11. Expressions of religiosity and blasphemy in modern societies

Riaz Hassan

Until recently a widely held view in sociology was that the conditions of modernity inevitably lead to the secularisation of society. It was further argued that in a secular society, religion becomes increasingly a private concern of the individual and thus loses much of its public relevance and influence. The conditions of modernity were seen as conducive to promoting religious pluralism in which people were voluntary adherents to a plurality of religions, none of which could claim a position of hegemony in society. These and similar views appeared in the works of a number of prominent scholars including Talcott Parsons,¹ Thomas Luckmann,² Peter Berger³ and Robert Bellah.⁴

The secularisation thesis was predicated on the nature of modernity and its sociological consequences. The core attribute of modern society was its institutional differentiation and functional rationalisation. Functionally differentiated societal institutions specialise around specific kinds of actions, for instance, polity, economy, law, science, education, art, health, religion and the family. These institutions not only performed specialised functions, but they were also relatively autonomous. In other words they developed their own norms to evaluate performance and were largely free from the interference of other societal institutions in carrying out their specialised tasks. Under these conditions, religious institutions also occupied a specialised functional domain which dealt purely with religious matters such as the sacred, religious beliefs, rituals and morality.

Secularisation was thus a consequence of the institutional differentiation and relative independence of various institutional spheres from religious norms, values and justifications. A logical and necessary outcome of this process is that religion not only retreats from the many public aspects of social life but it also comes under pressure to develop a specialised institutional sphere of its own. These conditions encourage the privatisation of religion. While religion can still direct the lives of individuals and subgroups, it becomes essentially a private concern of the individual. As a result, institutional religion cannot compete in the new structural environment and, therefore, weakens, leaving the religious tasks of constructing and guaranteeing holistic meaning systems primarily with the individual and a multitude of voluntary organisations.⁵ In short, institutional differentiation in modern societies leads to secularisation by restricting the influence of religious norms and values on other institutional spheres.

As mentioned above, in modern societies religious institutions also come under pressure to develop their own specialised functions and public role in society. Until recently this question was not adequately addressed in sociological theory because it was assumed that religion would continue to weaken in modern society and would eventually lose its public influence and social relevance. However, the continuous strength of religion in modern societies like the United States, Australia and other European societies, as well as newly modernising societies like India, the Philippines, Singapore, Brazil, Mexico and in Muslim societies, has raised important questions about the validity of the conventional explanation of the status and role of religion in modern societies. Religion is proving to be resilient not only in terms of the number of adherents and the degree of their involvement in religious organisations but also in terms of its public influence.⁶

To better understand this phenomenon we turn to the work of Niklas Luhmann. Luhmann agrees that the central feature of modern society is its institutional differentiation and functional specialisation. The specialised institutions operate as relatively autonomous functional instrumentalities. However, Luhmann argues that while the functional autonomy is real, it is conditioned by the fact that the other institutions are also operating in the same milieu. This leads him to explore the difference between how an institution relates to the society and to other institutional systems. He uses the terms 'function' and 'performance' to explore this. The term 'function' refers to religious communication and actions such as worship, devotion, salvation, morality and spirituality. Function, in other words, is the communication involving the sacred and the aspects that the religious institutions claim for themselves, as the basis of their autonomy in modern society.

Religious performance, by contrast, occurs when religion is 'applied' to problems such as economic poverty, political oppression, human rights abuse, domestic violence, environmental degradation, racism, etc., generated in the domains of other institutional systems but not solved or addressed there or elsewhere.⁷ Performance thus is concerned purely with the profane. It is through the performance relations that religion establishes its importance for the profane aspects of life and in the process reinforces the autonomy of religious action. There is a tension between the two, which is accentuated in certain strata of modern societies, but function and performance are in fact inseparable and mutually reinforcing. In Australia and elsewhere in the Christian West, for example, churches have been historically involved in education, social welfare and health care and the same type of involvement is present in Muslim societies from Indonesia to Morocco and Nigeria.

For Luhmann, the functional problem of religion in the modern world is in fact a performance problem. As mentioned earlier, increasing pressure towards secularisation and privatisation of religion under conditions of modernity tend

to place religion in a position of disadvantage. The solution to this problem lies in finding effective religious applications, and not in more religious commitment and practice.⁸ The main reason is that religion, as an institution concerned purely with its functional role of promoting the sacred as an all encompassing reality, runs counter to the specialised and instrumental pattern of the other dominant institutional systems. The functional role of religion in the past involved religious performance through moral codes that were used to explain the existence of social problems as consequences of sin and other contraventions of religious codes. Under these conditions, religious codes favoured morality as a privileged form of social regulation. This is precisely what is undermined by social structural conditions of modern society. The decline in the central regulatory role of morality is the principal cause of the functional problems, including the decline in the public influence of religion in modern society.

Religion and blasphemy

What are the implications of these developments in the role of religion in modern society for the acts of blasphemy? I will examine this question after a brief overview of the concept of blasphemy. The word blasphemy is derived from a Greek term meaning 'speaking evil'. In the Judeo-Christian tradition it refers to all acts of verbal offences against sacred values. A seventeenth-century Scottish jurist described it as 'treason against God'. In Catholic theology it is defined as 'any word of malediction, reproach, of contumely pronounced against God', and is regarded as a sin. Blasphemy exists to prevent challenge to the notions of the sacred in organised religion. Its existence is a litmus test of the standards a society feels it must enforce to preserve its religious beliefs and morality and to prevent mockery of its gods. It constitutes an intolerable affront to the sacred, the priestly class, the deeply held beliefs of the believers and the basic values a community shares. Its commission invariably evoked severe punishment. In Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions, its commission is/was punishable by death. Denying the existence of God or reviling God is also recognised as an offence under common law.

From the seventeenth century onwards, blasphemy increasingly became a secular crime in England and that tradition was also followed in the United States. The state began to supplant the church as the agency mainly responsible for instigating and conducting prosecutions. The connection between religious dissent and political subversion and the belief that a nation's religious unity augmented its peace and strength accounted in part for the rising dominance of the state in policing serious crimes against religion. But in the post Enlightenment age, blasphemy prosecutions began to decline.

There have been no prosecutions in the United States since 1969, and the last successful blasphemy prosecution in England was in 1977. There has been no prosecution in the state of Massachusetts in the United States since the 1920s,

but in 1977, the State legislature refused to repeal its three hundred year old act against blasphemy. In general, in the Anglo-American world, the conditions of modernity have made the legal prosecutions against blasphemy not only rare but also obsolete. People seem to have learned that Christianity is capable of surviving without penal sanctions and that God can avenge its own honour. The sentiments against blasphemy in the religious segments of the populations, however, continue to persist.⁹

In Islam there is no exact equivalent of the Christian notion of blasphemy, but offering insult to God (Allah), to the prophet Muhammed, or any part of the divine revelation constitutes a crime under Islamic religious law. From the perspective of Islamic law acts of blasphemy can be defined as any verbal expression that gives grounds for suspicion of apostasy. Blasphemy also overlaps with infidelity (*kufr*), which is the deliberate rejection of Allah/God and revelation. In this sense expressing religious opinions at variance with standard Islamic views could easily be looked upon as blasphemous.¹⁰

The Salman Rushdie affair in 1988,¹¹ Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid affair in Egypt in 1994,¹² and Hashem Aghajari Affair in Iran in 2003,¹³ signify that religious sanctions against blasphemy and apostasy have a powerful presence in contemporary Muslim countries and can have real legal and personal consequences for the accused persons. As my knowledge about the existence of formal blasphemy laws is limited to Pakistan I will use Pakistan as a case study to highlight the situation in Muslim countries in which such laws may also exist. During the Islamisation campaign of the late Pakistani President Zia-ul Haq several new sections relating to religious offences were added to the Pakistan Penal Code. In 1980, section 298-A was introduced which made the use of derogatory remarks in respect of persons revered in Islam an offence, punishable with up to three years imprisonment.

In 1986, this was further narrowed down, by inserting an offence specifically directed at the person of the Prophet. Defiling the name of the Prophet Muhammed was declared a criminal offence, which under section 295-C was punishable with death or life imprisonment. According to section 295-C:

Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet: whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.

In October 1990, the federal Shariat Court (The Islamic Court) ruled that 'the penalty for contempt of the Holy Prophet...is death and nothing else', and directed the Government of Pakistan to effect the necessary legal changes. As

the Government did not appeal this decision the death penalty is thus the mandatory punishment for blasphemy in Pakistan.

Since their introduction the new laws relating to religious offences against Islam, including section 295-C, have been extensively abused to harass members of the religious minorities such as Christians and Ahmadis as well as members of the Sunni majority. According to Amnesty International, hundreds of people have been charged under these sections. In all cases these charges have been arbitrarily brought, founded on malicious accusations, primarily as a measure to intimidate and punish members of minority religious communities or non-conforming Muslims. There are reports that suggest that factors such as personal enmity, professional envy, economic rivalry and political reasons play a significant role in these prosecutions. A common feature of accusations of blasphemy in Pakistan is the manner in which they are uncritically accepted by the prosecuting authorities who themselves may face intimidation and threats should they fail to accept them.¹⁴

Amnesty International has also reported that Pakistani authorities have introduced administrative measures to prevent abuse of Section 295-C blasphemy law. These measures appear to have been more successful in the case of Pakistani Christians but not in the case of Muslim minority sects such as the Ahmadis. The administrative measures do not alter the legal position of blasphemy law in Pakistan. While the death penalties have been imposed under section 295-C, all have been quashed on appeal to the higher courts. However, at least four persons who were acquitted on appeal have so far died at the hand of armed attackers alleged to be religious extremists.

Recently, I also had a personal encounter with Pakistan's blasphemy law. In 2000, I submitted the manuscript of my book, *Faithlines: Muslim Conceptions of Islam and Society*, which has been accepted by Oxford University Press in Pakistan for publication. When the page proofs of the book arrived I noticed that the letters PBUH (peace be upon him) were inserted in parentheses every time the name of Muhammed appeared in the manuscript. I did not think that it was an appropriate thing to do in an academic book and contacted my editor at the Oxford University Press in Karachi, Pakistan, to convey my opinion. She responded promptly and without any hesitation by saying that the protocol pertaining to the use of PBUH after Muhammed's name was 'the in-house policy of the Press'. She then went on to say that it was all right for authors who were safely overseas but it was they (the Press and its staff) who had to face the wrath of the people who felt that such omissions were offensive. I had no choice but to accept the Press's policy although I did not think then and I still think that it was not an appropriate thing to do in an academic book.

Attitudes towards blasphemy in Muslim countries and Australia

So far, I have focused on the impact of modernity on religious institutions and on the concept of blasphemy in Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions. I have briefly examined the nature and position of blasphemy laws in the Anglo-American world and used Pakistan as a case study to highlight the situation in Pakistan and other Muslim countries where blasphemy laws may also exist. In this section I would like to report findings from a survey on the attitudes of respondents towards blasphemy in Australia and seven Muslim countries.

Between 1996 and 2002 I carried out surveys of Muslim religiosity in seven Muslim countries namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, Kazakhstan and Turkey. In these surveys over 6300 Muslim respondents were interviewed about their religiosity and social attitudes.¹⁵ In 1999–2000, I also carried out a survey of Muslim and Christian religiosity in Australia.¹⁶ These surveys included a question about attitudes towards blasphemy. More specifically, the respondents were asked:

Suppose a person publicly admitted that he/she did not believe in Allah/God, would you agree or disagree that the following actions should be taken.

1. A book he/ she wrote should be removed from the library;
2. He/she should be fired from a job in government;
3. He/she should not be allowed to teach in a university/school;
4. He/she should be tried for heresy;
5. He/she should not be allowed to preach his beliefs;
6. He/ she should not be allowed to hold public office.

The survey findings are reported in Table 1.

Table 11.1. Suppose a person publicly admitted that he/she did not believe in Allah, would you agree or disagree that the following actions should be taken against him/her (per cent agreeing with the statement)

	Turkey (n = 527)	Iran (n = 536)	Malaysia (n = 801)	Egypt (n = 573)	Pakistan (n = 1185)	Indonesia (n = 1472)	Kazakhstan (n = 978)	Australian Muslims (n = 82)	Australian Christians (n = 88)
A book he/she wrote should be removed from the library	37	53	85	91	69	64	19	56	4
He/she should be fired from a job in the government	31	43	60	69	50	67	17	44	-
He/she should not be allowed to teach in a university/school	40	51	73	90	67	79	21	49	6
He/she should be tried for heresy	23	54	84	78	65	50	22	41	1
He/she should not be allowed to preach his beliefs to others	51	45	91	94	79	88	24	54	20
He/she should not be allowed to hold public office	43	45	79	85	63	58	18	50	30

Source: Unpublished Survey Data

The empirical evidence shows that there were significant variations in attitudes towards blasphemy among Muslims in different countries. In general, attitudes towards blasphemy were weakest in Kazakhstan, followed by Turkey. The attitudes were strongest in Egypt, Pakistan and Malaysia. The Australian Muslims displayed moderate attitudes but the Australian Christians have very weak attitudes towards blasphemy. These attitudes were classified into three categories using the following methodology. For each item if more than 60 per cent of respondents in a country agreed with the statement that country was classified as 'high'; if the agreement rate was between 40 and 60 per cent, the country was classified as 'medium' and if the agreement rate was below 40 per cent the country was classified as 'low'. This classification was applied to Australian Muslims and Christians as well. A further procedure was performed to classify countries as having 'strong', 'moderate' and 'weak' attitudes towards blasphemy. If four to six statements had been classified as 'high' in a country it was regarded as having 'strong' blasphemous attitudes, if a country had scored 'medium' for four to six statements it was classified as 'moderate' and if the score for four to six statements was low the country was classified as having 'weak' blasphemous attitudes. The result obtained from the application of this procedure showed that Turkey and Kazakhstan had 'weak', Iran had 'moderate' and Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia had 'strong' blasphemous attitudes. The Australian Muslims had 'moderate' and the Australian Christians had 'weak' attitudes towards blasphemy.

Blasphemous attitudes and religiosity

Blasphemy exists wherever there is organised religion. It is a powerful and effective check on actions deemed by the believers as undermining the core beliefs pertaining to the sacred. Does this mean that the intensity of blasphemous attitudes is related to the level of religiosity? Religiosity refers to the degree of religious commitment or piety. Different measures of religiosity are widely used in sociological analysis to ascertain the intensity of religious commitment. One of the most widely used approaches to measure religiosity has been proposed by Stark and Glock¹⁷ and Glock.¹⁸ Their approach conceptualises religiosity as a multidimensional phenomenon consisting of five dimensions namely, ideological, ritualistic, intellectual, experiential and consequential. In my study of Muslim religiosity I used a modified version of this approach with very useful results.¹⁹ These dimensions were also found to be significantly inter-correlated.

In order not to overload this paper with statistics I will use the values of only one dimension of religiosity here. This dimension in my study was labelled as Ideological. It corresponds to Stark and Glock's intellectual dimension and refers to the fundamental beliefs to which a religious person is expected and often required to adhere. For the purposes of this paper this dimension is clearly relevant since it refers to the knowledge of core religious beliefs a person must hold as a believer. The belief structures can be divided into warranting, purposive and implementing beliefs. The first type of beliefs warrant the existence of the divine and defines its character; the second type of beliefs explain the divine purpose and define the believers' role with regard to that purpose and the third type provide the grounds for the ethical strictures of religion.²⁰

It should be obvious that this dimension of religiosity has a direct bearing on whether or not certain acts are blasphemous. With this in mind I will use the findings of my religiosity survey pertaining to the ideological dimension to ascertain if the level of religiosity is related to the strength of blasphemous attitudes. The results reported in Table 2 show that the level of religiosity is strongly associated with the strength of blasphemous attitudes.

Religion, modernity and blasphemy

In the first part of this paper I have reviewed the theoretical expositions in sociology about the relationship between modernity and religion. To reiterate the main argument: according to sociological theory, conditions of modernity lead to increasing secularisation and privatisation of religion. Consequently religion gradually loses its relevance and public influence in modern society. I have outlined the dynamics of this process in some detail in the introductory section. I have also argued that in his theoretical work Luhmann has offered a more nuanced and useful analysis of the role of religion in modern societies. If we follow the widely held view that under conditions of modernity religion

loses its relevance and public influence then it can be argued that attitudes towards blasphemy in modern society are likely to be weak. This is a difficult issue to explore without an appropriately executed sociological study. In the absence of such a study, is there any evidence that can be used to examine this issue? I will attempt to do this by using the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is a composite index published in the UNDP Human Development Report annually. It measures the quality of physical, human and social capital in modern societies using a number of indicators. While this is not an ideal or flawless index, it is a useful measure that is now widely used in social analysis and to rank modern societies in terms of the quality of human life in them. The HDI values extracted from the 2002 Human Development Report for the countries included in this paper are included in Table 2 as well.

Table 11.2. Blasphemous Attitudes, Religiosity, and Human Development in Selected Countries

Country	Blasphemous Attitudes ⁱ	Religiosity ⁱⁱ	Modernity/ Human Development Index ⁱⁱⁱ
Turkey	Weak	57	.734
Kazakhstan	Weak	4	.765
Iran	Moderate	59	.719
Egypt	Strong	89	.648
Pakistan	Strong	96	.499
Indonesia	Strong	83	.682
Malaysia	Strong	88	.790
Australia			.939
Muslims	Moderate	87	-
Christians	Weak	41	-

ⁱ Blasphemous Attitude index was constructed from my unpublished survey data, see text for explanation for the methodology used.

ⁱⁱ Religiosity refers to the knowledge of core beliefs a Muslim is required to hold and in the case of Christians adherence to the core beliefs of Christianity. The numbers refer to percentage 'orthodox'. The data for Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia and Kazakhstan is from Hassan (2003), and for Turkey, Iran and Malaysia from unpublished survey data. Data for Australian Muslims and Christians is from Hassan (2002). For methodology used to obtain the values, see Hassan (2003).

ⁱⁱⁱ Human Development Index is from the UNDP (2002).

With the exception of Malaysia the general trend appears to be that countries with lower HDI tend to have high levels of religiosity and strong blasphemous attitudes. This trend appears to support the argument that if we accept HDI as a proxy measure for modernity then the trend reported in Table 2 would support the sociological hypothesis about the relationship between modernity and religion.

Discussion and implications

The findings reported in Table 2 and discussed above identify two possible trends about the relationship between religiosity and modernity. The first trend indicated by all countries except Malaysia is that the HDI is negatively related

to the intensity of religiosity. This trend is consistent with the relationship posited by the sociological theories of Parson, Berger and others as discussed in the introductory section of this paper. The second trend characterises Malaysia where the level of modernity is positively related to the intensity of religiosity. One plausible reason for this may be that Malaysia's demography is different from other countries. About 60 per cent of Malaysia's population consists of the Muslim Malays and the rest of them are non-Muslims, mostly of Chinese origin. The Chinese are also economically much more prosperous compared with the Malays. This economic disparity may be a factor in producing the higher HDI score for Malaysia.

Another plausible explanation for this second trend may be that ethnic diversity and economic disparities between the Malays and non-Malays in Malaysia may be a significant factor in this relationship. Malays, unlike other ethnic groups, use Islam as the defining feature of their ethnic identity. One consequence of that may be a greater level of religious consciousness among them which is reflected in their higher religiosity. These are offered only as plausible explanations and more focused research is required to satisfactorily explain the Malaysian situation.

The relationship between religiosity and blasphemous attitudes is positive and consistent with sociological theory. But here again there is the interesting case of Iran, which warrants a brief commentary. Iran is an Islamic Republic and it is the only country among the Muslim countries examined in this paper in which religion performs an overarching function in the affairs of the state and society. Under such circumstances one may have expected that both the level of religiosity and the intensity of blasphemous attitudes would be stronger than indicated by the data in Table 2. A possible explanation of this unexpected finding may be that the institutional configurations play a critical role in shaping the public influences of religious institutions and patterns of personal religiosity.

As I have argued elsewhere, there are institutional configurations in which religion is fused with the state, and public trust in religious institutions tends to decline which may also influence the expressions of religiosity at the individual level.²¹ In other words, the existence of an Islamic state, as is the case in Iran, can have a depressing impact on religiosity at the individual level. The converse may also be true. The existence of a secular state in which religion and state occupy separate and distinct spaces may produce a high level of personal religiosity. This may happen when the religious institutions act as a mobiliser of resistance against the state that is authoritarian and lacks political legitimacy. In other words, as suggested by Luhmann, when religion plays a strong applied role in a modern society its public influence increases, which may also produce a higher level of personal religious commitment at the individual level.²²

There is another sociological implication of the strong relationship between the level of religiosity and blasphemy in a Muslim society. According to Gellner, in Muslim society strong religiosity is conducive to reinforcing Islamic communalism rather than civil society.²³ This view is highly contested among scholars of Islam and Muslim society. For example Lewis, Pipes, and Huntington hold similar views to Gellner.²⁴ But other scholars, like Ibrahim, Kamali, Norris and Inglehart, and Hefner, strongly contest the view that Islam and civil society are incompatible.²⁵

As suggested by Gellner, if the core of civil society is the idea of institutional and ideological pluralism that prevents the central institutions of the state from establishing monopoly over power and truth in society, then it can be argued that religious traditionalism (as reflected by strong religiosity) can act as an impediment to the functioning of a robust civil society.²⁶ One can argue that persecutions of religious minorities for blasphemy and other deviations from traditional religious beliefs are indicative of a relatively weak civil society in Pakistan. Similarly, in Iran the enforcement of laws relating to women's dress code as well as pressure to conform to a particular reading of the sacred texts is also an infringement of civil liberty and human rights.

It can also be argued that if an important condition for the existence of civil society is that there should be an independent public sphere which is relatively autonomous of the state and whose legitimacy is normatively protected then the historical as well as contemporary variants of Muslim societies display elements of these conditions. The most visible representation of this is the position of the *ulama* (Islamic scholars and teachers) and their access to the *mambars* (pulpit) to influence public opinion on a wide variety of issues; this influence is universally acknowledged. The importance of *mambars* in propagating and legitimising political ideas, de-legitimising others, and mobilising support is part of Islamic history. In recent history the fortunes of, and survival of, political leaders have been strongly influenced by the activities of the *ulama* through *mambars* in Pakistan, Indonesia, Palestine, Malaysia, Lebanon, and Algeria and is now evident in the developments taking place in the American-British occupied Iraq.

The *ulama* can also influence the state policies through their access to the market (bazaar). It can, therefore, be argued that elements of religious ideology in Islam can also underpin the existence of an independent and strong civil society of a particular type. It is through these mechanisms that in Iran, notwithstanding the theocratic nature of the state and conservatism of the ruling Islamic party, there have been remarkable developments which have opened up space for political activism from professional bodies, women's organisations and from the reformist elements from within the Shiite Islamic clergy and the ruling party. Similar developments have taken place in Indonesia in the post-Suharto era.

To conclude, in this paper I have argued that conditions of modernity play a significant role in shaping the role of religion in modern society. It is conducive to increasing secularisation as well as revitalising the role of religion. Using empirical evidence I have explored the relationship between modernity, religiosity and blasphemy in several Muslim countries and in Australia. The paper has also explored the sociological implications of prevailing religious traditionalism in Muslim countries and in particular its implications for the functioning of a robust civil society.²⁷

ENDNOTES

¹ Parsons, T. 1960, 'Some Comments on the Pattern of Religious Organization in the United States', *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, New York, Free Press, pp. 385-421.

² Luckmann, T. 1967, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of religion in Modern Society*, New York, Macmillan.

³ Berger, P. 1967, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, Garden City, Doubleday.

⁴ Bellah, R. 1970, 'Religious Evolution', *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional Society*, New York, Harper & Row.

⁵ Meyer, P. 1997, *Religion and Globalization*, London, Sage Publications; Berger, P. and T. Luckmann 1966, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Sociological Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Garden City, Doubleday.

⁶ Beyer P. 1997, *Religion and Globalization*, London, Sage; Bellah, R. et al. 1985, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, New York, Harper & Row.

⁷ Luhmann, N. 1982, *The Differentiation of Society*, Holmes, Stephen and Larmore, Charles (trans.), New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 238-42; Beyer, 1997, pp. 70-81.

⁸ Beyer, 1997.

⁹ Levy, L. 1987, 'Blasphemy', in M. Eliade, (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, New York, Macmillan Publishing House.

¹⁰ Ernst, C. 1987, 'Islamic Concept', in M. Eliade, (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, New York, Macmillan Publishing House; Adams, C. 1995, 'Kufr', John L. Esposito, (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York, Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Salman Rushdie's novel *Satanic Verses* gave a fictional account of a prophet who was misled by the devil to include verses denying the unity of God. The account was similar to the issue of the Satanic Verses of Prophet Muhammed. It offended Muslims around the world and in 1989, a *fatwa* was issued by the supreme religious leader of Iran Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini that his novel was blasphemous and called upon Muslims to kill him. As a result he went into hiding to avoid being killed. In 1998, the Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami, distanced the government from his *fatwa*, but the Iranian ayatollahs maintain that the *fatwa* is irrevocable.

¹² Dr Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid was an Associate Professor of Arabic Studies at the Cairo University. His problems began when he applied for promotion to the post of professorship and submitted two examples of his research, *Imam Al-Shafei* and *A Critique of Religious Discourse*, to an examining Committee. One of the members of the committee rejected his application and accused him of rejecting fundamental tenets of Islam. In 1995 a Cairo Appeals Court ruled that his writings included opinions that made him an apostate and annulled his marriage. The verdict was based on *hisba*, a doctrine that entitles any Muslim to take legal action against anyone or anything he considers to be harmful to Islam. The appeals followed. A court in 1995 dismissed the case against him but that decision was reversed by a Superior Court. The University decided to promote him and provided him with armed protection. But for many militant Islamists, the court decision was tantamount to a death sentence. Abu Zeid's life was under grave threat. In July 1995, he and his wife went into exile and he now teaches at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

¹³ Dr Hashem Aghajari is a history Professor in one of the Iranian universities. He is a disabled veteran of the 1980-88 Iraq-Iran war. He is an active member of the reformist Organization of the Mujahideen-e-Enqelab-e Eslami (The Mujahideen of the Islamic Revolution). In a speech in August 2002, Aghajari

called for a religious renewal of Shiite Islam and declared that Muslims were not 'monkeys' and 'should not blindly follow' religious leaders. For these pronouncements he was declared by the clergy an apostate and sentenced to death by an Iranian court for blasphemy and apostasy. The decision caused a big uproar in Iran and led to large student demonstrations. The Supreme religious leader Ayatollah Khamenei ordered a judicial review and his death sentence was quashed by Iran's Supreme Court and sent back to the lower court for retrial. After the retrial the Court verdict upheld the original verdict in April 2004, and Aghajari is now held in a Tehran prison waiting for the appeal process to conclude. The Iranian President has condemned the sentencing of Aghajari.

¹⁴ Amnesty International, Report on Pakistan (ASA 33/10/96), London <www.thepersecution.org/ai/amnst196.html>, 1996.

¹⁵ For some of the main findings from phase one of the study see Hassan, R. 2003, *Faithlines: Muslim Conceptions of Islam and Society*, Karachi, Oxford University Press.

¹⁶ Details of this are reported in Hassan, R. 2002, 'On Being Religious: A Study of Christian and Muslim Piety in Australia', *Australian Religion Studies Review*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 87-114.

¹⁷ Stark, R. and C. Glock, 1968, *American Piety and the Nature of Religious Commitment*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

¹⁸ Glock, C. 1962, 'On the Study of Religious Commitment', *Religious Education, Research Supplement*, vol. 57, no. 4, pp. S98-S110.

¹⁹ Hassan, 2003.

²⁰ Stark and Glock, 1968.

²¹ Hassan, 2002; and Hassan, 2003.

²² See Hassan, 2003; Beyer, 1997.

²³ Gellner, E. 1994, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals*, Penguin Books.

²⁴ Lewis, B. 1993, *Islam and the West*, New York, Oxford University Press; Pipes, D. 2002, *Militant Islam Reaches America*, New York, Norton; Huntington, S. 1993, 'The Clash of Civilization', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, pp. 22-49.

²⁵ Norris, P. and R. Inglehart 2003, 'Islamic Culture and Democracy: Testing the 'Clash of Civilization' Thesis', *Comparative Sociology*, vol. 1, no. 3-4, pp. 235-63; Ibrahim, S. 1996, *Egypt, Islam and Democracy*, Cairo, AUC Press; Kamali, M. 2001, 'Civil Society and Islam: A Sociological Perspective', *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 42, vol. 3, pp. 459-82; Hefner, R. 2000, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratisation in Indonesia*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

²⁶ Gellner, 1994.

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