

Religious Dimensions of Nationalism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives

CALL FOR PAPER
DEADLINE 1 JUNE 2020

Organised by Marco Pasi,
Joep Leerssen and Francesco Piraino

Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venezia
26–28 November 2020



CENTRO STUDI
DI CIVILTÀ E SPIRITUALITÀ
COMPARATE
fondazione
GIORGIO CINI



Abel Gaium Kallak, The Prince of the Sun, 1885
Imprint in color by Blaudot, Goussier



In his classic study of nationalism, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (1990), British historian E.J. Hobsbawm wrote: “Religion is a paradoxical cement for proto-nationalism, and indeed for modern nationalism, which has usually (at least in its more crusading phases) treated it with considerable reserve as a force which could challenge the ‘nation’s’ monopoly claim to its members loyalty... The world religions which were invented at various times between the sixth century BC and the seventh century AD, are universal by definition, and therefore designed to fudge ethnic, linguistic, political and other differences”. These remarks point to the fascinating ambiguity of the relationship between nationalism and religion, particularly in the modern period.

A potential tension exists in the fact that universalist forms of religion tend to create and cultivate collective identities that, at least in principle, are not based on ethnical or cultural divides. On the other hand, modernist interpretations of nationalism have insisted on the close association between nationalism and secularisation. From this perspective, nationalism, as a modern phenomenon, becomes one of the leading forces towards the formation of new collective identities, while traditional forms of religion are increasingly challenged and mainstream religious institutions see their influence on society decreasing. In this sense, nationalism could develop an antagonism with religious loyalties. The paradoxical result was, frequently, a competitive imitation, with liturgical forms of nation-worship or state-worship (“secular religion”). As Jean-Jacques Rousseau had already remarked in the *Contrat Social*, “never was there a state founded but that religion served it for a basis”. Religious loyalties proved more resilient than modernizers expected, and politics across 19th-century Europe are characterized by a process of confessionalisation. Indeed, religion, far from disappearing from modern societies, has simply gone through a series of changes, such as individualisation and privatisation on the one hand, and new forms of public presence on the other.

In sum, nationalism and religion have become closely entangled in the last two centuries. Nationalism in fact, can be easily associated with “political religion”, charismatic leadership, forms of prophetism, messianism, millennialism, and more generally mysticism, esotericism and alternative spirituality. The old religious concept of a divine covenant with a “chosen people” takes new shapes in nationalist, but also imperialist and colonialist, discourses. The spread of nationalism on a global scale, and its role in the decolonisation process, is also often far from having a purely political or secular dimension, and indeed alliances with religious fundamentalism are now a prominent feature.

This entangled relationship warrants a fresh focus on the relationship between nationalism and religion, which remains relatively inconspicuous in the field of nationalist studies. This conference aims at bringing

together scholars coming from different disciplines who are interested in this relationship. We would like to have papers focusing on the modern and contemporary period from a global perspective, but we would also welcome contributions on earlier periods that would problematise modernist concepts of nationalism.

Abstracts and texts

Abstracts up to 300 words, accompanied by a CV, should be submitted in English by the 1st of June to nationalism.conference@cini.it A notification of acceptance will be forwarded by the 1st of July. A few months after the Conference, we will ask participants to send us their full paper, to be published in an edited book. We welcome submissions from doctoral students, early career researchers and established scholars.

Timetable

1. The call for papers is open – 31st of January 2020.
2. Abstracts (300-500 words maximum) and CVs to be received by 1st June 2020.
3. Notifications of acceptance will be given by 1st July 2020.
4. Conference will be held the 26th, 27th, and 28th of November 2020.
6. Final papers in English to be received by 30th January 2021.
7. Publication of the book in late 2021.

Practicalities and Funding

Fondazione Giorgio Cini, the Study Platform on Interlocking Nationalisms (SPIN), and the Center for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents will provide accommodation on San Giorgio Island, coffee breaks and lunches for all participants. Participants will arrange and pay for their own transportation, and will be requested to donate to the Cini Foundation Library *Civiltà e Spiritualità* Comparete one book related to religious studies they authored or in which they have participated. Extra

funding is available to cover the travel expenses of a limited number of scholars who cannot obtain funding from their own institutions. If extra funding is needed, please indicate this in the email with which you submit your abstract.

For further information, please contact: nationalism.conference@cini.it

References

- Armstrong, John A., *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1982.
- Breuilly, John (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Day, Graham, and Andrew Thompson (eds.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, Basingstoke - New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Dović, Marijan, and Jón Karl Helgason, *National Poets, Cultural Saints: Canonization and Commemorative Cults of Writers in Europe*, Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2016.
- Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and nationalism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983.
- , *Encounters with nationalism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995.
- , *Nationalism*, New York, New York University Press, 1997.
- Hastings, Adrian, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Hayes, Carlton L.H., *Nationalism: A Religion*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1960.
- Hobsbawm, E.J., *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Hutchinson, John, and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Hvithamar, Annika, Margit Warburg, and Brian Arly Jacobsen (eds.), *Holy Nations and Global Identities. Civil Religion, Nationalism, and Globalisation*, Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2009.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley - Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1993.
- Kohn, Hans, *Prophets and Peoples. Studies in Nineteenth Century Nationalism*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1946.
- Leerssen, Joep, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2006.

- Id., “Notes towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism”, *Romantik: Journal for the Study of Romanticisms*, 2:1 (2013), pp. 9-35.
- Id. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe*, 2 vol., Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2018.
- Özkırımlı, Umut, *Theories of Nationalism. A Critical Introduction*, Basingstoke - London, Macmillan Press, 2000.
- Periwal, Sukumar (ed.), *Notions of Nationalism*, Budapest - London - New York, Central European University Press, 1995.
- Smith, Anthony D., *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, Martin Robertson, 1979.
- , *Theories of Nationalism*, New York, Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1983.
- , *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995.
- , *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, London, Routledge, 1998.
- , *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Spencer, Philip, and Howard Wollman, *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, London, Sage Publications, 2002.
- Stevens, David, “Nationalism as Religion”, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 86:343 (1997), pp. 248-258.
- Veer, Peter van der, and Hartmut Lehmann (eds.), *Nation and Religion. Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999.