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# Varieties of Civil Religion:

*Robert N. Bellah*

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**Varieties of Civil Religion:** Robert N. Bellah
In 1980, Varieties of Civil Religion was the latest statement in the field of civil religion pioneered by Robert Bellah. Over thirty years later, scholarly interest in the field continues to grow. By examining the force of religion in politics and society, this book offers a comparative treatment that deepens the understanding of American civil religion and provides a lens for exploring civil religion in other societies, particularly those of Italy, Mexico, and Japan. Bellah and Hammond trace the historical development of the peculiarly American brand of civil religion as they unravel its sometimes baffling intricacies. Themes include the conviction that America is a chosen country and American power in the world is identical with divine will. The book also examines the vigorous counterbalance that has opposed unjust wars or demanded racial and social justice. Altogether, the health of a civil religion may be a prime indication of the overall health of any society. The authors state that when civil religious symbols are co-opted by ultraconservatives, and the philosophy of liberalism seems less adequate as a guide for public or private lives, a revival of public philosophy is urgently needed. Varieties of Civil Religion supports such a revival by making the religious aspect of our central tradition understandable in a nonreactionary way. It also reaffirms that American civil religion, with its deeper tradition of openness, tolerance, and ethical commitment, can make an essential contribution to a "global order of civility and justice"

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