

Sacralization of political power as an obstacle to global peace

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Abstract / Résumé / Resumen

This article suggests that modern uses of the sacred as well as sacralization of political power work often towards generation and justification of state violence and thus pose a significant threat to global peace.

The work first examines the secularization theories and their alleged process of secularization all over the world but observes the rise of religiosity and spirituality worldwide in the last decades. Then it points out the widespread use of the sacred in modern secular political systems, especially by nationalisms and civil religions and explains the contribution of “secular theologies” and civil religions to violence at home and abroad (ranging from ethnic cleansing as well as regional and world wars to torture, targeted killing and state terrorism).

The study ends by drawing attention to the need for exploring possible remedies for the negative aspects of civil religions and for that purpose suggests desacralization and demystification of the political power as much as possible.

Cet article suggère que les usages modernes du sacré et de la sacralisation du pouvoir politique tendent régulièrement à la génération et la justification de la violence d'État et, par conséquent, constituent une menace importante pour la paix mondiale.

L'article examine d'abord les théories de la sécularisation et le prétendu processus de sécularisation dans le monde, mais constate la montée de la religiosité et de la spiritualité à travers le monde ces dernières décennies. Puis il pointe sur l'utilisation généralisée du sacré dans les systèmes politiques modernes, laïques, en particulier de la part du nationalisme et de la religion civile, et explique la contribution des « théologies et religions séculières » civiles à la violence, tant au sein du propre pays qu'à l'étranger (allant de la purification ethnique et des guerres régionales et mondiales à la torture, aux assassinats ciblés et au terrorisme d'État).

L'article conclut en attirant l'attention sur la nécessité d'explorer des solutions possibles aux aspects négatifs de la religion civile et suggère qu'on désacralise et démystifie au maximum le pouvoir politique.

Este artículo sugiere que los usos modernos de lo sagrado, así como sacralización del poder político, tienden con asiduidad a la generación y justificación de la violencia estatal y, por ello, son una significativa amenaza para la paz mundial.

El artículo examina en primer lugar las teorías de la secularización y el supuesto proceso de secularización en todo el mundo, pero observa el aumento de la religiosidad y espiritualidad en todo el mundo durante las últimas décadas. A continuación, señala el uso generalizado de lo sagrado en los modernos sistemas políticos laicos, sobre todo por parte

de los nacionalismos y las religiones civiles, y explica la contribución de las “teologías y religiones seculares” civiles a la violencia, tanto en el propio país como en el extranjero (que van desde la limpieza étnica y las guerras regionales y mundiales hasta la tortura, los asesinatos selectivos y el terrorismo de Estado).

El artículo concluye llamando la atención sobre la necesidad de explorar posibles soluciones para los aspectos negativos de las religiones civiles y para ello sugiere que se desacralice y desmitifique al máximo el poder político.

Key Words / Mots-clés / Palabras clave

Religion, civil religions, sacralization of political power, world peace in Modern society, State violence.

Réligion, religions civiles, sacralization du pouvoir politique, paix mondiale dans la société moderne, violence d'État.

Religión, religiones civiles, sacralización del poder político, paz mundial en la sociedad moderna, violencia de Estado.

Politics and religion have often been in close contact and interaction. Political power has usually made use of religion and vice versa. Studies on early human civilizations all over the world and the present situation show this tendency clearly. As we will see in this study, sacralization of power is common to established traditional religions as well as modern secular systems. Needless to say, at least in practice, most of the traditional religions are not free from this phenomenon. Religious texts have often been exploited by religious institutions, men of religion or religious men in support of the political power. In theocratic

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systems this has been easy, as the clergy carried out or helped the sacralization of political power. As the sacralization of power is obvious in religiously-dominated political systems, I will not dwell on that in this article. Further, when I discuss the sacred and the religious or theological in secular systems, I will often refer to the traditional, organized religions.

I see the sacralization of power (in religiously motivated as well as secular political systems) often as a source of and justification for state violence (ranging from torture, targeted killing and state terrorism to ethnic cleansing as well as regional and world wars) and hence a threat to global peace. As we will see, secular theologies and civil religions of modern political systems often support violence at home and abroad. In this context, we should first examine the phenomenon of secularization and its relation to the modern sacralization of power.

Secularization: Myth or Reality?

In this section I will provide a very brief history of secularization and secularism, especially the secularization process in western Europe which is suggested to be a result of or accompanied by the Protestant Reformation, the formation of modern states, the growth of modern capitalism, and the early modern scientific revolution. This will be followed by a critique of secularization theories by some scholars. Then we will see some arguments for “religious transformation” which try to explain various developments in the modern world that have been used by the proponents of secularization theories as evidences for the secularization process. Finally, we will deal with, what might perhaps be called as “a third way”, which suggests an interesting coexistence and interaction of secularism and religiosity in our times.

The modern secular age is claimed to, and at first sight seems to, have a break with the religious and the sacred, but as we shall see this opinion is quite erroneous. For instance, the political languages of many secular systems very often resort to use (and abuse) of the religious and theological terminology for legitimizing or justifying their existence and some of their policies¹. They openly use, imply or consent to many religious concepts and ideas and

this seems to be a universal tendency. As we shall see below, various ideologies, and especially major elements of nationalism as well as civil religion provide principles of the modern secular theology of the politics.

Oxford English Dictionary defines secularization as “the conversion of an ecclesiastical or religious institution or its property to secular possession and use; the conversion of an ecclesiastical state or sovereignty to a lay one; an instance of this”². In its original historical sense, ‘secularization’ refers to “the transfer of use, possession, and/or control of material and moral resources from ecclesiastical to civil administration”³. In its broadest sense, “often postulated as a universal developmental process, secularization refers to the progressive decline of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions”⁴. In reference to an actual historical process, the term secularization referred to the lay expropriation of landholdings, the mortmain wealth and monasteries of the church following the Protestant Reformation.

Although the original meaning of secularization has ancient roots and to some extent might even be traced back to traditional Christian doctrine⁵, this notion in its contemporary sense is a product of Reformation and the following developments in Europe. In the sixteenth century the term “secularization” entered human discourse within a particular historical context and implied a very specific meaning.

To present the secularization thesis briefly as described by a convinced advocate of it, let us read Wilson⁶:

¹ German thinker Carl Schmitt who coined the term political theology provides us examples. “What Carl Schmitt named political theology was nothing more than the theory of a political religion necessary for the support of the state. It had nothing to do with any specific Christian theology.” Jürgen Moltmann, “Christian Theology and Political Religion”, in Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), *Civil Religion and Political Theology* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 43.

² <http://dictionary.oed.com/> (last visited on 8.8.2009)

³ Timothy Crippen, “Old and New Gods in the Modern World: Toward a Theory of Religious Transformation”, *Social Forces*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Dec., 1988), 318.

⁴ J. Casanova, “Secularization”, *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*.

⁵ “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” *Matthew 22:21*.

⁶ Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 1982), 149.

Secularization relates to the diminution in the social significance of religion. Its application covers such things as, the sequestration by political powers of the property and facilities of religious agencies; the shift from religious to secular control of various erstwhile activities and functions of religion; the decline in the proportion of time, energy, and resources which men devote to super-empirical concerns; the decay of religious institutions; the supplanting, in matters of behaviour, of religious precepts by demands that accord with strictly technical criteria; and the gradual replacement of a specifically religious consciousness (which might range from dependence on charms, rites, spells, or prayers, to a broadly spiritually-inspired ethical concern) by an empirical, rational, instrumental orientation; the abandonment of mythical, poetic, and artistic interpretations of nature and society in favour of matter-of-fact description and, with it, the rigorous separation of evaluative and emotive dispositions from cognitive and positivistic orientations.

As Crippen states, the content of the above quotation can be reduced to two main categories: “the diminishing role of traditional religious agencies in daily routine and in the exercise of public authority” and “the diminishing significance of supernatural (“super-empirical”) concerns as a basis for moral order and the corresponding intensification of a rational and empirical moral orientation”⁷.

Etymologically, the term secularization derives from the Medieval Latin word *saeculum*, with its dual temporal-spatial connotation of secular *age* and secular *world*. Thus, as Casanova⁸ asserts, in medieval Christendom social reality reflected a division of ‘this world’ into two heterogeneous realms or spheres, ‘the religious’ and ‘the secular’, similar to the kind of universal dualist system of classification of social reality into sacred and profane realms, postulated later by Emile Durkheim. According to this double dualist system of classification there was on the one hand, the dualism between ‘this world’ (the City of Man) and ‘the other world’ (the City of God), and on the other hand, the dualism within ‘this world’ between a ‘religious’ and a ‘secular’ sphere. And the church, located in the middle, belonged to both worlds at the same time and therefore mediated sacramentally between the two.

Although it is often considered as a single unified theory, the paradigm of secularization is in fact made up of three different propositions:

“secularization as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, secularization as general decline of religious beliefs and practices, and secularization as privatization or marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere. Strictly speaking, the core and central thesis of the theory of secularization is the conceptualization of the historical process of societal modernization as a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres –primarily the state, the economy, and science– from religion and the concomitant specialized and functional differentiation of religion within its own newly found religious sphere”⁹.

And the other subtheses, namely the decline and privatization of religion, were mere consequences of that process of secularization.

Another dominant postulate of the theory of secularization has been until recently that religion in the modern world was declining and would likely continue to decline. With industrialization, urbanization, rationalization and modernization people would become less religious and institutional religiosity too would decline. This view which was based chiefly on evidence from European experience assumed that those European trends were universal and that with increasing industrialization, non-European societies too would undergo similar experience in terms of religious decline. As we will discuss below, this part of the theory has proven obviously wrong.

As expected, the decline of religiosity entails privatization of religion thesis, whereby religion becomes ‘a private affair.’ Modern liberalism and individualism emphasizing a private sphere free from governmental intrusion facilitated such a trend. The modern individual who was now (allegedly) free from the control of the state (and of course, of the ecclesiastical control) enjoyed a freedom of conscience

⁷ Crippen, “Old and New Gods in the Modern World”, 319.

⁸ Casanova, “Secularization”.

⁹ Ibid.

and expression as well as freedom of religion as a private affair. Yet, as we shall see, there are serious problems with this subthesis too.

Criticism of Secularization Theories

David Martin¹⁰ was the first contemporary sociologist to reject in 1965 the secularization thesis outright, even proposing that the concept of secularization be eliminated from social scientific discourse on the grounds that it had served only ideological and polemical, rather than theoretical, functions and because there was no evidence in favor of any general or consistent “shift from a religious period in human affairs to a secular period”¹¹.

Peter Berger who in the 1960s predicted the demise of traditional religions by the end of the 20th century changed his view totally in 1997, just a few years before his deadline:

I think what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake. Our underlying argument was that secularization and modernity go hand in hand. With more modernization comes more secularization. It wasn't a crazy theory. There was some evidence for it. But I think it's basically wrong. Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious¹².

One can see the theory of secularization as a product of the social and cultural milieu from which it emerged. Hadden finds secularization to be “an orienting concept grounded in an ideological preference rather than a systematic theory”¹³. According to him, secularization theory went unchallenged for a very long time and has not been subjected to systematic scrutiny¹⁴ because it is “a doctrine more than it is a theory”, “a taken-for-granted ideology rather than a systematic set of interrelated propositions”. In fact, “secularization was more than taken-for-granted; *the idea of secularization became sacralized.*” He maintains that “belief in secularization has been sustained by a deep and abiding antagonism to religious belief and various expressions of organized religion”¹⁵.

Likewise, Rodney Stark¹⁶ suggests that the secularization thesis never was consistent with empirical reality. For him,

the conception of a pious past is mere nostalgia, as most prominent historians of medieval religion agree that there never was an “Age of Faith”. It seems that throughout European history, religious participation fluctuated with time and that often the people's Christianity was accompanied with worship of spirits and other sort of supernatural agencies. In a similar manner, Andrew Greeley¹⁷ states that “there could be no de-Christianization of Europe... because there never was any Christianization in the first place. Christian Europe never existed” in the sense we imagine today.

Hadden's assessment of the status of secularization theory reveals four important challenges: First, a critique of secularization theory itself reveals a mixture of loosely employed ideas rather than a systematic theory¹⁸. Second, existing data simply do not support the theory. Third, the emergence of new religious movements in the very locations where secularization appears to take root suggests that religion is a human universal. Fourth, in more and more countries religion is significantly involved in social life, politics, reform, rebellion and revolution. This reality

¹⁰ Martin, David, “Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularization”, in *Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences*, Julius Gould (ed.) (Penguin 1978).

¹¹ We should note, however, that later he decided not to abandon the concept and wrote a treatise on secularization: David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (New York: Harper and Row: 1978).

¹² “Epistemological Modesty: An Interview with Peter Berger”, *Christian Century* 114 (1997), 974.

¹³ Jeffrey K. Hadden, “Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory”, *Social Forces*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (Mar., 1987), 587.

¹⁴ Casanova agrees: “For over a century the theory of secularization remained not only uncontested but also untested... Only in the 1960s one finds the first attempts to develop more systematic and empirically grounded formulations of the theory of secularization in the works of Acquaviva (1961), Berger (1967), Luckmann (1963), and Wilson (1966).” Casanova, “Secularization”.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 588.

¹⁶ Rodney Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.”, *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999), 255.

¹⁷ Andrew Greeley, *Religion as Poetry* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 63.

¹⁸ According to Hadden, among the works on secularization, probably only David Martin's *A General Theory of Secularization* mentioned above would qualify as a theory.

challenges the assumptions of secularization theory that would relegate religion to the private realm¹⁹.

Today the institutional and emotional force of religion remains a vital and widespread aspect of human behavior. In fact, a renewed interest in the practical and theoretical centrality of religion suggests a rising skepticism among social scientists about the secularization thesis. This is not surprising. Apparently, individual religiosity is getting stronger all over the world (except for some European countries): the recent emergence of liberation theology in Latin America, the increasing vitality of Islamic religiosity from Morocco to Indonesia, the politicization of Roman Catholic symbolism in Northern Ireland and in Poland, and the activities of the New Christian Right in the U.S. Similarly, against secularization theories, one can also mention the failure of several generations of efforts to indoctrinate atheism in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Another factor which has served to challenge the secularization thesis has been the emergence of new religious movements or cults²⁰. Especially industrialized countries like Japan, USA and some in western Europe have witnessed a flourishing of such religions.

The case of the Islamic world too constitutes a counter argument to the secularization thesis. In many Muslim countries, Muslim commitment increases with modernization²¹. Even the thesis of “institutional decline” which appears perhaps as the strongest part of the modern secularization theories is not valid for many non-European societies, and especially for the Muslim world. For instance, in the most modernized-westernized, or secularized Muslim countries like Turkey, Indonesia²² and Malaysia, traditional Muslim institutions like *waqfs* (pious endowments or philanthropic foundations) have been regaining their previous strength and developing new institutions to meet modern needs. Likewise, modern business and commercial means and methods like interest-free banking have been flourishing. In fact, today *waqfs* are seen as parts of the civil society and even the institution of *waqf* is suggested as an alternative to support and sustain democratization in Muslim countries²³.

In brief, secularization theories has an ideological background reflecting the Enlightenment ideas of progress,

positivism, evolutionary world-view, and modernization, which are based on a teleological and deterministic notion of history. In spite of the changes in modern social sciences and philosophy, such ideas and ideologies have still survived, as one see in ethno-centric theories and theses like “the End of History”.

To conclude, in spite of the controversy over the empirical validity of secularization theories with regard to Europe (or “West”), even though we accept that there has been such a process of secularization as suggested, we should never forget that it is limited only to a small part of the globe (if not, to a certain period). The experience of the majority of human beings on this planet definitely does not fit in such an alleged unilinear and irreversible process.

¹⁹ Jeffrey K. Hadden, “Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory”, 598.

²⁰ For a study on new religious and quasi-religious movements as well as the responses of the established religions, see Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah (eds.), *The New Religious Consciousness*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976).

²¹ For instance, according to Mutlu, religious socialization among university students in Ankara is increasing, but not at the expense of democratic values. Although religious socialization seems to increase, subjects overwhelmingly reject religious discrimination and fundamentalism. Kayhan Mutlu, “Examining Religious Beliefs among University Students in Ankara”, *British Journal of Sociology* 47 (1996). Further, the present author’s personal observations with respect to a few Muslim countries, for instance, Turkey (from where he comes), Malaysia (where he lived for nearly 7 years) and Indonesia support the view that Muslim commitment increases with modernization.

²² In practice, in recent decades, democratization brings more Islamization in Turkey and Indonesia. As the grip of the authoritarian secularism as an ideology loses its hold, the societies are normalized and move in the directions which social engineering does not imagine.

²³ One such view is offered by a business historian in Turkey where many so-called civil society organizations have long been dominated, controlled and directed by the Jacobenist-secularizing elite: Murat Çizakça, *A History of Philanthropic Foundations: The Islamic World from the Seventh Century to the Present* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2000); and Murat Çizakça, *Demokrasi Arayışında Türkiye Laik - Dindar / Demokrat Uzlaşmasına Bir Katkı* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2002).

The Transformation Theory

While some of the critics of secularization theories question or even go further and totally deny the existence of secularization (for instance, by seeing it as a sort of western European exception or anomaly which does not apply even to the USA, let alone the other parts of the world), others like Crippen come up with a theory of religious transformation which integrates a kind of limited secularization, especially at the institutional dimensions (we should note here that while theories of religious transformation are generally based on functional conception of religion, theories of secularization are often based on substantive conception of religion). Crippen²⁴ challenges the secularization thesis and interprets claims of diminishing religious significance as evidence of religious transformation. To him, even if traditional religious consciousness and institutions are losing significance, religious behavior may still be viewed as an important, albeit transformed, feature of modern social life. There is little evidence suggesting that modern individuals are less preoccupied with sacred conceptions than were our “primitive” ancestors. The apparent weakening of traditional faith and the ensuing decline of supernatural referents in dominant religious expressions may imply that “new sacred constructs, new gods, are evolving in conjunction with transformations in the structure of collective organization”²⁵.

This is expressed by another scholar in a different way: Demerath²⁶ suggest that the secularization and the counter-vailing process of “sacralization” are more symbiotic than conflicting²⁷, and that their combination is a major factor in producing continued religious vitality through change rather than religious decline and irrelevance through changelessness in a changing world.

Tschannen finds the arguments of the critics of the secularization thesis very similar to those of the proponents of this very thesis. He thinks that there has never been a genuine “secularization debate,” “mainly because the purported “antagonists” are at cross purposes and do not speak the same language”²⁸. However, one should keep in mind that proponents of secularisation theories too have often been charged with very similar attitudes and approaches²⁹. It has been suggested that there are many secularization theories, each emphasizing one part of modern developments

as they see them appropriate, and that they often shift arguments in the face of inconvenient facts, like those developments denying empirical validity of suggested secularization. Whatever the truth of these mutual accusations, but, I think, the existence and role of personal religious or ideological commitments on both “sides” can hardly be denied. I will suffice here with stating that Tschannen too somehow comes close to the view of the transformation theory as we will see in the following section.

A Religio-Secular World?

Institutional dimension of secularism, namely legal separation of civil and ecclesiastical agencies, especially in the West, is more or less accepted by both sides (although some critics of secularism explained it by means of religious transformation). As Tschannen³⁰ admits, the analysis of secularization is certainly a complex issue, “which cannot be resolved by unilateral pronouncements or by grandiose theoretical schemes.” Tschannen reminds us that “most sociologists of religion do not, in practice, treat the views of the defenders and of the critics of the secularization thesis as completely incompatible”. He refers us to Roof and McKinney: “Americans are deeply religious and deeply secular; for us the challenge is not in choosing one or the other of these labels but in sorting out the intricacies of the relations between them”³¹.

²⁴ Timothy Crippen, “Old and New Gods in the Modern World”, 325-6.

²⁵ Ibid. 326-7.

²⁶ N. J. Demerath, III, “The Varieties of Sacred Experience: Finding the Sacred in a Secular Grove”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Mar., 2000), 3.

²⁷ Fenn has a similar view: “If a nation is to transcend the particular loyalties of religious and ethnic groups in its population, it must find generalized beliefs and symbols for its national identity and purpose... this third step not only advances the process of secularization but resacralizes the nation.” Richard K. Fenn, *Toward a Theory of Secularization* (Connecticut: K & R Printers, 1978), 41.

²⁸ Oliver Tschannen, “Sociological Controversies in Perspective”, *Review of Religious Research*, Vol.36, No.1 (Sep., 1994), 81.

²⁹ For instance, see Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.”, 251-2.

³⁰ Ibid., 74.

³¹ Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press 1987), 9.

Similarly, Martin E. Marty³², observes that our modern world is neither exclusively secular nor exclusively religious, but rather a complex combination of both of them. He considers both secularization and the worldwide rise in religiosity and spirituality as real phenomena. The old debates which revolved around binary categories and polarizing concepts labeled societies as secular or religious, worldly or otherworldly, materialist or spiritual etc. However, such notions do not adequately express the ways that individuals, groups, and societies actually behave. In adjusting to the complex world around them, people come up with a syncretic and modern blend of attitudes which one might call “religio-secular”. Likewise, Greeley too points out the constant interplay and interpenetration of the sacred and the secular, although the two are somewhat distinct³³.

According to Casanova, we are witnessing the “deprivatization” of religion in the modern world which means that religious traditions throughout the world are refusing to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularization had reserved for them. One of the results of this contestation is a “process of repoliticization of the private religious and moral spheres and renormativization of the public economic and political spheres”³⁴.

Moreover, it is obvious that last decades have seen three largely unanticipated global phenomena in the form of a continuing growth in religiosity, the rise of fundamentalism, and the emergence of new forms of ‘spirituality’³⁵. “Taken together, these three global phenomena have transformed, almost beyond recognition, a world that social scientists long assumed was becoming ever more secular”³⁶.

Marty also justly draws attention to the fact that definitions of the religious and the secular have drawn too much on peculiarly Western developments during and after the Enlightenment. The encounter with other cultures and religions might contribute to the observing, the naming, and the projecting of trends³⁷.

In brief, instead of using dichotomies like sacred/profane, sacred/secular, religious/secular, material/spiritual or modern/traditional, which does not help us at all, but rather complicates our problems further, perhaps we should

search new approaches and discourses, try to find alternative terms and develop a new terminology, although it is not an easy task³⁸.

Thus, whether there has ever been a process of secularization, of a return to religion, of religious transformation, or a synthesis of them, the issue of sacralization of power remains with us. This brings us to the problem of the sacred with which we shall deal now.

The Sacred

“The sacred” apparently covers a wider domain than “the religious” and often includes non-religious as well (as “religious” understood in common parlance). This is an interesting but rather complex area of discussion. We have the early views and elaborations of influential scholars like Emile Durkheim, Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade, and then more recent views by such scholars like Jonathan Z. Smith and Jean-Jacques Wunenburger. The complexity of the matter is also augmented by differing notions and conceptions of the sacred (and also of ‘holy’). For instance, while English has mainly two different terms of “sacred” and “holy”, German language uses only one term, that is, “*heilig*”. On the other hand, classical Greek, Hebrew and Arabic have a few terms related to the sacred. Obviously,

³² Martin E. Marty, “Our Religio-Secular World”, *Daedalus*, Vol. 132, No. 3, On Secularism & Religion (Summer, 2003), 42.

³³ Andrew M. Greeley, *Religion: A Secular Theory* (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 1.

³⁴ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 5-6.

³⁵ It is interesting to note that the rise of spirituality is observed mostly in Europe, Japan, and North America - in the heartland of post Enlightenment worldviews, secular capitalism and technological enterprise.

³⁶ Martin E. Marty, “Our Religio-Secular World”, 43. As Marty suggests, in fact, “a dissatisfaction with secularism itself may, in part, explain the rise in religiosity - and the spread of a new kind of hybrid religio-secularism.” *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁸ “In order to demystify the return of religion to politics, we need to cross the boundaries of sacred and secular and structural determinism to study religion, regardless of its doctrinal form, as a political force not for or against liberal democracy, but as a part of it.” Sultan Tepe, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics and Religion in Israel and Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 369.

the examination of the sacred necessitates a research in various fields such as historical, archeological, anthropological, and exegetical studies. Since such a study is beyond the volume of an article, I will briefly deal with the issue of the sacred as it pertains to my discussion. In addition, we will see clearly various manifestations of the sacred when we deal with the sacred in politics.

The term sacred is used in such disparate ways that meaning is sometimes unclear. Scholars attach different meanings to the term. Use of the term sacred in reference to the divine, supernatural, or numinous –and to things like religion that are associated with them– remains to this day. Both “religion” and “sacred,” as well as their relationship to each other, have been problematic concepts since Durkheim (and some suggests, perhaps because of him). For example, for Eliade, “*sacré*” means something very different than it does for Durkheim, though in both cases it has been translated into English as “sacred.” Perhaps “holy,” “transcendent,” or some other term connoting an unseen order of existence would better capture what Eliade means. In any case, it is only familiarity with these works that allows one to grasp which concept the author is trying to convey. This calls attention to the conflating effect of using a single term to describe more than one concept, and points to the difficulties of translation, the importance of precision in writing, and the challenges of shifting semantics across and within languages³⁹.

Stark⁴⁰ complained that “having equated religion with the sacred, too many scholars have proceeded to discover the sacred (hence religion) virtually everywhere, thus depriving the term of analytical power.” Evans⁴¹ thinks that maintaining a restrictive definition of religion used by early scholars by limiting the term to systems concerned in some way with the divine or supernatural, while more explicitly expanding conceptions of the sacred, allows one to recognize the sacred in religion –and other spheres– without necessarily finding religion in everything sacred.

Similarly, Demerath, III, asserts that our primary focus should be on the sacred, and that religion is just one among many possible sources of the sacred. Defining religion “substantively” but the sacred “functionally” helps to resolve a long-standing tension in the field. One way to clarify the matter is to reconsider the often confusing

distinction between substantive and functional definitions of religion. Substantive definitions characterize religion in terms of its descriptive attributes - for example, belief in some supernatural order or a system of ritual activities and symbols that typically occur within some kind of organizational structure. By contrast, functional definitions are characterizations in terms of consequences for instance, experiences of self-transcendence, or Durkheim’s suspiciously tautological emphasis on “beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church all those who adhere to them”⁴².

According to Demerath, III, instead of using both types of definition for religion, there are major advantages to restricting the substantive to religion while reserving the functional for the sacred. This preserves the basic thrust of both terms.

Meanwhile, separating the functional consequences of the sacred from the substantive activities of religion has another advantage. The narrowed conception of religion becomes only one possible –albeit one very important– source of the broadened conception of the sacred. Expanding the range of sources of the sacred also expands the terms for the debate over secularization. Restricting either secularization or sacralization to religion imposes an unwarranted constraint. Since any culturally impregnated activity has potentially sacred functions, we need to consider secularization as a process that may affect a much larger inventory of any society’s cultural stock, including its political, economic, scientific, and familistic values and practices. By the same token, the countervailing process of sacralization may also involve these non-religious spheres. Moreover, sacred elements from one sphere may serve to erode the saliency of sacred elements

³⁹ Matthew T. Evans, “The Sacred: Differentiating, Clarifying and Extending Concepts”, *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Sep., 2003), 37-8.

⁴⁰ Rodney Stark, “Reconceptualizing Religion, Magic, and Science”, *Review of Religious Research* Vol. 43, No. 2 (2001), 102.

⁴¹ Evans, “The Sacred: Differentiating, Clarifying and Extending Concepts”, 35-6.

⁴² N.J. Demerath, III, “The Varieties of Sacred Experience: Finding the Sacred in a Secular Grove”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Mar., 2000), 3.

from another sphere, and/or compensate for erosion once it has occurred.⁴³

These are views expressed by some influential names in the field. But we should note that although they are very helpful, they do not solve the major problems involved.

The Sacred in Politics

The sacred which has permeated societies throughout history has a significant place in politics as well. For example, archeological studies show us the common practice of sacralization of political power in Mesopotamia and Babylonia, which are considered among the oldest civilizations about which we have considerable information. In fact, such sacralization is obvious in almost all societies which have an important place for religion. What is more interesting is that, as many scholars demonstrate, modern secular political systems are not free from such a tendency. While some authors see religion as a cultural or human universal⁴⁴, others point out to the fact that separation of church and state has not denied the political realm a religious dimension. To give an example, one entity which assumed a sort of divine character was the state and as the Ernst Cassirer's work called it, "the myth of the state"⁴⁵ once dominated the political scene (although some authors like Andrew Vincent⁴⁶ assert that the concept and idea of the state has not been studied sufficiently in the West, particularly in the English-speaking parts). Indeed, one might witness the signs and perhaps theoretical backgrounds of modern sacralization of power in some thinkers like Hegel. We should just remember Hegel's internalization of God in society⁴⁷ and calling the state "the divine march on earth". The idea of a sacred state still survives in many modern ideologies and societies.

In brief, the problem of "the sacred state" seems to be almost universal. In fact, many authors complain about the "statist world we live in today". Some (e.g. Abrams)⁴⁸ suggest that the notion that there is such a thing as the state—real, neutral, and stable above governments, the army, political parties, bureaucrats, schools, or the police—is the greatest ideological myth of modern times. Again, some scholars draw attention to "secular ritual", "civic religion" or "secular theodicy" and emphasize the religious-theolog-

ical character of the modern state. For instance, Michael Taussig⁴⁹ draws attention to what he calls "the place of the sacred in the modern state". He suggests that with the historical dwindling of the religious power, the idea of the state replaced that of God.

The Sacred in Nationalism

Apart from the idea of a sacred state, various scholars like Carlton J. H. Hayes⁵⁰ and Anthony D. Smith⁵¹ either consider nationalism as a religion or at least point out the sacred dimension of nationalism. In many nationalisms, the nation (as a chosen people), the homeland (for which all should be ready to "sacrifice" their lives), national flag (which is, like a totemic figure, often a safer and more unifying symbol than God), national anthem as well as national days and holidays assume definitely a sacred character. Compulsory formal education and military service indoctrinate the citizens and consolidate their faith in this secular theology. Those who object to or refuse them are often considered betrayers or traitors, just like those who oppose certain aspects of traditional religions are sometimes accused of blasphemy. In fact, the pre-modern belief in ethnic election (chosen people), homeland as a sacred territory, ethno-history (which includes the "golden ages" of the nation as well) and finally national sacrifice (which

⁴³ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁴ Andrew M. Greeley, *Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1972).

⁴⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of The State* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946).

⁴⁶ Andrew Vincent, *Theories of the State* (Blackwell, Oxford 1987).

⁴⁷ I have dealt with this issue elsewhere: Ali Çaksu, "Causality in History: Ibn Khaldun's and Hegel's Transformation of Aristotelian Causes" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, ISTAC 1999, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). For a study on internalization of God, see Emil L. Fackenheim, *The God Within: Kant, Schelling, and Historicity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

⁴⁸ Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State", *Journal of Historical Society* vol. 1 no. 1 (March 1988).

⁴⁹ Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System* (London: Routledge 1991).

⁵⁰ Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1960). He was among the first to elaborate nationalism as a form of "secular religion."

⁵¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 98.

brings us to the issue of violence and war) provide the sacred properties of the nation as the main components of nationalist ideology.

Similarly, Hann⁵² too believes that “nationalist ideology provides not just the sense of belonging to a community but the nearest that modern citizens have to a principle of transcendence: the values of the nation are ultimately sacred”. However, he suggests that rather than see nationalism as a substitute for religion, one should investigate the extent to which new ideologies of nationalism build upon older cosmologies, and how the two can interact. In this context, he refers us to Kapferer’s work⁵³ on Sri Lanka, showing how an ancient, hierarchical Buddhist worldview has influenced both the doctrines and the practical expressions of contemporary Sinhalese nationalism. He himself studies some connections between religion and nationalism in two countries, namely Poland and Turkey that have become for him close approximations of the ideal-type of the “nation-state”⁵⁴. Even though these nation states are officially secular, in both cases he finds the role of religion to be of great importance in the dissemination of the national identity⁵⁵.

If we follow a more functional and Durkheimian perspective, we may indeed see in nationalism a particular form of “political religion”. As Smith⁵⁶ suggests, the nation can be seen as a sacred communion of citizens, a felt and willed communion of all those who maintain a particular moral faith and feel an ancestral affinity. The sacred properties contribute to the formation of cohesive national identities and produce a sense of national self-confidence and exclusivity⁵⁷. In characterizing the nation as a sacred communion, he refers to “an imagined community of the faithful that unites the dead, the living, and the yet unborn along an upward, linear trajectory of time, but one that lives not just in the imagination, as Benedict Anderson claims, but equally in the conscious will and mass sentiments”⁵⁸.

Likewise, Marvin and Ingle contend that nationalism is the most powerful religion in the United States, and perhaps in many other countries. According to them, nationalism also satisfies some of the most traditional definitions of religion, but citizens of nation-states have religious reasons for denying it⁵⁹.

Needless to say, there are various versions of nationalism which reveal the complexity of relations between particular nationalisms and religious traditions. One can find every kind of combination from total hostility to almost complete symbiosis, from tension and supersession to alliance and co-optation, displaying a constant interaction and mingling of sacred and secular elements. Thus, while some nationalisms like the French Revolutionary or Turkish Kemalist versions might be called ‘secular nationalisms’⁶⁰, in some others religion played a significant role. In fact, one cannot deny that religious traditions, and especially beliefs about the sacred, often inspire, support, foster and even shape national identities of the peoples and nationalisms of the modern world. For instance, Kedourie’s approach reflects this fact: “Nationalism, then, for Kedourie, would seem to be at one and the same time a modern, secular political ideology and a child of the Enlightenment and progress; a populist and neo-traditionalist ideology and an almost symbiotic ally of traditional religions; and finally, a secularising ‘political’ religion and rival of traditional religions, a ‘religion surrogate’”⁶¹.

⁵² Chris Hann, “The Nation-State, Religion, and Uncivil Society: Two Perspectives from the Periphery”, *Daedalus*, Vol. 126, No. 2, Human Diversity (Spring, 1997), 27.

⁵³ Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988).

⁵⁴ By this he means a society conceived as a homogeneous entity, the political boundaries of which coincide with cultural boundaries.

⁵⁵ Hann, “The Nation-State, Religion, and Uncivil Society”, 28.

⁵⁶ Anthony D. Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*; Vol. 29, No. 3 (2000), 792.

⁵⁷ Gellner mentions even a society’s self-worship: “Society can and does worship itself or its own culture directly, and not as Durkheim taught, through the opaque medium of religion. The transition from one kind of high culture to the other is visible outwardly as the coming of nationalism.” Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 142.

⁵⁸ Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism”, 803.

⁵⁹ Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, “Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Revisiting Civil Religion” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 64, No. 4, Thematic Issue on “Religion and American Popular Culture” (Winter, 1996). By “religion” they mean a system of cosmological propositions grounded in a belief in a transcendent power expressed through a cult of divine being and giving rise to a set of ethical prescriptions.

⁶⁰ Yet, as we shall see below, even such “strictly secular” systems are not free from sacralization either.

⁶¹ Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism”, 794.

With Smith and some others, one can find the bases of the main tenets of nationalist ideology in such sacred properties of the nation: ethnic election, sacred territory, ethno-history and national sacrifice.

1. Ethnic Election

Many nationalisms are based on a sort of pre-modern belief in *ethnic election*, the sense of constituting a ‘chosen people’⁶². One can mention two kinds of chosenness: ‘missionary’ and ‘covenantal’. The first and most common version maintains that the community has been chosen by the deity for a special religious task or mission, usually to defend the deity’s representative or church on earth, or to convert the heathen to the ‘one and true’ religion, or simply to enlarge the realm of the religion through territorial conquests.

The covenantal version of chosenness stresses the idea of a mutual promise, in which the deity chooses a community and promises it certain benefits if it in turn obeys the laws and statutes of the deity. This was the case in ancient Israel⁶³, from which it spread to many Christian societies, as Christianity took over the Jewish scriptures. This covenantal, or conditional, kind of election is largely a Judeo-Christian phenomenon.

The more common missionary version has had both religious and secular examples. Religious versions one can find in Shi’ite Iran under Khomeini, among Protestant revivalists in the United States, and in Hindu India under the BJP. But the secular versions are more striking. For instance, the French Revolution considered the nation as the embodiment and beacon of liberty, reason, and progress with a mission to liberate and civilise less fortunate peoples.

“In all these cases, the community is itself invested with sacredness, as a moral communion of the faithful, and a clear line is drawn separating it from those outside and beneath. Inside that line the elect nation seeks salvation by fulfilling its great destiny and noble mission, while those outside toiling in darkness wait to receive its civilising light and liberating gifts”⁶⁴.

2. Sacred Territory

A nation’s so-called historic and ‘inalienable’ homeland can be easily seen as a ‘sacred territory’. In the last two centuries, various nations waged many wars because of, among others, historic attachments to land which was, for one reason or another, seen as ‘sacred’. Alsace and Lorraine, Ulster, the Sudetenland, Transylvania, Kosovo, and the West Bank of the Jordan are only a few cases.

But the territory in question is often more than a bargaining counter in a power political game. It is an historic landscape invested with sacred qualities as the ‘cradle’ of the nation, or the site of major battles and gatherings, or the terrain of ancestral resting-places and tombs of founding fathers, saints and sages, as well as of fallen patriot-heroes, or simply land which is sanctified by the long residence of ‘our kin’ or our former (ancient, medieval) state, and hence *terra irredenta* to be ‘redeemed’⁶⁵.

Smith⁶⁶ relates this impulse to sanctify pieces of territory to ‘territorialisation of memory’. Here history, the ‘ethno-history’ of the community becomes naturalised: the community’s past is turned into an integral part of its natural environment and landscape. Vice versa, the natural setting, the community’s habitat, becomes historicised, and thus ‘nature’ is made intrinsic to the community’s peculiar history and development. Naturally, these are expressed in many national symbols, legends, poems and songs full of ethnic memories. From ‘poetic spaces’ to ‘sacred landscapes’ is a short, but crucial step:

In this way, the ‘promised land’ of the Israelites’ wanderings became the ‘holy land’; just as the everlasting snows

⁶² For a comprehensive work on this issue see Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). The special issue of *Nations and Nationalism* 5, no. 3 (1999) was devoted to the theme of Chosen Peoples and their influence and role in modern nations and nationalisms. Also see, Anthony D. Smith, “Chosen Peoples: Why Ethnic Groups Survive”, in *Myths and Memories of a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁶³ J. M. Powis Smith, “The Chosen People”, *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Jan., 1929).

⁶⁴ Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism”, 805.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 806.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

of the Alps seemed to reflect, and embody in their purity, the steadfast faith and simple virtues of the Swiss peasants whose miraculous victories overthrew Habsburg tyranny. Investing 'our' homeland with special qualities, and regarding it with reverence and awe, as the birthplace of the nation or the resting-place of its heroes and ancestors, is to continue in secular form the pre-modern practice of hallowing historic places and marking off sacred ancestral territories⁶⁷.

Smith⁶⁸ argues that, partly as a result of displacement of affect, as secularisation becomes more common, ancestral homelands acquire greater sanctity. Awe and reverence are transferred from the deity and his or her 'church' to the homeland. Thus, 'religion', or religious sentiments, penetrates the secular forms and hence the realm of worldly politics.

3. Ethno-history

The 'ethno-history' of the community is another sacred property of the nation and source of its communion. The so-called *golden ages* of the nation are looked on with a special nostalgia and reverence, as they are believed to embody the inner or true virtues of the community and fulfil its vision of its own glory. Thus, they serve as models and guides for future action, and a mirror for the nation's destiny. "Golden ages act as points of reference within a wider national salvation drama, exemplifying the 'true nature' of the community and providing a repository of its authentic 'virtues' for use by future generations. In this way, golden ages can restore its identity to a community and create a feeling of collective exaltation, of the extraordinary, thereby showing it how it can renew and transcend itself⁶⁹.

4. National Sacrifice

While some scholars consider nationalism as "the dominant form of modern religious consciousness," others like Crippen⁷⁰ see it "a major form of sacred symbolism" which commands the allegiance of national citizens in the modern world. Naturally, "the nation as a sacred communion" has close links with the idea of national sacrifice. To-

day too, those who fight for the nation and die in war are regarded as "martyrs", as surely as any who dies for their religious faith. Thus, war memorials and military cemeteries become shrines of national worship⁷¹. The cult of the glorious dead, cult of the fallen soldier or unknown soldier have been integral parts of the modern political culture. The Neue Wache in Berlin, the Cenotaph in London and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arc de Triomphe in Paris as well as *Heldenhaine* (Heroes' Groves) in various countries are just a few monuments that bear witness to this aspect.

After the end of the First World War the participating states, both the victors and the defeated, recognized the need to create a new form of homage to take account of the unprecedented scale and anonymity of the casualties that had resulted from prolonged mechanized warfare. The selection and reburial at a national shrine of an unknown soldier became, in France, Britain, Italy (in 1920), the United States, and then in Germany, a way of acknowledging without the customary discrimination the contribution of both officers and other ranks to the war effort⁷². The new burial place was also intended as a focus for what would amount to a cult. Memorials to the fallen emerged, "often accompanied by a distinctive iconography that generated a cult encouraging the view that the dead had not fallen in

⁶⁷ Ibid., 806-7. See for instance, Jonathan Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

⁶⁸ Smith, "The 'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism", 807.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 807-8.

⁷⁰ Crippen, "Old and New Gods in the Modern World", 325.

⁷¹ For example, Barber notes the controversy between those who favor "living memorials," that is, memorials with some present utilitarian function, and those who resent the intrusion of secular purposes into sacred spheres. Bernard Barber, "Place, Symbol, and Utilitarian Function in War Memorials", *Social Forces*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Oct., 1949), 64.

⁷² One should note the 20th century glorification in war memorials of the common soldier as against previous idolization of the General on Horseback. Earlier memorial forms paid tribute to generals and rulers while leaving common soldiers forgotten in mass graves. And in late 20th century we began to observe also the names of the fallen inscribed on some memorials and monuments apart from names found on individual tombstones. For a study on the last mentioned, see Daniel J. Sherman, "Bodies and Names: The Emergence of Commemoration in Interwar France", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 2 (Apr., 1998).

vain, but that they would rise in spirit from their graves to dictate the future course of the nation”⁷³.

George Mosse emphasized the role of war memorials in the construction of a “myth of the war experience,” and an accompanying “cult of the fallen soldier,” particularly in the defeated countries. This myth disguised the realities of war, evoking a secularized Christian transcendence of death that used the fallen to represent the martyrdom and resurrection of the nation, pressing them into the service of a “civic religion of nationalism”⁷⁴. Patriots now gladly laid down their lives on the altar of the fatherland. Volunteers believed themselves to be a consecrated elite. As a way out of the routine of daily life, fighting and dying became a sacred duty⁷⁵. “The cult of the fallen assimilated the basic themes of a familiar and congenial Christianity. The exclamation “Now we are made sacred” implied an analogy of the sacrifice in war to the passion and resurrection of Christ”⁷⁶. The Nazis too used analogies to the passion and resurrection of Christ to explain away death, and war cemeteries and war monuments to a large extent fulfilled the same function⁷⁷.

Ignatieff shows clearly the dire practical needs for erecting war memorials:

Hardly a family in the Soviet Union did not lose someone in the Second War: the least a society can do for such sorrow is to consecrate it in such a way that every widow, every orphan can believe their father died a hero... The cult of the Soviet war dead is a conscious attempt to draw meaning for the rituals of the present from the vast reservoir of past suffering. If Soviet society does worship anything it is the horror of its collective sacrifice⁷⁸.

In a sense, the war memorials are a vindication of terror, a consecration of a dreadful sacrifice. Thus monuments can perform “a ritual of forgetting”⁷⁹ and commemoration can be “in fact an invitation to amnesia”⁸⁰.

Nevertheless, commemoration can encourage and reflect a variety of responses – from pacifism to revisionism and revanchism. War memorials might glorify war and transfigure the reality of mass death to an image of heroic sacrifice that they attempt to press into the service of national unity⁸¹. Further, as Mayo⁸² asserts, expressing humani-

tarianism in war memorials is not only a statement of remembrance but also a questioning of war. Prison camps, execution factories, and massacre sites are often preserved as commemorative statements to counter inhumanity with humanity. War memorials also signify the failure of a nation to prevent warfare.

In brief, nationalism is indebted to traditional, orthodox world religions for many of its forms and much of its content, even when it nominally rejects them⁸³. As Smith

⁷³ Malcolm Humble, “The Unknown Soldier and the Return of the Fallen: The Political Dimension of Mourning in German Texts from the First World War to the Present”, *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (Oct., 1998), 1034. This article which deals with the notion of “unknown soldier” in German literary and political texts also includes its relation to the passion of the Christ as well as Hitler’s portrayal as the “unknown soldier” or “nameless soldier.”

⁷⁴ George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 99.

⁷⁵ George L. Mosse, “National Cemeteries and National Revival: The Cult of the Fallen Soldiers in Germany”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Jan., 1979), 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 4.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 7. Pois argues that in *Mein Kampf* Hitler “deified nature, and identified God (or Providence) with it”. Robert A. Pois, “Man in the Natural World: Some Implications of the Nationalist-Socialist Religion”, *Political symbolism in Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of George L. Mosse*, Seymour Drescher, David Sabeian and Allan Sharlin (eds) (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1982), 259.

⁷⁸ Michael Ignatieff, “Soviet War Memorials”, *History Workshop*, No. 17 (Spring, 1984), 158.

⁷⁹ Michael Ignatieff, “Soviet War Memorials”, 160. Ignatieff points out another interesting function of war memorials. For him, the diversion of resources from domestic to military purposes requires constant justification. It cannot be justified with public argument. “In the absence of legitimation by public debate, the Soviet military build-up is justified with symbols. War memorials are the churches of the Soviet military build-up.” Ibid., 161.

⁸⁰ Malcolm Humble, “The Unknown Soldier and the Return of the Fallen”, 1037.

⁸¹ Sean A. Forner, “War Commemoration and the Republic in Crisis: Weimar Germany and the Neue Wache”, *Central European History*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2002), 548.

⁸² James M. Mayo, “War Memorials as Political Memory”, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Jan., 1988), 67.

⁸³ In fact the relationship is reciprocal. For the transformation of three sacred cities by nationalism in the modern world, see Khaldoun Samman, *Cities of God and Nationalism: Mecca, Jerusalem, and Rome as Contested World Cities* (Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2007).

notes, “The sacred properties of the nation have, with the possible exception of the cult of the glorious dead, figured prominently within traditional world religions. What is new in nationalism is their combination into a single, coherent salvation drama of national history and destiny”⁸⁴.

Thus, one witnesses some modern attempts to invent secular equivalents to religious ritual⁸⁵ or even to reinvent secular forms of religion. In this context, one might mention “secular religions”⁸⁶ which include “civil religion”, “political religion” (like communism⁸⁷ and nationalism), “invisible religion”⁸⁸, “folk religion”, “implicit religion”⁸⁹, “quasi-religion”⁹⁰ and “para-religion”. These draw attention to religious and religious-like beliefs and activities which do not fit easily into the Western folk conception of religion as a distinct institutional structure focused on a transcendent being or beings. For instance, Auguste Comte’s call for a ‘religion of humanity’ qualifies as an early sociological mention of the notion of a ‘secular religion.’ Comte, the acknowledged founder of sociology, postulated in the mid-19th century that society had passed through two stages of the religious and the metaphysical. We were on the verge, Comte believed, of a new stage which he called the positive. In this third stage science and reason would replace belief in the supernatural. Comte sought to fill this vacuum by creating a non-theistic “Religion of Humanity” or “Church of Humanity”. Among the secular religions mentioned above, the civil religion (which shares many characteristics with nationalism) concerns us more, as it is closely related to sacralization of power.

Civil Religion

As a matter of fact, the phenomenon of sacralization of power in the modern world manifests itself more strongly in the concept of “civil religion” which has been discussed widely, especially in the USA, for almost four decades. Though there were some earlier references or discussions in some philosophers⁹¹ like Plato, Hobbes, Rousseau⁹² and Hegel, as well as in modern times⁹³, Robert Bellah’s 1967 article⁹⁴ triggered the ongoing debate on civil religion which was initially carried out mostly by sociologists of religion in that country. From then on a huge literature has emerged⁹⁵. Some conducted empirical studies too and confirmed its existence⁹⁶, while others questioned or refused

it⁹⁷. It seems, however, that the majority of the scholars involved accepted the existence of a visible, well-institutionalized and quite elaborate civil religion. Ever since the

⁸⁴ Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism”, 810-11.

⁸⁵ Commenting on the new political religion of Hitler Germany which adapted much of the traditional Christian liturgy and also went back into pagan times for some of its associations, Mosse states that “the new politics can be regarded as one successful way in which this sacred space was filled: with parades, marches, gymnastic exercises, and dances, as well as ritual speeches.” George L. Mosse, *The Nationalisation of the Masses* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), 208.

⁸⁶ Paul Tillich calls nationalism as a secular religion or quasi-religion in his *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), Chapter 1.

⁸⁷ See Arthur Koestler’s discussion of “communism as a religion” in Richard Crossman (ed.), *The God That Failed*. (New York, Harper and Brothers. 1950), 15-75.

⁸⁸ Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1967). The original is *Das Problem der Religion in der Modernen Gesellschaft* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1963).

⁸⁹ Edward Bailey (ed.), *The Secular Quest for Meaning in Life: Denton Papers in Implicit Religion* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002)

⁹⁰ For quasi-religious movements, see Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah (eds.), *The New Religious Consciousness* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976).

⁹¹ See for instance, Ronald Beiner, “Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau on Civil Religion”, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Autumn, 1993); and Diane Fourny, “Rousseau’s Civil Religion Reconsidered”, *The French Review*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Mar., 1987).

⁹² The phrase “civil religion” comes from Rousseau. In Chapter 8, Book 4, of *The Social Contract*, he outlines the simple dogmas of the civil religion. Rousseau’s argument was intended as a challenge to the Platonic idea of a “civic religion” which was based on strict state control and explicit dogma. Rousseau preferred a purely civil religious faith that would support the social order.

⁹³ For instance, Emile Durkheim (1961) and W. Lloyd Warner (1962) discussed the concept of civil religion in society.

⁹⁴ Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America”, *Daedalus*, Vol. 96, No. 1, Religion in America (Winter, 1967).

⁹⁵ For an early evaluation of that literature, see James A. Mathisen, “Twenty Years after Bellah: Whatever Happened to American Civil Religion?”, *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 50, No. 2, Thematic Issue: A Durkheimian Miscellany (Summer, 1989).

⁹⁶ “Detailed sociological research has tended to confirm Bellah’s insight that civil religion is a distinct cultural component within American society that is not captured either by party politics or by denominational religiosity. Americans do, indeed, affirm civil religious beliefs, even though most of them would not recognize the label.” Michael Angrosino, “Civil Religion Redux”, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Spring, 2002), 259.

⁹⁷ For Thomas and Flippen “a well-defined thesis of civil religion may be more the creation (and fantasy) of the liberal political intellectual

concept has gained widespread acceptance, in some other fields as well (in spite of several criticisms and even Bellah's later hesitation to use that term itself) and has been applied to various lands like Japan⁹⁸, Israel⁹⁹, Malaysia¹⁰⁰ as well as Italy and Mexico¹⁰¹.

Bellah noted that "there actually exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches an elaborate and well institutionalized civil religion in America"¹⁰². To him, certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public religious dimension which is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals he calls the American civil religion. For him, the inauguration of a president is an important ceremonial event in this religion. It reaffirms, among other things, the religious legitimation of the highest political authority¹⁰³.

Therefore, Bellah analyzes words and acts of the founding fathers as well as various inaugural addresses of American presidents and traces elements of the American civil religion. Although much is selectively derived from Christianity, this religion is clearly not itself Christianity. The God of the civil religion is not only rather "Unitarian"; he is much more related to order, law, and right than to salvation and love. Besides, he is not at all simply a watchmaker God. He is actively interested and involved in history, with a special concern for America. Here is an analogy to ancient Israel. The equation of America with Israel in the idea of the "American Israel" is not infrequent. "Europe is Egypt; America, the promised land. God has led his people to establish a new sort of social order that shall be a light unto all the nations"¹⁰⁴.

Bellah observed that American civil religion was still very much alive when he wrote his famous article. On 15 March 1965 President Johnson said: "Above the pyramid on the great seal of the United States it says in Latin, "God has favored our undertaking." God will not favor everything that we do. It is rather our duty to divine his will"¹⁰⁵. Again, if Washington is the quasi-divine embodiment of American virtue, Lincoln may well be the American Christ figure. Assassinated on Good Friday, he was a sacrificial victim

in helping to heal the wounds of civil strife. He died so that there might be a Union.

Behind the civil religion are often biblical archetypes¹⁰⁶ (and they are not peculiar to American civil religion): Exodus¹⁰⁷, Chosen People¹⁰⁸, Promised Land, New Jerusalem¹⁰⁹, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth.

Others have joined Bellah in expressing the fundamental characteristics of the American civil religion: For Novak, civil religion in America has displayed persistent elements

elite than active faith among the masses". Michael C. Thomas and Charles C. Flippen, "American Civil Religion: An Empirical Study", *Social Forces*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Dec., 1972), 224. Similarly, Cristi criticizes the Bellah/Durkheim formulation of the civil religion notion. Marcela Cristi, *From Civil to Political Religion: The Intersection of Culture, Religion and Politics* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001).

⁹⁸ K. Peter Takayama, "Revitalization Movement of Modern Japanese Civil Religion", *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Winter, 1988).

⁹⁹ Myron J. Aronoff, "Civil Religion in Israel", *RAIN*, No. 44 (Jun., 1981); Jo-Ann Harrison, "School Ceremonies for Yitzhak Rabin: Social Construction of Civil Religion in Israeli Schools", *Israel Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Regan, "Islam, Intellectuals and Civil Religion in Malaysia", *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Summer, 1976).

¹⁰¹ Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond, *Varieties of Civil Religion* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980).

¹⁰² Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", 97.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 110-111.

¹⁰⁶ See Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (NY: Seabury Press, 1975).

¹⁰⁷ Often the migration of people from oppression in tradition-bound societies to freedom in the New World are likened to the biblical Exodus. Walzer has found the Exodus metaphor throughout political history: "...the idea of deliverance from suffering and oppression: this worldly redemption, liberation, revolution" has a significant place in Western political thought. Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (NY: Basic Books, 1985), ix.

¹⁰⁸ See, for instance, Hartmut Lehmann, "The Germans as a Chosen People: Old Testament Themes in German Nationalism", *German Studies Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (May, 1991); James Sellers, "The Almost Chosen People: A Theological Approach to American Society", *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Oct., 1965); and Douglass Sullivan-González "A Chosen People": Religious Discourse and the Making of the Republic of Guatemala, 1821-1871", *The Americas*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Jul., 1997).

¹⁰⁹ Daniel B. Rowland, "Moscow-The Third Rome or the New Israel?", *Russian Review*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Oct., 1996).

of theism and even theocracy, in the sense that the government was, in a way, held to be divinely ordained, and given a role as protector and arbiter of morality that Europeans even today find perplexing¹¹⁰. It has led Americans to view the nation as the focus of God's work in human history. Moreover, American civil religion has been based on the elevation of the democratic system to a sacred status¹¹¹.

Likewise, Chidester¹¹² suggests that "civil religion in America... may be considered as a religiopolitical system, independent of both organized religions and the institutions of government, which represents a set of collective religious symbols, a sacralized national identity, and a system of transcendent, quasi-religious principles of political order".

An important stream of American religious nationalism has been the "republican theocracy" associated with Calvinist theologians of the nineteenth century (Timothy Dwight, Nathaniel W. Taylor, and Lyman Beecher among them). The American Calvinists were interested in salvaging both Christianity and the sacred state. The democratic order was interpreted as God's theocratic order. God's divine laws for human government were said to be embodied in the Constitution¹¹³. "With a sophisticated theological precision, Lyman Beecher and the other republican theorists affirmed a residual Puritan heritage in the notion of America as a chosen people with a unique destiny under the moral government of God"¹¹⁴.

Many have attributed considerable importance to civil religion as a mechanism for societal integration and maintenance of the institutions of the state. Thus, they see civil religion quite positively. For instance, for Bellah and Michael Angrosino civil religion as the public expression of the sacred make positive contributions to a country by defining the nation's fundamental purposes, giving a moral meaning to the political system, giving the people a shared language about a common heritage, defining certain absolutes about which they can all agree and uniting and mobilizing the people for good causes (like the abolishment of slavery).

However, the negative and violent side of the civil religion is often ignored by its protagonists. As we shall see below, civil religion is frequently responsible for initiating wars

too and often for the sake of national or elite interests by clothing them with a civil theology. The Vietnam War and the Second Iraqi war are clear examples for this¹¹⁵. Recently, President George W. Bush's rhetoric of good vs. evil and extensive use of biblical-theological terminology in his "war on terror"¹¹⁶ is not something novel in modern history¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁰ Michael Novak, "The Influence of Judaism and Christianity on the American Founding", *Religion and the New Republic: Faith in the Founding of America*, ed. James H. Hutson (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield 2000), 165.

¹¹¹ Angrosino, "Civil Religion Redux", 248-9.

¹¹² David Chidester, *Patterns of Power: Religion and Politics in American Culture*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1988, 83.

¹¹³ Angrosino, "Civil Religion Redux", 255-6.

¹¹⁴ Chidester, *Patterns of Power*, 96.

¹¹⁵ Bob Dylan's Vietnam-era protest song, "With God on Our Side," is perhaps the most famous pop cultural critique of the attitude that the institutions of the state were not, in fact, expansive systems of symbols but actually embodiments of a divine will that could not be challenged:

"The reason for fighting / I never got straight / But I learned to accept it / Accept it with pride / For you don't count the dead / When God's on your side / ... And you never ask questions / When God's on your side." <http://www.bobdylan.com/songs/with-god-on-our-side> (last visited on 27 February 2012).

¹¹⁶ See John M. Murphy, "'Our Mission and Our Moment': George W. Bush and September 11th", *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2003. Lincoln's observation about the religious nature of Bush's policies is very interesting and provides a good case for civil religion: "Although he fosters the impression that his policies are grounded in deep religious conviction, the reality is often the reverse. Vague notions and attractive terms such as *compassion*, *history*, and *freedom* are given rhetorical, sometimes even intellectual, coherence by his staff. Bush may resonate to some of the ideas and some of the language they prepare for him, but for the most part he uses these to justify policies that have already been decided on quite other grounds. Preemptive wars, abridgments of civil liberty, cuts in social service, subsidies to churches, and other like initiatives are not just wrapped in the flag; together with the flag, they are swathed in the holy."

Bruce Lincoln, 'Bush's God Talk', *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, eds. Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (NY: Frodham University Press, 2006), 276.

¹¹⁷ In fact, Bellah drew in 1967 our attention to the dangers of distortion of civil religion at home and abroad. For instance, with respect to America's role in the world: "Those nations that are for the moment "on our side" become "the free world."... It is then part of the role of America as the New Jerusalem and "the last hope of earth" to defend such governments with treasure and eventually with blood. When our soldiers are actually dying, it becomes possible to consecrate the struggle further by invoking the great theme of sacrifice." Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", 111-12.

In fact, civil religion's strong relation with and dependence on traditional religion is more evident in case of a war. Here a very basic problem civil religion faces is very clear: how to send children (i.e. 20 year-old youth, sometimes including girls as well) to death, that is, how to justify sending soldiers to the battlefield? This might not be difficult in the case of defending one's land, as it means defending one's freedom, dignity, beloved ones and property. Young or old, many will be ready to die for such a cause. But as we all know well, countries do not go to war merely for defending themselves. They often wage wars for various reasons ranging from border disputes and re-claiming parts of their "homeland"s, to securing their "national interests"¹¹⁸, colonizing, and even humanitarian intervention etc. That is why, especially in such cases, secular political systems resort to theological terminology and discourse. The soldier "gives" his life to the country or "sacrifices" himself so that his country and society survives.

Some scholars still liken this to the passion of Christ (or Crucifixion) and the Christian sacrificial act of death and rebirth¹¹⁹. For instance, Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle argue that blood sacrifice at the border, or war, is the holiest ritual of the nation-state¹²⁰. For them, sacrificial death defines both sectarian (religious, in the traditional sense) and national identity and in this sense both are species of religion. The flag is the sacred object of the religion of patriotism. It is the skin of the totem ancestor held high. It represents the sacrificed bodies of its devotees just as the cross, the sacred object of Christianity, represents the body sacrificed to a Christian god¹²¹. Further, the media are a vehicle to ritualize the religion of nationalism¹²².

To give a striking example for the sacrificial demands of nationalism and civil religion, as Marvin and Ingle put it,

"U.S. civil religion does do things. It kills. It commands sacrifice. It transforms infants, non-believers, and converts from other national faiths into Americans. It even mobilizes churches, synagogues, and mosques. It offers patriotic instruction in efficacious spells and rituals that believers will put to work when crisis comes"¹²³.

Similarly, Manzo suggests that "as the ultimate icon of national sacrifice and suffering, the war memorial has become the modern analogue of the crucifix in predominantly

Christian societies"¹²⁴. Likewise, some like Davies¹²⁵ point out the idea of "crucified nation" as a significant motif in modern nationalism. Davies explores the notion of the Christ-nation crucified by evil powers because of its higher virtue by analyzing five modern nationalisms that have employed Christian symbolism in this manner: Poland, France, Germany, Ireland and Palestine. He investigates the way in which fundamental Christian concepts are distorted and corrupted in the process, and points to the inherent dangers of this form of political self-glorification¹²⁶.

Our discussion of the civil religion has concentrated more on the American case. In fact, most of the existing literature deals with the USA, although there are also many works discussing the concept and its practice with respect to other lands. Needless to say, such aspects of nationalism and civil religion are not confined to societies with Christian culture or background. Other cultures too have often, for example, their own motifs of death and sacrifice with respect to their civil religions, yet these have not been studied sufficiently¹²⁷. In fact, the relationship between "the sacred" and "sacrifice" is very interesting and should be analyzed in this context as well. As René Girard argues,

¹¹⁸ For an argument that the United States relied on military prowess for national development, see Geoffrey Perret, *A Country Made by War: From the Revolution to Vietnam – the Story of America's Rise to Power* (New York: Random House, 1990). The author states that he "placed the nation's nine major wars and other armed conflicts in their truest context, the evolution of American life" (p. X).

¹¹⁹ See below footnotes 124 and 125.

¹²⁰ Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, "Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Revisiting Civil Religion", 774.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 768-770.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 776-7.

¹²³ *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32.

¹²⁴ Kathryn A. Manzo, *Creating Boundaries: The Politics of Race and Nation* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 42.

¹²⁵ Alan Davies, *The Crucified Nation: A Motif in Modern Nationalism* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2008).

¹²⁶ Note that Franklin H. Littell, a Christian historian, entitled his book on the holocaust *The Crucifixion of the Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

¹²⁷ Only few dwell on the civil religion in Muslim lands. This constitutes an interesting topic, as its premises are expected to be quite different from those countries with Christian background. In fact, the present author has a research in progress which deals with the recent transformation of Turkish civil religion.

“sacrifice too can be defined solely in terms of the sacred, without reference to any particular divinity.”

Conclusion

Dividing the world into two by relying on a sacred-secular dichotomy and such kind of polarizing concepts is not a scientific approach and has often an underlying ideological background and personal commitments. A view of unilinear and irreversible process of secularization which would render faith in a religion a private matter does not at all correspond to reality. On the contrary, in recent decades religiosity has been on the rise worldwide. New religions which flourished especially in more modernized countries too can be added to this tendency.

It seems that what we have today is a blend or synthesis of the two. Even this is valid more for the Western world and some parts of the world which came under its influence. Even in the latter, such coexistence came hardly as a result of internal dynamics or historical change, but often was imposed on societies through colonialism and westernized elite.

The “secular” 20th century was perhaps the bloodiest century of the history. Unfortunately, in spite of centuries of Enlightenment, humanism, secularization, modernization and urbanization, violence¹²⁸ and wars are still part of the modern culture, be they come from a perceived secular or religious source, or from a certain blend of the two. Secular-theological, civil-religious or simply religious roots of modern warfare need to be studied, however, not as separate types of violence but in all their connections.

This study has hopefully made it clear that how our modern life which was assumed to be rather secular is imbued with the sacred in spirit and practice. As integral parts of society, religion and politics have always been in interaction, even in those political systems which repudiate traditional religions. As we have seen, even such systems have their own sacred inherited partly from traditional religions and transformed for secular and political ends or come up with new ideas of the sacred (like cult of the glorious dead). We have seen how nationalisms and civil religions impose their own sacred and theologies on societies and ask for sacrifice.

Is it ever possible to isolate politics from religion or separate the two completely? It is obvious that the secularization process have not been able achieve such a thing. Nor did communist systems which would supposedly solve the problem by eradicating religion from society manage it. This is probably because religion is a human universal. It seems that the idea of the sacred is part of the human mind and spirit and thus of society. However, we have seen that sacralization of political power too is a common tendency throughout history and it often leads to great problems. Thus, demystification¹²⁹ and desacralization of power remain as a great challenge before us. Whether such a thing is possible at all is another problem. If that is not possible, then what are our alternatives?

We have seen that traditional religions are still with us and likely to remain so for a very long time¹³⁰. Therefore, one should make use of positive contributions¹³¹ of those religions¹³² towards global peace, security and prosperity¹³³. Hence the importance of interreligious dialogue. Perhaps

¹²⁸ As Wils assert, “it may hardly seem surprising today, at the end of a century steeped in blood, that violence is a genuine phenomenon of human history and cannot merely be dismissed as an occasional deviation.” Jean Pierre Wils, “Violence as an Anthropological Constant?: Towards a New Evaluation”, in Wim Beuken and Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds.), *Religion as a Source of Violence?* (London and Maryknoll: SCM Press and Orbis Books, 1997), 110.

¹²⁹ Cf. Brian T. Trainor, “The State as the Mystical Foundation of Authority”, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 32, No. 6.

¹³⁰ “Religions are likely to continue playing important public roles in the ongoing construction of the modern world.” Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 6.

¹³¹ Of course, the existence of religiously motivated violence and wars cannot be denied. See for instance, Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003). The work discusses several cases of religiously motivated violence ranging from abortion clinic bombings in USA, assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, Hamas suicide missions to examples of Sikh, and Hindu violence in India as well as Buddhist violence in Japan.

¹³² For possible Islamic contributions, see for instance, Lenn E. Godman, *Islamic Humanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹³³ Hurd argues that the secularist division between religion and politics is socially and historically constructed and that it is the failure of students of international relations to recognize this that has caused their inability “to properly recognize the power of religion in world politics.” Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 1.

one might start interreligious dialogue with the Abrahamic religions which share a common tradition and address the majority of the world. More than half of the world population is said to follow two religions, namely Christianity and Islam. Thus, as the People of the Book, the followers of the three monotheist religions, that is, Judaism Christianity and Islam might form a strong basis for an interreligious dialogue. I believe that there are already sufficient common theological roots¹³⁴ in favor of global peace (in spite of the existence of some irresolvable theological differences on some other issues). As various publications, organizations¹³⁵ and academical events show, members of these religions can come together and contribute to global peace, in spite of political and military problems involving their nations.

Of course, a dialogue should include all major religions, in fact, as far as possible all religions. If the main purpose is ensuring the global peace, indeed there is no reason to prevent people without any religion as well.

As a matter of fact, the academic publications which have come out in the recent decades are very encouraging: traditional religions are discussed with respect to issues ranging from pacifism and non-violence¹³⁶, to religious peace-building¹³⁷, as well as comparative works on religions¹³⁸ or on religious and secular perspectives¹³⁹ with respect to global peace. One also witnesses in recent years more works which admits the role of traditional religions in the formation of the West¹⁴⁰ which might help eradicate the secular-religious dichotomy which still dominates many minds.

Needless to say, education is essential for a dialogue towards global peace. Primarily, school textbooks which are important instruments of civil religions and nationalism in brainwashing or indoctrinating the children in accordance with official ideologies (and civil religions) must be revised and re-written. This approach which has had many successful examples all over Europe, including the Balkans, should be adopted all over the world.

In addition, interaction among the members of different religions should be encouraged. The role of charismatic leadership and of man of religion are obvious in this matter. Besides, an informed laity too is important.

As Appleby has argued “a committed and theologically informed laity that knows scripture and is at home with sacred texts and traditional practices can be mobilized as an important resource for stopping extremist groups and a militant leadership from promoting violence and religious confrontation”¹⁴¹.

It is very normal that those who have vested interests in conflicts (as they are involved in such activities as oil monopolies, weapons trade and drug trade) will be against the cessation of hostilities and global peace and prosperity. They belittle, undermine and sabotage intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and part of the mass media joins them. However, I believe that such attempts are doomed to loose sooner or later, if the peace-loving majority works hard.

¹³⁴ For example, even the following title will give an idea about what two of these religions share: Muhammad Ata ur-Rahim, *Jesus: A Prophet of Islam* (Karachi: Begum Aisha Bawany Waqf, 1981).

¹³⁵ For instance, see The World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace: <http://www.imamsetrabbins.org> (last visited on 27 February 2012).

¹³⁶ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher (ed.), *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions* (Cambridge: Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, 1998); David R. Smock, *Perspectives on Pacifism: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Views on Nonviolence and International Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Unites States Institute of Peace Press, 1995); and J. Patout Burns, *War and Its Discontents: Pacifism and Quietism in the Abrahamic Traditions* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996).

¹³⁷ R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000).

¹³⁸ J. William Frost, *A History of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim Perspectives on War and Peace*, vol. I: *The Bible to 1914*, vol II: *A Century of Wars* (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

¹³⁹ Terry Nardin, *The Ethics of War and Peace: Religious and Secular Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹⁴⁰ To cite just three recent works, see Jacob Neusner, *Religious Foundations of Western Civilization: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005); Richard W. Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); and Theodore M. Ludwig, *The Sacred Paths of the West* (NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006) which includes Islam as one of the three religious traditions that have shaped the Western world.

¹⁴¹ R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 232.