THE PROJECTION OF RELIGION ONTO POLITICS: MECHANISMS AND PATTERNS

by

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INTRODUCTION

The conjunctive use of the concepts "religion" and "politics" in academic discourse usually presupposes that the two concepts occupy two distinctive compartments of life and society, and that they stand in a relationship of some sorts toward each other. The practice to place the two concepts on a comparative footing is not without its merits and is well founded in sociology of religion tracts. In that context the body of religious convictions, motivations, practices and institutions is viewed as a distinctive social phenomenon, comparable to other social phenomena.

However, there are dangers in this approach. Firstly there is the danger of ideologically moulded thinking where the distinctions become ontological givens. Smart notes that "because in the West … the distinction between Church and State have become well developed, it is easy to slip into the thought that religion is what concerns the individual … while politics essentially covers the public domain." (Smart, 1983, p.268) A second danger is the possibility that the two concepts will not be accorded the same analytical status. In view of the privatisation of religion that has occurred in the West, religion has often been shifted to the background, from where it is seen to be influencing or contextualising other so-called spheres of life.

This dissertation challenges a juxtapositional handling of the two concepts and explores more integrated analytical approaches. In main, the conjunction and concurrence of the two concepts will be demonstrated through establishing and describing what might be called the *organic link* between religion's "intellectual" content (ideas and ideals) and the patterns of the religion-politics interface to be found at the societal (macro) level. It will be argued that the "intellectual" dimension of religion has defining implications for the macro dimension of the religion-politics interface. It is precisely the neglect of this organic nature of the religion-politics interface that has given cause to misplaced assumptions about the depoliticization of religion, as predicted in most secularization theories. The expression "religion-politics interface" is preferred in this dissertation as it is less likely to invoke a strict compartmentalisation of the concepts.

The direction of the dissertation's view is from the religious, which necessarily implies a more limited account of theories and assumptions relating to politics. This position is

reflected in the title.

It also has to be recognised that the religion-politics interface operates in different contexts, of which the most popularly known is the institutional. At the societal and institutional level, the religion-politics interface shows a propensity for compromise, opportunism and pragmatism. This is indicated in the text. However, it is not the intention of this dissertation to catalogue the range and detail of these arrangements. Where such detail will be forthcoming, it will be primarily in order to show how the religion-politics interface arrives at all its variances at the societal (macro) level.

In this dissertation the emphasis will therefore fall on the so-called intellectual dimension of religion and politics. This dissertation is primarily concerned with the conceptual *thinking* behind religion and politics that underlies and informs their functional relationship. Institutional detail is of secondary concern.

The dissertation will start with some conceptual development, which will be followed by an account of where we stand as far as the academic debate about the relevance of religion is concerned. It will then adopt an analytical approach propounded by Huston Smith, namely that the religion-politics interface operates at two levels: an individual or personal level (the root of the "intellectual" aspects of religion, i.e. ideas and ideals), and a collective or institutional level (visible, macro dimension). (Smith, 1987, p.xi) It will be argued that the ideas and ideals of religion extend into the social sphere through a number of mechanisms. Subsequently, account will be given of the dynamics that cause either congruence or incongruence at the religion-politics interface.

In addressing the societal/collective/institutional dimension of the interface, the focus will be on identifying the different patterns of relationships between religion and politics to be found at this level. However, as already stated, institutional detail will be limited, and the "intellectual" dimension of religion will hopefully transpire throughout.

Finally, the dissertation will cast its look forward to some of the key issues that are likely to dominate the debate about the religion-politics interface in the years to come. Here a distinction between the situation in post-industrial democracies and that in the so-called

developing nations will be evident.

CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

1.1   Introduction

The conceptual development that is attempted at the outset of this dissertation is not an attempt to put fixed concepts in place for subsequent theoretical construction. Such a methodology holds the danger of proscribing *a-priori* assumptions that could slant any subsequent analysis. A more sensible approach would be to provide an account of a range of definitions and approaches to the concepts religion and politics. The definitions that are recounted should, hopefully, facilitate rather than mould subsequent discussion.

The chapter concludes with a reflection on the potential for conceptual synthesis between religion and politics. It will be evident that such synthesis is indeed possible, and that an *organic link* exists between the two concepts.

1.2   Religion

Defining religion has always been problematic. Scholars are faced with two very basic obstacles: On the one hand there is contention in the very existence of the concept, and on the other hand it has been clear that whenever the concept is used, different meanings present themselves. Simply put, being "religious" means different things to different people.

The very assumption that there is a distinctive phenomenon requiring definition, presents the first obstacle in any attempt to define religion. Fiona Bowie, in her tract on the anthropology of religion, indicates that when we attempt to define religion, we are "constructing a category (religion) based upon European languages and cultures, and that the term has no necessary equivalent in other parts of the world." (Bowie, 2000, p.22)

The second obstacle presents itself as soon as we assume the task of defining. Bowie registers the problem of choosing an appropriate methodological approach to the study of

religion, and condenses the matter as follows: One can either see religion as an extension or dimension of social relationships (an inductive approach), or one can look down from the position of God, so to speak, and seek descriptions and explanations of religious phenomena (a deductive approach). (Bowie, 2000, p.23) These two approaches are evident in the various definitions that have been proposed by various scholars over many years.

This dissertation will proceed with an account of the various definitions that have been offered, whilst remaining conscious that there is an inherent potential bias in the very act of defining religion. Suffice to say that conceptual categories and definitions cannot be avoided if we want to systematically study any phenomenon.

Tyler's definition is offered as a starting point. He argues that a minimum definition of religion is "the belief in Spiritual Beings". (Tyler, 1958, p.8) This minimum definition falls in the category of definitions that sees the universe as essentially bi-natured: a sacred realm *vis-à-vis* a profane realm. The sacred-profane dichotomy characterised most of the early modernist thinking on religion.

One of the most influential theorists who incorporated the sacred-profane structure of religion into a coherent social theory has been Emile Durkheim. He explained his view of religion as follows: "… religious phenomena … always presuppose a bipartite division of the whole universe, known and unknowable, into two classes which embrace all that exists but which radically exclude each other." Working from this premise, Durkheim builds a clear relationship between religion and society, where religion is not only an expression of society but also "born" of society. "If religion has given birth to all that is essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion. Religious forces are therefore human forces, moral forces." (Durkheim, 1976, pp.418-419)

Durkheim offers the following formal definitions of religion:

> "Religious beliefs are the representations which express the nature of sacred things and the relations which they sustain, either with each other or with profane things." (Durkheim, 1976, pp.40-41)
> "… a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred

things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them." (Durkheim, 1976, p.47)

In contrast to Durkheim's grounding of religion in the social reality, stands Weber's view that religion can best be understood in terms of its meaning for *individuals*. He does not deny the social context of religion, but rather sees religious motivation impacting on social reality. (Marsh, 2000, p.621) This approach opened the way for a more focused study of religion's meaning-giving nature.

Subsequent theorists have related this meaning-giving/sense-making aspect of religion to the notion of *ultimacy*:

> Religion "relate(s) man to the ultimate conditions of his existence." (Bellah as cited in Paden, 1988, p.11)
> Religion articulates the core values of individuals and the society, and "address [es] the very foundations of meaning through a sense of superordinate purpose and significance." (Moyser, 1991, pp.9-10)

Bowie describes these approaches as "intellectualist". (Bowie, 2000, p.22)

Clifford Geertz straddles the society/individual theoretical divide when he describes religious symbols and rituals as metaphors for social life. Geertz's formal definition reads as follows:

> "Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." (Geertz as cited in Bowie, 2000, p.23)

Most non-theological attempts at defining religion take a rather dispassionate look at the phenomenon and to a large degree suggest the validity and universality of the phenomenon. However, a notable exception in this regard is Marx. Marx leaves no doubt about his personal dislike of the phenomenon and also casts it as a social and intellectual digression from the true nature of humankind. Marx believes that religion has no independent existence

and is simply a fantasy that deludes humankind about his true nature; "… an unreal reflection of real material conditions." (Marx as cited in Marsh, 2000, p.620)

To conclude, we need to identify the different dimensions of religion. Glock and Starke (1968, pp.253-261) offer five distinctive dimensions of religion: belief, practice, experience, knowledge and consequences. Haynes (1998, p.4) offers three dimensions:

> a body of ideas and outlooks;
>
> a type of organization; and
>
> a social group.

These three dimensions coincide with the plan of this dissertation in as much as it shows how religion projects onto politics from the "ideas and outlooks" dimension (**CHAPTER 3: MECHANISMS FOR THE "OUTWARD" PROJECTION OF RELIGION**), how religion's "organisation" (or institutionalization) modifies this process (**CHAPTER 4: CONGRUENCE AND INCONGRUENCE AT THE RELIGION-POLITICS INTERFACE**), and how religious groups relate to politics at the level of the nation-state (**CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL PATTERNS**).

1.3   Politics

Definitions of politics differ on the basis of how focused or generalised one wishes to treat the subject. At its core, there is agreement that politics has something to do with the pursuit of power in social relationships. A more refined look will state that politics is about the exercise of power, i.e. how decisions are made at societal level. This decision-making aspect of politics has been the cornerstone around which more formal and elaborate definitions have been built.

Wuthnow offers the following definition:

> Politics is the processes and institutions through which collective goals are determined and authority is maintained in society. (Wuthnow, 1998, p.xxix)

A similar definition is offered in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*:

> "… a process whereby a group of people, whose opinions or interests are initially divergent, reach collective decisions which are generally regarded as binding on the group, and enforced as common policy." (Miller, 1987, p.390)

This last definition contains all the relevant elements for this particular study of the religion-politics interface, i.e. the group element, the decision-making process element and the enforcement element.

Politics has also been theorised in terms of what has been called political *systems* and political *processes*. One of the most notable examples is Easton, who coined the term *political system,* and formulated a comprehensive theory explaining the *processes* of "demand and support inputs", "environmental effects" on these inputs, conversion of demands into "outputs", "decisions and actions" and the "feedback loop". (Easton, 1965, p.30)

A nation's decision-making processes take place through mediation of a tremendous range of institutions, most central of all the structures of the State. These include the executive organs (e.g. presidencies, cabinets, ministries), the legislative organs (e.g. parliaments, political parties), the judicial organs (e.g. Supreme Court, Chief Justice) and the bureaucratic

apparatus (e.g. State Departments, statutory bodies). There is also a range of non-State actors that play an important role in the national decision-making processes, e.g. lobby groups, business associations, labour unions and, indeed, religious organizations. Each of these categories consists, in turn, of a range of constituencies. In the case of religious organisations they may include churches, ecumenical councils, congregations, synods and religious activist movements. A high level of specialization is implied in this description of the range of institutions active in the political sphere, which is typical for the Western political tradition. However, in other political traditions the boundaries can be much less clear and there can be much fewer categories. The level of specialization should not unduly complicate our analysis, as long as we remember that the political decision-making processes of all nations generally have the same aims and require the same functions to be performed.

Against the background of these definitions and concepts, it is clear that politics is an inclusive and macro-dimensional concept. It is more inclusive than our conceptions of State and government, and it is mostly concerned with the larger social aggregates (e.g. at national level) and the macro processes at work. This is not to say that religion and politics do not interact at lower levels and that those interactions are not relevant for the larger picture. In fact, this dissertation devotes considerable space to how the ideas and ideals of religion at the personal level projects onto politics at the macro level. As for the lower priority given to the range of religion-politics interactions at the intermediate level (local and communal), this will not detract from or distort conclusions at the macro level, as the operating principles at the various levels are essentially the same.

It is possible to look at the detail of relationships between all the actors active in the political system, e.g. between the primary religious organisations ("Church") and the executive organs of the State ("government"). However, this dissertation wishes to maintain a broader approach, and will primarily deal with the *general* nature of the religion-politics interaction. Specifics and details will be used to illustrate this general nature.

1.4 Synthesis

Upon defining the two key concepts this dissertation is concerned with, it is necessary to place them in a proper relation. Firstly, there is a conceptual link between religion and

politics, derived from our understanding of what a nation is. *The Penguin Dictionary of Politics* defines a nation as follows: "A nation is a body of people who see part at least of their identity in terms of a single communal identity with some considerable historical continuity of union, with major elements of common culture, and with a sense of geographical location at least for a good part of those who make up the nation." (Robertson, 1986, p.223) Religion is inextricably part of the elements "communal identity", "historical continuity" and "common culture"; all of which to be found in our conception of nationhood.

Secondly, there is what Panikkar calls an "advaitic" relation between the two concepts. They are distinguished from each other but not separated; there is allowance for diversity but not for rupture. (Panikkar, 1983, p.59)

Panikkar, therefore, argues against a monism of sorts: "Obviously, time is not eternity, nor God, man; the sacred is not the same as the profane." (Panikkar, 1983, p.50) At the same time he warns against a dualist or parallelist view of the human condition.

Such a dualist or parallelist view can be depicted as follows:

vis-à-vis

Panikkar warns that the two concepts (religion and politics), "when understood in dialectical opposition, have lost their meaning." "It appears to me that it is necessary to find a new meaning in them, so as to express the polarity of an ontonomous (intrinsic) relationship." (Panikkar, 1983, p.49)

For Panikkar the matter boils down to the "authentic" and "true" meanings of the two concepts: "… there is no *authentic* religion without a political dimension, and no *true* politics without a religious dimension." (Panikkar, 1983, p.52) The true *homo religiosus* is involved with his fellow human beings and with the problems of the community, and the true *homo politicus* is involved with the deepest concerns of his fellow beings, and ultimately with the religious concerns of his constituency. (Panikkar, 1983, p.54)

Does this mean that people have not tried to construct their worlds along strongly dualistic (exclusivist) lines when it comes to the political and religious realms? Yes, ascetic monks hidden in caves, the self-absorbed rituals of the Russian Orthodox Church under communism, the messianic aspirations of secular totalitarian states in the modern era and the cynical machinations of contemporary politicians are all cases in point.

1.5   Conclusion

At a bare minimum, it is possible to conclude that our conceptual outlines of religion and politics are pointing toward an understanding that the two concepts are mutually inclusive, that their interplay is inevitable, and that a congruent relation between them is potentially constructive (positive).

These initial conceptual understandings will be further examined and tested in the subsequent discussions of how the inner (personal) religious prompt is projected onto the social and specifically the political environment, the distortions and corruptions that accompany this process, and the various manifestations of the religion-politics interface (relationship types).

CHAPTER 2

RELIGION'S RELEVANCE UNDER QUESTION

2.1   Introduction

Before we narrow down our focus to the religion-politics interface as such, the matter of religion's very relevance needs to be registered. Unlike politics, which is accepted as an inevitable and very necessary aspect of humankind's social condition, religion's validity and relevance is under question. The Enlightenment (1720-1780) and scientific age not only secularized theories of religion, but in a very concrete sense also diminished the actual claims that religion has been able to make on the human mind and psyche.

Four "onslaughts" on religion's relevance are identified here:

the development of theories of the origin of religion that refute the sacred/transcendental claim of religion;

the wholesale secularization of society;

the processes of "democratisation" and "political modernization", which has led to the relegation of the status of religion in the political project; and

the ascendance of a powerful liberal humanist ideology in the West, which aspires to provide humankind with a new (and final, it is claimed) rationale and modus of existence.

These forces all relate to one another and all contribute to what may be called our contemporary "zeitgeist". Although they will be discussed sequentially, their relatedness and overlapping should be borne in mind throughout.

2.2   Origins of Religion Theories

Philosophers like David Hume (1711-1776) and Immanuel Kant (1742-1804) led the early rebellions against the prevailing worldview that God's existence was an objective reality and that He was the source of all authority. They questioned religious traditions and emphasized

the role of reason and observation as the basis of all knowledge. Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) account of human evolution in his work *The Descent of Man* very firmly established a scientific basis for the early scepticisms about the "truth" of religion. His work was seen as scientific support for theories of religion that postulated the non-existence of the super-natural, be it God, spirits or transcendental experiences. (Bowie, 2000, p.13)

Darwin's work also served as inspiration for evolutionary views of the origin and evolvement of religion over time. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) developed such an evolutionary theory, known as the so-called dream origin of religion. He believed that the appearance of deceased persons in dreams as well as dream experiences where the self leaves the body, led to the belief that humans have a dual nature - body and spirit. The immortal spirits of deceased ancestors and prominent persons eventually acquired the status of gods, and the practice of offering food to the dead developed into sacrifices for the gods. (Bowie, 2000, p.14) Edward Tylor (1832-1917) also subscribed to the dream origin theory, and developed the notion of three stages in the evolution of religion: From animism to polytheism to monotheism. (Bowie, 2000, p.15)

The evolutionary theories of religion's origins were soon followed by a series of functionalist theories. Emile Durkheim focused his analysis on the social group rather than the individual, and concluded that religion is a projection of the social values of society. As such it is real because its effects are real, even if its beliefs are false. (Bowie, 2000, p.17) Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) was also a functionalist and believed that magic and religion served the psychological function of alleviating anxiety in the face of life's uncertainties. (Bowie, 2000, p.16)

Since the Enlightenment and the pioneering work of the early theorists, many efforts to define religion have focused on its human origins, thereby placing the study of religion firmly in the domain of the social sciences. In matters religious, the table was set for the study of humans rather than God.

2.3   The Secularization Thesis

The academic debate about secularization is well documented and will not be recounted at

length in this dissertation. However, the main themes as they relate to the religion-politics interface need to be presented.

Many social scientists have been and still are predicting the inevitable decline of religion, as scientific advances and understanding slowly but surely convince humans that there is no God, no supernatural, no sacred - that its all been a useful mental delusion all the time. This view has been proved partly correct: Empirical support for the decline in religious consciousness and practice, and the secularization of the public processes and institutions of society abounds. However, the prediction that secularization will run its full course, leading to the eventual elimination of religious thought, remains just this: a prediction. The existing empirical evidence simply cannot be extrapolated to answer the question about the ultimate fate of secularization and/or religion. The problem is compounded by the clear evidence in recent social research of religious resilience, and in some cases even the reversal of secularization.

This inconclusiveness has greatly confused and complicated the debate about secularization. What is to be made of the historical pattern of decline and survival? The question remains unanswered whether religion's decline is evidence of a long term downward spiral, where examples of continued or renewed religious vigour could be considered to be temporary aberrations, or whether religious motivations and institutions are in fact reinventing themselves and simply adapting to new circumstances.

The question about the long-term sustainability of secular ideologies *vis-à-vis* conventional religious constructs has been extensively debated by scholars. The ideas of one contemporary theorist, Charles Taylor, merit mentioning, mostly because he provides a contemporary critique of secularization orthodoxy.

Taylor starts his critique with an analysis of the origins of secularity:

> "… rationalised Christianity transformed the moral life by directing it towards the goods of ordinary life, self-responsibility, respect of individual rights, and the amelioration of the condition of humankind through instrumental reason and non-discriminating benevolence. These life goods defined the emerging modern moral order."

> "As rationalized Christianity evolved into Enlightenment naturalism, self-responsible reason came to be viewed as a purely human power rather than a divine gift." (Taylor as cited in Smith, 2002, p.227)

Taylor thus sees a transplantation of the "constitutive good" from God to modern self-defining life goods (i.e. the goods of minimized suffering, benevolence and justice). (Taylor as cited in Smith, 2002, p.228) This shift presents the secularization debate with its most acute philosophical problem: Are secular sources of the "constitutive good" adequate to permanently empower humans to realise all the life goods that make existence worthwhile? Taylor strongly suggests that the secular humanist outlook is not living up to its promise:

> "If it is true that human beings possess an intrinsic dignity as rational agents, or that nature constitutes things as good, does that really matter? Or rather, does it matter *enough* for us to lead our lives in a way that meets the standards set by the life goods? The thought that it might not, that reflection on such a constitutive good might fail to energize us into realizing the good, into sustaining the modern moral order, is what makes the question of their 'adequacy' as moral sources so pressing. The threat facing us in the modern secular age is that we might be living 'beyond our moral means'." (Taylor, 1989, p.517)

Taylor's analysis of this dilemma is cast as a tug-of-war between what he calls an exclusive humanism and a non-exclusive humanism. He defines exclusive humanism as a moral outlook that takes life goods, or human flourishing, to be the sole location of worth. (Taylor as cited in Heft, 1999, p.19) In contrast, non-exclusive humanism understands human flourishing in relation to something higher, transcendent or "beyond life". For non-exclusive humanism "… the point of things isn't exhausted by life, the fullness of life, even the goodness of life." (Taylor as cited in Heft, 1999, p.20) Taylor explains that exclusive humanisms are asserting the "metaphysical primacy of life", and in the process lose their ability "to give human

meaning to death and suffering, other than as dangers to be avoided or combated." (Taylor as cited in Heft, 1999, p.24) Taylor argues for a non-exclusive humanism where humans can enjoy the "practical primacy of life", and at the same time be committed to the metaphysical primacy of a constitutive good beyond human life. Taylor believes that non-exclusive humanism with its dual benefits of being able to enjoy life and at the same time being able to find meaning in suffering and death, is eminently preferable over the more limited exclusive humanist stance. (Smith, 2002, p.234)

These philosophical doubts about the adequacy of secular life and worldviews *vis-à-vis* theistic or *human-decentred* ones, together with the empirical evidence of sustained religiosity, have led many social scientists to adopt a more open-ended stance in the secularization debate. This stance contains *inter alia* the following arguments:

Secularization is a fact: It is not contested that there is a general trend in societies around the world to gradually move away from "being focused around the sacred and numinous." "In that sense it [secularization] does indicate a certain loss of power and authority of religion in society and, in consequence, indicates a slow transformation in the basic relationship between politics and religion." (Moyser, 1991, p.14)

Religion is surviving as a social force: The initial prospects for increasing secularization have been overstated, and the religious factor will be relevant for the foreseeable future. It is generally accepted that religion still plays a major role in matters of civil governance, regardless if it is a modern democracy, a secular totalitarian state, a Third World quasi-democracy or a primitive autocracy. The creation, survival and even growth of Muslim fundamentalist states, as well as the prominence of the religious New Right in US politics are but two prominent examples of the continued influence of religion in civil governance in this day and age. (Momen, 1999, p.421-422)

In this context, religion should be described as a "surviving", rather than "resurgent" or "growing", social force. Some social scientists warn against the drawing of conclusions from the higher visibility of religion, either at institutional or personal levels. For example, Heynes makes the point that the religious revival seen in former communist states actually was to be expected after the lifting of severe restrictions on religious activities.

Furthermore, there is not much evidence that the heightened activity of churches in these states is translating into their more effective intervention in the political realm. (Heynes, 1998, p.14)

Religion's locus is changing: Recent works on the sociology of religion, focusing on the highly secularized societies of Western Europe, present overwhelming evidence of strongly surviving belief, most of it Christian or quasi-Christian, despite believers' widespread alienation from mainline churches. It would seem that although societies may be secularizing, individuals frequently do not. Heynes describes this as a change in the institutional location of religion. (Heynes, 1998, p.216)

Smith conceives the matter from the perspective of the compartmentalization of religion. In this view religion is on a historical path that took it from complete integration with every aspect of life and the world, to almost complete compartmentalization from other facets of life. "Initially, religion's power was all-embracing, blanketing society as a whole. Nowhere in the primitive world was there a meaningful distinction between the political and the religious." He continues: "At their start the great historical religions looked more like civilizations than like religions as currently conceived; they were prescriptions for ordering the entire range of human affairs: economics, politics, ethics, law, philosophy, art and diet." "Today, of course, only tribes provide us with examples of religion-saturated societies. In civilizations, the passing of centuries brings complexity and role differentiation. Religion ceases to blanket the whole of life, and takes its place as one of life's compartments." (Smith, 1987, pp.x-xi)

Secularization is partly responsible for religion's survival: Hadden and Shupe propose a cyclical theory of secularization, which states that the process of removing the sense of the sacred from society contains the seed whereby religion is eventually revived and revitalized. They suggest that secularized answers to the meaning and purpose of life are essentially alienating and unsatisfying, hence religious ideas find fresh relevance and power. (Hadden & Shupe, 1986, p.xv)

2.4   Political Modernization

The discussion of the secularization thesis would be incomplete without reference to theories of political modernization. These theories basically postulate that political modernization involves three processes: Political process differentiation, mass politicization and state capacity building. (Smith, 1974, pp.3-4) Using the relatively more developed states as reference point, it has been boldly postulated that the differentiation and resultant secularization of the political process will prove to be enduring, "… for politics as a field of human activity makes sense in its own right and can function without traditional-religious [sic] props. Once a relatively high level of political consciousness is attained by the citizens, the political process becomes self-sustaining." (Smith, 1974, p.10) Religion is not excluded as an active agent of democratization, but paradoxically becomes the victim thereof: "… religion helps to produce mass politicization and then declines politically as increasing numbers of participants come to perceive politics as a relatively autonomous area of human activity." (Smith, 1974, p.18)

It has been assumed that the same pattern would repeat itself in the developing world. However, in many developing nations political modernization had quite the opposite outcome to what has been observed in developed nations. In the developing nation context mass politicization and democratization have provided a certain political space and legal framework for religious groups within which they could much more freely pursue their causes. Heynes quotes two examples (Heynes, 1998, p.11):

> In India religious Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims used their democratic freedoms to demand greater recognition by the State, and they succeeded in making religion a central issue in Indian politics.
> In Turkey, the Islamist Welfare Party assumed power in 1996, albeit for a short period, through democratic elections. In this case Islamism combined with and reinforced a certain political party and quite sectarian interests, and defied the more than 70 years of active secularization by the State.

The somewhat conflicting evidence of the implications of political modernization for continued religious influence on the political sphere can be better understood against the background of theories of pluralism. Conventional "pluralism theory" as posited by Woolf (1969) indicates that government decisions are essentially compromises between a plurality and fragmentation of influences: "Power is spread across a wide range of social locations

and organisations representing various interests and democracy exist [sic] because no one interest group is allowed to dominate." (Marsh, 2000, p.230) This theory is clearly supported by the evidence of reduced religious influence in situations of political modernization. However, it is less successful in explaining the cases where political modernization did not dramatically reduce religious influence in the political domain. Refinement of the theory was called for and was found in what is known as neo-pluralism.

Neo-pluralism basically observes a more selective interaction between the political power and the various other societal forces in a given situation. It postulates that the "state" negotiates more with certain groups and individuals than others, and that this accounts for slants in government decisions and structures. For instance, in some states the governing powers would favour corporate inputs into decision-making, making for a definite corporate slant to public policy. Similarly, religious structures can be accorded special status in government consultations, giving public policy the distinctive flavour of the religious persuasion concerned. (Marsh, 2000, p.230)

2.5   Liberal Humanism

Liberal humanism is a significant philosophical framework in terms of which secularization and democratization (including political modernization) has taken place in the late modern era. These issues have been dealt with in preceding sections. However, a separate discussion of the impact of liberal humanism on religion's continued relevance in public life (as opposed to private life) is necessary. The reason for situating our discussion of this debate after the discussions of secularization and democratization is the fairly recent introduction of so-called communitarian criticisms of liberal humanism. Also, the liberal humanist-communitarian divide places the religion-relegating impact of liberal humanism, which has been evident for a considerable time, in a new light.

2.5.1   Conceptual Clarification

Some clarification of what is included in the two key concepts, liberal humanism and communitarianism, is needed:

Liberal humanism: Liberal humanism takes the *rational human* (as opposed to a transcendental agency) as primary agent for the determination and realisation of what is "good", and resultantly the moral standpoint necessary for the attainment of that "good". As far as this rational human's "political morality" is concerned, his most important interest is maximum and equal liberty for each individual, and his most important moral principles are the principles of "justice" that protect individuals' rights to life and liberty. (Badhwar, 1996, p.1)

Kukathas explains the liberal humanist viewpoint as follows: "Liberal political theories generally argue that the good society is best understood as a framework of rights (or liberties) and duties within which people may pursue their separate ends." "… the good society is not governed by particular common ends or goals; it is simply governed by law, consistent with principles of justice". (Kukathas, 1996, p.80)

Communitarianism: For communitarians "our good as individuals is to be found

primarily in our relationships to particular people (e.g., in family or friendship), in our various social roles (e.g., as doctor or farmer), in our membership in certain voluntary associations (e.g., tribe or church), and in the community which contains all these partial communities, namely, our political community or society. The most important goods we find in any of these communities are joint or common goods - goods that exist and can be realized only in these communities, and that, when realized, devolve jointly on the participants." (Badhwar, 1996, pp.3-4) Humans' "conceptions of the good are determined chiefly by the communities in which they find themselves, and these conceptions are largely 'constitutive' of their particular moral identities. Moral agency is thus 'situated' and 'particularistic'." Our moral identities are therefore "…constituted by communally determined conceptions of the good and the right." (Badhwar, 1996, p.1)

For Kukathas communitarianism is, thus, "a philosophy which takes the common good of the political community as its first object of concern." (Kukathas, 1996, p.81)

2.5.2   Implications for Religion's Relevance

At the risk of simplifying the debate between liberal humanists and communitarians, it could be stated that the implications of the debate for religion's relevance in public life hinge on two key contentions:

> The degree to which a "comprehensive doctrine" can be attained by any political community.
> The degree to which "goods" in the community can be consigned to the public domain as opposed to the private domain, in other words, the "reach" of the political community into all aspects of life.

Very broadly speaking, it is inferred that religion's projection onto the public life will be enhanced by a wider doctrinal scope of the political project, and will be enhanced in political communities where public goods are maximised, i.e. where the boundaries of the political community are maximally extended.

2.5.2.1 The Viability of a "Comprehensive Doctrine" in the Political Community

The possibility of the establishment of a "comprehensive doctrine" in the political community will be discussed first. Liberal humanists are generally sceptical of such a proposition. John Rawls, a leading contemporary liberal humanist theorist, writes: "… the hope of political community must indeed be abandoned, if by such community we mean a political society united in affirming the same comprehensive doctrine." (Rawls, 1993, p.146) He continues: "…[b]y avoiding comprehensive doctrines we try to bypass religion and philosophy's profoundest controversies so as to have some hope of uncovering a basis of a stable overlapping consensus." (Rawls, 1993, p.152)

Clearly, religion cannot serve any significant public role in this liberal humanist conception of the political community. Some theorists have tried to moderate this rather prescriptive view by drawing attention to what has been called a *modus vivendi* analysis of the nature of the political project. John Haldane articulates this position as follows:

> "The acknowledgement that acceptance of a transcendent justification of the political order and its essential operations is not likely to come about (not: that such a justification is altogether impossible) suggests that the appropriate attitude toward the state is a blend of long-term moral aspiration, and short- to middle-term practical participation in limited political goals. Contrary to the position of Rawls, this latter element involves a defense of a form of political arrangement that probably is a *modus vivendi*. However, the proportions of this blend, as indeed the need of it, are matters of sociohistorical contingency; it is not inconceivable, therefore, that they may change over time, or differ geopolitically". (Haldane, 1996, p.61)

Referring to the British example, Haldane observes that its political order

"originates in and is maintained by a series of pragmatic resolutions [that] quickly come to be the object of civic allegiance, particularly as they are given the protection of law. If this is a *modus vivendi* writ large, it certainly seems no less stable than an overlapping consensus, and it is a way of going on socially that is compatible with active participation in a range of subordinate moral communities, and with the periodic accomplishment of principled political goals." (Haldane, 1996, p.78)

Haldane and others, therefore, are not disputing the fact that liberal humanism has effectively relegated religion as a formative public force. They are, however, reminding us of the existence of a rich community life situated under a morally "thin" political order. Thus, they are directing our attention to the views of the communitarians, whose focus is the relevance and potentiality of the political community.

2.5.2.2 Setting the Boundaries of the Political Community

According to the communitarian view, humans' communal attachments, albeit fluid over time and space, are fundamentally important. It is argued that people have strong and deep attachment to their societies, a notion thoroughly neglected by the liberal humanists. For the communitarians "the self cannot be conceived of independently of society or the community: the self is *situated* or *embodied.* It is constituted by society. Social processes and institutions shape the person into a social being, whose desires and whose understandings and attitudes toward the world are thus a product of the community." (Kukathas, 1996, p.90)

But how do humans' communal life and identity relate to the question at hand: Its implication for religion's projection onto the public sphere? The answer to this question is locked up in the communitarian understanding of what a "community" is. Kukathas defines a community as follows: "[It] is essentially *an association of individuals who share an understanding of what is public and what is private within that association.*" (Kukathas,

1996, p.85) Turning to the political community, it is therefore "essentially *an association of individuals who share an understanding of what is public and what is private within their polity."* (Kukathas, 1996, p.86-87)

It is this distinction between "public" and "private" goods in the political community that provides us with a tool to measure religion's projection onto the public domain. A few examples will illuminate the matter:

> At one extreme stand the so-called fundamentalist Islamic states, where there is no clear distinction between religious and secular authority. Bernard Lewis indicates that in the original Islamic tradition there is no equivalent to the idea of a separation of state and church as found in the West, and that even the Arabic languages do not really make provision for such a distinction. (Lewis, 1990, pp.3-4)
>
> An intermediate position can be found in the cases of modern Turkey and Indonesia, where there is a formal distinction between religious and political authority, but still considerable confluence of the two in public life. (Kukathas, 1996, p.87)
>
> At the other extreme stand the liberal societies of the modern West where very clear limits are imposed on the scope of political authority. Within these political communities "members may regard comparatively few matters as legitimate objects of public (i.e. political) concern. Religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and political belief might be viewed as matters in which the political public need … take no interest." (Kukathas, 1996, p.87)

In all of these cases there are political communities, but in each case the community is differently defined according to the mix of public and private goods to be found in each community. These differences manifest both geopolitically and historically. In fact, the boundaries of a community shift continually. Furthermore, all communities are partial communities. Few, if any, individuals are locked in a single community that leaves no room for

other attachments. It can therefore be concluded that political communities are stable entities only to a limited extent. (Kukathas, 1996, p.86)

2.6   Conclusion

There should be no doubt that the various interlinking influences of the modern era (secularization, democratization, political modernization and liberal humanism) have seriously eroded religion's claim on public life. However, the liberal-communitarian debate of the past two decades has opened up an opportunity for the re-examination of the secular humanist paradigm, and specifically a re-evaluation of religion's actual and potential projection onto politics. Where the original liberal humanist stance leaves little room for such projection, the communitarian view actually facilitates it. However, while religion's projection onto the political sphere is unavoidable in the communitarian view, it is also highly variable. Critics of pure communitarianism rightly point to the dangers inherent in the renewed emphasis on humankind's social character. At the higher extremes of the political community's *reach* into the realm of private or personal goods, there is a clear danger that individual rights and freedoms will be undermined for the sake of political unity and solidarity. Conversely, there will be the danger of oppression of minority views by a moral majority.

It is not argued here that the danger of oppression and undermining of individual rights and freedoms leave us with no choice but to accept a political order that is based on bare minimums. Rather, a limited intrusion of the political community into the private realm is called for - a stance that recognises the communitarian emphasis on humankind's social nature.

It should be accepted that humans find fulfilment in their communal associations, and that their participation in the paramount communal association, the political community, cannot and should not be denied. However, the plural composition of most present-day polities, including plurality of religious persuasion, should place a limit on the reach of the political community into the private realm, where religion finds its primary expression. One will have to concede that the reality of pluralism demands of the political community to limit its reach into the private realm, and that "thin" government is essential to maintain the peace between the constituting communities of society. As such, religious expression at the level of the

political community should be limited to those elements that are commonly held by the various constituting communities, and/or should be moulded into new and mutually acceptable quasi-religious symbols. Such a dispensation has been proved practical and can still be observed in the present-day examples of so-called civil religion, which is discussed in greater detail in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER 3

MECHANISMS FOR THE "OUTWARD" PROJECTION OF RELIGION

3.1   Introduction

The preceding two chapters have examined the conceptual basis for an "organic link" between religion and politics, as well as communitarianism's critique of some of the philosophical tenets of secular humanism. Baseline arguments have therefore been put in place that would justify an examination of religion's "outward" projection. However, there are also what may be called religion's own ontological imperatives that make for its "outward" projection. These imperatives present themselves as the following "mechanisms":

> the inner religious prompt;
>
> the extension of religion's universe of meaning;
>
> religion's assigning of purpose to history; and
>
> religion's conferral of power and authority in society.

From these mechanisms, the discussion will proceed to an analysis of culture as a fundamental context for the projection of religion. Finally, account will be given of the "civil religion thesis", where the mentioned mechanisms are displayed in an actual operative sense.

3.2   The Inner (Personal) Religious Prompt

The persistence of religious motivations in the social sphere has prompted scholars to renew their interest in the "inner" (personal or intellectual) dimension of religion. Increasingly, cognisance is taken of the genetic and psychological bases of religious beliefs and what this implies for the social reality.

Two points need to be made about the "inner" dimension of religion:

> At the personal (inner) level, religion is considered to be irrepressible and "in all probability ineradicable". (Wilson, 1978, p.176) It is not uncommon to find the description *homo religiosus* in contemporary texts, affirming this view of religion. For Charles Taylor "human beings have an ineradicable bent to respond to something beyond life", which he describes as an "anthropological constant." Taylor sees evidence of this "bent towards something beyond life" in the perennial human fascination with death and violence. (Taylor as cited in Heft, 1999, p.27)

> Religion serves the vital need of humans to see meaning in life. Smith explains religion's inner personal roots as follows:
>> "Religion would hardly have persisted, as perpetual as play, as universal as song, had it not, on balance, served some important human need"; and "… in the long run, religion is 'probably adaptive'; that is, life furthering, and the fact that no society has been found without it seems to support that point. Human life requires more meaning than it routinely perceives, and more altruism than is built into its genes." (Smith, 1987, p.xii)

What is the relevance of religion's meaning-giving function for humans' social existence, specifically in the political realm? Moyser argues that religion as ultimacy "commands the believer; it sets all other aspects of human existence beneath, and in the context of, that ultimate concern. Politics, once more, is made relative to, and is validated by, religion." (Moyser, 1991, p.10)

Smith establishes essentially the same link between religion at its deepest personal level, and politics in its generic sense, but from a different angle. He argues that politics to a large degree has been, and still is, benefiting from religion's meaning-giving and motivational role. The political project of serving the public will and good would be inconceivable without the individual members of the polity being motivated and inspired toward establishing and maintaining a commonwealth amongst themselves. Even when religions' popular appeal and reach wane, as had happened in the West, society still benefits from "the accumulated moral

capital of traditional religion and traditional moral philosophy." Smith sees no alternative philosophy developing in the West to take the place of religion's meaning-giving, motivating and altruistic role, which certainly rings warning bells for future social cohesion and stability in the West. (Smith, 1987, pp.xii-xiii) This concern is further reflected in the section **Social Cohesion under Pressure** in **CHAPTER 6: THE FUTURE.**

If religion's meaning giving role were conceived of as a coin where the one side represents *active* provision of meaning, the flipside would represent its *reactive* response to the lack of meaning. Religion mitigates the *negatives* of human existence and thus reinforces the political project. Smith indicates that in all societies the vast majority of people lead lives of considerable frustration, and that religion provides key resources for coping with these frustrations. He points to religions' ability to give hope to followers that their hardships can have an end, that good will eventually prevail over evil, and that hardship prods spiritual growth. Removal of these "consolations of religion", as had happened with wholesale secularization, only increased the demands placed on, and expectations of, society and government. According to Smith, "… remove religion's internal ways of coping with frustration, and what is left is an external way that asks society to relieve it." "A regime which has to pacify a populace that is seeking fulfilment in the wrong place, will find its problems insuperable." (Smith, 1987, pp.xiii-xiv)

3.3   Extension of the Universe of Meaning

Humans are both the creators and creations of the social order and conceptual universe they find themselves part of. Therefore, the social order and conceptual universe do not constitute themselves incidentally or without any rationale. For it to exist, there needs to be a social consensus about its nature and justification for that nature.

The justification for the social order stems from two sources:

> The social order can have *self-evident* validity for the particular circumstances in which it arose and for the people that created it.
>
> The social order can be *legitimated* to subsequent generations through the construction of overarching cosmologies and theologies of meaning. According to Momen, "legitimation serves to give meaning to the social order, to make it plausible and thus to strengthen it and give it cohesion." (Momen, 1999, p.403)

Societies generally lose their self-evident validity some time after they have been constituted, and will only survive if some form of legitimization can take place. It is this process of legitimization that is linking religions' universe of meaning with the social universe of meaning. If one is to work from the premise that religion provides an overarching universe of meaning, it stands to reason that this religious universe of meaning will cover and include the social order.

The extension of religion's universe of meaning to the social whole, therefore entails much more than the functionalist view that rulers and governments *use* religion to legitimate the social and political order. The mechanism is not incidental, but intrinsically implied in the definition of religion. As much as there is an imperative for the construction of meaning at the personal level, there is an imperative to construct meaning at the communal, national, and in the 21st century also the global, levels.

A good example of the extension of the universe of meaning from the religious to the social (including political) is medieval Europe, where the Church formed an integral part of the power structure of society, and sanctified the social order of the day. The Church not only legitimated the social order, but also actively participated in the maintenance of the social order, e.g. through the blessing of Kings. India provides another example, where Hinduism is the chief legitimator of the caste system. (Momen, 1999, p.407-408)

There are also other ways of conceiving the translation of religious meaning into social meaning. Bellah talks of "a creative tension between religious ideals and the world" where "transcendent ideals, in tension with empirical reality, have a central place in the religious symbol system, while empirical reality itself is taken very seriously as at least potentially

meaningful, valuable and a valid sphere for religious action." (Bellah, 1965, p.194)

3.4   Assigning Purpose to History

Part of the meaning-giving action of religion is the administering of divine/sacred/transcendental purpose to history. The so-called historical religious systems (Christianity, Islam and Judaism), which see history as a "struggle impregnated with moral purpose, and this purpose has to do with justice among men" (Smith, 1974, p.24), have been able to "develop religious ideologies of social change". "Because the historical process is understood as being linear and fraught with transcendent meaning", they have been able to "build convincing bridges to secular ideologies such as socialism." (Smith, 1974, p.7)

The situation for the so-called ahistorical religious systems (Hinduism and Buddhism) is quite different and explains to a large degree the more limited projection of these religions onto, especially, the political sphere. The ahistorical religions basically "view history as endless, cyclical and lacking in moral purpose" (Smith, 1974, p.6), and as a result "provide less adaptable raw materials for developing a convincing ideology of social change". "There is no concept of a linear historical process from which ideological bridges to socialism can be built." (Smith, 1974, p.24)

3.5   Transferral of Power

Moojan Momen's interpretation of the role of power in religion provides another mechanism for religion's outward projection. He defines power as "the capacity of an agent to carry out its will and to produce outcomes." For Momen, power in the religious realm stems from the feelings of awe and dread that comes from the experience of the holy. This "power of the holy" manifests at a deeply personal level, where it is experienced as both a coercive and enabling force. However, it does not stay confined to the inner personal experience, but gets "channelled into various forms of social religious experience." "These various social expressions of religion are, in effect, ways of transferring the feeling of awe … to some social institution or agent." For Momen, the power element is conferred from the personal level to the religious institutional level, giving the religious institution or leader authority. "This authority can subsequently, if the religious leader or institution chooses, be transferred to a

secular institution (a king or government)." (Momen, 1999, p.404)

This mechanism can be presented as follows:

Closely related to the "transferral of power" argument, are theories that have to do with the tendency of all human collectives to develop capacities for self-maintenance and self-legitimization. It is basically argued that for any social group to survive, the personal values of the members of the group need to be transferred into group values, which in turn would subjugate the personal values from which they were derived.

Rubenstein sees a perpetual motion between the sacred/transcendental legitimization of power and the secular (self-) legitimatization of power. His analysis of the Christian and Judaic religious traditions shows how they evolved into essentially theocratic ideologies (God ruling humans directly and personally), but have been repeatedly reverting to sacrilized kingdoms where political values can and do take precedence over God ordained personal values. He describes how the Hebrew escape from Pharaoh translated into a rejection of the politico-religious order where God and king/ruler is unified, and the State and its institutions are thought of as both ultimate and self-legitimizing. In Egypt, Pharaoh was both ruler and God, and thus the interests of the Egyptian State enjoyed ultimacy over the claims of any of its subjects. There was no extrinsic value or institution that could serve as an effective check on those in command, and the Egyptians, like the more recent examples of self-legitimizing states such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, the Cambodian Pol Pot, Castro's Cuba and North Vietnam, found it easy to abuse their powers on a massive scale. (Rubenstein, 1987, pp.7-8)

The Hebrews chose an alternative to the dispensation where the State can claim ultimacy; they posited "a God who possessed neither human image nor human incarnation as the power to whom the community owed its fundamental fidelity." They insisted on the primacy of the ethical over the political and imposed unconditional God ordained standards on the behaviour of men and nations alike. (Rubenstein, 1987, p.9) However, the important thrust of Rubenstein's argument is that although this view lies at the very root of the great historical events that moulded Western civilization as we know it today, e.g. the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, it has not prevented the modern State from lapsing into episodes of self-aggrandizement and abuse of power. The Israelites of old found it impossible to maintain their Kingdoms' monopoly of force against both internal and external opponents without subjugating individual ethical values. So does the modern State (regardless of its religious heritage), which would frequently assert political values (e.g. the

national interest and the need for self-preservation) over individual values (e.g. freedom of speech and freedom of association). (Rubenstein, 1987, p.15)

Rubenstein summarises as follows:

> "… a very different set of values is necessary to create a community, where none had previously existed, than is required to maintain that community. As soon as the problems of maintenance displaced those of creation, some means had to be found to legitimate the interests of the state."

> "When one seeks a psychologically effective and cost-effective means of maintaining the new order, there will almost always be the strong compulsion to resacrilise political institutions, or at the very least, to ascribe primacy to the state." (Rubenstein, 1987, p.16)

The battle between those who subscribe to the self-legitimizing state and those who assert the primacy of personal ethical values, is still evident today, and to a very large degree defines the left-right anatomy of Western style democracies.

Finally, another way of conceiving the tension between religion and secular ideologies as primary sources of power/authority is provided by Glock and Stark. They focus on the different sources of authority in society and indicate that in anything but the most primitive societies, there usually are many sources of authority, e.g. legal, social, suprasocial and the self (individual consciousness). Religion, together with secular ideologies, constitutes the suprasocial authority type. The salient point here is that religion, as suprasocial authority, at times underpins the general exercise of authority in the commune, and at other times finds itself in conflict/tension with the other sources of authority. (Glock & Stark, 1965, pp.177-179) In both instances, it is projecting itself onto the social and specifically the political scene.

3.6   Religion and Politics as Elements of a Common Cultural Identity

The cultural identity of all nations or large groups of people is derived from the dominant or prevailing ideology of a society. Ideology in this sense is understood to mean "the entrenched and wide-ranging perspectives and understandings on which more specific

values and attitudes are based." (Marsh, 2000, p.227) "Ideology" in this sense is not to be confused with its negative connotation in popular parlance, where it is mostly understood as a demagogic, singular and oppressive world and life view.

Culture therefore denotes an overarching system of beliefs, values, opinions and norms, and consists of various dimensions, including the religious and the political. The political dimension of a group's/nation's cultural identity, i.e. the "political culture", is therefore part of coherent mix of elements that make up the cultural identity of the group. The specific norms and values that the political culture is concerned with are those that legitimate the political system.

Before turning to the religion-politics interplay in culture, it needs to be pointed out that political culture is not a static concept. The pioneering work of Almond and Verba on what they have called the "civic culture" clearly indicates that political cultures vary considerably between states and that they are susceptible to differing changes over time, as they respond and adapt to major social developments like globalization, democratization and detraditionalization. (Marsh, 2000, p.227)

As far as the relevance of religion for the political culture of a group or nation is concerned, it is argued here that the religious orientation of the group or nation, with its own embedded set of beliefs, values, opinions and norms, contributes to defining the political culture of the nation or group. It then stands to reason that there should be similarity and/or compatibility between political and religious value systems in those situations where a distinct and overarching political culture has been able to form.

Moyser indicates that religion and politics do connect in this way; that there are numerous examples of how nations' religious belief systems underpin and reinforce their ideological orientations, e.g. religion and nationalism, fundamentalism and political conservatism. (Moyser, 1991, p.8) Obviously, this positive correlation is most visible in monocultural or dominant culture societies, and the mechanism becomes complex and confused in most multi-cultural situations.

In multi-cultural situations the cultural identity of the sub-national group becomes the focal

point. In the same way that religious values and norms inform political values and norms at the national level, the religious tradition of the sub-national group (e.g. ethnic minority) will inform the political participation and strategies of such a group. At this level religion will mostly serve as an important facet of group solidarity against perceived threats to the group's cultural identity and survival. This phenomenon is further described in the sections **Globalization** and **Cultural Defence** in **CHAPTER 6: THE FUTURE**.

3.7   The "Civil Religion" Thesis

3.7.1   Theoretical Roots

A number of the abovementioned mechanisms for the "outward" projection of religion, i.e. the influence/impact of religion on the political realm of public life, are identifiable in the so-called civil religions of the modern era. The theoretical basis for the civil religion thesis is to be found in the work of Durkheim, who looked for examples of beliefs, values and rituals in modern society that function in the same way as religion. And he did find several such beliefs, values and rituals, the most poignant example being the national flag, which he saw as equivalent to the totem in primitive communities. For Durkheim the national flag represents the sum of the nation and is a symbol of national values. (Marsh, 2000, p.634)

This thesis was further developed in recent times by Robert Bellah, who applied the Durkheimian idea to contemporary America. Bellah defined "civil religion" as "certain common elements or religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share", as a set of beliefs that "reaffirms the religious legitimation of the highest political authority." (Bellah, 1970, p.171)

3.7.2   The US Example

Bellah argued that US national values such as the ideals of freedom, justice, equality and democracy are given "sacred" status in American civil life in the way that they are "esteemed principles augmented within the national psyche and regarded with special respect." Furthermore, "civil rituals in the United States function to bind

together the nation through the celebration and commemmoration of key national events." (Marsh, 2000, pp.634-635)

Momen makes similar observations about the US, and, like Bellah, draws clear parallels between the US "civil religion" and Christian religious imagery, e.g. the national flag, the anthem and the recital of the pledge of allegiance are parallels to the cross, the hymn and the creed of the Lord's Prayer. (Momen, 1999, p.425) Bellah describes the civil religion-Christian parallels in US civil life as follows: "Behind the civil religion at every point lie biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, and Sacrificial Death and Rebirth." (Bellah, 1970, p.186)

For Bellah and others there is a comfortable synthesis of secular and religious cultural elements:

> "The American civil religion was never anticlerical or militantly secular. On the contrary, it borrowed selectively from the religious tradition in such a way that the average American saw no conflict between the two. In this way the civil religion was able to build up without any bitter struggle with the church powerful symbols of national solidarity and to mobilize deep levels of personal motivation for the attainment of national goals." (Bellah, 1970, p.181)

Thus, civil religion is neither specifically sectarian nor a substitute for Christianity. According to Bellah, civil religion describes the continuing moral interpenetration between religion and secular cultures in the political sphere. (Bellah, 1970, pp.175-176)

3.7.3   Towards an Inclusive Universe of Meaning

It is clear that although the Christian religion contributes massively to the civil religion variant to be found in the US, denominational religion remains at a distance from its many reflections in general public life. Civil religions as we have seen them in modern societies have been sufficiently distanced from denominational religion to make it possible for a broad cross-section of members of society to identify with the civil

religion. It could therefore be argued that civil religion's mass appeal lies in the *non-specific* or inclusive universe of meaning that it creates.

Such an inclusive universe of meaning is clearly evident in the US: An unnamed Creator/Provider God is seen as guiding the nation providentially to greater social progress, and the nation is seen to have the destiny to lead the rest of the world to social, political and economic salvation. As far as the so-called marginal situations of life are concerned, an afterlife is assumed and the unnamed God's grace is sought and experienced on a personal level. These tenets are related to the broad Christian traditions of most Americans, but remain quite distinct from the religious doctrines of any specific church or sect.

This civil religion therefore succeeds in creating a universe of meaning within which the social order is legitimated and within which the individual (regardless his *specific* religious persuasion) finds some meaning to his life.

3.7.4   The Problem of Distance

The distancing of the US's civil religion from established Christianity does not come without a cost. Where Bellah's earlier work reflected a rather optimistic view of the cohesive and inclusive power of civil religion, his later works concerned themselves with the very acute breakdowns in coherence in American civil life. Against the backdrop of the Vietnam war, the Watergate crisis and the myriad radicalised social movements, Bellah observed in his work *The Broken Covenant* that America can no longer be a "light to the world", and that instead it needed to concern itself with internal reform and "conversion". He modified the close relationship he had earlier posited between religion and secular culture, and he argued that secular culture has drifted too far from America's religious heritage. (Alexander & Sherwood, 2002, p.9) He writes: "… we have plunged into the thickets of this world so vigorously that we have lost the vision to be good", and that Americans do not suffer from a lack of means and goods but instead from a failure of "our central vision." (Bellah, 1975, p.157)

3.7.5   Virtue vs. Self-Interest

Bellah attributes the relative failure of civil religion in the US to a conflict between two distinct value complexes, namely "virtue" and "self-interest". For him the "virtue" amalgam of values is represented by the Puritans who first founded the colonies in concert with principles of republicanism and civic responsibility. "Self-interest" emerged from the end of the Civil War and from the ascendance of "corporate capitalism".

Although these competing value complexes have been at work in American society for a long time, Bellah argues that in contemporary America the values of self-interest have increasingly come to displace the values of virtue - hence the loss of vision. (Alexander and Sherwood, 2002, p.10) Bellah articulates the situation as follows: "The major tendency in the society at large seems to be erosion rather than reaction or reconstruction"; there is a "declining sense of moral obligation"; "freedom [has come] to mean freedom to pursue self-interest"; and the "self-interest

of the isolated individual" is pre-eminent. (Bellah, 1975, pp.xi-xii)

3.9 Conclusion

The description of the various mechanisms for the "outward" projection of religion provides compelling support for a social, and specifically political, order where religion can and indeed should provide some moral energy for the nurturing of the "common good".

The case of civil religion illustrates this view. It also illustrates the dangers of a public moral that is wholly devoid of religious moral input. The drifting of civil religion from its religious sources and the attendant breakdown in social coherence in the US clearly suggests that there are limitations to self-legitimating morality. When public life's link with the sacred becomes tenuous, and public ordinations are seen to originate from humans rather than God, the civil religion's cohesive power comes under question. We will then have to concur with Rubenstein's apt description of this dilemma: "… when the maintenance of the power of the state is self-legitimating, there can be situations in which there is no predictable relationship between the loyalty and trust of citizens and the actions of their government." (Rubenstein, 1987, p.8)

CHAPTER 4

CONGRUENCE AND INCONGRUENCE AT THE RELIGION-POLITICS INTERFACE

4.1   Introduction

The religious impulse is universal and has generic ways of projecting onto the social environment. These generic ways have been described in the preceding Chapter, **MECHANISMS FOR THE "OUTWARD" PROJECTION OF RELIGION**.

It now has to be asked how it is possible that the religious impulse brings forth some very sweet as well as some very bitter fruits. What accounts for the sharply divergent religio-political responses to pressing social, economic and political challenges? In some instances religious influences are blamed for inflaming tensions and conflict, whilst in others it is credited for fostering reconciliation and peace.

The following analysis of the dynamics behind respectively "congruent" religion-politics interfaces and "incongruent" ones will shed some light on this perplexing question. This dissertation prefers the "congruent-incongruent" descriptors, because they are inclusive and generic. Other valid descriptors for the basic divergence in the religion-politics interface include "integration-separation" and "cooperation-conflict".

4.2   Dynamics of Congruence

A congruent religion-politics interface is best understood against the background of theories of religion that focus on the integrative/cohesive power of religion in societies (e.g. Durkheim). The main argument of these essentially functionalist theories of religion is that religion legitimises the social order and that it contributes to the socialisation of the members of society.

Religious beliefs and rituals integrate individuals into social groups in several ways:

- by providing a common identity;

- by expressing shared meanings and understandings;
- by physically bringing "believers" together;
- by prescribing moral norms;
- by sanctioning the status of the individual at various stages of his life; and
- by dealing with the emotional stress of life crises.

(Marsh, 2000, p.629)

For the sake of completeness, it needs to be added that there are also some very mundane and cynical explanations of the congruent dynamics between religion and politics. The motivation for establishing and maintaining a mutually reinforcing relationship between the religious and political dimensions of life is in many cases a matter of pre-meditated expediency. Political leaders have in the past and still do rely on religious leaders to legitimate their authority. According to Momen, religious leaders and their institutions can give secular rule the appearance of being part of the "supramundane order of things." The religious world, in turn, often looks to secular authorities for support, mostly to provide them with a protected space within which they can operate unhindered and which would give them a competitive edge over contending, usually minority, religious persuasions. (Momen, 1999, p.403)

The main criticism of the functionalist understanding of a congruent religion-politics interface is the fact that it is not adequately addressing the situation in modern multi-cultural nation-states, where there is no religious consensus. In such situations, social expectations to accept certain cultural norms and values are often regarded with suspicion by significant numbers of the society, whilst the voicing of criticism of some norms and values in the society is often interpreted as a threat to the wider community. (Marsh, 2000, p.633)

4.3   Dynamics of Incongruence

Unlike the dynamics of congruence in the religion-politics interface, there is no single, all-encompassing theoretical foundation for the evident dynamics of incongruence. Generally scholars would focus on the breakdowns in the functionalist theories, as well as the time- and place-specific reasons for such breakdowns, in order to offer some explanations for the alter-pattern of a congruent religion-politics interface, namely an incongruent one. From this vantage point, incongruence is no more than the failure of congruence.

However, there are strong "hints" of much more substantive and autonomous dynamics behind incongruent religion-politics interfaces. A philosophical basis for an autonomous understanding of religion-politics incongruence can be found in what can be called the centripetal/centrifugal paradigm of thought. Smith relates it to religion as follows: Religion's ambiguity, as most clearly illustrated by its institutional fragmentation, stems from the eternal human struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces, the self and the other(s). "In both individuals and communities it provides a reference for self-definition and identity", which provides the rationale for the exclusion and alienation of others. But religion also, at the same time, presses "towards deep reaches of consciousness where our selfhood opens onto our shared humanity." (Smith, 1987, p.xvi)

Smith continues to describe the generic dynamics to be found in the centripetal/centrifugal paradigm (Smith, 1987, p.xvi-xvii):

> *Inclusion/exclusion dynamics*: "The group identity that religious institutions generate is both good and bad. It is good in binding members into large … wholes, inspiring in each community a healthy self-image and group morale. But the dark side of this virtue is the exclusion that identity requires."
>
> *Positive/negative feelings towards outsiders*: Stemming from the group identity phenomenon and the exclusion it implies, in-group and out-group feelings arise. These feelings towards outsiders can be either positive or negative.
>
> *Inward/outward looking perspectives*: Religious institutions "can become ingrown, centering their energies on institutional preservation and self-aggrandizement, or they can look beyond themselves to the needs of others."

> *Preserve/change motivations*: "Religion is a conservative force, and it is profoundly subversive; it is opiate and catalyst."

Turning to the more concrete traces of emerging theories of religion-politics incongruence, the following main arguments have been put forward by scholars.

4.3.1 The Institutionalisation of Religion

The institutionalisation of religion involves a distortion and manipulation of its theological and metaphysical truths. Smith describes religions' universal truths as "inspired", representing their "clean side". However, religious institutions, "constituted as they are of uneven people (partly good, partly bad), … are built of vices as well as virtues." (Smith, 1994, p.13) It is this ambiguity bred from institutionalisation that has been blamed for countless religious or religious inspired conflicts over the ages.

In its institutionalised mode, religion's capacity to project onto individual and public life increases vastly. The structures and processes associated with institutionalisation give rise to a myriad possible avenues for the projection of religious ideas and motivations.

4.3.2 The Interpretive Nature of Religion

The main world religions are interpretive communities, i.e. they may have fixed texts and fixed doctrines, but they do not have fixed interpretations of these texts and doctrines. Thomas talks of the creative and reflexive side of religion where religious communities interpret their traditions in terms of the present, and the present in terms of religious tradition. (Thomas, 2000, p.59) These interpretations are bound to vary and conflict, not only over time and space, but also within a situational context locked in time.

In concrete terms, it means that the individual can and does apply his interpretation of religious principles to a given situation. Subsequently, he is both inclined and

capable to manipulate events and fellow citizens in accordance with his interpretation. This potential problem is compounded by the special authority that charismatic religious leaders carry with followers. Charismatic leaders may use their religiously conferred authority to interpret sacred texts or "receive" divine revelations that may justify and inspire followers to fight for or against a specific temporal cause.

Although religions have the unique ability to comfort the psychological anxieties associated with unsettled social conditions, there is ample historical and contemporary evidence of leaders who choose to use religious interpretations to reinforce people's perceptions of injustice and redress. Under conditions of social stress, entrepreneurial religious leaders have the opportunity to formulate new ideas and to align themselves, their followers and their religious structures along broader societal schisms. An example would be a religious movement that appeals to an economically disadvantaged ethnic minority, and tries to maintain in-group loyalty by emphasizing the importance of ethnic boundaries and the dangers posed by assimilation. (Wuthnow, 1998, p.xxx) This mechanism is still clearly evident in especially so-called developing states, where economic development has spread unevenly through the layers of their multi-ethnic populations.

4.3.3   The Inviolability of Religious Tenets

For the masses of people who cognitively recognise and adhere to some religious frame of existence and self-actualisation, their religious tenets are set above most other mundane imperatives. In relation to political imperatives, Wuthnow articulates this position as follows: Religion "provides higher beliefs and principles in relation to which political leaders and politics can be judged." (Wuthnow, 1998, p.xxix)

People regard their religious imperatives as infallible and inviolable, therefore they tend to become inflexible in their judgement of when and how their religious tenets are threatened, and how they should respond to perceived threats. Momen uses the example of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1978-9 to indicate how the Iranian people and religious leadership acted in defence of religious principles that they

regarded as absolutely non-negotiable. Despite years of hardship and international vilification that followed the Iranian revolution, the people and regime remained steadfast in their defence of religious principles. (Momen, 1999, p.424) Much of today's Islamic fervour can be related to this point. The West and its values are perceived to be threatening, indeed taunting, the inviolable laws and principles of Allah (God), hence the concept of a Holy War (Jihad).

4.3.4   The Immediacy of the Mundane

Religion's eternal and holistic thrust, and its appeal at the personal level, often demanding a voluntary commitment, stand in stark contrast to the social reality where people find themselves in a very specific order with very specific rules (both written and unwritten) and demands. How will humans choose when they find their eternal spiritual demands in conflict with the immediate demands of survival and life? This question becomes particularly acute if one considers that religion is one of several sources of authority, each with its own sanctioning system and each contending for primacy. Glock and Stark respond as follows:

> "… confronted on the one hand by the abstract prescriptions of religion and on the other by the concrete norms and values made explicit by law, by the context in which they labour, and by secular groups, men are almost inexorably led to follow the latter - partly because these sanctioning systems are more salient, but also because the nature of a religiously inspired choice is not clear." (Glock & Stark, 1985, p.183)

The power of the mundane is also clearly visible in the life of the religious professional. He generally enjoys a high status amongst followers because of his close association with people's experience of the holy. He performs the ritual, interprets the Holy Law and teaches esoteric knowledge. However religious practitioners often use their positions in religious institutions for the most worldly of reasons, like the achievement of status, the wielding of power over others and the accumulation of wealth. It is not to say that all religious practitioners misuse their positions of status, power and access to wealth for personal gain, but the temptation and opportunity has led many down that path. (Momen, 1999, p.431)

4.3.5 Historical "Layering"

It is understood that human experience and history involves a process of "layering". That is to mean that in many situations of tension and conflict, the layers of injustice, exploitation and misunderstanding that have accumulated over time, are in fact cladding, so to speak, the true religious moral and ethical imperatives that may have facilitated reconciliation between warring parties. Smith illustrates this point poignantly with reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He indicates that at the core of Judaism, Christianity and Islam there is enormous convergence of moral codes, worldviews and doctrines. However, the hurts that each collectively suffered at the hands of the others were "plastered onto the originating revelations" until only the overlay remained visible. (Smith, 1987, p.xviii)

4.3.6   The Pluralisation of Society

The drawing and redrawing of political boundaries have created multi-religious populations. This plurality not only created the breeding ground for conflict amongst the various religious persuasions within the state, but also between the state and some minority groups. Fierce competition for scarce resources and access to power has defined the conflict and tension between the different constituent groups in the modern nation-state. (Wuthnow, 1998, p.xxix)

Religion-politics interaction in today's nation-state is being "charged" in the following ways (Moyser, 1991, p.15 and Smith, 1974, pp.3-4):

> The political system and process becomes much more differentiated and secularized. It creates opportunities for manipulation and exploitation of the traditional roles of government and religious institutions.
> The population is being politicized on a massive scale (with demands for equality growing), and mass communication disturbs traditional patterns of religious and political communication.
> The capacity of modernising states to direct and effect socio-economic change expands rapidly. Resultant social and economic development often undermines established power relationships in society.

4.4   Conclusion

The dynamics of congruence and incongruence do not occur in mutually exclusive contexts. Especially in the case of the modern nation-state, with its vast cultural diversity, it is often evident that congruent and incongruent dynamics are simultaneously at work. In those situations where one or the other pattern has temporarily established itself over the other, it has often been the result of extraneous factors, like extraordinary individual leadership at national level, or a cathartic and unifying national experience.

The concurrent constructive and destructive roles of religion in its outward projection are evident from the subsequent description of the respective societal patterns of the religion-politics interface.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL PATTERNS

5.1   Introduction

Our analysis of the religion-politics interface will now turn to the societal dimension of the interface, where one can justly talk of two societal forces standing in one or the other relation to each other. Different typologies have been proposed by scholars for the different types of relation and patterns of interaction that have been observed throughout history.

The typological model introduced here is intended to accommodate the widest range of typologies on offer. Although scholars use different terms and descriptions for their various religion-politics relation types, there is remarkable convergence in their observations. This convergence is visible in the unified typological model that follows.

5.2   A Continuum View of Typologies

The various visible social patterns of religion-politics interaction can be located on a continuum, which ranges from total alienation between religion and politics at the one extreme, to total integration and sharing of identity at the other extreme. Three main typological classes are presented, namely "integrated", "separated" and "alienated". These typological classes will serve as analytical beacons rather than fixed categories.

Before proceeding with the location of specific religion-politics relation types on the continuum, it is necessary to acknowledge two potential analytical pitfalls:

>   The different religion-politics relation types are not fixed, i.e. they do not occur uniformly over time in particular situations. It is often the case that a nation would, for example, have a cooperative religion-politics relation during a particular historical period, to be followed by a period of adversarial relations. The relation types are not mutually exclusive. In some societies different religious groups or factions often stand in different relations to the government of the day and the State, which may range from cooperative to adversarial. A good

example is Iran, which had three varieties of the religion-politics relation before the 1979 revolution. The religious leaders of Shi'ism, the Ayatollahs, generally remained aloof to the political systems and processes. A few religious leaders, however, dissented from this position and believed that it was their religious duty to support the government. Others, most notably Ayatollah Khomeini, argued that the regime was hopelessly corrupt and should be overthrown. (Momen, 1999, p.419)

The continuum that has been found to best accommodate the typologies offered by scholars, and which will be used as the framework for the subsequent discussion of the different relation types, looks as follows:

Congruence   Incongruence

Scholars generally avoid a judgement of which of these typological classes is dominant. Even the question about which is preferable, is mostly avoided. For instance, it is a fallacy to believe that the cooperative relation types (found in both the "Integration" and "Separation" typological classes) should be preferred over the adversarial relation types (found in both the "Alienation" and "Separation" typological classes). There have been too many examples in history of the good that has been achieved by religious institutions and leaders through their confronting of injustices and immoralities perpetrated by corrupt and inept regimes. Similarly, there are many examples where religion has become so integrated with the secular powers that it is just as culpable for the injustices perpetrated by the regime.

These ambiguities have been poignantly articulated as follows by Panikkar:

"… the union between the two not only embroils religion in compromises that reduce it to a sectarian status, but also loads politics with responsibilities that drive it toward totalitarian attitudes."

"… the separation of the two weakens religion by relegating it to a more

and more insignificant role, and gives rise to degeneracy in politics by reducing it to a mere application of techniques or by converting it into a religious ideology."
(Panikkar, 1983, p.44)

Momen concurs and argues that both total integration and total alienation should be avoided; that a balance should be struck between "religion and power". (Momen, 1999, p.420)

5.3   Typology Matrix

The different typologies can be compared in the following tabular scheme. The typologies presented here can be applied to both the general pattern of religion-politics interaction that are characteristic of the nation at large, and specific religious actors in their relation to the State.

ALIENATION	SEPARATION	INTEGRATION	Typology 1 (Wuthnow)
Typology 2 (Smith)	Typology 3 (Momen)	Typology 4 (Moyser)	
Typology 5 (Medhurst)		Typology 6 (Haynes)	
Cooperative	Secular denying Partnership	Present-informing past	
Condition setting	Theocracy (Hierocracy) State religion Multi-religious		
Integrated pattern Organic model Church model		Confessional polity Confessional	
Separatist		Predominant religion	
Areligious society Aloofness		Religiously neutral polity	
Generally religious society Established faith Liberal secular			
Adversarial	Religion denying Confrontational	Anti-religious society	
	Anti-religious polity	Marxist secular	

5.3.1   Integrated Relation Types

The ultimate integrated relation type is the *theocracy* (called a *hierocracy* by Momen because God is not in person ruling the state but by proxy - the religious leadership). In this relation type there is absolute unity between religious and political leadership. Moyser describes this relation type as the "organic model". In the organic model, religious and political authority is exercised by the *same* leadership. (Moyser, 1991, p.13) Examples include the Dalai Lamas' rule in Tibet from 1642 to 1959, and Ayatollah Khomeini's regime in Iran. (Momen, 1999, p.412)

At the next lower level of integration between politics and religion, lies what Moyser

calls the "church model." It should be noted that Moyser's "church model"-label can be misleading because he excludes situations where State/Church separation has been effected, but religious organizations remain active and generally cooperative with the State.

In his church model Moyser talks of the co-existence of religion and politics "in a pattern of symbiotic parity." The defining feature of this relation type is that there is, unlike in the organic model, a distinction between religious and political structures. The degree of distinction will vary from situation to situation, although the essence of the relation will remain integrative. (Moyser, 1991, p.13)

Momen's description of a *State religion* is basically identical to Moyser's integrated church model. The best examples of a *State religion* can be found in fundamentalist Islamic states like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan, Pakistan and Brunei. Here there is a distinction between the religious and political leadership, but the laws of the country are closely aligned with the Holy Law of Islam, the Shari'a. Europe in the Middle Ages also displayed the *State religion* type, although there were episodes of friction between the Roman Catholic Church and some monarchs. (Momen, 1999, p.412)

Medhurst's comparable type is defined in terms of the nature of the polity, which he describes as "the confessional polity." In this situation political leaders continue to legitimize their rule in religious terms but do so in an increasingly pluralistic context. This situation constitutes the first stage in the modification of the integrated pattern towards a situation of complete separation. (Medhurst, 1981, pp.115-134) Heynes also adopts the "confessional" label, and he describes it as a situation where the ecclesiastical authority is pre-eminent over secular power. (Heynes, 1998, p.10)

A rather unique relation type that could be classed as integrated occurs when different religious persuasions are formally included, with equal status, in governing structures, mostly as part of a power-sharing arrangement. This relation type is somewhat vaguely referred to as a *multi-religious dispensation*. An example is Lebanon where the unofficial constitution divides the principal offices of State

between the main religious communities (Maronite, Sunni, Shi'i and Druse).
(Momen, 1999, p.415)

5.3.2   Separated Relation Types

The second typological class, namely separation, has been prominent in especially
Christian, Hindu and Buddhist oriented societies. In the Christian tradition, religious
separatists would typically either draw a clear boundary between politics and
religion but participate in both, or actively distance themselves from the political
sphere. Hinduism has no ecclesiastical structure that could interact with the political
realm. This is not to say, however, that Hinduism is not relevant to the Indian
political system. Indian political parties and movements have repeatedly been
"energized by religious notions." (Heynes, 1998, p.9)

Today we have several examples where a state would have a *predominant*
religion, i.e. where one religion has considerable influence over the state but is not
the only one allowed or protected under the laws of the country. Examples include
the Roman Catholic Church in most of Southern Europe and Latin America.
(Momen, 1999, p.414) Heynes's *"generally religious states"* corresponds with
Momen's "predominant religion" category. He provides the US and Indonesia as
examples because both are guided by religious beliefs in general, but are not tied to
any specific religious tradition. He sees such a situation as similar to *civil religion.*
(Heynes, 1998, p.10) The civil religion concept is explored in greater detail in the
section **The "Civil Religion" Thesis** in **CHAPTER 3: MECHANISMS FOR**
THE "OUTWARD" PROJECTION OF RELIGION.

Also to be included in this class is Momen's *areligious society.* Such a society
generally adheres to no religion and there is no or very little interaction between
church and state. For him, Western Europe is a case in point. It has generally lapsed
into materialism and hedonism, and its governments have generally ceased to take
religion into account when formulating policies. (Momen, 1999, p.416) Heynes
classes states like England, Denmark and Norway in this category, but he rightly
indicates that although these states are "socially highly secular", they nevertheless

retain "established faiths." (Heynes, 1998, p.10) It should be acknowledged that although much of Western Europe can be described as generally areligious, a revival of religious consciousness at so-called grassroots level has been recorded in many Western European states. However, this revival still has to prove its depth and spread, as well as its relevance to the broader social environment.

Medhurst talks of a *religiously neutral polity* where religion is no longer the basis of the political system and the State views the religious groups and institutions as just another of the many interest groups in society. Here religion is not eliminated from the political realm, but finds itself in a more pluralistic context where its particular agendas and claims are given less recognition. In this context, religious bodies may align themselves with parties and pressure groups in order to defend and promote their interests. (Medhurst, 1981, pp.115-134)

Medhurst's religiously neutral polity coincides with what Heynes calls the *liberal secular* model, and in which he includes states like the Netherlands, Turkey, India and Ghana. In these cases there is a high level of detachment between religious bodies and the State. No religion is given official predominance, and their constitutions are neutral toward religion. (Heynes, 1998, pp.10-11)

Classification of states and situations of religion-politics interaction into the areligious or religiously neutral category can be contentious because of the fact that many of these states and situations evolved from the integrated relationship type as a result of secularization. One often finds what Moyser calls historical and cultural legacies or echoes in these situations. Moyser talks of a "clear religious imprint" to be found in every facet of society. (Moyser, 1991, p.23) To name but one example, such cultural legacies, echoes and imprints are evident in the case of Britain. It is an increasingly areligious society, and yet the monarch nominally maintains the dual positions as head of state and church (as Supreme Governor of the Established Church of England). (Moyser, 1991, p.13) Interestingly, Moyser's imprint/echo metaphors are reflected in the work of some of the earliest anthropologists. Tylor (1832-1917) talked of *cultural diffusion*, the transmission across time and space of cultural elements or traits. According to Tylor's theory the "primitive" traits found

in the more advanced societies are in fact *survivals* from an earlier evolutionary stage. (Bowie, 2000, p.15)

The separatist dispensation typically provides for both cooperative and adversarial relation types. Especially the Christian, Hindu and Buddhist traditions find their religious fundamentals compatible with a *de facto* situation of separation, although the cause, secularization, would be strongly condemned. They would typically encourage adherents to pursue otherworldly rewards through maintaining a pure personal life. For the Hindu and Buddhist religions the concept of *maya* (the idea that this world is illusionary and distracts from the Real) is used to adopt ascetic and monastic lifestyles. Momen calls this *religious aloofness*, because the religious group involved sees no relevance in secular matters to the business of achieving salvation/completion/perfection/harmony. (Momen, 1999, p.419)

Separatism can, however, turn into adversity. For Christian fundamentalists, usually small minorities at the fringe of both the secular and religious worlds, withdrawal from the secular world can be an option, but then their relationship with the State usually tends toward the adversarial type. They often find their own religious laws and codes in conflict with those of the state or society at large, and thus choose to ignore or break the secular laws and codes. This type of separatism can typically lead to refusal to pay taxes when it is deemed to promote immorality, refusal to serve in the military, or refusal to abide by certain safety and health regulations. (Wuthnow, 1998, p.xxxi)

Extreme separatism as practiced by the extremist or fundamentalist religious groups in the present age is increasingly problematic and often propels these groups into conflict with the State and society at large. Mass communication tends to expose such groups and focuses authorities' attention on any possible dangerous or illegal practices that may be followed by such groups. Governments are also much better equipped to exercise control over their territories and populations today than at any other time in history. The implications for extremist religious separatists are obvious: They are forced to interact with public officials on those matters where they differ fundamentally from public policy. (Wuthnow, 1998, p.xxxi)

5.3.3   Alienated Relation Types

The best example of an alienated relation type is the *anti-religious state.* The pre-1990 communist countries in Europe, where the state either outlawed or actively undermined and countered the influence of religions, belong to this category. The political project of the day intended to totally reconstruct society on an entirely secular ideological basis. Believers had no option but to practice their religious communions "underground", and were generally considered to be the enemies of the State and the "people". (Momen, 1999, p.416) The two best remaining examples are North Korea and China.

5.4   Conclusion

The preceding account of the various possible religion-politics relation types, which range from total integration to religion-denying and religion-hostile dispensations, shows that at the present conjuncture, the weight of religion-politics relations globally lies somewhere in the middle, broadly classed as "separatist". This *de facto* situation is consistent with our earlier observations about the questioning of religion's continued relevance and validity (CHAPTER 2), as well as the propensity for incongruence at the religion-politics interface (CHAPTER 4).

The fact that the alienated relation types comprise by far the smallest portion of the range of religion-politics interactions, substantiates the many observations about religion's intrinsic relevance to politics, as has been pointed out in the conceptual synthesis of the two concepts (CHAPTER 1), as well as the mechanisms for religion's "outward" projection (CHAPTER 3).

It is this *de facto* situation of continued relevance that informs the following discussion of key themes for the future.

CHAPTER 6

THE FUTURE

6.1   Introduction

Scholars have identified a number of problematic issues that are bound to impact on the religion-politics interface in the years to come. For the purpose of this dissertation, the more overarching (frequently intersecting too) themes have been chosen within which contentious debates and conflicts will take place.

It will be evident that these problematic issues present themselves differently from place to place. One useful distinction to be made in this regard is between post-industrial democracies and the so-called developing (Third) world. Both categories of states are profoundly affected by secularization, modernization, globalization, economic liberalization and an emerging new world order, yet the pathologies of their religio-political responses differ markedly.

6.2   The Postmodernist Void

Whatever the differences in response to secularization and modernization between the developed and the developing world, all responses can be related to what is generally called the postmodernist condition. Postmodernism has been variously defined as a feeling of widespread socio-political instability, a time 'turbulent, traumatic and dislocating, yet also … potentially creative" (De Gruchy, 1995, p.5); incredulity toward metanarratives, that is a rejection of absolute ways of speaking truth (Lyotard as cited in Heynes, 1998, p.211); and "the declining grip that all-encompassing systems of thought - that is secularized ideologies and world views - exercise over their adherents." (Heynes, 1998, p.211)

In view of these definitions of postmodernism, the continued relevance of religion in the postmodernist condition hardly needs to be motivated. However, some explanation of the link would help to place in proper perspective the subsequent discussions of religion's

relation to what might be called the secondary effects of postmodernism. One of the more illustrative descriptions of the link can be found in the concept "disenchantment". Thomas states that postmodernism has, for one thing, shown the human limits to "the disenchantment of the world - limits which modernization theory denies." From disenchantment flowed a new interest in religion, spirituality and the sacred; a growing re-enchantment and resacrilization of the world. The expression of this new interest has, however, been more diverse and more broadly conceived than mainline denominations and narrow fundamentalisms, which to a large degree obscured the true nature of religious survival and revival in the postmodern age. (Thomas, 2000, p.47) "Fundamentalism" is here understood to mean "an attempt to reclaim sacred authority and to use it in the service of reorienting the seemingly relentless process of historicity." (Touraine, 1988, p.xxiv)

Heynes describes religion's renewed relevance in the postmodernist condition in terms of "disenchantment's" companion pole, "alienation". He sees "a deep sense of alienation stimulating a search for an identity to give life meaning and purpose." In most post-industrial democracies secularization has run its course and there seems to be a religious backlash to its negative psychological, moral and ethical consequences. In this context people believe they can deal most effectively with their existential crises if they "present their claims as a group, perhaps a religiously oriented group." As a result, there has been "a wave of religiosity, with far-reaching implications for social integration, political stability and … international security." (Heynes, 1998, p.212)

The postmodernist void is also evident in the developing world where there has been a religious reaction to secularization (modernization). However, here the backlash has been primarily driven by disillusionment with the failure of modernization to deliver the political and socio-economic rewards so richly promised. The developing world's experience has been that modernization has in fact enhanced inequality and the marginalisation of certain groups. (Heynes, 1998, p.19) The reasons for the failure of modernization in the developing world are manifold. Suffice to say that it has to do with what Haynes calls the "attempted transplantation of alien Western institutions, laws and procedures which aimed to erode, undermine and eventually displace traditional and holistic religio-political systems." (Heynes, 1998, p.17)

6.3   Social Cohesion under Pressure

Durkheim was the first theorist to definitively link social cohesion with religion. He saw religion as a kind of social cement binding individuals within the social system. For Durkheim religion is so important to social integration that without it, social disintegration would inevitably follow. (Marsh, 2000, p.633) Glock and Stark elaborated on the conceptual link between religion and social integration by indicating that social integration requires and presupposes considerable consensus on a set of norms, a set of values, and a set of beliefs concerning the nature of humankind and the world; all three sets of imperatives being the primary concern of religion. (Glock & Stark, 1965, p.172)

Two qualifications need to be added to the contention that religious values are vital for social integration and cohesion:

> Religion is not the only source and support of values in society. Glock and Stark explain as follows: "… in order to maintain itself, every society must achieve some consensus around a set of *basic values* [own accentuation]." They go on to indicate that a society's "value orientation" may be reinforced by a religious tradition and/or a secular ideology. (Glock & Stark, 1965, p.172)
>
> Increasing secularization does not necessarily lead to a general decay of social and personal values. It is evident that areligious or secular societies can and do experience stability and cohesion. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence of religious or religious underpinned conflict in many societies. Glock and Stark observe that at times religion threatens social integration as readily as it contributes to it. (Glock & Stark, 1965, pp.171-172)

These observations should lead us to a more focused look at the role of secular ideologies, which have assumed, with varying degrees of success, the role of social value providers. These alternative secular ideologies include:

> Democracy (the will of the people is the ultimate source of legitimacy),
>
> Marxism (the will of the proletariat over the will of other classes),
>
> Nationalism (the will of a particular nation over others), and

Ethnic identity (the will of one ethnic group over others).

What does all this say about the very real problem of lacking social cohesion in many contemporary societies? Momen, for one, believes that the secular ideologies have proved to be less successful than religion as legitimators of the social order and the symbolic universe of a people, primarily because they are more limited in scope than religion. They have little to say about "the frightening marginal situations of human life, such as death." "No substitute for religion is, therefore, able to integrate all aspects of human life into one overarching social, conceptual and symbolic universe." (Momen, 1999, p.411)

But what has religion's reaction been to the inadequacies of contending secular ideologies? It can be argued that existing religions could at least try to formulate common positions on contentious moral and ethical issues that may help relieve some of the pressures on social cohesion. Scholars are, however, noting that the various religious traditions and institutions, when faced with these critical and divisive issues, rather tend to direct their energies inward; provide consolations to followers and encourage followers to support one another in creative ways, often at the cost of building bridges to other groups. (Wuthnow, 1998, p.xxxiii)

The inadequacies of both religion and its secular alternatives are clear. The social cohesion problem in today's plural societies remains basically unresolved.

6.4   Globalization

The all-encompassing nature of the term globalization and its use in so many meanings, has made its character ever more elusive and exceedingly difficult to discuss. In view of this dissertation's focus on religion and politics, it is probably useful to limit our understanding of globalization to its monocultural thrust (Westernization), as well as its superseding of national interests (supra-national governance). In both of these dimensions religion remains relevant in the sense that it will be called upon to respond to the profound effects of globalization at personal and communal levels, be it lost economic opportunities or threats to people's identities.

6.4.1   Westernization

Although the spread of what might be called Western culture is leaving no nation untouched, its reception has been uneven across the globe. The most conspicuous responses are those that reject and rebel against the Western values and material assumptions, most notably in the Islamic world. Other examples include protests against Western cultural imports in India, China, Japan and some South American states. Momen states that although it is a cultural rejection (non-Western cultures that reject the Western culture), "it is in reality also a religious rejection," since religion is the "basis of culture in most societies outside the West." (Momen, 1999, p.424) The implications of a wholesale and global "religious" response to what is perceived to be an atheistic world and life conception have not been fully exposed by contemporary scholars.

A measure of caution should accompany the constructs that cast globalization as nothing less than a process of irreversible and irredeemable Westernization. There are contending theories that see globalization as more than the spread of one culture at the expense of all others. "It (globalization) is also the creation of a new global culture with its attendant social structures, one which increasingly becomes the broader social context of *all* particular cultures in the world, including those of the West. The spread of the global social reality is therefore quite as much at the 'expense' of the latter as it is of non-Western cultures." (Beyer, 1994, p.9)

6.4.2   Supra-national governance

Turning to the second dimension of our understanding of globalization, namely its superseding of national interests, one needs little motivation for the growing influence and role of supranational institutions and processes. The UN and its many subsidiary bodies, as well as regional associations like the European Union are all examples of multilateral arrangements that have, to varying degrees, authority over and above their constituent nation-states. The point to be made here, is that increasingly higher levels of international organization and order will not go unchallenged. The inadequacies and weaknesses of the international system have *inter alia* been

described as its lack of a shared identity, which is central to any meaningful concept of society (Buzan, 1993, p.335), and which will keep it susceptible to the dynamics of competition, exploitation, marginalisation and conflict. The international system's ideological embeddedness in Western culture is another expression of its weakness. In postmodernistic parlance, Western culture is coming to an end, and the anticipated homogenisation of the international system, which it is supposed to nurture, will not be realised. (Thomas, 2000, p.53)

While some of these theoretical suppositions will be challenged, there should be no doubt that reactions against the new emerging international system and order will continue. Esposito and Watson foresee "the national expression of self-interest" (resurgent nationalism) as one such response. New nationalisms will have the following implications for religion:

> it can create new powerful secular rivals for allegiance with which religion will have to contend with; or
>
> it can suck religion into a politicised type of religiosity or religious nationalism. (Esposito & Watson, 2000, p.30)

6.5   The Spread of Free Market Capitalism

Probably the most significant feature of the so-called New World Order (a term roughly referring to the international dispensation that followed on the Cold War era and which saw the abolishment of an ideologically based bipolar world and the emergence of a unipolar world driven by Western values) is the global spread of free market capitalism. This ideology can be described as the new principal bearer of secular liberalism, in that it is promoting a profoundly materialistic and individualistic ethos. Acting in character as a full-fledged ideology, free market capitalism's social and cultural effects are felt at every level of society and in every corner of the globe. In Esposito and Watson's description, it is erecting self-interest as the determining motivation in human affairs; a process that sees the "commercialization, commodification and contractualisation of more and more areas of human activity and relationships, previously considered outside the money economy or subject to distinct public or professional ethos of service …". (Esposito & Watson, 2000, p.27)

The implication of this new ethos is that it stands in stark contrast to the essentially Judaeo-Christian ethics "which have provided the normative basis for a common, collective life (society) in Western countries"; norms that emphasized relationship, trust, justice, service, sharing and a common human dignity. Although it might claim liberal neutrality, free market capitalism is in fact weakening social ethics and social relations, as well as "the social responsibility and social cohesion that goes with them." (Esposito & Watson, 2000, pp.27-28)

The question that offers itself here, is how people are likely to respond to the continued dominance and growth of free market capitalist values, more often than not at the cost of moral concerns. Clearly, the free market capitalist paradigm would not have achieved its present dominance had it not satisfied some basic and generic human needs. However, growing international anti-capitalist sentiment is evidenced by the volatile protestations against free trade agreements at various World Trade Organisation and G8 summits.

Drawing from the work of Maslow (humans' needs hierarchy), Inglehart offers some explanation for the evident human schism on the question of free market capitalist values. Inglehart basically observes a materialist/post-materialist schism and describes the co-existence (albeit not harmonious) of "old" and "new" political attitudes. He states:

> "A large share of the public in Western societies have been socialised in an environment that provides an unprecedentedly secure prospect that one's physiological needs will be met. Consequently, Western public's responses should tend to polarise along a Materialist/Postmaterialist dimension, with some individuals consistently emphasising Materialist goals, while others tend to give priority to Postmaterialist goals." (Inglehart, 1997, p.110)

Inglehart proceeds with his examination of this thesis and comes to the conclusion, on the basis of data from up to 43 countries (mostly Western), that there has been a significant shift towards post-materialist values over the period 1970 to 1994 in the surveyed countries. Post-materialist values that gained ascendancy included 'less impersonal society', 'more say in job', 'more say in government', 'ideas count more than money' and 'freedom of speech'. (Inglehart, 1997, p.140)

Does this shift to post-materialist values open a window for increased religious relevance in the public sphere? It would seem so, judging from the very critical (anti-capitalist) voices emanating from some Christian communities. Christians in especially the developing world find it easy to subscribe to the notion that the rich Western countries and economic interests are, in the name of liberalism and economic progress, exploiting the underdeveloped but resource rich Third World. Similarly, religious institutions in the West are not escaping the clamour for more equity and humaneness in the ruthless global marketplace, and find themselves increasingly subject to transnational pressures from their fellow believers in other parts of the world. (Esposito & Watson, 2000, p.26)

6.6   The Emerging Role of Civil Society

Having discussed the pre-eminence of the global free market capitalist ideology and its institutions (multinational corporations, multilateral free trade mechanisms, etc.), we can now turn to another category of actors: civil society. The emergence of civil society formations as important actors on both the national and international stages is the direct outcome of the processes of democratization and mass politicization that has characterized the 20th century.

Civil society is defined as the arena where multifold social movements join with civic organizations to constitute themselves in an ensemble of arrangements to express themselves and to advance their interests. (Stepan, 1988, p.3) The causes typically pursued by the movements, organizations, associations and groups comprising civil society include: women's rights, conservation, social welfare, peace, human rights, development, Third World debt, fair trade, ethical investment, alternative technology, minority languages and cultures, etc. (Esposito & Watson, 2000, p.32) Religious bodies and institutions are prominent in this context. Esposito and Watson describe it as follows: "… civil society is certainly the space in which religion can breathe more easily and through which it can best contribute to the development of a different order." The most forceful examples are provided by Islam, where Islamic organizations provide educational, medical and social welfare services, operate publishing houses and TV stations, and provide professional associations for physicians, lawyers and journalists, all of these frequently on a transnational basis. In the Western world, Christian religious authorities and formal institutions prefer to engage the supra- and transnational causes through para-religious bodies of clergy and rank-and-file believers. (Esposito & Watson, 2000, pp.32-33)

The significant aspect of religious organizations' and groups' involvement in civil society and global causes is that religion has an inherent transnational character and reach, which is enhancing their effectiveness to act in these capacities.

A further force multiplier for religion's effectiveness as a civil society actor is the increasing common ground being pursued and found between different faiths, which can be called *ecumenism*. The processes of mass communication, economic and political liberalization, globalization and mass migration have brought unprecedented contact and integration

between the world's cultures and its religious traditions. As a result, people are more than ever exposed to new influences and increasingly recognise the relative as well as combined values of their cultural (including religious) heritages. As a result, the world has seen numerous ecumenical infusions in social and political issues, not least of which the anti-apartheid struggle. Obviously, religions and religious groups can also rebuff ecumenism by trying to preserve an exclusivist cosmology and prophesy of human destiny.

A final consideration for the role of civil society in the years to come, is the question of accountability. With the changing role of the State, primarily the redefinition of its social responsibility in light of the free market capitalist wisdom that economic efficiency, growth and progress is to be achieved through wholesale privatisation, many traditional governmental roles have been usurped by private and civil society formations. This situation raises fundamental questions about the accountability of these non-state actors. In the traditional dispensation, where religious and political bodies stood in well-defined relationships, and where they basically dealt with all socio-economic issues and needs, the element of accountability was present on both sides. However, who is to hold today's multitude of non-state actors accountable to moral and ethical principles? Religious organisations and groups active in the social society domain will find huge scope to provide both critique and guidance. However, they are, and are likely to remain, just a few of many civil society actors, and one should expect a proportionate level of influence.

6.7   Cultural Defence

The mechanisms associated with cultural identity, maintenance and defence have been mentioned earlier. It is repeated here because there is every indication that cultural defence (at both national and sub-national levels) will continue to be an important force in politics. Furthermore, it has to be recognised that cultural defence is a response that flows directly from the contradictions inherent in the postmodernist condition, and as such will be relevant as long as the condition prevails.

Cultural defence manifests in two contexts:
- Situations where the group's cultural identity is threatened (real or imagined) by one or more rival group identities. In this context religion will "furnish resources for

asserting a group's claim to a sense of worth", "form the basis of group identity" and "amount to an ideology of defence from encroachment from the feared 'other'." (Wallis & Bruce, 1992, pp.17-18)

- Where a group's cultural identity is threatened by a process of "cultural transition" (usually toward modernization and secularization), "it will turn to its theology to furnish the means to fight back". (Haynes, 1998, p.15)

In sum, religion's contribution to the defence of cultural identity primarily lies in fostering "group solidarity". This mechanism can be clearly seen in Northern Ireland (cultural defence against rival group) and the US (cultural defence against secularization).

6.8   Conclusion

This very cursory view of some of the challenges facing the world now and in the near future demonstrates the real potential for religion to regain some lost ground in its interface with the political realm. The modern condition will continue to face a range of introspections and challenges. The problems associated with exceeding levels of pluralism in nation-states, globalization, free-market capitalism, civil society activism and cultural erosion, have all been highlighted.

It is to be expected that the doubts and scepticisms facing the modern condition, in association with the fluid and indeterminate nature of the so-called post-modern condition, may well find resolve and consolation in religion. Religion, after all, claims to provide meaning and purpose to human existence, and more importantly, proposes the way that things ought to be. Such a proposal may seem very appealing at a time that humanity finds itself adrift in uncertainty.

CONCLUSION

Secularization and the survival of religion have found an uncomfortable but not inexplicable co-existence at the present conjuncture. The jury remains out on the ultimate fate of both, but their presence seems assured for the foreseeable time.

Religion's survival and continued relevance is to be understood from several perspectives, not the least of which the personal and intellectual. Looking at religion from this perspective, it can be seen that it has an intrinsic/organic/conceptual relevance to the social (including political) realm. Probably the most powerful and best-understood mechanism for the outward projection of religion's relevance onto the political project is the extension of ultimate meaning to the social reality. There should be no doubt that humans choose to fill their existence with meaning, whether that meaning is constructed from religion or from liberal humanism. On this account, there are compelling arguments that posit the limited capacity of liberal humanism to provide in humans' innate sense of purpose. Political orders based solely on the liberal humanist premise are potentially unsatisfying constructs, despite their current efficiency in maintaining stability in highly plural societies. Some extension of the boundaries of the political community into the realm of the religious is, therefore, called for, even though it may be at the risk of sacrificing on the individual rights and liberties account.

The different patterns of interaction between religion and politics at the societal level, patterns that vary greatly over time and space, can be broadly placed on a continuum that ranges from total integration between religion and politics, to separation between the two, and finally total alienation, hostility and denial. Where on this continuum one would locate a particular instance of the religion-politics interface would be determined by a combination of factors from both the personal and societal realms of religion. There is, for instance, a correlation between a religion's view of the purpose of history (historical and ahistorical religious traditions), and how it projects onto the political. There are also what might be called other circumstantial factors that will influence the religion-politics interface. It has been indicated that each instance of the religion-politics interface is influenced by the specific kind of state and society that obtains in that situation at that time.

Looking at how the religion-politics interface presents itself in what has been described as

the postmodern condition, it has been indicated that the failures of modernization, be it at the moral level (post-industrial democracies) or at the socio-economic level (developing states), have much to do with evidence of religious survival and possibly resurgence/revival. True to character, the postmodernist condition is not offering any all-encompassing theory or ideology to take the place of secularization and modernization. We are therefore left in a highly inconclusive position, where different theories and ideologies may co-exist. The religion-politics interface reflects exactly this indeterminate position. It is varied, confusing and seemingly retracing previous paths to a "re-enchantment" of the world.

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