

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The study of mathematical logic should be removed from philosophy's purview—just as physics, chemistry, economics, and psychology were in the past. For their part, philosophers should step outside the ivory tower and grapple with current political, judicial, and cultural issues. The emergence of journals like *Philosophy and Public Affairs* and *Philosophy and Literature* and the critical success of John Rawls' controversial, egalitarian *A Theory of Justice* (1971) indicate that some philosophers are already moving to rejuvenate their field.

Hell-Bent on Tolerance

"A Sort of Republican Banquet" by Martin E. Marty, in *The Journal of Religion* (Oct. 1979), University of Chicago Press, 5801 Ellis Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60637.

If Americans take their religion seriously, how can they tolerate rival faiths? Tocqueville had a simple answer in the 19th century: American religious beliefs were either shallow or irrational.

Marty, a historian at the University of Chicago Divinity School, disagrees. In part, he says, tolerance stemmed from a tactical judgment made by early American religious leaders. By the 1700s, it was evident to many that the presence of a multitude of sects assured that no single one would emerge dominant. Each small denomination saw a stake in tolerance. But added to this perception was the strong desire for a common spiritual bond.

In 1749, Benjamin Franklin urged the fostering of religious attitudes to promote national unity—while disdaining the zealous faiths that divided neighbors. In the 19th century, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau advocated a public religion that transcended established churches and exuded nationalism. Philosopher John Dewey went even further—in *A Common Faith* (1934), he favored replacing church religion with a godless faith in democratic ideals.

In general, Americans have sought the benefits of religious unity—and of religious freedom—while avoiding the divisiveness of pluralism. Thomas Jefferson held that the basic morality of *all* religions would safeguard political liberty and justice. In 1978, President Carter raised this belief to the international level, attributing the Camp David Egyptian-Israeli accords in part to the piety of Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin. As a young priest informed Tocqueville, Americans do not demand religious conformity, but they do demand that everyone be religious.

Some intolerance has, of course, marked religious attitudes in America. Early U.S. Baptists and Methodists competed for souls "with larynxes and fists alike." Mormons and Catholics encountered persecution in the 19th century. But borrowing a phrase from 19th-century philosopher William James, Marty describes the American religious scene then and now as "a sort of Republican Banquet." Each denomination respects the others' "personal sacredness." Each hears "one nation under God" and pictures its own.