

TOWARDS A POST-SECULAR SOCIETY?
Public management of the new religious diversity

[¿Hacia una sociedad post-secular? La gestión pública de la nueva diversidad religiosa]

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The type of social change traditionally identified with Modernity was interpreted by classical sociology as a gradual substitution of the religious foundations of political power and collective identity for more secularized references. The current historical circumstances have not completely refuted this diagnosis, but during the last decades we have witnessed a renewed tension by the return of religion to the public arena in Western democracies. Even in mostly secularized societies, like the European ones, the debates on secularism and its relation to public education, the public exhibition of religious symbols, the accommodation of minority ethno-religious practices, or the discussions on the meaning of marriage and the role of the Christian heritage, have strongly reemerged in the public realm. The univocal identification of *modernization* with *secularization* is thus not sustainable anymore. The European experience appears more as an exception than as a rule, but we are not witnessing a *religion* of the world either. Religions are a fundamental vehicle for the creation of community and a symbolic resource that shows no sign of disappearing. Their social functions though are changing into new configurations that challenge the established institutional patterns. Canada, a society characterized for its cultural diversity and pluralist policies for managing it, offers in this sense an interesting field for comparison with the European experience. This book brings together several Canadian and Spanish specialists who have studied the changing meanings of religious identities and some of the political and legal difficulties that affect the accommodation of religious diversity in contemporary Western societies.

CONTENT

I- The diagnosis of post-secularity:

- Valeriano Esteban Sánchez: *Beyond secularization*
- Ángel Rivero Rodríguez: *The return of religion to politics in Europe*
- Carlos Alberto Patiño Villa: *Religious Fundamentalisms as an anti-modern syndrome*

II- Managing the new religious diversity:

- Solange Lefebvre: *Immigration and religion. An assessment of four national commissions on diversity*
- Avigail Eisenberg: *Religious Identity and Discrimination in the Public Realm: The Case of Polygamy in Western Canada*
- Denise Helly: *Forms of religious intolerance in Canada*
- Francisco Colom González: *Between faith and the law. Ethno-religious minorities and their experience with legal pluralism*