

## **The Sufficiency of Christianity**

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A divinity student recently told me a story about her grandmother, a sheltered, small town, Southern Baptist. The student had explained to her grandmother that less than a fourth of the world's population is Christian. The older woman was initially skeptical and then became quiet as she mulled over the implications of this unwelcome and disturbing information. Finally, somewhat resigned, she responded, "Well, I suppose the rest must be Catholics."

For a very long time and for very many people, Christianity has been necessary - the one true church, the only way to the Father, the pinnacle of religious development. Yet now an increased awareness of religious diversity and the increased secularity of public culture have begun to change that. Most of us are no longer constrained by either the state, popular opinion, or fear for our eternal souls. Christianity is now optional. Such freedom can make one feel a bit heady at times, particularly if the shadow of an oppressive and dogmatic Christianity looms in the recent past. Suddenly the way to God is open; our spiritual lives are filled with choices and new possibilities.

As a culture, we are just beginning, I think, to feel the effects of this freedom from the necessity of Christianity, and the change appears to some as threatening rather than exhilarating. The case is similar, I think, to the cultural breakdown of marriage, for heterosexual marriage, too, seems no longer to be necessary. Now there have always been people who did not marry, but of late those practicing alternative lifestyles have made themselves more visible, have appeared more viable, and have even insisted that heterosexual marriage is not the culmination and completion of what it means to be human. Likewise, the range of religious options now available challenges Christianity's claims to uniqueness and normativity, thereby challenging as well the privilege that Christians have become accustomed to expect. This is as it should be. Christians and non-Christians alike need to experience the end of the necessity of Christianity, a social and theological error which has fostered oppression and dogmatism.

But there is another question, one not so easy to answer. If Christianity is not necessary, is it sufficient? Is Christianity adequate to the religious needs of contemporary persons and society? Can Christianity be rescued from its complicity in sexism, heterosexism, racism, anti-Semitism and colonialism? Does Christian tradition offer broad enough resources and rich enough symbols to continue today to point us towards God? Should Christianity continue to play a distinctive role in our own development as right-living, justice-loving liberal religionists?

Frequently Unitarian Universalists have said no, and for good reasons. In the first place, many within our movement bring a particular antipathy, or at least ambivalence, towards Christianity itself. Christianity's historical claims to unassailable truth, its political dominance, and the threat of its psychological impact still weigh heavily in our individual and collective memories, making us suspicious of Christian symbols and acutely sensitive to the harmful resonances within Christian theology and imagery. Christianity's elevation of the father, for example, and its emphasis on human sinfulness – these suggest to us that Christianity is fundamentally flawed and that our liberal religious obligation is to seek to diminish its influence where possible, and to replace it with other, more progressive practices and values, with Goddess traditions perhaps, or Buddhist meditation practices.

These objections and concerns are important and in certain cases will be decisive. Some individuals have perhaps been so scarred by the abusive practices of Christian communities that any ongoing reminders are painful, rather like the understandable repugnance of some Jewish survivors towards even the sound of the German language. But it seems obvious to me that Christianity, as a tradition, is much too broad, too rich, and too manifestly powerful in its potential for inspiring justice, godliness, holiness, and liberation to dismiss altogether. The ethical and metaphysical reach of the Christian tradition has been the inspiration and the principle object of study for many of the most brilliant and visionary figures of Western intellectual history; Christian stories, songs, and symbols have been at the heart, have formed the heart even, of liberalism's love for progress, justice, and liberation, and have fueled the social movements this love has spawned. No, Christianity, despite its tarnished history of often unworthy manifestations, cannot be rejected as either irrelevant or essentially oppressive.

There is another, more theologically compelling reason, however, for denying not only the necessity of Christianity, but also its sufficiency for contemporary religious life. The very conceptions of meaning and truth which are the core of liberal religion seem to demand such a conclusion, not because of anything specific about Christianity itself, but because, as my student's grandmother learned, it is one voice among many. We experience as never before the plurality of religious possibilities, a plurality that would seem to demonstrate *a priori* the inadequacy of any single approach or language for the divine. To claim the sufficiency of Christianity is to deny the validity of other faiths at a time when both reason and justice require us to embrace them. Religious pluralism, the diversity of traditions, practices, metaphysical perspectives, and deeply held convictions about what is most significant in human life, is the great challenge to contemporary religious thought. The attempt to recognize and respond to religious difference has transformed and continues to transform the academic study of religion, as every question becomes more complicated and every conversation gains voices with new accents. The most basic assumptions, categories, and terminology of religious scholarship now appear at best as incomplete and at worst as distorting and oppressive.

The challenges that religious pluralism poses to worship and religious practice are, if less immediately obvious than those in the academy, ultimately more significant. The Christian (or Unitarian) in the pew once could remain ignorant of, or at least safely ignore, the multiplicity of religious practices around the world, but now that diversity has made itself visible in local communities and in our own readings, hymns, rituals, and theology. Even in more conservative churches, the influence of pluralism is beginning to be felt, and not always with the intolerance we are accustomed to attribute to them. Most American Christians now acknowledge in some form the genuine value of other religions. So accustomed, in fact, are we to this openness, that it comes as a rude shock when the Roman Catholic church, hardly an icon for religious liberalism, reaffirms the exclusive primacy of its own tradition, as it did in a recently released and highly controversial statement.

How then could Christianity still appear as sufficient to any rational mind? We all know, after all, about the elephant and the three blind men. The characteristic openness of religious liberalism stands as a challenge to the sort of provincialism that would continue to give a particular priority to Christianity just because it is the more familiar tradition. Among liberal religionists, one finds in fact an explicit affirmation of difference, a sense that the diversity of religious expression is not only inevitable but desirable, and with this a willingness to reach out and

embrace new symbols and practices. The picture of one mountain with many paths, that overused but effective metaphor for religious pluralism, seems well established in our communal worship and in our individual theological visions. Given this liberalism, the undeniable Christian flavor, content, and style of our religious associations seem more a consequence of cultural inertia than of any intentional practice or theological commitment. Perhaps we have just not yet fully outgrown the Christian tradition of our past, but will soon come truly to treat it as just one of many sources of religious truth.

I find such an expectation implicit in much Unitarian Universalist writing and culture, but cannot help believe that such a hope is shortsighted, the consequence of lingering exuberance over an escape from Christian necessity. Nor is such a hope universal, as evidenced by the recent resurgence of explicitly Christian practice among some Unitarian Universalists. These movements signal, I suggest, a more widespread and pervasive reluctance to let go altogether of the Christian tradition. Perhaps some instinct warns us that it is our Christian heritage that gives liberal religion much of its depth and effectiveness, that it gives our local congregations focus and coherence, and that it makes possible a more fruitful and critical engagement with the wider culture. My discussion of the sufficiency (as opposed to the necessity) of Christianity is, to a large extent, an attempt to make this instinct explicit, that is to provide a framework for articulating how and why, given our liberal values and commitments, it still makes sense to situate ourselves within the Christian tradition and to claim and make use of that heritage. This is not primarily an argument about Christianity itself at all, though I do assert that Christianity has a better claim to sufficiency than certain alternatives. My basic claim, though, is that a primary and defining religious commitment to a single, broad historical tradition, constitutes a legitimate, and in fact desirable, enactment of liberal, Unitarian Universalist values. Specifically, an individual or congregational commitment to Christianity need not constitute either an outgrowth of social conservatism, a disengagement from religious diversity, or an abandonment of the fundamental principles of liberal religion. In fact, I contend that if Christianity is to be sufficient, for Unitarian Universalists or for anyone else today, it must be clasped tightly to a dynamic religious pluralism and liberal critical thought, for without these it will continue to be a dangerous vehicle for oppression and dogmatism.

This last point is crucial, for we live in a time when Christianity and other faiths in their most conservative and exclusive forms are experiencing resurgences as well. The value of an engaged and sophisticated Christian liberalism is, to some extent, measured by its capacity effectively to criticize these conservative movements, or at least to stand as a viable alternative to them. It is crucial therefore to distinguish at a foundational level between these competing positions, particularly since my claim for the sufficiency of the Christian tradition seems, on the surface, to reflect a troubling shift towards the religious right. In an attempt to distinguish explicitly and unmistakably between a liberal and a reactionary claim for the sufficiency of Christianity, I will draw on certain categories helpfully elucidated by George Lindbeck, a self-described postliberal and a proponent of the more conservative position I wish to reject.

Lindbeck, in his book *The Nature of Doctrine*, a title guaranteed to scare away most liberal readers, describes three competing models for conceiving of religious diversity and meaning. The first, which treats doctrinal claims as propositional statements referring directly and literally to the nature of reality, he rejects as simplistic and no longer a live option for most contemporary thinkers. The second, here named the experiential-

expressivist model, reflects to a large extent the liberal religious tradition. According to this model, religious speech and practice are founded in some basic experience and awareness attributed to God. Humankind, the liberal model asserts, has some universal, inherent access to such an awareness, and religious diversity therefore is the consequence of different historical and temperamental responses to this central core truth available in some degree to everyone. The experiential-expressivist believer conceives of knowledge of God as being, at its essence, individual, a direct connection between a human person and that which is divine. Creed and religious community may therefore be important but are voluntary and secondary to this direct experience, the central truth and reality to which all religions point and from which they emerge.

I will say more shortly about the virtues of liberal religion and how they relate to the problems of religious pluralism, but first should turn to the competing model offered by Lindbeck for conceiving of religious language. In developing his cultural-linguistic model, Lindbeck appeals to current sociological and critical theories of religion, developing an account of religious faith in many ways more acceptable to scholars of religion than is the experiential-expressivist one I have just described. This scholarly account treats particular religious traditions not as sets of scientific propositions or attempts to express ineffable experiences of the divine, but as fundamentally distinct languages or cultures. Lindbeck views religious traditions as the very frameworks in which meaning becomes possible. Religion is not the result of an experience of the divine, but the necessary, communal source for conceiving of the divine at all. The essence of religion here is not some universal or transcendent absolute, but is rather the deep grammar of the tradition itself and the sorts of specific experiences and practices that it creates. Meaning arises within language, within practice, within a particular world-view in which one is formed or transformed. According to such an approach, different religions should be regarded, not as different formulations of a shared human religious awareness, but, to borrow from Wittgenstein, as distinct language games. We distort them if we look for overlap or shared content and practice, and should instead begin with the acknowledgement that Christianity is no more like Buddhism than badminton is like chess, though we call the former religions and the latter games

Although scholarly and abstract, such a conception of religion is not foreign, I think, to the religious practice of many churches, including our own. You will have noticed that, despite a clear awareness of religious pluralism, many religious societies continue to worship exactly as they always have, using the same creeds, symbols, and formulas. Uncomfortable with explicit affirmations of doctrinal supremacy, many now defend such a response (or rather non-response) to religious pluralism by appealing to a cultural conception of religion. "It's not that Lutheranism is *better* than the Islamic practice, but just that the one is right for us, and the other for them." A cultural-linguistic approach acknowledges the presence of pluralism while eliminating the need for change. This model allows for a scholarly distance from competing religious claims, as each is viewed as appropriate and definitive for its respective community, with no necessity to seek or suppose a convergence or overlap. With respect to one's own tradition, the cultural-linguistic model provides affirmation and insularity, encouraging a preservation of tradition and a protectionist resistance to outside influences that would contaminate doctrinal or cultural purity.

Lindbeck's preference for a cultural-linguistic model, aside from its scholarly credentials, stems primarily from the support it, unlike the experiential-expressivist model, offers for denominational loyalty, for a sense of the

uniqueness and integrity of a particular tradition, and for the centrality of Scripture and creed to religious practice. Now personally I have little taste for creeds and am not one to insist on religious uniqueness. Lindbeck's criticisms of liberalism's experiential foundation for belief do, however, ring true. He argues that experiential-expressivist religious practice tends to function by correlation; it begins with the contemporary experiences of its members and adopts or creates symbols and stories to fit them. The appeal of religious pluralism for such a faith is that it gives a wider range of symbols and stories from which to choose. The weakness, however, of such an eclectic approach, is that the religion comes simply to copy and reinforce whatever values and perspectives emerge from the surrounding culture. Religious truth reflects the culture and does not challenge it. Moreover, such a faith will tend to lack a cohesive community, in part because it does not offer a clear alternative to everyday society. A liberal faith of this sort cannot demand commitment and cannot offer the security of certainty or unanimity, and so, Lindbeck (like other critics of liberalism) reasonably suggests, it encourages a sophomoric theology, a superficial practice, and a shallow spiritual life.

It is precisely these unfortunate tendencies within liberal religion that I suggest can be partially curbed by an explicit though critical embracing of some one particular religious tradition, most likely Christianity. Lindbeck points out that the depth and power of religious meaning depends upon focus, the interweaving motifs of a complex, comprehensive world-view, the shared practice of a longstanding and committed community, and the familiar stories that have acquired so many nuances and meanings with repetition and reinterpretation. If liberal religion is synonymous with an absence of consistency, commitment, and a compelling, demanding vision, then it cannot effectively compete. Where such a liberalism is attractive, it signals a secularized culture which has lost its taste for the transcendent. I contend, however, that critics of liberalism (and perhaps liberal religionists themselves) are wrong to interpret their religious practice as incompatible with such commitment, consistency, and depth. In what follows, I want to articulate the way in which three key characteristics of liberal religion – I will call them theological virtues – are compatible with the claim for the sufficiency of Christianity. These virtues will allow us to distinguish between an undesirable and unwarranted Christian dogmatism or cultural inertia, and a vital liberal engagement with Christianity. A committed liberalism, nuanced by such a commitment and nurtured within a broad faith tradition, can therefore stand as a much-needed beacon within a religious climate increasingly dominated by self-satisfied cultural-linguisticists.

The first theological virtue of religious liberalism is an optimism concerning a universal human nature and the possibility for uncovering shared ultimate values among those of very different religions, cultural backgrounds and social locations. Such a conviction stands at the heart of Universalist tradition, which refuses to divide humanity ultimately into us and them, the saved and the reprobate. Postmodern and postliberal critics like Lindbeck rightly object that this universalism may ignore or mask differences that do exist, functioning as a tool for imperialism and oppression, as it looks too quickly and superficially for consensus. On the other hand, the cultural-linguistic alternative denies at the outset the possibility for religious progress or convergence. Lindbeck advocates instead a non-proselytizing dialogue, a peripheral conversation founded on the assumption of intractable difference, rejecting on a conceptual level the possibility of common ground. Not only should we recognize different languages

for describing our religious values, but we should take it as given that, on a deep level, these values are not translatable and in fact make sense only within our specific languages and have no references outside of them.

Lindbeck describes this approach as respectful and warranted by the evidence, but it seems to me to imply either a hidden triumphalism (a basic belief that one's own tradition is categorically superior than all others and will continue unchanged while others fade away), or a radical anti-realism (an insistence that no religion points to anything that transcends human language and symbols.) This latter is of particular concern within the academy, and among our own well-educated population, where anti-realism often emerges as a kind of arrogant presumption that we alone understand the truth of religion and can look down sympathetically on the great masses who do not recognize religion as psychological wish-fulfillment. Experiential-expressivists do err when they seek to bring the various paths up the mountain to an immediate convergence, insisting that the peak they see is indeed the ultimate goal, and ignoring the forks that lead elsewhere. But cultural-linguisticists err more greatly, I think, when they assume, because of such forks, that the various paths must be on completely different mountains, or that there are no true peaks at all, only man-made paths to nowhere. Liberalism should permit us a confidence in the ultimate coherence of human religiousness, an optimism that other cultures and faiths are at heart compatible with our own, sharing a deep connection that points to a shared human condition and purpose, and to a real awareness of transcendence. This optimism can extend as well to an implicit expectation of future unity and partnership among traditions and cultures, one that is ultimately not Christian or Unitarian or Buddhist, but that has grown beyond any of these.

The second liberal virtue is our somewhat loose connection to specific doctrines, authorities, and metaphysical formulations. Within the experiential-expressivist model, this stems from a conviction that such symbols point to an ineffable and changing awareness of divinity and must not be allowed to constrain the development and progress of such awareness. Unitarians historically, for example, have found the symbol of the Trinity to be intellectually trying and biblically unwarranted, and so, despite its impressive pedigree, have named it a distraction rather than an aid to religious self-cultivation. Such thinkers have little patience for the claims of institutional authority and dogma. This iconoclasm allows them both to be critical of the traditions of their own culture and open to the symbols and insights of others, as they seek constantly for more complete depictions of truth. One of the characteristic dangers of such an approach, however, is that we become so engaged in the diversity of symbols that we never progress towards a deeper experience of the divine. We may even lose our sense for the transcendent altogether, allowing our awareness of the limited nature of all symbols to become a denial of that towards which they point. It is here that liberal religion can come simply to reflect the surrounding culture rather than to offer an access to meaning that transcends it.

The strength of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model, by contrast, is its emphasis on religion's function as an antithesis to culture, an alternative source of meaning and vision that can set itself against the norms of the day. Lindbeck speaks of letting oneself be absorbed into the language of the Scriptural world, allowing the framework of inherited doctrine and narrative to form one's fundamental outlook, one's deep grammar for understanding the world. Drawing on historical language and symbols provides a rich complexity, a texture to religious practice, providing a

compelling ready-made world of meanings to draw on. When liberal religion lacks this depth and complexity, it fails to serve its individual and communal function.

As we all know, however, the problem with immersing oneself in such a tradition is that one gives up the capacity to challenge it and to be critical of specific aspects. The tradition comes as a whole coherent world-view, the tremendous inertia of which resists all attempts at reform. Think of the bewildering resistance among some traditional Christians to inclusive language or the ordination of women. The symbols and the continuity of tradition become ends in themselves, regardless of where they lead or what they imply. Have you ever written a beautiful sentence, elegant, and perfectly balanced, then realized what it says simply isn't true, or isn't what you meant? But how can you give it up? Maybe it would be better to change your whole thesis, your whole life, to make it fit? Unitarian-Universalists have historically shown an impressive unwillingness to say things that they don't believe. The danger of aesthetic religion is that one relies ultimately on coherence with tradition and symbol rather than with reality.

But how can we bring the liberal hostility to fixed creeds and its openness to diverse symbols together with the depth and nuance of experience accessible only within a more stable and intentional religious practice? There is, I claim, no contradiction. It is a characteristic error of modernity to view Christianity as a coherent whole, a single dogma, and so to ignore the huge internal diversity, the almost unimaginable breadth available within the Christian tradition. From Gregory of Nyssa, to Soren Kierkegaard, to Gustavo Gutierrez, there is more than enough challenging, inspiring, and true material within Christianity to occupy some two thousand monkeys for two thousand years. There is certainly more than enough for contemporary Unitarian Universalism. My point is that we should approach the tradition, forgetting for the moment that we know it already, that we have all mastered it and outgrown it. Let us bring all of our critical faculties to it, but also a sincere search for religious guidance, to find the imprints of the same awareness of God that propels our own faith. We are good at the critical part, but often have more trouble accepting guidance from the past. John Calvin, for example, to choose one of my favorites, was far from perfect and we should not overlook the errors of his life or his thought, but his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* makes manifest a sincere and brilliant personal piety, profoundly aware of the presence of God. For some, the Bible itself continues to speak with a voice that is not God's but which proclaims the presence of God. The point of liberalism's rejection of creeds is to allow us to choose, to explore critically as widely as possible, and to follow our awareness of God free from external constraints. The point is not that we should create a new constraint for ourselves by stalwartly resisting the wisdom of the past and standing aloof from the incredible resources available to us, trying vainly to rebuild it all for ourselves.

The final liberal virtue I want to address is our individualism, a trait today not generally called a virtue. The core of liberal religion, I claim, is the conviction that each individual has a genuine access to the divine and a legitimate authority for interpreting that awareness. According to the experiential-expressivist model Lindbeck criticizes, the dignity of each human being implies an individual capacity for experiencing and interpreting the will of God, though of course the symbols and categories used will be borrowed from the cultural options available. In contemporary Unitarian-Universalism, this respect for the individual conscience has made possible an embracing of gay and lesbian rights, that is a trust that gays and lesbians, although facing a hostile majority opinion, have the

capacity to discern for themselves the will of God. The cultural-linguistic model, by contrast, looks to tradition and community as the source of identity and as primary for determining the form and content of individual experience. Hence such a model has a great difficulty in accounting for religious conversions, or even the sense, common to many (and particularly to lesbians and gays), that the religious tradition of one's childhood somehow did not adequately represent one's awareness of the movement of God in the world.

The experiential-expressivist model tends to view religion as, in part, an individual self-development, a process of deepening one's awareness of the divine and gradually approaching some transcendent fullness. Different people, though joined together in communities, move most authentically when at their own pace. For the cultural-linguistic model, however, the only individual goal is fluency within the language of community, as complete a uniformity as is possible with the deep grammar and norms of the group. The tradition itself may be moving and expanding to incorporate more and more people, but the individual's motion should not be distinctive except where sin or outside influences mar conformity. Such a model encourages individual complacency and a comfortable trust in religious or political authority. By contrast, the liberal position can, if not balanced, encourage anarchy, a complete resistance to authority or to any conformity, in which one comes to equate innovation itself with progress.

The challenge, then, is to preserve the essential character of individual awareness of God, personal piety if you like, while making full use of our voluntary religious associations. A purely individual commitment to Christianity, or to any religious path, is difficult to conceive. Schleiermacher described Jesus as such a religious genius, an individual fully aware of God in his own person, but even here Schleiermacher insists on the crucial role of the community of disciples to transmit the testimony that would allow others to recognize their own experiences of absolute dependence. In general, we are made up of both focused attention and trivial distraction, both godly insight and self-serving error. We therefore profit immensely from a genuine community of accountability in which to test our experience and to borrow from the vision of others. Such interaction has value even if our paths our widely divergent, but it is more effective and more sufficient if it can draw a shared vocabulary and range of experiences. The question of the sufficiency of Christianity or of any religious tradition is first a question for the individual within whom exists the ultimate responsibility to God, but is secondarily a question too for religious associations as we attempt to discern how best to cultivate and enrich our corporate life and faith.

I have attempted to describe here a commitment to a single religious tradition, here Christianity, that incorporates the essential virtues of liberalism and offers an alternative to an increasingly pervasive cultural conception of religion which I find disturbingly reactionary and uncritical. Now of course the Christian tradition is not the only one that is potentially sufficient, and I have no reason or desire to insist that it is the best. My purpose has not been to argue the insufficiency of some other particular tradition, but rather of a liberalism that draws broadly but superficially, turning away from challenge or committed engagement. On the other hand, I am not so optimistic as to assert that any tradition is sufficient for today's Unitarian Universalists. Such a tradition must have the capacity to engage with our liberal convictions and so cannot be exclusive, dogmatic, or authoritarian; the tradition must contain the breadth, depth, and nuance to challenge and enrich our experience of the divine not just for a year but for several lifetimes; and finally, the tradition must point continually to the personal experience of



divinity, to the individual's awareness of transcendence. These restrictions are demanding, and no doubt reveal a Western bias, but they are also true I claim to the values of our liberal heritage and to our own human experience. We may attempt to adopt an entirely new religious vision, but this will be a long, uphill climb if we are to master it with any depth. There is a reason that almost nobody ever learns to write good poetry in a language other than her native tongue.

So, in conclusion, is Christianity sufficient? No, if by this one intends an uncritical adherence to the forms of the past, as is justified by a cultural-linguistic conception of religion. No, as well, if one cannot reconcile such a commitment with the liberal virtues described above. And thirdly, no, if one attempts a purely individualized adaptation of Christianity, isolated from any responsible community. But the Christian tradition, including of course our own Unitarian and Universalist ancestors, can be sufficient, I claim, if engaged critically and respectfully, if combined with liberal confidence in the human access to the divine, and if lived within a righteous community of fellow travelers. Nor need this imply a fear or ignorance concerning other religious traditions or an unwillingness to celebrate and draw on the insights they provide. On the contrary, a confidence in our own vision and tradition and in the authentic awareness of the divine in ourselves and our communities can only make such engagement more fruitful and genuine. In the absence of such a richness within our own communities, we come as beggars to the feast and therefore frequently meet skepticism or indifference.

Nor should such a commitment imply that our denomination not continue provide a welcoming environment for those of Jewish and other non-Christian backgrounds, and even those who simply cannot tolerate Christianity. Certainly different congregations will choose different canons in which to engage and make meaning, and it is my hope that such diversity can be accommodated and drawn upon for the enrichment of all. But we must not be so tied to inclusivity that we simply stand still, too afraid of giving offense to take a step and risk treading on someone's toes. The call of liberal religion is one ultimately of a commitment to a universal, shared awareness of God that overshadows all of our particularities. I think, too, that our most important and difficult interactions are with other Christian traditions, as we seek to create a society worthy of the values of justice, liberation, and dignity that we espouse. In our enthusiasm over the demise of the necessity of Christianity, these are conversations we have too often neglected. It is time, I suggest, to reclaim our heritage and our voice, so as to reinvigorate a Christian religious liberalism that our world, and that many of us as individuals seeking God in our own lives, sorely need.