemporary public spheres look less like deliberative public spaces than complex landscapes shaped by mass movements, social media, and political entrepreneurs. These realities present serious challenges to those who hope to use education and dialogue in public advocacy with and for Muslim citizens.

Any attempt to explore the relationship between representations of Muslims and public advocacy in modern Western societies must at some point situate both processes in relation to the crises of liberal citizenship currently afflicting Western democracies. In much of the West, the confluence

The author or editor of some 20 books on Muslim culture and history, Robert W. Hefner is Professor of Anthropology and Global Affairs at the Pardee School of Global Affairs at Boston University. He is currently involved in research projects comparing responses to modern social change ("modernity") in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

of mass immigration, ISIS/Daesh terrorism, and, most decisively, the rise of alt-right populisms has shaken public confidence in once widely held liberal assumptions as to civility and citizenship in social difference. Calls heard in the 1990s for multicultural citizenship and pluralist "recognition" have long since given way to demands for the exclusion of new immigrants and the coercive assimilation of those—especially Muslims—long arrived.[1] These and other developments have raised deep questions about the received values and practices of citizenship and social recognition in Western societies. No community has felt the weight of the crisis more forcefully than Muslim citizens.

It was against this backdrop that the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs (CURA) at Boston University recently undertook 16 months of field research on the new plurality and civic pluralist co-existence in metropolitan Paris, Amsterdam, Montreal, and Los Angeles. These four cities were selected for two reasons. The first is that the nations of which they are part are heirs to quite different regimes of secular-liberal governance, vividly demonstrating that the "liberal" West is heir to not one but, as Alfred Stepan put it several years back, "multiple secularisms." The variation across cities and nations also reminds us that, to borrow a Stepan phrase once again, patterns of state-religion-society relations in these settings "are best seen as conjunctural, socially constructed, political arrangements, rather than as fixed normative models."[2]

The second reason for selecting these cities is that the main religious traditions to which each of the surrounding societies is heir are today undergoing unprecedented changes, as a result of (with the partial exception of the United States) a general decline in formal affiliation among mainline Christians, and a pluralization of authority in all faith-traditions. The latter changes have been felt, not just in the religious field, but in the varied ways in which people from different social and religious backgrounds imagine and enact their relations with fellow citizens. As this article will emphasize, even in the same national community, citizenship can be and typically is understood and practiced in multiple ways. The heterogeneity and contingency of citizenship practices provides a striking demonstration of the fact that, for many ordinary people, citizenship is not primarily a legal-juridical identity defined in terms of formal and unitary rights and responsibilities between individuals and the state, but is instead an experience of belonging premised on certain shared social qualities, often including those of religion, ethnicity, race, or some other category of social existence.

Among these four countries, and in the West generally, few countries have a species of citizenship and social recognition more hegemonically secular than France, the focus of the present essay. However, rather than having been established in the nineteenth century and reproduced unchanged to the present day, the cultural terms of social recognition in France have shifted in recent years, and nowhere more forcefully than with regard to French Muslims. This essay explores the concatenations of citizenship and social recognition in late modern France, highlighting the experiences of Muslims and Catholics, and underscoring the ways in which the country's new ethnoreligious plurality has destabilized once-hegemonic perspectives on religion and citizenship.[3]

## French Muslims and the Emancipatory Telos

My own engagement with Muslim advocacy and representations in the French wing of the project has a longer and more personal background. A generation back, as a young undergraduate and activist in France in 1972-1973, I had come to collaborate with a small community of progressive Muslim activists in Aix-Marseilles; together we were involved in various advocacy causes related to Palestine, the Vietnam War, and civil rights for French Muslims. It is an understatement to say that my experience wasn't ethnographic or research driven. My "sample" was self-selected and my own engagement too perspectival and politically motivated to be empirically rigorous. But one fact with regards to Muslims in France in those years resonates with something that more recent historical scholarship like that of Jonathan Laurence[4] has confirmed: namely, that the primary non-Muslim groupings campaigning in support of Muslim civil and economic rights in this earlier period were the communist- and socialist-linked trade unions, complemented by a lesser but vocal array of *gauchiste* ("leftist") organizations, including the ones in which I was active.

With regard to the situation and rights of French Muslims, the key narrative promoted by my own and other left-leaning groups in those years centered on the claim that the denial of Muslim civil rights was the result of inherent injustices in the capitalist system. We were convinced that the latter had ultimately to do with the efforts of the owners of capital to divide and conquer a dominated but resistant working class so as to defend bourgeois interests, not least by maintaining a reserve pool of proletarian labor in a legally vulnerable position. Neither French secularism nor its associated models of nationhood and citizenship figured in our representations of and advocacy for Muslim rights. Even less salient was any recognition that

Muslim identity as *Muslim* might at any point figure in the community's marginalization. Muslim identity and recognition were instead represented as situated squarely in the ranks of an oppressed proletariat and freighted with a simple but emancipatory teleology that aimed to unite all progressive classes on the condition of the erasure of religious and ethnic difference.

Old social democratic and leftist narratives of this sort are familiar enough, and so remote from the gritty Islamophobia of contemporary France as to appear delusionally romantic. However, jumping ahead four decades to the mid-2010s, the comparison nonetheless underscores just how much the contestations in play with regards to representations of and advocacy for Muslims as citizens in France have changed.

Over the past twenty years the French left's representations of Islam have become both more narratively nuanced and internally agonistic.[5] No less significant, the contours of the debate have been shaped by a small social research industry that has taken hold in France on the identities and social circumstances of Muslim citizens. As the numbers and political importance of French Muslims have grown, the challenge of how to represent and advocate for Muslims in France has become only greater. A deep division has emerged among left-leaning intellectuals, including those of Muslim background, over how best to promote a more just and equitable recognition of Muslims in French society. Although few subscribe to the religion-erasing teleologies of the 1970s, some intellectuals and activists insist that the grounds for such initiatives must still primarily be those of a secularist republicanism that backgrounds and privatizes religious confession so as to foreground a shared identity and practice of belonging as French citizens. A minority, however, insists that religion's privatization is a bridge too far, because it makes erasure of a key part of some Muslim French identities a precondition for citizen recognition.[6]

The debate among ostensible social progressives and other public advocates has been compounded by developments in the religious field since the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the Muslim community, first of all, the majority of French Muslims until the 1990s seemed either religiously casual, or, if observant, committed to a profession of Islam premised on adherence to a *madhhab* with its associated *fiqh* (jurisprudence) for minorities. In the early 2000s, another option emerged: commitment to a *maqāṣidi*-oriented and democratic-minded understanding of the "higher aims of the shariah" (*maqāṣiid al-sharī'a*).[7] For those who favored the latter approach, Tariq Ramadan's democratic reformist *maqāṣidism* was the most widely known and influential interpretation, and was still regularly referenced in

my discussions with Muslim interlocutors in the 2010s. Beginning in the late 1990s but accelerating in the 2000s, however, an ideologically hetero-geneous Salafism also took root, especially among poor *banlieu* (suburban housing project) youth.[8] Many of these youth had grown up in families that were at best casually observant. The youth's encounter with Salafism, then, occurred not by way of family or neighborhood networks, but in small study circles (*halaqa*) formed in the aftermath of meetings at settings like mosques or mainline study groups, but then pursued in private and inde-pendent of mosque or community authorities. As one Algerian-born imam in St. Denis observed in a conversation in October 2015:

> This is a different kind of Salafism than the variety I had seen but not practiced as a youth in Algeria. There the teacher (*ustadz*) had real au-thority, and his followers had to respect his leadership and guidance. But here in France young people who have left my mosque to join Salafi movements don't really listen to their elders. They look around and find someone who says what they want to hear, or what they have learned online, and stay with that teacher only as long as they agree with him. If they come to disagree, the young person just leaves to find a new teacher to his liking.

Although its genealogy is complex, part of the social momentum for the Salafiyyah ascent has to do with young *banlieu* Muslims' response to Islam-ophobia and the rise of the hard right National Front Party, about which I say more below.

In the face of these developments, and as confidence in old Marxist historical teleologies has waned, the French left's representations of and advocacy for Muslims has splintered, in many respects even more fiercely than is the case in countries with a less "assertively secularist" tradition of religious governance like the United States.[9] In France, one advocacy wing on the political left still represents the Muslim community in subal-tern, subordinated, and teleologically emancipatory terms. However, the more widely cited social ontology today tends to be more ethically nuanced than it was in the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, the multicultural left's portrayal of the marginalization of French Muslims no longer represents this circumstance as the product of capitalism and class inequalities alone. Instead, Muslim marginalization is portrayed in terms of the French state's exclusionary and assertively secularist model of republican citizenship. The latter is portrayed as granting admission to subaltern nationals, includ-ing Muslims, on the condition that they assimilate to a French republican

identity and repudiate or background the religious content of their public identity.

Because French republicanism is more assertively secularist than its counterpart in the United Kingdom, the United States, or Canada (with the notable exception of Quebec[10]), multiculturalism has always had a weak base of support in France. For the other, non-multicultural wing of today's French left, efforts to defend Muslim aspirations for religious observance within a still-republican narrative is commonly seen as an ideological bridge too far. The issue in question is not merely that of a hegemonic French secularism. Although not unique in this regard (Swedish social democracy shows parallels), French republicanism is unusual among Western civic traditions in the degree to which it proscribes intermediary identities and organizations between an idealized republican citizenship, on one hand, and the private lives of citizens, on the other.[11] In high ideological principle, religion is tolerated only inasmuch as it does not move out from personal observance into the republican public sphere; it is especially unwelcome when it assumes an organizational form that hints of "communitarian" challenges to republican citizenship. There is an interesting theoretical irony here. Whereas in the early 1990s the Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam[12] argued that civic or intermediary associations between family and state are one of the keys to "making democracy work," the French formula for sustaining citizenship and democracy mandates the public bracketing of all such intermediary associations and their associated ethical imaginaries, including not least of all those religious.[13]

In part as a result of the crisis of pluralist citizenship the country is today experiencing, the French left is not just divided on how to represent and advocate for Muslims; its once hegemonic position with regards to citizenship debates has also foundered. Conversely, the country's long marginalized Catholic community has enjoyed a small but notable public renaissance since the early 2000s.[14] If the French Left is splintered on matters of advocating for Muslims, however, Catholics are all the more divided.

## Catholic Collaboration and Tensions

There is a small but outspoken wing of the French Catholic community dedicated to supporting struggles to secure recognition of and representation for French Muslims.[15] Indeed, one of the unexpected findings of this research project was the discovery that the religiously ecumenical wing of the French Catholic community was confident that it had an alternative representation of French republicanism and citizenship from that of the

otherwise dominant secular republicanism, one whose lessons, its Catholic proponents felt, were directly applicable to their Muslim co-citizens. At the heart of this Catholic counter-narrative on republicanism was the understanding that people of faith in France—most notably, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims—could achieve a far more substantive degree of *public* recognition for their religious activities and institutions than a too formalistic understanding of secular republicanism might at first seem to allow.

So as to explain the counter-narrative that underlay this gently subversive Catholic understanding, it is important to recall a few background facts about Catholicism in France. Although just over one-half of all French citizens self-identify as Catholic, fewer than 5% attend mass weekly and only about 23% report that they are "engaged" to some significant degree in Church affairs.[16] This is to say that, as with Christianity in Europe generally, there is a wide range of conviction and practice among those who identify as Catholic.[17] Some limit their Catholicism to baptizing their children, marrying in a church, and attending funeral masses. But a larger proportion of unaffiliated French Catholics fall into the shadowy social category that the UK sociologist Grace Davie has described as "belonging without believing."[18] In the case of many nominal French Catholics, the "belonging" in question is stripped down to a bare minimum of identifying Catholicism as a cultural ingredient whose monuments and edifices should be maintained, since they bear witness to the wonders of a rich national heritage.

What struck me in the course of conversations with the minority of French Catholics who can be described as both engaged and religiously ecumenical is that many are convinced that, notwithstanding the precarious hold of Catholicism on the larger French public, there are nonetheless opportunities for public religion in contemporary France. In particular, this minority among French Catholics sees the widespread perception of Catholicism as part of a national heritage as providing a measure of cultural capital for leveraging support for Catholic institutions that would otherwise be in peril because of the high cost of maintaining religious structures like churches, schools, and hospitals. The facts say it all, and are perhaps surprising for Americans inclined to think that the high wall of legal separation seen in the US is also found in France. More than 60% of French Catholic churches and schools today receive state funding for their buildings and at least some among their staff.[19] Secularist Republicans see this as support for confessionally neutral symbols of French national identity. Interestingly, however, many of my ecumenical French Catholic colleagues

understood this secularist concession in a different manner. They regarded the crack in the high wall of French secularism not merely as a heritage-sustaining exception to the secularist rule, but as grounds for hope that an at least partial deployment and even restoration of Catholicism and, more generally, religion is still possible in public life. However, they insisted, to pursue this end requires that one avoid culture-war clashes like those that so ravaged Catholic-republican relations in the early years of the twentieth century, when the French state was aggressively implementing a separation of state-sponsored schooling from a Church that had long jealously guarded its public educational role.[20] The great majority of these "engaged and ecumenical" Catholics also say that they take exception to their more conservative and far-right Catholic counterparts, who have used opposition to gay marriage and sex education in public schools as rallying cries for a more publicly assertive—and openly right-wing and Islamophobic—Catholicism. By contrast, the ecumenical Catholic strategy today refuses a radical privatization of religion, then, but does so while maintaining a double consciousness with regard to laicite's proscriptions and possibilities: endorsing an "open" (*ouvert*) interpretation of republican secularism, but interpreting it in a religiously-accommodating *and* multi-religious manner.

Here then is a curious variation on the theme of representation and advocacy with regard to Muslims in Western countries. Many in the ecumenical wing of the Catholic community seek to counsel their Muslim interlocutors on how to represent their own tradition within the framework of French secular republicanism so as to secure that to which so many locally-based French Muslims aspire: land and operational funding for Islamic mosques and schools, as well as, ultimately, a greater measure of recognition and representation in French society. The key, my ecumenical Catholic interlocutors said, was for Muslims not to mount direct cultural challenges to an assertively secularist republicanism, but to endorse its principles while interpreting them in a more "open" and less absolutist manner. In concrete terms, the strategy might involve working to secure a plot of city land for an urban mosque or Muslim cemetery here, or quietly obtaining funding for teachers in Islamic schools—but doing this in a case-by-case manner, rather than through a direct and ideologically systematic challenge to republican principles. This piecemeal and gradualist strategy, the Catholics counseled, was the only way to ensure a growing public recognition of Muslim citizens. One Catholic colleague who lived in a small

town fifty kilometers north of Paris explained this to me in the following way:

> You have to be aware of your vulnerable position as a religious believer in a post-Christian France. So you play by the rules of the secularist republican game but in so doing you allow your community to survive and flourish.

As if an afterthought, she then added, "We Catholics who support Muslims worry that if Muslim leaders or young radicals challenge state secularism too directly, it will harm not only their prospects for accommodation, but ours as well."[21]

## Church Outreach amidst Right-populist Backlash

In the course of research, I encountered other, high-minded Catholic actors seeking to support even bolder strategies of representation and advocacy for French Muslims. One of the most notable was a priest who directed (until 2016) the Catholic Church's official *Service nationale pour les relations avec des musulmans*. Inspired by a series of inter-faith programs launched by Rome in the aftermath of Vatican II, the Service was established in 1973 with the aim of facilitating Church interactions with Muslims overseas, especially in the near Middle East. But as the question of French Muslims surged on the national scene in the mid-1990s, the bureau shifted focus, dedicating most of its resources to public engagements with Muslims in France, with the aim, too, of challenging blatantly anti-Muslim representations. To this latter end, the bureau sponsored public events in which the Service director, Father Christophe Roucou (active 2006-2016), engaged in well-publicized dialogue with prominent Muslim intellectuals and imams.[22] Typically he and his interlocutor discussed some feature of piety or public comportment, speaking with a wit and mischievous irony intended to highlight commonalities across the two religions, not least with regard to their challenges in contemporary France, even while acknowledging theological differences. Father Roucou is an Arabic speaker who had studied in Egypt in the 1980s, developing a sophisticated understanding of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. His strategy as director of the Service, then, was not one of promoting double-consciousness circumvention but public-cultural familiarization: reassuring an anxious Catholic public that Islam was not at all as culturally as alien as its secularist critics on left and right implied, but close both in history and ethical spirit to Western Christianity.

The two currents within the Catholic community with regard to recognition of and advocacy for French Muslims that I have thus far highlighted are not the only viewpoints on Muslims within France's observant Catholic community; nor, least of all, are they the most common. In the course of research interviews I came to understand that many in the Church hierarchy and even more—by my informal estimate, the great majority—among the observant laity took strong exception to the Service's Islam-familiarization programs. Many whom I encountered in fact pointed specifically and angrily at Father Roucou, insisting that what French society needed was not a better understanding of Islam but crash courses for Muslim assimilation to secular republican values. In personal interviews in 2016, Father Roucou acknowledged that he was frequently the target of public criticism and (in his own words) "hate mail."

My visits to France since the early 2000s suggest that the tide of intra-Catholic opposition to Muslims and to more "multicultural" modes of citizen recognition has increased markedly over the past fifteen years. Even priests in the communist-led but now heavily Muslim city of Saint Denis, north of Paris, made clear in interviews in 2015 and 2016 that most in their small congregations felt that the time for inter-religious dialogue had (to their deep regret) passed, not least in the aftermath of the ISIS-inspired Charlie Hebdo (January 7th) and November 13, 2015 attacks. One priest in the historic St. Denis parish observed in October 2015 that his dialogical outreach to the local Muslim and nominally Catholic community had foundered since the mid-2000s; none among his parishioners seemed interested in attending any more. In fact, he said, many of his parishioners today regarded even tenuous dialogue of this sort as evidence of the Church hierarchy's estrangement from mainstream society and its deviationist flirtation with "multiculturalism." A casual man realistic about his ability to sway opinions in his working-class parish, this particular priest blamed the negative tide of opinion on two developments: first, the recent growth of what he referred to as "Salafism" among Muslim youth in Paris's northern suburbs, and, second, the shift in allegiances among many in this working class community from the Communist Party to the far-right National Front.[23]

Tellingly, of everyone interviewed in Saint Denis and an adjacent suburb north of Paris, it was two imams from the same region who voiced sentiments closest in spirit to those of the St. Denis priest. One of these mosque officials was a second-generation Moroccan-French and the other

was a naturalized citizen born four decades ago in Algeria. Both imams had a more nuanced sense than had the Catholic priest of the varied forms Salafism could take among French Muslim youth. But both were, if anything, even more concerned about what they described as the growth of the "separationist" wing of the Salafi community. In interviews, I asked each man what he regarded as the greatest challenge to French Muslims winning recognition and representation in mainstream society; my expectation had been that each would identify the far-right National Front Party as the greatest threat. But neither did. Both instead cited Salafism. One of the imams quickly qualified his statement, saying the problem was, not Salafism in general, but "wild" Salafism (*Salafisme sauvage*). By this he meant a Salafism cultivated by youth independently in their own study circles, and looking more to the internet than to local religious scholars for ethical guidance. The imam regarded these new varieties of (to use his words again) "unschooled Salafism" as the greatest threat to the French Muslim community, he said, because they were sowing seeds of distrust and division among Muslims, leading many young people to turn away from imams and scholars associated with mainline mosques. All this is giving rise, the imam added, to a form of social rebellion that "has more to do with growing up in France than it does with anything Islamic."[24]

## Politicizing Catholic Traditionalism

Whatever the accuracy of the imams' assessment, it is clear that the challenge faced by public advocacy in support of French Muslims has in fact to do with a host of developments, including those internal to the observant Catholic community. One of the more important of these developments has to do with the rise since the 1960s of a schismatic "traditionalist" Church formally opposed to most of the reforms initiated since the early 1960s in the aftermath of Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). In its early years, the small traditionalist movement in France (as in other parts of Europe) focused primarily on theological matters unrelated to the Muslim presence in Europe. The traditionalists prefer the 1917 Code of Canon law to the Vatican II reforms, and take strong exception to Vatican II's promotion of inter-religious ecumenism as opposed to an uncompromising Catholic supremacism.

In France, many of the Catholic traditionalists rallied around the dissident Catholic Archbishop, Marcel Francois Marie Joseph Lefebvre (1905-1991). A former missionary to West Africa, Lefebvre had initially played a role in the preparation of documents for the Second Vatican Council, but

after attending the Council he emerged as one of its most outspoken critics. After refusing to implement some Council reforms, in 1968 he resigned his advisory position in an international Church mission, and, in 1970, established a small seminary in Switzerland dedicated to education in traditionalist Catholicism. In 1975, Vatican authorities instructed him to dissolve the society, which he refused to do. In 1988, and against the express wishes of Vatican officials, he consecrated four traditionalist bishops, an act which resulted in his excommunication from the Church. Lefebvre insisted until his death three years later that his was not a "schism" because he still recognized the supreme authority of the Pope, even while disagreeing with decisions taken by current popes.[25]

Although at its origins traditionalist Catholicism was preoccupied with matters of Catholic theology and liturgy, from the mid-1980s onward Father Lefebvre began to link his movement to far-right political issues. On numerous occasions he declared his support for the extreme rightist and Holocaust revisionist, Jean-Marie Le Pen. Among the grounds for his support was Le Pen's bitter opposition to Muslim immigration, a sentiment Lefebvre shared. Since Lefebvre's death, the linkage of traditionalist Catholicism to anti-Muslim sentiment *and* conservative sniping against Church dialogue with Muslims has only strengthened.

Today in France, the Catholic traditionalists remain an only small percentage of the observant Catholic community—by some estimates only about 5 percent of the community as a whole.[26] However, the traditionalists' staunch opposition to gay marriage and sex education in schools has combined with their continuing fierce opposition to Muslim immigration and multiculturalism to allow them to serve as something of a vanguard for the alt-right wing of the Catholic church as a whole. Moreover, as the percentage of observant Catholics has declined dramatically since the 1960s, those who remain behind have simultaneously become less inclined to take their cues from the established Church hierarchy, and more inclined to rally around certain red-line issues as abortion, gay marriage, and, no less significant, staunch opposition to Muslims and multiculturalism.[27] Although far from a unified bloc, a significant percentage of observant Catholics have rallied behind the National Front—and, along the way, have also made clear their distaste for the inter-faith advocacy and pluralist recognition promoted by ecumenical Catholics like Father Roucou.

## Public Reason and the Crisis of Citizenship

In a brilliant study some years back,[28] the anthropologist John R. Bowen reminded researchers of the importance of exploring the public reasoning of Muslim teachers and intellectuals in France, and the ways in which they look to and reconstruct Islamic traditions for ethical guidance on living as Muslims in their European homelands. The four country project of which this French study was part was premised on a similar aim, although we sought to extend our inquiry beyond the Muslim community to include Catholics and an amorphous default category our project called "secularists." Like Bowen, however, we were convinced that even in a post-Christian and post-modernist Europe some among the citizenry look to and transform received ethical traditions to grapple with contemporary problems of citizenship, belonging, and social recognition.

All this said, the daunting complexity of Bowen's thoughtful recommendation with regard to public reasoning has become increasingly apparent in contemporary France, as it has in much of the West. One complicating variable is that so much of the sound and fury of public discussion today in cities like Paris and Marseilles, or on the Twitter-scape in the US, emanates from populist actors little concerned with high-minded public reasoning, whether of a deliberative democratic sort, or in the sense used by Alasdair MacIntyre and Talal Asad in their discussions of religion as a "tradition."[29] The larger lesson here is that real-and-existing public spheres in late-modern societies often look more like culture-war battlefields than they do what Jürgen Habermas two generations ago described as an elite and largely male space for open-minded and deliberative discussion. The rise of anti-Muslim populism across Western Europe and the United States over the past twenty years shows similarly that real-and-existing public spheres are at times characterized by a politics of posturing and deliberate media caricature—"fake news"—as they are any genteel concern for deliberative reasoning. This makes the patient advocacy of people like Father Roucou or Tareq Oubrou with and for Muslim citizens all the more difficult.

A key feature of Marin Le Pen's skillful leadership of the National Front involved her redirecting of the party's public cultural invectives away from her father's old-right antisemitism toward a more alt-right, contemporary, and redolently populist message: that Muslims were not and could not be part of the French nation. This was a propaganda coup first and foremost, but, viewed more theoretically, it also exploited what has long been a crit-

ical vulnerability in understandings and practices of citizenship and social recognition in Western democracies.

In his epic book on *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims: The State's Role in Minority Integration*, Jonathan Laurence suggests that the way forward for Muslim integration into European society will be like that which secured Jewish integration in the earlier twentieth century: corporate pacts to secure formally equal citizen rights and representation in exchange for giving up at least some of the public perquisites of their Jewish identity. The key to civic integration for European Muslims, Laurence claims, will be the same. This is to say that it will be a matter of a deal-making between state officials and the corporate representatives of a disenfranchised but soon to be "emancipated" minority community.[30]

Corporate pacts may well play some part in what is involved in securing Muslim recognition and representation in Europe's future. But what Laurence overlooks is that even for Jews generations earlier such pacts—with their representation of citizenship as a bundle of formal rights conveyed by the state to individuals and communities—were far from sufficient to neutralize the groundswell of antisemitism that flourished in mainstream "civil" society across Europe in the early to middle decades of the twentieth century. As Bruno Karsenti has observed in his *La Question juive des modernes: Philosophie de l'émancipation*,[31] the Jewish question in most of early twentieth century Europe proved intractable not because of an absence of state-leveraged pacts or formal laws but because of the pervasiveness of antisemitic resentments in society, as well as the readiness of radical right leaders to mobilize and exploit those sentiments for their own political ends. Karsenti's observation resonates with the findings of the research discussed in this essay: that the ideals and practices of citizenship in any national setting depend on not just laws and state-defined rights and obligations but a less formal and inevitably more agonistic politics of social *recognition,* belonging, and exclusion. As here in France, in any society at any given time, there are varied and often competing ethico-political frameworks for recognizing one's social others, including those based on religion, ethnicity, gender, region, national citizenship, or political affiliation. The processes through which these varied registers for social recognition interact and compete, and by which some or one among them becomes dominant in public life, are matters far more contingent and decisive in pluralist coexistence than the formal terms of citizenship as such.[32]

All this is to say that the challenge of social recognition and citizenship in France or, for that matter, the United States today, is not just a matter of constitutions and civic legislation. It has also to do with public sentiments of belonging and inclusion as to just who does and who does not "count" as a full and equal fellow citizen. It is background sentiments like these that lead many conservative French Catholics today to ignore the advocacy appeals of actors like Father Roucou and look instead to alt-right political entrepreneurs promoting a more exclusive viewpoint on just who is properly French, one that excludes observant Muslims. In these and other instances we are also reminded that for many ordinary moderns citizenship is not primarily a legal status awarded equally to all by the state; nor, even less, is it a bundle of rights owned by autonomous individuals by virtue of their membership in an imagined national community. For many residents in Western democracies, citizenship is not uniform and equal but "graduated," in the sense that some among one's fellows are seen as more fully belonging to the national community than are others.[33] As Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, and others have emphasized, citizenship also depends on values and practices of *recognition* whose production and reproduction depends on, not just juridico-political instruments, but on more societally sustained sensibilities as to one's identity, community, and relationship with disregarded "others."[34]

And herein lies the cultural cunning of the right-wing populist variety of identity politics that has flourished in France in the 2000s and, in a different manner, in the United States. Right-wing populists have shown a keen ability to exploit the gap between formal and legal citizen rights, such as those negotiated in corporatist pacts and enunciated in state legislation, and "ordinary" perceptions of citizenship conditional on shared life-ways, including those of dress, sociability, religion, and race. Headscarved teachers in some *lander* in Germany, minarets in Switzerland, hijabs, niqabs, and any variety of "ostensible" religiosity in public institutions in France—the populist right has represented all these as a multicultural bridge too far. The populist argument has been made all the easier, of course, for reasons apparent in the discussion above: namely, that real-and-existing public spheres in most Western democracies and most modern societies are not polite spheres of public reasoning, but arenas of contest, caricature, and fake news.

Recognizing the limitations of his 1994 model for "making democracy work," the Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam has argued that

one key to making democracy work in complex societies lies in nurturing "bridging" as well as "bonding" civic associations.[35] The recipe sounds sociologically appealing, and it resonates with the proposals made by scholars in the field of peace studies who say that the key to making plurality "work" is for people from diverse ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds to put aside their intellectual reservations and join with people of diverse backgrounds in local campaigns of community organizing and betterment.[36] My research confirms that interfaith collaborations like those of Father Roucou are helpful, and may well be transformative of some individuals. But a nagging question remains: What is to be done with the overwhelming majority of people who have neither the time nor the inclination to engage in such collaborative and bridging dialogues? And what is to be done when a significant portion of the Western public finds itself drawn to right-wing populisms that refuse to extend even elementary forms of social recognition to Muslim citizens?

The broader point here is that in an age of Twitter wars and neoliberal precariousness, we should not be surprised to see that certain political entrepreneurs show a genius for exploiting the vulnerabilities of real and existing public spheres, as well as the gap between citizenship as a formal-legal reality and a "cultural citizenship" that is imagined and lived by ordinary people. For those who aspire to a more inclusive and equitable practice of citizen belonging, the challenge is somehow to bring the equality and legal-mindedness of the former into deeper dialogue with ordinary life, so that slowly but surely, and as Father Roucou enjoined, some among the unfamiliar will be recognized as actually being among one's citizen fellows.

It is here too that anthropological advocacy has a role to play, however weak and precarious it too may appear in an age of raging populist ire. Modern societies are made up of diverse social fields, and history shows that pluralist progress in one field can be easily reversed by uncivil bigotry in another. The challenge for the anthropological proponents of pluralist civility, then, is to devise ways to slowly extend inclusive representations and advocacy from our restricted academic circles outward into society. Along the way there will be obstacles and set-backs, as well as whirlpools and eddies of indifference or, worse yet, anti-pluralist froth. But that too is the new citizen reality in populist times: there is and never will be any blissfully multicultural end to history, nor a public sphere of always earnest deliberative dialogue. But to recognize these facts is not to succumb to pessimism but to find a practical path toward hope. Building better representations of and advocacy for Muslims and other targets of populist exclusion is not an

easy task in an age of Twitter rage, but it is a pathway forward. And it is one that is needed now more than ever.

## Endnotes

1.   Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007).
2.   Alfred Stepan, "The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes," in *Rethinking Secularism,* eds. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 114. For a related analysis emphasizing contextual variations in secularist governance, see John R. Bowen, "Secularism: Conceptual Genealogy or Political Dilemma?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 2 (2010), 680-694.
3.   A PhD candidate at the time, Carol Ferrara of the Department of Anthropology at Boston University was the long-term field researcher for the Paris and Lyon wing of the project I directed, and, as with the other country projects, I followed her research with visits, interviews, and my own short-term ethnography in France. I wish to thank Carol for her kind assistance in arranging my field research interviews.
4.   Jonathan Laurence, *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims: The State's Role in Minority Integration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
5.   For illustrative overviews of the debates, see John R. Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) and Jennifer A. Selby, *Questioning French Secularism: Gender Politics and Islam in a Parisian Suburb* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
6.   For a recent analysis of the most striking examples, see Jean Beaman, *Citizen Outsider: Children of North African Immigrants in France* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017) and Christian Joppke, *Is Multiculturalism Dead? Crisis and Persistence in the Constitutional State* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).
7.   Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
8.   See Mohamed-Ali Adraoui, "Salafism in France: Ideology, Practices, and Contradictions," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 364-383; and Gilles Kepel, *Quatre-vingt-treize* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), 211-244.

9.    Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies Toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

10.   Over the past decade, the province of Quebec has witnessed a deeply polarizing debate over religion, immigration, and multiculturalism. The debate's core ingredients resemble those in France but have inevitably acquired a national specificity of their own. For illustrative treatments, see Norman Baillargeon and Jean-Marc Piotte, *Le Québec en quête de laicit*é (Montreal: Ecosociete, 2011) and Louis Rousseau, ed., *Le Québec après Bouchard-Taylor: Les Identités religieuses de l'immigration* (Quebec: Presses de l'Université du Quebec, 2012).

11.   See Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves*, 155-181, and Jean-Paul Williame, "Pluralité Religieuse et Citoyennete en France et en Allemagne," in *Pluralisme religieux et citoyenneté*, eds. Micheline Milot, Philippe Portier, and Jean-Paul Willaime (Rennes: Presses Universitaire de Rennes, 2010), 139-151.

12.   Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993);

13.   On this, see Selby, *Questioning French Secularism,* 71-98; and Mayanthi L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 105-144.

14.   See Yann Raison du Cleuziou, *Qui sont les Cathos aujoud'hui? Sociologie d'un monde divisé* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2014).

15.   On the history and contemporary marginalization of the Catholic left in the French church, see Jacques Lagroye, *Appartenir à une Institution: Catholiques en France aujourd'hui* (Paris: Economica, 2009), esp. 103-125.

16.   See "Qui sont vraiment les catholiques de France?" *La Croix*, January 11, 2017; https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/France/Qui-sont-vraiment-catho liques-France-2017-01-11-1200816414; accessed March 15, 2018.

17.   See Yves-Marie Hilaire, "La sociologie religieuse du catholicisme français au vingtième siècle," in *Catholicism, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century France,* ed. Kay Chadwick (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 244-59.

18.   See Grace Davie, "From Believing without Belonging to Vicarious Religion," in *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies*, ed. Daniel V.A. Olson and Detlef Pollack (London: Routledge, 2012), 165-168.

19.   See Alfred Stepan, "Multiple Secularisms," and Jonathan Fox, *A World Survey of Religion and State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

20.   See Ahmet Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies,* 136-59; and Jean-Paul Willaime, "Teaching Religious Issues in French Public Schools: From Abstentionist Laicite to a Return of Religion to Public Education," in *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts, and Debates*, eds. Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, and Jean-Paul Willaime (Munich: Waxmann 2007), 87-101.

21.   Interview with Catholic study group, north Paris, August 15, 2014.

22.   Some of the most widely publicized examples of such outreach have involved public conversations between Father Roucou and the respected public intellectual and Head Imam of Bordeaux's grand mosque, Tareq Oubrou. A chronicle of their conversations is presented in a book published in 2013, *Le Pretre et l'Imam [The Priest and the Imam]*, by Christophe Roucou and Tareq Oubrou (Paris: Bayard 2013). Although the book was widely praised in pro-pluralist circles, many Catholics with whom I spoke declared (often without having read the book) that Father Roucou was "too soft" on Muslims with regards to questions of democracy, pluralism, and freedom of conscience.

23.   Interview with parish priest, St. Denis, France, October 14, 2015.

24.   Interview with imam, St. Denis, France, October 17, 2015.

25.   The above summary draws heavily on Carol Ferrara's dissertation thesis, defended in November 2018, and on conversations with a Catholic study group in northern Paris during March and October 2015. On Lefebvre and Catholic traditionalists, see also Allan Stoekl, "French Catholic Traditionalism and the Specter of Reactionary Politics," *South Central Review* 23, no. 1 (2006), 89-106.

26.   Estimates on the percentage of Catholics who are openly traditionalist vary, but typically run no greater than 5-10% of the observant Catholic population. But the number of Catholics willing to align themselves with traditionalists on hot-button matters like abortion, homosexuality, and sex education is arguably several times larger. See Raison du Cleuziou, *Qui sont les Cathos aujoud'hui?* 44-52.

27.   On the pluralization of authority among Catholic French and its impact on lay Catholics' political engagements, see Philippe Portier, "Pluralité et unité dans le catholicism francais," in *Catholicisme en tensions*, eds. Celine Beraud, Frederic Gugelot, and Isabelle Saint-Martin (Paris: Editions EHESS, 2012), 19-36.

28.   John R. Bowen, *Can Islam be French? Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

29.   See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), and Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," Occasional Papers Series (Washington: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986).

30.   Laurence, *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims*, 163-197.

31.   Bruno Karsenti, *La question juive des modernes: Philosophie de l'émancipation* (Paris: PUF 2017).

32.   For similar analyses with regards to citizenship's contingency and agonistic plurality, see Jean Beaman, "Citizenship as Cultural: Towards a Theory of Cultural Citizenship," *Sociology Compass* 10 (2016), 849-57; E.N. Glenn, "Constructing Citizenship: Exclusion, Subordination, and Resistance,"

*American Sociological Review* 76, no. 1 (2011), 1-24; and, with specific reference to Muslims in contemporary France, Jennifer Fredette, *Constructing Muslims in France: Discourse, Public Identity, and Citizenship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), esp. 151-174.

33.   On citizenship and its graduated variations, see Aihwa Ong, "Mutations in Citizenship," *Theory, Culture, & Society* 23, nos. 2-3 (2006), 499-505.

34.   See Alex Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), and Taylor, *Multiculturalism.*

35.   Robert W. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

36.   For a thoughtful example of such an argument, see John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).