

Secularism and IR Theory*

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Sociologists have debated the secularization thesis for decades.¹ Political theorists have analyzed the public/private divide since the founding of the discipline.² These debates have only just begun to enter the field of international relations. When Christine Sylvester wrote that international relations “smacks of debates within the hierarchy of one church,” she might have been right in more ways than one. For the most part, it is a secular church.³ Contemporary international relations theory takes the Euro-

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¹ See David Yamane, ‘Secularization on trial: in defense of a neosecularization paradigm,’ *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no.1 (March, 1997), Steve Bruce (Ed.) *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Max Weber, (Fischoff, trans.) *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), Malcolm B. Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1995), David Martin, *On Secularization: A Revised General Theory* (2nd ed. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), Phillip Hammond (Ed.) *The Sacred in a Secular Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), Mark Chaves, ‘Secularization as declining religious authority,’ *Social Forces* 72 (1994), pp. 749-74, Olivier Tschannen, ‘The secularization paradigm: a systematization,’ *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30 (1991), pp. 395-415, and the special issue of the journal *Sociology of Religion* 60: 3 (1999).

² See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), and Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1963), Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), and Habermas, (trans. Hohengarten) *Postmetaphysical Thinking* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), Seyla Benhabib, ‘Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Jürgen Habermas,’ in Craig Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), and William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

³ There are dissenters. On religious movements and conflict resolution see R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000). On religion and IR see Jonathan Fox, ‘Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations,’ *International Studies Review* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2001), pp. 53-73, the special issue of *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2000), and Barry Rubin, ‘Religion and International Affairs,’ *The Washington Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1990), pp. 51-64. On the Protestant Reformation and the modern state system see Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), and Philpott, ‘The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations,’ *World Politics* 52 (2000), pp. 206-245. On the rise of religious violence see Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

American definition of religion and its separation from politics as the natural starting point for social scientific inquiry.

I adopt a different starting point. Rather than take secularism as a given, I argue that it is a discursive tradition defined and infused by power.⁴ It is one of the most fundamental organizing principles of modern politics. Secularism has taken two distinct trajectories in international relations: laicism, in which religion is seen as an adversary and an impediment to modernization and development, and Judeo-Christian secularism, in which religion is seen as a source of unity and identity that generates conflict in modern international politics. These two varieties of secularism play across international relations theory and practice, confounding this traditional divide at every step. Their politics, history and consequences for international relations are the subject of this essay.

Secularism cannot be studied outside of particular historical contexts and sets of social practices. Each of the two traditions of secularism discussed here have a history. Laicism, which comes out of the Enlightenment critique of religion, is associated with attempts to distill a particular understanding of religion and to ban it from politics. The secular spheres are emancipated and expanded, as Casanova has argued, “at the expense of a much-diminished and confined religious sphere.”⁵ Judeo-Christian secularism is associated with attempts to claim and reinforce the “secular” as a unique Western achievement that both reflects and reinforces what is perceived to be the essence of Euro-American history, civilization and culture. Each of these forms of secularism is a contingent and productive form of power located on a broader spectrum of theological politics.⁶ They are not mutually exclusive, nor are they the only forms of secularism in existence. There is no strong or necessary dividing line between them. An individual or an institution may draw upon the discursive resources of both traditions simultaneously to legitimate a particular political position.

In diagnosing these two varieties of secularism I am indebted to the work of Charles Taylor, José Casanova and Talal Asad. In “Modes of Secularism,” Taylor describes an “independent political ethic” variety of secularism and a “common ground”

⁴ Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, ‘Power in International Politics,’ *International Organization* 59 (Winter 2005), p. 41.

⁵ José Casanova, ‘A Reply to Talal Asad,’ in David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Eds.) *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 23.

strategy of secularism that, he argues, turn out to be “ancestral to rather different understandings of secularism today.”⁷ He then develops a new model of secularism, which he calls the “overlapping consensus” model. A modified version of Rawls’s blueprint for a just society, it is similar to the independent political ethic but without the requirement of a common foundation of universally accepted political principles. Taylor argues that there can be no universal basis for these principles, whether religious or not.⁸ In *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Casanova refers to two distinct paths for managing the public/private distinction: liberal and civic/republican. Like Taylor and myself, he is cautiously critical of both of these traditions, “the liberal perspective because it insists on the need to confine religion to a private sphere, fearing that public religions must necessarily threaten individual freedoms and secular differentiated structures; the civic-republican perspective because...like the liberal perspective it also conceives of public or civil religions in premodern terms as coextensive with the political or societal community.”⁹ Casanova points to three ethnocentric prejudices embedded in Euro-American theories of secularization: a bias for Protestant subjective forms of religion, a bias for “liberal” conceptions of politics and the public sphere, and a bias for the sovereign nation-state as the systemic unit of analysis. In *Formations of the Secular*, Asad explores the construction of modern categories of the secular and the religious and unpacks the assumptions that govern Western forms of secularism, including the specific concepts of religion, ethics and politics that they presuppose.¹⁰

Regarding the geographical scope of this argument, the secular formations identified here have been influential within and between countries that inherited, borrowed, had imposed upon them, or somehow ended up living with and against the traditions (both secular and religious) of historical Latin Christendom, including Europe and its settler colonies, Turkey, Iran, India and elsewhere. Practitioners, theorists, journalists and ordinary people rely upon and continually reproduce these discursive traditions to organize their responses to events and processes involving religion and

⁶ Thanks to Bonnie Honig for suggesting this phrase.

⁷ Charles Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism,’ in Rajeev Bhargava (Ed.), *Secularism and its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 33-36.

⁸ Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism,’ p. 38.

⁹ Casanova, *Public Religions*, p. 216.

politics, including international politics. Laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism pre-structure discourse and practice involving politics and religion, in Hayden White's sense.¹¹ They are productive modalities of power that work "through diffuse constitutive relations" to contribute to the "situated social capacities of actors."¹² They are vehicles through which shared interests, identities and understandings involving religion and politics developed at the domestic, regional and transnational levels become influential at the systemic level in international relations.

If as I am suggesting the secular is socially constructed differentially across time and space, then at least two considerations emerge with regard to this narrative in the context of international politics. First, charting the influence of forms of secularism in international politics challenges the "clash of civilizations" narrative in which religion is seen as a fixed source of communal unity and identity that generates conflict in international politics. This is because any attempt to identify something called "religion" and to assign it a stable and unchanging role in "politics," whether domestic or international, is a political move that needs to be unpacked. Tracing the history and politics of the construction of the categories "secular" and "religious" is one way to go about unpacking these assumptions. In addition, in my understanding of the social construction of secularism,¹³ elements of "religion" escape each attempt to represent, define or confine it to particular roles, spaces or moments in politics. The continual fluctuation, evolution and contestation surrounding these categories confirm the difficulties faced by any attempt to stabilize the category of religion and define once and for all its relation to politics. The question for students of religion and international relations, then, is not "what is religion and how does it relate to international politics?" For there can be no singular, universal definition of religion. This is "not only because its constituent elements are historically specific (as Asad argues), but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes." So if religion is the product of complex cultural and political negotiations, then the question becomes *how* does something come to be understood as "religious" as opposed to "political," and what are

¹⁰ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 2.

¹¹ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

¹² Barnett and Duvall, 'Power in International Politics,' p. 48.

the effects of this demarcation? The attempt to define the boundaries of the secular and the religious is a political decision. Religious beliefs and practice are interwoven with political authority in complex and changing ways that often fail to align with state boundaries or secularist assumptions.

Second, this argument presents an alternative to realist, liberal and constructivist theories of international relations in which religion is considered to be a private affair. According to these accounts, religion was privatized in 1648 at the Peace of Westphalia as a solution to sectarian violence in Europe. Yet this attempt to privatize religion, to which I will return in my discussion of laicism, emerged out of a series of political and philosophical attempts to manage and moderate sectarianism in European politics. It is out of this particular historical, political, and philosophical context that the two traditions of secularism discussed here evolved. The next section offers a brief excursion into this context through a discussion of the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

Kant's secular variant of Christianity

Though best known in the field of international relations for his contributions to idealist theories of cosmopolitanism, Kant was also an important forerunner of modern forms of secularism.¹⁴ In contemporary international relations, the legacy of Kant's "rational religion" may even outweigh his contribution to theories of cosmopolitanism and idealism.¹⁵ One of the principle objectives of Kantian universal moral philosophy involved the attempt to address the adversarial effects of religious sectarianism in Europe. To do so, Kant laid a template for a generic form of Christianity that was intended to supersede sectarian faith. This template served as an important historical precursor of and political resource for later articulations of the forms of secularism described in this essay. Understanding Kant's rational religion makes it possible to discern some of the historical, religious, and philosophical contingencies embedded in and transmitted through contemporary Euro-American traditions of secularism.

¹³ See Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, Chapter One.

¹⁴ Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 33.

¹⁵ See Andrew Hurrell, "Kant and the Kantian Paradigm in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 16 (1990), pp. 183-205.

To overcome sectarianism, Kant proposed elevating universal philosophy, or rational religion, to the position previously reserved for Christian theology.¹⁶ This rational religion was essentially a generic form of Christianity that would replace and render publicly inert sectarian faith. As Connolly argues, the key to this Kantian rational religion is that it is anchored in a metaphysic of the supersensible that is presupposed by *any* agent of morality.¹⁷ “Kant anchors rational religion in the law of morality rather than anchoring morality in ecclesiastical faith.”¹⁸ This allows Kant to retain the command model of morality from Augustinian Christianity while shifting the proximate point of command from the Christian God to the individual moral subject.¹⁹ By shifting the point of command to the individual moral subject, however, Kant also ensures that “authoritative moral philosophy and rational religion are now only as secure as the source of morality upon which they draw”—individual apodictic recognition.²⁰ In this way, Kant’s rational religion, although it seeks to displace Christian ecclesiastical theology, also shares several significant qualities with it. Connolly identifies four of these common qualities shared by rational religion and the church doctrine that it sought to displace:

First, it places singular conceptions of reason and command morality above question. Second, it sets up (Kantian) philosophy as the highest potential authority in adjudicating questions in these two domains and in guiding the people toward eventual enlightenment. Third, it defines the greatest danger to public morality as sectarianism within Christianity. Fourth, in the process of defrocking ecclesiastical theology and crowning philosophy as judge in the last instance, it also delegitimizes a place for several non-Kantian, nontheistic perspectives in public life.²¹

Kant was a forerunner of secularism rather than a secularist himself.²² Yet the forms of secularism that evolved out of the Kantian settlement consisted of “a series of attempts to secure these four effects without open recourse to the Kantian metaphysic of the

¹⁶ Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 30. See Immanuel Kant (trans. Gregor) *The Conflict of the Faculties*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

¹⁷ Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁰ “Morality as law now itself becomes anchored only in the ‘apodictic’ recognition by ordinary human beings of its binding authority.” *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²² “His obsequious deference to the prince, his explicit dependence on the supersensible, his hope that a natural teleology of public life will promote rationality in the public sphere by automatic means, and his hesitancy to include most subjects within the realm of public discourse render him a forerunner rather than a partisan of secularism.” *Ibid.*, p. 33.

supersensible. Secularism, in its dominant Western forms, *is* this Kantian fourfold without metaphysical portfolio.”²³

This describes laicism, and to a certain extent, Judeo-Christian secularism. Laicism pursues the Kantian effect of an authoritative public morality based in a singular conception of reason. It rejects theology in public life as dangerous sectarianism. It harbors an antipathy toward nontheistic and non-Kantian philosophies, as well as philosophies of public order derived from Islamic tradition. Laicism attempts contain ecclesiastical intrusions into public life.²⁴ Its overarching objective is to provide “an authoritative and self-sufficient public space equipped to regulate and limit ‘religious’ disputes in public life.”²⁵ There is an emphasis on “protecting the authority of deliberative argument in the secular public sphere.”²⁶ To achieve this Kantian effect, laicism constantly reinscribes the boundary between public and private, secular and sacred, mundane and metaphysical.

The specific contours of this separation, if made explicit, are often legitimated through reference to the dictates of logic, reason, or nature. As Connolly argues, “many secularists who have lost confidence in a god replace it with an overweening confidence in the power of logic, reason, or nature as a guide to life.”²⁷ The suggestion that a single logical, reasonable or natural universal moral order is slowly replacing religion is an example of how Kantian-inspired laicism influences contemporary theories of international relations.²⁸ Elements of this tradition are reflected in the work of David Held, Martha Nussbaum and Francis Fukuyama.²⁹ Connolly describes this move toward moral universality as “the secular variant of Christianity.”³⁰ The spheres of social control are divided between the realm of the Judeo-Christian sacred, on the one hand, and the

²³ Ibid., p. 32 (emphasis in original).

²⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁷ William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 189.

²⁸ Immanuel Kant, (trans. Ted Humphrey) *Perpetual peace, and other essays on politics, history, and morals* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983).

²⁹ David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), Martha C. Nussbaum, (Joshua Cohen, ed.) *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), and Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’ *The National Interest* 16: (1989), pp. 3-18.

³⁰ Connolly, *Ethos*, p. 181.

realm of secular morality, international law and international order on the other. A consensus separating the Judeo-Christian sacred from universal secular reason thus defines the terms through which the sacred and the secular are conceptualized in the field of international relations.

Like laicism, Judeo-Christian secularism also pursues the Kantian effect of an authoritative public morality based in a singular conception of reason. It also shuns nontheistic and non-Kantian philosophies, including Islamic ones. Like laicism, this variety of secularism seeks to regulate and limit religious intrusions in public discourse. The difference is that unlike laicism, which claims to have superseded religion and religious origins altogether, Judeo-Christian secularism elevates and emphasizes a different aspect of Kant's moral philosophy: his insistence that among all ecclesiastical creeds available Christianity comes closest to his version of "universal rational religion."³¹ Judeo-Christian secularism thus positions itself differently and more warmly toward the "metaphysical portfolio" eschewed by laicism. Judeo-Christian secularism draws upon these insistences in Kantian philosophy to sustain a distinctive narrative about the origins, nature and significance of modern secularism. In this narrative, Christianity informs and sustains the moral foundations of modern Euro-American secular order. The Christian origins of modern secularism are valued; claims to secular order are emboldened and not scuttled through reference to these origins.

The figure of Judeo-Christian secularism captures elements of modern secularism that are not part of the laicist framework yet are exceedingly important in sustaining modern secularist settlements. Consider in this regard Gilles Deleuze's observation that the "apodictic recognition" upon which Kantian morality is grounded is no more than "a secondary formation reflecting the predominantly Christian culture in which it is set."³² Unlike laicism, in which secularism is considered universal, or at least universalizable, in Judeo-Christian secularism modern habits of secularism are seen as culturally embedded, fixed and largely unproblematic. Deleuze, by way of contrast, is neither a laicist nor a Judeo-Christian secularist, pointing instead to the close cultural and historical ties that animate relations between these two traditions. In highlighting the influences of

³¹ William E. Connolly, "Europe: A Minor Tradition," in *Powers of the Secular Modern*, p. 80.

³² Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 33.

Christianity upon modern secular moral habits and traditions, his writing directs our attention to the historical, cultural and religious contingencies in both varieties of secularism. This opens the way to questioning pretensions to universality grounded *either* in the claim to have overcome such religio-cultural particularities (laicism) *or* to have located the key to successful moral order in a particular religio-cultural heritage (Judeo-Christian tradition).

The relation between Christianity and modern secularism is a subject of heated debate among philosophers, theologians and historians.³³ John Milbank, for example, has suggested that, “all the most important governing assumptions of [secular social] theory are bound up with the modification or the rejection of orthodox Christian positions. These fundamental intellectual shifts are...no more rationally ‘justifiable’ than the Christian positions themselves.”³⁴ Milbank concludes that only Christian theology offers a viable alternative to both secular reason and “nihilism.” Christian theologian Arend Theodor van Leeuwen, according to Juergensmeyer, argues that “the idea of a secular basis for politics is not only culturally European but specifically Christian.”³⁵ For van Leeuwen, according to Juergensmeyer, “secular culture was, in his mind, Christianity’s gift to the world.”³⁶ While Juergensmeyer argues that van Leeuwen’s thesis about the Christian origins of modern secularism “is increasingly regarded as true, especially in Third World countries,” he also criticizes van Leeuwen for suggesting that secularism was *uniquely* Christian, and argues that other civilizations do have distinctions between priestly and secular authority.³⁷ This distinction is important for my argument. Juergensmeyer does not suggest, as does van Leeuwen, that Christianity is the *unique* foundation of secular democracy. Instead, he gestures toward the argument that particular forms of secularism are historically specific and contingent formations.

³³ See Carl Schmitt (trans. George Schwab), *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), and Hans Blumenberg, (trans. Robert M. Wallace) *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986).

³⁴ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990, 1993), p. 1.

³⁵ Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 16. See Arend Theodor van Leeuwen, (trans. H.H. Hoskins) *Christianity in World History: The Meeting of the Faiths of East and West* (New York: Scribner’s, 1964).

³⁶ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, p. 17.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

Juergensmeyer therefore supports van Leeuwen's argument, as do I, that "the particular form of secular society that has evolved in the modern West is a direct extension of its past, including its religious past, and is not some supracultural entity that came into being only after a radical juncture in history."³⁸

In reaching these conclusions, however, Juergensmeyer wrestles with and ultimately leaves unresolved an important tension in the study of secularism. On the one hand, like van Leeuwen, he acknowledges the complex yet also much-interrupted relation between Christian history and doctrine and modern forms of Euro-American secularism. On the other hand, unlike van Leeuwen, he wants to leave open the possibility that alternative forms of secularism can and have emerged in non-Christian settings. Yet, in the same moment that Juergensmeyer gestures toward this need to disaggregate secularism and examine its diverse historical trajectories and complex relation to religion in different historical and political circumstances, he also (somewhat apodictically) recognizes religion and secular nationalism as opposing "ideologies of order" and then concludes that, "there can ultimately be no convergence between religious and secular political ideologies."³⁹

I take a different approach. Rather than close off inquiry by setting up the "religious" and the "secular" as mutually exclusive, I examine the ways in which particular trajectories of secularism are socially constructed in particular historical circumstances and then assess their political consequences for international relations. The two forms of secularism examined in the following sections emerged out of the theopolitical history and traditions of Latin Christendom, which was richly informed by but not limited to Kantian philosophy and tradition. Other traditions, such as Spinozism and Lockean liberalism, for example, also profoundly influenced the forms of secularism discussed here.⁴⁰ These forms of secularism represent two points on a much broader

³⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 197. On Juergensmeyer see Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 'The International Politics of Secularism: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran,' *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 29, no. 2 (March-May 2004): 115-138.

⁴⁰ On this fascinating alternative challenge to established religion see Benedict de Spinoza (Edwin Curley, trans.) *Ethics* (New York: Penguin, 2005). On the contrast between Spinoza's "freedom to philosophize" and the liberal "freedom of conscience" see Jonathan I. Israel, 'Spinoza, Locke and the Enlightenment Battle for Toleration,' in Ole Peter Grell and Roy Porter (Eds.), *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 102-113, and Miguel Vatter, 'Strauss and Schmitt as Readers of Hobbes and Spinoza: On the Relation between Political Theology and Liberalism,' *The New*

spectrum of theological politics.⁴¹ Other forms of secularism that do not share the same philosophical, religious, historical and institutional legacies will appear quite differently.

Laicism and international relations

In his classic 1965 text *The Secular City*, Harvey Cox suggests that, “it will do no good to cling to our religions and metaphysical versions of Christianity in the hope that one day religion or metaphysics will once again be back. They are disappearing forever and that means we can now let go and immerse ourselves in the new world of the secular city.”⁴² This perspective emerges more recently in Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*, which describes the evanescent quality of religion and suggests that, “every metaphysical tradition is now completely worn out.”⁴³ This assumption has been particularly influential in the academy, in which as Esposito observes “religious faith was at best supposed to be a private matter. The degree of one’s intellectual sophistication and objectivity in academia was often equated with a secular liberalism and relativism that seemed antithetical to religion...Neither development theory nor international relations considered religion a significant variable for political analysis.”⁴⁴ In this view, “the mixing of religion and politics is regarded as necessarily abnormal (departing from the norm), irrational, dangerous and extremist.”⁴⁵

Centennial Review 4 (Winter 2004): 161-214.

⁴¹ For a different attempt to negotiate the demands of Christian faith and public life see Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, in which according to Taylor the “independent ethic reigns supreme.” Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism’, p. 34. For a different reading see Cavanaugh’s argument that “in Hobbes it is not so much that the Church has been subordinated to the civil power; Leviathan has rather swallowed the Church whole into its yawning maw...The body of Christ is thereby severely nominalized, scattered and absorbed into the body of the State.” William T. Cavanaugh, ‘A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State,’ *Modern Theology* 11, no. 4 (October 1995), p. 406.

⁴² Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 4.

⁴³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), cited in William E. Connolly, *Pluralism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 150.

⁴⁴ John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, 2nd ed.), p. 200. Daniel Lerner’s *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: MacMillan, 1958) is the classic example; for a critique see James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997, 4th ed.).

⁴⁵ John L. Esposito, ‘Islam and Secularism in the Twenty-First Century,’ in John L. Esposito and Azzam Tamini (Eds.) *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 9.

Laicism is a powerful tradition of the secular city, world “empire,” and Western academy that presumes that metaphysical traditions of all kinds have been exhausted and transcended. It is one of the founding principles of modern political thought and one of the practical pillars of the secular separation of church and state. There are many dimensions of laicism, including the exclusion of religion from the spheres of power and authority in modern societies (structural differentiation), the privatization of religion, and a decline in church membership and potential disappearance of individual religious belief.⁴⁶ I focus upon the exclusion of religion from spheres of modern power and authority because this dimension of laicism is most relevant to my argument about international relations.

Laicism is a powerful organizing principle of modern politics that has been influential in France, the former Soviet Union, Turkey, China and elsewhere. It is derived from the Jacobin tradition of *laïcisme* and associated with what Partha Chatterjee has described as “a coercive process in which the legal powers of the state, the disciplinary powers of family and school, and the persuasive powers of government and media have been used to produce the secular citizen who agrees to keep religion in the private domain.”⁴⁷ Casanova suggests that this privatization of religion is “mandated ideologically by liberal categories of thought which permeate not only political ideologies and constitutional theories but the entire structure of modern Western thought.”⁴⁸ According to Taylor, the overarching objective of the “independent political ethic” mode of secularism, pursued by Grotius and others, is to identify features of the human condition that allow the deduction of exception-less norms about peace and political obedience, making religion irrelevant to politics.⁴⁹ As Grotius argued, “*etsi Deus non daretur*...even if God didn’t exist, these norms would be binding on us.”⁵⁰ The result is that “the state upholds no religion, pursues no religious goals, and religiously-defined goods have no place in the catalogue of ends it promotes.”⁵¹ Asad notes that laicism seeks to confine religious belief and practice “to a space where they cannot

⁴⁶ I thank Peter Berger for his comments on this section.

⁴⁷ Partha Chatterjee, ‘The Politics of Secularization in Contemporary India,’ in Scott and Hirschkind (Eds.) *Powers of the Secular Modern*, p. 60.

⁴⁸ Casanova, *Public Religions*, p. 215.

⁴⁹ Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism,’ p. 33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

threaten political stability or the liberties of ‘free-thinking’ citizens.”⁵² Van Der Veer and Lehmann observe that, “it is a fundamental assumption of the discourse of modernity that religion in modern societies loses its social creativity and is forced to choose between a sterile conservation of its premodern characteristics and a self-effacing assimilation to the secularized world.”⁵³ Richard King describes laicism as the attempt to define and then exclude (whatever laicists identify as) religion:

The Enlightenment preoccupation with defining the “essence” of phenomena such as “religion” or “mysticism” serves precisely to exclude such phenomena from the realms of politics, law and science, etc.—that is, from the spheres of power and authority in modern Western societies. Privatized religion becomes both clearly defined and securely contained by excluding it from the public realm of politics.⁵⁴

International relations theory assumes that religion was privatized in the course of creating the modern state and thus excluded from spheres of power and authority in modern societies. Realist and liberal approaches to international relations are part of a tradition in social theory that operates on the assumption that religion has been confined to the private sphere or has diminished altogether.⁵⁵ As Katzenstein observes, “because they are expressions of rationalist thought deeply antithetical to religion, the silence of realist and liberal theories of international relations on the role of religion in European and world politics is thus not surprising.”⁵⁶ The operative assumption that religion has been privatized that characterizes these approaches is what Thomas refers to as the “Westphalian presumption.”⁵⁷

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 35.

⁵² Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, p. 191.

⁵³ Peter van der Veer & Hartmut Lehmann, ‘Introduction,’ *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 10.

⁵⁴ Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and ‘the Mystic East’* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 11. In 1951 Adiver described Western positivism as “the official dogma of irreligion.” Advan Adiver, ‘Interaction of Islamic and Western Thought in Turkey,’ in T.C. Young (Ed.), *Near Eastern Culture and Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 126, cited in Esposito, *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ Thomas argues that this applies to the English School as well; see Scott M. Thomas, ‘Faith, History and Martin Wight: The Role of Religion in the Historical Sociology of the English School of International Relations,’ *International Affairs* 77: 4 (2001), p. 926.

⁵⁶ Peter Katzenstein, ‘Multiple Modernities and Secular Europeanization?’ in Peter Katzenstein and Timothy Byrnes (Eds.), *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 31.

⁵⁷ Scott M. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 33.

There is a vast literature on religion, the Protestant reformation, and the Westphalian settlement (which ended the Thirty Years War between 1618 and 1648), most of which emphasizes the declining role of religion in European public life.⁵⁸ Skinner, for instance, observes that after Luther “the idea of the Pope and Emperor as parallel and universal powers disappears, and the independent jurisdictions of the *sacerdotium* are handed over to the secular authorities.”⁵⁹ Pizzorno refers to this transition as the “Gregorian moment,” and describes it as the most emblematic episode of what he calls “absolute politics” in Western history, which “lies at the root of the transfer, as it were, of the collective responsibility for ultimate ends from a collectivity having the boundaries of Christianity, and including all believers tied by this particular bond of faith, to separate collectivities defined by the territorial boundaries of one state and including all the individuals identified by their living within those boundaries.”⁶⁰ Philpott emphasizes the important role of the Reformation and processes of secularization that emerged out of it to challenge the temporal powers and decrease the public role of the church.⁶¹ Krasner suggests that, “the idea of sovereignty was used to legitimate the right of the sovereign to collect taxes, and thereby strengthen the position of the state, and to deny such right to the church, and thereby weaken the position of the papacy.”⁶² He argues that Westphalia “delegitimized the already waning transnational role of the Catholic Church and validated the idea that international relations should be driven by balance-of-power considerations rather than the ideals of Christendom.”⁶³ Cavanaugh argues that the conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries inverted the dominance of the ecclesiastical over the civil authorities through the creation of the

⁵⁸ On the emergence of the Westphalian settlement and alternatives to it see Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and its Competitors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁵⁹ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol. II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 353.

⁶⁰ Alessandro Pizzorno, ‘Politics Unbound,’ in Charles S. Maier (Ed.), *Changing Boundaries of the Political* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 34.

⁶¹ Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁶² Stephen D. Krasner, ‘Westphalia and All That,’ in Judith Goldstein & Robert Keohane (Eds.), *Ideas & Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 238.

⁶³ Stephen D. Krasner, ‘Sovereignty,’ *Foreign Policy* (January/February 2001), p. 21. On the violation of state autonomy embedded within the Westphalian settlement through provisions enforcing religious toleration that undermined the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* see Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 77-84.

modern state, preparing the way for the eventual elimination of the Church from the public sphere.⁶⁴

Westphalian republicanism was organized on a modern conception of social and political order in which individual subjects assembled a society under a single sovereign authority. By challenging the arbitrary rights of kings in the name of the common good,⁶⁵ the new republicanism did de-legitimize and transform pre-existing hierarchic forms of order, as most conventional accounts have it.⁶⁶ As Taylor argues, however, this new republicanism also reinforced a particular kind of distinction between natural order and supernatural order, a distinction that came out of, remained indebted to, and partially reproduced a broader Christian framework.⁶⁷ Early republican order was characterized by a strong idea of providence and a pervasive sense that men were enacting a master plan that was providentially preordained. As Taylor suggests, the idea of moral order underlying this arrangement is in fact unrecognizable to non-Westerners due to its emphasis on a providential plan to be realized by humans.⁶⁸ That early republicanism was situated within a broader Christian context also fits with Krasner's observation that in the Treaty of Osnabrück, one of the two treaties that made up the Peace of Westphalia along with the Treat of Münster, religious toleration was limited to Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics.⁶⁹ Westphalia, as Nexon concludes, thus contributed to a "territorialization of religion" leading toward the "formation of polities in which territory, state, and confession were closely linked."⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Cavanaugh, 'A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House,' pp. 398-400.

⁶⁵ Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997), p. 70.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the emergence of the concept of politics as a separate activity in early modern Europe and the argument that spiritual or ultimate ends can always be found "in the pursuance of those activities to which it is today usual to assign the generic name of politics" see Pizzorno, 'Politics Unbound,' pp. 30-32.

⁶⁷ As Nexon writes, "when we view Europeanization as a long historical process, we inevitably confront the creation of Europe as a community through, first, the extrusion of religious difference and, second, the management of religious schism within a broader Latin Christian community." Daniel Nexon, 'Religion, European Identity, and Political Contention in Historical Perspective,' in Katzenstein and Byrnes (Eds.) *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, p. 260.

⁶⁸ Charles Taylor, Seminar on Secularization, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, Spring 2003. For the argument that theological contributions underlie key components of the Westphalian settlement, including the legitimacy of private property, absolute sovereignty and active rights, see Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, pp. 9-26.

⁶⁹ Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, p. 81, citing Treaty of Osnabrück 1648, 240, 241, Article VII.

⁷⁰ Nexon, 'Religion, European Identity, and Political Contention,' p. 277.

The varieties of secularism identified in this essay as influential in contemporary international relations emerged out of this Christian-influenced Westphalian moral and political order. Although laicism presents itself as a universalizable discourse that emerged out of the Westphalian settlement as a solution to the wars of religion, it is actually “a specific fashioning of spiritual life... carved out of Christendom.”⁷¹ As Mitchell observes, even “the idea of the sovereign self, the autonomous consenting self, emerged out of Christianity... paying attention to the religious roots of consent in the West alert us to the fact, that it is in fact a provincial development, not necessarily universalizable.”⁷² The influence of Christian tradition upon the original Westphalian “secular” settlement makes it difficult to subsume modern international order into realist and liberal frameworks that operate on the assumption that religion has been completely privatized. This is because the traditions of secularism identified here contribute to the constitution of particular modern forms of state sovereignty that purport to be universal in part by *defining* the limits of state-centered politics with religion on the outside.

Modernization theory is the policy expression of this commitment to build a modern Westphalian state. The dominant paradigm in this theory is that “managing the public realm is a science which is essentially universal and that religion, to the extent it is opposed to the Baconian world-image of science, is an open or potential threat to any polity.”⁷³ As Falk argues, the exclusion of religion from the spheres of power and authority “was intended to facilitate governmental efficiency as well as to provide the basis for a unified politics of the state in the face of religious pluralism, and a background of devastating sectarian warfare. Ostensibly, in the modern world religious identity was declared irrelevant to the rational enterprise of administering the political life of society.”⁷⁴ In viewing religion as an impediment to the scientific management of the domestic and international public realms, modernization theory reflects laicist assumptions. Religion, however defined, was to be confined to the private realm in order to ensure the proper demarcation of public and private, sacred and secular. This

⁷¹ Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 23.

⁷² Joshua Mitchell, Comments presented at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the Pew Christian Scholars Program conference on ‘Theology, Morality, and Public Life,’ The University of Chicago Divinity School, Chicago, Illinois, February 25-27, 2003.

⁷³ Nandy, ‘The Politics of Secularism,’ p. 129.

⁷⁴ Richard Falk, ‘Religion and Politics: Verging on the Postmodern,’ *Alternatives* XIII, (1988), p. 381.

paradigm was considered to be universal, or at least universalizable. As T.N. Madan concludes, “the idea of secularism, a gift of Christianity, has been built into Western social theories’ paradigms of modernization, and since these paradigms are believed to have universal applicability, the elements, which converged historically—that is in a unique manner—to constitute modern life in Europe in the sixteenth and the following three centuries, have come to be presented as the requirements of modernization elsewhere.”⁷⁵

Structuralist and materialist approaches to international relations such as neo-realism and historical materialism are influenced by these laicist assumptions insofar as religion is seen as epiphenomenal to more fundamental material interests. Neo-realism proceeds on the assumption that states have a set of fixed and innate interests and that their behavior is constrained by international structure defined by factors such as the distribution of power, technology and geography. Historical materialism, following Marx, dismisses religion as “a mode of consciousness which is other than consciousness of reality, external to the relations of production, producing no knowledge, but expressing at once the anguish of the oppressed and a spurious consolation.”⁷⁶ As with the realists and liberals, materialist approaches to state interests neglect the constitutive and productive role of social norms and practices.⁷⁷ As Bukovansky argues, “materialist approaches tend to view rules and norms as being contingent upon, and thus reducible to, material configurations of power or resources.”⁷⁸ The forms of secularism identified here are not reducible to material power or resources but instead play a constitutive role both in creating agents and contributing to the normative structure in which they interact.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ T.N. Madan, ‘Secularism in its Place,’ *Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 4 (November 1987), p. 754.

⁷⁶ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 46.

⁷⁷ On historical materialism see Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1994) and B.K. Gills, ‘Historical Materialism and International Relations Theory,’ *Millennium* 16 (1987), pp. 265-272; on neorealism see Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), and Waltz’s chapter “Political Structures” in Robert Keohane (Ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 70-97.

⁷⁸ Mlada Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics: The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 19.

⁷⁹ See Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Chs. 1-3.

Like their realist and liberal counterparts, constructivists have paid little attention to the important role of the secular-sacred dichotomy in constituting state sovereignty. Although this literature examines the interaction of pre-existing state units to explain how international norms influence state interests, identity, and behavior,⁸⁰ the literature on the social construction of states and the state system has ignored the secular and sacred or treated religion as essentially private by prior assumption.⁸¹ This has left little space for examining the history and politics of secularism.

The most significant implication for international relations of these differing attempts to either expel religion from politics or assume that it has been successfully privatized within the state is that they demand “not only the sharing of the (independent political) ethic but also of its foundation—in this case, one supposedly independent of religion.”⁸² Laicism defines religion by designating that which is *not* religious: the secular. As Asad argues, “in the discourse of modernity ‘the secular’ presents itself as the ground from which theological discourse was generated...”⁸³ In doing so, laicism implicitly demarcates the limits and boundaries of public space. In defining the temporal, laicists aspire to define or at least delimit the transcendental. The laicist settlement is a form of politics that, as Pizzorno argues in reference to absolute politics, “sets the boundaries between itself and other activities. To define what is within or without the scope of politics, one needs laws, or abolition of laws, hence political decisions, political activities, and discourse.”⁸⁴ Laicism attempts to set the terms for what constitutes politics and religion. As Scott observes, “part of the problem to be sketched and investigated therefore has precisely to do with the instability of what gets identified and counted by authorized knowledges as ‘religion’: how, by whom, and under what conditions of power. In other words, the determining conditions and effects of what gets categorized as

⁸⁰ See Peter J. Katzenstein, (Ed.) *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Authority in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). For a critique see Sujata Chakrabarti Pasic, ‘Culturing International Relations Theory: A Call for Extension,’ in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich V. Kratochwil (Eds.), *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), pp. 85-104.

⁸¹ See Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (Eds.), *State Sovereignty as a Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁸² Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism,’ p. 38.

⁸³ Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, p. 192.

⁸⁴ Pizzorno, ‘Politics Unbound,’ p. 28.

‘religion’ are historically and culturally variable.”⁸⁵ Euro-American traditions of secularism are forms of authorized knowledge that emerged out of the contested theopolitics of Latin Christendom and rely upon particular assumptions about the secular and the religious.

These are historically contingent forms of knowledge, as may be illustrated through a look at the derivation of the English term “religion” from the Latin *religio*.⁸⁶ In the pre-Christian era, Cicero provided an etymology of the term linking it to the Latin verb *relegere*: to re-trace or re-read.⁸⁷ In pre-Christian times, *religio* referred to “re-tracing” the ritual of one’s ancestors. As King observes, “this understanding of the term seems to have gained provenance in the ‘pagan’ Roman empire and made *religio* virtually synonymous with *tradio*.” The Roman idea of *religio* tolerated different traditions, since the exclusion of one tradition in order for another to be practiced was not required.⁸⁸ At the time, early Christians were referred to as atheists because they did not belong to a recognizable *tradio* and did not acknowledge the gods of others.⁸⁹ As Christians increased their power among the Romans, they also transformed the meaning of *religio* by severing its association with ancestral traditions:

It became increasingly important within early Christian discourses to drive a wedge between the traditional association of *religio* with *tradio*. This occurred through a transformation of the notion of *religio*. Thus in the third century CE we find the Christian writer Lactantius explicitly rejecting Cicero’s etymology, arguing instead that *religio* derives from *re-ligare*, meaning to bind together or link.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ David Scott, ‘Conversion and Demonism: Colonial Christian Discourse and Religion in Sri Lanka,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 2 (1992), p. 333.

⁸⁶ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, pp. 35-36.

⁸⁷ In his analysis of the applications of the lexical resources associated with “religion,” Derrida argues that *relegere* is from *legere* (harvest, gather) and is a Ciceronian tradition continued by W. Otto, J.-B. Hollmann and Benveniste. He also points to a second etymological source of the word *religio*: *religare*, from *ligare* (to tie, to bind), and traces this tradition from Lactantius and Tertulian to Kobbert, Ernout-Meillet, and Pauly Wissola. Jacques Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,’ in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Eds.), *Religion* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 34-35.

⁸⁸ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, p. 36. The only restriction on *religio* in the Roman context was that practices were not allowed to “impinge upon acceptance of civic responsibilities.”

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Over time, *religio* came to be associated with “a worship of the true and a superstition of the false.”⁹¹ For Christians and Westerners more generally, religion came to denote a bond of piety between *one true* God and man. Cavanaugh argues that this modern concept of religion dates to the late fifteenth century and the writings of Marsilio Ficino, whose 1474 *De Christiana Religione* represents religion as a universal human impulse. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries “religion moves from a virtue to a set of propositions...at the same time the plural ‘religions’ arises, an impossibility under the medieval usage.”⁹²

This reconceptualization or reformulation of *religio* becomes important for international relations because it established “the monotheistic exclusivism of Christianity as the normative paradigm for understanding what a religion is.”⁹³ This monotheistic exclusivism influenced European social order, European perceptions of others and, later, European forms of secularism. Kant, for instance, was famously unable to fathom the idea of more than one valid religion:

Differences in religion: an odd expression! Just as if one spoke of different *moralities*. No doubt there can be different kinds of historical *faiths*, though these do not pertain to religion, but only to the history of the means used to promote it, and these are the province of learned investigation; the same holds of different religious *books* (Zendavest, the Vedas, Koran, and so on). But there is only a single *religion*, valid for all men in all times. Those [faiths and books] can thus be nothing more than the accidental vehicles of religion and can only thereby be different in different times and places.⁹⁴

Writing in the same decade, Joseph Endelin de Joinville, the Surveyor-General in the Administration of Frederic North, first Governor of British possessions in Ceylon, also suggested that religion could refer only to a Christian belief-system.

An uncreated world, and mortal souls, are ideas to be held only in an infant state of society, and as society advances such ideas must vanish. *A fortiori*, they cannot be established in opposition to a religion already prevailing in a country, the fundamental articles of which are the creation of the world, and the immortality of the soul. Ideas in opposition to all religion cannot gain ground, at least cannot make head, when there is already an established faith...⁹⁵

⁹¹ Lactantius, *Institutiones Divinae* IV.28, trans. Sister McDonald, 1964, 318-320, cited in King, *Orientalism and Religion*, p. 36.

⁹² Cavanaugh, ‘A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House,’ p. 404.

⁹³ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, p. 37.

⁹⁴ Kant, (trans. Humphrey) ‘To Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch,’ in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, p. 125.

⁹⁵ Joseph Endelin de Joinville, ‘On the Religion and Manners of the People of Ceylon,’ *Asiatick Researches* 7 (1803), pp. 397-444, cited in Scott, ‘Conversion and Demonism,’ p. 347.

The spread of this particular concept of religion in Europe meant that the term came to be associated with a set of *beliefs* as opposed to more pluralistic and embodied Ciceronian understanding of *religio* and *traditio*.⁹⁶ As King concludes, “modern discussions of the meaning and denotation of the term *religio* tend to follow Lactantius’s etymology, thereby constructing a Christianized model of religion that strongly emphasized *theistic belief* (whether mono-, poly-, heno-, or pan-theistic in nature), exclusivity, and a fundamental dualism between the human world and the transcendent world of the divine to which one ‘binds’ (*religare*) oneself.”⁹⁷ According to Cavanaugh, “religion as a transhistorical phenomenon separate from ‘politics’ is a creation of Western modernity.”⁹⁸

Modern Euro-American forms of secularism inherited this specifically Christian approach to religion. One result is that attempts to regulate the terms through which religion is defined and confined lead to conflict between laicists, who police the boundary of what they define as the public sphere, and others who view this policing as an extension of religion in the name of a rival (laicist) set of metaphysical assumptions and practices.⁹⁹ As Taylor explains,

What to one side is a more strict and consistent application of the principles of neutrality is seen by the other side as partisanship. What this other side sees as legitimate public expressions of religious belonging will often be castigated by the first as the exaltation of some peoples’ beliefs over others. This problem is compounded when society diversifies to contain substantial numbers of non-Judaeo-Christian religions. If even some Christians find the “post-Christian” independent ethic partisan, how much harder will Muslims find it to swallow it.¹⁰⁰

By defining something called religion and working to exclude it from politics, laicism constructs and delimits the temporal domain in a particular fashion. This is a political move. It may also be considered a religious one. Laicism marks out the domain of the secular and associates it with public authority, common sense, rational argument,

⁹⁶ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, p. 37.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37 (emphasis in original).

⁹⁸ Cavanaugh, ‘A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House’, p. 411.

⁹⁹ Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism’, p. 36.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37. For an analysis and critique of the justificatory liberal position on religious conviction in politics from a Christian perspective see Christopher J. Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

justice, tolerance and the public interest.¹⁰¹ It reserves the religious as that which it is not, and associates it with a personal God and beliefs about that God.¹⁰² Laicism, then, is not the opposite of religious or theological discourse. It is more complex than a simple laicism-religion binary would suggest. It enacts a particular kind of theological discourse in its own right. In this discourse, as observed by Connolly, religion is “treated as a universal term, as if “it” could always be distilled from a variety of cultures in a variety of times rather than representing a specific fashioning of spiritual life engendered by the secular public space carved out of Christendom.”¹⁰³ As Milbank argues in his critique of secular reason, “a theology ‘positioned’ by secular reason...is confined to intimations of a sublimity beyond representation, so functioning to confirm negatively the questionable idea of an autonomous secular realm, completely transparent to rational understanding.”¹⁰⁴

Milbank also refers to the “critical non-avoidability of the theological and metaphysical” and observes that differing approximations of it appear in the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, Gillian Rose, René Girard, Guy Lardreau and Christian Jambet.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, White argues that “the supposedly neutral, ‘freestanding’ nonontological standpoint is, in fact, a perspective constitutively infused with an ontological desire to hold an authoritative center in the flux of political life...the desire for a definitive center is what needs to be diffused.”¹⁰⁶ Although laicism purports to stand outside the contested territory of religion and politics, it does not and cannot. Laicism is located on a spectrum of theological politics.

In international relations, laicism has the effect of excluding alternative approaches to the negotiation of the secular that threaten its own concept and practice of modern politics. As Taylor observes with regard to global politics, “defined and pursued out of the context of Western unbelief, it understandably comes across as the imposition

¹⁰¹ Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 21.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 3. Juergensmeyer alludes to this possibility in his reference to secular nationalism as “a suprareligion of its own.” *The New Cold War?*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 140.

of one metaphysical view over others, and an alien one at that.”¹⁰⁷ In attempting to legislate the terms through which the secular and the sacred are defined and experienced, laicism rules out in advance linkages between religion and spheres of power and authority such as law, science, and politics within states. In defining the limits of state-centered politics with religion on the outside, laicism contributes to the constitution of a particular form of state sovereignty above states. The exercise of this productive power encounters obstacles and incites opposition. As Casanova observes regarding religious interventions in the secular public sphere, “the purposes of such interventions in the undifferentiated public sphere is not simply to ‘enrich public debate’ but to challenge the very claims of the secular sphere to differentiated autonomy exempt from extrinsic normative constraints.”¹⁰⁸ Challenges to dominant formations of secular order, including secular concepts of state sovereignty, are often particularly pronounced in non-Western contexts where Western-imposed or inspired forms of laicism correspond less neatly to local political and religious traditions.

A second consequence of laicism for international relations involves the definition of religion and the production of religious subjects. Laicism presumes to distinguish cleanly between the transcendent or supernatural and the temporal or mundane. As Casanova writes, “the secular, as a concept, only makes sense in relation to its counterpart, the religious.”¹⁰⁹ Laicism defines itself as the starting point in relation to which the religious is constructed. It therefore effectively contributes to the production of the categories that it presupposes. It is most powerful when this process of construction, this mode of production, remains invisible or unseen. In this way, laicism aspires to represent itself as the natural order that emerges when there is no ideology present.¹¹⁰ In its most influential legal, social and political instantiations, laicism succeeds in positing itself as public, neutral and value-free, while assigning to religion, religious actors, and religious institutions the role of its private, affective and value-laden counterpart. Religion is assigned to be the domain of the violent, the irrational, the

¹⁰⁷ Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism,’ p. 37.

¹⁰⁸ José Casanova, ‘Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad,’ paper presented at a workshop on *Secularization and Religion*, Erfurt, Germany, July 2003, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Casanova, *Public Religions*, p. 20.

¹¹⁰ Melani McAlister makes this argument with regard to gender in *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media and U.S. Interests in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 232.

undemocratic, the “other.” Thus Cavanaugh argues that “liberal theorists...assume that public faith has a dangerous tendency to violence,”¹¹¹ and Appleby refers to the “conventional wisdom that religious fervor—unrestrained religious commitment—inevitably expresses itself in violence and intolerance.”¹¹² Laicism is the conventional wisdom adopted by Cavanaugh’s liberal theorists. The secular public sphere is constructed as the domain of reason, objectivity, deliberation and justice. The religious private sphere is construed as the domain of subjectivity, transcendence, effeminacy and affect. Laicism guards against what it defines as religion in the public sphere. Religious presence is seen as unnatural, infectious, undemocratic, and even theocratic.¹¹³ Adapting Honig’s insight about virtue theorists, laicists “distance themselves from the remainders of their politics and that distance enables them to adopt a not terribly democratic intolerance and derision for the other to whom their democratic institutions are supposed to be (indeed claim to be) reaching out.”¹¹⁴ These religious subjects, as Euben concludes, become repositories for laicist anxieties about relations between politics, religion and violence.¹¹⁵

By pushing dissenters out of the rational domain of the political and into the domain of the religious, laicism incites counter-reactions. As both the religious and the internal “remainders” of laicism are shut out of politics, as they come to sense that this domain itself is in fact purportedly *defined* by laicism, some resort to extreme tactics to air their grievances. As Nandy argues, “modern scholarship sees zealotry as a retrogression into primitivism and as a pathology of traditions. At closer sight it proves to be a by-product and a pathology of modernity.”¹¹⁶

Judeo-Christian secularism and international relations

¹¹¹ Cavanaugh, ‘A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House,’ p. 409.

¹¹² Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, p. 5.

¹¹³ See for example the biological references to Islamism as a contagion in French media coverage of the dispute surrounding the 2004 law as discussed in John Bowen, *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹¹⁴ Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 6.

¹¹⁵ Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹¹⁶ Ashis Nandy, ‘The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance,’ in Rajeev Bhargava (Ed.), *Secularism and its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 335.

George W. Bush supported secular democracy in Iraq. Yet he acknowledged that religion played an important role in his strategic vision, policy decisions and leadership style. In a 2003 speech to the National Endowment for Democracy Bush stated that “liberty is both the plan of Heaven for humanity and the best hope for progress here on earth.”¹¹⁷ In his second inaugural address in 2005, Bush described his commitment to human rights as founded in the belief “that every man and woman on this earth... bear[s] the image of the Maker of Heaven and Earth.”¹¹⁸ President Bush was not a laicist. He did not support the exclusion of religion from the spheres of power and authority in modern societies. Instead, he invoked what Wolterstorff has described as a theistic account of political authority. “Among the ways in which a theistic account of political authority is distinct from all others,” Wolterstorff argues, “is that it regards the authority of the state to do certain things as transmitted to it from someone or something which already has that very same authority.”¹¹⁹ The United States, for Bush, is empowered by a transcendental authority. It is a secular republic that is realizing (a Christian) God’s will. This joint invocation of secular and Christian discourse displays a familiar logic.¹²⁰ This is one variation of Judeo-Christian secularism.

Judeo-Christian secularism is a discursive tradition that aspires to negotiate the relationship between religion and politics. While laicism seeks to define and confine religion to the private sphere, Judeo-Christian secularism connects contemporary Euro-American secular formations to a legacy of “Western” (Christian, and later Judeo-Christian) values, cultural and religious beliefs, historical practices, legal traditions, governing institutions and forms of identification. Many Christians and Jews are not Judeo-Christian secularists, and it is possible to adopt the assumptions of Judeo-Christian

¹¹⁷ George W. Bush, *Remarks at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy*, United States Chamber of Commerce, Washington, D.C., November 6, 2003.

¹¹⁸ George W. Bush, cited in Peter Ford, ‘What Place for God in Europe?’ *The Christian Science Monitor* (www.csmonitor.com/2005/0222/p01s04-woeu.html), February 22, 2005).

¹¹⁹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, ‘For the Authorities are God’s Servants’: Is a Theological Account of Political Authority Viable?’ Comments on paper presented at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the Pew Christian Scholars Program conference on ‘Theology, Morality, and Public Life,’ The University of Chicago Divinity School, Chicago, Illinois, February 25-27, 2003.

¹²⁰ On the history of this discourse in the United States see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000, 5th ed.) and Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Random House, 2006).

secularism without being either Jewish or Christian. Judeo-Christian secularism straddles and confounds conventional categories of the secular and the religious. Like laicism, Judeo-Christian secularism is a discursive formation that comes in different variations. George W. Bush, for example, invokes a soft version of Judeo-Christian secularism: while Christian discourse is inseparable from the practice of secular authority, it is not the case that *only* Christianity holds the key to secularization. The common claim of Judeo-Christian secularism of all varieties, however, is that Western political order is grounded in a set of core values with their origins in (Judeo)-Christian tradition that cannot (and should not) be diluted or denied.

The religious populism of Richard John Neuhaus is one variation of this tradition.¹²¹ Neuhaus argues that universally valid traditional Catholic moral arguments should replace “secular” public godlessness and re-clothe the naked public square as the basis of American identity, community and foreign policy. Americans, for Neuhaus, are a “Christian people,” and Catholic natural law theorizing can and should serve as a universal moral-religious vocabulary in and foundation for American public life.¹²² Drawing on the arguments of John Courtney Murray, Neuhaus argues that Catholicism is not the enemy of liberalism but “its true source and indispensable foundation.”¹²³ For Neuhaus and others who articulate different variations of this tradition, religion (Catholicism, Christianity, and/or Judeo-Christianity) is the elemental defining feature and moral basis of Western civilization. As Jelen argues, “in the United States, a ‘Judeo-Christian’ tradition is thought to provide a moral basis for political life—what some analysts have described as a ‘sacred canopy’ beneath which political affairs can be conducted. Religion is thought to perform a ‘priestly’ function of legitimating political authority.”¹²⁴ Judeo-Christian forms of secular order, in this view, are among the core

¹²¹ For a different example see Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005).

¹²² Damon Linker, ‘Without a Doubt: A Catholic Priest, a Pious President, and the Christianizing of America,’ *The New Republic* (April 3, 2006). On Neuhaus’s philosophy see his *Catholic Matters: Confusion, Controversy and the Splendor of Truth* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), *The Naked Public Square* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1984) and *The Catholic Moment* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990). For two very different critiques see Damon Linker, *The Theocons: Secular America Under Siege* (New York: Doubleday, 2006) and Cavanaugh, ‘A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House’, pp. 410-412.

¹²³ Linker, ‘Without a Doubt.’

¹²⁴ Ted Jelen, *To Serve God and Mammon: Church-State Relations in American Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p. 11. On the “sacred canopy” see Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements*

values of Western civilization. They do not merely contribute to but actually help to constitute the common ground upon which Western democratic order rests. Religion plays an important constitutive role in secular politics. It constitutes what Jelen describes as “the basis of an ethical consensus without which popular government could not operate.”¹²⁵ This tradition of secularism draws on a long tradition that Casanova has described as a “celebratory Protestant reading of modernity, going from Hegel’s *Early Theological Writings* through the Weber-Troeltsch axis to Talcott Parson’s interpretation of modern societies as the institutionalization of Christian principles.”¹²⁶

In the laicist account of secularization, the Christian identity of the West has been superseded, radically transformed and for all practical purposes rendered irrelevant. A modern, rational West was reinvented and rejuvenated by democratic tendencies inherited from its Greek and Roman predecessors. Judeo-Christian secularism does not share this assumption that after the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment linkages between Western politics and public forms of Christianity were definitively severed. It works out of a different set of traditions involving the relationship between Christianity and modern political identities and institutions. Rather than eschewing religion, it draws sustenance from earlier European institutional arrangements in which church and state were unified, with “each representing a different aspect of the same divine authority.”¹²⁷ Gedicks describes this arrangement:

Prior to the Reformation...the concepts “religious” and “secular” did not exist as descriptions of fundamentally different aspects of society. Although there clearly was tension and conflict in the relation between church and state during this time, the state was not considered to be nonreligious. Both church and state were part of the Christian foundation upon which medieval society was built.¹²⁸

The Reformation, Gedicks argues, led to the distillation of two separate spheres of influence: the spiritual, led by the Church, and the temporal, overseen by the State. Luther and Calvin revived and strengthened Augustine’s concepts of the “city of God” and the “city of men,” which described two aspects of the sovereign authority of God as

of a Sociological Theory of Religion (New York: Doubleday, 1967) and Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1984).

¹²⁵ Jelen, *To Serve God and Mammon*, p. 34.

¹²⁶ Casanova, ‘A Reply to Talal Asad,’ in *Powers of the Secular Modern*, p. 21.

¹²⁷ Frederick Mark Gedicks, ‘The Religious, the Secular, and the Antithetical,’ *Capital University Law Review* 20, no. 1 (1991), p. 116.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

embodied in the church and the state. However, they also made this split more fundamental by claiming that, “God had instituted two kingdoms on earth, one spiritual to be ruled by the church, and the other temporal to be ruled by a civil sovereign.”¹²⁹

In the case of the United States, this larger Christian context within which both church and state were set during the Reformation set the terms of American public discourse at least through the 19th century:

There was no explicit 19th century ethic that required the divorce of religion from politics and government...there was no division of society into spheres of the religious and the secular...rather religion and government emerged as competing centers of institutional authority, each of which tacitly recognized the pre-eminence of the other in certain matters.¹³⁰

It was both legally and culturally acceptable for Americans to argue public policy in openly religious terms.¹³¹ Following the influx of immigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, it became politically expedient to couch political programs in increasingly non-sectarian terms in order to ensure success at the polls.¹³² While Protestant discourse at that point took a back seat to a more general civic religion, a de facto Protestant establishment continued to set the ground rules. According to Gedicks, “Protestantism still affected public business, but implicitly, more as the source and background of political movements than as the movements themselves.”¹³³

Judeo-Christian secularism is apart of the source and background of contemporary domestic and international politics. It draws on a long tradition in which particular religious traditions are linked implicitly to the possibility of civilization, as described most famously in reference to the United States by Tocqueville:

In the United States it is not only mores that are controlled by religion, but its sway extends over reason...So Christianity reigns without obstacles by universal consent... Thus while the law allows the American people to do everything; there are things which religion prevents them from imagining and forbids them to become...Religion, which never intervenes directly in the government of

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp. 117-118.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 121.

¹³² Ibid., p. 122.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 122. American Catholics in the late 19th century responded to Protestant bias in the schools by withdrawing from the public system and establishing parochial education. Ibid., p. 122, note 29.

American society should therefore be considered as the first of their political institutions.¹³⁴

The religious beliefs of the Protestant majority in early America formed the basis of a particular understanding and practice of modern democratic politics. The influence of the Protestant majority in early America was evident in Legislative prayer, state acknowledgment of Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving and the Christian Sabbath, and the outlawing of blasphemy and punishment of atheism.¹³⁵ Protestants “opposed a particular Protestant denomination to Protestantism in general, which later they did not equate with an establishment. The notion of prayer and worship based on the Bible accepted by all Protestants did not amount to a general establishment, but constituted an essential foundation of civilization.”¹³⁶ To be secular, in this line of reasoning, meant to not privilege one Protestant denomination over another. The common ground of Christian civilization was taken for granted. A similar situation prevailed contemporaneously in England. In his analysis of nineteenth-century debates between British evangelicals and their utilitarian rivals, van der Veer notes that despite their differences both sides agreed that “civil society and the forms of knowledge on which it was based were ultimately part and parcel of Christian civilization.”¹³⁷

This Protestant common ground, though slowly eroded by the increasing religious diversification of the American population and eventually modified to incorporate both Catholic¹³⁸ and, after World War II, Jewish influences, has retained a cultural foothold. It is out of a celebratory reading of this cultural inheritance that Judeo-Christian secularism emerged and continues to influence modern dispositions toward the secular and the place of religion within it. Carter is referring to this when he suggests that “the image of America as a Christian nation is more firmly ingrained in both our politics and our

¹³⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, (trans. George Lawrence) *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 292.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹³⁶ Thomas Curry, *The First Freedoms*, pp. 123-4, quoted in Gedicks, p. 123, note 30.

¹³⁷ Peter Van der Veer, ‘The Moral State: Religion, Nation, and Empire in Victorian Britain and British India,’ in *Nation and Religion*, p. 28.

¹³⁸ On Catholicism in American public life see John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003).

practices than the adjustment of a few words will ever cure.”¹³⁹ Other prominent scholars of religion including Bellah, Connolly, Taylor, van der Veer and Morone and Pizzorno have gestured toward the formation that is identified here as Judeo-Christian secularism by chronicling the ways in which Judeo-Christian tradition resonates in and through contemporary politics, including modern varieties of liberalism and secularism.¹⁴⁰

Morone, for example, paints a lively portrait of American history in which the nation develops “not from religious to secular but from revival to revival.”¹⁴¹ Connolly points to a tendency in canonical liberal thinkers, such as J.S. Mill, to rely quietly upon Judeo-Christian tradition as the moral basis of civilizational unity and identity. For Mill, he suggests, it is “through Jewish and Christian culture above all that a territorial people acquires the civilizational conditions of possibility for representative government.”¹⁴² Mill, then, contributed to the cultural and political inheritance that I identify as Judeo-Christian secularism. Van der Veer identifies a long tradition of combining liberalism and evangelical moralism in Anglo-American political thought. He describes British Liberal leader Gladstone’s (1809-98) writings as invoking a “liberal view of progress...but added to this is the notion that progress is the Christian improvement of society and that in such progress we see the hand of God.”¹⁴³ This understanding is reflected in Bush’s rhetoric described earlier. Charles Taylor describes a “common ground” mode of secularism, in which members of a political community agree upon an ethic of peaceful coexistence and political order based on doctrines common to all Christian sects, or even to all theists.¹⁴⁴ Historically, this represented a successful compromise in Europe for warring sects because “political injunctions that flowed from

¹³⁹ Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 86. See in particular his chapter ‘The “Christian Nation” and Other Horrors.’

¹⁴⁰ See Robert Bellah’s concept of American civil religion in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) and Juergensmeyer’s argument that American nationalism blends secular nationalism and the symbols of Christianity into a form of “civil religion” in *The New Cold War?*, p. 28.

¹⁴¹ James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 3.

¹⁴² Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 78.

¹⁴³ Van der Veer, ‘The Moral State: Religion, Nation, and Empire in Victorian Britain and British India,’ p. 24.

¹⁴⁴ Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism.’

this common core trumped the demands of a particular confessional allegiance.”¹⁴⁵ The objective was not to expel religion from politics in the name of an independent ethic, as in laicism. Rather, it was to prevent the state from backing one (Christian) confession over another by appealing to that which all held in common. This even-handedness between religious traditions was according to Taylor the basis of the original American separation of church and state.¹⁴⁶ Finally, Pizzorno suggests that the “fundamental, long-term function of the church in the formation of Western civilization” was to offer “a set of symbols of common identity, which made it possible to establish who belonged and who was excluded.”¹⁴⁷

This collection of secular practices that I identify as Judeo-Christian secularism, as these different accounts suggest, is beholden to religion in a particular way. Judeo-Christian forms of secularism are not the opposite of religious or theological discourse. Instead, they enact a particular kind of theological discourse in their own right. Like laicism, Judeo-Christian secularism is located on a spectrum of theological politics. Yet this variety of secularism differs from laicism in that it does not aspire or claim to absent or exclude religion from modern spheres of power and authority. It diverges from laicism with regard to the role of Judeo-Christian tradition in the establishment and maintenance of the secularist “separation” of church and state. While laicism assumes that religion has receded out of modern spheres of authority and into the private realm or perhaps diminished altogether, Judeo-Christian secularism does not make this assumption. Instead, Judeo-Christian secularism is a variant of what Jelen calls religious “accommodationism” insofar as it maintains that “religion (singular) is ultimately good for democratic politics, because a *shared* adherence to a common religious tradition provides a set of publicly accessible assumptions within which democratic politics can be conducted.”¹⁴⁸ For Judeo-Christian secularists, the separation of church and state is a unique Western achievement that grew out of a shared adherence to a common set of

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 33. Taylor cites Pufendorf and Locke as examples.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁴⁷ Pizzorno, ‘Politics Unbound,’ p. 39.

¹⁴⁸ Jelen, *To Serve God and Mammon*, p. 90. On democracy, religious pluralism and accommodationism see Nancy Rosenblum (Ed.), *Obligations of Citizenship and Demands of Faith: Religious Accommodation in Pluralist Democracies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

European religious and political traditions. Christianity, as van Leeuwan argued, led into modern secularism.

International relations theory has not escaped the influence of this tradition. The most influential variation is found in arguments suggesting that religious history and tradition play a specific and determinative role as the source of particular styles and institutions of governance, forms of civilizational identity, and entrenched and violent clashes between so-called civilizations. Judeo-Christian tradition, in this view, culminated in and contributes to the unique Western achievement of the separation of church and state and forms of liberal democracy.¹⁴⁹ As Huntington argues, “Western Christianity, first Catholicism and then Protestantism, is historically the single most important characteristic of Western civilization.”¹⁵⁰ This prevailing dualism between “God and Caesar, church and state, spiritual and temporal authority...contributed immeasurably to the development of freedom in the West” and forms part of “the factors which enabled the West to take the lead in modernizing itself and the world.”¹⁵¹ Religion is the bedrock of this cultural inheritance and is closely tied to geographic location. It is responsible for differentiating between civilizations and between individuals: “in the modern world, religion is a central, perhaps *the* central, force that motivates and mobilizes people.”¹⁵² It is the glue that holds civilizations together. Religion and culture are dictated not by “political ideology or economic interest,” but “faith and family, blood and belief.”¹⁵³ There is solidarity in civilizational consciousness, and religious diversity is dangerous because it threatens this solidarity. As Huntington argues, “multiculturalism at home threatens the West; universalism abroad threatens the West and the World. Both

¹⁴⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, ‘Religious Persecution and Religious Relevance in Today’s World,’ in Elliot Abrams (Ed.), *The Influence of Faith: Religious Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), p. 60. On challenges to Huntington see *The Clash of Civilizations: The Debate*, (New York: Foreign Affairs, 1996), Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, ‘‘Civilization’ on Trial,’ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28, no. 1 (1999), especially pp. 143, 152; and Stephan Chan, ‘Too Neat and Under-Thought a World Order: Huntington and Civilizations,’ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 26, no. 1 (1997), p. 139. For a critique of the ethical implications of his argument see Michael Shapiro, ‘Samuel Huntington’s Moral Geography,’ *Theory and Event* 2, no. 4 (1999).

¹⁵⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York & London: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 70.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 72.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

deny the uniqueness of Western culture.”¹⁵⁴ If the United States becomes “de-Westernized,” and “Americans cease to adhere to their liberal democratic and European-rooted political ideology, the United States as we have known it will cease to exist and will follow the other ideologically defined superpower onto the ash heap of history.”¹⁵⁵

This account divides the world into two categories, those who share the Judeo-Christian common ground and those who do not. This is often accompanied by an implicit hierarchy between these two groupings. This framework is strikingly similar to the divisions proposed in the 14th-century by Italian jurist Bartolus de Sassoferato.¹⁵⁶ Bartolus divided the world into five classes: the “populus Romanus” or “almost all those who obey the Holy Mother Church,” and four classes of “populus extranei:” the Turks, the Jews, the Greeks and the Saracens.¹⁵⁷ Bartolus’s scheme parallels Huntington’s seven or eight major civilizations: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and “possibly African.” Pagden describes the effects of these divisions:

The effect of Bartolus’s ethnic division is once again to limit “the world” to a distinct cultural, political, and in this case religious, community. And again it places boundaries between what may be counted as the domain of the fully human world, and those others—which because of their rejection of the hegemony of the Western Church now also included the Greeks—who have no place within the *civitas*, and so no certain claim upon the moral considerations of those who do.¹⁵⁸

The assumption that a Judeo-Christian secular common ground ends abruptly at the edge of Western (Judeo-Christian) civilization leads to calls to defend this ground against both internal and external enemies, resulting in what Connolly has described as “civilizational wars of aggressive defense of Western uniqueness.”¹⁵⁹ These wars of defense become aggressive as the common ground is challenged and reconfigured under the stress of an

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 318.

¹⁵⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilizations,’ *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993), p. 62.

¹⁵⁶ Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-c. 1800*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 28.

¹⁵⁷ Saracen is a Greek word that was synonymous with Arab in pre-Islamic times that referred to Arabic-speaking Muslims of indeterminate race in medieval times. After the twelfth century, along with other terms such as Turk and Moor, it came to be synonymous with “Muslim.” Mohja Kahf, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), Chapter 2, note 5, p. 181.

¹⁵⁸ Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁹ William E. Connolly, ‘The New Cult of Civilizational Superiority,’ *Theory and Event* 2, no. 4 (1999), p. 4.

increasing pluralistic West made up not only of Judeo-Christians but also Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, agnostics, Deleuzeans and others. As Taylor notes, “with the widening band of religious and metaphysical commitments in society, the ground originally defined as common becomes that of one party among others.”¹⁶⁰ At this critical juncture the common ground is either renegotiated or the aggressive defense of the common ground is set in motion. Neuhaus opts for the latter, arguing that the godless are incapable of a “morally convincing account” of the nation and concluding that, “those who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus turn out to be the best citizens.”¹⁶¹

This line of argument finds expression in international relations in the idea that the secular West has a monopoly over the proper relationship between religion and politics. As Keane argues,

The principle of secularism, which “represents a realisation of crucial motifs of Christianity itself” (Bonhoffer), is arguably founded upon a sublimated version of the Christian belief that Christianity is “the religion of religions” (Schleiermacher), and that Christianity is entitled to decided for non-Christian others what they can think or say—or even whether they are capable of thinking and saying anything at all.¹⁶²

This kind of thinking contributes to the marginalization of non-Western and non-Judeo-Christian perspectives on religion and politics. If the dualism between spiritual and temporary authority is uniquely Western and Christian, then non-Westerners who want to democratize have no alternative but to adopt Western forms of secularism. This view is reflected in the following statement by Bernard Lewis, an influential adviser to the Bush administration in the lead-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq:

Separation of church and state was derided in the past by Muslims when they said this is a Christian remedy for a Christian disease. It doesn't apply to us or to our world. Lately, I think some of them are beginning to reconsider that, and to concede that perhaps they may have caught a Christian disease and would therefore be well advised to try a Christian remedy.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism,’ p. 33.

¹⁶¹ Neuhaus, cited in Linker, ‘Without a Doubt.’

¹⁶² John Keane, ‘Secularism?’ in David Marquand and Ronald L. Nettle (Eds.), *Religion and Democracy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 14.

¹⁶³ Bernard Lewis, ‘Islam and the West: A Conversation with Bernard Lewis,’ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Luis Lugo, Moderator, Washington, D.C.: April 27, 2006, <http://pewforum.org/events/index.php?EventID=107> (accessed 5/25/06).

According to this line of thinking, on the one hand non-Westerners who do not advocate for Western forms of secularism are portrayed as children who refuse to acknowledge that they are sick and need to stay in. On the other hand, those who *do* advocate for some form of separationism are subject to the charge that they are advancing pale imitations of a robust Western secular ideal, thereby departing from (and potentially betraying) indigenous tradition. This binary has the effect of de-legitimizing alternative, indigenous traditions and trajectories of secularization as they are associated with selling out to Western power and betraying local traditions rather than being recognized as legitimate local separationist negotiations of the secular-religious binary. The oppositional relationship that has developed between Euro-American secularism and forms of political Islam, for example, such that the latter is virtually assumed to be a threat to any variation of the former, has had significant consequences for international politics.¹⁶⁴

Charting the influence of secularist traditions in international relations calls into question the assumptions upon which the “clash of civilizations” narrative rests. Approaching secularism in the plural as sets of discursive traditions that construct the secular and the religious in particular ways makes it possible to see that any definition of “religion” as a fixed and final source of unity and identity with a particular relationship to politics is itself a contentious and contestable political decision. Any attempt to fix the meaning of religion and define its relationship either in or out of politics—any attempt to displace the politics of secularism—is inherently political and inherently unstable. Elements of religion escape such attempts to represent, define and confine it to particular roles, spaces or moments either within or outside politics.

Secularism and the displacement of politics

In *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, Bonnie Honig discusses two conflicting political impulses: the desire to decide “undecidabilities,” and the will to contest established institutions and identities.¹⁶⁵ She criticizes theorists who limit their definition of politics to the “juridical, administrative or regulative tasks of stabilizing

¹⁶⁴ See Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, ‘Political Islam and foreign policy in Europe and the United States,’ *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3, no. 4 (October 2007): 345-367.

¹⁶⁵ Honig, *Political Theory*, p. 201.

moral and political subjects, building consensus, maintaining agreements, or consolidating communities and identities.”¹⁶⁶ Rather than theorizing politics, she argues, they displace it. Honig explores a contrasting impulse in the work of Nietzsche, Arendt and Derrida, for whom politics is a “disruptive practice that resists the consolidations and closures of administrative and juridical settlement for the sake of the perpetuity of political contest.”¹⁶⁷

Like their counterparts in political theory, scholars of international relations yearn for closure and consensus, at least regarding the relation between religion and politics. As Barnett argues, “actors struggle over the power and the right to impose a legitimate vision of the world because doing so helps to construct social reality as much as it expresses it.”¹⁶⁸ For most political scientists this is a secular social reality. Most of us, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps less so, think, work, struggle against and live in and around variations of the two traditions of secularism described in this paper. These secular visions and the attitudes, sensibilities and habits that sustain and shape them do not merely reflect social reality; they construct it, providing what Bukovansky describes as “a set of parameters, focal points, or even points of contention around which political discourse revolves.”¹⁶⁹ They provide attitudes, sensibilities and habits that facilitate closure and agreement around particular cultural, political and legal settlements of the separation of church and state. Secularism, it turns out, is a powerful “pattern of political rule.”¹⁷⁰

This pattern of rule is sustained through a constellation of related yet distinct discourses: secularization as the most recent step in the worldly realization of (Judeo-) Christian morality, secularization as the natural evolution toward a universal morality that has transcended the need for metaphysical moorings, secularization as a laudable side-effect of democratization and economic and political modernization within the state, and secularization as the globalization of the Westphalian state system in which religion has been privatized. These narratives shape and reproduce modern sensibilities and beliefs

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 250, citing Michael Williams, ‘Hobbes and International Relations: A Reconsideration,’ *International Organization* 50, no. 2 (Spring 1996), pp. 213-37.

¹⁶⁹ Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics*, p. 25.

about the secular and contribute to the consolidation of national identities as secular and democratic. Understanding their history is the first step in coming to terms with the politics of secularism in international relations.

¹⁷⁰ Asad, 'Responses,' in *Powers of the Secular Modern*, p. 219.