SECULARIZATION AND CULTURE CHANGE: AN APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING CHANGING SYSTEMS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

OLIVER READ WHITLEY

II

CRITIQUE OF THE CONCEPT OF SECULARIZATION

Five ways in which the concept of secularization has been used in research have now been reviewed, and some of the work being done from each perspective outlined has been described. The sixth approach to secularization as an aspect of social and cultural change – secularization as the movement from sacred to secular society – will be taken up in the next section of the paper. At this point, it is appropriate to introduce a critique of the concept, a critique which has, by and large, been aimed at the five uses of the concept we have dealt with above, and which runs the gamit from indicating the need for sharpening up the concept if it is to be used in empirical research, to showing what immense difficulties are encountered in the use of the secularization idea, and finally to the proposal that use of the concept be given up forthwith (a proposal which, it might be observed, has been made with regard to several other rather important ideas in the social sciences, such as evolution and race).

British sociologist David Martin advocates the immediate abandonment of the secularization concept on the ground that it is more accurately described as a tool of counter-religious ideologies than as a scientific concept.[57] Spokesmen for the ideologies of optimistic rationalism, Marxism, and existentialism, Martin points out, use the approach of selecting certain phenomena as Really Religious (the items selected fit their practical "political" needs and are in accord with the logic of their metaphysical systems) and then proceed to show that the disappearance of the items selected is inevitable.

The flaw in this procedure, according to Martin, is that the argument moves back and forth between a definition of religion that is consistent with conventional usage of the term, and a definition that indicates an analytic criterion that will distinguish the genuine from the bogus in religion. For example, take the distinction between religious

[57]Martin, David, "Toward Eliminating the Concept of Secularization," in Gould, Julius, (Ed.), *Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences, 1965*, (Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 169-182.

OLIVER READ WHITLEY is Professor of Sociology of Religion, The Iliff School of Theology. Chapter I of this monograph was published in the previous issue of *The Iliff Review*.

and secular based on the notion of otherworldliness. One thing this might mean is a belief in life after death, the function of which is to make life in this vale of tears more bearable, so that when the level of living improves it makes less sense to settle for deferred benefits—ergo, this-worldly concerns increase. Another thing this could mean is that material benefits, both present and deferred are to be rejected, in favor of spiritual self-discovery or self-immolation. In the first instance the contrast is between what is present and what is to come; in the second it is between spiritual and material. The two interpretations of otherworldliness are not mutually exclusive. The ambiguities involved in defining secularization on the basis of the understanding given to otherworldliness are emphasized if we introduce a third or mixed type by comparing a Texas Baptist millionaire with a dedicated Communist. They resemble each other, since both believe in deferred benefits; they differ in their estimates of the material advantages of capitalist society. So, what does otherworldliness "really" mean?

Such semantic ambiguities can be dealt with, Martin argues, in two ways, neither of them very satisfactory. One approach would be to *link* the polar extremes of the various continua, so that one set defines religion and the other provides a definition of secularity.

The other approach would be to pick one dichotomy as being the crucial one. The difficulty with the first approach is that there is no *necessary* connection between any of the several possible polar alternatives. That being the case, no *sets* of criteria can be utilized for distinguishing religious and secular. The second approach is a possibility, but it is intellectually expensive, because it easily leads to unintelligibility. Regardless of which criterion is selected, too many recognized forms of religiosity would be found at every point on the continuum thus established. The essential point here is that there is, in fact, no unitary process called secularization that arises in response to something called religious.

A brief look at the way Martin describes the ideological uses of the concept of secularization will be instructive. The optimistic rationalists, of course, know that religion is not true. If religious institutions are in difficulty, this is to be expected, since it represents the ongoing march of truth. The mistake of the rationalists is that they view religion primarily as a system of explanation and man as a cognitive animal. We have not witnessed, all arguments to the contrary, the coming of "the end of ideology," and societies still continue to depend upon the existence of certain kinds of social fictions. Of course religion is bound up with the kinds of irrational "nonsense" on which the cohesion of societies apparently depends, but it might be argued that this

only insures its continuance. So what, pray tell, is being secularized according to the rationalistic specifications? Marxists, too, believe in an inevitable triumph, not of reason as an idea but reason embodied in an historical movement. They accept the notion that history is *Heilsgeschichte,* and that this "purification" is already objectively present in some existing societies. It is not necesary to dispute the Marxist claim that certain kinds of religiosity do function in ways that lend support to class domination and facilitate false consciousness (in the Marxist sense) among the lower classes in order to indicate that the Marxist definition of religion is ideologically tainted and that its belief in the inevitability of the arrival of the communist state is eschatological, if not apocalyptic, in exactly the same way, and to the same extent, as are the "religious" beliefs the secularization of which Marxists applaud. It might even be asked whether or not, since the secularization game is one that presumably any number can play, Marxist ideology has been "secularized."

As for the existentialists, they present an interesting and somewhat special case. Existentialism, with its emphasis upon subjectivity, might be said to have a psychology rather than a sociology. What makes it a special case in the present discussion is that some of its most influential spokesmen are "religious" rather than "atheistic." For them, religion is a complex of institutions and that obscures rather than expressing the divine. The God of religion is an idol. Religion hides God in formulae, ritual, and sacrament; since He can only be known experimentally and existentially, this can result only in obfuscation. The referent for the term "God" is the qualitative dimension of all existence, not some being alongside of (or above or out there) other beings. Religious institutions are in trouble because they are trying to perpetuate the idol. Secularization, understood in this context, is actually to be welcomed, for it is a kind of benign iconoclasm.

The sum of the whole matter is this. In the study of religion it is far from easy to keep value orientations from entering into the description and analysis. Nevertheless it is a gain to eliminate the kind of ideological distortion introduced into the discussion by notions such as secularization. The fact of the matter is, according to David Martin, that "secularization should be erased from the sociological dictionary."[58] This appears to be a sweeping (perhaps too sweeping) judgment. It is at least worthwhile, I think, to pursue the subject a bit further, to see whether anything still intellectually viable can be preserved from the flames to which Martin's intentionally devastating critique has consigned the concept of secularization.

[56] *Ibid,* p. 182

The next step in the critique of the concept is a review of the five ways in which secularization has been used, and which I have already described in some detail. The object of this review is to discover some more specific ways in which the concept may be misleading than those referred in Martin's assessment, as well as to point out the possibility that the negative critique may have been overstated. If secularization is defined as the decline of religion, difficulties are immediately apparent. They take two major forms, according to Larry Shiner. One difficulty is that of deciding what, where, and when the religious society now in process of secularization was. The other difficulty resides in the ambiguity of the measures used to determine when, and to what extent, decline has taken place. The first of these difficulties brings to mind the familiar golden age fallacy, the relevance of which may be pointed to by asking whether a nation, such as France, now said to be in the process of rapid de-Christianization, was ever "Christianized," in the sense called for by the theory that secularization by way of the decline of religion has taken place. The tendency to indulge in the golden age fallacy is not uncommon in the writings of interpreters of the contemporary American religious scene. Gibson Winter, for example, in his THE SUBURBAN CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCHES, complains of the subservience of the suburban churches to the middle-class values of the demographically homogeneous suburb.[59] In making this complaint, he appears to be suggesting that the captive church in the suburbs is to be compared with a church that at one time represented all the diverse elements in community life in America. Concerning this instance of the golden age fallacy, I have elsewhere commented that "(h)e describes a church which at one time reflected the various inequalities and interdependencies of the city's life. The implication seems to be that these competing segments of the community were brought together in a kind of 'beloved community,' where they could experience a sense of unity, and where they could be in conversation with each other . . . . That the nonsuburban city church ever succeeded in reflecting the diverse segments of community life to the extent suggested is, I think, a notion which needs to be viewed cautiously. This is especially true since it is being used to establish a 'norm' against which the suburban church is to be evaluated."[60]

With regard to the second difficulty with viewing secularization as the decline of religion – the ambiguity of the indexes used to measure it – at least two comments are in order. One is that a careful

[59]Winter, Gibson, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches.* (New York, Doubleday, 1961).
[60]Whitley, Oliver R., *Religious Behavior: Where Sociology and Religion Meet,* (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 99-100.

examination of the major work that has been done on this problem, such as Father Fichter's study of a southern urban Roman Catholic parish,[61] Gerhard Lenski's study of religion in Detroit,[62] Yoshio Fukuyama's work on the United Church of Christ,[63] and Charles Glock's continuing struggle with the problems of measuring religious commitment,[64] would show that the situation, both in terms of methodological considerations and interpretive findings, is not quite as muddled and unclear as Shiner's somewhat gloomy estimate indicates. The second comment is that there is increasing awareness of the need for developing reliable measures, and more and more attention is now being paid to it. Shiner is correct, of course, in raising the question as to whether a movement along the theological spectrum from the conservative end toward the liberal end is to be taken as prima facie evidence of secularization. And he is certainly on solid ground in pointing out that the measurement of any decline of religion depends crucially on how religion itself is defined.

Similar difficulties are experienced in the case of defining secularization as increasing conformity with the world. This meaning of the concept is also beset with ambiguities. The danger is mainly at the point of the tendency when using this approach to slip into the habit of treating some particular form of religiosity as authentic and then assuming that secularization is involved in any departure from it. The specter of the pejorative use of ostensibly descriptive and objective terms is likely to haunt those who employ this approach. One man's increase in worldliness (secularization) is another man's freedom of the human spirit (religion). In point of fact, a case is being made, or has been made, by certain well-known theologians, such as Harvey Cox, Paul Van Buren, Frederic Gogarten, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for turning the proposition roundabout and saying that the increase in worldliness is actually a spiritual gain, not a loss.[65]

The critique of secularization as disengagement suggests that it, too, suffers from ambiguities that trap the scholars who use it into value-loaded conclusions. Semantically, the term disengagement used in the context of secularization seems almost by definition to disparage religion. I wonder, however, why this should necesarily be so. Surely, in scientific work, we are entitled to, indeed compelled to, use stipula-

---

[61]Fichter, Joseph H., *Social Relations in the Urban Parish,* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1954).

[62]Lenski, Gerhard, *The Religious Factor,* (New York, Doubleday, 1962)

[63]Fukuyama, Yoshio, "Functional Analysis of Religious Beliefs." *Religious Education,* LXVI, (1961), pp. 446-451, and "The Major Dimensions of Church Membership," *Review of Religious Research,* II, (1960-61), pp. 154-161.

[64]Glock, Charles Y., "On the Study of Religious Commitment," *Religious Education,* LVII, (1962), Supplement to July-August Issue, pp. 98-110.

[65]For bibliography on this, see above, Note 56.

tive definitions. It does not seem to be the case that disengagement is *inherently* value-loaded, and if the term is used with care, it is not immediately evident that the substitution of the term differentiation represents any improvement of the terminological situation. What Durkheim said about the source of the sacred, that it lies not in the objects credited with having sacred qualities, but in the attitudes taken toward those objects, is applicable here. The value-loading in the uses of the meanings of secularization resides not in the words but attitudes taken in employing them. The issue is really whether something identifiable as secularization has taken place if it can be shown either that a society has become more disengaged from religion or that a society has differentiated itself structurally or functionally in a way that affects religion, and this has to do with whether the changes that have occurred represent a gain or a loss for religion (in some sense), not with whether one or the other term is used to refer to them. A case of disengagement may, or may not, be also an instance of differentiation. Such matters must be decided by empirical investigation of the society in question in each case.

Secularization viewed as transposition of religious beliefs and institutions also presents difficulties. Just as David Martin, as I pointed out earlier, has charged that the secularization concept is an ideological tool of some of the counter-religious forces, it is pointed out (and this, in a sense, puts the shoe on the other foot) that secularization seen as transposition may be used as an ideological weapon by the theologians whose intent is to attack the legitimacy of the emerging modern world.[66] Ambiguity is also involved, in that the identification of survivals or transmigrations is far from easy. The idea that a formerly Judaic or Christian belief has been "taken over" by a contemporary belief seems to imply that some sort of illicit ideational transfer has occurred, and this easily becomes a form of alleging that something pure and unadulterated has been distorted or corrupted. Clearly, then, the possibility of value-loading the issues comes into view. Each set of social or cultural changes that is proposed as an instance of transposition must, therefore, be carefully examined for ideological taint.

Like the other understandings of the concept of secularization, the one that sees it as desacralization must be closely scrutinized. Here again, the problem of what is meant by religion comes into the picture. Is religion necessarily tied to the notion of the sacred, with the sense of the mystery of life? Further, if, as was pointed out earlier, it is feasible

[66]Blumenberg, Hans, "Sakularisation: Kritik einer Kategorie Historischer Illegitimat," in Kuhn, Helmut and Wiedmann, Franz, *Die Philsophie und die Frage nach dem Fortschritt*, (Munchen, Anton Pustet, 1964).

to argue that, at least in the Biblical faith desacralization is a fulfilment of religious goals, what becomes of the idea that desacralization is a form of secularization (if secularization is taken to indicate something that is the polar opposite of religion)? At the very least, we must entertain the possibility that desacralization is a more complex matter than interpreting it as a process of secularization would suggest. And to increase the complexity of this problem, it cannot be gain-said that, as Robert Nisbet points out, "the main line of sociology reveals a fascination with the analytical uses of the religio-sacred that is unmatched in any other social science."[67] In that main line of thought, of course, the work of Emile Durkheim, in whose view of religion the sacred was a crucial idea, is central. If, as Durkheim's THE ELEMENTARY FORMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE indicates, "the power of religion to stimulate, to reinforce, and to protect individuals lies not primarily in the ideas of religion but in the rites and mysteries through which unattached man becomes conscious of a sense of membership in society,"[68] the possibility that social and cultural changes that have the effect of desacralizing the world may diminish the importance of religion must be kept open.

The critique of these various approaches to secularization can now be brought to a close with some general remarks concerning the intellectual position in which I think we find ourselves as a result of it. In the main, the critique focuses on two important issues: imprecision and ambiguity in the uses of the concept, largely, it would seem, coming about because of the failure, as yet, to develop adequate measures or indexes of the phenomenon; and, secondly, value-loading (as a result of the imprecision) which opens up the probability that the various meanings of the concept of secularization are being employed ideologically rather than objectively. These are, to be sure, critically important issues, and they are issues that had to be raised and cannot be ignored. I think, however, that the insistence of David Martin that the concept of secularization be expunged from the social science vocabulary is too extreme. It indicates, perhaps, an understandable impatience with the slow pace of development of adequate methodological equipment for handling certain kinds of problems with which social scientists want to deal. The concept of secularization will continue to be useful if work aimed at refining it is permitted (or motivated) to go on.

Larry Shiner's proposal is more temperate and balanced, but he nevertheless also concludes that we drop the use of the word secular-

[67]Nisbet, Robert A., *The Sociological Tradition*, p. 222.
[68]*Ibid.*, p. 231.

ization entirely, putting in its place words he considers to be more descriptive and neutral, such as transposition and differentiation. Yet he goes on to say that it is not likely that the use of the term secularization will be given up. That being the case, he proposes that those who continue to use the term should either state what they mean by it carefully and then make sure to follow the stipulated meaning consistently and/or use the term as a general designation that would cover such aspects of religious change as desacralization, differentiation, and transposition. In the next section, I shall want to look at the second of these options more closely, with a view to the possibility of seeing religious changes as a part of the over-all social and cultural changes that are to be understood as aspects of secularization. At this point, it is important to see that Shiner is skeptical of the uses made of the secularization concept largely because he thinks the secular-religious polarity approach is misleading. This polar approach has, he thinks, three major disadvantages: it mistakenly encourages us to assume that the form of societal differentiation found in the West is normative; it tempts us to assume that if what is defined as secular is increasing, what is defined as religious must be decreasing; it deceives us into thinking that religion is an entity of some kind. There is, in all this, a real and constant danger of reification. It needs to be remembered that both religion and secularization are high-order abstractions, and, as S. I. Hayakawa would say, the map is not the territory (or, cow_1 is not cow_2).

The kind of intellectual situation that has been described in this account of the critique of the concept of secularization is not unusual. In at least two important areas thart come immediately to mind, the same problems of measurement and ideological distortion have been pointed out. In anthropology and sociology, the argument over the merits and demerits of functionalism still rages on questions of both methodology and ideology. Functions are, it is said, objective consequences of any social or cultural item for the social system under examination. But how, the critics ask, are these consequences to be measured? Since functional questions are asked with reference to the maintenance or viability of social systems, the functional method, it is charged, is ideologically tainted in the direction of commitment to *status quo*, and inherently incapable of dealing with social change. Not so! is the reply of the advocates of functionalism. Of course, there *are* problems, but they are the same problems that any approach to the study of human behavior encounters, and they are not peculiar to

functionalism.[69] To alter slightly a remark attributed to Liberace, the functionalists are laughing all the way to the post office, as they mail their papers and research studies to the professional journals.

A very similar situation is encountered among the students of social problems. Twenty-five years ago, C. Wright Mills ,in a paper still widely referred to, discussed the professional ideology of the social pathologists,[70] observing that their descriptions of what they call social disorganization often amount merely to discussion of "the absence of that type of organization asociated with the stuff of primary-group communities having Christian and Jeffersonian legitimations."[71] The imputation of ideological taint is clear enough. More recently, Cuber, Kenkel, and Harper, in their PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY: VALUES IN CONFLICT, suggest that the concept of social disorganization has limited usefulness in the study of social problems because "the term implies disapproval and abnormality, temporary undesirability, a trend which (if unchecked) will lead to institutional dissolution. . . . To hold, however, that contemporary changes are symptoms of social disorganization is to imply that the formerly established patterns. . . were 'good' and that the conditions toward which current changes are moving are known to be 'bad.' "[72] Social disorganization is an inadequate concept, it is charged, since it encourages moralization rather than objectivity, it does not distinguish disruptive from other kinds of social and cultural changes, and its proposals for remedies are likely to be appeals to return to the good old ways.[73] This criticism of the concept of social disorganization, while potentially devastating, does not hit its mark in two respects: there is nothing inherent in the concept that would necessarily lead to the anticipated results indicated by the critics; and, further, it appears to have escaped their notice that the same charges have been made against the value conflicts approach (their own preference) and the social deviance approach. What this leaves us with is, I think, a counsel of intellectual and scientific despair, since it suggests that the real truth is that the study of social problems is impossible.

As with functionalism and social disorganization, so with secularization. The critique of the first two of these concepts is remarkably

---

[69]On the functional approach to religion see Merton, R.K., *Social Theory and Social Structure*, (New York, The Free Press, 1957), esp. pp. 19-82, and Eister, Allan W., "Religious Institutions in Complex Societies. . .", *American Sociological Review*, XXII, (1957), pp. 387-391.

[70]"The Professional Ideology of Social Pathologists," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLIX, (1943-44).

[71]*Ibid.*, Reprinted in Irving Horowitz (Ed.), *Power, Politics, and People*, (New York, Ballantine Books, 1963), quotation from p. 542.

[72]Cuber, John, Kenkel, William, and Harper, Robert, *Problems of American Society: Values in Conflict*, (New York, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), pp. 34-35.

[73]*Ibid*, p. 35

similar, in its line of argument, to the critique of the third. The critique, in all three cases, raises issues that are undeniably important. Yet work along the lines indicated by each of the three concepts continues to go on, and I think it is quite clear that the functional approach has taught us much that is of real intellectual value about social systems, the social disorganization approach has yielded much information that is crucial to understanding the problems of contemporary societies, and the secularization approach has produced some indispensable knowledge of some of the social and cultural changes that are taking, or have taken, place, Work on culture change that proceeds along the lines suggested by the concept of secularization cannot be fruitful if it ignores the issues raised in the critique, but I am convinced that it is still capable of doing much that will be useful to us.

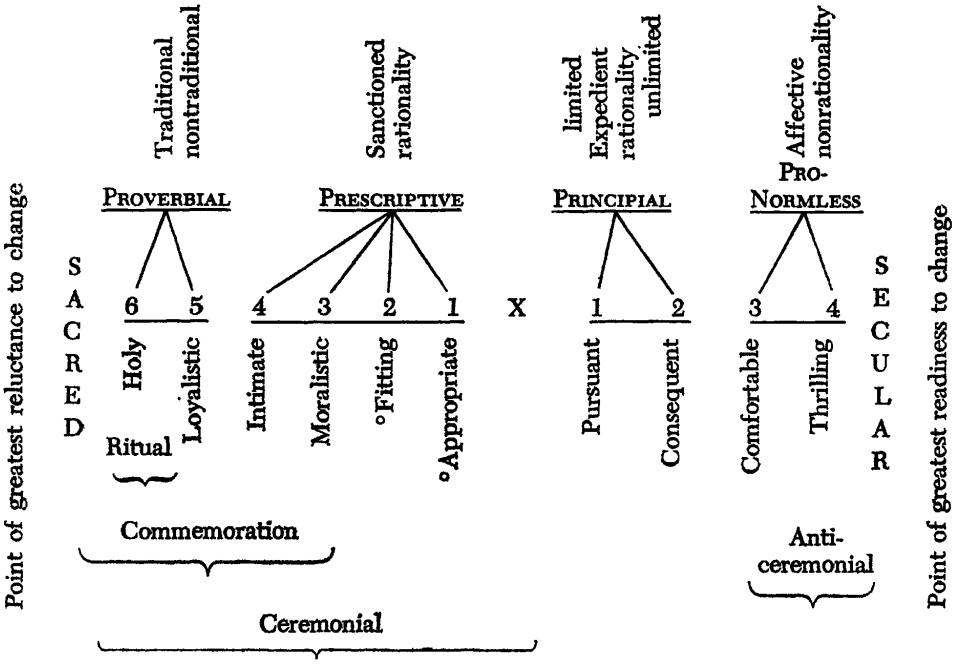
III

SACRED TO SECULAR: A MODEL FOR THE STUDY OF CHANGE

In order to get around some, but not all (since that may be impossible) of the difficulties with the concept of secularization which the discussion of the critique of that concept pointed to, it appears that what is needed is an approach to social and cultural change that may be able to incorporate changes in the religious area, but will avoid the pitfalls of the secular-religious dichotomy. A promising, and potentially fruitful, intellectual option, in addition to the five already considered, is to be found in the work of sociologist Howard Becker. In discussing this option, I want, in a small way, to try to complete the discussion of secularization that has been so helpfully outlined for us by Larry Shiner. I find it somewhat curious that he regards detailed discussion of the view that secularization may be taken to mean movement from sacred to secular society as being outside the limits of a discussion of religious change, because this view is a general theory of social change. The possibility that such a general theory of social change may be just what is needed for an adequate understanding of changes in religion should at least have been considered. This section of the paper, then, will give attention to the sixth of the approaches to secularization mentioned in the previous section.

Figure 1 (below) provides a chart drawing together conceptual tools employed in this approach in schematic fashion. Reading the chart from left to right, we find the movement from sacred to secular society indicated. The terms sacred, and sacred society, are defined by Becker as follows: the sacred is "that which is protected, whether or

FIGURE 1*



°The categories fitting and appropriate were telescoped into the category, conventional, in the definition of "Sacred Society" for the *UNESCO Social Science Dictionary*.

MEANINGS AND/OR DESIGNATION OF POINTS ON SCALE**

6. "What *is* Holy Must Be Kept Holy"
5. "Nobody Loves a Traitor"
4. The Bonds of Intimacy
3. The Moralistic and its Qualifications
2. "It Jest Ain't Fittin' "
1. "Dinner Jackets Would Be Appropriate"

X

1. Principial Evaluation — Pursuant Secularity
2. Expedient Rationality — Consequent Secularity
3. Seeking Comfort Values — Comfortable Seculiarity
4. Seeking Thrill Values — Thrilling Secularity

*Adapted from Loomis, Charles P. and Zona K., *Modern Social Theories*, (New York, D. Van Nostrand, 1965), p. 48.

**Adapted from Becker, Howard & Boskoff, Alvin, *Modern Sociological Theory*, (New York, Dryden Press, 1957), pp. 133-185.

not by religion, against violation, intrusion, or defilement. It covers the religious, but is not limited to it . . . . (S)acred carries the meaning of respected, venerated, and inviolable;"[74] the sacred society, in the light of this meaning of sacred, is "one that engenders in its members, by means of all the appropriate kinds of socialization, social control. . . , reluctance to change customary orientation toward and/or definition of values regarded as essential in that society, which reluctance exceeds in degree readiness to change in the same respcts . . . . (It is a society) bringing its members to be unwilling or unable, in whatever measure, to accept the new *as the new is defined in that society.*"[75]

The secular pole on the scale is, as might be expected, defined in a similar manner. Secular, for Becker, is understood in such a way that a culture may be described as secular "when its acceptance is based on rational and utilitarian considerations rather than on reverence and veneration."[76] A secular society, then, is a society that "engenders in or elicits from its members, by any or all appropriate means, readiness to change customary orientation toward and/or definition of, values regarded as essential to that society . . . . (It is a society) bringing its members to be willing and able, in whatever measure, to accept or pursue the new *as the new is defined in that society.*"[77] The definitions of the polar opposites in this scheme indicate that Becker has adopted the procedure of the constructive typology. Rigorously used, a *constructive typology* can be a valuable heuristic device, as I think it may be in connection with the study of social and cultural change, and especially of religious change. John C. McKinney, in describing this procedure, indicates that a constructed type involves the selection, abstraction, combination, and accentuation of a set of criteria for which there are empirical referents, the set serving as a basis for comparative work on empirical cases.[78] It is a theoretical model, functioning as an implicit theory, the drawing out of which leads to the generation of hypotheses about the type under consideration.[79] No attempt can be made, within the limits of this paper, to explore the methodological and theoretical issues involved in the use of constructed types, except as these issues may be involved in the use of the sacred-secular typology.

From the definitions of sacred and secular, and sacred and secular

[74]In Gould, Julius, and Kolb, William, *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences,* (New York, Free Press, 1964), p. 613.

[75]*Ibid.,*

[76]*Ibid.,* p. 625.

[77]*Ibid.,* p. 626.

[78]McKinney, John C., in Becker, Howarl, and Boskoff, Alvin, *Modern Sociological Theory,* (New York, Dryden Press, 1957, p. 225.

[79]*Ibid.,* p. 226

society, given above, it is quite clear that, in terms of this approach, the secular is not to be thought of as merely the diminution of the area of religion in society. It may certainly include this, but it is not identical with it, as some of the theories of secularization I have reviewed appear to suggest. A discussion of the chart provided in Figure I will help to make this, and other, points clear. The strongest empirically manifested reluctance to change, designated here as "what is holy must be kept holy," is, to be sure, found in connection with the embracing or inflicting of martyrdom for the sake of preserving religious needs and values. The sacred and the religious are not, however, coterminous, for religion *per se* is but one aspect of the sacred. Religion – holy evaluation – conduct oriented toward objects regarded as supernatural (the three categories are synonymous) must be analytically distinguished from other varieties of the sacred.

Moving to the "nobody loves a traitor" point on the scale, it may be observed that martyrdom or its equivalents is found in other kinds of sacredness – for example, the loyalistic (clan allegiance, patriotism, ethnic identification), which may call forth such actions as altruistic suicide or even murder. The holy and the loyalistic are difficult to separate, and this is true both empirically and analytically. The possibility that it may be safer to denounce a god than to assert independence of a group must be kept in mind, yet the holy has probably been the stronger of the two aspects of the sacred.

The "bonds of intimacy" point on the scale is obviously linked to the existence of the primary group. The ties men have with friends, comrades, mates, and partners, once firmly established, are not altered easily, and they are never terminated as if they were of little importance. Universally, intimacy calls forth a high level of devotion, although the basis of it may be subject to many variations, and its importance can be exaggerated (as it is when small-town American Protestant culture is used as the paradigm for the understanding of community). Moving another point along the scale, we come to "the moralistic and its qualifications." The moralistic refers to evaluations involving enjoined or forbidden types of conduct, but it is more limited than the concept of mores, which has sometimes been used in such a way as to include everything from the holy to the fitting.

"It just ain't fittin' " is Becker's phrase for the next category on the scale, the fittingly sacred; its "territory" is the part of the scale that lies between the moralistic and the merely appropriate. Things done or not done, things that are good or bad form, things that are mannerly or unmannerly, decent or vulgar fall here. The evaluations expressed here represent a rather low intensity of the sacred. Offenses

against the moralistic may evoke indignation, while offenses against the fitting elicit not much more than mild contempt. When the "dinner jackets would be appropriate" point on the scale is reached, the shift to the secular is imminent. The words used in connection with the appropriate still have a kind of sacred tinge to them (suitable, customary, expected, for example), and the appropriate is not simply a matter of indifference. But those who engage in what is inappropriate are not regarded as unworthy, but as uninstructed. The appropriate, then marks the lowest degree of the sacred, and it lies next to the zero point on the scale. From here on, the secular begins to come increasingly into the picture.

The zero point on the scale might, Becker observes, be represented theoretically by the kinds of conduct that show almost complete indifference either to change or the lack of it. Such conduct might be difficult to locate; *empirically*, it may be non-existent, but analytically a zero point so described must be postulated. When the transition through the theoretical zero point has taken place, the secular portion of the scale begins, that is, readiness to change takes the place of reluctance. Change is now acquiesced in, assented to, searched for, but restrictions stemming from the sacred govern the kind of change, its speed, and its range. The proverbs and prescriptions that symbolized the sacred begin to lose their power. In place of them, principles (which are more abstract, and therefore more flexible) now come increasingly into use. Principles lend themselves to change (even though they are yet regarded as sacred) since they can be progressively modified by implementing ammendments, whereas proverbs and prescriptions tend to be concretely and tightly bound to their immediate manifestations. Change pursuant to the carrying out of basic principles is now considered both possible and desirable, so long as the principles are kept in force.

Eventually, the ammendments of principles go so far that there occurs either a reversion to concrete prescriptions or an abandonment of the imperative to bring changes into line with principles. When abandonment takes place, we have reached the point of expedient, as contrasted with pursuant, rationality. Changes may, or may not, be consistent with recognized principles. The fundamental meaning of expedient rationality is that any means, provided they are not believed to be self-defeating, may be employed in the achievement of ends, without regard for whether such means can be squared with, or are pursuant of, principles. Rational judgments of instrumental efficiency are what is important, entirely apart from the question of whether the ends are themselves rational or nonrational.

When the outside limits of the secular are reached, both means and ends may be nonrational. The "sweepingly secular" now becomes a possibility, in two not easily distinguishable forms – the comfortable and the thrilling. Comfortable secularity, as the term itself implies, involves a readiness to seek whatever provides comfort, if the search for it itself is comfortable, with no concern about breaches of proverbial, prescriptive, or principal rules, so that change is wide open. The transition to the secularity of the thrill shows no sharp break. The secularity of the comfortable is epitomized by the statement "I like it because I like it," uttered as though no more needs to be said in "explaining" an action. The secularity of the thrill is expressed by the act done "for the hell of it." When people begin flinging themselves into the nonrational pursuit of the new simply because it is new, proverbs, prescriptions, and principles largely become irrelevant, and norms are subject to whim, so that they may be disregarded, evaded, changed, or even flouted. This brings us to the end of the secular end of the scale, which has moved from the minimum of willingness of change to change that is permitted in the service of principle, and finally to change for the sake of change, the point of maximum willingness to change.[80]

Several comments about this scale are now in order. The scale has been intended to provide guidelines or landmarks. While it has dealt primarily with types of reluctance and readiness to change, rather than with the societies that embody these types, the designations of proverbial, prescriptive, principal, and pronormless, as Figure 1 shows, can be applied to societies. It must be understood, however, that empirically the societal types suggested are found to be mixed; the *proportion* of the proverbial or the other types, is what has to be determined. Sacred society and secular society are ideal types. They do not exist empirically in a "pure" form. At one end of the scale, sacredness, as defined, is never absolute; at the other end of the scale, secularity, in the sense of normlessness, does have limits. A situation in which needs and values were utterly discrete, wholly private, completely random, and with no "system" would not be a society at all. Such a situation, then, represents the theoretical limiting case at the secular end of the scale.

The scale can be made more useful, and more applicable for the pursuit of empirial investigation, if two additional landmarks are added (not shown in Figure 1): isolation and accessibility, which occur in three major forms – vicinal, social, and mental. Physical separation

[80]This account of the sacred-secular scale follows that presented by Howard Becker in Becker, Howard, and Boskoff, Alvin, *Modern Sociological Theory*, pp. 141-161.

from other societies in the vicinity constitutes vicinal isolation, and this may be changed into vicinal accessibility without removing the physical separation (an obvious impossibility). Social and mental isolation may, of course, continue to be maintained, even when vicinal isolation has been transformed into accessibility – witness the spectacle of the American tourist looking out the window of his suite in the Cairo Hilton at the ragged peasants and beggars wandering in the streets. Degrees of isolation and accessibility are important in the application of the sacred-secular scale for the reason that the type of society nearest the sacred end, the proverbial society, usually is isolated in all three ways, and because of this is difficult to change. The prescriptive society may survive a considerable degree of increase in vicinal accessibility, since social and mental isolation can be continued in ideological and authoritarian forms. The society that has become principial is usually found to have been exposed to frequent and sustained visits by outsiders who are allowed to move about freely, by this very fact tending to increase social and mental accessibility. As accessibility in all its forms continues to increase, some remnants from proverbial, prescriptive, and principial value systems continue to be maintained, but at some point in this process it becomes accurate to speak of the emergence of the *pronormless* society, in which expedient rationality has become virtually, but not completely (in which case it would not longer possible to speak of society at all) unlimited.

The possibility of a reversal in the process of secularization must also be noted. In what Becker calls a normative reaction to normlessness, a reversion to sacralization may occur, in which reinstatement of reluctance to change, in various forms, takes place. Normlessness is perhaps exhilarating, but for some it may be very uncomfortable or even frightening, to the point of suggesting the probability of disaster. In such situations, some form of archaism is advocated as the way to avert the disaster. The pronormless society, at most chaotic or at least synchretic, tends to mix value-systems that appear to be irreconcilable; it produces a kind of free-market in ideologies and *Weltanschauung,* in which "gospels" of all sorts experience sometimes fantastic, if short-lived, growth. Here it might be said that the extremes meet, for secularization, having gone to its extreme limit, elicits the intensification of efforts at re-sacralization.[81]

Two additional points, perhaps in the form of reminders about the kind of use that can be made of the sacred-secular scale that has been presented, need to be made. One point is that the scale is not intended to suggest any sort of unilinear evolutionary theory of social and cul-

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 163-176.

tural change. The theory implicit in the scale does not necessarily require any commitment to the premise that the process of movement from sacred to secular is inevitable or irreversible, or that it follows some unchangeable order. It is, rather, designed as a set of landmarks in terms of which empirical investigation of the actual course of social and cultural change in a given society might be pursued. The task of constructing the measures and indexes that would be needed for this (not discussed in this paper) would still remain. Certainly, no foregone conclusions for which the investigator is seeking confirmation by a judicious selection of cases are being implicitly smuggled into the process. Along with this goes a second reminder. The points on the scale cannot, at the present stage of its use, be marked off as precisely as the term "point" might seem to indicate. Points here might better be seen as "zones" on a continuum, with one zone sliding almost imperceptibly into the next one. Improvements in the precision of the scale await the development of adequate indexes, a problem that continues to be endemic in every phase of work in the behavioral and social sciences.

The sacred-secular theory of Howard Becker has been presented at some length for the reason that I believe it has relevance, not only to the general question of social and cultural change, but also to the tracing of ideological (specifically, religious) change along the lines suggested by the alternative views of secularization that I have reviewed. Whether secularization is defined as the decline of religion, increasing conformity to "the world," the disengagement of society from religion, the transposition of religious ideas, or as desacralization, the processes involved can be seen as parts of the movement from sacred toward secular society (in Becker's sense), without the value-loading of which critics of the concept of secularization have complained. The attempt to trace the ramifications of Becker's approach for each of five views of secularization cannot be pursued in any detail in this paper. I content myself there with a few remarks concerning the possibilities that seem to lie in Becker's sacred-secular scale theory. The disadvantages that Larry Shiner finds to be built into a religion-secular polarity (that it assumes that Western forms of societal differentiation are normative; that it assumes that if the secular is increasing, the religious must be decreasing; that it assumes that religion is an entity of some kind) do not appear to be inherent in Becker's theory. Further, unless it is assumed in advance (as it does not need to be) that the movement from sacred to secular society is a movement from "good" to "bad" to "worst" (or that a closed traditional society is good and an open flexible society is bad) we are confronted with

methodological, theoretical, and empirical questions, and not with value questions. Changes in the religious sphere of society are to be seen, in this view, not as special cases, but as parts of the larger pattern (if one can be discerned) of change in societies. Whether the Becker theory holds the promise that I see in it at the moment can only be determined by an investigation, both historical and contemporary, that cannot be undertaken in this paper, but would be, I am convinced, both interesting and fruitful. Perhaps what I am expressing here is my belief that it is too early to abandon the theory of secularization – in some form – as a part of our search for viable theory of social and cultural change.

IV

TECHNOLOGY AND THE MORAL ORDER: A MACRO-ANALYTIC COMMENT ON SECULARIZATION

In the course of preparing this paper, I had occasion to re-examine the work of Alvin Gouldner and Richard Peterson on TECHNOLOGY AND THE MORAL ORDER, which I had read earlier in connection with a continuing interest in the critique of functional theory, and which at the time I had noted as insightful with respect to my interest in contemporary changes in the religious sphere of culture. In 1965, I wrote in a blank space at the end of Chapter III of this book the question "the sociologicial background for understanding 'the death of God' in contemporary theology?" That marginal note now seems worthy of being given further attention, since it is relevant to my interests in this paper. While the term "secularization" is not used by these authors, and does not appear in the index of their book, what they have to say throws some important light on what students of secularization have been trying to get at. No attempt will be made to discuss the complicated methodological issues raised by the work of Gouldner and Peterson, since I am interested at the moment in certain macrotheoretical implications of their findings rather than in a critique of their methodology.

In terms of data taken from the Yale Cross-Cultural Files, Gouldner and Peterson concentrated on four dimensions of primitive society – lineality, sex dominance, level of technology, and Apollonianism (norm-sending), referred to, respectively, as Factors L, SD, T, and A. For the purposes of this paper, it is the relation of Factors T and A to each other that is of special interest. Factor A is discussed in a manner which the authors describe as akin to what Ruth Benedict did with the notion of Apollonianism in PATTERNS OF CULTURE, but Gouldner

and Peterson took their paradigm of Apollonianism from Nietzsche. Nietzsche's model of this dimension includes the following emphases: freedom from extravagant urges (nothing in excess); rejection of license; stress on cognitive modes of experience; a hopeful, melioristic view of the world; activism; stress on the dictum, "know thyself;" concern with the plastic arts; maintenance of a compensatory belief in gods that lived; yearning for an afterlife. Nietzsche evidently thought of Apollonianism as being primarily concerned with impulse control, which Gouldner and Peterson think may be a common latent dimension running through the religio-magical items and the items indicative of centralized authority taken from the cross-cultural data. In this connection they note that the performance of ceremonial and ritual tasks, and adaptation to differentiated structures of authority, both require actors in a system to practise deferred gratification. Ceremony and ritual appear to perform several fuctions, all associated in some way with the strengthening of morality. They solemnize orientations to nature and to other men (Radcliffe-Brown);[82] they reinforce the super-ego; they (along with centralized authority) commonly have a norm-sending function (Rommetveit).[83] In these terms Apollonianism also appears to involve a supernaturally sanctioned norm-sending system. Gouldner and Peterson argue that "the higher the level of technology, the higher the degree of demanded impulse control or Apollonianism."[84]

They arrive at this position in a manner of interpretation that may may be sketched (in greatly oversimplified and eliptical form) somewhat as follows. Factor T (level of technology) is associated with development of a more complex and differentiated system of social stratification; the core items in T are correlated with the growth of a money economy and a higher level of trade. A money economy means a drastic modification of social arrangements based on reciprocity, while growth of trade indicates increasing contract with diversity of belief systems, accompanied by a decline in the belief in an unchangeable order of things.[85] Life chances are increasingly differentiated, and different social strata develop diverging social perspectives, with the result that fewer and fewer beliefs and values are shared in common, and tensions and conflicts between and among the strata grow.[86]

In this context, the emergence of "the modern self" can be under-

[82]Radcliffe-Brown, A.R., *The Andaman Islanders,* (Cambridge, The University Press, 1922).

[83]Rommetviet, Ragmar, *Social Norms and Roles.* (Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota Press, 1955).

[84]Gouldner, Alvin and Peterson, Richard, *Technology and the Moral Order,* (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1962).

[85]*Ibid,* p. 37.

[86]*Ibid,* p. 38.

stood. Amidst these threats to order and cohesion in society, the process of individuation is enhanced. The very notion of "self" involves at least three elements: a discrimination of differences, as well as likenesses, between a given individual, and others; an emerging sense of the individual's own power; the discrimination of the self's discrimination, so that times of alertness and times of quiescence, shaped awareness and formless nonawareness, are distinguished (in short, the self becomes aware of itself as self). Differences *between* ourselves and others are introjected, so that they are experienced as a difference in ourself – as our individuality. Under the conditions described above, the demands introjected into the self increasingly differ and entail conflicting or inconsistent perspectives, with a resulting increase in internal tensions, and in the need for efforts at tension reduction. The sum of the matter is that "(t)he Neolithic development of technology strengthens the self's feeling of power by giving it increased control over nature and greater practice in decision-making. With the growth of this sense of the self's power comes a growth of self-*regard.*"[87]

The self that has emerged appears to require some sort of "proof" that it is real; it needs to be "validated." Such validation may occur mainly in two ways: one is through feeling powerful in conflictual validation; the other is through feeling loved and approved in a process of consensual validation. Each of these methods of self-validation has costs. The "cost" of conflictural validation is that in the effort to maintain self-boundaries the resistance of others is increased, with a resulting increase in tensions and the possibility that others will withhold needed consensual validation. The cost of complete commitment to receiving consensual validation of the self is the possibility of a conformity that destroys the necessary boundaries of the self. Either way, the maintenance of the self is a costly enterprise.[88]

The emergence of the "new self" makes the problem of impulse management more difficult of solution. Order and cohesion, the adjudication of interpersonal differences, the control of mutual interferences of persons and groups, and the synchronizing of task performance in society become increasingly problematical. Of course, divergent impulses might conceivably be controlled by a system of power and dominance, involving punishment of interference, and the rewarding of compliance or acquiescence. But the cost of this approach seems to be inordinately high. The alternative seems to be the development of a normative structure, a system of reciprocal moral beliefs agreed upon or shared by those who participate in this society. If this norma-

[87] *Ibid*, pp. 39-44, quotation at p. 44.
[88] *Ibid*, pp. 45.

tive system is to function in the manner anticipated (that is, "solve" the problem of societal cohesion and selfhood) certain conditions must be noted. Norms must be judged to be not merely expedient or useful, but also legitimate, right, and proper, so that they conduce to the performance of actions even when the outcome is doubtful or incalculable. Norms must be shared, so that they facilitate common definitions of situation, characterized by complementarity. Norms must be reciprocal, in order that an arrangement for an exchange of gratification may be provided.[89]

If a rule meets one of the following conditions it is likely to be thought legitimate:: if it is associated with benefits to both *claimee* and *claimant,* if it is associated with gratifications to a third party, the claims of which are agreed to be legitimate; if it is seen to involve disadvantages or deprivations for both claimee and claimant. If one or more of these conditions is met, the chances are increased that the performance of the actions indicated by a rule will not be thought of as selfishly motivated, and thus that the performance "required" will take place. Rules believed to be very old, and supported by the force of tradition have certain advantages in all of this. Rules believed to be derived from an agency that is nonpartisan and impartial with respect to rival claims are more likely to be given the status of legitimacy than are rules associated with the contending parties.[90]

The notion that rules or norms are suprapersonal and impartial is often supported by a rhetoric indicating that they are of divine origin, that they are the will or the gift of the gods.[91] The inducements to impulse control that emanate from this source must, however, with the growth of technology, be regarded as only one of several functional alternatives. Some impulse control takes place because of the belief that infraction of rules will incur effective punishment; some takes place because of the expectation of an attractive future life; it must now be added that some takes place because the growth of technology has made available an increasing number and variety of rewards in this world, and these rewards can compensate for the costs of impulse control. If these items are viewed as functional alternatives, it seems to follow that if one declines the others will need to be strengthened, and that if one gains strength the others may decline with out any diminution of impulse control. Thus, the correlation between Factors T and A would not be expected to continue if technology makes good its promise of greater rewards. So, in the final analysis of Apollonian-

[89] *Ibid,* pp. 47-48.
[90] *Ibid,* p. 49.
[91] *Ibid,* p. 50.

ism we may say that it "may be especially needed as a 'starting mechanism' at the beginning of a major technological spurt or reorganization, insofar as this entails a heightening of deprivations or an initial sacrifice of traditional gratifications. Under these conditions, a concentration of Appollonianism may serve in effect as a form of 'deficit-financing,' providing social controls during a period when the new technology's rewards are not yet available to motivate the new demands for impulse control. When and insofar as the increased rewards of the new technology are distributed it may be that Apollonianism is a less necessary source of impulse control and may slacken."[92] In other words, and in a shorter version, when God has finished his job he will no longer hang around to embarrass the guests at the big barbecue; he will have the decency to die and leave us alone.

The preceding sentence is, of course, an intentional half facetious caricature. Behind it, however, is a serious point – that if the so-called death of God is understood as a cultural event, as it is by most of the theologians who discuss it, rather than as a metaphysical pronouncement, the functional interpretation of the situation leading to the realization that God died suggested in the work of Gouldner and Peterson deserves serious attention. I would add to this that the account they give of what has taken place in Western society has some notable similarities to the account given by students of secularization, although as indicated at the outset they do not use the term.[93]

V

SECULARIZATION AND COGNITIVE BELIEF: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

In the previous sections, this paper has referred in a number of ways to what might be called the socio-structural aspects of secularization. I turn in this final section to a noetic-epistemological level of analysis, which, as I indicated at the outset, is to be explored in terms of how secularization affects the "consciousness" of modern man, and which culminates in a phenomenological understanding of religious belief systems. The matter at hand may be helpfully approached by beginning with some reference to one way that the question of "world-view" has been dealt with in anthropology. Robert Red-

[92] *Ibid*, pp. 51-53, quotation at pp. 52-53.

[93] Gouldner and Peterson refer to the work of Guy Swanson, whose *The Birth of the Gods* they regard as tending to confirm their interpretations of the cross-cultural data bearing on the question of the relation between religious beliefs and social structure. Swanson attempted to update Durkheim's view of this problem, and he was able to show, on the basis of a considerable body of evidence that Durkheim's initial clue was substantiated. Swanson's work might well be pursued in connection with the present interest in religious aspects of social and cultural change.

field has pointed out in his THE PRIMITIVE WORLD AND ITS TRANSFORMATIONS that "the 'world view' of a people . . . is the way a people characteristically look outward upon the universe . . . . how everything looks to a people, 'the designation of the existent as a whole.' . . . . If there is an emphasized meaning in the phrase 'world view,' . . . it is in the suggestion it carries of the structure of things as man is aware of them."[94] Redfield draws three conclusions about the world-view of precivilized man that provide relevant background for our present interest: (1) precivilized man perceived a cosmos that partook simultaneously of the qualities of man, nature, and God; what "confronted" man was not a trinity of separate things but one thing having different aspects – a unitary cosmos pervaded with sacredness and "personal;" (2) since nature is not shaply set off as discontinuous with man, in the precivilized world view, the attitude toward that which is not man is one of *mutuality;* (3) in the primary world-view Man and Not-Man are bound together in a moral order; the universe is morally significant, and far from being indifferent it cares.[95] In what has happened to this world-view, we can see one of the "great transformations" that the human mind has experienced over its long history. The three characteristics of the primitive world-view indicated "have weakened or disappeared. Man comes out from the unity of the universe within which he is orientated now as something separate from nature and comes to confront nature as something with physical qualities only, upon which he may work his will. As this happens, the universe loses its moral character and becomes to him indifferent, a system uncaring of man. The existence today of ethical systems and of religions only qualifies this statement; ethics and religion struggle in one way or another to take account of a physical universe indifferent to man."[96]

The transformation in world-view described by Redfield is expressed phenomenologically in the subjectivization of the consciousness of modern man. The developments to which I am referring have been traced in some detail in the work of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, who set them initially in the context of "Secularization and Pluralism."[97] Defining "pluralism" as "a situation in which there is competition in the institutional ordering of comprehensive meanings for everyday life," they argue that these meanings are socially structured, by which they mean that "among the many socially recognized

---

[94]Redfield, Robert, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations,* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1953), pp. 85-86.

[95]*Ibid,* pp. 103-107.

[96]*Ibid,* p. 108.

[97]Berger, Peter L., and Luckmann, Thomas, in *International Yearbook for Sociology of Religion,* II, (1966), pp. 73-84.

meanings of everyday life there will always be some that are comprehensive in the sense of supplying an overall canopy for all the experiences of individual existence .... the meanings that allow the individual to make sense of his biography as a whole, particularly to integrate into an intelligible unity his experences in the various discrepant sectors of everyday life as well as those experiences that are marginal to the reality of everyday life."[98] The pluralism that obtains among these comprehensive meanings has a social-structural dimension, but it has a subjective dimension as well. This is to say that there is competition among the institutions that objectify the meaning systems, and that the competition is manifested at the personal level in subjective consciousness.

Pluralism in the view of Berger and Luckmann, has been produced by secularization, "the progressive autonomization of societal sectors from the domination of religious meanings and institutions.[99] At the social-structural level, pluralism has affected both the relationship between institutional religion and other social institutions and the character of institutional religion itself. Ignoring differences in details for particular societies, it can be said that there is a widespread general tendency toward a separation between religious and other institutional spheres. The upshot of a variety of developments here is the emergence of a network of religious bureaucracies in interaction with each other and with the political organs. The religious monopoly preserved by the coercive power of the state is replaced by a population of voluntary consumers; in short, pluralism has created a religious market,[100] in which religious groups, functioning as marketing agencies, cater to a clientele whose support is problematical. The need for a religious group to continue to appeal to its clientele involves increasing developments in organizational rationalization, tending toward bureaucratization. Unregulated competition, being here, as it is in strictly economic sphere, economically irrational, builds up pressures toward the regulation of competition by the development of religious cartels, so that the number of competing units can be reduced and the accommodation of those that remain can be facilitated. In the long run, this affects in crucial ways the inner contents of religion, for the expectations of the clientele now become decisive, both economically and sociologically speaking. Religious content tends to become both standardized and marginally differentiated. Items in the traditional religious contents

---

[98] *Ibid*, p. 73.

[99] *Ibid*, p. 74.

[100] Cf. Berger, Peter L., "A Market Model for the Emergence of Ecumencity," *Social Research*, XXX, (1963).

that are now irrelevant to consumer demand will be de-emphasized, if not eliminated entirely.

In social-structural terms, the contemporary person finds that his social existence is dichotomized; in the public sphere, he is likely to occupy highly specialized statuses, and the roles enacted in connection with them are increasingly found to be inadequate in terms of personal meaning and self-identity; in the private sphere, the individual has some liberty to arrange his life, within the private sphere, according to preferences. The crucial primary institution, the family, while it does function as an important source of meaning and identity for personal life, is not entirely adequate in this respect. Thus, a variety of "secondary" institutions has appeared — e.g., mass media, education, and religion. Religion, at one time a "constraining, monopolistic institution of the public sphere," has now become a "voluntary, competitive institution of private life."[101]

These developments have their correlates in subjective consciousness, in terms of religious subjectivization, a process in which the old religious contents lose the status of *objective facticity* in individual consciousness. Traditional religious affirmations about what reality is, once taken-for-granted, now lose their status as "objective truth" and become, instead matters of choice, belief, and preference. Any particular religion is, then, in the pluralistic situation, a *hairesis* (heresy), a choice. The modes of subjectivization tend to be either "hot" or "cold." The hot mode appears in the Kieregaardian "leap of faith" found, for example, in the religious existentialists. Much more common, however, is the cool mode, a kind of noncommittal attitude, within which religious contents become opinions, held with varying degrees of relevance and saliency. Neither of these stances is possible apart from a situation in which traditional religious affirmations are no longer self-evidently a part of the taken-for-grantedness of the everyday world.

Certain phenomena in the contemporary religious situation now become intelligible in the light of what has been said about the subjectivization of religious contents. "Religion," say Berger and Luckmann, "tends to be this-worldly in its orientation, in accordance with the cognitive presuppositions of a secularized view of reality. This-worldliness . . . is largely equated with the interests of the privatized individual. Thus religion becomes both 'interpersonal' and 'inward'; in its orientation."[102] The contemporary movements of existentialism and psychologism offer rhetorics by means of which the traditional re-

[101]Berger and Luckmann, "Secularization and Pluralism," p. 80.
[102]*Ibid*, p. 82.

ligious contents can be de-objectivated.[103] Theology, as the pluralistic situation deepens, tends to become an esoteric exercise for a rather small group of experts, who still concern themselves with what is happening to the traditional religious contents, but it still functions as organizational ideology for the religious institutions and as legitimation for the activities of the religious organization men.[104]

As subjectivization proceeds, it generates a need for theoretical legitimation, since the theologians must in some way respond to the phenomenon. They have done so in ways that may be conveniently arranged on a continuum between the extreme postures of attempting to maintain the old objectivities through defensive strategies, and of accepting subjectivization as valid, so that the task is that of legitimating the acceptance theologically. The available formula for accomplishing what is called for by this posture is the translation of traditional religious affirmations into the *language* of subjectivism. The efforts of Bishop Robinson to be "honest to God," of Rudolf Bultmann to "demythologize" the Christian faith, of Paul Tillich to work out the implications of "the Protestant principle," and to develop a "theology of culture" may be cited (in a variety of ways, to be sure) as examples of this posture. In between these extremes are to be found a fascinating array of compromise, accommodation, and *aggiornamento*. Berger and Luckmann wonder whether this leads to a situation in which secularization is "finally *aufgehoben*, since religion itself has become fully secularized from within," and to what extent the accomplishments achieved from this posture represent "the self-liquidation of religion."[105] They are inclined to think that this theological "liberalism" is inherently unstable and full of tension, so that its adherents are finally predisposed to look for cognitive relief in either the leap of faith or in sheer psychologism. As for the defensive posture, it can only be viable in contexts in which it is possible to keep intact a segregated social world, capable of producing adequate structures of boundary-maintenance, and this becomes less and less possible.

The situation just described is quite understandable in societies, like most of those in the western world, "in which discrepant worlds coexist within the same society, contemporaneously challenging each other's cognitive and normative claims," to the extent that religion is now in the midst of a "crisis of credibility."[106] Religion, after all, deals

---

[103]On psychologism, sf. Berger, Peter L., "Toward a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis," Social Research, XXXII, (1965), pp. 26-41.

[104]Cf. Berger, Peter L., "Religious Establishment and Theological Education," *Theology Today*, (1962)

[105]Berger and Luckmann, "Secularization and Pluralism," p. 83.

[106]Berger, Peter L., "A Sociological View of the Secularization of Theology," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, VI, (1967), p. 9.

with supraempirical certitudes, and at the present time the maintenance of any certitudes that extend beyond empirical necessities is problematical. As has already been indicated, there has occurred a process of de-objectification of the traditional religious contents; this is based upon the disintegration of the traditional plausibility structure that underlay these contents. A phenomenological account of the "knowing" process is a useful tool in understanding what is involved in this. To begin with, human consciousness emerges out of practical activity, and it remains related to such activity in a variety of ways. Ideas and theories, of whatever kind, are in constant and recurring process of interaction with the process of activity from which they emerge. If a society, for the purpose at hand, may be thought of as a relatively permanent constellation of activity, then it can be said that a society is always in a dialectical relationship with the "worlds" that provide the basis for the cognitive and normative meaning coordinates of individual existence. "The socially produced world attains and retains the status of objective reality in the consciousness of its inhabitants in the course of common, continuing social activity. Conversely, the status of objective reality will be lost if the common social activity that served as its infrastructure disintegrates."[107] Theories and ideas whether of astrology or of science, are buttressed (and maintain their plausibility) through infrastructures of confirmatory social interaction. If the infrastructure is strong and lasting, the ideas grounded in it become "objective reality;" they are taken for granted as "facts of life." What is said here about ideation in general applies with equal force (if not more than equal) to religious ideation. "The plausibility structure is . . . a collection of people, procedures, and mental processes geared to the task of keeping a specific definition of reality going. . . . (S)uch a social and social-psychological matrix is a condition *sine qua non* of all religious ideation."[108] When a particular plausibility structure begins to disintegrate, one notes a kind of process in human consciousness (in the society in question) in which what I *know* becomes what I believe and further along in the process, what I believe becomes my *opinion*, and finally, my *feeling*. What has happened to religion in the western world during the past several decades makes considerable sense in the light of this perspective.[109]

The question might still remain, however, as to whether what has taken place is accurately described as secularization. It is, of course,

[107] *Ibid*, p. 10.
[108] *Ibid*, p. 11.
[109] On the phenomenological account of human consciousness, see Berger, Peter L., and Luckmann, Thomas, *The Social Construction of Reality*, (New York, Doubleday, 1966), and Berger, Peter L., *The Sacred Canopy*, (New York, Doubleday, 1967).

if one accepts the main assumption of most of the work in the sociology of religion, that church and religion are to be identified. This assumption, as Thomas Luckmann has pointed out, fits neatly with the understanding of sociology as a science of social institutions, and it is congruent with a theoretical positivism.[110] Religion, thus viewed, is the institutional embodiment of a set of irrational beliefs, and the churches are "islands of religion in a sea of secularism."[111] The question must be raised as to whether it is scientifically accurate to identify religion with its prevalent institutional form, thus ruling out the possibility that some "socially objectivated meaning structures . . . function to integrate the routines of everyday life and to legitimate its crises," and thereby missing some essentially religious "aspects of location of the individual in society."[112]

To be sure, the account of the contemporary religious situation given by those who have followed out one or another of the interpretations of secularization that have been reviewed earlier in this paper must, in certain important respects, be accepted. The churches survive either by association with social groups and strata that continue to be oriented toward values of a past social order, or by legitimating the dominant culture of the modern industrial society. Traditional church religion has been shoved to the periphery of society, and the study of secularization is an attempt to account for this fact. But we must ask, in addition, whether anything that could be called religion has replaced this traditional church religion.[113] Otherwise stated, this is the question of functional equivalents or functional alternatives. The relevant question might be stated in this way: "what is it that secularization has brought about in the way of a socially objectivated cosmos of meaning?"[114]

When this question is asked, it is necessary to consider problematical what is taken for granted in sociological functionalism. Religious *institutions* are not universal, but we may still go on to inquire whether the phenomena underlying religious institutions, or performing analogous functions in the relation of the individual to the social order, *are* universal. What is it, in other words, that becomes institutionlized, and what reality does it possess, as a social fact, before it is institutionalized? This question can be answered, Luckmann argues, by identifying the "universal yet specific anthropological condition of religion," which is to be found in the social processes "by which con-

[110] Luckmann, Thomas, *The Invisible Religion*, (New York, Macmillan, 1967), p. 22.
[111] *Ibid*, p. 23.
[112] *Ibid*, pp. 26-27
[113] *Ibid*, p. 37.
[114] *Ibid*, p. 40.

sciousness and conscience are individuated."[115] Luckmann arrives at this point in a manner that may be summarized (briefly, elliptically, and omitting discussion of the empirical evidence for it) as follows. "Detachment from immediate experience originates in the confrontation with fellow men in the face-to-face situation. It leads to the individuation of consciousness and permits the construction of interpretive schemes, ultimately, of systems of meaning. Detachment from immediate experience finds its complement in the integration of past, present and future into a socially defined morally relevant biography. This integration develops in continuous social relations and leads to the formation of conscience. The individuation of the two complementary aspects of Self occurs in social processes. The organism — in isolation nothing but a separate pole of 'meaningless' subjective processes — becomes a Self by embarking with others upon the construction of an 'objective' and moral universe of meaning. Thereby the organism transcends its biological nature. It is in keeping with an elementary sense of the concept of religion to call the transcendence of biological nature by the human organism a religious phenomenon."[116] In the light of this, the world view, as an 'objective' and historical social reality, is an elementary social form of religion.[117] As such, it has no special or distinct institutional base. The articulation of a particular sacred cosmos in the world view is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for the emergence of the institutional specialization of religion.

Under the conditions of increasing complexity of the division of labor, a large economic surplus beyond the level of subsistence, an increasingly differentiated pattern of social stratification, (which is, in a sense, an all too neat summary of social and cultural change under conditions of urbanization and industrialization) world-view, like other kinds of "knowledge," becomes differentially distributed in society. The same conditions that obtain with respect to the distribution of knowledge (and ignorance), skills, and techniques in other areas also apply to world-view. The social distribution of religious representations becomes more heterogeneous, and specifically religious roles (the religious "experts") proliferate. Differentiation of full-time religious statuses is accompanied by the standardization of the sacred cosmos, and the emergence of ecclesiastical organization. When religion is localized in special institutions, the possibility of an antithesis between "religion" and "society" develops, and tensions between religious experience and the demands of everyday affairs may occur.

[115] *Ibid*, p. 49.
[116] *Ibid*, pp. 48-49.
[117] *Ibid*, p. 53.

The religious specialists eventually (and understandably, since the process is similar to that which occurs in other areas of specialization) are faced with the necessity of defending the "official" model of the sacred cosmos. This presents no insurmountable difficulty so long as the socialization process in the society includes effective socialization in terms of the official model. The gap between the official version of the sacred cosmos (the definition of matters of ultimate concern) will not be immediately perceived, if the rhetoric of religious representations remains effective, at least minimally, and there will be on the part of the individual some resistance to social and cultural changes that might tend to increase consciousness of the "irrelevance" of the official model. Eventually, however, the point is reached where "what the fathers preach but do not practice will be internalized by the sons as a system of rhetoric rather than as a system of 'ultimate' significance. At the extreme point of such a development . . . we find a situation in which everybody is still socialized into the 'official' model of religion, but the model is not taken at face value by anybody. Religious practices . . . will be performed for a variety of 'nonreligious' motives and specifically religious beliefs will be compartmentalized into opinion . . . which will have no direct relation to the individuals' effective priorities and everyday conduct."[118] The theoretical possibility of a society in which the typical socialization process does not include the former official model of religion now comes into view. In such a society, only individuals who may be characterized as being socially and psychologically marginal will internalize the official model as a system of ultimate significance. This would be a society accurately described as no longer characterized by the institutional specialization of religion. The crucial point is that it is a *non sequitor* to say that religion has disappeared from the society so characterized, and this is the conclusion that seems to be called for by many of the students of what they call secularization.

It is closer to the mark to describe the present situation somewhat along the lines now to be suggested. Despite all the factors that contribute to increasing conflict between the claims of the traditional model and the circumstances of individual daily existence, that conflict does not usually become particularly acute. The claims are, after all, a part of the taken-for-grantedness of the everyday world, and in that world, they are understood as rhetorical. At the same time, it is the subjective "neutralization" of these claims that creates the possibility of their being maintained as a rhetoric. The claims do not have to be "rejected," since they retain salience only as rhetoric in the first place.

[118] *Ibid*, p. 89.

Still, it is correct to say that the neutralization of the claims may contribute to the further dissolution of the cogency and coherence of the official model, and it will certainly reinforce the tendency to restrict the applicability of the model to the private sphere of the individual's existence.[119] If this is the case, the relevance of speaking of the market situation in the religious realm becomes clear. A bewildering assortment of religious themes, of versions of the sacred cosmos, is now directly accessible to the individual. This does not create a society from which religion has disappeared; what it does is to bring about a situation in which the forms of religion are no longer mediated through the institutional structures of the society or through the institutional specialization of religion. The conclusion that religion has disappeared (or is in process of disappearing) is not warranted, since, in principle, it is quite possible that "the 'autonomous' individual will not only select certain themes but will construct with them a well-articulated private system of 'ultimate' significance. To the extent that some themes in the assortment of 'ultimate' meanings are coalesced into something like a coherent model . . . some individuals may internalize such models en bloc . . . . (I)t is more likely that individuals will legitimate the situation-bound (primarily emotional and affective) priorities arising in their 'private spheres' by deriving, *ad hoc,* more or less appropriate rhetorical elements from the sacred cosmos . . . . (T)he *prevalent* individual systems of 'ultimate' significance will consist of a loose and rather unstable hierarchy of 'opinions' legitimating the affectively determined priorities of 'private' life."[120] The empirical evidence to support this interpretation of the present situation does not exist in any adequate measure as yet. I am convinced, however, that the suggested interpretation is capable of generating testable hypotheses on the basis of which its adequacy can be determined, and that enough impressionistic 'evidence' already exists to establish both its relevance and its cogency. It states rather well the existential situation in which my work as a professor in theological seminary is presently carried on.

[119] *Ibid,* p. 100.
[120] *Ibid,* p. 105.

ATLAS erials

Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.